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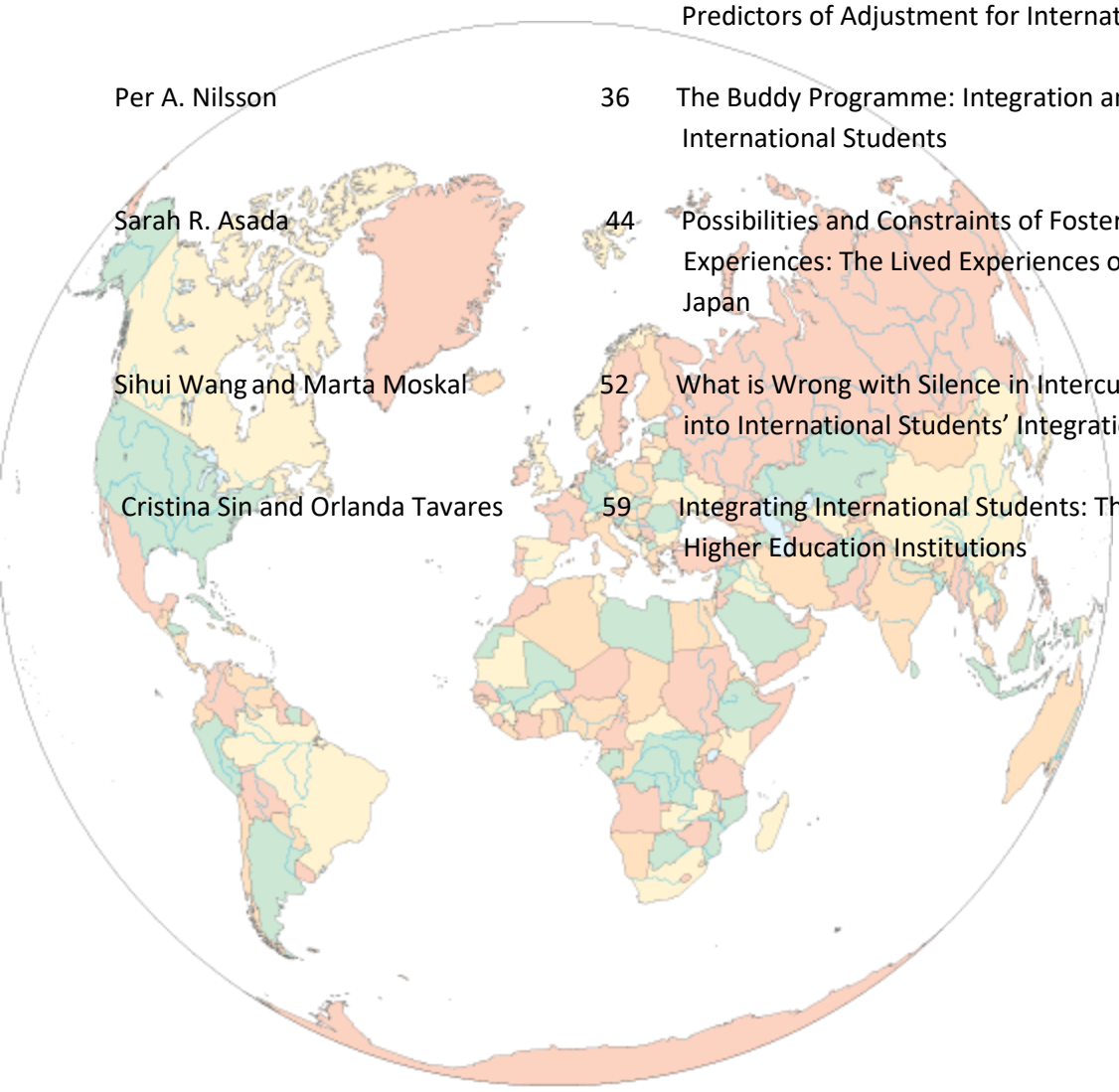
FEATURED ARTICLES



JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE & INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

Philosophy for *Comparative and Int'l Higher Education*

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

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The Editorial Board invites contributions dealing with the complementary fields of comparative, international, and development education and that relate to one of the areas listed in the Philosophy section above. Contributors may:

1) Submit a research article of 1,500 - 3,000 words. All articles will undergo a blind-review peer-editing process.
2) Submit a comparative report analysis of 750 - 1,000 words that examines current policies related to higher education institutional policy.
3) Submit graduate student research in-progress of 500 - 1,000 words that shares new research that will help to set the tone for current and emerging issues in the field.

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The style and format of the *Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education* follows the Chicago Manual of Style. Only endnotes are allowed. USA spelling (e.g., center, color, organize) and punctuation are preferred (single quotations within double if needed), and requires a short paragraph of bibliographical details for all contributors.

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Editor-in-Chief Introduction: Winter 2019 Special Issue

Dear Readers,

I would like to welcome you to the second annual *Journal of Comparative and International Higher Education* (JCIHE) Winter Special Issue. The JCIHE Annual Graduate Student Work-in-Progress that celebrates the academic interests of students studying in a Master or Doctoral program will now be included in the Winter 2019 Supplemental Issue.

The Winter 2019 issue includes an article by Jermain Griffin (American University) and Lisbeth R. Gall (American University), "Higher Education Regionalization in the Northern Triangle of Central America: Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras." This article is a timely one that examines the types and depth of collaboration between HEIs within the Northern Triangle and examines how future collaborations might be fostered.

The Winter Special Issue 2019 theme is *Integrating International Students in Local (Student) Communities: A Theory-to-Practice Perspective.* JCIHE is honored to have Christof VanMol (Tilburg University) as the guest editor. This Special Issue includes articles that collectively explore various forms of academic and social integration experiences of international students while abroad in their host institutions. In unpacking the factors that can explain the integration process of international students, the articles in this issue find that social support (articles by Cong and Glass; Nilsson), campus climate (article by Cong and Glass), socialization process in different cultures (article by Wang and Moskal) and institutionalized support services (articles by Asada; Ballo, Mathies and Wiemer; Cong and Glass; and Sin and Tavares) are central to student success. A sub-theme found in the special issue articles is how student voices can build student agency by exposing stereotypes that they encounter that may not be familiar with college administration. Finally, each article includes practical recommendations to practitioners based on best practices grounded by theoretical and empirical research.

The articles in the 2019 JCIHE Winter Special issue include:

Anduena Ballo (University of Jyväskylä), Charles Mathies (University of Jyväskylä), and Leasa Weimer (University of Jyväskylä) show that international students are not a homogenous group and as such need tailored student services. They use Student Development Theories (SDT) to show how students develop holistically and environmental conditions can facilitate their development.

Cong Cong (Old Dominion University) and Chris Glass (Old Dominion University) use quantitative analysis to show that international student services (academic advising, writing support services, immigration advising, etc.) are very important in student social adjustment. In using this information in practice, they find a need to facilitate positive faculty-student relationships and international student - local student relationships.

Per Nilsson (meå University) focuses on one type of interaction, that of the buddy program that uses both institutional reports to organize the program and social support in terms of program activities. Yet, research shows that while social integration with local students appears, it is limited to only those in the buddy program.

Sarah Asada (Kyoritsu University) shows the importance of institutional services in terms of curricular design, on-site administrative staff, and creating an atmosphere that promotes students' independence as leading to integration of international students with local students. A historical analysis of short-term Japanese program from 1960s to 2010s shows that the diversity of the students leads to different experiences as international students.

Sihui Wang (University of Glasgow) and Marta Moskal (Durham University) present a micro-focus study that examines interactions within the classroom and tensions that can arise from the level of socialization of the international students. Particular attention is place on the time in-country and on the situation that defines how

silence is purposefully or unintentionally used by the international student to build or reduce retention. In terms of practice, links to faculty development as a means to mediate student choice.

Cristina Sin (Agency for Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Education (A3ES) and at the Centre for Research in Higher Education Policies (CIPES) and Orlanda Tavares (Agency for Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Education (A3ES) and at the Centre for Research in Higher Education Policies (CIPES) describe the strategies used at the institutional level to integrate international students and the students' perceptions of their integration experiences. The article also targets international students from the same-language countries as the language of the university who need specific outreach that shows that generalizability does not work for international students.

JCIHE State of the Field

During the 2019 calendar year, the *Journal of Comparative and International Higher Education* (JCIHE) received 31 submissions, of which, we accepted 17. Publications in the Spring, Fall, and Winter 2019 issues were authored by 28 men and 25 women. Authors in these issues were affiliated with institutions in Canada (6); China (9); Egypt (1); Finland (3); Japan (1); Korea (1); Netherlands (1); Portugal (2); Scotland (1); Sweden (1); United Kingdom (6); United States (9).

For the upcoming Winter 2019 Supplemental Issue received 55 graduate student submissions, of which we accepted 42. Authors represented a range of countries including Afghanistan (2); Australia (1); Brazil (2); Canada (2), China (5), Egypt (2), England (2), Finland (1), Ghana (1); Italy (1); Japan (2), Korea (1), South Africa (6); Tanzania (1); United States (29).

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The editorial staff of JCIHE is please to help support the CIES Higher Education SIG in advancing JCIHE as a professional forum that supports development, analysis, and dissemination of theory-, policy-, and practice-related issues that influence higher education. I especially want to thank the JCIHE Executive Editors, Gerardo Blanco and Pilar Mendoza for their continued support. I would also like to extend special thanks to our HE-SIG team for their help in the upcoming Graduate Student Issue: Kayla Johnson, Hans Schultz, Michelle Vital, and Matthew Witenstein. Finally, I want to personally thank the JCIHE Team, Bernhard Streitwieser, Senior Editor, Angel Oi Yee Cheng, Communications Editor and the Managing Editor, Hei-hang Hayes Tang.

Editor in Chief,
Rosalind Latiner Raby
Winter 2019

JCIHE would like to thank our 2019 peer reviewers

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Higher Education Regionalization in the Northern Triangle of Central America: Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras

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Introduction

The ongoing migrant crisis that engulfs the U.S.-Mexico border is often the source of political and socioeconomic discourse related to the treatment of those caught in the web of immigration politics or the causes of migration to the U.S. from Mexico and Central America. One related, critical conversation involves the future stability of countries neighboring the southern region of Mexico – El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Together they comprise the northern region of Central America, increasingly referred to as the *Northern Triangle* (NT). The region is documented for its lower levels of human development, high rates of violent crime, low school completion rates and high rates of poverty (Meyer and Seelke 2015; Congressional Research Service 2019). The U.S. government has maintained regular engagement with NT countries to support the development of greater stabilization in the region following decades of internal armed conflicts and the aftermath, which contributed to lower human development in the region. In recent years, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has supported efforts towards public health, business development, efficient government institutions and the scaling up of postsecondary education through grants with regional and international partners. In 2014, the Plan of the Alliance for the Prosperity of the Northern Triangle (A4P) was developed by the leaders of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, in partnership with the U.S. to improve overall living conditions through coordination efforts focused on areas of need including access to basic healthcare, nutrition, education and employment opportunities (Inter-American Development Bank 2014). While the Plan of the Alliance does not explicitly reference the role of higher education (HE), we argue that it is reasonable and important to question how and if higher education institutions (HEIs) from the NT can contribute to improving social and economic conditions in the region. One important question about HE in the region is the level of collaboration between HEIs within the region that exists and how much of it is dependent on external support compared to available resources within the NT. This paper examines existing HE partnerships through a theoretical lens of higher education regionalization led by Knight's (2013) framework for regionalization. It is important to understand the capacity of HEIs in the region to facilitate collaboration. This paper begins to answer that question by exploring the depth of collaboration between HEIs in the NT region. How many partnerships are there and what are the context of those partnerships? This paper offers an important overview of the current state of HE collaboration in the region and how future collaborations might be fostered.

The Northern Triangle

Among Central American countries, Costa Rica and Panama have shown a steady economic growth and have maintained the highest gross domestic product (GDP) (Casalet and Buenrostro 2014). Their annual GDP per capita surpasses $7,000, therefore categorized as upper middle-income countries, whereas the Northern Triangle (NT) maintains an average between $2,000 and $3,000 (Svenson 2013). In terms of development, NT countries are

regularly categorized has having *medium* human development (UNDP 2019). The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI) draws from key 2030 UN Sustainable Development goals such as good health and well-being, quality education and economic mobility (United Nations 2019).

Regarding the political and economic stability, Colburn and Cruz (2016) state that "democracy in these three countries is weak, marred by political fragmentation, party instability, corruption, and feeble state capacity" (80). Despite the expansion of higher education (HE) in Central America, the World Bank (Ferreyra et al. 2017) study on HE in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) found high levels of unequal access to education in NT countries. This has resulted in limited development opportunities for citizens that translates into violence, poverty and increased emigration patterns. The shared social and economic issues in this region led the leaders in NT countries to form a strategic alliance aimed at addressing the problems threatening the security and development of their region.

The Northern Triangle Prosperity Alliance

The NT region's persistent struggles with violent crime and poverty reduction further exacerbated the flow of migrants north to Mexico, then onward to the U.S. These trends prompted the development of the *Plan of the Alliance for the Prosperity of the Northern Triangle* or A4P. The Plan was an attempt by NT countries, with support from the U.S., to invest in creating the conditions for increased economic development, job opportunities, improved public safety and strong public institutions leading each country (Inter-American Development Bank 2014). During the 2016-17 period, the three NT countries committed a combined $5.4 billion towards successful implementation of the A4P (U.S. Department of State 2018). The Plan's emphasis on improving secondary education completion rates and investing in workforce development represents opportunities for the region's higher education sector to contribute the Plan's implementation.

We contend that higher education should be examined for its potential to contribute in the NT context. The A4P continues to represent a key opportunity to improve the NT region through strategic partnership and coordination. In order to understand if and how higher education might serve a critical role in fostering mutually beneficial partnership that increases quality of life in the region, it is important to first understand the current state of higher education partnership activity between institutions in the region.

Literature Review

In recent years, research has emphasized the complexity but importance of higher education collaborations, be they international, regional or transborder. While there is no linear frame of reference for terms such as 'collaboration' or 'partnership' in the higher education context, there is sensitivity to the variability of these linkages. They can range from individual scholar collaborations to system-level coordinated efforts to support the building up of higher education systems with limited resources. In North-South higher education partnerships, respect for contextual factors and careful handling of power dynamics (particularly for well-resourced northern institutions) to ensure a reasonable level of mutuality of benefits are found in such alliances (Koehn 2012; Irazabal et. al 2015).

Higher Education Collaboration Efforts in Central America

Svenson's (2018) case study of the Central American Institute of Business Administration (INCAE) examines a North-South research collaboration between INCAE institutions (largely from Costa Rica and Nicaragua) and Harvard University. The case highlighted interpersonal dynamics as foundational to such international collaborations, which can eventually lead to broader organizational collaborations (Svenson 2018). The conditions for higher education linkages in Central America date back several decades.

In 1948 the Central American University Confederation and the Central American University Council of Universities (*Consejo Superior Universitario Centroamericano*, CSUCA) was established to foster higher education coordination among universities in the region (CSUCA, 2019). The council's membership is comprised of the state universities of Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panamá, and Dominican Republic (CSUCA 2019). The contributions of CSUCA include the creation of structures and systems to improve the delivery of higher education services (Swallow 1975; Soto and Sáurez 2014; CSUCA 2019). The harmonization process has been slow, in part because of the economic and structural differences among the region's countries. Casalet and Buenrostro (2014) explain that in cooperation processes, difference among countries may weaken cooperation efforts.

Other key regional contributors to ongoing efforts to strengthen higher education connectivity include the Association of Private Universities in Central America (AUPRICA), founded in 1990 and the Central American Agency of Graduate Accreditation (ACAP). Both organizations are part of a regional effort to build integration of teaching, research and in some cases, organizational leadership, to benefit public and private HEIs in Central America (ACAP, 2019; AUPRICA 2019). A key regional actor for the discussion in this paper is the Central American Integration System (Sistema de Integracion de Centroamerica, SICA). Established in 1991 and recognized by the United Nations, SICA is an economic, political and social alliance between the seven Central American countries and the Dominican Republic. The regional alliance uses a variety of outlets including academic centers to promote regional integration (Carducci & Amaya, 2012; SICA, 2019). These examples of regional integration efforts draw from existing models of regionalization, which will be discussed in the next section.

Higher Education Regionalization

Knight (2013) describes higher education regionalization as a "process of intentionally building connections and relationships among higher education actors, structure and systems within a region" (113). Regionalization attributes a proactive role and agency to higher education. This process can lead regions to improve higher education institutions (HEIs) recognition as they strengthen their capacity. Furthermore, these initiatives can support and shape structural gaps among nations, reduce disparities and enhance capacities in different educational areas (Casalet and Buenrostro 2014).

The concept of regionalization of higher education is influenced by the European Union's Bologna Process (BP), which began in 1999 with the goal of building a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010. Now a 48-country higher education, EHEA members implement several aspects of the BP including the streamlining degree requirements and quality assurances to support a broad network of higher education (Azevedo 2014). The EHEA has provided a model for other regional blocs to use towards aspirations of greater integration between the regions' HEIs. In the African continent, a few examples of higher education areas under development would be in the East African Community (EAC) and in the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) (Eta 2015; Eta, Kallo and Rinne 2018). In Asia, key higher education alliances include the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Universities Network (AUN) (Chao 2014; Choi 2017).

