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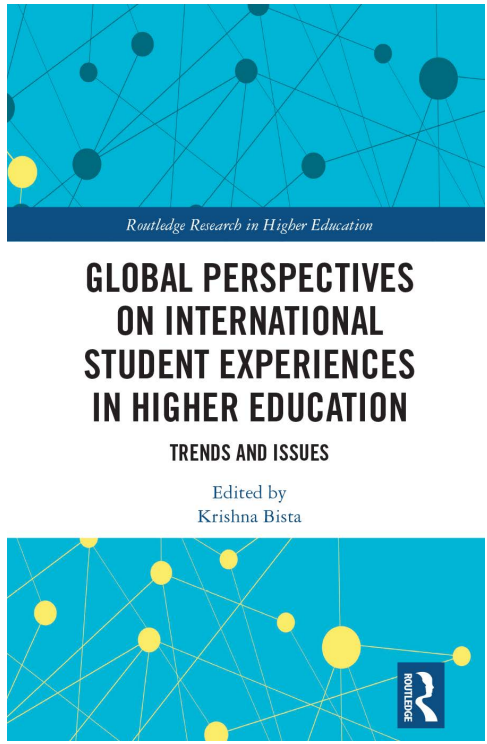

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Focusing on Graduate International Students

Shyam Sharma
State University of New York at Stony Brook, USA

ABSTRACT

In this brief editorial essay, the author points out a lack of focus on graduate-level international students in research and scholarship in the United States. Highlighting a few potential contributing factors behind the gap, he suggests a number of important issues and perspectives that the scholarship needs to explore as it advances the discourse on the graduate segment of international students. He concludes by calling for a transdisciplinary field of scholarship focusing on international students in general, with a viable subspecialization on the graduate students.

Keywords: graduate, international students, myths, politics, agency, advocacy, ecological perspective, leadership

Of the million plus international students in the United States, roughly half of them are at the graduate levels. Unfortunately, there is limited focus on this group in research and scholarship, as well as in academic support programs and institutional policy. Scholarship does recognize this gap, but there is no clarity about its causes and solutions. In this essay, which I write in response to the editor's request to share some highlights drawn from my research, especially a recent book on this student body, I share a few observations on possible factors as I essentially urge scholars writing for journals like this to respond to this gap. I also highlight a number of issues and perspectives needing our attention as we address the gap.

CONTEXTS AND FACTORS

In public discourse, graduate international students are viewed as "top talent," and they often feature in political debates and national policy discussions (such as in the many Congressional hearings in the past decade) as a valued asset. This positive view

and discourse, however, seems to ironically contribute to the negligence about supporting and focusing on them.

The Maturity Myth

First of all, the logic of "top talent" naturally extends to the assumption that international graduate students are mature and therefore do not need any support. On the one hand, the current set up of American graduate education has no curricular structures to support any graduate students. On the other, few institutions and support professionals pay attention to how this gap affects international graduate students far more seriously than it does their domestic counterparts. For instance, there is a vast difference between driving north from Sarasota, Florida to settle in Syracuse, New York before beginning a doctoral program and flying from Shanghai, China to New York City before somehow getting to Syracuse with the same objective. The latter must be done in less than 30 days, per student visa regulation.

International graduate students' being "top talent," whether in the test measures used for recruitment or in their prior academic records, can only translate into success after they land here only in the right environment with sufficient support. That is because these students must reinvent themselves academically, as well as socioculturally. When one enters advanced education in a new academic culture, academic skills like "writing" involve a complex puzzle involving a number of linguistic, rhetorical, cultural, and social abilities that one must develop by learning from a variety of places and processes, formal and informal, and visible or invisible to academic support professionals.

Research and scholarship must confront the assumptions and negligence about international graduate students, paying special attention to their backgrounds, their needs based on disciplines and other factors, and the kinds of programs they are enrolled in. In order to truly assess whether and what kind of support these students need for translating their prior success, assumptions about their maturity must be questioned from all kinds of perspectives.

The Need to Lead Them

Second, international graduate students themselves exacerbate the problem. Most of them buy into the same false binary about maturity: they assume that their advanced status means that they can do without foundational academic skills, which they may need to catch up on, especially skills that are uniquely situated in the larger academic and social culture of the host country. For this reason, the practice of "making an argument" in academic writing or even writing a "reading response" to prepare for a class meeting can stumble even the most mature and talented foreign graduate students.

Unlike at the undergraduate level, international students first encountering the US academe as graduate students don't have to take foundational courses, aren't exposed to the campus community as part of "college experience," and aren't reached out to for organized initiatives by various support units across campus. Most of them go straight to their departments and labs, while many of them also have to attend to

many challenges outside campus (usually without a support community). The overwhelming number of things they need to do for adjusting to and catching up leaves most of these students grappling from one day and week to another, until they learn what could have helped, when it has been too late. Many mentors don't help to "educate" them about the availability and benefits of the support; some, in fact, don't know about or, if they do, discourage students from using available support, for all kinds of reasons. An excessive focus on their disciplinary specialization also leads to a narrow view (and thereby development) of their academic skills and professional profiles.

The fact that there are no support structures for these students minimizes the opportunity for practitioners to work closely with these students, as well as for researchers and practitioners to learn and report more about them. In fact, as I have argued in Writing support for international graduate students: Enhancing transition and success, the very methods and framings we use for academic research/scholarship are insufficient when it comes to this student body. I suggest that the framing be not limited to one academic support system at a time but instead the full and complex picture of the university as encountered by the students.

The Nationalistic Regime

One last factor, among possibly many, behind the relative lack of focus on graduate international students is the larger context of nationalistic regime of international education. Within this framework, international students exist and are viewed by host societies and universities as "foreign bodies" whose well-being and even rights and safety are uncertain. As Simon Marginson aptly points out, "it is hard for national systems of regulations to encompass cross-border persons. It is harder for the students, at the sharp end of national-global ambiguities and tensions" (10). The nationalistic framing is made especially problematic by an increasingly neoliberal, capitalistic view of higher education around the world, partly prompted by the dwindling support for public education and partly by universities becoming willing to find students wherever the money is around the world (while the need to advance global social mobility of students and scholars toward advancing knowledge and its exchange across borders). So, even as they are celebrated for their role in "diversifying the campus," international students evoke ambivalence about whether and how much attention to pay to their success and wellbeing.

International students seem to be decreasingly viewed as *individuals* with varied identities and ambitions who strive to find a place in often contested intellectual and professional domains in and beyond graduate education (like domestic graduate students). It seems that they are increasingly treated, in practice, as outsiders accepted conditionally and in the "national interest"; their value lies in the competitive geopolitical *benefit* and economic interests of receiving nations and institutions respectively. Their foreignness (labeled "diversity"), while frequently glorified and occasionally working to the students' advantage, shapes policies and sustains ideologies in ways that practically counter professed ideals about international education and international students.

ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES TO ADVANCE

This is not to say that the connections above are causal, or that these specific connections are the most significant. My intention here is to point out a few contributing factors in order to call for greater focus on international graduate students. With that in mind, let me share a few issues and perspectives that I believe are particularly important to focus on as we address the above gap about this student body.

Minding Politics and Ideology

First, scholars must pay attention to the fact that international students are fundamentally political beings, inhabiting highly political spaces and therefore highly susceptible to all kinds of political forces. Research and scholarship about them must account for global and national politics about them, including changing relationships between their home and host countries, as well as micro-level political and ideological forces influencing the students' academic experience and performance within the university. This accounting must inform recruitment and orientation, academic support programs, curriculum or pedagogy.

The macro-politics of international education shapes the micro-politics of power and privilege, bias and prejudice, ambivalence and disinterest on the ground—as much as the micro-politics of resistance and empowerment can be used for countering the effects of the larger forces. Being broadly informed about the global geopolitical forces shaping the "market" of globally mobile students can help us respond to the marginalization of existing academic programs. In an era of "big data," the effect of support programs can be further amplified by using numbers about larger political and historical pictures at state, national, and global levels. Doing so can also help academic administrators and staff members participate in institutional conversations on policy, program-building, and negotiation for continuing or changing existing support systems; to formulate new policies and tackle new challenges in realistic manners; and to collaborate with rather than confront university administration when institutional challenges affect existing academic programs. Even scholars involved primarily in classroom instruction can tremendously benefit from an awareness of the larger sociopolitical, economic, and cultural conditions and forces that directly and indirectly affect international students and their own work.

Looking at History

Similarly, there is a need to develop historically informed perspectives. Research and scholarship on international students must account for historical trends of the global flow and mobility of students, major disruptions and their reasons, and the visible and neglected influences shaping international education and affecting students. Studying the history of international education in the US makes it abundantly clear—whether it is related to immigration policy, change in presidential and economic politics, or international relationship or cultural shift on the domestic front—that this has been a truly volatile political landscape. In the United States, this

landscape has been full of major shifts—from the establishment of such powerful national programs as Fulbright and Peace Corps to policies like those reflected in provisions of special visas for foreign students and exchange visitors, to the tectonic shifts created by presidents such as John F. Kennedy on the one hand and Donald J. Trump on the other (see Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2017)—that have reshaped the world of scientific advancements, international relationships, and the view of education and citizenship. As Trilokekar (2015) notes, "Reagan's aggressive anti-communist foreign policy [for instance] provided the ideological basis to support international educational exchanges, with the 'era of sending and receiving young scholars to build mutual understanding … now a quaint artifact of a bygone era'" (6). In contrast, in the post- 9/11 era, including the Obama years, the fact that international student visas continued to be handled by the Department of Home Security, for instance, shows how politics substituted international educational policies.

Beyond seeking to resist or correct course when policy makers or institutional leaders take approaches that academic scholars/ practitioners consider problematic, it is important to recognize the dynamic nature of international education, given how it has historically interacted with global and local economic and political forces. Even academic programs and day-to-day support practices for these students cannot be sustained without understanding the changing global political and economic forces affecting the movement, adaptation, and success of these students.

Fostering Agency

Third, especially given the lack of established formal support structures that (when used) benefit international graduate students, research on these students must focus on their agency. As it is problematic to "assume" that these students need no support or attention just because they are talented or mature, it is similarly problematic to assume that they are powerless, helpless, or deficient. Given the structure of US graduate education, instead of trying to create undergraduate-like support programs for graduate students, new support programs and practices must be designed to foster international students' *agency* so the students can explore the ecology of resources and can more quickly and effectively learn and use academic skills for navigating a new academic culture and negotiating their intellectual positions. In my research, I have found significant interactions between seemingly extraneous forces and students' process of learning academic skills, interactions that deserve exploration in the context of graduate-level academic support for these students *as* international students.

For instance, in the case of international graduate students, "learning to write" involves a complex puzzle requiring a number of linguistic, rhetorical, cultural, and social skills that they must gather from a variety of places and processes, formal and informal, and visible or invisible to academic support professionals. For that reason, writing support for these students requires support programs to foster their agency toward exploring and exploiting what they need when they need it, to let them adapt and hack the resources we provided, and to design support services with open/flexible points of entry and exit.

Using an agency-driven approach means that instead of either using a deficit view of international students or using "universal design" for supporting all graduate students, support programs should be designed to let students "forage" and not be limited by support programs. Similarly, scholarship on these students must explore how they develop agency as writers and scholars, as members of their academic disciplines and professional fields. Such a focus can help us recognize the diversity, fluidity, and change in their identity as they interact with and negotiate power and relationship with people and programs across institutions.

Embracing Advocacy

Fourth, for many of the factors discussed above, practitioners must advocate for international graduate students. Even researchers and scholars often need to drive the conversation about vulnerable groups like this in directions that may be neglected by mainstream discourse—hence requiring a form of advocacy. While requiring separation in data collection and analysis, advocacy may be necessary in terms of advancing research and discourse in significant directions. In many of the areas of academic support for these students (such as my own, which is graduate-level writing and communication support), the support is inherently educational and promotional: often, the students themselves and other stakeholders need to be educated about the support.

The research that I did for my recent book—which involved data from 20 universities that I visited and 15 more from which I collected data distantly, including interviews with nearly 200 individuals in a wide range of positions—showed that an advocacy-driven approach not only helped to foster student agency but also to grow new support programs and make them more effective/sustainable. It also helped academic support programs to transcend the limitations of their marginal "service" positions in their institutions. Effective support programs used inclusive, accessible, and engagement-driven practices in order to foster students' intellectual and social agency, especially by advocating for the students' success and wellbeing. They also paid attention to how their programs could shape institutional policies and priorities; accounted for internal diversity and intersectionality of international graduate students' identities, proficiencies, and experiences; situated the support in the process of students' academic transition into US academe; and prioritized focused support to "universal design" whenever necessary and possible.

Understanding Local-Global Interactions

Fifth, scholarship on international graduate students can and should tackle overlapping issues about them and about their domestic counterparts, whether that is the intersection of political or economic interests of the two student groups. On the one hand, when it comes to international students' political vulnerabilities, it is not enough to simply view them as "one of us," while doing nothing about their distinct challenges. Improved language skills, for instance, are essential but far from sufficient in order for international students to overcome or deal with the sense of otherness that may be preventing them from speaking with a clear voice and

confidence. Power dynamics and attitudes (both toward them and among them) affect motivation and success with communication, and these students must learn how to deal with those challenges *as* international students. On the other hand, we must also directly confront the adverse effects of internationalization of higher education on domestic students. For example, writing for an edited collection on "transnational writing program administration," Dingo, Riedner, and Wingard (2015) used the case of outsourcing of writing support to tutors in Bangladesh, India, and Malaysia by a professor in Texas, discussing how writing scholars can "foreground the many contexts—globalized and institutional, material and ideological—under which twenty-first century [writing support] labor practices may take place" (266). Scott (2016) used the case of outsourcing to make a larger point about the political economy of internationalization, stating that "[u]nder neoliberal political economic reorganization, global economies have seen a forty-year trend toward the privatization of everything from local mail delivery to national security and intelligence to public education" (13). In my research, I observed that at many public universities, international students are increasingly enrolled in essentially private enterprises within public institutions; increasing their numbers do have other benefits to different stakeholders, but doing so also clearly undermined the mission of education as a social cause.

We cannot advocate for international students without serious regard for how that advocacy may affect domestic students and the future of public education. For instance, we must be mindful not to let political leaders and policy makers *off the hook* by simply accepting the replacement of public support with "international dollars." As scholars, both institutional leaders and we are responsible to "explore alternatives to perpetual crisis" in education, showing how the crises are "a function of political economy" (26). So, on the one hand, we can and should support institutional leaders to counter the politics of austerity coming at them from state and federal governments by reframing academic scholarship and also programs and pedagogies in politically informed manner. On the other hand, we must pursue research and service for international students with full awareness about how their interests intersect those of domestic students.

Taking an Ecological Approach

Sixth, especially because international graduate students are extremely *diverse* in their linguistic, educational, national/cultural, and other social backgrounds, scholars must understand the broad institutional and social *ecology* that these students inhabit, where they seek support and forge relationships, and how they find resources and solve problems. It is necessary for researchers and practitioners alike to look at diversity and complexity as functions of their agency and vice versa. For instance, in a study involving 20 doctoral students, Gardner (2007) identified five major themes about the socialization process of the students, including ambiguity in guidelines and expectations of students, difficulties students face with balancing various responsibilities, intellectual independence that students needed to become successful, development of cognitive/personal and professional growth, and support by faculty and others in the institution and beyond. In my own study, I found that whether and

how students use support in one area is connected and competing with their many other needs and interests; thus, to make their support effective, program leaders and practitioners had to understand the larger tangle of challenges, opportunities, resources, relationships, and so on—the larger ecology.

Findings from my research also highlight the value of taking "socioecological approaches" to designing support for international graduate students. As Krasny, Tidball, and Sriskandarajah (2009) note, by reviewing prior scholarship on "social and adaptive learning theories," ecological approaches are particularly useful in advancing situated and adaptive modes of education. Ecological perspectives are also useful for theorizing educational policy at all levels (Weaver-Hightower, 2008; Banathy, 1992). Weaver-Hightower showed how the approach "helps us to conceptualize policy processes as complex, interdependent, and intensely political…. [It] is more appropriate than one of *stages* and *circuits* because the interactions of environments, groups, and events capture better the fluidity of processes" (154). Ecological perspectives can help scholars explore broader and complex issues about international graduate students especially because they can account for political and policy ambiguity, as well as disciplinary ideologies and gaps/tensions affecting them, context and process of their social/academic transition/adjustment, and diversity and complexity of their identity and experiences.

Taking Leadership

Finally, there is a need to provide institutional leadership in favor these students. Too often, we see that academic support units for international students—from ESL centers to remedial courses and ITA support offices—are housed in the basement, dependent on additional fees that students find out they have to pay when they arrive, or treated as a second thought and moved around when there is not enough political pressure to sustain them. Teaching and academic support for these students are provided with contingent faculty; programs are vulnerable to shifting institutional whims; and policy decisions about these students aren't guided by research and scholarship. Part of this problem comes from an ambivalence as to whether especially publicly-funded universities are responsible for the success and wellbeing of international students as non-citizens. There are no voters, taxpayers, lobbyists (beyond some incidental lobbying by certain industries), or parents behind foreign students. In this situation, it is important for scholars to take leadership, to provide insights and information about this student body to relevant decision-makers. It is necessary for them to lead the institutional conversation, program-building, and policy-making. Academic support for international graduate students can be used a high-impact point of intervention in graduate education at large; it can similarly be used as a catalyst for institutional change and problem-solving in graduate education at large.

Intellectual leadership is also necessary because the discourse about international students is replete with outdated and otherwise problematic understanding. There are many (often emerging) issues that need greater attention and more critical perspectives, issues such as shifting concentrations across disciplines, fluctuations in student numbers by country of origin and therefore educational backgrounds and

support needed, spikes in enrollments at the master's levels (Caplan & Cox, 2016) where academic support culture is yet to considerably develop, increasingly uneven distribution of international students by types of institution and regions of the country (Okahana & Allum, 2015), and so on. Such issues call for intellectual leadership not just for the benefit of international students but also because they often have serious bearings on higher education at large and for national interest and the advancement of knowledge globally.

CREATING A SPECIALIZATION

The various disciplines where international students are a focus of academic support, instruction, or research and scholarship need intellectually and politically savvy approaches that are guided by complex, ecological views especially about the graduate segment of these students. Scholars working with these students must pay serious attention to "the movement and broader influence of globalized power—economic, political, cultural, governmental, sovereign, disciplinary, biopolitical, all forms and mixes of forms at work" (Dingo, Riedner, Wingard, 2013; 519). We must be willing to rethink convention and introduce our diverse students' stories and perspectives into the agenda of our scholarship. A more broadened and complex view, coupled with new perspectives, will help to liberate us from the limited role of academic service in the margins of institutional organization and conversation, helping us provide better support for students, provide more significant intellectual and educational leadership to our institutions, and thereby make more significant contributions to society.

I would venture further to propose a research area, a specialization, on international students, with concerns about graduate-level international students being a sub-specialization. We might call the specialization "international student study," and it could be an interdisciplinary field of research where scholars of international education, higher education, writing and language/communication support, career centers and other academic services, as well as recruitment and student affairs could find a common ground. Addressing the gaps in the scholarship and creating corresponding professional opportunities, scholars from across the disciplines could work to develop such a specialization by putting the students front and center. The academic program and scholarship should focus on the students themselves (rather than on support systems, institutions, professions or disciplines, social/national interests, or globalization/internationalization of education), especially because international graduate students are capable of partnership and even leadership to address their needs and even the broader interests of academe. As the very name of this journal indicates, the new specialization would foreground the students' own experiences and stories, their stakes and perspectives, their challenges and strengths, their failures and successes, their hurdles and aspirations.

Because "globalization, transformation from the industrial into the global knowledge economy, and international student mobility are mutually reinforcing one another and changing the higher education landscape worldwide" (Gürüz, 2011; 19), foregrounding students as we explore the interactions among these dynamics could help us better serve the students and the society. Such a focus would especially help

us recognize that international students bring many traditions of knowledge, helping us rethink higher education in light of internationalization. There is a need to develop "transformative internationalization," which, as Habib, Haan, and Mallett (2015) argue, cannot be achieved by simply "recruiting students from other countries": it should instead be "about changing the nature, perspective and culture of all the functions of the university" (web). I argue that future evolution of the university should be guided in the interest of future generations of learners and scholars who will (or should be able to) cross national and cultural borders. If international education is to be driven by broader perspectives and long-term visions for society and the world—especially for increasing in global social mobility and greater exchange of knowledge in the interest of broader human good—the scholarship on advanced international students can and should focus on the students and can and should be on the frontline of discourse about higher education at large.

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SHYAM SHARMA, PhD, is an associate professor and Graduate Program Director in the Program in Writing and Rhetoric at State University of New York in Stony Brook. His scholarship and teaching both focus on writing in the disciplines, professional communication, cross-cultural rhetoric, international students and education, new media in education, and issues about language and language policy. His recent book (Writing Support for International graduate Students: Enhancing Transition and Success, Routledge, 2018), which is based on data gathered by visiting 20 US universities (plus distantly from 15 more) offers theoretical and practical strategies for better serving international graduate students and using that support as a high-impact point of intervention in graduate education at large. Email: kmanjet@gmail.com

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The Price of Being International: Career Outcomes of International Master's Recipients in U.S. Labor Market

Xiushan Jiang
College of Charleston, USA

Dongbin Kim
Michigan State University, USA

ABSTRACT

This study sought to examine whether international master's recipients (IMRs) who graduated from U.S. institutions have different early career outcomes in major and job match, annual earnings, and career satisfaction from their counterpart domestic master's recipients (DMRs). By analyzing combined datasets of National Survey of Recent College Graduates, this study found that IMRs were 2 times more likely than DMRs to hold jobs that are related to their master's degree. On the other hand, IMRs faced an 8% earnings disadvantage as compared with DMRs. There was no statistically significant difference in job satisfaction between IMRs and DMRs. The policy implications for postsecondary institutions and the U.S. were discussed.

Keywords: annual salary, career outcomes, international master's recipients job satisfaction, major–job match

During the 2014–2015 academic year, more than 200,000 international students at the master's level studied in the United States, representing a 71% increase from 120,000 in 2004–2005 (Institute of International Education, 2015). Reflecting the trends, the number of foreigners with a master's degree who stayed after their education and worked in the U.S. labor market has also increased over time. Of all temporary foreign workers (i.e., H-1B visa holders) employed in the US in 2009, 62% were those with advanced degrees, representing an approximately 20% increase from the year 2000 (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2011).

Foreign workers in U.S. labor markets are considered important contributors to the development of the U.S. economy. They provide a young workforce for the nation, which suffers from declining birth rates and aging populations (Arthur &

Flynn, 2011; Stephan & Levin, 2003). Foreign workers who have received U.S. degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields are especially seen as a coveted pool of talent that is critical for the nation to maintain and improve its competitive advantages in the knowledge-based global economy (National Academy of Sciences, 2007; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2008). While the US has been considered the "IQ magnet" for highly skilled foreign workers (Shachar, 2006, p.148), this trend has recently changed, and the US is no longer the sole country actively recruiting the best foreign talent. Instead, other developed countries, such as Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom, have recently begun to compete for the highly skilled foreign talent (Shachar, 2006).

From an international student's perspective, with an increasing number of students studying abroad, the value of an overseas degree in their home countries is likely to depreciate. Therefore, acquiring foreign work experience has become more important than ever, even for those who choose to move back to their home country—work experience abroad makes international students better able to compete in the home country job market (Gribble, 2014). Regardless of whether they plan to work in their host or home country in the future, therefore, the career prospects of international master's recipients (IMRs) may have significant implications for higher education institutions' recruitment of future international students (Gribble, 2014).

Previous literature on career outcomes of foreign-born workers with degrees acquired at U.S. institutions has primarily focused on those with doctoral degrees (Corley & Sabharwal, 2007; Kim, WolfWendel, & Twombly, 2011; Mamiseishvili, 2011) or those with bachelor's degrees who graduated from U.S. institutions (Jiang, 2018). This study, in contrast, seeks to understand how foreign workers with master's degrees from U.S. higher education institutions experience the transition from degree seekers to highly skilled workers, with particular emphasis on their employment outcomes in the U.S. job market. Recognizing the significant differences in language, culture, and socioeconomic conditions by countries of origin (Lee & Rice, 2007; Phythian, Walters, & Anisef, 2011), this study further explores possible differences in career outcomes of IMRs by their countries of origin. Our specific research questions are as follows:

1. Of those who received their master's degree from U.S. higher education institutions, are there different patterns in early career outcomes (major–job match, annual earnings, and job satisfaction) by international status?
2. Of those who received their master's degree from U.S. higher education institutions, does international status play a unique role in determining early career outcomes, all things considered?
3. Of the international workers with temporary visas, do the countries of origin have a unique effect on early career outcomes?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Challenges for Foreign Workers with Temporary Visas

While IMRs have successfully acquired their human capital from their education in the US, their ability to convert their U.S. credentials into career success may be strongly limited by possible discrimination against foreigners (Cantwell & Lee, 2010). International students face numerous challenges in transitioning from postsecondary institutions to the job market and to working in the US (Sangganjanavanich, Lenz, & Cavazos, 2011). Examples of the culturally based barriers to employment that international students experience are negative perceptions of an English accent (Carlson & Mchenry, 2006), unfamiliarity with available job options/promotion opportunities, and acculturation stress (Fritz, Chin, & Demarinis, 2008), to name a few. Even after successfully locating jobs in the US, foreign workers may still face significant barriers in gaining career advancement comparable to their domestic peers.

Examining the experiences of international postdoctoral researchers, Cantwell and Lee (2010) argued that international status does not represent a legal category only, but is also defined by a sense of alienation and discrimination. International workers' career success may be further restricted by immigration regulations, which largely limit their freedom to change jobs. International workers who are professionals with a baccalaureate or higher degree have to apply for the H-1B temporary visa through their employers in order to legally work in the US. The visa allows for a 3-year stay that is renewable for another 3 years and permits a change of employers upon issuances of a new visa (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2015). Since the H-1B visa is tied to a specific employer, foreign temporary workers risk the possibility of losing their working visas if they switch jobs (Lan, 2013). The restricted mobility of H-1B workers makes temporary foreigner workers vulnerable to exploitation in the form of lower pay and longer working hours (Matloff, 2003) and constrains their negotiating power from gaining better career outcomes (Lowell, 1999). Therefore, the possible discrimination against foreigners, coupled with the restricted job mobility due to the limitations of temporary visas, may put IMRs in a vulnerable position in the U.S. job market, which may negatively affect their likelihood of achieving career outcomes that are comparable to their U.S. peers.

Career Outcome: Major–Job Match

Prior research focusing only on immigrants who did not receive postsecondary degrees from host countries found that these immigrants were more likely to hold jobs unrelated to their college major in the host country relative to domestic workers (Arbeit & Warren, 2013; Dean, 2009). This line of research revealed that immigrants who received college degrees from their home country, but did not attain degrees from their host country were more likely to encounter the mismatch between education from home country and jobs they hold in the host country than domestic workers (Arbeit & Warren, 2013). The primary attribute of immigrants' mismatch may be the incompatibility between degrees or skills acquired through foreign education that immigrants received from their home country and the skill

requirements of the host country. Although foreign credentials, in general, tend to be devalued in the host country's labor market, the extent of major and job mismatch seems to differ by country of origin. Focusing on immigrants in Canada, Dean (2009) found that foreign workers from western regions were more likely to succeed in locating jobs related to their field of studies than immigrants from the Middle East and Asia. Immigrants who received their postsecondary degrees from countries that are predominantly White and English-speaking were more likely to locate jobs that matched their fields of study than immigrants who received their degrees from Asian and African countries (Arbeit & Warren, 2013).