The European model has also influenced higher education collaboration in Latin America. In 2000, the European Union-Latin America/Caribbean Higher Education Area (UEALC) was launched to build cooperation between HEIs in Europe and Latin America as well as help create greater linkages between HEIs in Latin America. While forming its regional education group in the early 1990s, before the Bologna Process, the Latin American Southern Cone Group (MERCOSUR) is found to not be as advanced in higher education regionalization compared with the EHEA. Comparative studies highlighted unique challenges that impede higher education regionalization between MERCOSUR countries including insufficient resources, variation in governance systems, cultural dynamics within

some MERCOSUR countries that see European approaches to higher education as intrusive among other challenges (Verger and Hermo, 2010; Azevedo 2014; Felsen 2016).

A key initiative to support education regionalization in MERCOSUR and Latin American/Caribbean regional communities was the ALFA Tuning Latin America Project. The project, launched 2004, aimed to improve cooperation between universities in the region through an emphasis on a variety academic disciplines to build competences for teaching and learning. The project concluded in 2013 with nearly 20 countries, including El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, contributing to dialogue on building shared competences in 12 subject areas including Business, History and Medicine (Albo 2017; Tuning Academy 2019).

The Tuning Latin America Project is part of an international network of programs designed to increase higher education coordination through shared principles towards curriculum and teaching. The Tuning Academy (2019) has similar projects in both Asia and Africa, drawing on expertise from those regions as well as Europe and North America. Jane Knight (2013) offers a key contribution to the discussion of higher education regionalization in the inaugural issue of the Tuning Journal for Higher Education.

Theoretical Framework

Knight (2013) explains that the higher education regionalization process involves a variety of terms with different meanings that are often used interchangeably and are necessary to understand, such as: collaboration, harmonization, integration, among others. Knight (2013) uses these terms to develop a continuum of higher education regionalization that ranges from cooperation to integration. Regionalization is argued to begin with cooperation or collaboration with bilateral or multilateral activities between HEIs, then grow to coordination or alignment with partnerships between systems and structures. Knight (2013) suggests the following stage would involve harmonization and convergence with regional quality assurance plans or a shared academic credit system. Finally, the level of integration is where the aforementioned activities are part of a formalized higher education area. In Table 1 (below), Knight's suggested continuum is illustrated with examples of practical actions for each suggested stage.

Table 1: Knight's (2013) Continuum of Higher Education Regionalization Terms and Practical Examples

Higher Education Regionalization Terms	Practical Examples
Cooperation, Collaboration, Partnership	Open, informal relationships Faculty-led programs
Coordination, Coherence, Alignment	Joint-degree programs System-level partnerships
Convergence, Harmonization	Shared academic credit system Compatible quality assurance plans
Integration, Community, Interdependence	Agreements and bodies that legitimize plans for regional higher education area

Source: Adopted from Knight (2013), p. 6

While higher education regionalization is a voluntary and intentional process, Knight suggests that a planned method can support the development of more strategic and sustainable relationships. For this end, Knight proposes a Functional, Organizational and Political Approaches (FOPA) model to support the regionalization process.

Knight's proposed framework for higher education regionalization – the Functional, Organizational and Political Approaches (FOPA) Model, consists of three interrelated approaches, illustrated in Table 2, that complement one another. The *functional approach* refers to the strategies to align a) higher education systems, and b) collaborative

academic programs. This approach offers an analysis to further align academic systems and policies that include student mobility, quality assurance, and academic credit. The *organizational approach* involves the existing networks and government agencies through various levels of collaboration in order to promote initiatives, funding, capacity building, among other initiatives. The *political approach* "involves the political will and strategies that put higher education initiatives on the agenda of decision-making bodies" (120). Political instruments include: agreements, treaties, conventions and summits and among other events of this nature. The FOPA model helps stimulate regionalization efforts through a systematic and sustainable process.

Table 2: FOPA Approaches and Characteristics

Approach	**Characteristics**
Functional	Alignment of systems and policies Collaborative Programs
Organizational	Organizations Networks
Political	Declarations Agreements

Source: Adopted from Knight (2013), p. 7

Knight's (2013) FOPA model does not denote linearity, but interdependency, complementarity and flexibility. Knight emphasizes that the levels of collaboration and approaches used in each region are defined by higher education institutions and systems. The existing literature of higher education regional coordination in Latin America largely emphasizes efforts in from regional communities South America (MERCOSUR and the Andean Community: Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia). Higher education research on the Central America region is still relatively obscure with the emphasis typically on activities in Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama or Nicaragua. Central America's Northern Triangle (NT) region is certainly part of regional networks to encourage higher education coordination and the harmonizing of credit policies and systems, but the field needs more research on the capacity of HEIs within the region to support regionalization.

This case study is designed to examine the capacity of HEIs in regions confronted with a myriad of social, economic and political challenges to support collaboration. Important questions for this study are: How much of existing HEI collaboration in the region is driven by institutions within the region as opposed to neighboring Central America countries or outside supporters such as the European Union and the US? What are the priorities for collaboration among NT institutions? We hypothesize that HEI collaborations for NT countries are likely to be predominantly driven by outside efforts due to weak regional systems and ongoing political, economic and social challenges.

Methodology

A case study approach was used to answer this paper's research questions. Therefore, the findings in this study are limited to this specific case, however, some aspects of the study may be helpful in making sense of regionalization cases in other context. This study has a sample of 47 HEIs (El Salvador – 24; Guatemala – 15; Honduras – 8). Kim and Kuljis' (2010) approach to content analysis of Web-based content was helpful for the study as publicly available information including downloadable documents from more than 70 Web sites were gathered and analyzed for patterns of regionalization activity. The authors cautioned that Web site data would be aided by some form of triangulation, e.g., Participant interviews. Due to economic constraints, interview data was not funded for this study. Additionally, we

decided to incorporate perspectives of key actors from the region with perspective on HE regionalization for a future study.

The qualitative data were put through one round of coding before categories and themes were developed (Saldaña, 2013). Knight's (2013) FOPA model was used to finalize categories and interpret the findings. Three categories were created to describe partnership activities: Collaborative activities exclusively between HEIs within the NT region, which we labeled *NTCLAB* (Northern Triangle Collaborations); activities that included at least one NT institution and institutional partners from other Central American countries, *NTCAM* (Northern Triangle + Central America, Dominican Republic and Mexico), and engagement between at least one NT institution and external partners, labeled as *NTEX* (Northern Triangle + External partners). For each category, we documented the type of activity, sector or topic, and a brief description for each partnership example. Partnership examples were also reviewed and interpreted to reflect one of three approaches from Knight's (2013) FOPA model: functional, organizational and political. While the sources of data were limited, a multi-prong approach was used to make sense of HE regionalization in the NT context.

Findings

We found 53 examples of collaborative activity that involved higher education institutions (HEIs) from at least one country in the Northern Triangle (NT). In Table 3, we highlight these activities in three distinct categories: The NTCLAB group, NTCAM and NTEX.

Table 3: Types of HE partnerships with institutions from NT countries

Category	**% Activities**
Collaboration between 2-3 NT countries (NTCLAB)	8 out of 53 – 15%
Collaboration between 1 NT country and 1 Central American country/Mexico/Dominican Republic (NTCAM)	15 out of 53 – 28%
Collaboration between 1 NT country and an external partner from outside the region (NTEX)	30 out of 53 – 57%

Our findings included eight NTCLAB activities, half of which were student or faculty exchanges programs between NT HEIs. These examples would fit in Knight's (2013) model under the functional approach as collaborative academic programs. The other half consisted of agreements or meetings aimed at improving regional coordination between HEIs in the NT. These examples would fit under the political approach of Knight's (2013) model. Partnership activities exclusively between NT HEIs only represented 15 percent of our overall findings.

The NTCAM category highlights 15 examples of collaborations between at least one NT country and a country in Central America (including Mexico), which comprised 28 percent of our overall total of activities. The partnerships included a variety of activities such as student exchanges, research collaborations, conferences and trainings. An examination of these activities with Knight's FOPA model found eight of the partnership activities to fit under the *functional approach* with collaborations that emphasized collaboration agreements, partnerships, coordination of programs, research initiatives and scholarships. Six examples of partnership activities fit the *political approach* including the implementation of conferences on literacy, entrepreneurship, internationalization of higher education, food security and nutrition; and a forum/debate on the Plan of Alliance for the Prosperity of the Northern Triangle (A4P). We determined one activity to fit the *organizational* approach, a cooperation agreement between the National Secretariat for the Science and Technology (SENACYT), Guatemala's University of San Carlos (USAC) and the

Central American University Council (CSUCA) to create region-wide systemic coordination on science and technology research.

Engaged regional partners in this category included CSUCA, SENACYT, and the Central American Integration System (SICA), along with partner HEIs from Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Mexico and Panama. Key funders for partnership activities in this category include SICA, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Ford Foundation.

In the NTEX category, examples that involve a country or organization from outside of Central America/Mexico, represented more than half – 57 percent – of the total data. Overall, this group yielded 30 examples of activities that contributed to HE regionalization in the NT region. The majority of examples (18) fit under the *political* category with an emphasis on forums or meetings for higher education partnership in the region and announcements of agreements highlighting plans for collaboration. For example, El Salvador's Central American University (UCA) announced a plan collaboration for student mobility wide range of partners including Fulbright, Canada's Emerging Leaders in the Americas program and Germany's DAAD program. There were 11 examples of activities that fit Knight's (2013) *functional* description with an emphasis on student mobility or research exchanges. There was one qualification framework example supported by Spain and ERASMUS+ to support curriculum harmonization in Central America. NTEX included one organizational example, a 'Sustainable Economy Observatory' founded by Del Valle University and USAID. This activity could have also been labeled a functional example, which highlights the similarities between approaches cautioned by Knight (2013) in her pilot of the FOPA model.

Discussion

The findings illustrate that higher education (HE) regionalization in the Northern Triangle (NT) region of Central America is predominantly driven by external partners from the US and the European Union (EU). The investment of the latter's higher education community in the wider Latin America and Caribbean region is evident with the array of support for exchanges, meetings and agreements for future collaborative efforts that involve the EU. The support of external partners was also evident in examples from the NT-Central America, Dominican Republic and Mexico (NTCAM) category.

Knight's (2013) FOPA model helped to make sense of priorities for HE regional engagement, which largely centered on increasing student and faculty mobility, whether between NT countries, the greater Central America or with EU partners. US' role showed firm support for building capacity of HEIs in the region to support economic empowerment and security. In applying Knight's (2013) regionalization continuum from Table 1, HE engagement appeared to revolve largely around the cooperation/collaboration stage with a nudging towards more coordination. There are institutions with the greater Central America to facilitate regionalization (ACAP, AUPRICA, CSUCA and SICA), but HEIs within the NT region are still in the early stages of maximizing opportunities.

While the study offers a roadmap for creating a snapshot of HE contexts with nascent aspirations for developing a higher education area, the analysis approach limited our findings and thus, potential impact of the study. Several of the collaboration examples analyzed in this study require more in-depth investigation of context affecting the level of regional activity between HEIs within the NT region and the greater Central America. Additional time is needed to gather corresponding documents and to gather the perspective of institutional leaders, scholars and regional organizations involved creating greater connectivity between institutions. Additionally, a follow up study on the impact of the Tuning Academy projects in Central America is necessary to help piece together the puzzle of HE regionalization for the NT area. This paper is the beginning of a much needed, prolong study.

Conclusion

While Knight's (2013) model was helpful in making sense of existing and potential HE regionalization in the Northern Triangle (NT), our experience with Knight's frameworks suggest that the work is muddled by the interchangeably of terms. For example, the emphasis on student and faculty mobility among higher educations (HEIs) represented both levels of collaboration and coordination. In some cases, it may have also reflected a great deal more integration, but we needed additional data to ascertain this point. Knight (2013) does reflect on the interchangeability of terms in her framework, which is not necessarily a detriment for application, but more of a illustration of the complexity involved with understanding HE regionalization more concretely.

What we learned is that the current landscape for regionalization remains driven by a North-South dynamic, but the conditions exist for increase collaborations driven by South-South engagement. Within the NT region, additional perspective is needed to understand more accurately the challenges and opportunities for regionalization. Moreover, future studies will inform of how post-conflict, emerging societies can build HE regional areas that eventually become independent of Northern influence.

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Introduction to the Winter 2019 Special Issue
Integrating International Students in Local (Student) Communities: A Theory-to-Practice Perspective

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Over the past decade, the study of international student mobility and migration in higher education has become increasingly popular among scientists from different disciplines. As a consequence, studies from a range of different scientific fields have now covered a wide array of aspects related to the decision to go abroad, international students' experiences abroad as well as the outcomes of students' mobility experiences. This special issue particularly aims to contribute to our knowledge on the experiences of international students abroad, and more specifically their academic and social integration at the host institution and surrounding community.

Many studies indicated that when international students arrive in destination countries, they face significant challenges, such as different academic demands and cultural adjustment (e.g. Smith and Khawaja 2011; Brown and Holloway 2008; Zhou et al. 2008), language barriers (e.g. Jean-Francois 2019; Van Mol and Michielsen 2015; Poyrazli and Lopez 2007) and/or prejudices, stereotyping and discrimination (e.g. Bonazzo and Wong 2007; Jean-Francois 2019; Poyrazli and Lopez 2007; Gu, Schweisfurth, and Day 2010). These challenges, on their turn, can have an impact on international students' academic and social integration, which is of key importance, as this shows to influence their overall academic performance (Hirschy 2016; Arthur 2017). Therefore, the first main aim of this special issue is to contribute to a better empirical understanding of the academic and social integration process of international students, focusing particularly on the perspectives of different actors involved in the process such as higher education institutions and international students themselves. The papers in this special issue clearly illustrate the role different factors that can explain the integration process of international students, such as social support (the papers of Cong and Glass; Nilsson), campus climate (Cong and Glass), socialisation processes in different cultures (Wang and Moskal) or institutionalised support services (the contributions of Asada, Ballo, Mathies and Weimer; Cong and Glass; and Sin and Tavares).

Furthermore, whereas the theoretical and empirical literature on the integration of international students is expanding and becoming increasingly diverse, the translation of empirical and theoretical insights into practical implications that can be applied or implemented in daily practice is also still relatively limited. Therefore, the second main contribution of this special issue is its intention to bridge the gap that often exist between theory and practice, in order to provide practical recommendations to practitioners to enhance international students' integration, based on theoretical and empirical insights from a range of studies conducted in different contexts. This approach frames within a more general argument to translate social research into social practice, as practitioners are often unaware of useful academic knowledge (Zetterberg 2018), and scholars often do not truly elaborate on the potential implications of their findings for daily practice, despite the potential their findings might have in this regard. Therefore, besides the academic contribution, this special issue also aims to make a practical contribution, contributing to the development of strategies that have the potential to improve the social and academic integration of international students, based on a solid empirical and/or theoretical understanding of the processes at play.

The papers in this special issue

The paper of Ballo, Mathies and Weimer starts from a theoretical inquiry, and investigates how student development theories can help us to better understand the academic and social integration of students. They particularly point to the need of tailored student services that may help to support their integration process. This is particularly important as international students are often considered to be a homogeneous group, and as such they are generally treated in a similar way, despite the heterogeneity of profiles that exist within this group. Their analysis thus indicates not all international students have the same needs.

The role of international student services in international students' academic and social adjustment is also explored by Cong and Glass, but now from an empirical viewpoint. Their quantitative analysis of a sample of international students in the United States covers both traditional predictors of adjustment (language proficiency, social support and campus climate) as well as institutionalised support services (educational service augmenters), and illustrates their complementarity. Similarly to the argument of Ballo et al., they also indicate the need to provide a broad range of services to international students for enhancing their academic and social integration. Finally, they underline the important role friendships with local students play in international students' adjustment process.

This role of social support has also been documented by other authors, indicating its significant association with international students' psychological adjustment (Bender et al. 2019) and experiences of integration in the destination country, as they can often provide students with the necessary links to the local (student) community which consequently may enhance social integration processes (Van Mol and Michielsen 2015). The literature thereby clearly indicates places of interaction also matter: when international students, for example, live segregated from the local population, there will generally be little interaction (Jean-Francois 2019; Van Mol and Michielsen 2015). The paper of Per Nilsson also addresses the role of social support in supporting students' integration. Interestingly, Nilsson's paper focuses on the role of buddy programmes in students' integration, blending the boundaries between social support outside academic studies documented elsewhere and institutionalised support as reported for example in the paper of Ballo et al. His analysis indicates the clear potential of buddy programmes for providing social support to international students. However, it also reveals the flipside of the coin, namely that international students' social circles become limited to individuals involved in the buddy programme, and as such integration with the local student community might only partially be achieved.

The role of institutions and programs in international students' integration is also explored in Asada's paper on American students in Japan between the 1960s and 2010s. Her findings illustrate the importance of program components such as curricular design and on-site administrative staff providing support. Furthermore, her analysis clearly indicates the diversity of the international student body, which leads to different experiences in the host country.

The paper of Wang and Moskal dives deeper into the classroom dynamics in classrooms consisting of international and national students. Their qualitative study indicates that the tension between international and national students' experiences, expectations and perceptions in the classroom can often be related to socialisation processes in different cultures. As such, and in line with studies in other contexts (Song and McCarthy 2018; Arthur 2017), their study indicates the need to take these cultural differences into account, as it takes time for students to get acquainted with the – often subtle – differences between academic cultures. As they indicate, this adaptation process should be an interactive and mutually inclusive process which appreciates classroom diversity. Therefore, their paper points to the crucial role teachers play in the integration process of international students (Arthur 2017), as it is rarely sufficient to just bring students together to foster meaningful interactions (Leask and Carroll 2011, cited in Arthur, 2017).

Whereas the previous papers particularly focused on the perspective of students' themselves, finally the paper of Sin and Tavares also adopts an institutional perspective, focusing on the perspective of top and middle managers in higher education institutions. Their findings clearly illustrate the need to articulate clear strategies to support

international students in countries where the diversification/internationalisation of the higher education student population is relatively new, strategies that need to be adequately implemented and monitored.

In conclusion, the papers in this special issue together illustrate the heterogeneity of the international student population as well as the need to consider the different actors involved in the integration process when designing interventions, namely international and national students, stakeholders (e.g. student associations and organizations) and higher education institutions (both faculty members as well as individuals working in support services). International students' academic and social integration clearly cannot be achieved fully without offering them specialised and differentiated services. These services should go beyond a one-size-fits-all approach, meaning there is a shared responsibility of the different actors mentioned above in the academic and social integration process. This also means an investment from the part of the host institution is needed: although there often is a dominant focus on investment in the attraction of international students, increasing the numbers of incoming international students because of the financial revenue they generate (see e.g. Universities UK 2017), there should also be attention for training of local students and teaching staff in order to foster cross-cultural competences and a sensitivity to diversity, as well as for the development of specialised services that can support the integration process of international students.

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Applying Student Development Theories: Enhancing International Student Academic Success and Integration

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Introduction

The student body in many higher education institutions (HEIs) has become more international, although student services are often offered in a generic one-size fits all approach (Manning, Kinzie, and Schuh 2014). However, international students represent a heterogeneous community (Jones 2017; O'Conner 2018) who often lack the local social and cultural capital domestic students embody (particularly language skills). Jones (2017) argues that HEIs should not differentiate between domestic and international students in assessing needs and services provided, but this is problematic as international students have specific needs and require targeted services, in addition to the ones provided to domestic students (Marginson 2010). Traditionally, student services served as a key indicator of student satisfaction and influenced the mobility of international students' choices regarding study programme, HEI, and country of study (van der Beek and van Aart 2014). However, recent research shows that student services are becoming less important in these regards (Amigan and Jones 2018). Most services offered to international students relate to the student academic experience. As Perez-Encinas and Rodriguez-Pomeda (2018) demonstrate with European exchange students, academic services are not enough; services related to the student living experiences (e.g. accommodations, cultural and social activities, etc.) and comfort (e.g. student employment/living expenses, security, etc.) are also needed to improve the international student experience.

In this paper we focus on Student Development Theories (SDT) as a way to increase our understanding of how to improve international students' academic success and integration. SDT has long been the theoretical foundation for student services in North America. While there are frameworks in other parts of the world (e.g. students as partners) containing similar elements, we contend SDT is substantially different because as a theoretical framework it acknowledges how students develop holistically, as well as what factors and environmental conditions can facilitate their development (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, and Renn 2010). While debates occur over how theory can translate into practice, there is a common understanding among practitioners that SDT provides at minimum "guiding concepts" to explicitly direct the development of student services (Reason and Kimball 2012, p. 360). We argue using SDT as a framework can provide a developmental and holistic approach to international student services. More specifically, we present models viewing student development from the multiple domains, all of which tailor programmes designed for student *success*, and *social and academic integration*.

A student's integration is a multi-dimensional concept involving social, economic, political and cultural considerations, and it is difficult to measure and evaluate (Rytter 2018). Strange (2010) argues social and academic integration represents the extent to which a student is satisfied with the campus' social and cultural environment, and attainment of personal educational objectives or acquisition of desired skills and competences. It has been suggested students' social and academic integration influences subsequent commitment to the HEI and degree completion (Hirschy 2016). Specifically, the formal and informal interactions between international students and HEI community

members (domestic students and academic staff) on academic issues, language support, social activities, and career guidance promote higher levels of integration into a host country (Kelo, Rogers, and Rumbley 2010; Hirschy 2016).

We focus both on credit and degree mobile students in this paper. While there are differences between both groups, there are also a number of commonalities (King, Findlay, and Ahrens 2010), including their need for services (academic, living, and comfort/security) while they study abroad. After all, all international students need the support, information, and activities these services provide. For example, many HEIs focus on degree-mobile students rather than credit-mobile students with their career or guidance services; degree-mobile students are considered "their" students while credit-mobile students are more likely to be considered "visitors". However, if an HEI accepts an international student, regardless if they are degree-or credit-mobile, they have a duty and responsibility to educate and support that student, including the provision of services supporting students to meet their career goals.

Overview of Student Development Theory

The literature on SDT provides explanations of student development and assists in understanding the process and substance of students' experiences intersecting with various aspects of an HEI's environment, student services and organizational structures (Schuh, Jones, and Torres 2016). SDTs provide lenses through which to view, understand and support students' development occurring while they are in higher education (Jones and Abes 2016). Psychosocial and cognitive-structural theories are considered fundamental to understand student development, though new "theoretical frameworks" have emerged interpreting the interaction of the student development process, content and context in higher education (Jones and Abes 2016). For example, environmental theories, acknowledge the importance of campus environment for shaping students' experience, learning outcomes and development in post-secondary education (Astin 1984; Museus 2014) while the more recent holistic perspective (Baxter Magolda 2009) brings together cognitive, interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions to understand how students achieve self-authorship to meet life's challenges and be successful in adult life.

Focusing in on Three Models of Student Development

A number of models of student development derive from the foundational SDTs and "new approaches" offering useful frameworks for practical applications. Due to the space limitations, we focus on three models that in our view could have significant influence on international student success and integration.

First, the Learning Partnerships Model (LPM) emerged from a longitudinal study of adult development examining self-authorship and learning in different contexts, including multiple student populations, educational contexts, and curricular and co-curricular activities (Baxter Magolda 2004). According to Baxter Magolda (2001, p. xvi), self-authorship is "the capacity to internally define own beliefs, identity and relationships". The journey toward self-authorship begins with students trusting external authorities for knowing the world and themselves (Baxter Magolda 2001). Dissonance with external authorities brings them to a crossroad where they are challenged to rely on their internal sense of self rather than following others' visions and expectations (Baxter Magolda 2001). By listening and cultivating their internal voice, they build an internal belief system and shift toward self-authorship (Baxter Magolda 2001). Identifying conditions that promote self-authorship, the LPM model assumes that learners´ self-authorship journey is challenged by three principles: validating capacity of learners as knowledge constructors, situating learning in learners' experiences, and defining learning as mutually constructing meaning (Baxter Magolda 2004). These three principles are key in creating intentional learning partnerships encouraging students to bring their own experiences into the classroom, exchange their ideas with peers and teachers and participate in social knowledge construction (Baxter Magolda 2004). In short, students feel supported when their thoughts and feelings are respected, and when they are encouraged to handle their experiences and solve problems in a collaborative environment (Baxter Magolda 2004).

Second, Samuel Museus's (2014) Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) model accounts for the climate, culture, and organizational elements of a HEI. This in turn explains and helps the understanding of the impact of institutional environments on the outcomes of diverse student populations. The CECE model emphasises the role and the responsibility of HEIs in constructing environments that shape students' experiences and success (Museus 2014). The central points of this model, derived from a longitudinal qualitative study, are indicators of *cultural relevance* (cultural familiarity, cultural knowledge, community services, cross-cultural engagement, cultural validation) and *cultural responsiveness* (collectivist orientations, humanized environments, proactive philosophies and holistic support) that engage students' multiracial cultural backgrounds and identities, reflect their diverse needs, and facilitates their success in higher education (Museus 2014). These indicators mainly focus on the extent to which campus learning and support systems respond to the cultural norms and needs of culturally diverse students (Museus and Smith 2016). The CECE model suggests that when students have opportunities to connect with staff and peers, it permits them to share common backgrounds (Museus 2014). Maintaining connections based on culture origins and active participation in activities and projects relevant to their cultural communities allows for meaningful cross-cultural interactions which validates their cultural identities and leads them to succeed in higher education (Museus 2014; Museus and Smith 2016). The CECE model also acknowledges that different external factors such as finances, employment and family support influence student experiences and shapes their success in higher education (Museus 2014).

The third model is the "transitions" model originating from Schlossberg, Waters and Goodman's *transition theory* (1995). It is an "eclectic theory looking at context, development and life span" and is a useful framework explaining adult behaviours when coping with life situations, events and change. It defines a transition as "any event or non-event that results in change of relationships, routines, assumption and roles" (Schlossberg, Waters, and Goodman 1995, p. 27). However, Goodman, Schlossberg, and Anderson (2006) argue that any transition (event or non-event) needs defining by the person experiencing it and results in a change of person's behaviour. The model has three major components. *Approaching a transition* identifies the change and the degree to which it is causing changing reactions in persons' life over time. The *taking stock* introduces the four S's: situation, self, support and strategies that provide ways to identify potential resources for someone to cope with transitions. *Taking charge* occurs when new strategies are utilised to deal with different phases of the transition. This model helps explain how individuals react differently to life transitions (Schlossberg, Waters, and Goodman 1995). Students moving into a new situation need to become familiar with rules and expectations of the educational environment and feel supported and challenged during their journey in order to move into the next phase of the transition (Anderson, Goodman, and Schlossberg 2012). These models considering different aspects of holistic student development such as, preparing to become successful adults in life, the importance of culturally diverse campus environments in shaping their experience, and understanding how development occurs during transitions are useful frameworks to consider when designing services needed in each phase of their higher education journey.

Discussion

Perez-Encinas and Rodriquez-Pomeda (2018) group international student services into four stages of international students' life cycle (pre-arrival, arrival, during stay, and re-integration [in their home country or in a third country] after their stay abroad) and is valuable in discussing the intersections between SDT and International Student Mobility and Migration (ISM). ISM is conceptualised as a dynamic process where an individual student's agency is simultaneously constrained and enabled by external factors such as governmental or institutional policy, family considerations and labour market opportunities (Mosneaga and Winther, 2013; Van Mol 2014). In particular, governmental and HEI policy shape international students' motivations to move across borders for education

(Raghuram 2013). Riaño, Van Mol, and Raghuram (2018) argue there are five distinct types (economic agents, sources of income for higher education, temporary subjects, immigrates of doubtful value, and part of soft power) of policy discourses within ISM; each influencing ISM differently. While most ISM-policy discussions are focused at governmental or national level (Raghuram, 2013; Riaño, Van Mol, and Raghuram 2018), discussions on HEI or local ISM-policy are important as these policies are particularly impactful on international students' lived day-to-day experiences and integration to the local host academic and social communities (O'Connor 2018).

In the pre-arrival stage, the primary focus of services is on academic (e.g. application and programme) and environmental (e.g. where to live, visa/entry requirements, etc.) information for students. In this stage, international students transition to the idea of living and studying abroad seeking information to make informed decisions. Schlossberg, Waters, and Goodman (1995) "transition" model suggests practitioners should support this by providing as much personalized information and communication as needed. Pre-arrival information tailored to either a specific location and/or unique circumstances delivered in a personalized and meaningful manner increases the likelihood students will experience a successful international study period (Kelo, Rogers, and Rumbley 2010). Questions practitioners should consider include "what information is desired?" and "what information is needed?" by international students. The aim is to assist international students in understanding the context (academic programme, and location) and prepare for the transition they are about to make (Anderson, Goodman, and Schlossberg 2012).

During the arrival stage, most services focus on orientation, integration with the local community (with local students as well as integration into the locality), and providing non-academic information, for example, security, cultural and social activities, often including the locations of restaurants, libraries, and medical services. Schlossberg, Waters, and Goodman (1995) "transitions" model suggests practitioners should examine the support they provide as this is when international students begin to transition through a culture shock (Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, and Todman 2008) and its accompanying phases. Tools like a self-assessment interview guide could be used as part of the orientation activities to encourage deep reflection about students' experiences, helping them identify their interests and needs in developing their 'internal voice' (Baxter Magolda 2004), and the subsequent related services. Anderson, Goodman, and Schlossberg (2012) suggest assessment strategies could help students understand the transition(s) they are experiencing; examples include a worksheet to identify each four-S's with listings under each important aspect for the individual´s reflection and discussion. Lastly, the "transitions" model suggests that practitioners and HEIs (as organisations) need to be proactive and reach out to students repeatedly and through different mediums (emails, flyers, sponsored events, social media, etc.) during this stage; they cannot assume international students will come to them with questions and concerns.

The third stage, during students' stay, is usually the longest (in duration) and most services here focus on academic support (e.g. writing and language services), health and well-being (physical and mental), and fostering and maintaining local social networks through informal and formal activities. Museus' CECE model (2016) suggests HEIs examine how their environment shapes international students' experiences and success, as well as their sense of belonging in the HEI community by nurturing cross-cultural interactions. This approach advocates HEIs offering programs and practices that facilitate educational and meaningful opportunities for intercultural exchange, among international students as well as with domestic students. Baxter Magolda's (2001, 2004) LPM model suggests HEIs examine how their students construct relationships with peers, teachers, and within the local community. Practitioners ought to ask the question "what services exist to encourage international students to be involved in the academic *and* the local community?"

The last stage, integration and re-integration, involves two aspects. *Integration* into the host country includes the students' ability to establish a life and enter the labour market. On the other hand, *re-integration* relates to the return of students back into their host country or onto a third country post studies and preparing students for reverse culture shock if they return home. For both aspects, student services should focus on student completion and career services with a particular emphasis on employability. These services ought to offer structured opportunities for students to

engage in internship programmes, service learning or other work experience (Hamrick, Evans, and Schuh 2002). Baxter Magolda (2001) points out benefits of an internship or part time-job in developing self-authorship including opportunities to assume responsibility, encourage decision-making, and taking risks. The LPM model argues that self-authorship allows "the capacity to internally define a coherent belief system and identity that coordinates engagement in mutual relations with the larger world" (Baxter Magolda 2004, p. xxii). Additionally, Astin (1993) contends part-time work off campus is positively associated with academic performance and achievements such as completing a degree. Practitioners and professors can work together to develop programmes such as research assistantships, course projects, service-learning courses connected to specific occupations and work opportunities which enhance students' working experience and their social and academic integration.

Conclusion

In this article, we presented a first step bringing the literatures of SDT and ISM together. More work needs to be done, but as we demonstrate, SDT can potentially be a valuable tool in developing international student services that positively influence international students' success and integration. International students, regardless if they are degree or credit mobile, are heterogeneous not only in their backgrounds (academic preparation, nationality, culturally, etc.) but also in their personal development (Perez-Encinas and Rodriquez-Pomeda 2018). As such, students from similar backgrounds and/or in the same life cycle will have different student service needs.

It is worth noting some critiques of SDT models as they relate to the development of international student services. For example, SDT has been criticised for primarily focusing on North American domestic students, and often minimizes or excludes non-white and non-North American student experiences. However, research shows SDT models promote culturally engaging campus environments that are positively associated with high levels of engagement and academic performance, increased motivation and sense of belonging; ultimately, greater student success (Museus 2014). This suggests care and attention is required to ensure the interests and needs of international students are served when SDT models are used as frameworks in developing international student services.

Being intentional about designing international student services has its benefits. Drawing from STD helps to frame programmatic innovations, inform classroom teaching and develop holistic services. As HEIs continue to evolve in their internationalisation efforts, they must offer opportunities and support for international students to be academically successful and to integrate into the local community. It is clear more work is needed with SDT and international students, particularly when considering ISM's proposing students' agency can be simultaneously constrained or enabled by external factors such governmental or HEI policy. We hope this paper could serve as a starting point to further elaborate on an integration of these frameworks as we feel using SDT models in developing international student services considers the holistic development of students promoting an inclusive internationalisation effort, which likely creates a welcoming and supportive environment shaping the international students' experiences.

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Stronger Together: Educational Service Augmenters and Traditional Predictors of Adjustment for International Students in the US

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Introduction

Higher education has been classified as a marketable service by the General Agreement on Trade Services by the World Trade Organization (Russell 2005). From the perspective of education as a marketable service, international students are viewed as consumers who expect high-quality services and outcomes, and universities are viewed as businesses selling a core product: educational services (Elsharnouby 2016). Higher education marketing researchers view international students as consumers who assess the quality of the educational services – the product – before purchase and consumption – acceptance and matriculation to a university (Paswan and Ganesh 2009). As higher education is shaped by neo-liberal economics forces, universities adapt marketing, recruiting, and branding practices from the business world to position themselves in a competitive global marketplace. To influence prospective students' perceptions of educational quality, universities engage in marketing campaigns that highlight campus life, academic services, and support services, that add value to the core degree programs offered at the university (Findlay, McCollum, and Packwood 2016).

In the marketing research literature, these supplemental services are referred to as *educational service augmenters*, defined as factors "outside of the domain of the core content of education that might emerge as crucial for determining students' satisfaction" (Elsharnouby 2016, 681). In the most-cited marketing research literature, educational service augmenters are intended to capture the elements of the university (e.g., academic advising, writing support services, immigration advising, etc.) that add value to the core service (i.e., degree programme), and thereby provide a competitive edge (Pawan and Ganesh 2009). Research suggests that supplemental services, in addition to the degree programme, play a crucial role in international students' evaluation of educational quality (Garrett 2014).