Career Outcome: Earnings

In previous studies, researchers primarily have utilized measures of human capital, including language proficiency and devalued foreign education, to explain the earning gap between immigrants and native-born workers (Bratsberg & Ragan, 2002; Chiswick & Miller, 2007). Yet, discriminatory practices in the host country have been found to negatively affect the labor-market value of immigrants' human capital; thus, all things equal, immigrants are penalized due to their foreign status in the job market (Boyd & Thomas, 2002). Moreover, focusing on international students, prior research found that international students' college experiences vary by country of origin (Lee & Opio, 2011; Lee & Rice, 2007). Specifically, this line of research revealed that while students from Asia, India, Latin America, and the Middle East reported that they faced considerable indirect or direct discrimination experiences, students from Europe, Canada, and New Zealand did not consider their studying experiences in the U.S. campus related to their race or culture as negative (Lee & Opio, 2011; Lee & Rice, 2007). Consistent with this view, prior research on employment outcomes of immigrants also suggests that immigrants from non-European countries are more likely to have lower economic achievement than immigrants of European origin. One factor that possibly causes the discrepancy of economic accomplishments in the job market by country of origin is that primarily coming from non-European countries (such as Asian countries) with a different skin color from previous immigrants from European countries, makes immigrants from non-European countries visible targets for racial, cultural, or ethnic discrimination in the host country (Bratsberg & Ragan, 2002; Hou & Balakrishnan, 1996; Phythian et al., 2010).

Career Outcome: Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is crucial in studying career outcomes of workers in that job satisfaction has a close association with labor market mobility, employee well-being, and job performance (Freeman, 1978; Hellman, 1997, Mount, Ilies, & Johnson, 2006; Rode, 2004). Immigrants, especially visible minority immigrants, generally defined as those who are of non-Caucasian race or non-White in skin color, reported lower job satisfaction compared with domestic workers, and lower career satisfaction compared with non-visible minority immigrants (Yap, Holmes, Hannan, & Cukier, 2014).

Focusing on international doctorate recipients and faculty who received their degrees from U.S. institutions of higher education, previous studies revealed that foreign-born scientists were more likely to report lower work satisfaction than U.S.-born peers (Corley & Sabharwal, 2007). In examining the job satisfaction difference between foreign-born and U.S.-born scientists and engineers employed at American universities, Sabharwal (2011) found that foreign-born faculty members across all citizenship categories (naturalized citizens, permanent residents, and temporary residents) had lower job satisfaction than native-born faculty members, after controlling for various job, organizational, personal, and cultural factors. Further, examining job satisfaction of managers and professionals in Canada, Yap et al. (2014) found that foreign-born employees experienced significantly lower levels of career satisfaction than native-born workers.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research utilizes human capital theory and neo-racism theory, which provide complementary perspectives in understanding if and how IMRs experience career outcomes differently from their domestic peers. Human capital theory suggests that individuals, by investing in education and career training, become more productive, which in turn improves their career outcomes in terms of the amount of life-time earnings, occupational choice, and occupational status (Becker, 2009; Paulsen, 2001). Human capital theory is based on the premise that the labor market tends to reward merit (certain measures of ability and efforts). In a meritocratic labor market, individuals with more education and career training will be rewarded with better career achievements. However, the labor market is hardly completely meritocratic in reality. Instead, the market value of educational achievements and credentials must be negotiated with potential employers. In other words, through the negotiation process, the market value of the educational achievements and credentials workers have attained is eventually determined. The market value determined by the negotiation between workers and employers may be different from the one determined in a real meritocratic labor market (Anisef, Sweet, & Frempong, 2003). More importantly, in this negotiation process, race/ethnicity, gender, and/or immigration status play a role and neo-racism, with its emphasis on the discrimination against foreigners, add its explanatory power to the study of understanding the career outcomes of immigrants and foreign workers.

Neo-racism theory, also called new racism, proposes a unique type of discrimination based on culture and nationality instead of on race (Balibar, 1992; Hervik, 2004). As defined by Balibar (1992), neo-racism is "a racism whose dominant theme is not biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences, ….. the incompatibility of life-styles and traditions" (p. 21). Neo-racism emerges and flourishes in a society where the culture of political individualism is promoted and the dominant culture is considered superior. Therefore, the culture of immigrants, differing from the dominant culture, is likely to be excluded and discriminated against (Balibar, 1992; Hervik, 2004). It is critical to point out that neo-racism and biological racism are not mutually exclusive but can coexist and share similar goals in creating

a cultural hierarchy by exclusion, denial of rights, and mistreatment toward foreigners and outsiders (Hervik, 2004).

Although neo-racism was first used to explain discrimination against immigrants in France (Balibar, 1992), Lee and Rice (2007) extended its application by studying international students and postdoctoral scholars in U.S. higher education institutions. They uncovered a range of neo-racist encounters toward international students and scholars, ranging from verbal insults to physical assaults that stemmed from the international students and scholars being perceived as unwelcome outsiders in the US. The effect of neo-racism on IMRs in the U.S. job market may not be fixed but differs by country of origin. As indicated in the previous studies, students from Asia (including India), Latin America, and the Middle East reported considerable indirect or direct discrimination, whereas students from countries in Europe, Canada, and New Zealand did not report any direct negative experiences related to their race or culture (Lee & Opio, 2011; Lee & Rice, 2007).

Drawing on the neo-racism theory and the prior literature relating to career outcomes of foreign-born workers, this study hypothesizes that IMRs may experience significant neo-racism in their career outcomes and therefore, all things being equal, IMRs have significantly disadvantaged career outcomes compared with their DMR peers. Going one step further, this study hypothesizes that of the IMRs, those from countries that are culturally similar to the US (e.g., English-speaking countries) enjoy better career outcomes than those from countries that are culturally distinct from the US.

METHOD

Data Sources and Sample

The data used in the present study are the National Survey of Recent College Graduates (NSRCG) from the National Science Foundation (NSF). The NSRCG data provide detailed information about demographic characteristics, educational background, career information, and visa status for individuals holding a master's degree from U.S. academic institutions and living in the United States during the survey reference week (NSF, 2013). To have a greater sample size of the foreign workers with temporary visas, we built data sets by combining five NSRCG surveys over 10 years (2001, 2003, 2006, 2008, and 2010). The NSRCG survey consisted of individuals who received either a bachelor's or master's degree from U.S. institutions 2 or 3 years prior to the survey year. NSRCG data are collected through surveys that utilize stratified and two-stage probability proportional to size sampling techniques. Therefore, this study used the command SVY in STATA, in order to effectively control for the sample design effect using the final survey weight, WTSURVY (Kim, Saatcioglu & Neufeld, 2012).

IMRs are defined as non-U.S. citizens holding temporary working visas (H-1B) and DMRs are defined as native U.S. citizens (excluding naturalized citizens). The total numbers of IMRs and DMRs for the study are 1,664 (14.3%) and 9,972 (85.7%), respectively. The majority of IMRs were from India (49.94%) and China (20.78%). The remaining 29.28% of IMR are from 13 other countries. The data include only the individuals who are full-time workers with an age range of 19 to 65.

As defined by NSF (2013), full-time employees are those who work more than 35 hours per week.

Variables

The dependent variables, three career outcome measures, are (a) major-job match; (2) annual salary; and (3) job satisfaction. The major-job match variable is an ordinal categorical variable that indicates the extent to which college graduates' principal job is related to the highest degree (1 = not related, 2 = somewhat related, and 3 = closely related). The salary variable is a continuous variable that measures the basic annual salary of master's recipients as of the week the survey was taken. Job satisfaction is defined by how master's recipients rated their overall satisfaction with the job they held. Job satisfaction is measured by an ordinal categorical variable with a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *very dissatisfied*, 2 = *somewhat dissatisfied*, 3 = *somewhat satisfied*, and 4 = *very satisfied*).

A list of independent variables is categorized into three groups: demographic, academic experience, and labor market–related variables. Demographic variables include gender, race/ethnicity, age, marital status, having children, and parental education. Previous research has consistently found that gender and race/ethnicity play an important role in career stratifications: By being male or White, individuals enjoy advantaged career outcomes relative to female and racial minorities (Kim & Sakamoto, 2010; Robst, 2007). Prior research has revealed that college graduates from affluent families are more likely to convert their postsecondary education into career success in the labor market; thus parental education is included in the present study as a proxy of family socioeconomic background (Borgen, 2015; Rivera, 2015). A first-generation student is defined in the present study as having no parents or guardians with at least a bachelor's degree. Marital status, having children, and age have been found in previous studies to influence career outcomes including earnings, career advancement, and the chance of major–job match (Fogg & Harrington, 2012; Robst, 2007).

Academic experience variables include the field of study where master's recipients received their degrees (math and computer science, physics, chemistry and physical science, biology and agricultural science, health, psychology, and social science with engineering as the reference group). The self-reported overall undergraduate grade point average (GPA), following previous studies (e.g., Jones & Jackson, 1990), is coded into three categories (high = 3.75–4.0; middle = 3.25–3.74; and low = <3.24 being a reference group). Since the NSRCG does not provide information of GPA for master's programs, this study used undergraduate GPA as a proxy for master's program GPAs given that previous studies reported close correlations between academic performance in undergraduate and graduate school (Kuncel, Crede, & Thomas, 2007; McKee, Mallory, & Campbell, 2001). The selectivity of higher education that individuals received their degree is known to influence career outcomes. The most selective institutions are defined as the top 25 institutions from *U.S. News and World Report* in this research. It is worth noting that rankings of universities tend to remain significantly stable (Morphew & Swanson, 2011).

Job-related variables include employer sector, employer size, employer region, and having a supervisory role. According to the current immigration code, if foreign workers work in a non-profit entity related to or affiliated with higher education institutions and government, they are exempt from the H-1B statutory cap (U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 2016). Given that IMRs working at higher education institutions or in the government could receive the H-1B status more easily than their peers working outside of higher education or the government, this study includes employer sector, coded as whether or not the employer is a postsecondary institution or government entity. Employer regions are controlled in this study in that previous studies have uncovered the influence of employer regions on earnings, partially because of the varied regional economic conditions of labor markets and the living costs discrepancies across regions (Fog & Harrington, 2012): Employer region was coded as Northeast, Midwest, South, and West, with Northeast being the reference group. It is particularly worth noting that larger employers are more likely to obey the immigration law to give international workers comparable salaries to domestic workers (Levina & Xin, 2007; Matloff, 2003). Therefore, employer size, a continuous variable was included in the statistical analysis.

There is the glass ceiling effect in the labor market where racial and ethnic minorities are less likely to be promoted to be managers as compared to Whites (Zeng, 2011). To examine if the glass ceiling effect is found among IMRs, this study includes whether individuals hold supervisor status recoded: 1 = supervisors and 0 = non-supervisors.

Previous studies have consistently documented the significant associations among career outcome variables—major–job match, salary, and job satisfaction (Bender & Heywood, 2011; Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995; Robst, 2007; Xu, 2013). For example, the mismatch between college academic training and postgraduation careers has significant negative effects on earnings, job satisfaction, and turn-overs (Bender & Heywood, 2011; Robst, 2007; Xu, 2013). In addition, earnings have been found in previous studies to be one of the most influential predictors of job satisfaction (Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995). Therefore, major–job match is included as a controlled variable in the analysis on earnings. Similarly, major–job match and earnings are controlled in the analysis on job satisfaction.

It is worth noting that the data set for this study consists of individuals from five data collection points over a 10-year period. In order to capture the effect of graduation timing on career outcomes, this study included a series of year dummy variables from 1999 to 2009, with 1999 being the reference year.

Considering immigrants coming from an English-speaking country may do better in the job market due to their language advantage than ones from non-English–speaking countries, previous studies have used languages of the immigrants' country of origin, along with other language related variables (e.g., age at arrival) as a proxy for immigrants' language proficiency (Bleakley & Chin, 2010; Espenshade & Fu, 1997). To understand if languages of countries of origin make any differences in career outcomes, a separate set of analysis in which the DMR variable was replaced with languages of countries of origin (India, China, and other countries).

Statistical Analysis

For the two career outcome measures that are ordered categorical variables—major–job match and job satisfaction, two separate sets of ordered logistic regression analyses are conducted to study whether international status significantly influences the probability of having jobs related to majors (or job satisfaction) after controlling for all other relevant predictors (Hosmer, Lemeshow, & Sturdivant, 2000). The final model for the ordered logistic regression is specified as follows:

$$\mathrm{Log}\left(\frac{\mathrm{p}(\mathrm{y_i} \le \mathrm{m}|\mathrm{x})}{p(\mathrm{y_i} > \mathrm{m}|\mathrm{x})}\right) = \beta_0 + \beta * INTER + \alpha * DEM + \gamma * EDU + \delta * JOB + \sum_{t=2}^{11} \kappa_t YEAR_{ti}$$

The results of ordered logistic regression are reported in odds ratio (the exponent of the log odds; Long & Freese, 2006): Odds ratio is interpreted as the odds of an outcome being less than or equal to *m* versus being greater than *m* with one unit change in the predictor variable after controlling for other covariates (Bruin, 2006). In the model, the variable INTER denotes IMRs with DMRs being the reference group, DEM denotes a vector of demographic indicators, EDU represents a vector of academic experience indicators, JOB denotes a vector of job market characteristics, and the variable YEAR represents a vector of series of year dummy variables from 1999 to 2009.

Because the distribution of annual earnings is highly skewed, log transformation is used for the value of annual earnings and logged earnings are considered to have a linear relationship with international status and other demographic (DEM), educational (EDU), and job market (JOB), and major–job match (MJM) variables plus an error term (Pohlman & Leitner, 2003).

$$\mathrm{Logged(earnings)} = \beta_0 + \beta * \mathrm{INTER} + \alpha * DEM + \gamma * EDU + \delta * JOB + \kappa * MJM + \sum_{t=2}^{11} \kappa_t YEAR_{ti} + \mu$$

Data Analysis Process

We first conducted chi-square tests to examine if the three career outcomes, as well as demographic, educational background, and job market factors, differ significantly by international status. Additional descriptive analyses were conducted for the percentage distributions of categorical variables and mean and standard deviation of continuous variables by career outcome measures. Sequential regression analyses were conducted to examine if international status has a significant and unique association with career outcome measures and if the unique association changes as additional variables were entered into the model (Keith, 2014). By successively adding variables to the regression model at each step, we were able to examine how the effect of international status on career outcomes changes with additional subsets of variables added to the model. Model 1 included only the

international status variable in the regression. Additional demographic variables (i.e., gender, race/ethnicity, and parental education) were added to Model 2; academic experience variables including major, undergraduate GPA, and the selectivity of the higher education institutions were added to Model 3; and lastly, job market–related variables were added to Model 4. In analyses on earnings, Model 4 had one additional variable—major–job match. In analyses on job satisfaction, Model 4 had two additional variables—major–job match and annual earnings. Lastly, to understand if the countries of origin have a unique effect on early career outcomes, a separate full regression model (Model 4) was conducted with three variables (India, China, and other non-U.S. countries) with DMRs as the reference group.

RESULTS

IMRs: Are They Different from DMRs?

In general, IMRs are more likely to be males (67.4% as compared with 46.6% of DMRs), younger (the average age for IMRs is 28, 3 years younger than DMRs), and from families with parents holding college degrees. On the other hand, IMRs are less likely to be married and to have children. More than four fifths of IMRs are Asian, followed by Hispanic, White, and Black. The majority of DMRs are White (65.23%), followed by Hispanic, Black, and Asian.

IMRs are likely to have higher GPAs than DMRs. Over 83% of IMRs held GPAs higher than 3.25 as compared with only 65% of DMRs. With regard to field of study, IMRs are highly concentrated in the STEM fields (94%), while DMRs are distributed relatively evenly in STEM (64%) and non-STEM (36%) fields. While IMRs are slightly less likely to graduate from the highly selective top 25 institutions than DMRs, the difference was not statistically different.

For the job-related variables, IMRs are more likely to work in business and industry (than education institution or government), more likely to work for employers with smaller number of employees, and more likely to work in the Northeast than their DMR peers. On the other hand, IMRs are less likely than DMR to work in the South and are less likely to hold supervisory roles than DMR (See Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Categorical Independent Variables (*N* = 11,604)

	IMRs	DMRs	χ^2	*p*
Demographic characteristics				
Gender				
Male	67.43%	46.62%		
Female	32.57%	53.38%	246.88***	0.0001
Marital status				
Married	43.99%	47.26%		
Not married	56.01%	52.74%	6.140*	0.013

	IMRs	DMRs	χ^2	*p*
Having children				
Yes	11.48%	25.54%		
No	88.52%	74.46%	156.72***	0.0001
First generation				
College degree	78.05%	61.40%		
Less than college degree	21.95%	38.60%	169.19***	0.0001
Race				
White	4.87%	65.23%		
Asian	83.17%	3.38%		
Hispanic	10.46%	16.39%		
Black	1.50%	15.00%	730.00***	0.0001
Educational background				
Major				
Biology & agriculture	4.21%	8.89%		
Math & computer science	25.24%	70.85%		
Physics & chemistry science	7.33%	7.01%		
Engineering	57.21%	37.17%		
Health	0.72%	8.76%		
Social science	4.69%	16.80%		
Psychology	0.60%	11.09%	861.90***	0.0001
College selectivity				
Top 25	12.86%	13.20%		
Not top 25	87.14%	86.80%	0.14	0.7
GPA				
3.75–4.0	36.25%	24.59%		
3.25–3.74	47.07%	41.65%		
<3.24	16.69%	33.76%	11.88**	0.001
Year master's degree awarded				
1999	8.89%	6.50%		
2000	10.40%	7.48%		
2001	7.33%	7.32%		
2002	4.69%	6.50%		
2003	5.47%	7.10%		
2004	7.63%	7.65%		
2005	16.11%	9.11%		
2006	11.54%	11.74%		

	IMRs	DMRs	χ^2	*p*
2007	10.94%	12.53%		
2008	10.10%	11.60%		
2009	12.56	12.46%	48.85***	0.0001
Job market characteristics				
Employer sector				
Education and government	21.81%	42.72%		
Business and industry	78.19%	57.28%	260.07***	0.0001
Employer locations				
Northeast	23.10%	17.91%		
Midwest	17.63%	18.38%		
South	32.37%	38.40%		
West	26.90%	25.32%	35.54***	0.0001
Supervisor status				
Yes	20.31%	31.18%		
No	9.69%	68.82%	80.71***	0.0001

Note. IMR = international master's recipient; DMR = domestic master's recipient. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Continuous Independent Variables (*N* = 11,604)

	IMR	DMR	Min	Max	*t* test
Age at the survey year	28	31	19	64	15.68***
Logged earnings	10.91	10.89	0	12.97	ns
Employer size	5.4	5.69	1	8	5.33***

Note. IMR = International Master's Recipient; DMR = domestic master's recipient. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

The logged earnings was an independent variable in career satisfaction analyses.

Career Outcomes: Does International Status Matter?

IMRs are significantly more likely than DMRs to be employed in jobs that are closely related to their majors (χ^2 =125.74, $p < .001$). As for the overall job satisfaction, IMRs seem to be more satisfied with their jobs relative to DMRs (χ^2 =37.45, p =.0001). IMRs on average had significantly higher annual earnings (after adjusting inflation) than DMRs: The average annual earnings for IMRs ($62,176) are $1,635 higher than DMRs ($60,541).

Of IMRs, Chinese workers had the highest major-match rates, followed by Indians and IMRs from other countries. On the other hand, Indian IMRs had higher job satisfaction than Chinese IMRs or IMRs from other countries. This finding may reflect the differences in annual earnings by countries of origin: Indian IMRs reported the highest annual earnings ($66,800), significantly higher than DMRs, Chinese IMRs, or IMRs from other countries. The annual earnings of Chinese IMRs were not statistically different from IMR from other countries.

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Major–Job Match: Differences by International Status

	Not related	Somewhat related	Closely related	χ^2
DMR	9.11%	26.79%	64.09%	125.74***
IMR	3.19%	19.65%	77.16%	
China	2.18%	13.90%	83.92%	23.5***
India	2.83%	22.22%	74.94%	
Other countries	5.61%	22.24%	72.15%	

Note. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

Table 4: Percentage Distribution of Job satisfaction: Differences by International Status

	VD	*SD*	*SS*	*VS*	χ^2
DMR	3.55%	9.68%	41.63%	45.14%	37.45***
IMR	1.62%	6.79%	46.63%	44.95%	
IMR					
China	1.09%	9.26%	57.49%	32.15%	41.33***
India	1.25%	5.44%	43.31%	50.00%	
Other foreign countries	2.71%	7.74%	45.26%	44.29%	

Note. VD = very dissatisfied, SD = somewhat dissatisfied, SS = somewhat satisfied, VS = very satisfied. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

Table 5: Mean Differences in Earnings by Country of Origin

Group	Group means		Mean difference	HSD test
DMR vs IMR	$60,541	$62,176	$1,635.00	
DMR vs China	$60,500	$59,900	$594.10	0.5748
DMR vs India	$60,500	$66,800	$6,334.42	6.1287*

DMR vs Other countries	$60,500	$56,200	$4,339.02	4.1981*
China vs India	$59,900	$66,800	$6,928.52	6.7035*
China vs Other countries	$59,900	$56,200	$3,744.92	3.6233
India vs other countries	$66,800	$56,200	$10,673.44	10.3268*

Note. $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$.

With the purpose of controlling for the possible influence of currency inflation on earnings, salaries in different years were converted into 2015 dollars using the inflation calculator from Bureau of Labor Statistics (CPI Inflation Calculator, 2015).

Understanding the Effect of International Status on Career Outcomes

For major–job match, the effect of international status has increased consistently from Model 1 (odds ratio = 1.51, $p < .001$) to Model 2 (odds ratio = 1.83, $p < .001$), to Model 3 (odds ratio = 1.87, $p < .001$), and to Model 4 (odds ratio = 1.97, $p < 0.001$). In other words, when only the IMRs (DMRs being the reference group) were included in Model 1, the odds of holding jobs that are related to their majors are 51% higher for IMRs than their domestic counterparts. In Model 4, after taking into account master's recipients' demographic characteristics, educational experiences, and a series of job market characteristics, the odds ratio of IMRs is 1.97, suggesting that IMRs are about 2 times more likely than DMRs to hold jobs that are related to their master's degree, all things being controlled (see Table 6).

By contrast, IMRs are not statistically different from their DMR counterparts on career satisfaction, across all sequential models examined. This suggests that regardless of whether IMRs share similar characteristics with their DMR counterparts, there is no consistent difference in career satisfaction by IMR status.

For earnings, Model 1 shows that before controlling for any other relevant variables, the logged annual earnings for IMRs is 7% higher than the annual earning for DMRs, and this difference is statistically significant at the .01 level. After adding demographic factors in Model 2, however, the significant positive effect of being IMRs on earnings disappeared, suggesting that the reason why IMRs had higher earnings than DMRs is because of the demographic characteristics that are associated with higher earnings. In Model 3 when both demographic and educational background factors were assumed to be equal, IMRs had 6% lower logged annual earnings compared to DMRs. The earnings gap between IMRs and DMRs even grew larger in Model 4 where all independent variables were entered: IMRs who work in the U.S. labor market for less than 3 years face a 8% earning disadvantage as compared to their DMR counterparts, all things being considered (see Table 6 for details).

Table 6: Coefficients of IMR Relative to DMR on Career Outcomes

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Major–job match[+]	1.51***	1.83***	1.87***	1.97***
Career satisfaction[+]	1.09	1.14	1.16	1.08
Earnings	0.07**	−0.02	−0.06**	−0.08**

Note. [+]Odds ratio. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

Does Country of Origin Matter in Career Outcomes?

To understand if countries of origin matter in career outcomes, a separate set of analyses in which the DMR variable was replaced with countries of origin (India, China, and other countries) was conducted and the findings are presented in Table 7. Of 1,664 IMRs in the data, 52.6% of them are from India (n = 875), 21.7% from China (n = 361) and 25.7% from other countries of origin (n = 428). The purpose of categorizing countries into India, China, and other countries was to test if IMRs from India where English is the official language had better career outcomes in the U.S. job market as compared with IMRs from China whose official language is Chinese.

Table 7: Coefficients of IMR Relative to DMR on Career Outcomes: By Countries of Origin

	Major job match[+]	Career satisfaction[+]	Earnings
India	1.85***	1.45*	0.01
China	2.9***	0.72	-0.1**
Other countries	1.38*	0.97	-0.11***

Note. [+] Odds ratio. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

For the analysis on career satisfaction, major and job match and earnings added to Model 4, as additional job market characteristics. For the analysis on earnings, major and job match was included in Model 4 as a job market characteristic.

While IMRs altogether were more likely to have a job that is significantly more related to their majors than their DMR counterparts, unique and significantly different sizes of positive effects were found by countries of origin as compared to DMRs: The odds of having a job matched major were nearly 3 times greater for Chinese IMRs, 1.85 times greater for Indians, and 1.38 times greater for IMRs from other countries than their counterpart DMRs.

Similarly, the levels of career satisfaction were significantly different by countries of origin: Only Indian IMRs reported to have higher career satisfaction than their DMR counterparts. No significant differences were found between Chinese IMRs and DMRs or IMRs from other countries and DMRs.

For earnings, IMRs born in China and other countries presented significant earning loss as compared to their DMR counterparts. On the other hand, IMRs from

India did not show significant earning differences from their DMR counterparts. With these findings, it became clear that country of origin is an important factor that determines career outcomes of IMRs even if all of IMRs were born in foreign countries and work in the United States on temporary visas.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Of the three career outcomes this study examined, IMRs were significantly more likely to have jobs related to their majors but less likely to have equivalent earnings in comparison to their DMR counterparts. For career satisfaction, no significant difference between IMRs and DMRs was found. The seemingly positive relationship between major–job match for IMRs should be understood in the context of the current U.S. temporary visa regulations. In order for IMRs to legally work in the US, they have to apply for an H-1B working visa, which imposes several constraints on what employment can be taken. One key requirement for international students to gain the H-1B visa is that the international student's job must be in an occupation that is *closely related* to their field of study (USCIS, 2015). Under this regulation, IMRs can be employed only in jobs that are related to their major, whereas DMRs can freely select jobs at their will. The effect of H-1B regulation on major and job match, however, may particularly be evident before IMRs gain their permanent resident status. Once foreign workers gained permanent resident status, their career outcomes were largely improved such as better pay, no limitation for job mobility, and job opportunities (Lan, 2013).

From a different angle, this finding also suggests that as compared with immigrants without U.S. degrees, IMRs were able to locate jobs that were related to their majors. Prior literature studying foreign immigrants, most of whom did not hold U.S. postsecondary degrees, indicates that immigrants were more likely to hold jobs unrelated to their college major in the host country compared with domestic workers (Arbeit & Warren, 2013). Therefore, this study finds that the skills and knowledge IMRs acquired from U.S. higher education institutions—human capital—help them locate jobs in the United States, indicates that human capital is location-bound, meaning that the value and applicability of human capital in the job market is highly dependent on where it is acquired.

The net negative effect of international status on earnings is consistent with the previous literature—although international students received degrees from U.S. institutions, they still face a significant earning loss as compared with their domestic counterparts with the same degrees (Chakravartty, 2006). This finding may suggest that international students suffer from a form of discrimination against their culture, not necessarily by their race, which prevents them from advancing their career success as much as their domestic peers, even with similar professional qualifications (Lee & Opio, 2011; Lee & Rice, 2007). As explained by Cantwell and Lee (2010), international status in the job market is more than a mere legal category, but rather a perception of cultural stereotypes, which may have influenced IMRs experiencing loss of earnings. At the same time, the finding supports that human capital theory has its own flaw that limits its ability to fully explain the career outcomes of IMRs. In the U.S. job market, IMRs need to negotiate with employers to determine the market

value of their U.S. credentials; thus in this process, international status may play an important role in negatively shaping their ability to convert their U.S. education into career success, especially in earnings.