The consumer-centric language of the marketing research literature focuses on the private benefits of a university education, and language, such as educational service augmentation, marks a significant departure from traditional ways of framing and assessing educational quality (Marginson 2018). The neo-liberal ideology that treats international students as consumers is acute in a context where internationalization is scrutinized as a form of privatization, in which international students are valued for the substantial revenue they generate for host universities (Cantwell 2015; Deschamps and Lee 2015). Currently, marketing and higher education research remain far apart in terms of frameworks to understand the international student experience (Pawan, Spears and Ganesh 2007). The marketing research literature tends to examine educational quality in terms of customer experience and loyalty through satisfaction surveys, consumer-to-consumer recommendations, and brand reputation (Elsharnouby 2016). The higher education research literature, in contrast, traditionally examined educational quality in terms of academic outcomes through the direct and indirect assessment of students' knowledge and skills (Glass, Gómez, and Uzura 2014).

This study addresses a gap by connecting these two disparate literatures to analyze the relative strength of educational service augmenters along with traditional predictors in the academic and social adjustment of international students. We examined the extent to which educational service augmenters and traditional predictors are

complementary, yet distinct, predictors of academic and social adjustment. Our main research question is: To what extent is there a difference in predicting international students' academic and social adjustment between students' satisfaction with educational service augmenters and traditional predictors? We focus on three service augmenters: educational support services, social support services, and campus support services, as well as three traditional predictors: language proficiency, friendships with US peers, and welcoming institutional attitude. We define adjustment as "a dynamic and interactive process that takes place between the person and the environment and is directed towards an achievement of the fit between the two" (Janjua, Malik, and Rahman 2011, 1360). A focus on both educational service augmenters and traditional predictors adds needed emphasis on the *university's responsibility* in international student adjustment.

Core and Augmented Services in Higher Education

Marketing researchers view students as consumers of educational services in the higher education market (Goralski and Tootoonchi 2015). Services in the higher education setting are classified into *core level services* and *augmented level services* (Elsharnouby 2016). The core level service of universities is education itself, including teaching quality and faculty expertise (Clemes, Ozanne, and Tram 2001). Augmented services include services such as academic support services, student support services, and campus life services (Clemes et al. 2001). In relation to the current study, studies in international student satisfaction have primarily focused on core service quality (Parahoo, Harvey, and Tamim 2013). However, augmented level services may have a strong relationship with academic and social adjustment. Parahoo et al. (2013) stated the concept of the student experience relates "not only to interactions with faculty, courses, and overall learning experiences, but also to other aspects that fall within the domain of student life such as administrative service, staff, physical characteristics of academic facilities, social environment, and advising support" (137-138).

Education Augmenters as Predictors of Adjustment

First, educational support services, such as writing centers, tutoring, and academic technology support, play a key role in the experiences of international students. Numerous studies cite the importance of academic writing support on international student satisfaction and adjustment (e.g. Curtin, Stewart, and Ostrove 2013; Trice and Yoo 2007). International students may keep problems to themselves or ask friends for advice if they consider academic support services to be inadequate. Moreover, international students often view their professors as potential sources of information and support to help them succeed academically (Curtin et al. 2013). Interaction with faculty members, in-the-classroom or during office hours, has been shown to predict students' positive educational experiences (Glass, Gesing, Hales, and Cong 2017; Kim and Sax 2009). Furthermore, "more contact between students and faculty, both inside and outside the classroom, enhances college students' development and learning outcomes" (Kim and Sax 2009, 438).

Second, social support services foster a "perception or experience that one is cared for, esteemed, and part of a mutually supportive social network" (Taylor 2011, 189). It has been shown that social support is essential when international students experience stress, particularly as it buffers against psychological distress (Glass and Westmont 2014). The number and quality of supportive relationships is strongly associated with positive adjustment (Tomkins, Brecht and Tucker 2016), and social support ensures international students succeed (Urban and Palmer 2016).

Third, campus support services offer administrative services, campus safety and security, financial aid advising, and maintenance services (Paswan, Spears, and Ganesh 2007). These basic services ensure international students are satisfied with the quality of the core product. For example, visa and immigration services ensure that all international

students' study and work legally and are essential for "maintaining the exchange relationship in the context of international student-university interaction" (Paswan and Ganesh 2009, 81).

Traditional Predictors of Adjustment

Gallagher (2013) emphasized the important role of second language proficiency in the adaptation process, in that "the ability of communicating in a second language effectively is essential to "successful interfacing with the host culture" (52). Glass et al. (2014) found a positive relationship between second language proficiency and sociocultural adaptation; and research consistently shows that fluency in the host country's language is a significant variable affecting students' academic and social adjustment (Gallagher 2013; Kang 2006). Higher levels of language proficiency result in less adjustment stress and higher overall satisfaction (Sawir et al. 2012).

Numerous studies have shown that friendships with host country peers are among the most important factors influencing the social adjustment of international students (Gareis 2012; Rienties and Nolan 2014; C. Rose-Redwood and R. Rose-Redwood 2018). Friendships with host students provide security for international students to explore an unfamiliar cultural environment (Glass et al. 2013). Research indicates that "even 'weak ties' with host country students contributed to an international student's sense of social connectedness and well-being" (Gómez et al. 2014, 11). In sum, the addition of local students to international students' personal social networks facilitates their overall adjustment (Rienties and Nolan 2014).

Finally, a welcoming institutional attitude is one of the key factors that fosters sense of belonging (Stebleton, Soria, Huesman, and Torres 2014). A welcoming institutional attitude reflects whether international students perceive their institution values the international student population, as well as whether students have friends and make as many friends as they had hoped at their college or university (Redden 2014). Research demonstrates that a welcoming institutional attitude fosters a strong sense of belonging, which provides a more secure base for international students to explore the campus and local community (Glass and Westmont 2014). A welcoming campus environment facilitates international students' acculturation, understandably often focusing on the experiences of participating in a new culture (Gomez et al. 2014).

Method

Our study is based on an online survey, the International Student Satisfaction and Adjustment Inventory (ISSAI, *n*=240), developed for the purposes of this study. Items were developed based on a review of empirical research on the measurement of international student adjustment, as well as the marketing research literature on educational service augmenters . A pilot study was conducted to ensure the face validity of the items and the reliability of the scales (α = .80 - .92). The final instrument was sent to international students studying in the US through convenience sampling: they replied to an email from NAFSA: Association of International Educators with a survey link. A survey link was also posted on social media pages affiliated with international student affairs to gather more participants from various geographical locations. Table 1 reports the gender, level of study, years in US, and country of origin of participants, as well as descriptive statistics for all variables.

Table 1: Means and standard deviations for the variables used in the analysis

Variable	**Mean**	**SD**	**Min.**	**Max.**	***N***
Educational service augmenters	4.03	.82	1.33	5.00	251
Social support service augmenters	3.62	1.02	1.00	5.00	250
Campus support service augmenters	4.02	.83	1.00	5.00	250
Academic and personal adjustment	4.11	.85	1.00	5.00	245

Social adjustment	3.70	1.02	1.00	5.00	245
Language Proficiency	4.21	.88	1.00	5.00	243
Friendships with American Peers	3.50	1.12	1.00	5.00	243
Welcoming Institutional Attitude	3.89	1.12	1.00	5.00	250
Variable	%		*Min.*	*Max.*	***N***
Gender			0	1	226
Female	48.2				105
Male	51.8				121
Level of Study			1	4	240
Undergraduate – Bachelors	37.2				89
Graduate – Masters	26.2				63
Graduate – PhD	30.8				74
Other	5.8				14
Years in the US			1	4	241
Less than 1 year	29.5				71
1-3 years	46.1				111
4-5 years	19.1				46
6 or more years	5.4				13
Country of origin			1	3	244
China	20.5				50
India	14.8				36
Other countries	64.7				158

The context of this study is a higher education service marketed to all international students who are currently enrolled in U.S higher education institutions. In 2016, the year this study was conducted, the total international student enrollment in the US had just crossed over one-million international students (Institute of International Education [IIE] 2016), and new international enrollment was at its peak prior to subsequent declines after the inauguration of President Trump. International students represent just over 5 percent of the overall enrollment at US higher education institutions, with China, India, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia as the leading places of origin.

Respondents rated their satisfaction with education service augmenters, social support augmenters, and campus support augmenters on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Educational service augmenters (α = .87) examined respondents' satisfaction with (1) the academic support provided by their program of study, (2) academic department, (3) professors, (4) university resources, (5) accessibility of professors out-of-class, and (6) support from their academic advisor to reach their goals. For example, respondents rated their satisfaction with "the academic support provided by my program of study." Social support augmenters (α = .88) examined respondents' satisfaction with the (1) social activities available for international students, (2) opportunities for international students to network, and (3) guidance provided by the university to support involvement in campus social activities. For example, respondents rated their satisfaction with "the social activities available on campus for international students." Campus support service augmenters (α = .87) examined respondents' satisfaction with the (1) campus immigration office services, (2) campus infrastructure, (3) campus environment, (4) responsiveness of services to individual students, and (5) overall service-orientation towards international students. For example, respondents rated their satisfaction with "the Campus Immigration Office services if I ever need them."

Traditional predictors included English language proficiency, friendships with US peers, and welcoming institutional attitudes towards international students. First, respondents indicated their English language proficiency as beginner, early intermediate, intermediate, early advanced, or advanced. Second, they indicated whether (1) they were satisfied with their friendship with American peers and (2) easily become friends with American peers on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (α = .87). Third, they rated the extent to which they believed their college or university values international students on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In addition, we include several control variables in our models, namely gender (male, female); level of study (bachelors, masters, doctoral, and other); years in host country (less than a year, 1-3 years, 4-5 years, 6 or more years); and country of origin (China, India, and other countries).

The final section measured academic and social adjustment. For academic adjustment respondents indicated (1) if they enjoyed their courses, (2) fit into their academic program, (3) fit in with classmates, and (4) were pleased with their decision to attend their college or university on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (α = .86). Participants responded to items such as, "I feel that I am enjoying most of my courses." For social adjustment respondents indicated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (α = .79) if they felt like they (1) belonged at their college or university, (2) had close and supportive relationships, and (3) could interact with as many people as they desired to at their college or university. Participants responded to items such as, "I feel that I belong at this college/university."

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to examine the relationship between educational service augmenters, traditional predictors of adjustment, and academic and social adjustment. Correlations between factors (.41 - .65) and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values (1.01 - 3.07) were moderate which suggest the factors are related, but distinctly defined. Hierarchical multiple regression was chosen to examine if service augmentation variables of interest explained a statistically significant amount of variance in academic and social adjustment after accounting for traditional predictors.

Results

The first hierarchical multiple regression analysis aimed to determine if international students' satisfaction with educational service augmenters is related to academic adjustment after controlling the traditional predictors (see Table 2). The regression of the three traditional predictors on academic adjustment explained 30% of the variance in international students' academic adjustment; $F(3, 237) = 34.80$, MSE = 17.57, $p < .001$. Welcoming institutional attitude ($\beta = .31$ $p < .001$), friendships with host country peers ($\beta = .24$ $p < .001$), and language proficiency ($\beta = .16$ $p = .006$) had a positive relationship with academic adjustment. The addition of service augmenters in model 2 explained 68% of the total variance in international students' academic adjustment, $F(6, 234) = 87.45$, MSE = 19.87, $p < .001$ and led to a significant change in $R^2(\Delta R^2 = .38, p < .001)$, explaining an additional 38% of variance. Educational service augmenters ($\beta = .60$, $p < .001$) and campus support service augmenters ($\beta = .21$, $p = .001$) were significantly related to academic adjustment, as well as language proficiency ($\beta = .13$, $p = .002$) and friendships with host country peers ($\beta = .12$, $p = .010$). These relationships persisted in the full model (model 3), $F(15, 225) = 36.40$, MSE = 8.14, p < .001, with none of the demographic control variables significantly related to academic adjustment.

Table 2: Predictors of international graduate students' academic adjustment, hierarchical multiple regression

	Model I	Model II	Model III
Traditional Predictors			
Language Proficiency	0.16 (.06)**	0.13 (.04)**	0.10 (.04)*
Friendships	0.24 (.05)***	0.12 (.04)**	0.13 (.04)**

Welcoming Institutional Attitude	0.31 (.05)***	0.03 (.04)	0.05 (.04)
Education Service Augmenters			
Educational Support Augmenters		0.60 (.05)***	0.61 (.05)***
Social Support Augmenters		-0.04 (.04)	-0.06 (.04)
Campus Support Augmenters		0.21 (.06)***	0.19 (.07)**
Control variables			
Years in US (ref: Less than 1 year)			
1-3 years			0.06 (.07)
4-5 years			0.01 (.09)
6 or more years			0.02 (.21)
Gender (ref: Male)			0.02 (.06)
Level of study (ref: Undergraduate)			
Masters			0.06 (.08)
PhD			-0.06 (.08)
Other			-0.02 (.14)
Country (ref: China)			
India			0.05 (.13)
Other countries			0.02 (.09)
R^2	.31***	.69***	.71***
N	240	240	240

Notes: Reported values are unstandardized coefficients with standard errors between parentheses.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The second hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine if international students' satisfaction with educational service augmenters is related to social adjustment after controlling the traditional predictors (see Table 3). A regression of the three traditional predictors on social adjustment explained 42% of the variance in international students' social adjustment; $F(3, 237) = 56.11$, MS = 34.48, $p < .001$ (model 1). Friendships with host country peers ($\beta = .56$, $p < .001$) and a welcoming institutional attitude ($\beta = .17$, $p = .004$) had a positive relationship with social adjustment. The addition of service augmenters explained 54% of the total variance in international students' social adjustment, $F(6, 234) = 45.80$, MSE = 22.42, and led to a small but significant change in $R^2(\Delta R^2 = .12, p < .001)$, explaining an additional 12% of the variance in international students' social adjustment (model 2). Educational support service augmenters ($\beta = .21$, $p < .001$) and campus support service augmenters ($\beta = .19$, $p = .010$), as well as friendships with host country peers ($\beta = .47$, $p < .001$) were significantly related to social adjustment. These relationships persisted in the full model (model 3) where control variables were added, $F(15, 225) = 19.85$, MSE = 9.46, $p < .001$. Gender had a small but significant relationship to social adjustment ($\beta = -.10$, $p = .035$); and number of years in host country also had a small but significant relationship to social adjustment for one-to-three years in host country ($\beta = 0.10$, $p = .043$) and six or more years in host country ($\beta = 0.09$, $p = .048$).

Table 3: Predictors of international graduate students' social adjustment, hierarchical multiple regression

	Model I	Model II	Model III
Traditional Predictors			
Language Proficiency	-0.07 (.06)	-0.06 (.06)	-0.07 (.06)
Friendships	0.56 (.06)***	0.47 (.05)***	0.47 (.05) ***
Welcoming Institutional Attitude	0.17 (.05)**	-0.06 (.06)	-0.02 (.06)
Education Service Augmenters			
Educational Support Augmenters		0.21 (.07)***	0.27 (.08)***
Social Support Augmenters		0.13 (.06)*	0.12 (.06)
Campus Support Augmenters		0.19 (.09)**	0.13 (.09)
Control variables			
Years in US (ref: Less than 1 year)			
1-3 years			0.10 (.10)*
4-5 years			0.04 (.13)
6 or more years			0.09 (.30)*
Gender (ref: Male)			-0.10 (.09)*
Level of study (ref: Undergraduate)			
Masters			0.10 (.12)
PhD			0.04 (.11)
Other			-0.02 (.21)
Country (ref: China)			
India			0.09 (.18)
Other countries			-0.06 (.13)
R^2	.42***	.54***	.57***
N	240	240	240

Notes: Reported values are unstandardized coefficients with standard errors between parentheses.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Discussion

This study aimed to contribute to research by bridging marketing and higher education research to understand international student adjustment (Pawan, Spears and Ganesh 2007). This focus is especially important as universities highlight how campus life, academic services, and support services add value to the core degree programs offered at the university. The results indicate the critical role of educational service augmenters, in addition to traditional predictors of adjustment in international students' adjustment. Educational service augmenters (i.e., academic advising, writing support services, immigration advising, etc.) explained an additional 38% of variance in international students'

academic adjustment; and 12% of variance in social adjustment. Rather than considering whether the traditional predictors or the educational service augmenters are better predictors of adjustment, the results indicate that they are complementary, yet distinct, predictors of academic and social adjustment. The results emphasize an organization's responsibility in international student integration into local communities and the importance of educational augmenters, especially with regard to international students' academic adjustment.

The results of this study support previous research that traditional predictors boost international students' adjustment (Hendrickson et al. 2011). They indicate that educational support augmenters and campus support augmenters are especially important for academic adjustment. As expected from previous research, among all regression analyses, friendships with US peers is most strongly correlated with adjustment (Gareis 2012), before and after adding educational service augmenters into the model, and English proficiency significantly correlates with international students' academic adjustment.

The additional amount of variance explained by educational augmenters supports previous research on the importance of faculty members for academic adjustment (Glass et al. 2017), as well as educational support services and campus support services for academic adjustment (Kim and Sax 2009). Professors engage students' interest in pursuing an academic degree and provide advice that helps students succeed (Curtin et al. 2013). Faculty, indeed, have "a critical role in designing and delivering learning opportunities. As the institutional agents who instruct, advice, and mentor students in classes and courses, academic programs, and co-curricular activities, faculty members are a dominant force in shaping students' learning experience and learning outcomes. Student engagement begins with faculty engagement" (Chen et al. 2008, 341).

This study has a number of limitations. It is important to recognize that not all international students experience university in the same way and place-based factors are essential to social and academic adjustment, e.g. city size, diversity, etc. Our convenience sample relied on a relatively small sample size, so it is difficult to make strong inferences to the overall international students population in the US. Future research could use a larger sample of international students and include place-based factors as control variables that influence academic and social adjustment, in addition to the traditional predictors and educational service augmenters used in the current study. In addition, the study focuses on the private benefits of higher education for individual international students. Further research should use case study research to explore higher education as a global public good where international students cross-border study contributes to non-excludability benefits made broadly available across populations on a global scale (Marginson 2018). Researchers used a non-probability convenience sampling strategy, so there is no way to assess sampling bias, limiting the generalizability of the results. Finally, the applicability of this research outside the US is limited due to the relatively large and extensive number of student support staff and services offered at US universities compared with how similar services are organized and staffed at universities outside the US.

Implications

The present study indicates that there are statistically significant relationships between satisfaction with educational service augmenters and international students' adjustment. We propose three recommendations for practice. First, academic departments and programs should focus on facilitating positive faculty-student relationships. The more international students are satisfied with faculty support and fit within their department and programs, the more they consider themselves well-adjusted to their university life. As academic achievement and social adjustment are higher among peer-mentored international students than among non-peer-mentored international students, higher education institutions must place more emphasis on connecting international students with US peers to facilitate intercultural friendship formation. Student service units that provide co-curricular programming are essential education service augmenters. Peer-mentoring programs, as mentioned above, are the best known of these. Such programs

provide an excellent means of enhancing intercultural connection and integration, and link to more positive attitudes of US students towards international students.

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The Buddy Programme: Integration and Social Support for International Students

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Introduction

The integration of international students is essential for the internationalization of higher education institutions (HEI). Issues of both personal and social adjustment are included in the process. For example, the U-curve (e.g. Klineberg and Hull 1979; Lysgaard 1955; Torbiorn 1982), which expresses different phases during a stay abroad such as 'honeymoon', 'culture shock', 'adjustment' and 'mastery', is one way of describing the challenges international students face abroad, mainly focusing on the individual level and life within academia. Some authors focus on the distinction between 'us' and 'them' (Furnham and Bochner 1982), while other scholars have recognized the importance of social relationships as one dimension of social capital and especially how this relates to international students' academic performance (Neri and Ville 2008). The well-being of international students has been a concern among researchers for decades (cf. Rienties and Tempelaar 2013; Rode, Arthaud-Day, Mooney, Nera, Baldwin, Bommer and Rubin 2005; Szabo, Ward and Fletcher 2016). After all, transitioning from one's home country to a university abroad is a significant life event, and students studying abroad may undergo a cultural and psychological adjustment to a new country (e.g. Brown 2009; Leask 2009; Szabo et al. 2016). However, recent research has also shown that social life outside academic studies has a strong influence on academic integration (Rienties, Beausaert, Grohnert, Niemantsverdriet and Kommers 2012; Van Mol and Michielsen 2015). As such, many types of support (e.g. language proficiency or social and cultural events outside academia) can be offered to international students to help them integrate with the surrounding society. Such support does not necessarily need to be limited to the HEIs themselves: many stakeholders are involved in the integration process, and some have argued that student integration is not only a university issue but also a community one (Marangell, Arkoudis and Baik 2018). One example of an intermediary organization in Europe that invests in international students' well-being in order to assist them in adapting during their sojourn abroad is the Erasmus Student Network (ESN). The ESN is aimed at improving international students' social lives during their time abroad, through the concept of 'students helping students' (Erasmus Student Network 2018). Participation in social activities can help address problems international students face; and, most importantly, successful social integration during their time abroad will hopefully translate into better academic performance and a comprehensive personal experience. After all, whereas a study by Rientis and Tempelaar (2013) showed that social adjustment is the primary predictor for academic success, another study (Neri and Ville 2008) shows that, for international students, social capital is not associated with improved academic performance but rather with increased well-being.

In order to work proactively with the international student community in the interest of improving the well-being of international students, different types of peer/buddy/mentor programmes are offered at many HEIs. A buddy programme by nature addresses social support, aiming at encouraging networks and friends. Brown (2009) showed that the adjustment process of a group of international students in the United Kingdom empowered them to reduce stress and offset loneliness through the development of social relationships. The international students appreciated the

friendship and bicultural bonds with domestic students, stimulating them to partake in cultural and linguistic learning (Brown 2009). Matching international students with domestic students has proven to be successful in integrating students and changing the culture on campus (Leask 2009). However, if HEIs are to increase the value of diversity on campus, there is a need for a systematic and integrated approach at the HEI itself (Leask 2009). Previous research shows that peer-support programmes can help students adjust to a new culture and to new international surroundings (Campbell 2012; Lassegard 2008). However, the lasting effects of peer programmes can be best maximized when students first arrive in a new country (Campbell 2012). Hendrickson (2018) concludes that establishing student contact with local intercultural connectors enhances the potential to connect with domestic students.

In this paper, I describe an example of a buddy programme (BP) specifically designed to integrate international students within the local student community. Such an endeavour is important in order to inform other educators/practitioners and programme managers around the globe about what works, and why it works. I thereby specifically focus on how the programme is perceived by incoming international students, to examine whether it works as a tool for integration.

The Buddy Programme (BP)

Every year Umeå University welcomes a large number of international students from around the world, and when these students arrive they generally have questions and concerns. For example, they can encounter a number of practical issues, and it is important that they feel welcome and receive help and support. Most students have a desire to experience Swedish culture and the society outside the university campus, and to meet Swedish families. The BP, having developed over time after receiving feedback from previous international students, can help facilitate such needs.

When the programme started in 1999 little more than a hundred students participated, while today it accommodates more than 1,000 students each year. When it started it was exclusive to exchange students, but it has been widened to include all international students coming to Umeå University, including exchange students, fee-paying students (outside the EU/EEA), and students with EU citizenship. International students come from all over the world, meaning not only that they have different cultural backgrounds but also that they arrive with different expectations; this also needs to be reflected in activities within the programme, for example activities without alcohol. This cultural variation thus places great demands on the choice of activities to be organized.

A student coordinator, responsible for the programme's management and administration, is recruited among the domestic students with the requirement that they have international experience as well as previous experience of the BP. The coordinator receives a one-year employment contract from the International Office, enabling him or her to work full-time for one academic year. After this, a new student is recruited for the position. The experience has been that the programme is best managed by an energetic person of the same age as the international students, with support from senior staff at the International Office.

The programme has 16-18 buddy groups, with a group containing approximately 30 international students and six to eight domestic students. The BP consists of two parts: the individual programmes in each group, and a common part in which activities for all students are arranged by the student coordinator. The student coordinator manages the operation of the larger joint activities, while the operations within each buddy group are managed by its group leader. The student coordinator provides tips and recommendations to the groups for activities, based on observations of which activities have worked well in previous years and those that may be useful for the purpose of the programme. Examples of activities include berry picking, celebrating "cinnamon bun day" by baking, a Swedish dinner, an international dinner, excursions, and "fika" (coffee breaks, of great importance to Swedes). Buddy groups are responsible for their own costs in connection with their activities. Since some activities are very popular, equipment has been purchased centrally, and can be borrowed by the groups when necessary. The programme is divided into an

autumn and a spring term. As new students arrive each semester, the vast majority of those who are exchange students will be studying for one semester. Therefore, there are new group constellations every semester. It should be noted that students who stay longer tend to not be as much in need of social support during their second semester. The new students who arrive during the spring semester will feel just as welcome as their predecessors. The programme strives for equivalence in activities and opportunities between the two semesters.

Prior to the beginning of each semester, group leaders and domestic students participating in the programme receive training. This training is vital for ensuring that all group leaders and Swedish students are acquainted with the programme's purpose, expectations, and needs.

The common part of the programme is shared with all enrolled students. These activities should be seen as a complement to the buddy groups, as some activities are more suitable for larger groups and some require too much planning to be organized by an individual buddy group. This also offers an opportunity to get to know more students outside one's own group. Additionally, these activities are important for ensuring the programme's quality, as the quality of the individual buddy groups may vary slightly.

Method and data

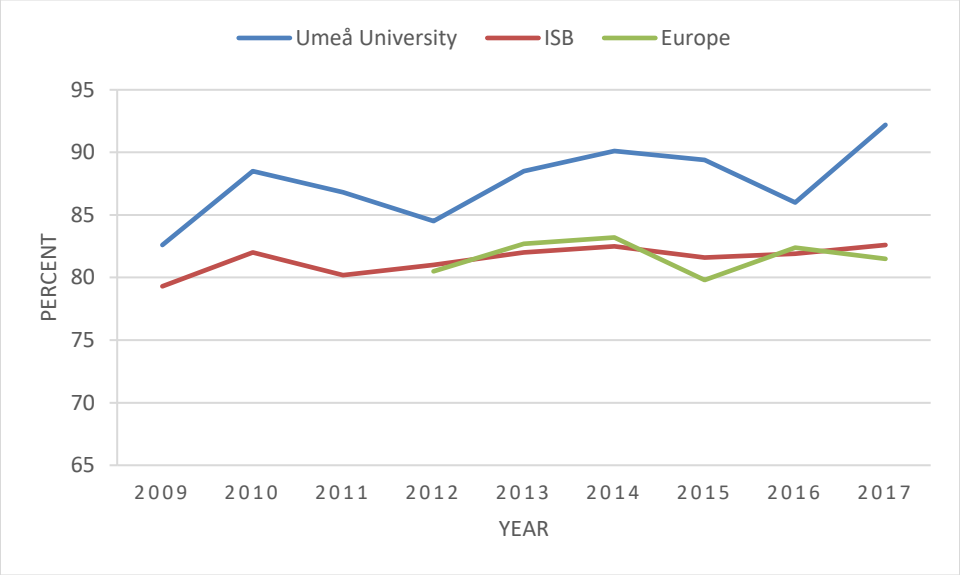
Since 2009 international students have been systematically monitored at Umeå University through the International Student Barometer (ISB), collected through the International Insight Group (i-graduate). From 2009 to today, between 120 and 208 Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in approximately twenty countries, about half of them European countries, have participated in the survey each year, with approximately 150,000 students responding annually. The overall average response rate is about 30%, while for Umeå University the response rate has been closer to 40%. The survey is directed at international students at the participating HEIs. All international students are asked to complete a survey in November. Umeå University purchased the survey for the period 2009-2017.

The survey was conducted in English and covered topics such as application, arrival, learning, and living support. For this article, three survey questions were considered relevant: 'institution clubs/societies', 'making friends from this country', and 'the social activities (organized events)'. For this study the author received aggregate data from the Umeå survey, as well as the benchmarking scores of the whole survey (ISB) and for Europe specifically. Importantly, one of the major limitations of this study is that no micro-level data were available, limiting the results to a descriptive analysis of international students' integration at Umeå University. Nevertheless, such descriptive data is also very informative, as it provides information on international students' integration over a timespan of eight years, As such, the presented descriptive results are relevant for advancing our understanding of how students perceive the Buddy Programme and the added value of such programmes.

Results

Organized events such as social activities have been a cornerstone of the BP, and when Umeå University participated in the ISB survey for the first time the programme had been running for ten years. As can be observed in figure 1, the international students at Umeå University showed good satisfaction with the social activities offered. Benchmarked with the total ISB and Europe, international students at Umeå University were very satisfied during the surveyed period and top-ranked (places 2-7) in six of the nine surveys. Figure 1 also indicates a progression in satisfaction among students at Umeå University, interpreted as a steady course forward in regard to being able to adjust the BP's content and improve its quality.

Figure 1. Students' self-reported satisfaction with organized social events (%)

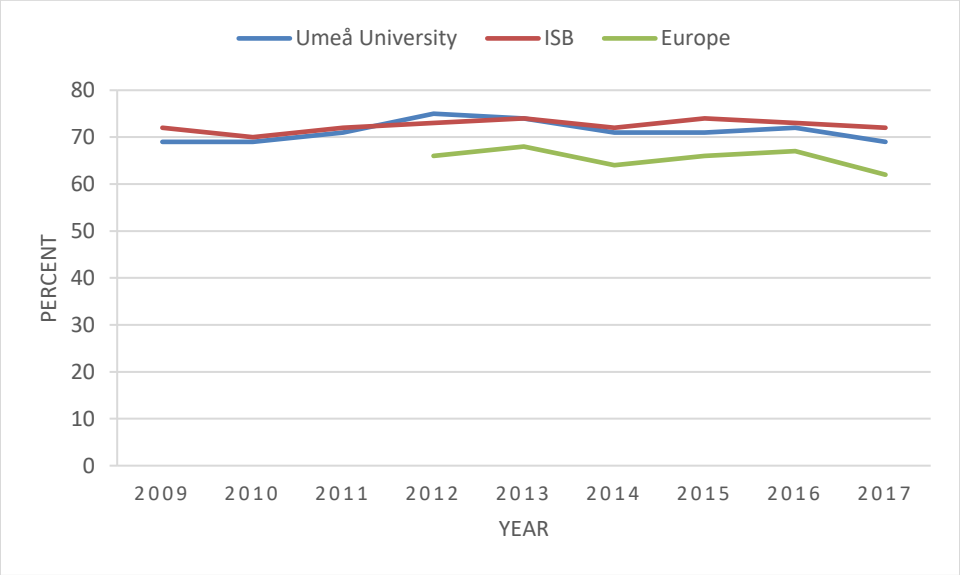


Source: i-graduate.

Notes: For the 2010 and 2011 surveys, Europe was not benchmarked. Levels of satisfaction were rated on a six-grade ordinal scale (from 1 = very dissatisfied to 6 = very satisfied), with higher scores indicating higher levels of life satisfaction, and the scale was dichotomized into either satisfied (5–6) or dissatisfied (1–4).

Making friends from the country where one is studying is an indicator of how well an international student is integrated with the student community and society (Brown 2009; Campbell 2012; Hendrickson 2018; William and Johnson 2010). This has been one of the purposes of the BP at Umeå University. However, with regard to making friends from the host country Figure 2 show a stable pattern, but overall the students are quite satisfied. Learning from other cultures and making friends from the host country are perceived as positive among international students (Brown 2009; Campbell 2012; Hendrickson 2018; William and Johnson 2010). Umeå University fared slightly better compared to the scores from HEIs in Europe, and about equally when benchmarked with the total ISB.

Figure 2. Students' self-reported satisfaction with making friends from the host country during the period abroad (%)

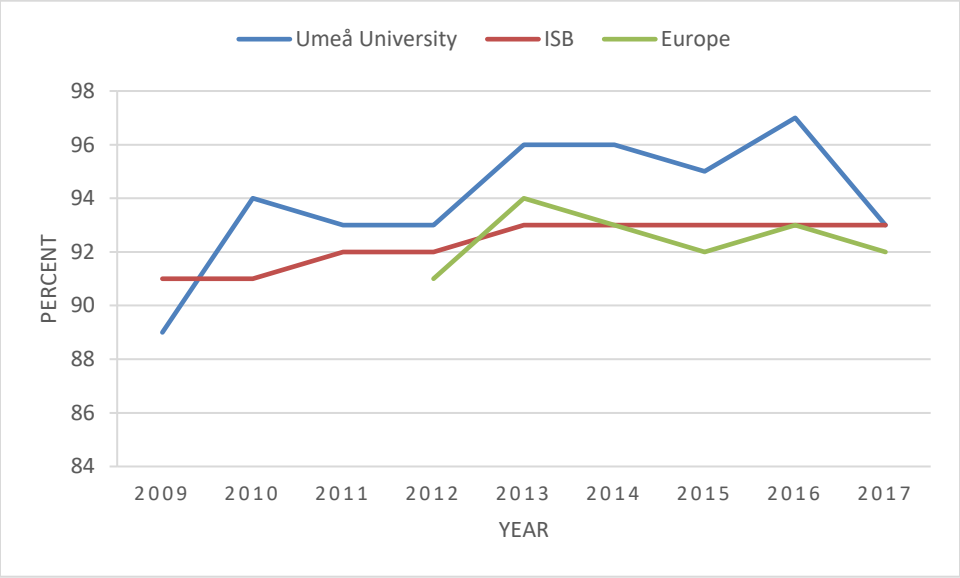


Source: i-graduate.

Notes: For the 2010 and 2011 surveys, Europe was not benchmarked. Levels of satisfaction were rated on a six-grade ordinal scale (from 1 = very dissatisfied to 6 = very satisfied), with higher scores indicating higher levels of life satisfaction, and the scale was dichotomized into either satisfied (5–6) or dissatisfied (1–4).

Belongingness is an important construct for academic success (Hausmann, Schofield and Woods 2007), and institution clubs and societies are expressions of such needs. International students want to interact with peers and to have the chance to connect with Swedes and make new friends from the host country during their stay abroad. This often serves to inspire them to get involved in the business of clubs and societies, and motivates them during their studies abroad. Figure 3 shows that international students overall are satisfied with what they get out of activities through clubs and societies at Umeå University, and the impression is that this is an appreciated part of the experience of studying abroad. Over the surveyed period, with the exception of 2009, Umeå University students are more satisfied compared to the total ISB and Europe. One important explanation for this might be the BP, as the programme has served as a door-opener to the student community.