Contrary to the negative effect of international status on earnings (Hervik, 2004; Lee & Opio, 2011; Lee & Rice, 2007), this study found that IMRs are equally satisfied with their jobs as their DMR counterparts. IMRs may perceive the struggles of converting their human capital into career success at the early stage of their careers as a price they need to pay for gaining permanent resident status (Matloff, 2003). IMRs may also realize that after they receive their permanent resident status, they will be freed from visa restrictions and can expect to gain better employment outcomes (Lan, 2013). Ultimately, despite the earning loss compared with their domestic peers, IMRs are still more likely to enjoy advantaged career outcomes as compared to their peers in their home countries with similar professional qualifications. For instance, the average monthly salary for chemical engineers in the United States in 2005 was $4,710, whereas the corresponding figure in China was $1,076 (International Average Salary Income Database, 2008). All these may have contributed to the career satisfaction that IMRs have reported, despite their loss of earnings as compared to DMRs.

Going one step further, however, not all IMRs experience career outcomes in the same way. IMRs from India perform much better in the U.S. job market than IMRs from China or other countries in annual earnings and job satisfaction. Given that major-job match does not necessarily indicate a positive career outcome, due to H-1B regulations for IMRs, the fact that IMRs from China were much more likely to have jobs related to their major than IMRs from India suggests that Chinese IMRs may experience more restriction in major-job match when they first apply for and secure jobs in the United States than IMRs from India.

The advantages and positive outcomes that Indian IMRs experience over Chinese IMRs are particularly noticeable in annual earnings and career satisfaction. In terms of annual earnings, IMRs from China and other countries have significantly lower annual earnings than DMRs, while Indian IMRs gained almost parity with DMRs. Furthermore, Indian IMRs are significantly more satisfied with their jobs in the U.S. as compared with DMRs, whereas IMRs from China and other countries are not different from their DMR counterparts.

This finding supports previous studies, which emphasized the importance of studying the effects of countries of origin on immigrants' career outcomes (Bratsberg & Ragan, 2002; Hou & Balakrishnan, 1996). Suggesting that the distinct cultural differences between Asian and European international workers may be associated with different career advancements (Cantwell & Lee, 2010; Chakravartty, 2006), this finding reveals that even within Asian countries, there are still significant career differences among different countries of origin.

The significantly different career outcomes between Indian and Chinese IMRs may support the view based on neo-racism theory that the extent to which IMRs suffer from this new discrimination in the labor market may be not universal but instead could differ by nationality (Cantwell & Lee, 2010; Lee & Rice, 2007). One of the possible factors that explain how Indian IMRs experience better and more positive career outcomes than other IMRs might be related to English language skill. Previous

studies have documented that Asian Indian immigrants integrate into U.S. culture at a faster rate compared with Chinese immigrants, possibly due to language advantages and differences in national cultures (Chand & Ghorbani, 2011; Hofstede, 2007). Against this context, this study extends our understanding of a neo-racism that emphasizes cultural hierarchies by recognizing the influence of culturally and linguistically specific advantages in career outcomes that IMRs from certain country experience more than others.

Limitations

While prior literature consistently finds that language skills are closely associated with career outcomes of immigrants in the host country (Frank, 2013; Robertson, Hoare & Harwood, 2011), with lack of variables in NSRCG, this study was not able to consider IMRs' language skills and their association with career outcomes. The strong positive or negative effects of international status on career outcome measures in this study, therefore, may have been over (or under) estimated due to the incomplete controls of language capabilities of individuals. Nevertheless, by examining the unique effect of countries of origin on career outcomes—we believe that this study still captured the unique influences of cultures and language skills (as represented by the countries of origin) on immigrants' career success and outcomes. Future research that considers language proficiency exclusively may provide in-depth understanding on the specific mechanism through which language proficiency plays a role in immigrants' career experiences, in both positive and negative ways.

Another limitation of NSRCG data also prevented us from building a comprehensive statistical model with appropriate individual academic capability measures: undergraduate and graduate GPAs. The data only provided GPAs from undergraduate institutions but not from graduate schools. Given that undergraduate GPA is not the strongest predictor of graduate performance (McKee, Mallory & Campbell, 2001), our approach of using undergraduate GPA as a proxy of graduate GPA might not be able to fully capture the effect of college academic performance on career outcomes. Finally, although NSRCG provides key variables to examine the differences in career outcomes between IMRs and DMRs, the data from NSRCG is, in essence, secondary data. Therefore, the measurement and reliability of variables affect the robustness of the statistical analyses.

Implications for Policy, Theory, and Future Research

The disadvantaged career outcomes—earnings, in particular—of IMRs in the study, coupled with the alarming slowdown in the number of international applications to American graduate schools, may serve as a wake-up call for U.S. institutions to pay more attention to track, examine, and assess the career outcomes of international students. The fact that IMRs as a group have significant disadvantages in fully converting their U.S. degrees into economic career outcomes in the early stage of their careers may discourage future international graduate students to choose the U.S. as their study abroad destination. In fact, according to research from Council of Graduate Schools (Gonzales, Remington, & Allum, 2013), U.S. higher education in 2013 witnessed an alarming slowdown in the number of international applications to

American graduate schools—only 1% increase in international graduate applications and a 5% decline in the number of Chinese students applying to U.S. graduate schools. This decrease is potentially troubling for U.S. graduate schools, especially engineering and science departments, which rely heavily on international students to offset the decreasing domestic enrollments (Carnevale, Smith & Strohl, 2010; Fischer, 2013).

While this slowdown in international graduate applications could be attributed to a variety of factors, U.S. higher education should take this decline seriously, since it is almost inevitable that U.S. institutions will face more rigid challenges in attracting high quality international graduate students in the future. With the large number of international students returning to home countries voluntarily or involuntarily, U.S. degrees alone are not enough for international students to stand out in competitive job markets in their home countries. This situation makes U.S. work experience more important than ever for many international students to improve their career outcomes in their home countries (Gribble, 2014; Lawrence, 2013). However, the rigid visa restrictions in the US, coupled with the common disadvantages in locating jobs associated with international students, has led to the majority of international students at the bachelor's and master's level returning to their home countries without enough work experiences (Fischer, 2014; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2011). Recent studies have indicated that Chinese returnees (who once studied abroad) working in venture capital in China were actually less successful than their counterparts who had remained at home possibly due to a mismatch in skills and weaker social networks (Lawrence, 2013; Sun, 2013). Therefore, U.S. institutions, especially graduate schools, should recognize the increasing importance of work experience for international students' career outcomes (Gribble, 2014; Lawrence, 2013). Furthermore, U.S. postsecondary institutions and graduate education policymakers should expand the definition of institutional effectiveness from attracting and graduating international students to preparing them for improved and rewarding careers by effectively developing, resourcing, and implementing initiatives and strategies to improve the career outcomes of international students (Lawrence, 2013, Xu, 2013).

This study points to a direction that the U.S. immigration policy may be a significant factor to be considered in improving international students' career success. Foreign workers with H-1B visas are typically in no position to seek other employments freely under current H-1B regulations. Consequentially, H-1B employees in industry have become cheap labor as a means for companies to save costs (Matloff, 2003). The mechanism of the employer-driven selection in the H-1B system is to assure that employers identify the most appropriate workers with various skill sets (Papademetriou & Sumption, 2011), but it seems that the H-1B system has provided an opportunity for some employers to abuse the system and to get cheap and compliant workers (Matloff, 2003). With international students being considered as the talent pool for the U.S. and the intensified global competition for foreign talent among developed countries (Altbach, 2004; Shachar, 2006), immigration policymakers need to constantly monitor, assess, and revisit the effect of immigration policies toward international students, and should consider removing barriers of the

employer-driven H-1B system and granting international students full mobility in the labor market before they gain permanent resident status (Lan, 2013; Matloff, 2003).

This study focusing on temporary immigrants with the same education credentials as their native counterparts found that the earnings gaps still exist even if immigrants are educated from U.S. graduate schools—different from previous research that tends to examine immigrants with foreign education (Arbeit & Warren, 2013; Bratsberg & Ragan, 2002; Chiswick & Miller, 2007; Dean, 2009). Furthermore, this study found that there are different career outcomes even among the immigrants by their countries of origin; English language skills and cultural similarities to the American system are seemingly two factors that influence differences in career outcomes. This finding may shed an important light on the applicability of neo-racism to higher education settings; discrimination against international status is not fixed but varies by country of origin (Lee & Opio, 2011), among international students (Lee & Rice, 2007), postdoctoral scholars, (Cantwell & Lee, 2010), and master's recipients working in American labor markets.

While this study found earning gaps by immigration status, since the data examines only individuals who recently graduated with a master's degree, it is not clear if the earning loss that IMRs experience is a temporary or a lasting issue that follows IMRs' long-term career ladder. Future research that examines longitudinal datasets and traces the patterns of the income disparity and career trajectories over a longer period of time will contribute further to our understanding of career outcomes of immigrants, especially those who are educated and received credentials from American higher education institutions.

In this study, we examined individuals who have a full-time job at the time of survey. However, during the first stage of career outcomes—whether or not one is able to secure a job—significantly large numbers of IMRs fail and return back home. Therefore, the IMRs in the data are already highly capable individuals who have successfully secured their jobs in the competitive labor market in the United States. According to recent statistics (IIE, 2015; Koh, 2015), during the 10-year study period from 2001 to 2010, international students at master's or doctoral levels from India and China contributed approximately 20.9% and 33.7%, respectively, to the total international students studying in the US. Given that 49.94% in the study sample were Indian IMRs and 20.78% were Chinese IMRs, it is likely that IMRs from India are overrepresented and IMRs from China are underrepresented among those who have full-time jobs and thus included in the study. Future research, therefore, that provides an in-depth understanding of one's career trajectory—from searching for jobs to experiencing career outcomes—by examining international students who returned back home versus those who stayed in the United States after graduation would certainly enhance our understanding of the motivation behind the job search, discrimination throughout the process, and global mobility of international students that influence both host and home countries.

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XIUSHAN JIANG, PhD, is the Associate Director of Analytical Research & Planning at the Office for Institutional Effectiveness and Strategic Planning at the College of Charleston. His research interests include international higher education, employment outcomes of international students and STEM education in the college setting. Email: jiangx@cofc.edu.

DONGBIN KIM, PhD, is an Associate Professor of Higher, Adult Learning and Education (HALE) at Michigan State University. Through her scholarly endeavors, Dr. Kim seeks to examine how mobility (and different types of mobility) interacts with issues of stratification in higher education, both in national and international settings.

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Motivations for Studying Abroad and Immigration Intentions: The Case of Vietnamese Students

Tran Le Huu Nghia
Ton Duc Thang University, Vietnam

ABSTRACT

This article reports a study that investigated prospective and current Vietnamese international students' motivations to study abroad and their immigration intentions. Analyses of 55 intercept interviews and 313 responses to a survey revealed 12 push and pull factors that motivated students to pursue overseas studies and 18 sociocultural, economic, and political factors that influenced their immigration intentions. Independent samples *t* tests indicated that there were statistically significant differences in the influence of motivations on decisions to study overseas between groups of male and female students and prospective and current students. The analyses, furthermore, suggested that students' immigration intentions depended on their personal attachment to the home country and (perceived) adaptability to the host country.

Keywords: immigration intention, international education, international students, motivations, Vietnam

Physically experiencing life and studying in a host country is a rewarding learning experience for many students. Therefore, the number of students going overseas to pursue international education has continually increased in recent decades, especially to the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia (Doherty & Evershed, 2018; Kritz, 2012). However, the last 2 years have experienced great turbulence in international education. "Brexit" in the United Kingdom will restrict the free movement of people from continental European countries into the United Kingdom, and more recently, Trump's policies against immigrants pose serious threats to international education in the two countries (Choudaha, 2017; Marginson, 2017). These political upheavals are largely rooted in the fear of immigrants competing with local residents for employment and creating a social burden (Somai & Biedermann, 2016). However, many international students arrive in the host country primarily to study and experience a new culture, and unnecessarily to pursue immigration opportunities (Tran & Vu, 2016). Students' immigration prospects also appear to depend on several factors, including political ones, and not solely on their intention

to immigrate (Fenicia, Kaiser, & Schönhuth, 2016; Güngör & Tansel, 2014; Tran & Vu, 2016). Thus, international students' motivations for overseas studies and their immigration intentions need to be further explored.

Drawing from a study conducted in 2015–2016, this article reports findings related to factors that motivate students to study abroad and factors influencing their immigration intentions. This article is a timely tribute to debates about the "risk" of international students in the host country during their studies and after graduation. It also discusses implications for policies related to international students and international graduates.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Benefits of International Education

In recent decades, the number of international students has continually increased. The total number increased from 0.8 million in 1975 to 4.1 million in 2010 and is predicted to reach 8 million by 2025 (Kritz, 2012). The top five host countries of international students are the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, and France (Kritz, 2012; Lee & King, 2016). Recent years have also seen the rise of international education in Asian countries. For example, the number of international students in China increased from 77,715 in 2003 to 377,054 in 2014 (Ding, 2016). Likewise, the number of international students in Taiwan for degree and non-degree programs doubled from 38,285 in 2009–2010 to 78,261 in 2013–2014 (Lee & King, 2016).

The increase in the number of international students worldwide can be attributed to the many benefits of international education. Studies have pointed out that by pursuing international education, students can become proficient in a foreign language, enhance their academic competence, develop intercultural competence, build a network of international friends and professionals, nurture personal qualities, and increase their employment prospects (Dewey, Belnap, & Hillstrom, 2013; Nilsson & Ripmeester, 2016).

Recent studies have indicated that international students also benefit the host institution and country (Chellaraj, Maskus, & Mattoo, 2005; Deloitte Access Economics, 2015). Economically, international students pay tuition fees and use services such as tourism, accommodation, catering, editing and printing, and language education (Deloitte Access Economics, 2015). For example, in 2014–2015, international students contributed about AUD 18.8 billion to the Australian economy via tuition fees and related educational services (Deloitte Access Economics, 2015). International students are also a future source of skilled labor for the host country (Scott, Safdar, Desai Trilokekar, & El Masri, 2015). In a research paper published by the World Bank, Chellaraj et al. (2005) estimated that every 10% increase in the number of international graduates to the United States would raise patent applications by 4.7%, university patent grants by 5.3%, and non-university patent grants by 6.7%. Socio-culturally, international students enhance local residents' experiences with the different cultures they bring with them and in turn disseminate the culture of the host country upon their return to their home countries (Mellors-Bourne, Humfrey, Kemp,

& Woodfield, 2013). Politically, international students can help tighten the relationship between home and host countries via post-study support programs or scholar exchange programs. Findings from some studies seem to challenge misconceptions about international students as social welfare or migration seekers (for example, Tran & Vu, 2016). Rather, these full fee-paying international students deserve to be respected as customers of higher education and members of the future skilled workforce (Vuori, 2013).

Students' Motivation for International Education and Migration

Many studies have examined factors that motivate students to pursue education abroad (and the choice of study destinations) using the push-pull factors concept (e.g., Eder, Smith, & Pitts, 2010; Maringe & Carter, 2007; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Push factors are defined as factors that operate within the home country and influence a student's decision to undertake international study (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Push factors include the unavailability of a desired study program, lack of access to universities, and poor quality of education in the home country. Pull factors consist of factors in the host country or institution that attract international students (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002), such as culture, living standards, socioeconomic status of the host country, improved career prospects, and immigration opportunities. Other studies that do not use the push-pull model have reached similar conclusions and further revealed that international students' decisions to study abroad can be influenced by their family, teachers, and other socioeconomic, political, and cultural issues in both the home and host countries (e.g., English, Allison, & Ma, 2016; Liu & Morgan, 2016; Nguyen, 2013; Spinks, 2016).

Recognizing the potential socioeconomic and cultural benefits that international students and graduates may bring, many host countries have used different strategies to attract them, including scholarship programs and permanent residency or work visa schemes (Hawthorne & To, 2014; Scott et al., 2015). For example, in 2012, the Canadian government decided to increase the number of international student enrollments from 240,000 in 2011 to 450,000 by 2022 in an attempt to make Canada the place to be for top talent (Hawthorne & To, 2014). By 2012, about 3,983 students had successfully converted their international student status to permanent skilled migrant status in Canada (Hawthorne & To, 2014).

However, international graduates respond differently to these skilled immigration schemes. Generally, international graduates prefer to stay in the host country because of the high standard of living there, and this can also help enhance their career prospects (Arthur & Nunes, 2014; Lin, Shi, & Huang, 2016). Their social networks and marriage to local residents also increase their likelihood of staying in the host country (Arthur & Nunes, 2014; Bijwaard & Wang, 2016). Güngör and Tansel (2014) found that economic instability in the home country, established intentions to stay abroad, and negative work experience in the home country increased international graduates' likelihood of staying. In contrast, many international graduates decide to return to their home countries right after graduation or after their post-study visas expire because of a lack of employment opportunities in the host country (Bijwaard & Wang, 2016), family issues, and gender factors, according to

which females seemed to be less willing to return than males (Fenicia et al., 2016; Güngör & Tansel, 2014). Moreover, Bijwaard and Wang (2016) found that international graduates often leave the host country after they have accumulated a certain amount of savings. Furthermore, language barriers, disconnection with local communities, and perceived discrimination and unjust treatment in regard to employment opportunities can push international graduates to return to their home countries (Scott et al., 2015; Tran & Vu, 2016). Finally, political issues can be a detrimental factor that influences international students' decision to return (e.g., Spinks, 2016). For example, in Australia, international coursework graduates are entitled to post-study visas that allow them to work in the country for up to 2 years, and they are advised to leave before their visas expire (Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2017).

In summary, regardless of local residents' fear or misconception of the presence of international students and graduates, whether they stay or leave after graduation, international students benefit both themselves and the host country. The literature review showed that international students and graduates do not always consider immigration to be the top reason for pursuing an international education, but this varies across individual students. Thus, these factors should be further explored with different cohorts of international students to confirm our understanding in this regard as well as provide justifiable implications for international education policies.

THE PRESENT STUDY

Context of the Study

Current statistics show that Vietnam has become one of the top countries to send students abroad. In a recent commentary, Dr. Mark Ashwill, Director of Capstone Vietnam, reported that approximately 200,000 Vietnamese students are studying in host countries in 2018. Japan is the leading host of Vietnamese students, with 61,671 students in 2017, followed by the United States with 31,613 students, Australia with 23,000 students, and Canada with about 15,000 students (Ashwill, 2018).

However, only a few studies have directly investigated the reasons that Vietnamese students want to pursue their studies abroad (e.g., Nguyen, 2013). Nguyen's study, combined with other studies about Vietnamese higher education, revealed that increasing demands for skilled workers, low quality of higher education, globalization and regionalization, governments' commitment to sending students overseas, families' desire to improve their children's career prospects, and many international educational organizations have contributed to promoting the value of having an international education experience (Bodewig, Badiani-Magnusson, & Macdonald, 2014; Nguyen, 2013).

Vietnam is also among the countries that have the highest number of emigrants. For example, the latest statistics available on the website of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection from the Australian government show that 3,835 individuals were granted the Australian citizenship in 2014–2015. Records show that the number of skilled Vietnamese immigrants to Australia with permanent residency in that period was 1,618, an increase of 51.5% compared with 2011–2012 (1,068

individuals). Likewise, Australia's *The Guardian* reported that the number of Vietnamese people gaining permanent residency in Australia grew from approximately 2,000 in 1997 to approximately 5,500 in 2017 (Doherty & Evershed, 2018). Although there are no figures available to corroborate this, many of these permanent immigrants could be Vietnamese international graduates.

Therefore, the context above suggests that the Vietnamese international student cohort can serve as an appropriate case to explore international students' motivations for pursuing their studies abroad and their immigration intentions upon graduation. Results from this exploratory study can contribute to moderating debates and policies regarding international students.

Focus of the Article

In 2015–2016, a study was conducted to explore (a) prospective and current international Vietnamese students' motivations to study abroad at the higher education level, (b) their immigration intentions, (c) factors influencing their choice of the host country, and (d) factors influencing their choice of the host institution. In this study, prospective students were defined as those planning to study abroad in 2015, 2016, and 2017. Current students referred to those who were enrolled in a higher education course at the time of the research.

However, this article only reports findings related to the first two aims of the study. Findings related to influential factors on students' choice of the host country and institution were reported in a separate paper because of word limitations. This article specifically answers the following research questions:

1. What factors motivate prospective and current international Vietnamese students to study abroad?
2. To what extent do these motivational factors influence their decision to study abroad?
3. What factors influence their decision to return to the home country or stay in the host country upon graduation?

The study used a mixed-methods approach to explore the research issues in depth and increase the robustness of the findings with both quantitative and qualitative data (Lisle, 2011). The study was conducted in two phases using a sequential exploratory design. Qualitative data were collected first to explore the research issues. This was followed by quantitative data collection to further explore the findings from the first phase using a larger sample size (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003).

Data Collection and Analysis

In the first phase, intercept interviews were used to collect qualitative data from 55 Vietnamese prospective international students. Intercept interviews are "a straightforward and direct method for gathering data on public perceptions or other locally relevant information" (Flint et al., 2016, p. 106). Students were informed of the purpose of the study and their roles in the study and asked to sign a consent form. Among the four key research issues, students were asked to identify motivations for

their overseas studies and immigration intentions. The interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using a content analysis approach (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). By the end of this process, 12 motivations for overseas studies (Table 1) and some reasons for returning home or staying in the host countries were identified.

In the second phase, a paper-based and online survey were developed based on the findings of the first phase to collect data from Vietnamese prospective and current international students, respectively, using a snowball sampling technique (Browne, 2005). Among the four key research issues in the survey, participants were asked to provide some demographic information to rate on a 5-point Likert scale (in which 1 = *very weak* and 5 = *very strong*) the influence of the 12 motivational factors identified in the first phase on the students' pursuance of international education. Students were also asked to indicate their likelihood of immigrating upon graduation: returning, not determined yet, and immigrating (temporary and permanent). Instead of asking participants to rate the factors influencing their intentions to return or stay identified in the first phase, they were encouraged to explain the reasons for their intentions. This was because the factors identified in the first phase appeared not to fully capture the reality because of a small sample size, imbalance between to-be returnees and stayers, and participants' hesitation about expressing their intentions with regard to immigration, which is associated with the "disloyalty to the country" notion. This question in the survey allowed the collection of qualitative data on the research issue but simultaneously produced some quantitative insights from a larger number of participants who felt more comfortable expressing their viewpoints with little direct interaction with the researcher.

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 20. Demographical data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. In total, 313 responses were recorded in the second phase. Among them, 249 were prospective students, and 64 were current students from 17 countries. Regarding gender, 27.8% of students were male, and 72.2% were female. The majority of the participants planned to study or were attending a business program (44.4%), whereas the remaining participants were planning to study or attending social sciences (21.4%); science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (15%); agriculture (7.7%); education (7.7%), and healthcare (3.5%) programs.

The 12 motivational factors were reduced to principal components. To do so, the researcher first tested the internal consistency of this set of data. Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.74$) indicated that the internal consistency of this set of data was acceptable. Then, the researcher tested the uni-dimensionality of the 12 motivational factors by computing item-total correlations. Typically, an item (i.e., the motivational factor) with a coefficient value $r > 0.30$ is retained for interpretation (Coolidge, 2013). Ten items had coefficient values ranging from 0.31 to 0.49. The items "competitive entry to Vietnamese universities" and "being asked to study abroad by my family" had low coefficient values, $r = 0.24$ and 0.18, respectively. However, the researcher decided to retain these items because removing them did not significantly increase the alpha value and because they were relevant to the motivations of Vietnamese international students. Next, the results of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test showed a value of 0.75, suggesting that this data set was sufficient to extract the items into principal

components (de Vaus, 2014). Because the number of participants was large enough, principal components were extracted based on the scree plot and using the Varimax rotation method. Two principal components were extracted using this method, which together explained 49.36% of the variance. The resulting scale is as follows (Table 1):

- Factor 1: Pull factors (six items, $\alpha = 0.83$, variance explained: 29.18%)
- Factor 2: Push factors (six items, $\alpha = 0.70$, variance explained: 20.18%)

After extracting items into principal components, mean scores and deviations were computed to examine the extent to which these motivations influenced participants' intentions/decisions to study abroad. Independent samples *t* tests were run to test whether there were differences in the influence of the factors between different groups of (a) male and female students and (b) prospective and current students.

Qualitative data from the last question were analyzed using a summative content analysis approach (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The researcher read the participants' explanations, coded factors influencing their intention to immigrate, and counted the frequency of each factor. The researcher compared these factors between groups of prospective and current students as well as male and female students to identify the commonalities and outliers of these factors.

FINDINGS

Motivations for Pursuing International Education

The analysis of 55 intercepts with prospective students revealed 12 factors that motivated them to pursue international education outside Vietnam. These motivations can be categorized into push and pull factors.

Pull Factors

Fifty-three interviewees stated that they would like to gain international experience by attending a university program abroad. In their view, because the world has become more globalized and the Vietnamese economy is open to the world, international experience is important for their career development, especially those who want to start their own business or run their parents' business. Similarly, 32 interviewees believed a foreign credential would make them competitive internationally in terms of employment opportunities. Among these interviewees, establishing relationships with international friends was also mentioned as a strategy to explore other cultures as well as make potential business partners for their future careers. Twenty interviewees were motivated to study abroad because of their desire to experience foreign cultures. Many of them stated that they had watched movies and learned about Western cultures or interesting festivals in other countries and wanted to witness them firsthand. Thirty-one interviewees revealed that they wanted to obtain a foreign degree and, at the same time, take advantage of being in the host country to improve their foreign language skills, which they believed were important

in the current context of Vietnam and the world. Finally, 33 interviewees considered studying abroad to pursue the educational values of the host country. In their view, the quality of university education in host countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia, is well known, and these can be a platform for them to thrive in their career and personal lives.

Push Factors

Eleven interviewees stated that they wanted to study abroad so that they could pursue immigration opportunities. These interviewees explained that their intention stemmed from the fact that the quality of life in Vietnam was not good enough. Some interviewees implied that they were discontent with the political issues and social injustice in Vietnam, so immigrating via pursuing international education was a feasible alternative. In parallel with the recognition of the high quality of foreign education mentioned earlier, 12 interviewees agreed that Vietnamese university education is of poor quality. A limited number of these interviewees also suggested that they left Vietnam to seek international education because they could not stand the "bad practices" of the local educational system, such as suppression of students' academic freedom, injustice in university admission, and lack of transparency in assessment and evaluation. Three of them wanted to study abroad because they could not find a trustworthy education program that could support their personal and professional development. Similarly, an interviewee mentioned competitive entry to Vietnamese universities as a push factor. Two interviewees admitted that they did not want to study abroad, but their families asked them to go and look for immigration opportunities.

Influence of Motivational Factors on Students' Decision to Pursue International Education

Descriptive analyses of quantitative data (Table 1) showed that participants' motivation for pursuing international education was influenced by pull factors (M = 4.12, SD = 0.70) more than push factors (M = 2.48, SD = 0.78). Among the pull factors, three factors, "improving chance of employment internationally" (M = 4.30, SD = 0.96), "improving foreign language competence" (M = 4.23, SD = 0.94), and "obtaining international experience" (M = 4.19, SD = 0.93), appeared to very strongly influence participants' motivation for studying abroad. The other three factors, "pursuing foreign educational values" (M = 4.08, SD = 0.97), "experiencing foreign cultures" (M = 4.02, SD = 0.94), and "establishing relationships with international friends" (M = 3.87, SD = 1.00), appeared to strongly affect participants' motivation.

Among the push factors, factors related to Vietnamese higher education were found to influence participants' decisions the most. Specifically, "poor educational quality in Vietnam" (M = 3.46, SD = 1.13) affected their decisions the most, followed by "avoidance of bad practices in Vietnamese education" (M = 3.26, SD = 1.33), "pursuit of immigration opportunities" (M = 3.20, SD = 1.21), "unavailability of a desired program" (M = 2.44, SD = 1.20), and "competitive entry to Vietnamese universities" (M = 2.35, SD = 1.16). Interviewees' decisions were also influenced by their family (M = 2.34, SD = 1.34). Standard deviations of these factors were much

higher than those of pull factors, suggesting that the influence of these push factors varied between participants.

Table 1: The Influences of Push and Pull Factors on Vietnamese Students' Motivations To Study Abroad

		All students (N = 313)		Prospective students (n = 249)		Current students (n = 64)	
Principal components	Loading	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Pull factors		4.12	0.70	4.04	0.73	4.40	0.51
Experiencing foreign cultures	.818	4.02	0.94	3.89	0.95	4.52	0.69
Obtaining international experience	.794	4.19	0.93	4.08	0.96	4.66	0.60
Establishing relationships with international friends	.763	3.87	1.00	3.82	1.03	4.03	0.84
Improving foreign language competence	.699	4.23	0.94	4.24	0.96	4.20	0.89
Improving chances of employment internationally	.652	4.30	0.96	4.27	1.01	4.44	0.75
Pursuing foreign educational values	.651	4.08	0.97	3.96	1.00	4.55	0.69
Push factors		2.84	0.78	2.80	0.80	2.98	0.67
Competitive entry into Vietnamese universities	.715	2.35	1.16	2.45	1.15	1.94	1.14
Unavailability of a desired program	.690	2.44	1.20	2.40	1.18	2.59	1.28
Avoidance of bad practices in Vietnamese education	.662	3.26	1.33	3.12	1.31	3.78	1.27
Being asked to study abroad by family	.618	2.34	1.34	2.46	1.38	1.84	1.09
Pursuit of immigration opportunities	.588	3.20	1.21	3.10	1.18	3.56	1.28
Poor educational quality in Vietnam	.502	3.46	1.13	3.28	1.10	4.16	0.93

Independent samples *t*-test results showed that male students' decision to study abroad was influenced by push factors more significantly than female students' decision to study abroad, $t(311) = 3.37$, $p = 0.00$, $MD = 0.33$. At the same time, the decision of female students was influenced by pull factors more significantly than the decision of male students, $t(137.17) = -2.57$, $p = 0.01$, $MD = 0.24$.

Independent samples *t*-test results also indicated that although push factors influenced the decision to study abroad of current students more than that of prospective students, the difference was insignificant, $t(137.70) = -1.80$, $p = 0.07$, $MD = 0.18$. The results also showed that pull factors influenced the study motivation of current students ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 0.51$) significantly more than the study motivation of prospective students ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.73$), $t(137.73) = -4.53$, $p = 0.00$, $MD = 0.35$.

Return or Stay Upon Graduation?

Data collected in the first phase of the study showed that 43 out of the 55 interviewed students (78.1%) would like to return home upon graduation, 10 (18.2%) would like to stay in the host country, and two (3.7%) students had not made up their minds. Reasons for return included developing the country and taking responsibility for caring for parents. Reasons for staying were to gain international work experience or to fulfill parents' wishes. Although the findings resulted from a small sample size and imbalance between participants who wanted to stay and those who wanted to return home upon graduation, they were consistent with the findings in the second stage, which are reported in the following section.

In the second phase, students' decisions to return or remain in the host country were better reflected in the data. Generally, out of the 313 participants, 96 (30.7%) reported their intention to return to their home country, 78 (24.9%) were unsure, 98 (31.3%) were considering staying abroad temporarily, and 41 (13.1%) wanted to seek permanent residency overseas upon graduation. Regarding gender, out of the 87 male participants, 28 (32.2%) reported their intention to return, 30 (34.5%) reported their intention to stay (12.6% with permanent visas and 21.8% with temporary visas), and the remaining 29 (33.3%) were unsure. Out of the 226 female participants, 72 (31.9%) reported their intention to return, 105 (46.4%) reported their intention to stay (11.5% permanently and 34.9% temporarily), and 49 (21.7%) had not made up their minds. These percentages showed that females are more likely to stay in the host country than males, which is consistent with Güngör and Tansel's (2014) findings.

The analysis showed that there were differences in the immigration intentions between groups of prospective and current Vietnamese international students. Among the 249 prospective students, 85 (34.1%) planned to return, 71 (28.5%) were unsure, and the remaining 93 (37.3%) had intentions to immigrate (8.8% preferred to immigrate permanently, and 28.5% preferred to stay in the host country temporarily and then return to the home country). Among the 64 current students, the percentage who had intentions to immigrate was much higher, with 42.2% reporting their intention to immigrate temporarily (27 students) and 25% to immigrate permanently (19 students). Participants with intentions to return or those who were unsure were low in number: 21.9% (11 students) and 10.9% (7 students), respectively. These results suggest that international students' immigration intention may increase after they have been in the host country.

Table 2: Participants' Intentions Regarding Mobility upon Graduation (Second Phase)

		Study status		Gender	
Intention	All (N = 313)	Prospective students (n = 249)	Current students (n = 64)	Male (n = 87)	Female (n = 226)
Return home immediately	30.7%	34.1%	10.9%	32.2%	31.9%
Unsure	24.9%	28.5%	21.9%	33.3%	21.7%
Stay temporarily	31.3%	28.5%	42.2%	21.8%	34.9%
Stay permanently	13.1%	8.8%	25.0%	12.6%	11.5%

Ninety-six participants who intended to return explained the reasons behind their intention. The summative content analysis approach showed that return intention was triggered by 10 factors, eight of which were associated with the home country and the other two with the host country (Table 3). The five factors mentioned the most by the participants were:

- *Family ties and obligations.* Of the participants in this group, 40.6% stated that they wanted to live near their family or that they wished to take responsibility for taking care of their parents. Some reported that they had to return to reunite with their spouses and children or to get married.
- *Developing the home country.* More than two-thirds of the participants (39.6%) explained that they were Vietnamese, so they had the responsibility to develop their nation. They considered it a matter of pride and viewed their return to their home as a sign of their loyalty to their country. Some participants wrote that they disliked the idea of developing a foreign country.
- *Work culture in the home country.* Many of the participants (14.6%) wrote that they returned because they felt more comfortable with the work culture in Vietnam. In their view, the work environment there was less hectic, and they felt more engaged.
- *Familiarity with the culture/lifestyle of the home country.* This factor was mentioned by 10.4% of the respondents. In their view, they were born in Vietnam and were familiar with the language culture, customs, and traditions of the country. Therefore, returning to the place where they felt a sense of belonging was natural.
- *Social life in the home country.* This factor was mentioned by 7.3% of the respondents. They stated that they had a solid social network back in the home country, and they needed to maintain it by returning. A few of them felt that it was easier and more comfortable to socialize with people of the same background.

In addition to the mentioned factors, the respondents explained that they wanted to return to the home country because they had signed a contract with the sponsors of

their studies (6.2%), because they did not like the culture of the host country (2.1%), or because they realized that they would face unemployment or discrimination in the host country (1.0%). Some of the participants also acknowledged that with foreign credentials, they would have better employment prospects (3.1%) or that they would have better advantages for personal and business development (4.1%) in the home country. A small percentage of participants wanted to return because of their inability to adapt to the host country's culture (2.1%) or because of their fear of discrimination (1.0%).

One hundred and sixteen out of the 135 participants who intended to immigrate explained the reasons behind their intentions. The summative content analysis approach showed that Vietnamese students' intentions for immigration were influenced by eight factors (Table 3). Below are the five most frequently mentioned factors:

- *Obtaining international work experience.* More than half of the respondents of this group (58.6%) revealed that they wanted to immigrate to obtain international work experience. For those who were considering temporary immigration, having international work experience was viewed as a precursor for career development when they returned to their home country.
- *High income in the host country.* A high salary rate for jobs in the host country was reported to attract 17.2% of the respondents in this group to immigration upon graduation. They explained that the higher salary would help them obtain better living conditions and support their family back home. A number of respondents wrote that they needed to work in the host country upon graduation to make back the amount that they and their families had invested in their international education.
- *Work conditions in the host country.* About 13.8% of the respondents suggested that they wanted to stay because of the good work conditions in the host country. They also acknowledged that their work style fit better with the work culture in the host country.
- *Opportunities for personal development in the host country.* Almost 13% of the respondents felt that if they stayed in the host country, they would have more opportunities to develop their skills and nurture their dreams, and they would enjoy more freedom compared with the home country.
- *Quality of life in the host country.* About 9.5% of the respondents suggested that their immigration intentions stemmed from their recognition of the quality of life in the host country. In their report, issues such as sanity, security, living environment, and living standards in the home country were mentioned as triggers for their intention to immigrate.

Although not very influential, factors such as "intolerance with cultural and social practices in the home country" (2.6%), "social life in the host country" (1.7%), and "culture of the host country" (3.4%) were reported to have contributed to their immigration intentions upon graduation.

Table 3: Factors Influencing Participants' Intentions to Return or Immigrate (Second Phase)

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Intention to return	*n* = 96	
Family ties and obligations	39	40.6
Developing the home country	38	39.6
Work culture in the home country	14	14.6
Familiarity with the culture/lifestyle of the home country	10	10.4
Social life in the home country	7	7.3
Work obligation in the home country	6	6.2
Better opportunities for personal and professional development at home	4	4.1
Better employment prospects in the home country	3	3.1
Inability to adapt to the culture in the host country	2	2.1
Disadvantaged living conditions in the host country	1	1.0
Intention to stay	*n* = 116	
Obtaining international work experience	68	58.6
High income in the host country	20	17.2
Work conditions in the host country	16	13.8
Opportunities for personal development in the host country	15	12.9
Quality of life in the host country	11	9.5
Culture of the host country	4	3.4
Intolerance of negative cultural and social practices in the home country	3	2.6
Social network in the host country	2	1.7

DISCUSSION

This study identified 12 factors that motivated Vietnamese students to pursue international education abroad and 18 factors that affected their intentions to stay in the host country or return to their home country upon graduation. This section will further discuss the findings in association with the socioeconomic, cultural, and political issues of Vietnam and relevant literature in the field of education.

All 12 motivational factors identified in this study are consistent with the existing literature (e.g., English et al., 2016; Liu & Morgan, 2016; Nguyen, 2013). Pull factors appeared to influence Vietnamese students' decision to study abroad more strongly than push factors did. Among the pull factors, those related to international career development (M = 4.30, SD = 0.96), improvement of foreign language competence (M = 4.23, SD = 0.94), and international experience (M = 4.19, SD = 0.93) appeared to influence students' decision the most. Push factors affected students' decision moderately and varied greatly between students. The majority of push factors denoted the negative characteristics and practices of the local higher education system, some of which were reported in Nguyen (2013). All of these suggest that the students, to some extent, were aware of the determinants of their employability and career

advancement, and therefore, pursuing international education was one of their strategies. This can partially explain why many international graduates are economically successful in their home and host countries, as evidenced in previous studies (e.g., Chellaraj et al., 2005)

In particular, pursuit of immigration opportunities (M = 3.20, SD = 1.21) was ranked ninth out of the 12 motivations and was correlated the most with the factor of "being asked to study abroad by my family" (n = 313, r = 0.35, p = 0.00). This indicates that pursuit of immigration was not the primary purpose of Vietnamese students, and in many cases, this depended on the wishes of their family, just like in the case of their Chinese counterparts (Liu & Morgan, 2016). This also reflects the current socioeconomic status and culture of many Vietnamese families in Vietnam: Rich families send their children abroad to obtain better quality education, and then the latter come back to continue their family business. This provides them with better advantages than staying in the host country and starting from scratch.

Moreover, this study found that not all Vietnamese international students want to remain in the host country upon graduation. Several factors were identified to influence their intentions to return or stay. For those who choose to return, family-related issues and desire for building their home country were the two main determinants of their intentions. Vietnam is a country with a Confucian tradition, in which family obligations are considered the standard for measuring one's morals and success (Tingvold, Middelthon, Allen, & Hauff, 2012). Therefore, in most cases, family—both immediate and extended families—becomes the first priority in the decision-making process of people in the country. Similarly, Confucian and socialist educational values appeared to influence participants' intentions because they promote "the love of nation, community and family" in each student (George, 2010, p. 42). From a young age, students are taught that being loyal and developing the nation is the responsibility of every citizen. Likewise, Vietnam's intensive socialist political education often makes many people believe that if they leave Vietnam to live in other countries, they are not patriotic or they are brainwashed by capitalist ideology. Therefore, such ingrained educational ideologies may have significantly hindered the immigration intentions of many international students. Moreover, familiarity with Vietnamese sociocultural practices and attachment to their social network can also pull international graduates back to the home countries. This is natural because people feel more comfortable living in a place they are accustomed to.

For those who choose to immigrate (43.4%, including 31.3% temporary immigration), international work experience, work conditions, and high incomes in the host country strongly contribute to their intentions. Together with the strong influence of pull motivations above, these findings further confirm that international students' top concern is to develop their employability advantage. In this globalized world, having international work experience is an advantage in the increasingly competitive labor market. Similarly, pursuing international education is a costly investment for students from developing countries; therefore, they would need to earn back, which they would not have been able to do in their developing home country as noted in Bijwaard and Wang (2016). A better quality of life, better work conditions, and better career development opportunities undeniably attract international

graduates. However, this does not mean that international graduates intend to steal jobs or social welfare from host countries; rather, they have to compete for jobs and work and contribute to the socioeconomic and cultural development of the host country through taxes, ideas, patents, or intellectual work. It should also be noted that among these participants, many plan to return to the home country after a certain point in their life. However, they can continue to benefit the host country by disseminating their culture and fostering economic cooperation between the two countries. This has been shown in recent brain circulation studies (e.g., Mok & Han, 2016; Tian, 2016).

It was also revealed that participants' intentions, regardless of whether they choose to stay or return, were affected by their individual experiences with social, cultural, and work practices in the home and the host country as well as by how they could fit in with these practices. Those who chose to return often referred to their familiarity or comfort with the cultural, social, and work practices back home and criticized the negative aspects of the social and professional life in the host country. Meanwhile, their counterparts who chose to immigrate showed intolerance for the negative social, cultural, and work practices back home and preferred the practices in the host country. However, this study suggested that immigration intentions might grow when international students have arrived in and adapted to life in the host country. The evidence for this claim is that the percentage of current students who wanted to immigrate was almost double that of prospective students (67.2% versus 37.3%). This could be because prospective students were still uncertain about and had no authentic exposure to life in the host country yet. The claim, however, should be examined further and confirmed by a longitudinal study using the same international student cohort.

It should also be noted that because it used nonprobability samples and was exploratory in nature, this study might have produced findings that are true for the study participants but may not be for all international students. Future studies should use the probability sampling technique to collect data from a larger sample size and achieve a better balance between current and prospective international students as well as male and female students. That way, the findings will become more robust and better reflect the reality of the research issues. Additionally, the relationship between international students' motivations for studying abroad and their immigration intentions should be determined using longitudinal quantitative analyses. This will provide better insights into the prediction of international students' immigration intention.

CONCLUSIONS

In short, despite its limitations, this exploratory study found that international students were motivated by several factors to pursue international education overseas. The study also indicated that not all of the students were immigration hunters; many were willing to return their home for socioeconomic, cultural, and political reasons. Therefore, the fear that international students arrive in a host country to seek immigration opportunities is biased, especially when the host country has the power to adjust its policies regarding international students (e.g., Spinks, 2016).

Because host institutions and countries sell their education as an expensive good, it is recommended that they take responsibility for international students'/customers' employment outcomes that are in line with that price of good (Vuori, 2013). In particular, host institutions should responsibly train international students in relevant knowledge, skills, and attributes for work and life. Host countries should offer students who want to obtain international work experience post-study visas to fulfill their aspirations. Thus, if international graduates can successfully compete with local citizens for jobs, they deserve respect for their talent and should be allowed to work in a positive and hatred-free work environment so that they can contribute to the host country's socioeconomic development and their own personal growth.

Overall, international students should be treated with fairness rather than making them victims of the misconception that they are constantly seeking permanent residency (Tran & Vu, 2016) because they bring major opportunities to their host countries and institutions. Restricting or rejecting international students from one country will allow another country to gain these potential labor forces, especially when more and more countries are offering international education (Lee & King, 2016).

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Tran Le Huu Nghia is a research fellow at Informetrics Research Group, Ton Duc Thang University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam and Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ton Duc Thang University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. His research interests include graduate employability, teaching and learning in higher education, international education, teacher education and TESOL. Email: tranlehuunghia@tdtu.edu.vn

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Social Capital and the U.S. College Experiences of International Student-Athletes and Non-Athletes

Helen Forbes-Mewett
Monash University, Australia

Madeleine Pape
Northwestern University, USA

ABSTRACT

This study shifts the tendency to focus on international students' negative experiences of undertaking education in a host country to a group that enjoys an elevated level of support. By looking at international student-athletes compared with non-athletes, it is shown how the former group experiences the benefits of social capital. Insights relating to international student-athletes in the US reveal strong and ongoing support from coaches and teammates. It is shown that international student-athletes have far greater support structures compared with international non-athletes. In doing so, this study presents a new perspective to debates on what higher education institutions in host countries can do to support their international student populations.

Keywords: athletes, college, international students, social capital, student experience

International students tend to be associated with host country economic gain as well as vulnerability in terms of their safety and security. Research to date concerning the international student experience has focused primarily on their vulnerability, especially the challenges faced by large numbers of students from China and India (Marginson, Nyland, Sawir, & Forbes-Mewett, 2010). Australian studies have tended to be at micro and meso levels, and have looked at international student security broadly to include housing, employment, finances, English language difficulties, and safety (Forbes-Mewett, Marginson, Nyland, Ramia, & Sawir, 2009; Marginson et al., 2010). More recently in the United Kingdom, the focus has been on offering a safer study destination, with pointed reference to the violence against Indian students in Australia in 2009 (British Council, 2012). However, international students are a heterogeneous population, and we know little about the experiences of those in more

privileged situations. In short, studies of international students have tended to "study down" rather than "study up" (Sprague, 2005, p. 11) and our knowledge of their experiences has been limited primarily to those that we associate with vulnerability and victimhood. Given these social statuses provide associated perspectives, much can be learned about processes of marginalization by turning our analytical attention to the construction of privilege (Hastie & Rimmington, 2014; Lewis, 2004).

This study represents a significant shift from a previous focus on negative aspects of undertaking education in a host country. By contrast, our study considers notions of privilege by investigating the production of social capital across diverse groups of international students—that is, the development of network ties enabling the realization of beneficial outcomes. It seeks to understand what it is like to live and study in the US for international student-athletes, in this instance sampled from the sport of track-and-field and primarily the top division of collegiate competition, compared with non-athlete international students from various countries. Here we use the term "athlete" to refer to those engaged in varsity sport, while recognizing that those students we designate "non-athletes" may nonetheless be engaged in other forms of sport or have an athletic background (see Lubker & Etzel, 2007). Use of the term "athlete" also denotes a formal relationship to the U.S. collegiate sport system. Studying this population adds a new dimension to the literature that examines international student well-being. Furthermore, it shows that social capital in the form of social connections and support is unevenly spread across different student groups. That is, contrary to claims that international student groups are generally lacking in support (Marginson et al., 2010), the international student-athletes in this study were evidenced to be better supported than their non-athlete counterparts.

The concept of social capital has been used to understand how the social networks of student-athletes differ from those of the non-athlete population, with implications for their academic success and wellbeing (Clopton, 2010). Student-athletes are generally considered to experience a unique sense of community and stronger social networks than their non-athlete peers, largely because of the frequency and intensity of their interactions with teammates and coaching staff (Wolf-Wendel, Toma, & Morphew, 2001). Furthermore, it seems that sports participation in general enhances social capital development by strengthening an individual's connection with their broader social environment (Perks, 2007). Yet scholars have also documented the exclusionary and divisive tendencies of sport (Elling & Claringbould, 2005). The present study is situated at the intersection of college sports and international education, two institutional spheres that shape and are shaped by relations of social capital, in comparing international student-athletes with their non-athlete counterparts. We aim to find links between the micro and meso level experiences of the participants and macro-level institutional processes.

We argue that despite their status as non-citizens and regardless of division, international student-athletes living and studying in the US are in a position of privilege due to the institutional arrangements that attribute social capital to U.S. collegiate sports. Because of this privilege, they are shielded from many of the challenges typically faced by international students (see Forbes-Mewett, McCulloch, & Nyland, 2015; Marginson et al., 2010). This situation leads us to question: What do the experiences of these student-athletes reveal about stratification in higher

education institutions, and what can be done to improve circumstances for other international students who find themselves without adequate support?

In pursuing these questions, this article contributes a new perspective to debates on what higher education institutions in host countries can do to recognize, integrate, and protect their heterogeneous international student populations. It also provides a deeper understanding of the social and institutional ties that can enable international students to succeed in a foreign environment. While it has been acknowledged that international students in the United States generally enjoy a positive experience (Forbes-Mewett et al., 2015), our analysis suggests that they typically experience a level of social capital that is second to that of international student-athletes. In what follows, we review the concept of social capital as embedded within the practices and structures of institutions. We then describe college sport as a source of stratification within the institution of higher education in the US. Following the analysis of our empirical material, we conclude by suggesting how the experiences of international student-athletes point to clear ways that administrators can improve the generic support currently provided to international students. We argue that both groups of international students would benefit from targeted efforts to increase the diversity of their social networks.

THEORETICAL CONTEXT

A Social Capital Framework

We opt for a social capital framework that highlights the relationship between social structure and individual capacity to act, bringing attention and analytical specificity to the enabling and disabling effects of intra- and intergroup networks (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). The concept of social capital is widely used within studies of educational attainment, migrant communities, and sports (see Coleman, 1988). We draw on Coleman's (1988) notion of social capital as:

> …defined by its function. It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors … *within the structure*. (p. 98, emphasis added)

Bourdieu (1986) similarly defined social capital as the "aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network or more or less *institutionalized relationships or recognition*" (p. 248, emphasis added). Thus, both Coleman and Bourdieu emphasized social capital as the benefits that accrue to individuals through their ties with others, and particularly because of their embeddedness not only within certain communities but also broader institutions (see also Portes, 2000).

Moreover, social capital is a function of *relationships* rather than an attribute of individual agents themselves (Schuller, Baron, & Field, 2000). We also draw on Putnam's (2000) association of social capital with both intra- and intercommunity networks. Putnam suggested that social capital performs a "bonding" function when it enhances or strengthens relations within a social group. It can also play a "bridging"

role within social relationships that extend beyond immediate community boundaries. We suggest that both intra- and intergroup ties are important in shaping an individual student's opportunity structure (see also Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013).

The relations that produce social capital include those between individuals and communities, but can also be extended to encompass the role of overarching social institutions. Scholars have used the concept of "linking" social capital to describe the enabling and disabling effects of the vertical relations between individuals and these institutions (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). Ranson's (2012) work on schools and civil society notes that leadership of institutions "endeavoured to accumulate *social capital* by appointing governors who bring their networks of information, knowledge and resource contacts to enrich the practice of a school" (p. 40, original emphasis). Thus, Ranson conceptualized education as an institutional sphere that mediates social capital by linking individual capacity to act to broader structures of inequality.

We adopt what we term a "critical institutional approach" to social capital, in that we examine how the relations institutionalized within higher education facilitate the generation of social capital but do so unevenly. Here the purpose is to identify how the specific institutional mechanisms that distribute social capital intersect with the schemas of inequality that stratify higher education, in this case in the U.S. context. As noted by others, social capital is inseparable from institutionalized forms of inequality that shape experience at different social locations (Das, 2004). As such, the institutionalized conditions for social capital realization may support hostile and discriminatory forms of exclusion (Field, 2003). The experiences of international students and student-athletes, therefore, should reflect their heterogeneous relations to a range of institutions, including higher education, migration, and sports.

Institutions and Social Capital: Migration, International Education, and Sport

Scholars have argued that social capital is a valuable resource for migrant communities (Jacobs & Tillie, 2004) and the experiences of international students have been likened to those of newly arriving immigrants (Neri & Ville, 2008). Indeed, in the case of international students, crossing international borders to pursue higher education presents many challenges frequently involving culture shock and is characterized by anxiety, loneliness, disorientation, alienation, and homesickness (Forbes-Mewett, McCulloch, & Nyland, 2015; Forbes-Mewett & Nyland, 2008; Marginson et al., 2010; Neri & Ville 2008; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001).

Existing research suggests that the institutional and social location of international students impacts their capacity to adapt to their new environment, and that this process can be understood in terms of social capital (Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune, 2011; Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013). For example, Lee and Rice (2007) found that international students in the US experience feelings of discomfort and alienation when ignored in the classroom or excluded from social events by other students. They argued further that "negotiating basic academic procedures and living arrangements are daunting tasks for some international students" (2007, p. 6). In the Australian context, Neri and Ville (2008) found that in comparison with their domestic peers, international students may struggle to benefit from orientation programs, understand course material, obtain high grades, and contribute to class

discussion. Existing university support systems are often inadequate as a means of helping international students adapt to their new social and educational environments (Cho & Yu, 2015; Forbes-Mewett & Nyland, 2013; Forbes-Mewett & Sawyer, 2016).

However, social networks developed through involvement in clubs and paid employment contributed to the wellbeing of international students who rarely "forged relationships with domestic students or in the local community that might have provided them with insights into the broader culture" (Neri & Ville, 2008, p. 33). Instead they tended to form networks with students from their own country of origin, suggesting that some international students can more readily develop bonding rather than bridging social capital. Moreover, Neri and Ville found that "students from Western countries do better than those from non-Western countries" (p. 35). Overall, research suggests that international students face an uneven institutional terrain marked by the racialized ideologies of the broader social context in their host nation (Marginson et al., 2010; Neri & Ville, 2008). University administrators can counter this unevenness by intentionally creating the conditions for interaction among students from different national and cultural backgrounds (Rienties & Nolan, 2014).

Heterogeneity and the Student-Athlete Experience

Intercollegiate sport in the US, which is governed by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), has been described as "American higher education's 'peculiar institution'" (Thelin, 1994, p. 1). According to Harrison et al. (2009, p. 79), student-athletes are a "nontraditional' group on campus because of their relationship to the complex 'social and political system of college sport'." Indeed, they face a unique combination of academic, sporting, and social pressures (Etzel, Watson, Visek, & Maniar, 2006). However, the institutional authority of sports in U.S. college life is also such that student-athletes are often located within privileged social networks, with access to unique support services, especially at the Division I level (Potuto & O'Hanlon, 2007). Nevertheless, a key criticism here is that the extensive support programs provided to student-athletes inadvertently contribute to their social and academic segregation within the broader student community (Bowen & Levin, 2003). Moreover, it is unclear whether the institutional and cultural privileges and associated social capital enjoyed by student-athletes afford them positive social and academic benefits (Gayles, 2009). On the one hand, Clopton (2010) found that student-athletes identify with their university at a far greater level than their non-athlete counterparts. Scholars have also shown that student-athletes are more academically engaged and have a higher rate of graduation than non-athletes (Ferris, Finster, & McDonald, 2004). On the other hand, some scholars have shown that student-athletes experience less academic success and develop lower academic and career aspirations than their non-athlete peers because of the demands imposed by their sport-focused, competitive environment (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). Other research suggests considerable overlap in the college experiences of student-athletes and non-athletes (Umbach, Palmer, Kuh, & Hannah,, 2006). These mixed results justify subgroup analyses to better understand the factors shaping social capital realization among athletes and non-athletes. In our study, we explore how these structural factors vary in the case of international student-athletes and non-athletes.

International Student-Athletes as High Achievers

Efforts to recruit international student-athletes have been critiqued for diminishing the number of scholarships available to U.S. citizens and encouraging elitism among NCAA institutions (Ridinger & Pastore, 2000). Despite their elite status and trajectory, international student-athletes are more likely than their domestic peers to view academic achievement as a central goal (Bale, 1991). They typically arrive in the US well prepared and experience fewer of the academic challenges encountered by some domestic student-athletes. Nevertheless, international student-athletes may return home prior to completing their degree because of the challenge of adjusting to life at a U.S. college (Popp, Love, Kim, & Hums, 2010). Similar to the non-athlete international student population, the three greatest challenges for international student-athletes are homesickness, adjustment to U.S. culture, and language (Pierce, Popp, & Meadows, 2011). However, with the addition of resources available to student-athletes (Ridinger & Pastore, 2000), this seemingly elite group provides a new perspective for the literature pertaining to supporting international students' success.