Figure 3. Students' self-reported satisfaction with institution clubs and societies (%)



Source: i-graduate.

Notes: For the 2010 and 2011 surveys, Europe was not benchmarked. Levels of satisfaction were rated on a six-grade ordinal scale (from 1 = very dissatisfied to 6 = very satisfied), with higher scores indicating higher levels of life satisfaction, and the scale was dichotomized into either satisfied (5–6) or dissatisfied (1–4).

Finally, the ISB survey also contains a section for open comments. This is an opportunity for students to provide more specific information about their experiences at Umeå University. As Table 1 shows, the qualitative data suggest that students mainly touch upon issues such as cultural awareness, cultural adaptability, and cross-cultural communication skills. However, personal outcomes such as maturity and increased confidence have also been a major learning experience for these students.

Table 1. Selected open comments in the ISB survey

	Feedback from students
Nationality not known, 2016	"I have to say that the social [programmes] [at] Umeå university, such as the BP, amazing! It gives the chance to know not only Swedish culture, but other cultures as well."

Student from Rumania, 2016	"the BP is one of the best way[s] to feel integrated in the social life of Umeå and to make friends from other countries and Sweden."
Student from Germany, 2015	"As [an] exchange student you maybe want to experience typical Swedish life. This is well organized by the international office and through the buddy programme but nevertheless there is not really an integration with the Swedish students."
Student from Ireland, 2013	"the BP and general banter with the international students and those Swedish students who are involved in that banter is just fantastic."
Student from China, 2016	"In here I will find a fantastic buddy group. It is very useful when you study abroad or want to have more friends and know the culture."
Student from Finland, 2016	"Umeå University has helped me to learn about Swedish culture as well as to meet new people through the BP."
Student from Turkey, 2016	"I think the BP is working quite well, alongside the other events made for the international students which helped us get together and meet other people in quite an 'easy-going' environment."
Nationality not known, 2016	"The university has provided some great opportunities for making new friends and social connections through the BP and having the opportunity to meet an array of people from literally everywhere around the world has been amazing."
Nationality not known, 2012	"The buddy groups have been a great opportunity [though] I didn't have time to use it so much."
Student from Germany, 2012	"The BP is an excellent idea and I don't think that there are many other universities where there are so many people caring for international students!"
Nationality not known, 2012	"The BP has helped me to make many friends and join in numerous social events."
Nationality not known, 2013	"All the activities and means to make friends from Sweden or other countries are [offered to] undergraduate students. The BP is an example, as all of the members of the buddy group are students in their late teens or very early 20s. As a [Master's] student, my social interests are not fulfilled when meeting only undergrad students, because they will unfortunately not be contacts for the nearest future. It would be better if the social programmes [had] extra activities dedicated only to [Master's] students."

Source: i-graduate.

Discussion

As students leave to study abroad, they have certain expectations in terms of academic and personal exploration, and it is an anticipated transition. Personal and student characteristics affect how an individual views life during a sojourn abroad. An important expectation seems to involve connecting with peers from other countries and learning more about another culture (Nilsson 2015). Students have their individual strategies for obtaining such objectives. At Umeå University, the BP plays an important role in enhancing such contacts and learning. When they sign up for the BP, students get access to social support, intimate relationships, and networks of friends.

As the findings showed, a well-organized BP can provide international students with a great deal of social activities that they are happy with. However, there is also a flipside to this. With a well-developed BP, some international students tend to stay with the programme and thereby miss opportunities to mix with national students outside the BP. The results of our study indicate that Umeå University has been more successful with social activities than with opening the doors to integrating with national students. However, addressing the students' well-being in

relation to making friends from the host country has proven to be difficult for most HEIs as the ISB scores shows for when international students are surveyed.

An awareness of the international students' well-being is a great asset of the BP. The buddy groups serve an important function, in the sense that they represent a very large part of the international student population. For the future, it seems pertinent for the HEI to collaborate with the surrounding society to increase students' well-being and help international students integrate and contribute to society. However, it should be stressed that the mission of HEIs is to address measures that can enhance academic adjustment and outcomes, for instance focusing on the retention and academic achievements of international students during their sojourn abroad.

Another challenge is to maintain good quality within the programme as the number of international students is on the rise, especially since the programme is aimed at including all international students who want to participate. Setting a ceiling for the number of participants in the BP is not an option; a BP that excludes students will result in students feeling left out instead of included. The long-term quality of the programme is dependent on a systematic approach, addressing feedback from group leaders and students. This has also been recognized by Betty Leaks (2009).

Finally, it is important to recognize that those who have taken a positive view of international student mobility and connectivity with different student groups on campus in order to build up increased global understanding are now challenged by those who feel that what they see as eroding national cultural identities are leading to cultural homogenization (Knight 2012). This will make it even more important to increase efforts on campus to include students from different countries. This will of course be a major challenge for the BP in integrating international students with students from the host country.

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Possibilities and Constraints of Fostering Deeper Study Abroad Experiences: The Lived Experiences of 50 Years of US Students in Japan

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Introduction

The number of US students studying abroad has more than doubled since the turn of the twenty-first century, from 154,168 in 2000–2001 to 332,727 in 2016–2017 (Institute of International Education 2010, 2018). This exponential increase reflects the growing recognition by higher education institutions and the federal government on the importance of providing international experiences to cultivate skills for a global competitive economy (Whatley 2018). In the US, study abroad is often used to refer to credit-seeking international mobile students enrolled in a higher education institution outside of the US. Credits earned abroad are usually used towards their academic degree at their home institution. Duration varies in length and includes short-term study abroad (typically eight weeks or less), mid-length study abroad (one semester or one or two quarters), and long-term study abroad (academic or calendar year). As the overall percentage of US students studying abroad in Europe declined from 62.9% in 2001–02 to 54.4% in 2016–17, the percentage going to Asia increased from 6.8% to 11.6%. Despite the prominence of China as a destination country for American students from the late 1990s onwards and the emerging popularity of South Korea in recent years, Japan's relevance as a leading historic destination remains, as its numbers more than doubled from 3,168 in 2001–2002 to 7,145 in 2016–2017.

With the rise of US students studying abroad, it is important to understand the mechanisms of how study abroad experiences can create opportunities to integrate into the host society and develop intercultural understanding. This paper examines how the design of a study abroad program and historical organizational changes may assist or hinder integration into the host society, based on 25 qualitative in-depth interviews with one-year and one-semester participants from the 1960s to 2010s on a select US study abroad program in Japan.

Examining Study Abroad Impacts, Integration, and Program Design

Studying abroad is expected to contribute to the development of a graduate who can operate in an increasingly globalized interdependent world while navigating new opportunities and challenges (Asada 2019; Murphy et al. 2014). For example, the Institute for the International Education of Students (IES) Abroad 50-Year Alumni Survey found that the study abroad experience has a long-lasting impact on academic, professional, and personal lives of participants for up to 50 years (Dwyer 2004). Moreover, longer durations of study abroad resulted in a larger impact. Meanwhile, the Study Abroad for Global Engagement (SAGE) Project found that a study abroad program that provided a deeper experience and countries with larger cultural distance influenced participants to pursue internationally-oriented advanced degrees and careers (Paige et al. 2010).

But what makes a study abroad experience influential on participants' lives? The SAGE Project indicated the "4Ds of Study Abroad" to understand how integration into the host society influences the outcomes of study abroad, namely demographics, duration, destination, and depth of program. Young (2014) proposed a working definition of integration

for the context of international higher education: "Integration is an intentional process to create community, by encouraging domestic and international students to engage with each other in ongoing interaction, characterized by mutual respect, responsibility, action, and commitment" (1).

Recent research suggests that institutions and social networks influence the integration of international students (Rienties and Tempelaar 2013). Students studying abroad often navigate new and unpredictable encounters in a landscape of new cultural and physical environments as outsiders without support from their family and social networks from their home countries (Sawir et al. 2008). They may face difficulties as they react to the new academic, social, and emotional terrains of the study abroad destination (Gebhard 2012). Research finds that international students often experience social isolation and difficulties integrating and forming relations within the host society (Page and Chahboun 2019). Jean-Francois (2019) suggested that institutional support is needed to assist international students' social and academic integration because, otherwise, individual students are left to their own determination to navigate the host society and rely on their own intercultural strategies. Spencer-Oatey and Dauber (2019) argued that integration efforts at the student level (e.g., student interaction opportunities, engagement with experimental learning, and adaptation to new academic norms), community level (e.g., student societies, social and academic events at departments, and intercultural training for staff), and institution level (e.g., anticipation of student needs, interactive social spaces creation, and support center development) are interconnected.

Building upon Young's definition of the integration of international students, this study examines academic and social integration at formal and informal levels (e.g., Severiens and Schmidt 2009; Severiens and Wolff 2008). Specifically, this holistic approach aims to understand how study abroad program design elements contribute to or hinder integration into the local student community and the wider host society. Elements may include target language competence, extent of target language used abroad, context of academic work, living arrangements, provisions for structured cultural interaction and experiential learning, and guided reflection on learning (Engle and Engle 2003).

Methodology

This study focuses on how curricular and noncurricular elements of a select study abroad program can potentially contribute to the integration into the host society from the participant's perspective. This is achieved by examining the lived experiences of US study abroad students who studied in Japan for one year or one semester from the 1960s to 2010s. While most participants tend to have at least one semester of Japanese language instruction prior to their study abroad, they represent a mix of academic disciplines including not only Japan, Asia, and international-related majors but also social sciences majors.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews aimed to provide in-depth understandings of the mechanisms of study abroad program design and its role in international students' integration into the host society during the study abroad experience. Interviews were conducted in English from March to July 2013 in the US and Japan. Twenty-five participants were selected based on a combination of purposive sampling (study abroad timeframe and participant demographics) and convenience sampling (participant availability and interview locations). Nine of the interview participants were female and 16 were male. Eighteen of the participants identified as Caucasian, five as Asian, and two as African American. Four of the participants studied abroad in the 1960s, three in the 1970s, three in the 1980s, seven in the 1990s, and eight in the 2000s. After receiving informed consent, the interviews were audio recorded and lasted between 45 to 90 minutes. Themes explored in the interviews are guided by Engle and Engle (2003) and included experiences related to living arrangements, academic experiences, social experiences, participation in the service learning program, and interactions with the study abroad program office. The verbatim transcriptions were analyzed with a grounded theory approach. In addition, negative case analysis was undertaken to understand possible difficulties in integrating into the host society.

Results

The following sections discuss the key study abroad program elements that emerged out of the interviews as being connected to participants' integration into the host society: on-site administrative staff, curricular design, noncurricular design, service learning opportunities, and unintended consequences.

On-Site Administrative Staff

The respondents identified the on-site administrative staff as a resource to ease transition into a new country and receive guidance on curricular and noncurricular matters. The on-site administrative staff consist of one program coordinator, a bilingual Japanese national who resides in Japan at the host institution, who oversees the administrative duties of the program. In addition, there is a rotating one-year resident director who is a faculty member from an American college that offers academic and intercultural guidance to students. Beverly shares how the on-site administrative staff provide guidance for experiences inside and outside of the classroom.

Do you know them [the program coordinator and resident director]? They were amazing anytime I had questions. About class registration, host family problems, I'd stop by the office and get some advice. (Beverly, 1960s Participant)

In light of growing student needs in the twenty-first century, a part-time program assistant was added to the staff to provide administrative support to the office and daily life guidance for the students. The findings suggest that the structure of the study abroad program and its on-site administrative staff play an essential role in the participants' study abroad experience through providing guidance and support to participants to regularly engage, process, and reflect on their lived learning experiences (Enns 2016).

The Connection of Curricular Design to Deeper Integration into Japanese Society

Interviewed respondents reported that the curricular design of intensive Japanese language classes complemented by English-based academic coursework about Japan allowed them to develop the skills and knowledge to integrate into the host country. The curricular experience provided a foundation to connect with host nationals in noncurricular activities, such as living with a host family, joining student clubs, and participating in a service learning program. Through these activities, they felt a deeper connection to the host society and culture. Jason explains the connection between his classroom experience and his lived experiences outside of the classroom as follows:

The Japanese classes were really good. Since I did like extracurricular stuff and like joined an orchestra and had to interact with Japanese students a lot, my Japanese got a lot better. And on the service learning program, too. So there were a lot of things that weren't part of the coursework that were part of the program that did help. (Jason, 2000s Participant)

Organizational changes at the host institution also influenced respondents' opportunities for integrating with the local student community in classroom experiences. From the 1960s to early 2000s, limited opportunities existed for participants to interact with Japanese students in class. Participants were associated with an island program at the host institution, which provided academic coursework in English to non-degree seeking international students from around the world. Harold, who studied abroad in the 1960s, comments that "there were no Japanese students in our classes." The 1960s was also a turbulent time that witnessed student movements across Japanese universities (see Krauss 1988). Patricia, a participant in the late 1960s, shares that classes were temporarily moved to a location further from campus because of student protests: "Even away from the campus, we could hear the protesters shouting as we were learning

Japanese. It was quite surreal." Later, Alexander, a participant in the 1990s, explains, "there might be one or two Japanese students that just returned from studying abroad in a class. But, it was hard to really talk since they were always rushing to their next class across campus."

In the mid-2000s, the island program evolved into a full-fledged degree-granting undergraduate school. Accordingly, more opportunities arose in the classroom to form personal connections with host nationals. Steven provides examples of how the increase in Japanese students resulted in closer social networks due to class assignments and naturally occurring conversations.

I made a number of Japanese friends in classes. Sometimes we'd be doing an assigned group project and then just end up hanging out sometimes. Or, like, I'd just randomly strike up a conversation with the person sitting next to me before the bell rang. One good Japanese friend I made that way. We started to talk and found out we both liked the same things. (Steven, 2000s Participant)

Noncurricular Design as a Door into the Host Society

Of the 25 interview respondents, 23 respondents emphasized forming close relationships with host nationals through noncurricular experiences while studying abroad, primarily through living with a host family and participating in student clubs. Social networks may be formed both prior and during study abroad experiences (Van Mol and Michielsen 2015). The findings of this study suggest the formation of social networks primarily occurs during the study abroad experience. The study abroad program generally requires participants to live with host families. Host families were identified by all participants as a central study abroad element that contributed to their development and renewed commitment to Japanese language, society, and culture. Stephanie highlights below the role of being a member of her host family, rather than just a guest, in opening the door into Japanese society, culture, and language.

[My home stay experience] was the biggest thing… I mean I took away, you know, the language skills and learning about culture and things like that, but yeah, it was like I'd have not just my host family, but my host mom's sisters and my host mom's parents and like it was—I had a whole family, a whole network. (Stephanie, 2000s Participant)

Student clubs are also central to integrating with the local student community in Japan. For local and international students alike, student clubs provide a space to form social networks. About half of the program participants join a student club (Asada 2020). Student clubs provided an informal space to better understand and be a part of Japanese society. Eugene (1980s Participant) shared how being a student club member allowed him to partake in typical student life primarily in Japanese and form close relationships with host nationals. As Brandon explains below, student clubs allowed a first-hand opportunity to be a part of Japanese society and its hierarchy system.

Compared to the US, my student club was a very different experience. It was very structured. A lot of hierarchy within the club. You know, you have like your *senpai* [senior], your *kohai* [junior] and that was sort of my first interaction with that hierarchy in Japan was through that club. (Brandon, 2000s Participant)

However, participants experienced challenges in joining student clubs. The interview respondents' arrival in September rather than the standard student club member recruitment period at the beginning of the Japanese academic calendar in April made it difficult to join clubs. Moreover, the sheer number of student clubs (around 600 in 2017) and club guidebooks offered predominately in Japanese presented additional hurdles. On-site program staff provided guidance to those unable to navigate Japanese fluently. Alisa's (1990s Participant) hope to join a student club was met with obstacles to find an appropriate fit. One of her motivations for joining a student club was to improve her Japanese language ability. However, she comments that "some international students couldn't really speak Japanese, so everyone was using English." Moreover, Alisa, echoed by others, found the prominent alcohol culture off-putting. This

culture stems from the prevalence among Japanese university students to use a *nomihodai* (all you can drink) system, a fixed price (generally around ¥3,000) to drink unlimited alcohol drinks for two to three hours (Kawaida et al. 2018). In student club activities, it is normal to participate in *nomihodai* dinners after club activities.

The ease of joining student clubs have increased over time. Interview respondents from the 1960s to 1980s viewed student clubs as generally unwilling to accept international students and having greater barriers to joining student clubs. However, interview respondents from the 1990s to 2010s shared how they felt they had more options for student clubs. This corresponds to internationalization efforts and an increasing number of international students at the host institution. Moreover, the host institution introduced student club recruitment fairs and information brochures in English at the fall intake of international students. However, the student clubs represented are small self-selective groups who desire to recruit international students.