METHODS

Using in-depth interviews, we assessed the extent to which the two groups access and feel supported by university services and mentors (linking social capital) and compared the depth and composition of their friendship networks (bonding and bridging social capital). Rather than adopting the full conceptual model of Comeaux and Harrison (2011) to analyze the multiple stages of student-athlete development, we focused on two stages in the international student sojourn: initial support upon arrival and day-to-day support throughout the remainder of their stay. Interview questions were broad and addressed general wellbeing and available support services.

Research Participants

Our sample of 25 international students from multiple U.S. colleges was purposively drawn from a larger cross-national study across three countries (Forbes-Mewett et al., 2015). A snowballing approach was used for original recruitment. All participants were provided with an explanatory statement about the study including details of approval from the Monash University Standing Committee on Ethics in Research on Humans. Participants signed informed consent forms. Of the sample, 19 were actively studying in the U.S. context and six had completed their studies in the US within the previous 3 years. The 12 international student-athletes included an equal number of male- and female-identifying participants, all of whom were from a single country and one team sport. Ten of these attended Division I schools, and all were receiving scholarships to cover their tuition, accommodations, and food expenses. The 13 non-athlete international students were aged 20–32 and included eight men and five females. Their countries of origin were diverse and included Australia, China, Germany, India, Malaysia, Poland, and Turkey. In this regard, our sample reflects the globalized nature of higher education. At the same time, and

reflecting our exploratory qualitative approach, we do not claim to have representative samples of international students or student-athletes. While this approach means we cannot measure broad and generalizable patterns in the experiences of these two groups of students, our sample does support an in-depth exploration of the ways in which our interviewees relate to their institutional environment. In the findings that follow, all interviewees are described in terms of their gender and their status as student-athletes or non-athletes. We identify all participants by gender and age, but to preserve confidentiality for the student-athletes in our sample, only the non-athletes are identified by nationality.

Data Collection and Analytic Approach

The in-depth and semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face or over the phone. They ranged from 40–60 min, addressing topics related to the international student experience including orientation, ongoing student services, safety and security, financial support, academic support, friendship networks, and other support networks. Questions included: *Were you greeted on arrival at the airport? Was your accommodation arranged? Did you know anyone before arriving at the host institution? Who do you turn to in times of need?* A limitation of our reliance on interviews was that students may have reported socially desirable behavior (Yee, 2016). However, since this limitation was likely across both athletes and non-athletes, it does not compromise our goal of comparison.

Interviews were recorded and later transcribed. Both authors served as interviewers and wrote memos after each interview to record and share emerging themes, ideas, and questions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The focus on social capital followed our initial immersion in the data and subsequent iterative coding approach. We read and re-read the transcripts to identify emergent themes and generate overarching categories, consistent with Strauss and Corbin's (1990) description of open and axial coding. Both authors conducted coding independently while regularly comparing and refining common overarching themes and categories. We also compared and discussed our application of these themes and categories to the interview data to reach agreement on how to interpret and represent it. In presenting the data below, our approach was to emphasize participants' voices so that the focus was drawn to students' lived experiences (Parry, McLeod, Hockings, & Kenway, 2011).

RESULTS

Our findings are organized in two sections, corresponding chronologically with the two stages of the international student experience noted above: arrival and corresponding initial support, and the regular period of their sojourn following initial orientation, characterized by day-to-day support systems and services. Over these two periods we identified key differences in the institutionalized means available to the two groups of students to develop their social capital, which relate to proximity to institutional support, access to authority figures, and extent of organized interactions with peers and other student populations.

Initial Support: Airport Welcomes and Ready-Made Networks

Our interviews revealed that the support provided upon arrival was two-tiered as it was characterized by very different institutional relationships. Most interview participants and particularly student-athletes responded positively to questions regarding initial support upon arrival in the US and early stages of their sojourn. The international student-athletes in our sample found the arrival experience to be extremely welcoming. Almost all student-athletes reported that they were met at the airport by their coach or a teammate. For example: "From the first time I arrived they were really good. Especially being an international [athlete] . . . they'd arranged one of the team members to pick me up" (female, 23). Coaches often greeted international student-athletes on their arrival:

> … for the head coach to come out and greet you … it's a big deal. … It was late at night and he showed me around the campus and we had a meal together and discussed a few things. … Yeah, he did make me very welcome. (male, 18)

The welcoming process often extended from the airport pick-up to assisting the student-athletes with initial tasks, including in one case staying at the team manager's home for the first few nights. Interviewees frequently mentioned being escorted on shopping trips to purchase essential items and to offices on campus to sort paper work and class details. According to one student-athlete, "[they] got us bedding and towels and all the necessities we need . . . they make it very easy for us" (female, 26). In another example, the student-athlete explained:

> The coach took me round for the next three days [after arriving], just helping me get to know the area a bit, taking me around campus … helping [with] documentation, sorting through all my classes … [introducing] all the people that I might need to speak to if I needed help, and then gave me a tour of all the athletic facilities. (male, 19)

However, while student-athletes in the US received institutionalized support upon arrival, when such support did exist for non-athletes, it was provided by less institutionally embedded student-run organizations. Nevertheless, such support was perceived favorably. According to one Chinese international student (non-athlete) in our sample:

> A general welcoming environment was created here. I honestly don't remember having anything similar when I arrived in the UK, in Nottingham. … Here [in the US], we have the Chinese Student and Scholars Association that basically provides airport pickup service when you first arrive here. … It was very welcoming. (male, 21)

Interviewees also generally reported positively on the period following their arrival, particularly student-athletes. Comments ranged from administrative enrollment procedures, "[My enrollment] was already done when I got here" (female, 26) to assistance with banking: "they set us up with the local [American] bank here so I can deposit money and withdraw without having to pay the charges associated

with an international card" (female, 20). In addition to the support provided by coaches, there was also evidence of strong ties and support mechanisms between the student-athletes: "When you first come here you've already got an immediate group of friends, the guys that you're on the team with, whereas if I came here and I didn't have a team … I would need to make friends in class" (female, 20).

Indeed, most student-athletes felt prepared for their sojourn before arrival in the US and often knew other student-athletes at their destination, sometimes via social media. For example:

> With Facebook, you've basically met everyone before you got there, we … knew what everyone looked like, what [they were] into and where they were from … I'd been there to visit before I went over as well so … I had met basically all the other girls. (female, 22)

Being part of a varsity team provided comfort in unfamiliar surroundings and ready access to established resources for the development of social capital. This advantage was further assisted through social media as a vehicle for social capital, highlighting the generational shifts in network formation brought about by the effects of globalization on higher education and interpersonal communication.

When international student-athletes did not know others at their destination, there was a concerted and immediate effort by the coach and team members to integrate the newcomers. For example:

> The following day after we arrived we were picked up by one of the head coach's assistants … we were introduced to the team … they were all really friendly. … I can't think of anything more that they could have done. (male, 18)

As described by one interviewee, student-athletes were never without "a safety net" (male, 18), which contributed to their wellbeing and success on and off the sporting field. These micro and meso level experiences including the initial welcoming environment and support provided for the student-athletes was an indication of the ongoing support that could be expected.

Ongoing Support: Authority Figures and Insulated Friendship Circles

Ongoing support of international student-athletes and non-athletes also differed between the two groups. Non-athlete international students relied on friendship networks and international student services (ISSs), while the ongoing needs of international student-athletes were met through their immediate team community and the well-resourced athletics department. As explained by one student-athlete, "everything I need is done basically from . . . track-and-field" (female, 22).

A defining characteristic of the international student-athlete experience was the linking capital, which as shown in this study was gained through the central and ongoing support of their coach. As noted by one interviewee, coaches constitute "pretty well-known public figures" (male, 18). While there may be notable differences in pay and prestige, with variation by sport, gender, and race, NCAA coaches nonetheless occupy positions of influence on U.S. college campuses. For

many interviewees in our study, their interaction with head coaches included daily conversations:

> If I called him at 9 o'clock at night he'd be willing to talk to me. … He'd come into his office on a weekend to help you out. I could openly talk to him about anything. … That was immensely important. (female, 23)

Another commented, "I go into his office quite a bit . . . just to have a yarn" (male, 20). The coach represented both an institutional anchor and a guardian. For one student-athlete, her coach was a critical point of contact for her parents back home in Australia:

> … my parents were communicating with [my coach] quite a lot and said, "make sure you look after her" … so he knew that I was struggling. He'd bring me into his office once a week just for a meeting, and talk to me and make sure that everything was ok. … I never felt alone, I felt upset and homesick, but I never felt like I didn't have anyone to talk to. (female, 23)

Coaches constituted directly accessible institutional ties, and were available to international student-athletes over both the short and long term. They provided the kinds of informal care expected by families and needed to ensure a successful education experience (Ranson, 2012). Furthermore, the approach of coaches appeared to cater to students who may be in unsupported circumstances and be considered "at risk" (Gershon, 2012, p. 12).

Although student-athletes in our sample were aware that meso level formal services for international students existed on campus, ISS were generally viewed as peripheral to their main support system. Some student-athlete interviewees relied only on the athletic department to take care of bureaucratic paperwork. For example, one student-athlete reported having her annual tax return done by an employee within the athletic department. Others navigated bureaucratic hurdles with the assistance of coaching staff. The privileged status of the athletic department also entitled international student-athletes to extra academic support:

> You get an extra advisor. … We also get group tutorial sessions ... [and] we get our textbooks pre-wrapped for us so we don't have to go wait in line at the textbook bookstore. (male, 19)

> I think being a student-athlete, even though I was international, I was privileged a bit as a student because we had free tutoring services, psychology [services]. … The availability of those services was more readily accessible for us. (female, 23)

In some cases, interviewees were helped by employees within the athletic department to reorganize their academic schedule when classes interfered with training and racing. The examples above demonstrate the inequities between the privileged student-athlete and other international students, whose support appeared to be more limited. More specifically, all student-athlete interviewees in this study received what was termed a "free ride," meaning 100% coverage of their tuition, health insurance, and living expenses such as accommodations and food. This

advantage is in contrast to the circumstances of several non-athlete interviewees who described financial stress as a defining feature of their experience:

> Because international students come here without any kind of financial aid or scholarship, the tuition in American dollars it's really expensive, a heavy burden for the family. A lot of students want to save money for their parents on housing and they try to live in the cheaper area, which is less safe. (Chinese, female, 21)

Non-athletes also had a different perspective of the ISS available on campus. While not necessarily making more use of ISSs, non-athletes were more likely than student-athletes to identify them and other generic student services as a primary source of support. For example: "I do know that at the back of my mind, that if anything happened I have the ISS. [But] I don't really feel like I need them for my security" (Israeli, female, 35). And: "I think [international students] first report to the campus Department of Safety. … If I were a victim of a crime that would be the first place I'd turn to" (Chinese, female, 21). One non-athlete interviewee stated that for some international students the "first point of contact will be their friends" because they have a "fear of talking to anyone in administration or anyone American" (Polish, female, 23). This suggests that although international students experience strong bonding social capital via their ties with similarly situated students, they may not form strong or personal connections to institutionalized sources of support and authority.

The ongoing support provided demonstrated the benefits of the capital enjoyed by international student-athletes compared with non-athletes who were reliant on ISSs. The ISSs provided a fallback position that was rarely used by the international student-athletes. Not only did international student-athletes have the support of their coaches but they also benefited from greater financial support. These forms of capital meant they did not need to be part of the broader group of students competing for support and services. Indeed, the capital they enjoyed led to the development of strong social networks.

Putnam (2000) describes bonding and bridging capital as the internal and external ties of a group. Our study indicates that both forms of capital can be forged through social relations within a single community. The team environment provided international student-athletes with a network of both fellow athletes and American students, representing simultaneously local ties and "people who have things in common with you" (female, 23). In contrast with non-athletes, international student-athletes were much more likely to report strong social networks, which provided them with "a big family" (male, 20) in addition to other resources. Their accounts revealed that the value of these networks extended beyond the initial arrival period. Indeed, most international student-athletes reported spending most or all their social time with other student-athletes (female, 23):

> We're pretty antisocial to be honest … by the time you're training, going to classes, going to training again … I don't really have time to do much else. … There are a few people that you'll talk to in your classes if you're doing group assignments, but there's not really anyone I've made the effort to catch up with at another time. (female, 21)

> We train so much, there's probably 40 people … most of my friends are definitely from the track team. (male, 21)

A similar tendency emerged in the accounts of non-athlete international students: "Usually there is a tendency of forming friends and hanging out with other international students much more so than with other American students just because we have that difference in common" (female, 23).

Indeed, university policies and particularly those related to housing repeatedly emerged as key to the formation of friendships across separate spheres. One student-athlete explained that his university had a dormitory policy to room student-athletes with non-athletes. He indicated that his "main circle of friends were those people in his dorm" (male, 19) who were not other student-athletes. Another student-athlete reported: "My freshmen year when we lived in dorms we were rooming next to people who weren't on teams, so I made quite a few friends that first year who were not athletes" (female, 20). Nonetheless, the international student-athletes tended to make friends with their teammates as interaction with other students, including other international students, required either conscious effort or structured interaction facilitated by university policies.

There was also evidence, however, that not all international student-athletes experienced strong social ties with their teammates. One student-athlete referred to a teammate who didn't speak English well and was "a bit of a loner" (male, 21). He also described "a few … girls on the track team … [who] definitely do congregate together." Similarly, although most non-athletes in our sample reported that they and other international students succeeded in forming support networks, they also observed exceptions:

> Some international students may feel really alone, homesick, isolated from their environment. … For example, one Chinese male, we didn't have any contact at all with him, also a Japanese girl … they were basically … coming back home, closing the door. (Turkish, male, 23)

Despite such heterogeneity, it was evident in this study that student-athletes overall experienced denser and more locally embedded social networks than non-athlete international students. Although this in many cases contributed to their isolation from the main student body, student-athletes appeared to feel more strongly supported and culturally comfortable during their sojourn than the non-athletes.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Within the framework of higher education and sport, our focus on international student-athletes reveals that the centrality of NCAA sports in U.S. colleges ensured that international student-athletes were embraced by highly organized, high-status, and tightly woven networks of people and programmatic resources. International student-athletes were therefore given immediate access to a circle of friends that functioned as a "big family," with whom they often lived, trained, traveled, studied, and socialized. That is, they enjoyed privileged social networks (Potuto & O'Hanlon, 2007). International student-athletes also benefited from their strong personal

connections to people in positions of authority (particularly coaching staff) and their access to additional academic advising and other services. Being located within the athletic department structure meant they had resources to navigate the bureaucratic hurdles related to taxation and visas, as well as direct access to medical and counseling services.

At the same time, both athletes and non-athletes were often embedded in insulated friendship networks: Just as many international student-athletes described the athlete community they belonged to as "segregated" from other students, several international non-athlete students reported their friendship circles as consisting largely of other international students. This outcome supports an earlier finding by Umbach and colleagues (2006), who indicated that there was considerable overlap in the college experiences of student-athletes and non-athletes. These two social network patterns had distinct strengths and weaknesses. Importantly, the non-athlete group experienced an absence of the high-status figures and team camaraderie and friendships with American students that seemed to be important parts of the student-athlete experience.

Examples of the contrasting experiences of international student-athletes and non-athletes included the arrival experience, which has previously been described as a "critical moment" for international students (Forbes-Mewett, 2011; Yan & Sendall, 2016) In contrast with the non-athletes in our study, the international student-athletes viewed this period very positively. Also, the support received after arrival and throughout their sojourn was thought to contribute to the success of the international student-athletes. This support contrasts markedly with previous studies of non-athlete international students in Australia, which found that they felt unsupported in the initial stages of their sojourn (Forbes-Mewett, 2011; Marginson et al., 2010). However, more positive views align in many ways with a previous marco level cross-country comparative study, which indicated the US provided a "hand-holding" approach to all students, and particularly to international students (Forbes-Mewett et al., 2015). In the current study, there was demonstrated support provided upon arrival that appeared to be two-tiered and influenced by different institutional relationships. A case in point was being part of a team that provided support and advanced social capital in surroundings where students were not versed and required access to established resources. This process was further assisted by using social media to enable social capital through network formation, which reflects the impact of social media and globalization on higher education and interpersonal communication (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012).

The international student-athletes in our study experienced linking capital that was accessible through the ongoing support of their coach, who typically held an influential position within the U.S. college structure (Fink, Pastore, & Riemer, 2001). Daily interactions with head coaches were enabled through regular training sessions and meetings. The coaches provided informal care that served the international student-athletes and their families well (Ranson, 2012), and provided support for those deemed "at risk" (Gershon, 2012, p. 12). The findings also supported Putnam's (2000) description of bonding and bridging capital, these being the internal and external ties of a group. We found both these forms of capital were developed within

community. That is, the team environment provided international student-athletes with networks involving fellow athletes and American students.

We suggest several possible interventions that may help administrators to address the social and institutional discrepancies between international athletes and non-athletes. These interventions build on earlier studies that have sought to address concerns about international students, but would also benefit domestic students by promoting their cross-cultural learning and international networks (Cho & Yu, 2015; Forbes-Mewett et al., 2015; Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2013; Marginson et al., 2010). First, administrators could increase the heterogeneity of social interaction by requiring that dormitory living arrangements combine student-athletes, international students, and domestic students. Under current NCAA requirements, no institution can have a dormitory with more than 49% student-athletes. Our study suggests it may be beneficial to lower this percentage further, and that schools should establish similar arrangements for non-athlete international students. Second, administrators could facilitate the formation of different "teams" that need not necessarily be sport-related but which could create the level of social capital enjoyed by student-athletes, particularly if they are led by student support staff empowered with the authority to advocate for and negotiate on behalf of a manageable number of international students. Third, administrators should do more to strongly encourage international students to engage in an extracurricular activity on or off campus, a student club, or some other student-led organization for at least their first year. Universities could produce a list of recommended clubs or activities to ensure that international students are branching out beyond their existing networks of friends and acquaintances (see also Glass & Gesing, 2018; Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2015). However, to succeed, such an initiative would require the fostering of a broader university culture that encourages inclusion, learning, and engagement.

Indeed, the challenge for administrators, particularly those working in ISSs, is that each intervention described above is associated with higher order changes in the existing structures and practices of higher education institutions. This challenge is not new in the context of international students in general; however, what is new is that the circumstances for international student-athletes in the US have highlighted a deficiency in support for the wider group of international students. As our research demonstrates, a critical institutional approach to the study of social capital offers explanatory power to education scholars seeking to link micro-level experiences and meso-level practices to macro-level institutional processes.

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HELEN FORBES-MEWETT, PhD, is Senior Lecturer in the School of Social Sciences at Monash University. Her major research interests lie in the areas of human security, international education, international student safety and security, migration, cultural diversity and social cohesion. Email: helen.forbesmewett@monash.edu

MADELEINE PAPE, PhD, is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Science and Human Culture program at Northwestern University. Her current research focuses on gendered organizational change and feminist debates surrounding the inclusion of sex and gender in biomedical research and the regulation of female eligibility in international sport. Email: madeleine.pape@northwestern.edu

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Satisfiers and Dissatisfiers for International Vocational Education Students: A Case Study Using Narrative Frames

Jonathon Ryan
Waikato Institute of Technology, New Zealand

Michael Rabbidge
Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, South Korea

Yi Wang
Jenny Field
Waikato Institute of Technology, New Zealand

ABSTRACT

While the satisfaction of international students is frequently surveyed, much of this research is based on a very limited range of closed-item data collection methods, producing findings that partially reflect the researchers' assumptions in designing the survey items. Recognizing the potential value in using methods that are more open-ended and qualitative analyses, the present study employed narrative frames and follow-up interviews to explore the satisfiers and dissatisfiers for international vocational education students at one institution in New Zealand. Reporting on perceptions of the class, institution, and community, the findings identify the participants' top-of-mind (dis)satisfiers and complement the existing literature by identifying seldom-reported themes. Discussion of issues in analyzing narrative frames is also provided.

Keywords: dissatisfiers, international student satisfaction, narrative frames, satisfiers

As befits an important global industry, satisfaction surveys are used in international education. Insights gained from these tools inform the shape, direction, and marketing of education at institutional, national, and international levels. Among the most

prominent are annual surveys, generated or commissioned by industry stakeholders, which elicit responses from several thousand students or more, such as the International Association of Language Centres' (2017) survey of sojourning language students. Alongside such international studies, similarly numerous country- and institution-specific surveys are conducted at regular intervals, though the findings are not necessarily disseminated beyond the education providers who administer them. Complementing these are a diverse range of research reports with objectives that are academic in nature, and that are often focused on understanding the factors behind student satisfaction rather than simply providing an evaluation of current satisfaction across various dimensions. Within these, by far the most frequently reported research method is the Likert-scale questionnaire (e.g., Grebennikov & Skaines, 2007; Sam, 2001; Ward & Masgoret, 2004), the main advantage of which is the opportunity to identify statistically robust trends across large populations.

Importantly, however, questionnaires (and similar quantitative approaches, including interviews with closed-ended questions) are prone to producing seriously distorted findings because researchers' assumptions and biases are built into the design and selection of questions (Hammersley, 2008). As such, despite their undoubted strengths for some types of research questions, questionnaires provide limited value toward understanding phenomena from the participants' perspectives. Furthermore, given the frequency with which questionnaires are used, and, more particularly, the frequency with which certain question foci appear (e.g., course workload), the possibility remains that further studies largely reinforce what has already been generally established, rather than break new ground and broaden future research agendas.

We posit, therefore, that much can be gained by building upon the substantially smaller body of literature that explores international student satisfaction through more "open" research approaches, which allows for greater participant nomination of the key issues, along with reporting of individuals' voices. The present study aimed to do this surveying international students by deploying narrative frames focused on satisfying and dissatisfying aspects of their sojourning experience at one vocational tertiary institution in New Zealand. This was then followed by extended, open interviews that allowed us to further pursue key ideas. The objective of this article is both to report findings relating to the satisfaction of international vocational education students at the institution in question, and to raise issues in the use of narrative frames and the reporting and analysis of satisfaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Nature of Satisfaction

Following Letcher and Neves (2010), student satisfaction is defined as "the favorability of a student's subjective evaluations of the various outcomes and experiences associated with education" (p. 3). Key frameworks for understanding satisfaction have emerged particularly from work in the service sector, the most prominent being the expectancy-disconfirmation model, in which consumer satisfaction is thought to arise particularly from the gap between consumers' pre-

service expectations of service quality and their perceptions of what they subsequently experienced (Oliver, 2010). Where consumer evaluations of quality meet or exceed their expectations, satisfaction usually results, while failure to meet expectations usually results in dissatisfaction. Even for relatively brief service encounters, these expectations and evaluations are multidimensional, as indicated by the ServQual instrument (Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml, 1991), which operationalizes expectancy-disconfirmation along five dimensions: reliability (in performing the service to standard), assurance (trust in the provider's knowledge; their courtesy), tangibles (facilities, materials and personnel), empathy ("caring, individualized attention"), and responsiveness ("willingness to help"; Parasuraman et al., 1991, p. 41). In exploring the satisfaction of international students, such multi-dimensional assessment reveals a broad range of factors relevant to their experience in the host country (Sears et al., 2017), some of which lie beyond what an institution would traditionally consider to be the service they provide. These may include the way that students are received outside the institution by members of the host community, the local availability of familiar foods, and off-campus shopping and entertainment.

From the perspective of an education provider, a reasonable way to structure such an exploration would be to start from the core service—learning experiences—and work progressively outward to the support services and structures of the institution, and then to the peripheral aspects of the service, including the general experience of living in the host country. In the present study this has been operationalized as a distinction between experiences in the class, the institution, and outside the institution (i.e., within the local community or the larger country. It is worth noting, however, that this three-part construction does not map exactly onto the continuum between the provision of core and peripheral services. Homestay—the practice of placing an international student in the home of a local family—is an example of a reasonably core service of some education providers and one that is largely experienced outside of the institution.

An important theoretical contribution to discussion of satisfaction has been Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman's (1959) observation that some factors influence satisfaction only in a positive direction and others only in a negative direction. For instance, in their study of work satisfaction, achievement and advancement were identified as major sources of satisfaction but, in their absence, these played an "extremely small" role in producing negative attitudes to work (p. 82). Conversely, factors such as administration and working conditions proved to be major sources of dissatisfaction but had "little potency to affect job attitudes in a positive direction" (p. 82). Overall, they found that this unidirectional effect proved "truer of dissatisfiers than satisfiers" (p. 112).

Studies of International Student Satisfaction

Although, as discussed above, international students are frequently surveyed about their satisfaction with certain services, relatively few recent studies have sought to identify their "top of mind" issues and to understand the influence of these on satisfaction. Nevertheless, a broad range of issues has been found to be relevant.

Considering first the class, perhaps unsurprisingly, the quality of teaching and teaching materials is reported to be a key factor in satisfaction (Ammigan, 2019; Bianchi, 2013; Grebennikov & Skaines, 2007), as is academic performance (Bianchi, 2013; Ward & Masgoret, 2004). Dissatisfaction may arise particularly from the struggles that some international students experience in adapting to local classroom-based social conventions and pedagogical styles (e.g., M. Li, 2016; Sato & Hodge, 2015). A further dissatisfier is a perceived lack of academic support from lecturers and tutors (Sato & Hodge, 2015). Also important is the interaction between domestic and international students, both inside and outside of the class. Students report valuing inclusiveness practices and friendship building (Ammigan, 2019; Beloucif, Mehafdi, & Komey, 2018; Zhang & Brunton, 2007).

At the institutional level, Finn and Darmody's (2015) study reported that satisfaction with the institution as a whole was found to be the strongest determiner of the overall satisfaction with the study abroad experience. The category of tangibles may be especially important, including features such as the quality of buildings, library services, and technology (e.g. Arambewela & Hall, 2006; Ammigan, 2019; Beloucif, Mehafdi, & Komey, 2018). Indeed, Arambewela and Hall's (2006) comparative study of Thai, Indonesian, Chinese, and Indian students found tangibles to be the most important influence on institutional satisfaction overall. Additionally, it appears that such facilities and access to them may be more important for international than domestic students (Grebennikov & Skaines, 2007). Sam (2001) found that providing students with incomplete and/or inaccurate information prior to departure from their home country was an important source of dissatisfaction.

Studies also consistently emphasize the student experience of the community and country in general. Accommodation arrangements are crucial to satisfaction. Experiences living in homestays vary widely between being highly satisfying and highly dissatisfying (Ho, Li, Cooper, & Holmes, 2007; Ward & Masgoret, 2004; Zhang & Brunton, 2007). Homestays are identified as offering potentially important support, cultural insight, and language acquisition opportunities (Lee, Wu, Di, & Kinginger, 2017; Marijuan & Sanz, 2018), but for some, they represent a particularly difficult arrangement and can be associated with loneliness and mistreatment by the host family (Ho et al., 2007).

In terms of experiences in the community, dissatisfaction arising from perceived discrimination is frequently reported (Bianchi, 2013; Miller & Sujitparapitaya, 2010; Ward & Masgoret, 2004). Much of this experience with discrimination is reported to come in the form of microaggressions (subtle insults), such as exclusion (Houshmand, Spanierman, & Tafarodi, 2014). In some contexts, more overtly aggressive behavior is experienced, such as reports from one research context of Asian international students being "frequently screamed at and told to leave the country" (Bianchi & Drennan, 2012, p 105).

METHODS

The objective of the present study was to explore student satisfaction in a way that permitted greater student nomination of issues and to present more of the student voice in reporting the findings. The focus was on students enrolled at one tertiary

vocational education provider in New Zealand (NZ). We selected narrative frames and follow-up interviews as the metholodogy for exploring the following research questions:

1. What do international students find satisfying and dissatisfying about their classes?
2. What do international students find satisfying and dissatisfying about the learning institution they attend?
3. What do international students find satisfying and dissatisfying about their life in New Zealand?

As mentioned above, two data collection methods were used for the study: narrative frames and interviews. A narrative frame is best described as a template of sentence starters that seeks to prompt participants into revealing and reflecting upon their experiences about topics of interest to researchers (Barkhuizen, 2014). The stories that come from these frames allow researchers to appreciate the participants' experiences in their own words. From a researcher's perspective, the narrative frame is an effective data gathering device as it allows the researcher to not only elicit content related to specific research questions, but to combine the responses from a large number of participants to create a coherent overview of how participants feel about targeted situations. This use of narrative frames is especially effective when dealing with language learners due to the built-in scaffolding that helps students to find the language to say what they want to say. In addition to this, the frame still provides enough opportunity for participants to add other topics of interest should they so desire (Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008). Finally, the exploratory nature of the frame provides a good entry point into new research areas, and accommodates the use of follow-up interviews to expand upon initial responses (Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008).

The participants for this study were international students studying at one higher learning institute in NZ that focuses on vocational education. International students were defined for this study as those on an international student visa; thus, the perceptions of NZ immigrants and former refugees were not sought. All enrolled international students were invited to participate via an email sent by the international liaison office of the institution. They were invited to fill in a narrative frame (see Appendix A), which asked them to complete a series of sentences focusing on how satisfied or dissatisfied they were about their experiences with their classes, the institution, and NZ generally. There were no restrictions on how they could complete the frames. If willing to participate, students were asked to return their completed narrative frame either as an email attachment or to anonymously deposit it into a box on campus. A small number also submitted hardcopies in person. The initial timeframe for this was two weeks (later extended by a further two weeks).

The frames also requested biographical data, as well as an indication of whether or not the participants would be open to a follow-up interview. The majority of the participants indicated that they were open to follow up interviews. One hundred and eight students completed and returned the frame, representing slightly less than 10% of all the enrolled international students. The students who responded identified themselves as coming from a host of different nations, including China, Brazil,

Russia, Tahiti, Sri Lanka, India, Kenya, Bolivia, Saudi Arabia, Burma, Japan, France, South Korea, Jordan, Malaysia, and Nepal. Of the 93 who specified their current field of study, those studying within the institution's Business school accounted for 23%, with the remainder including Nursing, Media Arts, Information Technology, English, Civil Engineering, Hospitality, Applied Science, Veterinary, and TESOL.

Degree programs at this institution require a minimum an English entry level of International English Language Testing System (IELTS) 6.0 or equivalent, while a few diploma and certificate courses accept students with IELTS 5.5. Of the English language students, three reported studying in a qualification with an entry level of 5.0, and the others with entry levels of 5.5 or 6.0. Although language proficiency may have limited the expression of certain ideas, it is reasonable to assume that the key themes were captured, given the short length of the narrative frames, the 2-week time period, and access to dictionaries. For language reasons, no English-as-a- second-language (ESL) students were selected for the interviews.

An iterative/inductive approach (Dörnyei, 2011) was used to code and compile the responses into different factors that influence student perception of their experiences. This was in line with the *analysis of narratives* approach (Polkinghorne, 1995), which follows a paradigmatic procedure when coding themes. Such an approach involves identifying, then categorizing, themes according to emerging patterns of association (Barkhuizen, 2013). Each coding and categorizing decision was agreed upon by all four core members of the research team, and in a number of cases this led to considerable debate as to what could be inferred about the respondent's meaning. A protocol was established to tend toward caution when inferring meaning.

From there, the themes were used to create a picture of the satisfying and dissatisfying elements of being an international student in this context. Riessman (2008) acknowledged that determining the boundaries of "stories" can be difficult and highly interpretive, but the structure of the frames allowed for an easier thematic analysis, as the responses were already written thematically (Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik, 2014). In teams, the complete narrative frames were read and sorted within the three broader categories satisfiers and dissatisfiers: classes, institution, and country. From there, themes were identified and grouped accordingly to determine how the students felt about the broader categories. Within the three frames, some responses had more than one possible theme.

Following the thematic analysis, follow-up interviews were conducted with 20 of the participants, which provided more contextual details of their experiences (interview length ranged from 30 to 90 min); these data are reported here only sparingly in order to clarify comments from the narrative frames. Interviewees were chosen based on the themes that emerged, particularly those that indicated troubling or problematic experiences. The interviews were semi-structured and consisted of questions that allowed divergences to occur if necessary. They were also conducted with the understanding that knowledge formed during the interviews was co-constructed between the participant and researcher, and that parameters of sensitivity (Mann, 2016) were often vital in ensuring the success of the interviews. These interviews were transcribed and analyzed to broaden the context of understanding the satisfiers and dissatisfiers.

RESULTS

The findings presented here are drawn mainly from the narrative frames, with a small number of comments from the interviews for clarification. We leave aside the analysis of complete, individual narratives in favor of an examination of the themes that emerged from them *in toto*. Overall, as often reported internationally (e.g., International Association of Language Centres, 2017), students expressed an overwhelming sense of satisfaction through both the narrative frames and the interviews. These data tended to readily cluster into fairly general themes, such as *teachers* and *natural environment*. Instances of dissatisfaction were fewer, more varied, and tended to be tied to specific, individual experiences.

Tables 1–3 present a summary of the most common themes to emerge from the frames. The percentages indicate the proportion of respondents whose comments reflected each theme; as a number of respondents made complex statements reflecting more than one theme, in most cases the combined figures are greater than 100%. In each category, more respondents nominated sources of satisfaction than dissatisfaction.

Class Context

At the level of classes, the most commonly mentioned themes related to teachers, with displays of kindness, friendliness, and patience being the most reported satisfier (42%) ahead of teaching skill and knowledge (35%). Very often these two factors were cited in tandem. Brief, representative examples relating to teachers' personalities and interactional behavior include:

> "Every teachers are very kind and patient, always encourage me to keep going."
>
> "I think they are very friendly and they help me a lot."
>
> "They are friendly and helped me with my study."
>
> "The tutors have always had nice patience for us."

The following statement is an example of an expression of satisfaction with teachers being professional, well-prepared, and sensitive to students' needs:

> The way the tutors understand the language barrier and are ready to teach in different manners or styles for better understanding of people with English as their second or third language. Tutors do also understand that we international students come from different cultures. So they also help you to understand and adapt to New Zealand culture. Which I personally found very useful as it helped me a lot to understand New Zealand; the country, the people and the culture here.

Although, overall, there was widespread student satisfaction with teachers, dissatisfaction was expressed about cases in which students perceived teachers to lack the attributes of professionalism, including subject knowledge and teaching

competency (6%) and behavior that was unfriendly or unhelpful (5%). The most detailed comment in this regard was the following:

> Because I cannot adapt to that tutor's teaching methods. First of all, his voice is so low in class, which it's hard for me to hear what he said even he sit next to me. Then, we have a test about [particular equipment]. Since that tutor does not how to use it, he cannot teach us . . . and just recommend us to find the text book or search the videos to learn by ourselves. Moreover for the project report, he does not give us the grading standard and the content requirements. So most of the classmates are confus[ed] in this class. One of the Kiwi students talk in the class that as a local people, she can't understand what the teacher said in the class and she can't image how the international students' feeling. Because these reasons, that tutor was complained by students . . . At this moment, that tutor, that tutor is the worst teacher I have ever met in New Zealand.

This response captures a range of dissatisfiers attributed to the teacher: pedagogical style, pedagogical competency, subject knowledge, personal characteristics, and transparency in assessment grading. Here, and elsewhere in these data, dissatisfaction with teachers tended to involve multiple interrelating issues that ultimately had an effect on the participants' overall course achievement.

The next most important theme was classmates and interactions with them. Satisfying elements included having friendly relationships, particularly those which extended to social engagement outside the classroom (27%). The most frequently occurring comments related to aspects of interactional behavior, with the following representing very typical statements:

> "They are nice and friendly, they are very patient when I meet problems."

> "They were very friendly, receptive and helpful."

> "All of them are very nice, we got the group chat on Facebook, we support each other well."

However, classmates were also a frequently cited source of dissatisfaction, particularly in relation to behavior (8%), including interpersonal matters ("three mean girls") and, more frequently, disruptive behavior:

> "This classmates delay the class [be]cause of don't take it seriously."

Dissatisfaction also arose from other international students communicating in their first language (6%), thereby excluding participation of others in classroom interactions: "Some students who always communicated in their mother tongue made other students to feel left out." Loosely connected to this, two respondents (3%) also cited a lack of interaction between international and domestic (NZ or "Kiwi") students:

> "Kiwi students may don't willing to complete assignment with international students because of language problem."

"[It is] hard to make foreign friends."

The most frequent dissatisfiers were class scheduling/timetabling (15%) and facilities (13%), which were both much less frequent sources of satisfaction (6% and 2% respectively), suggesting a predominantly unidirectional effect. Scheduling/timetabling appeared to be a simple binary between convenient and inconvenient. Classroom facilities were reported as satisfying when they were considered modern and convenient, and dissatisfying when of poor quality or in poor condition, or when rooms were cramped, noisy, or had poorly functioning temperature control.

Matters relating to assessment proved to be another important dissatisfier. Poor assessment results was nominated as a dissatisfier by 10% of respondents. Assessment practices were mentioned by 9% of respondents, including comments such as the following:

> "There are too many assessments. In order to help us achieve those assessments, teachers have to spend many time preparing them, instead of teaching [course name]. We spend lots of time attending assessments."

> "Not reasonable assignment time frame, ambiguous marking."

> "We had too much tests and they are also doing at the same day. So we always felt high pressure and we did not have enough time to prepare them."

In the follow-up interviews, a number of participants discussed their dissatisfaction with grading practices, and particularly what they perceived to be a lack of transparency, especially in relation to the grading of essays. For many, essays were reported to be a largely unfamiliar assessment type and were felt to be too subjective in grading. Two (undergraduate) interviewees spoke at length about their frustration at being penalized for minor formatting errors in the use of APA style, when this revealed nothing about their mastery of the subject. Assessment practices appear to fundamentally represent a (unidirectional) dissatisfier, with no comments indicating these were a source of satisfaction; it is also notable that no students singled out successful results as a particular source of satisfaction.

Overall, the most frequently cited sources of satisfaction aligned with Parasuraman et al.'s (1991) categories of empathy (teachers and classmates) and assurance (teacher knowledge and skill); there was a more diverse range in the sources of dissatisfaction, with assurance (e.g., assessments), responsiveness (e.g., timetabling), and tangibles (e.g., facilities) all frequently cited.

Table 1: Student Reports of Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction Within Classes

Theme	Percentage
Satisfaction	
Teachers being kind, friendly and approachable	42%
Teachers being knowledgeable and skilled	35%
Classmates being friendly and supporting each other (within and outside the class)	27%
General teaching methods being engaging and effective	13%

Theme	Percentage
Class atmospheres being warm and friendly	12%
Timetables being convenient	6%
New knowledge and skills being learned	5%
Facilities being modern/convenient	2%
Other	6%
Dissatisfaction	
Class schedules/timetabling being inconvenient	15%
Facilities lacking or being substandard	13%
Teacher behavior	13%
Academic achievement/grades; assessment policies being unreasonable; grading criteria lacking transparency	10%
Topics being uninteresting or not useful	9%
Behavior of other students being disruptive or unpleasant	9%
Workload being too high	8%
Other international students speaking too much in their native language	6%
Teachers lacking professional knowledge/skills	5%
Other	13%

Institutional Context

At the institutional level, the majority of themes related to Parasuraman et al.'s (1991) category of tangibles, and more specifically facilities and resources. Forty-one percent of respondents identified satisfiers relating to facilities and a combined 63% mentioned dissatisfiers (general facilities 33%, computers 15%, lack of parking 15%). Satisfaction arose when key facilities were convenient, useful, comprehensive, clean, and in good condition, and dissatisfaction arose from spaces that were deemed inconvenient, noisy, crowded, or dirty and when a particular key facility was lacking. The most frequently reported satisfier was having access to a purpose-built area for students to both study and interact in socially:

> "Besides providing a space for learning, [it] plays a role for people chatting or consulting issues. It is quite multi-functional and people can share ideas during this merging process."

> "The [social/study area] was quite easy to use, with a great number of computers and big tables. People can get access to school website easily. Students can discuss issues in some study rooms, even though they are not easy to book one."

Apart from access to key resources in such areas (e.g., computers, printers, and kitchen), many students cited satisfaction arising from the functionality of these spaces, and enjoyed student areas that provided for eating and drinking, socializing and engaging in academic activities, including group study and research. Also satisfying was having 24-hr student access to such facilities.

Conversely, students reported dissatisfaction when the availability, functionality, and user experience of a facility was compromised. Particularly frequent were responses citing a lack of convenient parking (15%), reflecting the inner city location of the institution. One student, writing about a small privately run business school, wrote at length about her dissatisfaction at the lack of facilities in that institution and of their low-quality, adding that: "As an international student, I was payed a lots of tuition for my course but the cleanliness in the school is awful: Bathroom always run out toilet paper and students cannot use the elevator in this school." Discussing a particular incident relating to a lack of computers, she further added a comment relating to the lack of responsiveness of the institution: "It makes me unhappy and nobody answered my complaining in reception."

Even for students at the larger, better resourced institution, limited space and choices also dampened levels of satisfaction: "The group discussion rooms are too limited and the library computers are always not available. Because I want to use computers in the quiet area and want to discuss issues with my classmates."

A frequently reported dissatisfier among general facilities was a lack of options in the types of cuisine available on campus and a lack of organized social activities:

> "There are not enough tables and there are not healthy food. For example, there is only sushi or fast food. Sometimes, we want to eat some hot and fresh vegetables."

> "There is not a lot of activities. ... I think social activities can improve students' abilities in communication and make them more aware of local cultures."

The responsiveness of support services was also frequently discussed. Students identified satisfiers (10%) with the various institutional services available to them, such as those supporting learning (including the opportunity to practice English), international administration, enrollment, study advisories, libraries, information technology, and health services. Often remarked upon was the empathy of staff providing these services, who were variously described as kind, patient, friendly, qualified, and willing to help. Dissatisfaction (5%) related more to students' personal experiences or a lack of available information and support for international students:

> "[I was] somewhat dissatisfied about lack of support for international students. I wish there would be the opportunity to get some advice from senior students."

> "Because when I started my course, I really needed someone, who had already experienced my situation, to get some advice, but I wasn't able to find anyone."

In the following case, dissatisfaction was expressed in relation to the support services around homestay accommodation:

> "[I feel] very dissatisfied about the support from [team name], because when I had had some problems with my ex-homestay, the staff of [team name] did not support me well. Moreover, I heard some students complained that home

stay before I came. I could not understand why the staff still given them students after few times complained."

Thus, although tangibles (e.g., facilities) were the dominant theme in the discussion of institutional (dis)satisfiers, empathy and responsiveness were also notably important.

In the presentation of these data, a rather high proportion of responses (18%) have been grouped as "other." This grouping mostly consists of issues that were raised by a single respondent, such as the perceptions of long waiting times to see a doctor, the institution lacking an international standing, and unfair criteria for receiving scholarships.

Table 2: Student Reports of Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction with the Institution

Theme	Percentage
Satisfaction	
Facilities being modern/convenient	41%
Learning and study being facilitated	19%
Teachers being helpful	17%
Support services being helpful	10%
Friendships being made	8%
The general experience of being an international student being pleasant/rewarding	8%
The atmosphere being warm	7%
Other	6%
Dissatisfaction	
General facilities lacking, being inconvenient or in poor condition	33%
Computers being insufficient in number and/or in poor condition	15%
Parking options lacking	15%
Social and entertainment activities lacking	7%
Library lacking resources and/or space	5%
Support services being ineffective or unhelpful	5%
Program options and structure	5%
Rules and regulations	4%
Organizational structure and communication	3%
Other	18%

New Zealand Context

The issues influencing satisfaction studying within NZ related particularly to the natural and social environment, interactions with people, and aspects of lifestyle. Of these, the most frequently cited satisfier was being in a clean, unpolluted, and beautiful natural environment (55%). The following is a fairly representative extract identifying a number of typical satisfiers:

> Because there is not environment pollution, I can enjoy the air, the sun and the grass. There are a lot of free park, I often do some exercise around a lake. Also, the water is cleaner than our country, I like drink tap water here. Some of us are not good at English, but the Kiwi and other English speaker are patient, we can communicate with them easily.

As in this example, aspects of the natural environment were often favorably contrasted with those of the home country, and positive evaluations of the environment were often mentioned together with the hospitality of locals. Perhaps because of the similarity in the environment that all respondents would have experienced, there were no indications of a corresponding dissatisfaction with such environmental matters, although weather and climate represented as a related dissatisfier (8%).

The theme of hospitable people was evidenced in frequent references to the friendliness and generosity of people during ordinary social interactions (32%):

> People here are influenced by this peaceful and patrol surroundings a lot, very patient and friendly. They always keep a placid attitude towards life, no matter what tough difficulties come, New Zealanders are able to tackle them with optimistic moods. And this positive perspective affects me as well. I appreciate it very much. Besides, people here are very friendly and kind. Most of them like helping others who need support.

However, 9% of respondents identified discrimination (mostly in the form of microaggressions) as a key source of dissatisfaction. When followed up on in the interviews, nearly all respondents reported having experienced some form of discrimination (such as perceiving that they had received less polite service than others) but most brushed aside the notion of it impacting on their overall satisfaction. The most serious case was a female student reporting being verbally abused by a stranger, which she found very unsettling.

For many respondents, their closest interactions with New Zealanders occurred in homestay contexts, and it is here that both satisfiers and dissatisfiers involved a particular intensity. When discussing homestays as a satisfier (7%), students focused on the help they received from their homestays, and their general kindness, as illustrated in the following response:

> I had a lovely homestay mother. She is a wonderful woman with a big heart, she is the one of the reason I love New Zealand. She is very lovely. She took a great care of me to get used to a new living place.

Similarly, in the interviews, a number of students discussed their positive homestay experiences at length, reflecting on the warmth and inclusivity of the family experience, life-long friendships, and the perception of enormous gains in English proficiency. Nevertheless, although most homestay experiences were positive, when there were problems, at times these had a profoundly negative impact upon the student's study experience and desire to remain in the country; these represented 7% of the NZ dissatisfiers. In such cases, unpalatable food and a lack of support were recurring sources of dissatisfaction, while there were also clashes over household

rules and expected behavior: "The first month I live with the homestay. I think I can't handle of the food and the way they treat people."

However, the two most frequently cited forms of dissatisfaction related to a lack of cheap and convenient public transportation (24%) and a perception of insecurity around personal safety and the occurrence of petty crime (15%). The transportation issue had no corresponding satisfier and may represent a unidirectional factor. Personal security was a satisfier for a small number of people (3%), but also appears to be largely unidirectional, becoming notable largely after the experience of petty crime.

Overall, the satisfiers in this category tended to represent tangibles (clean environment) and empathy (welcoming homestays and friendly locals). Tangibles also accounted for the majority of dissatisfiers (e.g., transportation, food, weather/climate).

Table 3: Student Reports of Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction within New Zealand

Theme	Percentage
Satisfaction	
The environment being clean and unpolluted, and/or beautiful	55%
People being friendly and welcoming	32%
Social services being good	10%
Lifestyle/pace of life being pleasant	10%
Homestay being warm and friendly	7%
City services/infrastructure being good	5%
Feeling secure	3%
Other	19%
Dissatisfaction	
Public transportation being inconvenient and/or expensive	24%
Feeling insecure and/or experiencing petty crime	15%
Disliking the food/lack of access to favorite foods	10%
Experiencing (or detecting) discrimination	9%
The cost of living being too high	9%
The weather/climate being disagreeable	8%
Experiencing language barriers	6%
Homestay problems	5%
Other	16%

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to explore the satisfaction of international students at one tertiary education provider, and to do so through their own words, building a picture of the key satisfiers in the class, the institution, and the host country (New Zealand). A feature of the narrative frame approach is that it promotes identification of the top-of-mind issues for respondents, revealing a snapshot of the most important issues for a respondent at a moment in time, and avoiding the priming effect of

specifying which issues the participants can comment on. The open nature of the prompts invites comment on any issue and could potentially raise matters that may be overlooked through more commonly used closed-item methods. Thus, the use of narrative frames seems likely to produce a rather different picture than would be generated through Likert-scale questionnaire responses.

One example of an unexpected finding was related to assessment practices, which represented one of the most frequent class dissatisfiers (9% of responses). Although problems with assessment requirements are well-established (e.g., M. Li, 2016), this appears to be one of the few studies to highlight substantial dissatisfaction with factors such as a lack of grading transparency in essays (see also Grebennikov & Skaines, 2007), and a reported overemphasis on assessment at the expense of teaching. There was some interaction between dissatisfaction with results and dissatisfaction with policy (23%). In terms of tackling such perceptions, transparency may be a particularly vexing issue, given that university tutors tend to tackle essay grading with holistic and largely subjective, "gut-feel" approaches (J. Li, 2012).

Another important issue is evidence of the satisfaction arising from the warmth, patience, and friendliness of the teachers' general interactional behavior. Although this may not come as a surprise, it is worth noting that the set of class satisfiers is dominated by the interpersonal domains arising from the attitudes and behavior of the teacher (42%) and classmates (27%) and the warmth of the atmosphere (12%). This seems particularly worth emphasizing given the increasing international focus on accountability for maximizing educational effectiveness, and the focus on efficiency that is driving outcomes-based education (Tam, 2014). More specifically, while the educational outcome is undoubtedly crucial, so too is satisfaction with the educational journey. Indeed, from a market-oriented perspective, it may be that it is satisfaction with the journey that generates greater positive word-of-mouth exposure.

Overall, the picture to emerge from this study is that there are a number of "top-of-mind" issues that are consistently reported by international students in NZ in their discussions of satisfiers and—to a somewhat lesser extent—dissatisfiers. In terms of the class experience, reports of satisfaction in this study were primarily based on warm, helpful interactions with the teacher and other students, and with trust in the teacher's professional competence. Institutional satisfiers were largely based on convenient and attractive facilities, and on helpful interactions with staff. NZ satisfiers were dominated by the perception of a clean, natural environment and positive interactions with people.

As discussed in the next section, reported dissatisfiers vary widely and cannot therefore be readily grouped together. Often, these may be tied to specific experiences. However, at a general level, the most important principles appear to be convenient access to resources and fairness. The first accounts for the main issues at the class, institution, and country levels: timetabling/scheduling, facilities, parking, and transportation. It seems likely that by attending to these obstacles, these sources of dissatisfaction could be relieved; these are not, however, readily solvable, and may require detailed, integrated planning of the services supplied to international students. The second theme, fairness, is not as strongly apparent as the first but also runs through the three contexts, particularly in relation to issues such as assessment

practices, workload, teacher/student behavior, other's use of native languages, discrimination, and crime.

These findings, based largely on the use of narrative frames, present a rather more detailed picture of the issues than those that have previously been reported (e.g., Arambewela & Hall, 2006; Bianchi, 2013; Sam, 2001; Ward & Masgoret, 2004). Thus, the use of narrative frames and other more open data collection methods (including that of Bianchi, 2013) appear to provide richer detail that complements the broader brushstrokes of large-scale questionnaires, while also enabling input from a greater number of participants than is generally feasible via interviews (see Ho et al., 2007 for a fairly large-scale interview and focus-group study). In the following sections, the focus turns to discussion of issues that arose in the reporting and analysis of (dis)satisfiers. Although our focus was narrative frames, much of this is relevant more generally to exploring satisfaction via any qualitative approach.

Reporting and Analyzing Satisfying and Dissatisfying Experiences

A noticeable trend across the narrative frame data was that satisfiers were reported in rather general terms, but dissatisfiers were reported in more specific and detailed terms. For instance, in the narrative frames, descriptions of individuals (e.g., homestay mother) and groups (e.g., classmates) were nearly always presented as general characteristics (e.g., kind), yet these descriptions were seldom exemplified through recounting particular events that demonstrated that quality. For example, in discussing class satisfiers, one participant described teachers as being "always very approachable, friendly and I can feel their willingness to help," thereby describing a general, positive characteristic of the types of people she tended to encounter.

Yet, when describing class dissatisfiers, she presented a lengthy description of a specific instance in which the tutor had been absent and no replacement tutor had been scheduled, which she saw as being symptomatic of a lack of communication within that department. Similarly in the interviews, it was more typically the case that satisfiers were illustrated by describing habitual or frequently recurring events while dissatisfiers were very frequently illustrated in detail with a specific critical incident that caused frustration or anguish. For instance, one interviewee reported an overall satisfying homestay experience, but spoke at length about receiving an "angry, definitely angry" lecture-like reprimand from a homestay mother over repeatedly wearing shoes in the house against her instructions.

One possibility is that the occurrence of a large number of positive interactions may become generalized into an overall positive description of a person or group, while negative interactions may have a greater emotional impact and a more pointed implication. Indeed, this is suggested in both the marketing literature relating to satisfaction (e.g., Vargo, Nagao, He, & Morgan, 2007), and in the psychology literature under the concept of *negativity bias*, for which Rozin and Royzman (2001) provide a useful taxonomy. This includes the phenomenon of *negative potency*, whereby a negative event "is subjectively more potent and of higher salience than its positive counterpart" (p. 298), and the notion of *greater negative differentiation*, in which negative experiences may be recalled in greater descriptive and emotional detail than positive experiences of a similar magnitude, as well as the idea of

negativity dominance, whereby negative events are weighted more heavily than positive events in "holistic perception and appraisal" (p. 298). Such tendencies would account for the prominence given in these data to individual negative occurrences or negative evaluations of single individuals (such as a teacher or classmate). These phenomena appear to have implications from both a research methodology perspective and in terms of managing student satisfaction.

As researchers reflecting on the process of conducting an analysis of narratives (Polkinghorne, 1995), it became apparent that we were particularly, and possibly overly, drawn to accounts of dissatisfaction. For instance, in the interview reported above, initially for us the most striking—and reportable—feature of the interviewee's account of his homestay experience seemed to be the "angry, definitely angry" reprimand from the homestay mother; yet he mentioned this only after describing the overall family experience as very warm, and did so only in response to further questioning, before reiterating his very positive overall evaluation. He also mentioned that he happily resided with the family for more than a year in total. Thus, while the shouting event was undoubtedly important to the student, in our initial analysis we had probably misapprehended—and risked overstating—its significance to him. Although this may reflect our own biases in attempting to improve the student experience, it may also be a common risk that arises in analyzing narrative due to the phenomenon of greater negative differentiation. In further acknowledgement of researcher subjectivity, what may also occur is an interaction between negativity bias and empathy for the interviewee's experience. We may be biased toward focusing more heavily on an interviewee's description of being shouted at than her or his account of an enjoyable experience overall. From a methodology perspective, then, it seems important to be aware that in studies of positive and negative experiences, there may be an inherent risk of researchers misrepresenting the participants' reports of negative events.

CONCLUSION

For multiple reasons, the satisfaction of international students is an issue of major importance to stakeholders of international education, such as parents, teachers, prospective students, ministries of education, and employers. This is increasingly important given the competitive international education market. In asking new questions and exploring the issues in a range of ways, a more rounded picture can emerge of how best to cater to international students to ensure a satisfying and positive living and learning experience in the country of their choice.

In interpreting the present findings, due caution is required in relation to the limitations in the study design. Of particular note is the rather low (10%) response rate from international students at this institution, which means that the findings cannot be generalized to the wider body of international students. Additionally, it is likely that at least some of the specific findings may represent localized issues and therefore may have little resonance in another context.