Service Learning Program

One of the unique features of the study abroad program is its unique one-month service learning program that has existed since the program's inception in the 1960s. The mandatory service learning program for one-year participants allows them to experience living in an area outside of Tokyo to be fully immersed in Japanese language and culture while participating in activities with the host community and living with a host family. Interview respondents described the service learning program as assisting them in integrating into the the host society. The Japanese language acquired through in-classroom Japanese language instruction at their home institution and host institution was based on standard Japanese. The service learning program allowed them to gain comparative understandings of the host country, society, and culture by encountering first-hand linguistic and sociocultural differences within Japan. When James (1990s Participant) recalls his experience, he reflects on the comparative view of Japan he gained: "It is just a persistent reminder that there's—there's another dialect of Japanese outside of the standard language…Another Japan." Stephanie shares how integrated with the community she felt during the one-month service learning program.

I'd visit the neighborhood elementary school, assist the teachers in the classroom, and eat lunch with the students. You know, I learned so much through that. So that was just the feeling of belonging there and not just feeling like this random foreigner stuck in a Japanese family and visiting some school. (Stephanie, 2000s Participant)

Unintended Consequences

The study abroad program elements discussed are not a panacea for integration into the host society. Michael highlights the potential conflicts of how the curricular program design with elements of academic coursework primarily in English rather than in the host language may hinder integration into the host society.

[My graduate level study experience in Japan completely in Japanese] was a great, positive experience… I was like, I should have done this the first time. I should not have gone as an undergrad because, we did all the classes in English and sure I studied some Japanese, but it wasn't as immersive. (Michael, 1990s Participant)

Furthermore, the sociocultural differences between the US and Japan that contribute to a larger impact can also have the unexpected consequence of pushing participants away from the host society. One key mechanism for navigating challenging intercultural situations is the participants' social support systems and networks, both formal and informal, at home and in the host country, that provide space for them to navigate and unpack lived learning experiences. Earlier cohorts of interview respondents often lost their home support networks of family, friends, and community during the study abroad experience (Forbes-Mewett and Nyland 2008), mostly due to expensive international calls and time lag of postal mail. From the late 1990s onward, the availability of the internet enabled

respondents to maintain connections with home support networks through email and voice calls. In some cases, social support systems were not sufficient to overcome sociocultural differences and hindered integration. Monica shares below the difficulties she had with her first host family in Tokyo and the role social networks played in her decision to move to a new host family. Based on parental advice, she decided to move out instead of attempting to overcome the difficulties she was having with her host family. Importantly, her decision process shows how social support networks in the host country and home country can be at odds with how to deal with challenging intercultural situations.

I actually left my original host family for another host family around March… My friends listened and tried to help. I went and asked for help from the office. It was just cultural. I ended up moving out… My mom back home said I should get on with my life. I just didn't want to deal with it anymore. (Monica, 2000s Participant)

Conclusion

Study abroad programs can be designed to facilitate integration into the host society. The findings presented in this paper contribute to our empirical knowledge on how internationally mobile students experience academic and social integration during their time abroad. According to the lived experiences of the interview respondents, curricular design promotes a high level of formal learning of the host language as well as an intellectual knowledge base of the host society. Meanwhile, noncurricular design is particularly helpful for providing opportunities for participants' integration into the local student community and wider host society. Furthermore, on-site administrative staff provide organizational and educational support to participants to ease their integration into a new country (McKeown 2012) and actively engage students in guided reflection that increases intercultural competences (Hammer 2012). The study's time span of nearly 50 years identified program and host institution organizational changes in response to student needs and internationalization aspirations as increasing integration opportunities during the study abroad experience.

In light of increasing diversity of the US study abroad participants (Institute of International Education 2010, 2018), the SAGE Project's findings regarding a larger cultural difference leading to a larger impact needs to be reexamined. Depending on the individual cultural practices and values of students and their similarities and differences with the host country, they may have different experiences adjusting and adapting while studying abroad (Tempelaar et al. 2012). In informal conversations with respondents following the interviews, the topic of student diversity arose. In particular, several respondents were curious if new support systems exist to support diversity. The study abroad program's homepage now dedicates a section to diversity abroad. Further research needs to be conducted to draw empirical conclusions due to the limited scope of the present study. However, the informal conversations with respondents suggest scholars and practitioners of study abroad need to challenge assumptions and acknowledge that what one student views as disruptive to their monocultural or ethnocentric mindset may well be different from another. Moreover, the increased diversity of study abroad participants calls upon study abroad program practitioners to reconsider their program design and support systems to promote access and inclusion by acknowledging that diverse participant backgrounds can influence their experiences in integrating in the host society.

Deliberate study abroad program design provides opportunities for integration into the host society and guidance during study abroad plays an important role in assisting participants in overcoming intercultural challenges. However, there is also the risk of over-engineering a personal experience and creating a culture of dependency. Participants need to gain skills to independently navigate sociocultural differences. If the ultimate goal of study abroad is fostering individuals with the intercultural skills to navigate a complex, global world, a balance between formal guidance and creating an atmosphere conductive to independent self-reflection to successfully navigate and integrate into the daily life of the host society is needed.

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What is Wrong with Silence in Intercultural Classrooms? An Insight into International Students' Integration at a UK University

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Introduction

The internationalization of higher education and growth of international student mobility make higher education classrooms culturally and linguistically more diverse than ever, especially among postgraduate students (Brown and Holloway 2008; Gu, Schweisfurth, and Day 2009; Yu and Moskal 2019). However, recent research reports a common tendency for international students to be silent in the Western English-medium classroom (Choi 2015; Zappa-Hollman and Duff 2015; Morita 2004), identifying language competence and cultural difference as two main barriers to participation (Zhou, Knoke, and Sakamoto 2005). International students often bring a different cultural understanding of classroom interaction norms and conventions (Dippold 2015). Grounded in the theoretical framework of "community of practice" (Lave and Wenger 1991), this paper perceives international students' verbal participation as a "dynamic, socially situated process" (Duff 2010, 169) and classrooms as communities, in which students develop "an evolving form of membership" as they "change in how they participate in a community through the multiple social relations and roles they experience" (Lave and Wenger 1991, 53). In short, this study investigates how community members interact with and adjust to each other in order to create an equal classroom atmosphere.

University Classroom as A Community of Practice

Advocating the social nature of learning, Lave and Wenger (1991) proposed community of practice to emphasize the dynamic of changing relationships between learners and particular communities, in which they are involved. Wenger (1998, p.73) further extended the notion with three defining characteristics as "mutual engagement", "joint enterprise" and "shared repertoire". Among these three dimensions of the relation, mutual engagement entails common passion, engaged diversity and cooperation while joint enterprise refers to regular interactions among the community members and mutual accountability developed during the process. Shared repertoire indicates the resources that community members share with each other such as previous experiences, concepts and styles.

The examined context of classrooms in higher education is studied as a community of practice, holding an aggregate of home students and international students who are mutually engaged in the specific subject of the classroom through shared classroom activities using a shared repertoire of resources (Dippold 2015). Multicultural classroom in internationalized higher education is a setting of complexed nature with the involvement of language issue, different cultures and interaction patterns. Duff (2007, p.315) highlights the important roles of sense of community and the influence of "old-timers" such as instructors and home students who are used to the educational systems. She claims that "joint enterprise or mutual engagement in activity by 'old-timers' and 'newcomers' provides the foundation for learning, and that practice and community belonging are key aspects of learning and identity formation."

This paper seeks to contribute to a growing stand of literature that examines international students' integration in the community of the university classroom, with a particular focus on silence.

The Concept of Silence

International students' silence in classrooms has been identified in many previous studies. For example, treating silence as a barrier to learning in US university classroom, Choi (2015) attributed the reticence of two Korean students to limited English proficiency, different classroom gestures and culture. By contrast, in a similar context of US university classroom, Tatar (2005) recognized the importance of silence while examining four Turkish international students' learning and revealed that silence performed the function of a face-saving strategy, a sign of respect for authority and a means of participation. Furthermore, Kim et al. (2016) explored Japanese students' socio-cultural perceptions of silence and called for legitimatizing silence as a teaching strategy and a form of engaged participation. The existing literature usually linked international students' reticence to cultural differences and English communicative competences (Ha and Li 2014) as silence is often attributed to individual characteristics of the students. However, little research has been conducted on how such language based inhibition may be compounded by other contextual elements, such as "reciprocal cultural familiarity" and power differentials between different languages, cultures and knowledge (Zhou, Knoke, and Sakamoto 2005, 288).

In Moskal and Schweisfurth' s study (2018), international postgraduates talked not only about the difficulties of engaging across the differences of language and cultural background but also about hidden prejudices related to perceptions of otherness on both sides. Kurzon (1997, cited in Nakane 2006) distinguished different types of silence in different contexts, "intentional" and "unintentional". Intentional silence is usually a deliberate strategy to cope with a certain situation and unintentional silence describes unwilling silence, which often comes with frustration and embarrassment. A context oriented analysis of students' cross-cultural experiences has been advocated (Cheng 2000; Kubota and Lehner 2004), and we follow this approach in this paper. Informed by the social learning and community of practice theory, we explore silence in a specific context, namely a classroom setting of a UK university, rather than assuming it is predetermined by students' cultural and educational backgrounds. We examine the concept of silence as a fluid and socially situated phenomenon and present the voices behind the silence by discussing three student cases.

Methods

This paper draws on an ethnographic case study among ten postgraduate students from seven different countries, conducted by the first author in an established university in the UK during the 2016-17 academic year. Ethnographic techniques allow the study to capture the multiplicity and fluidity of the participants' classroom experiences (Bryman 2012). The fieldwork generated eighty hours of interviews, seventy-eight sets of field notes and sixty reflective journals. Classroom observation was used to record the classroom dynamics, teaching practices and focal students' behaviors. Sitting at the back of the classroom, the first author took non-participant observation and noted down details in observation protocols, focusing on participants' behaviors and interactions with others. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with the focal students (n = 10), their instructors (n = 12) and their peers (n = 12) to explore the phenomenon from different perspectives (Silverman 2013). Instructors were lecturer and tutors who led the class. Their peers who had interaction with the focal students both inside and outside the classroom were selected.

Student interviews consisted of immediate short interviews before or after the class as well as three rounds of formal one-hour interviews throughout the academic year. Additionally, focal students kept reflective journals to document significant events. Interviews with their instructors and peers were carried out at the end of the course, focusing on their experience of interacting with international students and impressions of the influences of target participants on their job and study respectively. The data was coded, categorized and summarized under the guidance

of thematic analysis (Patton 2015). Interceder's review and triangulation of multiple perspectives increased the trustworthiness and creditability of the analysis process (Bryman 2012). Pseudonyms were applied for all participants' and courses' names to protect participants' confidentiality and anonymity.

Research Findings

The findings present various and inter-connected reasons leading to focal students' reticence in class, as well as the co-constructed nature of silence (Morita 2004). This section outlines the overall themes drawn from the research project and illustrates each theme with one specific case in context.

Misinterpretation of Silence

The research findings revealed different conceptualizations of silence among different classroom community members. Compared with the focal participants, their native-English-speaking peers attributed greater significance to oral participation in classroom activities. To some of them, oral participation was such an essential part of the learning process that they misunderstood silence as international students' disinterest, lack of preparation or insufficient knowledge. This adversely affected the focal students' integration in the classroom context, in some extreme cases conflicts and tensions aroused as international students and their peers blamed each other for the inactive atmosphere or learning inefficiency. Haijun's experience in the Course "International Communication" presented the effects of different conceptualizations and expectations on their classroom interactions and showed how the native-English-speaking peers perceived international students' silence.

Haijun, a 26 years old Chinese student, came to pursue his master's degree in International Communication after working as a documentary editor in China for three years. The course took the form of seminar with nineteen students, including fourteen Chinese, one Indonesian, and four British. A common observation of the class was the silence of most of the Chinese students, as noted in all the field notes of this course. By contrast, the other students were more active during classroom activities. Haijun reported different reasons for being silent, related to developing perceptions of verbal participation at different stages. He reflected that he was eager to speak up in the beginning, when he was impressed by the interactive modes of class in the new learning context (Journal 1). When Haijun was asked "Why do you speak less as this semester goes on?" he answered,

I only feel motivated or inspired to speak up when someone comes up with original and in-depth ideas. I have not met any students like this yet in this class. I only participate when I feel my opinions will contribute to the teaching content and may benefit other students. (Interview 1)

Haijun did not like speaking up for the sake of drawing attention or just making some noise in class (Journal 5). He felt discussions generally remained at a superficial level.

Haijun's British peer Tracy expressed a different opinion. Tracy is a mature student from England who had seven-year work experience before her studies. Tracy treated verbal participation as a critical part in the learning process. She felt "The participation part of the seminar is when the information really sticks in your head." Unfortunately, Tracy dropped out as she found it difficult to learn in the specific classroom atmosphere,

There was no dialogue. There was no participation in the seminars. It made me feel very unhappy and I had to change because I didn't feel I was getting much out of the classes, because everybody was quiet.

Nevertheless, Tracy explained it was a difficult decision and she felt sorry for the international students because she sympathized with their learning difficulties. However, she found it unacceptable to have such a quiet class and she interpreted the silence of international students as a lack of "background knowledge", "preparation for discussion" and "language barriers". Although Haijun did not interpret Tracy's dropout personally and expressed his understanding of Tracy's decision. However, he felt that Chinese students were looked down upon as well:

I think she must think communicating with people from other countries is more important. They chose to leave. It's their choice. I think more or less; Chinese students are discriminated overseas. It's not because what we did but just because of the big population of Chinese students. Of course, they will not say anything rude or offensive, but you can feel they try to avoid you. (Haijun, Interview 2)

Participants' perceptions of classroom participation had significant influence on their classroom performances and efforts to speak up (Guo and Chase 2011). Haijun and Tracy had little reciprocal cultural and educational familiarity that caused lack of communication and mutual understanding.

Negotiation of Membership

International students' silence was also closely related to their membership in the classroom community. Some students chose to remain silent in discussions because they felt marginalized by their native-English-speaking peers and they did not feel there was space or time left for them. Their membership in the classroom communities was related to the development of participation modes. A comparison of Mary's experience in the courses "Educational Inquiries" (EI) and "Adult Education" (AE) shows how the membership to specific class communities affects participation patterns.

Mary, a 27 years old student from Mexico got a bachelor's degree in Psychology, and she had two years' teaching experience for children with special needs. Mary valued the importance of verbal communication in class, but she did not manage to speak up in all the classes. She admitted that her English proficiency and knowledge of the subject had a great effect on her oral classroom participation, but she thought "It's more about if I feel comfortable in that group" (Interview 3). Mary felt easier to speak up in AE than in EI. The sense of membership in these different class communities had a significant influence on Mary's participation.

Both courses had a lively atmosphere and involved around twenty students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The difference was that the EI course was usually dominated by the native English speakers while almost everyone spoke up in the AE course as documented in the field notes. There was a lack of international students' integration in EI, evidenced by the fact that since the first presentation session, when students were divided into three groups, they sat in the same group for the rest of the term. The native English students sat in one group while Mary formed a group with four Chinese students. There were hardly interactions among the three groups. A clear divide could be observed between the native English and non-native English speakers, not only in their seat positions but also in their participation frequencies. Mary complained about the native English students being dominant and insisting on their opinions. Mary always felt short of time and "space" to participate in this class as she stated that,

In this class, I feel it's more dominated by the native English speakers. So, there is not enough time, like room to speak. And they sometimes, even just end up speaking, answering themselves like between them. So, it doesn't feel like there is room to participate. (Interview 2)

In contrast, Mary described the course on AE as "where I have seen more people participate" (Interview 3). Mary confessed that she had little background knowledge of this subject, but she enjoyed studying with this group of peers as a community. Even though Mary was the only student from a different major, she felt included and integrated into

this class. She felt a sense of belonging to the class where everyone knew each other's name. Mary replied to question "What is your impression of Course AE?" as below,

I think everybody was very interested in everyone's opinion in Course AE. Sometimes I think, in other classes like Course EI, I feel like people are just waiting for you to finish. You know they don't really like interested. They were interested in your opinion. It was more like a group. (Interview 3)

Mary achieved integration in the AE course, which made her feel secure and motivated to contribute to the discussions. Mary's different experience in these two courses underscores the importance of group membership and belonging within the class to provide a supportive environment for students' verbal participation.

"Silence as my way of participation"

Kim et al. (2016) argue that verbal participation is not the single form of engaged learning and that silence can also be treated as a form of participation. Following Kurzon's categories of silence, Haijun and Mary represented the "unintentional" type because they were reluctant to participate, while Qiang's case was more proactive and suggested "intentional" silence, which could be seen as pedagogy rather than a deficient participation mode. Qiang was a 24 years old Chinese student. He studied Accounting and he worked in a bank for a year before moving to the UK for further study. Qiang was completely silent throughout the whole academic year in both lectures and tutorials. However, he was an attentive listener and usually sat in the front listening carefully and taking notes. Qiang has been arguing throughout the study that silence was "my way of participation" (Journal 8). He did not consider silence in a class as a problem. He had his own understanding of a good lesson when he compared his experience in the two tutorials, as shown below.

Qiang was observed during two tutorials, one in International Accounting (IA) and one in International Finance (IF). The classroom atmosphere of the IA tutorial was more dynamic than that of the IF. Most of the time, Qiang remained silent in both tutorials. Nonetheless, Qiang preferred the tutorial of IF over that of IA since his criterion of a good lesson was "the structure of the content" rather than the interactive format. He thought tutorial IF was well organized and structured. In contrast, although tutorial IA was more dynamic, Qiang did not feel that he acquired anything from the open discussions.