It is also worth reflecting on the design of the narrative frame, which here divided student experience into the class, the institution, and the country. These categories undoubtedly influence the type of response elicited. For instance, in dividing the

study experience between the class and the institution, it may be that the narrative frame created separate categories that some respondents may otherwise have collapsed. In this case, by eliciting a comment on the institution, it may have promoted commentary on facilities, and by eliciting a commentary on the class it may have discouraged an association with learning as an institutional activity. A number of reasonable alternatives exist, but each will of course build in a different set of biases. Despite this caution, it seems that compared to other forms of data collection typically used in the exploration of student satisfaction, the use of narrative frames provided opportunity for personal responses that more accurately represented international student voices at the vocational educational institute in question. The inherent scaffolding provided by the frames assisted the students, who were all non-native speakers of English, to provide details relevant not only to the study itself, but also to areas of concern that were unanticipated by the researchers, which in turn led to greater investigation via follow-up interviews. Such advantages may be usefully exploited in future studies that focus on participants who may require certain levels of assistance in expressing themselves in languages other than their first language.

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JONATHON RYAN, PhD, is a Principal Academic Staff Member in the Centre for Languages at Wintec. His major research interests lie in the areas of reference, pragmatics, miscommunication, and practitioner research. Email: jonathon.ryan@wintec.ac.nz

MICHAEL RABBIDGE, PhD, is an assistant professor in the Department of English education at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, South Korea. His major research interests lie in the areas of identity research, EFL/ESL higher education research, and translanguaging. Email: mikemind@hotmail.com

YI WANG, PhD, is an Academic Staff Member in the Centre for Languages at Waikato Institute of Technology. Her major research interests lie in the area of learner autonomy, teacher cognition, reflective practice, and bicultural teacher identity. Email: Wang.Yi@wintec.ac.nz

JENNY FIELD, MPhil, is a teacher/researcher in the Centre for Languages at the Waikato Institute of Technology. Her major research interests are in second language learning with beginner and limited L1 literacy learners and learner autonomy. Email: jenny.field@wintec.ac.nz

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Jeitinho as a Coping Strategy Used by Brazilian International Students for Dealing with Acculturative Stress

Silvia Alves Nishioka
Defne Akol
Teachers College, Columbia University

ABSTRACT

This mixed-method study examined whether Brazilian students in the US use an indigenous problem-solving practice, *jeitinho*, as a coping strategy for acculturative stress. Forty-two participants answered an online survey, which was a culmination of demographic information, the Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students, BriefCOPE, *jeitinho* questionnaire, and three open-ended questions about how Americans may perceive *jeitinho*. Results showed that a negative dimension of *jeitinho* was associated with nonadaptive coping strategies, but it was not a significant predictor of acculturative stress. Qualitative themes highlighted the multidimensionality of *jeitinho*, which could help in students' adjustment (positive) or reinforce stereotypes and prejudices (negative) against Brazilians. Findings elucidate the complexity of *jeitinho* Brazilian students can be mindful about and when to use it to avoid stereotyping.

Keywords: acculturative stress, Brazilian, coping, *jeitinho*

The globalization of the economy and technological development has increased the demand for highly educated professionals who are competent in establishing international partnerships and collaborations (British Council, 2012). As such, there has been an increase in the number of people interested in studying abroad, which both creates unique opportunities to immerse oneself in a different society and culture and also challenges one to quickly adjust to a new environment.

A study focusing on international students' mental health in the United States found a high prevalence of mental health difficulties: 43% of 551 participants

reported at least one emotional or stress-related problem that affected their academic performance (Hyun, Quinn, Madon, & Lustig, 2007). International students may experience stressful situations that require clinical attention, as they have to adjust not only to college but also to a new language and culture (Olivas & Li, 2006). Thus, clinicians are challenged to incorporate multiple perspectives in their practice to address specific psychological needs of international students, such as acculturative stress, defined as the stress resulting from the process of adapting to a different culture (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987; Holm-Hadulla, & Koutsoukou-Argyraki, 2015).

To thrive both academically and socially in the new country, international students may employ a variety of strategies that are culturally driven but are not readily understood or validated by the mainstream culture (e.g., text-borrowing practices; Amsberry, 2009). By identifying and acknowledging such cultural strategies, clinicians may better support students' adjustment. Practices such as the Brazilian *jeitinho*, defined as a "clever dodge" to solve problems (Da Matta, 2001), could be used by international students in their adjustment process. For instance, Brazilian students may use *jeitinho* to find alternative methods to finish an important experiment despite not having all the necessary instruments. Yet, there is a dearth in the literature about such indigenous practices and how they are employed.

Little is known about the characteristics of certain subgroups of students or how they adjust to American educational institutions. According to the Open Doors Report (Institute of International Education, 2016), Brazil represented 2.4% of all international students in 2015, which is the largest student population from a Latin American country in the US. This number has increased due to assistance from Brazilian governmental programs; for instance, more than 5,000 Brazilians received governmental scholarships to study in the US in 2013 (Ministério da Educação, 2013), and it is one of the most promising markets for university recruitment (Fang, Roy, & Ortiz, 2015). Nonetheless, there is a lack of studies focusing on Brazilian students and their acculturation in the US. This mixed-method study aimed at examining how Brazilian students employ coping strategies while adapting to the US; specifically, how may the indigenous practice, *jeitinho*, be used as a coping strategy for acculturative stress?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Acculturation and Acculturative Stress

Brazilians and other international students often lack much of the cultural background that would help them adjust to American universities. They are rapidly immersed in the educational context while feeling pressured to succeed, which may increase their vulnerability to stress (Holm-Hadulla & Koutsoukou-Argyraki, 2015). Acculturation is a concept that describes the process of adjustment that international students go through. It can be defined as the dynamic process of cultural and psychological transformation experienced by a person when in contact with a new culture (Berry, 2006; Birman & Simon, 2013). This concept has been extensively studied among immigrant and refugee populations to clarify the psychological processes related to living in a new country. A meta-analysis evaluating the

relationship between acculturation and mental health showed that, overall, acculturation to the host culture was positively associated with positive mental health outcomes (Yoon et al., 2013).

Despite being related to positive outcomes, acculturation may be a stressful process. This experience has been conceptualized as acculturative stress, or the strain experienced by a person while acculturating to a new culture (Berry et al., 1987). Studies have shown that the various challenges international students face related to academic performance and social interactions significantly increase their stress (Gebhard, 2012; Yakunina, Weigold, Weigold, Hercegovac, & Elsayed, 2013). Sandhu and Asrabadi (1994) developed the Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students (ASSIS) to further investigate the concept in this population. The instrument has shown good validity and reliability for international student samples, which improves research with this population (Constantine, Okazaki, & Utsey, 2004; Yakunina et al., 2013).

Despite their need for mental health support, international students may encounter greater barriers to access treatment, as clinicians may lack certain skills such as providing services in languages other than English (Holm-Hadulla & Koutsoukou-Argyraki, 2015; Prince, 2015). Considering this, Mori (2000) highlighted that counseling centers should understand the unique characteristics and needs of international students to better serve and support them.

International students experiencing acculturative stress may use more or less adaptive responses to cope. Gebhard (2012) found that students employed behaviors that could be described as facilitators or barriers to their adaptation. Participants expressed that having reminders of their home culture, socializing with other students, and trying to understand and engage with American culture were helpful behaviors. On the other hand, expecting others to adapt to their needs, constantly complaining, and withdrawing from the new culture were considered barriers to adaptation (Gebhard, 2012). Another study observed that certain attitudes toward cultural diversity, such as openness to differences and having contact with diverse people, were associated with significantly lower acculturative stress in a sample of 336 international students in the U.S. (Yakunina et al., 2013). These results emphasize that international students' attitudes and behaviors may promote their acculturation process, thus lowering their acculturative stress.

Coping can be defined as the way one responds to an adverse event and the consequent distress from it (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010). Studies have shown the importance of coping to promote physical and psychological health (for a meta-analysis, refer to Penley, Tomaka, & Wiebe, 2002). There are clinical benefits to fostering coping responses in individuals going through stressful situations. Consequently, it is appropriate to study further the specific responses international students employ to overcome adversity linked to their adjustment to universities.

Brazilian Students and *Jeitinho* in Brazilian Culture

A study about mental health experiences of Latinos (mainly from Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, and Guatemala) and Brazilian immigrants found that the groups differed significantly regarding their help-seeking behaviors for

mental problems (Sánchez et al., 2014). Among Brazilians, participants who were more acculturated were more likely to endorse treatment-seeking behaviors. This trend was not observed among the other Latino groups, suggesting that people from Latin American countries may approach mental health problems differently. Indeed, Tosta (2004) proposed that Brazilian identity is distinguished from Latino identity. Most Brazilians do not identify themselves as having Hispanic (Spanish) origins, since Brazil was mainly influenced by Portuguese culture and has Portuguese as the official language. The author argued that Brazil has historically assumed an isolated position regarding the other Latin American countries' political and cultural influences. Therefore, Brazilians may have cultural practices and beliefs that are not shared with other Latino cultures. These cultural practices and beliefs are salient to Brazilian populations in how they relate to other people and handle daily problems. For these reasons, the Brazilian population may be better examined as a separated group.

An example of a salient practice in the Brazilian culture that is less relevant to other Latino groups is *jeitinho*. Sociologists and anthropologists have described *jeitinho* (pronounced *jaytcheenyoo) brasileiro* as a "clever dodge," a way to "get things done" by bending or breaking norms mainly based on personal relations (Da Matta, 2001; Duarte, 2006). *Jeitinho*, as a problem-solving strategy, is considered an indigenous construct very common in Brazil that intrigues researchers due to its ambiguity. The origins of *jeitinho* are unclear, but it was linked to over-bureaucratized, rigid, and excessively formal contexts that characterize many Brazilian institutions, especially public institutions (Duarte, 2006). *Jeitinho* would be a way to deal with these contexts and, most importantly, is considered part of the Brazilian identity (Barbosa, 1992; Da Matta, 2001). It is a widespread practice present in a variety of social contexts and easily recognized by the expression: "Dá um *jeitinho* para mim" ([Give me a *jeitinho*]; Duarte, 2006).

Ferreira, Fischer, Porto, Pilati, and Milfont (2012) tried to explore the concept of *jeitinho*, capturing its intrinsic ambiguity. The authors developed and tested scenarios depicting the use of *jeitinho* (see Appendix). They distinguished three underlying dimensions: corruption (i.e., morally questionable ways to solve a problem), creativity (i.e., new and creative ways to solve a problem), and social-norm breaking (i.e., bypassing social norms to solve a problem). The results underscore the complexity of Brazilian culture and its practices; participants acknowledged that *jeitinho* might produce negative consequences and be negatively perceived by other people, and, at the same time, they recognized that most Brazilians engage in it (Ferreira et al., 2012).

Research found *jeitinho* to be comparable to other indigenous constructs: *guanxi* in China, *wasta* in Lebanon, and "pulling strings" in the United Kingdom (Smith, Huang, Harb, & Torres, 2010). Each construct was considered to have a cultural-specific practical value to solve problems. Considering the perception that *jeitinho* is part of Brazilian identity, it is relevant to investigate its use and implications in contexts that may not recognize it as a valid strategy. In organizational settings, research has examined the influence of *jeitinho* in business in Brazil as negative moral implications (Dennis & Stroh, 1997; O'Keefe & O'Keefe, 2004). Similar to other cultural practices such as *guanxi* in China, *jeitinho* is heavily based on informal

connections and social influence, which can be seen as a negative characteristic by cultures that value formal structures and organizations (Smith et al., 2010). It is possible that non-Brazilians perceive *jeitinho* negatively and disapprove its use in academia and workplaces, but little is known about these perceptions.

Research involving Brazilian immigrants highlights the challenges they face that have negative repercussions to mental health. Studies observed that Brazilian immigrants may be discriminated against, which intensifies the stress during adaptation (Oliveira et al., 2016). To cope with such adverse situations, Brazilians may employ a variety of strategies including *jeitinho*. Hafemeister (2005) interviewed Brazilian immigrants in Miami and found that they used *jeitinho* as a critical strategy when confronted with difficulties related to their acculturation to the US. Many participants reported being able to thrive due to their ability of *dar um jeitinho* ([give a *jeitinho*]; Hafemeister, 2005). *Jeitinho* has an evident value as a strategy that is often employed by Brazilians, yet little is known about its use outside Brazil. Although international students do not face the same challenges as immigrants do, the former still have to quickly adapt to a new culture when being pressured to perform academically, which may result in increased stress requiring the use of strategies such as *jeitinho*.

To date, few studies have focused on the Brazilian immigrant population (Oliveira et al., 2016), and none have focused on Brazilian international students investigating their difficulties in the host country and the strategies, including *jeitinho*, that may help them in their adaptation process. To address this gap in the literature, this study aimed to answer the following research questions: (a) What are the coping strategies used by Brazilian international students in the United States for acculturative stress? (b) Is *jeitinho* used as a coping strategy to reduce acculturative stress? And, (c) how do non-Brazilians perceive the use of *jeitinho* by Brazilian students? It was hypothesized that: (a) *jeitinho* would be a significant coping strategy among Brazilian students for acculturative stress; (b) lower levels of acculturative stress would be associated with adaptive coping strategies and *jeitinho*; and (c) American professors and colleagues would perceive *jeitinho* as a negative practice.

METHOD

Study Design

This study used a mixed-method design to address the research questions. The qualitative measures aimed to increase knowledge regarding the Brazilian international student population and their levels of acculturative stress, coping strategies, and use of *jeitinho* to compare between participants. Due to the lack of objective measures and the exploratory nature of the investigation, the authors formulated three open-ended questions to examine the perceptions of non-Brazilians about Brazilians using *jeitinho* based on previous studies (Dennis & Stroh, 1997; O'Keefe & O'Keefe, 2004). Additionally, the qualitative material could further elucidate the quantitative results.

Participants

The present study considered an international student any individual who is a non-U.S. citizen or permanent resident who came to the US primarily to study. Participants were recruited through a Brazilian student association. This association focuses on disseminating relevant information for undergraduate and graduate Brazilian students studying in the US through their website and social media. Brazilian students can subscribe to their website and receive this information or access it directly on their social media pages. The association announced the study to potential participants on their email newsletter and social media pages. Participation was voluntary and involved responding to an anonymous survey. A gift card raffle was conducted for those who completed all the questions. Inclusion criteria were self-identify as Brazilian, be a current student in a college or university in the United States, and voluntarily accept to participate in the study. Forty-two (n = 42) Brazilian students in the U.S. completed the quantitative scales, and from those, twenty-eight (n = 28) also answered the qualitative questions included in the analyses. The Teachers College Institutional Review Board approved this study prior to data collection. Data was collected from November 2016 to January 2017.

Measures

Participants completed demographic information, the ASSIS, and the BriefCope inventory. Additionally, the *jeitinho* questionnaire (Ferreira et al., 2012) and three open-ended questions developed by the authors were used to examine *jeitinho*.

The ASSIS (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994) has 36 items rated using a 5-point Likert-type scale, describing different possible stressful situations such as, "Multiple pressures are placed upon me after migration." Seven factors are considered: perceived discrimination (eight items), homesickness (four items), perceived hate (five items), fear (four items), stress due to change/culture shock (three items), guilt (two items), and miscellaneous (10 items). A total score higher than 109 is considered in need of clinical attention. In this study, the instrument reliability was $\alpha = .93$.

The BriefCope (Carver, 1997) assesses both adaptive and nonadaptive coping strategies. Maroco, Campos, Bonafé, Vinagre, and Pais-Ribeiro (2014) developed a Brazilian version of the BriefCOPE translating and validating the items to this population. The instrument has 28 items (e.g., "I concentrate my efforts in doing something about it," "I give up the attempt to get what I want") describing different coping strategies rated according to a 5-point Likert-type scale. Scores for adaptive and nonadaptive strategies are calculated separately; higher scores indicate a higher frequency of that type of strategy. In this study, the instrument reliability was $\alpha = .83$.

Participants responded to a questionnaire evaluating *jeitinho* among Brazilians composed of 19 hypothetical scenarios of the use of *jeitinho* (Ferreira et al., 2012). Participants rated how likely they would behave in the described way (i.e., using *jeitinho*). Answers range from 0 to 10 (0 = *very unlikely* and 10 = *very likely*). Three *jeitinho* dimensions were represented: corruption, creativity, and norm breaking. According to the developers, corruption refers to a problem-solving strategy that involves illicit methods. Creativity refers to an innovative or creative way of solving

a problem without violating social or legal norms. Norm-breaking refers to strategies that bypass some social norms to solve a problem. Examples of these scenarios are found in the Appendix. Scores are calculated by summing the responses; higher scores indicate higher likelihood of using *jeitinho* as a problem-solving strategy. For corruption dimension scores range from 0 to 60, for creativity scores range from 0 to 70, and for norm-breaking from 0 to 60. In this study, the instrument reliability was $\alpha = .76$.

Finally, participants answered three open-ended questions developed by the authors on the online survey to gather qualitative data on how Americans may perceive *jeitinho*: (a) "If your professor at your college/university knew you were using *jeitinho* to solve a problem, in your opinion, what would s/he think? Would this influence their impressions about you?"; (b) "If a classmate at your college/university knew you were using *jeitinho* to solve a problem, in your opinion, what would s/he think? Would this influence their impressions about you?"; and (c) "If an American friend/colleague knew you were using *jeitinho* to solve a problem, in your opinion, what would s/he think? Would this influence their impressions about you?"

Data Analyses

Following a mixed-method design, first, quantitative data and qualitative data were analyzed separately. Then, the findings were integrated yielding a more holistic understanding of the use of *jeitinho* as a coping strategy for acculturative stress in Brazilian international students.

Quantitative data (i.e., ASSIS, BriefCOPE, and *jeitinho* questionnaire) was analyzed through SPSS using the total scores of each participant in each measure. First, participants ($n = 42$) were divided into two groups according to their ASSIS total score: Scores below or equal to 109 were considered low acculturative stress (LAS; $n = 34$) and scores higher than 109 were considered high acculturative stress (HAS; $n = 8$). Scores from BriefCOPE were divided into adaptive coping (AC) and nonadaptive coping (NC). Results of *jeitinho* questionnaire were analyzed in its three different dimensions: corruption (CP), creativity (CR), and norm-breaking (NB). Higher scores indicated higher likelihood the participant used *jeitinho* in the described way. We conducted an analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare the measures' scores between LAS and HAS groups. Multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine significant associations between LAS and AC, NC, CP, CR, and NB while controlling for the participant's age, gender, and level of education.

Qualitative data (i.e., answers to three open-ended questions about *jeitinho* from the online survey) were categorized using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to capture the common themes across participants. Following a first reading of all responses, initial themes were generated for each participant (total of 28 participants, 84 responses). Then, common themes across responses were searched and elaborated to accurately capture distinct perspectives related to the research question. The themes were reviewed and defined using significant instances from the dataset. Quantitative and qualitative analyses were then integrated to provide a more holistic comprehension of the present research theme.

RESULTS

The present study aimed to: (a) identify the coping strategies used by Brazilian international students in the U.S. for acculturative stress; (b) assess whether *jeitinho* is used as a coping strategy to reduce acculturative stress; and (c) how non-Brazilians perceive the use of *jeitinho* by Brazilian students. It was expected that: (a) *jeitinho* would be a significant coping strategy among Brazilian students for acculturative stress; (b) lower levels of acculturative stress would be associated with adaptive coping strategies and *jeitinho*; and (c) American professors and colleagues would perceive *jeitinho* as a negative practice.

Quantitative Analysis

Table 1 summarizes the participants' demographic characteristics divided by high acculturative stress (HAS) and low acculturative stress (LAS) groups. Overall, participants were aged between 27 and 31 years, identified as female, and were single. They were all Brazilian nationals and asked to identify their ethnic background according to Brazilian census categories (e.g., non-Hispanic European, multiracial, Brazilian native).

Table 1: Demographic Information by Level of Acculturative Stress

	HAS		LAS	
Variables	*n* = 8	%	*n* = 34	%
Age				
18 to 22 years	0	0	6	17.6
23 to 27 years	2	25	6	17.6
27 to 31 years	4	50	18	52.9
32 to 36 years	2	25	1	2.9
37+ years	0	0	2	5.9
Gender				
Male	2	25	10	29.4
Female	6	75	24	70.6
Ethnicity[a]				
African	1	12.5	0	0
Asian	1	12.5	2	5.9
Brazilian Native	3	37.5	17	50
European Hispanic	2	25	6	17.6
European non-Hispanic	5	62.5	9	26.5
Multiracial	5	62.5	6	17.6
Marital Status				
Single	3	37.5	22	64.7
Married	3	37.5	10	29.4
Living together	2	25	1	2.9

	HAS		LAS	
Variables	*n* = 8	%	*n* = 34	%
Divorced	0	0	1	2.9
Current level of education				
College student	0	0	9	26.5
Master's student	0	0	5	14.7
MBA student	2	25	7	20.6
Doctoral student	6	75*	12	35.3
Post-doctorate student	0	0	1	2.9
Residence in the U.S.				
West Coast	3	37	3	9
East Coast	3	38	15	44
Central	1	13	13	38
South	1	12	3	9

Note. HAS = high acculturative stress; LAS = low acculturative stress. [a]More than one option was possible; *$p < .05$

Table 2 shows the students' scores in each measure and significant differences between the groups with high and low levels of acculturative stress. Most participants reported low levels of acculturative stress (81%); only a small number of participants reported being highly distressed (19%). Most acculturative stress factors were significantly different between the two groups with the exception of homesickness. Level of education emerged as the only significant difference in demographics; doctoral students represented 75% of those reporting HAS compared with 12% of those with LAS. No other significant differences were noted regarding the demographics.

Table 2: Analyses of Variance Comparing High and Low Levels of Acculturative Stress

	HAS		LAS	
Measure	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
ASSIS (total)	117.6	7.17	81.3	17.71
Discrimination	26.5**		17.2	
Homesickness	14.9		12.2	
Perceived hate	13.8**		8.6	
Fear	10.9**		6.6	
Cultural shock	10.5**		6.8	
Guilt	6.4*		4.5	
Miscellaneous	34.6**		24.6	
Adaptive coping	56.1	7.47	58.9	8.75
Non-adaptive coping	32.6*	5.12	23.3*	3.94
Jeitinho corruption	0.62*	0.39	0.27*	0.41
Jeitinho creativity	5.05	1.10	4.41	0.99
Jeitinho norm-breaking	1.98	0.93	1.74	1.20

Note. HAS = high acculturative stress; LAS = low acculturative stress; ASSIS = Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students.*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

Regarding coping strategies, two significant differences were observed between participants with HAS versus LAS: Non-adaptive coping and *jeitinho* corruption scores were higher for those with HAS. Despite Hypothesis 2, no differences were observed in the report of adaptive coping, *jeitinho* creativity, and *jeitinho* norm-breaking. Although participants with HAS employed adaptive strategies, they tended to use significantly more nonadaptive coping compared with participants with LAS. Similarly, the corruption dimension of *jeitinho* was more often employed than creativity and norm-breaking by participants with HAS. Indeed, correlation analyses (not reported here due to space limitations) showed that high scores of acculturative stress were significantly correlated with nonadaptive coping and corruption dimension ($r = .37$, $p < .05$). Although not significantly different, the means of the three components of *jeitinho* were higher among participants with higher levels of stress in comparison to those with lower levels. This small difference may indicate a tendency that participants who employed more *jeitinho* were also more distressed.

Based on multiple regression analyses (Table 3), primary factors associated with LAS were higher utilization of adaptive coping strategies and lower utilization of nonadaptive coping strategies. The influence of coping strategies on acculturative stress was independent of demographic factors, including level of education. Although doctoral students scored higher on acculturative stress measures than the rest of the students, the only significant predictor of acculturative stress was the use of coping strategies for all students. It is possible that doctoral students have a different experience from undergrads and masters-level students increasing their levels of acculturative stress. Perhaps the multiple roles doctoral students have to play (student, researcher, lecturer) may pressure them more compared with other students.

Table 3: Coping Strategies and *Jeitinho* as Predictors of Low Levels of Acculturative Stress

	B	*SE B*	*β*
Age	−.022	.054	−.054
Gender	.123	.109	.138
Level of education	−.078	.045	−.236
Adaptive coping	.016	.006	.341*
Non-adaptive coping	−.046	.010	−.641**
Jeitinho corruption	−.095	.141	−.101
Jeitinho creativity	−.034	.050	−.089
Jeitinho norm-breaking	−.007	.055	−.021

Note. $R^2 = 3.90$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

The findings show that participants from both groups use adaptive and nonadaptive coping strategies. However, participants with HAS tend to employ nonadaptive coping strategies more frequently than those with LAS, which may exacerbate their stress. The dimensions of *jeitinho* were not significantly associated

with acculturative stress in this sample. The data does not support the initial hypothesis that *jeitinho* would be a relevant coping strategy for acculturative stress among Brazilian students.

Qualitative Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to examine the qualitative data that was gathered through the open-ended questions. We aimed to explore participants' impressions of how American professors, classmates, and friends might perceive *jeitinho.* Eighty-four (N = 84) responses from 28 participants yielded three main themes, namely: "impressions of *jeitinho*," "negative aspects of *jeitinho*," and "positive aspects of *jeitinho*" (Figure 1).

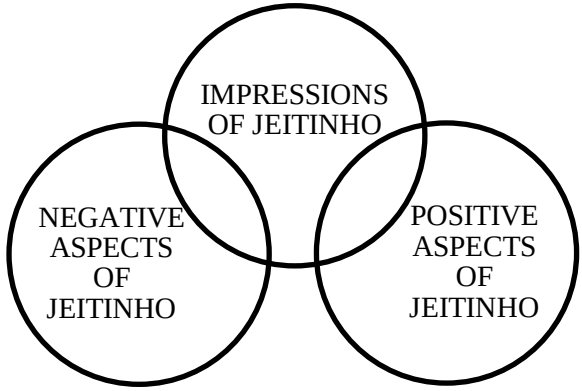

Figure 1: Themes Found in the Qualitative Analysis

The theme, "impressions of *jeitinho*," included most responses (49%) and emphasized the complexity of the strategy. Participants mentioned that there are different uses, interpretations, and consequences associated to *jeitinho*. It can be perceived as negative or positive; "it depends" how it is used. *Jeitinho* can be "cheating," doing something clearly "illegal" that would result in severe consequences for the person. Alternatively, *jeitinho* can be a "legitimate way" to solve problems leading to positive consequences. For instance:

> If I am being creative, accommodating problems, and trying to create a better working environment, I think *jeitinho* is seen as a great thing. On the other hand, if I am using *jeitinho* to fool members of the university, I think they would not accept this kind of behavior and see me in a bad light.

Responses also stated that if Brazilians employed *jeitinho* in a positive way, Americans would perceive it positively. However, if it is bending norms or illicit, Americans would perceive it negatively and there will be implications to it. Therefore, participants pointed that they are mindful about when to use *jeitinho* to

avoid this negative connotation. For example, "I try to use the '*jeitinho*' wisely, so that others are not impacted in a negative way. If I feel I might be taking advantage of anyone, I will refuse to do it." Therefore, Brazilian students are aware of the multiple dimensions of *jeitinho* and did not use it instinctively in the United States as they may do in Brazil where it is widely accepted.

The second theme was "negative aspects of *jeitinho*" including responses (43%) that mentioned negative perceptions Americans have about *jeitinho.* Supporting the study hypothesis, Brazilian students mentioned they would be considered "untrustworthy," "lazy," "cutting corners," and "looking for the shortest path" if they used *jeitinho.* For instance:

> In some ways, the Brazilian *jeitinho* is dishonest and simply wrong. It does not go in accordance with American values. It would be hard for them to accept it because they do not share of the same cultural upbringing and whenever you try to explain it, it sounds like you are just looking for the shorter path, which can give you an image of lazy.

Some responses highlighted that *jeitinho* could be an illicit strategy, which is associated to the corruption dimension of the quantitative questionnaire. Moreover, there would be severe consequences, "disciplinary actions," affecting the student's academic performance and relationship with non-Brazilian professors, classmates, and friends. These impressions negatively impact relationships and potentially harm the impressions Americans have of Brazil in general. Indeed, 13% of all responses stated that negative impressions linked to *jeitinho* could be generalized to all Brazilians as part of the culture. This would confirm stereotypes and prejudices against Brazilians. For instance:

> It would definitely influence [the professor's] impressions about me and Brazilian people in general. The "*jeitinho*" is usually some "illegal" trick or shortcut to do something, and it can give the impression of laziness.