Qiang achieved Merit as his final average grades and the highest mark for a group project. Although he did not participate verbally in class, he demonstrated good understanding of the teaching content and assignment. Qiang described, "I focus more on the result than on the process. I know clearly what I want". He had no doubt of himself as a "competent learner". He understood that he had strong independent learning skills. When asked "What do you think of the role of speaking up or group discussion in the process of your learning?" Qiang responded,

I might be slow in the beginning but it's because I always have deep thinking about questions. It will be stuck in my head after I figure it out on my own. I will be confused if I learn by discussing with others. (Interview 3)

Conclusions and Implications for Practice

This paper reveals the tensions between international students and their peers in the classroom resulting from different expectations and perceptions of classroom participation. Comparing and contrasting the selected participants' experiences, we explain their different socialization processes by mapping out factors that lead to their silence and that promote their participation. Consistent with previous research, our findings indicate that linguistic and cultural factors greatly affected students' classroom reticence. However, it is important to discuss the context and link it to other

influential factors like participants' negotiation of membership of community of practice. "Intentionally" silent students chose to keep quiet in class, viewing silence as acceptable and normal behavior, in contrast, "unintentionally" silent students found verbal participation challenging.

Fostering an appreciation of diversity in the classroom requires the open exchange of ideas and experiences of students from different backgrounds (Zhou, Knoke, and Sakamoto 2005, 307). Mutual understanding among students should be encouraged to promote students' cooperative learning. One potential way to achieve this can be an induction program or the instructor's interventions to promote an open exchange of opinions and experiences of students from different backgrounds. Some of the observed departments had an induction program, however, it was usually about the introduction of staff and assessments.

A brief introduction to the classroom conventions would help students to understand the learning environment better. Hollander (2002) defines classroom participation as a collective responsibility of the class rather than just an individual responsibility. It is neither international students' responsibility to adapt to the new learning environment or their peers' or instructors' obligation to compromise. This should be an interactive and mutually inclusive process. It is important to promote an appreciation of diversity in the classroom community to legitimize different participation modes. Ha and Li (2014, p.245) argue for "the need to optimize silence as pedagogy" to recognize learning diversity rather than to compromise for "a shared behavior". This is not to encourage students to keep silent, but rather to remove the misunderstanding and negative stereotypes of silence as non-participation or passive learning. To facilitate the formation of a positive classroom atmosphere, more interactions and social activities, inside and outside the classroom, should be encouraged and arranged by higher education practitioners to get students to know each other and thus develop a sense of community. Zhou, Knoke and Sakamoto (2005) argue that familiarity with peers and instructors can contribute to "sense of safety" and "sense of belonging". When international students feel they are members of the class and their ideas are welcomed, they would make extra efforts to contribute to the discussion.

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Integrating International Students: The Missing Link in Portuguese Higher Education Institutions

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Introduction

Over the past few years, Portugal has become a proactive recruiter of international students (Sin, Antonowicz and Wiers-Jenssen 2019). Portuguese institutions have been the preferred choice of students from the former Portuguese colonies coming through agreements with the Portuguese government (França, Alves, and Padilla 2018). Consequently, in 2017-18 around two-thirds of international students came from Portuguese-speaking countries, such as Brazil, Angola, Cape Verde, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe, Guinea Bissau and East Timor (DGEEC 2018).

Although proactive recruitment of full-degree international students was far from a common practice among public institutions, after 2014 this has become a priority (Nada and Araújo 2018a; Sin, Tavares and Cardoso 2019). Various factors have encouraged this shift in attitude: declining enrollments and highly pessimistic demographic projections (Dias et al. 2013); the prioritization of incoming student mobility in the internationalization strategy of Portuguese higher education (MADR/MEC 2014); and the recent *Statute of the International Student*, a piece of legislation from 2014 which allows public institutions to charge higher fees for international students.

Despite the growth of international student migration and the active recruitment of international students by host countries, there are only a handful of studies that investigated institutional strategies for integrating international students, or their experiences, in the host country (see for example Mosneaga and Agergaard 2012; Urbanovič, Wilkins, and Huisman 2014; Nada and Araújo 2018a; O'Connor 2018;). Also in Portugal, research on this topic is rather scarce, and existing studies mainly focused on students' perceptions (Campos and Lima 2012; Alves 2013; Nada and Araújo 2018a, 2018b). This paper, while also reporting on student experiences, adds the institutional perspective of top and middle managers. It aims to investigate institutional strategies for the integration of international students and student experiences in this regard. The research questions to answer are: What strategies do institutions employ to integrate international students, if any, and are these effective? Do international students feel integrated socially and academically in the institution? What are the reasons for their perceptions? This will allow inferring opportunities and challenges of integration policies and experiences, and formulating some possible ways forward to improve international students' experience.

Integrating international students

A main challenge that higher education institutions must address to ensure their global attractiveness is international students' well-being and satisfaction during their studies. A successful integration of these students is therefore paramount to achieve the goal of increasing the internationalization of the student body. Integration thereby refers to the set of institutional activities meant to cater for international students, not only in the early stages following their arrival, but also throughout their stay. This is, however, not an easy task because international students face

multiple difficulties, not only related to a new social and academic environment, but also to the necessary cultural adjustment (Brown and Holloway 2008; Zhou et al. 2008). Furthermore, international students are also reported to be more likely to experience homesickness and discrimination (Poyrazli and Lopez 2007; Brown and Holloway 2008; Thurber and Walton 2012; Nada and Araújo 2018a). According to Poyrazli and Lopez (2007), higher levels of perceived discrimination can lead to lower self-esteem, higher identification with other international students, and poor adjustment to the new environment.

Institutions can play a crucial role in counteracting the negative effects of culture shock, homesickness and discrimination, and in assisting students to navigate the acculturation process. Ward (2015) recommends four key areas for institutional action: welcoming international students, adjusting services and programs to meet their needs, facilitating integration between international and other students, and assessing students' experiences. The importance of pre-arrival information about, for example, the culture, the school, the academic program, and links to a range of university services is highlighted by several studies (Brown and Holloway 2008; Thurber and Walton 2012; Perez-Encinas and Ammigan 2016). The benefits of interventions meant to help students interact with the host culture are also mentioned by various authors. For example, pairing international and host-country students has been found to increase sociocultural and psychological adaptation and to reduce acculturative stress (Thompson and Esses 2016); regular social gatherings can give students a sense of belonging (Brown and Holloway 2008); and forming support groups for students can help to raise awareness among home students about how certain behavior could be perceived as discriminatory (Poyrazli and Lopez 2007). Such measures could help to reduce the culture shock (Zhou et al. 2008) experienced by international students.

Support services and infrastructures oriented to cater for international students are considered an essential element to ensure that these students' needs, different from the needs of national students, are considered (Mosneaga and Agergaard 2012; Perez-Encinas and Ammigan 2016). An international unit could provide comprehensive services ranging from pre-arrival information to providing advice on practical matters, such as residence permits, visas, accommodation, health care, etc. Additionally, other support services may be necessary to ensure students get integrated academically, culturally and socially, such as with counseling (Brown and Holloway 2008) or academic support (Brown and Holloway 2008; Gu, Schweisfurth, and Day 2010). Indeed, students are confronted with a new pedagogic environment which makes them feel uncomfortable and unsure about their academic skills: They worry about failing the exams, about not being able to answer questions in class, or they feel embarrassed about speaking up in class. Since students are generally unaware of these challenges before they arrive, it is important that institutions anticipate them and provide early academic support and integration. Moreover, establishing relationships with teachers is a major challenge (Gu, Schweisfurth, and Day 2010). Assigning teacher-tutors for international students and/or intervention programs to raise awareness of the difficulties experienced by international students among academic and administrative staff are potential measures to improve international students' academic integration (Brown and Holloway 2008; Gonçalves 2009).

Finally, language is also highlighted as a challenge both for academic and social integration (Poyrazli and Lopez 2007; Thurber and Walton 2012; Van Mol and Michielsen 2015; Thompson and Esses 2016). In Portugal, at first sight this would not be an issue for the majority of international students, as they mainly come from Portuguese-speaking countries. However, they speak the language differently, filtered through their own culture. Several authors who focused on the Portuguese context (Franca et al. 2018; Nada and Araújo 2018b) have already shown that students who come from Lusophone countries can also experience problems understanding the Portuguese language spoken in Portugal. If the academic community is unaware of these cultural and linguistic differences, they tend to treat them the same as they treat domestic students. For this reason, Gonçalves (2009) calls them 'invisible.'

Methodology

This small-scale qualitative study was conducted in 2017-2018 through eight semi-structured interviews at two public universities in the northern area of Portugal (four in each) with institutional representatives in positions of management and decision-making related to international students. In public universities international student recruitment is a recent priority, contrary to private institutions which have always been interested in attracting these students, as sources of valuable revenue (See Table 1).

Table 1. Interviewed institutional representatives and focus groups with international students

	Institutional representatives	**Students**
Institution A	Vice-rector for Internationalization Vice-rector for Academic Affairs Head of International Office Head of Academic Affairs	Focus Group A
Institution B	Internationalization Adviser to Rector Head of International Office Head of Academic Affairs Head of Communication, Image and Public Relations Unit	Focus Group B

Additionally, two focus groups with international students were conducted at each university to determine if strategies are effective judging by the students' experiences. The international students were enrolled in first degrees, except one student enrolled in a master degree program. The discussions were held in Portuguese as all participants were from Portuguese-speaking countries, reflecting the majority of international student enrolments. The interviews and focus groups lasted around an hour. They were transcribed and analysed with the help of the qualitative analysis software MaxQDA, following a grounded theory method adapted from Strauss and Corbin (1990). Grounded theory consists of the pursuit of emergent themes through early data analysis and coding, construction of abstract categories that synthesise the phenomenon in question, further refinement of categories by means of additional data collection and the integration of categories in an overarching theory. It is therefore the emergence of theory from data that gives grounded theory its particular characteristics. The following two sections address the perspectives of institutional representatives and of students.

Perceptions of institutional representatives

The interviews show that neither university has a clearly articulated strategy for the integration of international students, although both have become more proactive recruiters following the *Statute of the International Student* and the financial incentives implied therein. The institutions are in a process of finding their feet and looking for the best way to organize themselves to respond to an increasingly international student body. Institutional representatives mention some measures that have been taken to integrate international students, including reception activities, logistical support on arrival (accommodation, opening bank account, visas, etc.), mentorship programs, staff training, and social activities. However, these measures seem to be developed ad hoc and at an incipient stage:

We still have no concrete measures to receive international students. We have a 'reception machine' for exchange students, which in my opinion works very well, […] but we have not taken advantage of the whole structure and reception methods to integrate international students who come here for a full degree. This is merely a question of

internal organisation. […] We are still not well organised, the databases are not accessible to the interested parties and those people who could help integrate students are still not fully informed. We are struggling to support students before they come, to be with them in the critical moment of arrival and to accompany them in the first two weeks. (Head of International Office, Institution B)

Indeed, institutional representatives generally acknowledge the integration of international students as a challenge rather than a reality. A structure with exclusive remit and competence to support international students in their interaction with the institution seems to be a missing key element. As an interviewee stated:

A difficulty within the university is having a formal structure, because we have not yet managed to organise ourselves internally to say that we have such competences in this structure and that the people who work there have a broad knowledge which spans from application to registration, from the point of view of what we tell them and how we communicate with them. (Head of Academic Affairs, Institution B)

Currently, these students fall under the remit of academic services, which focus on national students and lack expertise to answer the needs of international students. In contrast, international units, which have experience of working with Erasmus students, are only now starting to be called upon, but have limited resources to do so. In fact, financial resources are explicitly identified as a challenge, similar to other small countries (Urbanovič, Wilkins, and Huisman 2014). According to an interviewee:

There is the funding issue. We have Erasmus funding to support Erasmus students' integration. There is no European funding to support the integration of non-Erasmus students […] Tuition fees go fully to the faculties. Therefore, it is the faculties that manage all issues associated with the stay of these students in the schools, in the departments. (Head of International Office, Institution A)

Changing staff mentality and equipping them with competences to deal with cultural diversity is another challenge identified by the interviewees. This suggests that the institutionalization and professionalization of support services for international students is critical to move beyond this embryonic stage of development (see Mosneaga and Agergaard 2012; Perez-Encinas and Ammigan 2016).

Students' perceptions

Students' predominantly negative opinions regarding their integration, expressed during the focus group discussions, reinforce the need for articulated institutional action and support. Negative perceptions are much more frequent after arrival than before arrival, suggesting that the main difficulties arise during their integration/adaptation. Indeed, social and academic integration stood out, by far, as the main difficulties experienced by international students. In terms of social integration, they struggle to get close to their Portuguese colleagues, to connect, and establish friendships. For this reason, they tend to get together with other international students or with friends from the same home country. They often experience feelings of loneliness and tend to isolate themselves, mirroring findings from other countries (Brown and Holloway 2008; Poyrazli and Lopez 2007). Academic integration is also highlighted as a major negative experience in several aspects. First, differences between the home and host country higher education systems and/or pedagogies are mentioned, and students generally do not feel guided or supported either by their teachers, or by the institution regarding various aspects of the academic life:

Sometimes, for us from abroad…there we have a different kind of teaching: teachers come, they speak and we write everything they say. Here teachers speak, speak, speak, put the slides and we take notes of what we think is important. There it was not like this, even at university. It was not technology-based like here, it was more like us making photocopies, studying those, doing exams, and so on. Here it is more complicated. (Focus group B)

Second, students feel excluded academically by their peers, who leave them aside when they have to conduct group-work. According to a student from an African country:

No one comes and says: 'I want to work with you'. They always want to work among themselves. Many times, I would be left without a group and then they would sort one out to integrate me. […)]The task involved knowing the Portuguese reality, do field work and we struggled with it because we had no idea. […] In the group I joined there was little interest, I even tried, but then I ended up not questioning anything and gave up. (Focus group B)

Another negative experience reported by the international students, although in a lesser degree, is related to language, which represents an obstacle aggravating both social and academic integration. Despite coming from countries where Portuguese is an official language, they struggle to follow the language spoken in Portugal because of differences in accent, pronunciation, pace, and semantics. As such, our findings are in line with those reported by Franca et al. (2018) and Nada and Araújo (2018b). However, this seems to go unnoticed, which confirms the designation 'invisible students' (Gonçalves 2009). As a student from Brazil reported, this not only led to social exclusion, but also affected her academic performance:

I could not understand anything that was being taught. I could not follow the Portuguese from Portugal. […]My grades in Brazil were one thing, here they were another. Here I was always the worst student in class. Besides not understanding and feeling lonely, when I had doubts I was embarrassed to ask. Because I did not feel welcomed, as if they were doing me a favour. (Focus group A)

With less emphasis, and in one university only, negative experiences emerged related to logistical and practical issues, such as accommodation, opening bank accounts, or visas. For example, a Brazilian student lamented the fact that the cheaper university student accommodation was not available for international students:

I heard about an accommodation and scholarships service. I sent them an email. They said I was not Portuguese, and that the Portuguese students had priority. I had to have an equal rights statute. This statute is only granted six months after living here and it would allow me to apply for a place in halls of residence. (Focus Group A)

In the other university, these issues were not critical because the focus group participants generally came through partnerships or agreements involving the host university and organizations in their home country. As a consequence, such practical issues were largely taken care of by the organizations, as the following excerpt illustrate:

The university helped me, they dealt with everything for us, I mean, the students from Timor, in terms of accommodation, residence permit, fiscal number, everything. (Focus group B)

Conclusions and Practical Implications

Strategies employed by the Portuguese institutions to integrate international students are still scarce, developed ad hoc, and misarticulated according to institutional representatives. Uncoordinated measures apparently fail to ensure a positive experience for international students, judging by their opinions, regarding both social and academic integration. A first implication arising from this study is the need for a strategy capable of providing coordination, direction, and focus to activities meant to support international students. The implementation of this strategy could be the responsibility of a dedicated international office exclusively focused on international students, equipped with staff with intercultural competences. This appears particularly relevant for higher education systems and/or institutions for which the internationalization of the student body is a recent priority.

Language unexpectedly emerges as an issue for students from Portuguese-speaking countries, a group that tends to be 'invisible' given the shared language and the assumption of their familiarity with Portugal. Institutions, when designing strategies meant to improve the experience of international students, need to bear in mind that most come from Portuguese-speaking countries and therefore discriminate between the needs of different groups of students, avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach. Whether or not the problems encountered by Portuguese-speaking students are aggravated by the historical specificities of the Portuguese colonial past (see for example França, Alves, and Padilla 2018) is a moot point.

In order to prevent social and academic exclusion triggered by linguistic and cultural differences, the following institutional measures could be considered: pre-arrival information to manage student expectations about the country which is assumed they know, including assistance with accommodation; pairing international with national students to foster mutual knowledge and inter-cultural understanding; assigning teacher-tutors to develop the learning skills needed in a different pedagogic environment; and raising awareness among staff of the importance of promoting a more inclusive and multicultural environment. Such measures could turn institutions more responsive to cultural diversity rather than assuming a paternalistic attitude towards the supposed deficits of international students (Nada and Araújo 2018b). Moreover, any measure taken to integrate international students must be properly thought through and monitored so as not to single them out, because this could lead to unintended opposite effects of isolation and segregation (Fincher and Shaw 2009; Nada and Araújo 2018b).

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