These statements illustrate the concerns Brazilian students may have in using *jeitinho* in their academic settings, as they fear to be discriminated against or to reinforce a negative stereotype of Brazil. This specific topic may have important implications for the students' adaptation to American universities.

Participants also reported that Americans might perceive *jeitinho* positively. These responses (7%) were included in the theme "positive aspects of *jeitinho.*" In a more nuanced way, participants explained that Americans would praise the creativity in *jeitinho* as "thinking outside of the box" and showing "resourcefulness." For example, "*jeitinho* doesn't have to be illicit or dishonest, there are plenty of ways that a problem can be solved creatively within the confinements of morality and legality." Moreover, participants emphasized how *jeitinho* could be helpful in solving problems. They mentioned that their colleagues often admired them or were inspired by their ability to overcome difficulties. These positive consequences were observed in instances like: "My friends are often impressed on how I can solve some problems using *jeitinho*. They believe that is extremely creative and lots of them wished to know how to get away using it. I was already praised for that."

The findings partially support the initial hypothesis that Americans would perceive *jeitinho* negatively. The theme "negative aspects of *jeitinho*" supports this hypothesis. However, the themes "impressions of *jeitinho*" and "positive aspects of *jeitinho*" point to the complexity of the construct and how it is linked to the situation that is employed. Regarding this, American professors and students may be very strict in condemning such practice if it is used against the rules or to take advantage of others. At the same time, they may perceive it as a good skill and even desire they were able to use *jeitinho* in a creative way. Overall, perceptions about *jeitinho* may include discrimination and prejudice against Brazilians and Brazilian culture, but also admiration and recognition of the usefulness of the strategy. Noteworthy, the complexity of *jeitinho* could not be captured only by the quantitative measure, especially concerning the different implications of using it.

DISCUSSION

The present study was one the first investigations looking into levels of acculturative stress among Brazilian international student in the US and the coping strategies they use, including the indigenous practice, *jeitinho*. No significant relationship was found between the dimensions of *jeitinho* and levels of acculturative stress. The findings did not support the initial hypothesis that *jeitinho* would be a relevant coping strategy for acculturative stress. One explanation for these results is that *jeitinho* is a core aspect of Brazilian identity (Da Matta, 2001). Duarte (2006) argued that over-bureaucratic institutions in Brazil might have accentuated the practical relevance of this strategy that helps people to find "unofficial" solutions to their problems bypassing bureaucracy and rules. Supporting this idea, qualitative responses in this study pointed to the close relationship between *jeitinho* and what is seen as being "Brazilian." Specifically, participants mentioned stereotypes that Americans may hold regarding the Brazilian identity. Indeed, *jeitinho* is heavily based on social influence and can be seen as a negative characteristic by cultures that value the respect for formal structures and organizations (Smith et al., 2010). Consequently, Brazilian students may decide not to use *jeitinho* in the U.S. to avoid negative perceptions.

Due to its possible association to Brazilian identity, *jeitinho* may be more linked to enculturation than acculturation or acculturative stress, which would explain its nonsignificant relationship with acculturative stress. Research has shown that acculturation and enculturation are related but pertain to different dimensions and are independently related to mental health outcomes (Yoon et al., 2003). Also, studies have found that enculturation was positively related to good mental health in African American and Latino individuals (Yoon et al., 2003). As emphasized by the study's qualitative findings, *jeitinho* is a complex construct and involves both positive and negative connotations depending on how it is employed, with the uncertainty of whether it will have a positive effect on mental health or not. Future investigations could aim to evaluate the possible relationship between enculturation and *jeitinho*.

Most participants reported low levels of acculturative stress. Those who were more stressed also employed nonadaptive strategies more frequently than those less stressed. Similarly, participants with higher levels of stress were more likely to endorse *jeitinho* corruption, suggesting that the corruption dimension of *jeitinho*

could be another nonadaptive coping behavior particularly used by Brazilian international students. As some participants mentioned in their qualitative responses, they are mindful of the use of *jeitinho* in the US, avoiding its negative consequences. Perhaps Brazilians who are not as aware of such consequences may use *jeitinho* instinctively and experience negative perceptions by Americans which, in turn, would increase their acculturative stress.

The use of nonadaptive behaviors was also found in previous research with international students (Gebhard, 2012) in which participants recognized that they would behave in ways that were not helpful to their adjustment. In the present study, participants described negative aspects and consequences of using *jeitinho*. Many of the qualitative answers pointed to the "illegal" and "wrong" side of using *jeitinho* and how it would negatively impact their interpersonal relationships. Some descriptions included in the theme "negative aspects of *jeitinho*" were aligned with the conceptualization of the corruption dimension from the quantitative questionnaire. Furthermore, qualitative responses indicated that Americans reacted to *jeitinho* corruption negatively, possibly because it goes against their cultural values. Participants recognizing such cultural variance and negative perceptions in their academic settings may consider inappropriate to use *jeitinho*. Hence, it is possible that students with HAS in employing more adaptive behaviors that would promote their adjustment. Perhaps, students who are more stressed may use *jeitinho* as they do in Brazil, where the practice is widely accepted. In the US, the ambiguity of *jeitinho* may not be understood or accepted in the same way (Ferreira et al., 2012), leading to more stressful situations for Brazilian students who use it compared to when they are in Brazil.

Participants mentioned being aware of the cultural differences between American and Brazilian values and consciously deciding about the appropriate situations to use *jeitinho* to prevent or decrease discrimination. However, as highlighted by other studies, the anticipation of discrimination due to cultural differences may have adverse effects on the individual's mental health by itself (Yoon et al., 2003). Therefore, the perception that *jeitinho* would have a negative impact on them and other Brazilians could be in itself a barrier to adaptation and affect mental health outcomes. This could reinforce the use of indigenous practices that come "instinctively" to the international student increasing stress and hindering adjustment. Most participants reported low levels of acculturative stress, yet this could be an underlying issue for those who had higher scores that would need clinical attention. Further investigation is needed to better understand the effects of nonadaptive coping strategies on acculturative stress and overall adjustment; particularly, how indigenous practices may be employed as nonadaptive strategies.

Some qualitative responses emphasized the positive aspects of *jeitinho* that is admired by non-Brazilians. These statements described that professors and colleagues are impressed by the Brazilian ability to overcome problems and could be linked to *jeitinho* creativity of the questionnaire. Moreover, participants expressed that the situation is relevant to determine how *jeitinho* is perceived. These findings did not support the initial hypothesis that non-Brazilians would perceive *jeitinho* only negatively.

Finally, we found that doctoral students reported significantly higher levels of acculturative stress. It is possible that the academic challenges linked to doctoral studies increase the stress experienced by international students who have to handle with multiple roles student, researcher, and often lecturer or teacher assistant. Yet, educational level was not a significant predictor of acculturative stress. Future investigations could focus on this specific population analyzing possible factors associated with higher levels of acculturative stress and potential interventions to support these students.

Some limitations should be considered when interpreting the results. First, this was an online survey conducted with a small sample of students; future studies should involve a larger sample and also administer in-person interviews gathering more details about the use of *jeitinho* in American academic settings. In-depth interviews could further explore prejudices and stereotypes that exist towards this practice. Secondly, this study involved only Brazilian participants' impressions of how Americans would perceive *jeitinho*. It would be important to include non-Brazilian participants to express their perceptions about *jeitinho*. Finally, the only measure of acculturative stress was the ASSIS, and other measures of acculturation and enculturation could have been included and tested regarding its relationship with *jeitinho*.

Conclusion and Implications

This study opens a new set of questions about the use of culture-specific practices by international students. The advance of such area would provide important information to better support and foster healthy adaptation of this population to their host country.

The present study expanded the knowledge on the levels of acculturative stress, coping strategy, and *jeitinho*. Moreover, it highlighted the complexity of this cultural practice regarding the different perceptions Brazilians and non-Brazilians may hold about it. Overall, Brazilian students reported low levels of acculturative stress, employing adaptive coping strategies to adjust to the US. Additionally, participants reported using *jeitinho* in its creative dimension, which may help them to solve a diversity of problems increasing their resources to succeed in American universities, such as running experiments despite the lack of adequate equipment. Although *jeitinho* was not significantly associated with lower levels of stress, it may be a helpful strategy for Brazilian students in their daily lives.

The findings corroborated previous studies (Duarte, 2006; Ferreira et al., 2012) about *jeitinho* demonstrating the multiple aspects of this practice and its uniqueness to Brazilian culture. Particularly, the findings emphasized that *jeitinho* could yield different outcomes depending on how it is used. *Jeitinho* may be linked to Brazilian identity in general and related to enculturation rather than acculturation. Qualitative data added important nuances to the investigation of the use of *jeitinho* outside Brazil, suggesting that Brazilian students are aware of the different impressions and implications of the use of *jeitinho*. Such concern may not be present when they are in Brazil because *jeitinho* is a common and acceptable practice there. Nevertheless, when living abroad, they have to be more mindful about the employment of the

strategy, avoiding negative perceptions and consequences. Such implications were not observed in previous investigations (Hafemeister, 2005), in which only the positive aspects of *jeitinho* were discussed.

Another important implication was the possible discrimination against Brazilian students due to *jeitinho*. Many qualitative responses evoked the concern of being devaluated according to cultural prejudices. Participants were worried that all Brazilians would be perceived negatively because of their use of *jeitinho*. This concern had twofold consequences: First, at the individual level, the student's interpersonal relationships with professors and colleagues would be affected, and this could impact their academic development. Second, at the community level, the negative impression would be generalized to other Brazilian students, reinforcing a negative stereotype about the group. This second consequence indicates that Brazilian students might fear a more systematic discrimination against Brazilians in American academic settings due to the use of indigenous practices. The relationship between *jeitinho* and discrimination was not mentioned in previous investigations with Brazilians living outside Brazil (Hafemeister, 2005; Oliveira et al., 2016) and should be further researched. Yet, most participants in this study mentioned the positive aspects of *jeitinho*, especially in its creative dimension. Possibly, *jeitinho* as a strategy that creatively finds new ways for solving a problem could be taught and learned as some participants mentioned in their responses.

The data highlights the importance of supporting Brazilian students in their adaptation to the US. Although a small proportion of participants reported being more stressed, those who did also reported a more frequent use of nonadaptive coping strategies and *jeitinho* corruption. Such strategies may have a detrimental effect on how they are perceived, affecting their adjustment. Mental health services in universities should be culturally competent, factoring in cultural-specific issues and practices such as *jeitinho* to assist international students in developing more adaptive coping strategies and decreasing stress levels. For instance, counselors could explore and identify how cultural practices may influence their adaptation. Furthermore, student associations and mentorship programs could be a valuable source of support to international students where they could share their difficulties and learn adaptive strategies. For example, in our study, we observed the relevance of understanding in which situations to employ *jeitinho*; senior students could mentor incoming students helping them to use *jeitinho* "wisely" given the university context and American culture. Future research should address the limitations of this study such as including more participants, Brazilians and non-Brazilians, conducting in-depth interviews, and assessing enculturation.

The present study shed light on the use of an indigenous practice in Brazil that has not been examined in the context of a different culture that may not accept it as a valid strategy for solving problems. *Jeitinho* was not found to be significantly associated with acculturative stress because it may be related to enculturation rather than acculturation. The data showed the complexity of this practice and how Brazilians were mindful about using it in appropriate ways and situations to avoid negative impressions. These impressions included discrimination and stereotypes, but positive perceptions and admiration were also mentioned as possible outcomes. These different outcomes depended on the ability of Brazilians to use *jeitinho* carefully.

Such ability may require knowledge of American culture and skills to navigate encounters with American professors and colleagues. Therefore, it is important that mental health services and international offices are culturally competent supporting Brazilian students in their specific needs and promoting a better adaptation to the university.

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SILVIA ALVES NISHIOKA, MA, is a doctoral student in Counseling and Clinical Psychology at Teachers College, Columbia University. Her research interests lie in the area of preventive interventions, adaptation of evidence-based interventions, and multiculturalism. Email: san2143@tc.columbia.edu

DEFNE AKOL, PhD, is a lecturer at Teachers College, Columbia University. Her research interests lie in the area of substance use disorders, eating disorders, the effects of mental and physical illness on families, and professional identity development. Email: da2105@tc.columbia.edu

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Exploring Oral English Learning Motivation in Chinese International Students with Low Oral English Proficiency

Deyu (Cindy) Xing
Benjamin Bolden
Queen's University, Canada

ABSTRACT

This study employed narrative inquiry to understand the oral English learning motivation of Chinese international students with low oral English proficiency through their academic acculturation stories. Expectancy–value theory served as the theoretical framework to inform the study design and the interpretation of results. Findings suggest all participants' motivation for oral English learning increased as a result of the newly acquired high subjective value of spoken English during their academic acculturation. However, they experienced high levels of psychological stress during their academic acculturation due to their low oral English proficiency. Further, participants' perceived expectancy of success for learning oral English declined as their academic acculturation progressed, negatively influencing their oral English learning motivation. Implications for various stakeholders are discussed.

Keywords: academic acculturation, Chinese students, expectancy–value theory, oral English learning motivation

In our current age of globalization, it is common practice for North American universities to actively recruit international students (Tang, Collier, & Witt, 2018), as they bring benefits such as enhanced campus diversity, increased employment opportunities within the local economy, and university revenue (Zhang & Beck, 2014). Meanwhile, students are keen to seek out international education opportunities, hoping for academic and social experiences that will help them secure a brighter future (Elliot, Reid, & Baumfield, 2016).

One key prerequisite for international students' admission into English-speaking institutions is their English language proficiency. Long after admission, however, language proficiency continues to play a significant and influential role in international students' academic acculturation (Sawir, Marginson, Forbes-Mewett, Nyland, & Ramia, 2012), because it is a salient stressor that interacts with other stressors in both academic and nonacademic settings (C. P. Chen, 1999; Leong, 2015). Among the four skills of language proficiency, speaking is particularly important, because it affects international students' ability to engage academically and socially (Leong, 2015; Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006; Yeh & Inose, 2003).

With respect to international students' ability to engage socially, studies have shown that the number of host culture friends that international students have in a new social environment is a major factor for them to acculturate successfully (Hong, Fox, & Almarza, 2007), and that the inability to fluently speak the host language is a primary inhibiter for international students to develop intercultural friendships (Meng, Zhu, & Cao, 2018). International students who can communicate fluently in oral English have a higher sense of connectedness to English-speaking surroundings and lower cultural stress when compared with other international students with limited oral English capacity (Rosenthal, Russell, & Thomson, 2006).

Chinese international students, the biggest international student body worldwide (G. Li, Chen, & Duanmu, 2010; Meng et al., 2018), often demonstrate low oral English communication capacity and face harsh academic acculturation realities in English-speaking countries (Zhang & Beck, 2014). Among the commonly identified academic acculturation stressors—language proficiency, educational and sociocultural differences, discrimination, and practical stressors (Smith & Khawaja, 2011)—language proficiency has been identified as the biggest barrier for successful academic acculturation (Yi, 2004; Zhang & Beck, 2014). Exclusion from host culture communities has emerged as a prominent theme in the academic acculturation experiences of Chinese international students with limited oral English proficiency (Zhang & Beck, 2014). Given the continuously increasing number of Chinese international students worldwide and the often-reported stressful academic acculturation experiences of Chinese international students, there is an ongoing need to further explore the factors that influence Chinese international students' academic acculturation (Meng et al., 2018).

Even though language proficiency has been emphasized in academic acculturation research, language learning motivation of international students prior to and during their academic acculturation remains largely unexamined (Chirkov, Safdar, de Guzman, & Playford, 2008); the psychological mechanisms involved in language learning motivation have not been sufficiently studied. Specifically, how the oral English learning motivation of Chinese international students varies prior to and during their academic acculturation remains unclear. Empirical understanding of individual language learning motivation factors is critical in order to better understand and support Chinese international students' academic acculturation processes.

To address the research gap, we designed this study to explore the academic acculturation experiences and oral English learning motivation of Chinese international students who pursue postsecondary education overseas. Specifically, this qualitative research sought to understand the oral English learning motivation of

six Chinese international students with low oral English proficiency, studying at a mid-sized Canadian university where English is the language of instruction, through their academic acculturation stories. With the term "academic acculturation stories," we refer to the participants' detailed accounts of their experiences living and learning in an unfamiliar overseas academic context. Aligned with this purpose, we derived two research questions: (a) What are the academic acculturation stories of Chinese international students with low oral English proficiency? (b) How do these students describe their motivation for learning oral English in relation to their academic acculturation experiences?

We designed the study to contribute to the existing understanding of international students' academic acculturation in two ways: (a) by adding to the body of academic acculturation literature through an in-depth narrative inquiry focusing specifically on the academic acculturation experiences of Chinese international students with low oral English proficiency; and (b) by expanding current understanding of international students' motivation for oral English learning prior to and during academic acculturation in English-speaking countries.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Expectancy–Value Theory

In the field of psychology, learning behaviors are often examined with reference to expectancy–value theory (Xie & Andrews, 2012). Expectancy–value theory proposes that the motivation behind an individual's choice to perform an activity can be explained in relation to two factors: (a) their expectancy of success with the activity and (b) the value they attach to the activity (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). In an academic context, expectancy of success is related to students' beliefs about their capability to perform a given task (Schunk, 1991). When assigned a task, students ask themselves: "Can I do it?" Subjective value is the degree to which an individual deems the task to be worth doing (Jacobs & Eccles, 2000); students ask themselves: "Do I want to do it?" (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). How students answer these two questions affects their motivation to engage in the task. If the answer to both is "yes," students are likely to be motivated to engage in the task; if the answers to both questions is "no," then students will not be motivated to engage in the task (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).

Expectancy of success and value are two useful factors to consider in seeking understanding of Chinese international students' behavioral choices with regard to their oral English learning. In light of expectancy–value theory, we first look at literature related to the value factor of Chinese international students' motivation for oral English learning, and then move on to their expectancy of success in relation to oral English learning.

The Objective Value of Oral English and Academic Acculturation

Oral English proficiency profoundly influences international students' academic acculturation. In this study, international students are defined as "linguistically and culturally diverse students engaging with the academic study cultures of English-

medium universities" (Cheng & Fox, 2008, p. 309). According to Cheng and Fox (2008), academic acculturation is a complex and idiosyncratic interplay between academic and nonacademic experiences that is related to language proficiency. Oral language proficiency is particularly relevant to international students' ability to engage socially, and social engagement is crucial; a positive relationship exists between social contact with the host culture through oral communication and successful academic acculturation (Cheng & Fox, 2008; Glass & Westmont, 2014; Zimmermann, 1995). Among English language skills, speaking is significant in affecting intercultural friendship development (Hong et al., 2007). In turn, the number of host national friends an international student has in the new environment is a major factor for successful acculturation (Hong et al., 2007).

Despite clear evidence that oral English proficiency has high objective value in relation to international students' academic acculturation success, the perceived *subjective* value of oral English proficiency amongst students in China is different.

The Subjective Value of Oral English in Chinese English Education

Within Chinese English education, the oral component of English language learning is not perceived as important as reading, writing, and listening. China's English language testing system reflects this lack of importance. All of the language tests focus solely on assessing reading and writing (Cheng, 2008). It was not until 1999 that a spoken English subtest was developed based on Bachman and Palmer's theoretical framework of language test design (H. Li, 1999). However, unlike the listening, reading, and writing components of the test, the speaking test is optional, is only available to a small number of students (those who score high in preliminary tests), and is not a requirement for Chinese postsecondary graduation (H. Li, 1999).

The washback of these testing practices diminishes the perceived subjective value of oral English proficiency among Chinese students. Washback is a term widely used in language testing, referring to the influence testing has on teaching and learning (Xie & Andrews, 2012). In China, the washback of English language testing is severe. Teaching to the test has been a common practice throughout the whole country for decades (He & Shi, 2011). Concerns about washback identify the negative influences of teaching to the test, which include a narrowed curriculum and the downplaying of practical language ability (Qi, 2005). When oral English proficiency is not tested, it is not valued in English teaching, either in schools or after-school test preparation centers (Y. Li, 2014). Consequently, having been immersed in an English language-teaching context that does not value oral communication, students do not recognize the value of oral English proficiency.

Chinese students are only required to take English language proficiency tests that have a compulsory speaking component when they decide to pursue international higher education. Two common measures of English language proficiency are the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Both TOEFL and IELTS have a speaking component that is valued equally with the listening, reading, and writing components, accounting for one fourth of the global test score. However, because many Chinese students have already been acculturated to the belief that speaking is not an important

component of academic English language learning (He & Shi, 2011), they still perceive training in reading and writing as more important. In fact, Zhang and Beck (2014) identified a popular belief among Chinese parents, teachers, and students that the ability to speak English proficiently will simply materialize soon after the students arrive and begin their studies in an English-speaking country.

Therefore, despite the extremely high *objective* value of oral English proficiency in relation to supporting the success of international students in universities where English is the medium of instruction, the perceived *subjective* value of oral English proficiency remains low among Chinese students in China. There exists a huge gap between the subjective value and objective value that Chinese international students ascribe to oral English proficiency before they actually begin their overseas study. Hence, the answer to the "Do I *want* to do it?" question for learning oral English—aligning with students' low valuing of oral English—is likely to be "no."

Expectation of Success for Learning Oral English among Chinese Students

In addition to the low subjective value Chinese students tend to attribute to oral English proficiency, a low expectancy of success contributes to their lack of motivation for oral English learning prior to overseas studies. Due to the aforementioned washback on English language teaching in China, teachers and students teach and learn to the test, making passing the test the ultimate goal (Jin, 2015). As oral English proficiency does not play any significant role in helping students to pass the tests, test preparation focuses almost exclusively on reading and writing. Consequently, Chinese students learn English in an environment devoid of oral English (He & Shi, 2011) and are not exposed to adequate oral English training, even in such basic aspects as pronunciation (He & Shi, 2011). Often Chinese students speak English with a strong accent that severely influences effective communication with native English speakers, making them feel apprehensive when speaking in English (He & Shi, 2011). It is often the case that Chinese students spend up to a decade in English language learning contexts being trained only in reading and writing (Jin, 2015). When they are eventually required to speak in order to obtain the required TOEFL/ IELTS test scores for international education admission, they feel very insecure about their speaking and tend to perceive themselves as more capable in doing the reading and writing test components. To compensate, students often further minimize their oral training to focus on achieving higher reading and writing scores, in the hope they will counter-balance the low oral language grades in the global test score.

As a result of these factors, Chinese students tend to have a low expectancy of success in relation to learning oral English. This low expectation of success is negatively related to their motivation. In other words, when a Chinese student is given an oral English task, and asks both "Can I do it?" and "Do I want to do it?", the answer to both questions is likely to be "no." According to expectancy–value theory, when the answers to both questions are "no," students will not be motivated to engage (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).

It is not surprising, then, that Chinese international students tend to lack motivation for learning oral English prior to their international education, and it is

also not surprising that, compared with other international students, Chinese international students demonstrate lower oral English communication capacity (G. Li et al., 2010). Unfortunately, as a result of their limited oral English, Chinese international students are more likely to experience acculturative stress and psychological problems than other international students (J. A. Chen et al., 2015; G. Li et al., 2010). However, it remains unclear how Chinese international students' academic acculturation experiences impact their motivation in oral English learning once they realize what it is like to have limited oral English proficiency in an English-speaking academic context. Hence, we designed the study reported here to explore motivation for oral English learning among Chinese international students with low oral English proficiency, through the academic acculturation stories they relate.

METHODS

In alignment with our purpose and research questions, we structured the study as a narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2000). Narrative inquiry is effective for understanding and representing human experiences because "the storied descriptions people give about the meaning they attribute to life events is the best evidence available to researchers about the realm of people's experience" (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 479). Narrative inquiry enables understanding through inquiring "how people think through events and what they value" (Riley & Hawe, 2005, p. 229). Narrative inquiry suited the general objective of the study: to gain understanding of the motivational factors at play in the complex experiences told by Chinese international students with low oral English proficiency.

Participants and Recruitment

We recruited participants from a mid-sized Canadian university where English is the language of instruction. We required that participants were Chinese students attending university classes. We contacted the university's international center and English school to distribute the recruitment email to all Chinese international students attending the university. We also utilized snowball sampling through our personal contacts to facilitate the recruitment. In the recruitment notice we asked participants to self-identify as students with low oral English proficiency. Then, when potential participants contacted us, we asked them to provide their original admission TOEFL/IELTS scores to verify their speaking scores. If their speaking scores were at or below the minimum requirement for admission into the university's undergraduate program, the students were invited to participate. Often international students are offered conditional acceptance to an institution even though their language scores fall below the minimum requirements, with the condition that certain language courses be completed before or together with the program of study.

Because the fundamental aim of narrative inquiry is to gain an in-depth understanding of individuals' experiences through collecting and analyzing detailed individual narratives of experience, as opposed to generalizability (Lieblich et al., 1998), we decided to carry out multiple data collection sessions with a small number of individuals. The small sample size enabled the capture of detailed stories while

still allowing for a variety of participant experiences to be represented (Creswell, 2005). We continued to recruit participants until we reached data saturation (Morse, 1995) with our sixth participant. Data saturation is the point at which significant information across participants' data becomes repetitive, and no new salient information is identified (Morse, 1995).

Data Collection

We used a predetermined interview protocol to elicit data directly relevant to answer the research questions (Leins et al., 2014). The interview protocol was designed following an interview protocol refinement framework comprised of a four-phase process: "(1) ensuring interview questions align with research questions, (2) constructing an inquiry-based conversation, (3) receiving feedback on interview protocols, and (4) piloting the interview protocol" (Castillo-Montoya, 2016, p. 811).

We first developed interview questions around the research questions of this study informed by expectancy–value theory. We designed questions in three main categories: (a) the academic acculturation experiences participants experienced, (b) their value and expectancy of success for learning oral English before and during their academic acculturation, and (c) how their academic acculturation experiences impacted their value and expectancy of success for learning oral English in Canada. Then we further condensed and refined all questions to be open-ended to invite an inquiry-based conversation, as the aim of in-depth interviewing is not to get answers to questions but to understand the complex individual lived experiences of people (Seidman, 2013). Following these steps, two experts in qualitative research methods reviewed the protocol to generate feedback for further revision as a quality control measure. Finally, the first author translated the questions into Chinese and tried the interview questions with Chinese English as a foreign language speakers to ensure the wording was concise.

The first author, who is proficient in both Chinese and English, conducted the interviews in Chinese because the participants were, of necessity, low in oral English proficiency. It was important for participants to use the language with which they felt most comfortable and were most likely to be successful in communicating the full richness of their experiences. While following the general format of the interview protocol, the first author followed it with flexibility, so that the conversations were appropriate for capturing the unique voices and experiences of each participant (Rabionet, 2011).

One preliminary and one follow-up in-person interview were conducted with each participant. Follow-up interviews were conducted after the preliminary analysis of the first interview data to further probe emergent themes from the first interview. Each interview lasted 45–60 min, and was audio-recorded. Each interview was transcribed by the first author, and the subsequent transcription, in Chinese, was sent to the participant to verify that it accurately captured what they intended to communicate. The verified transcripts were then translated into English by the first author for analysis.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out in two stages. First, in keeping with narrative inquiry methods, we analyzed the data through the process of re-storying (Creswell, 2005). We organized the experiences described by each participant in their interviews into a narrative sequence to form an independent personalized story, to describe and illuminate, in their own words, each individual's lived experience of academic acculturation. Second, we used a general inductive analysis approach (Thomas, 2006). Working across the re-storied narratives, we identified text segments significant to the research questions, labeled (coded) the text segments, and then organized related codes and data into themes. Initial codes and themes were generated by the first author. The second author then reviewed the data and coding to raise questions, suggest alternative interpretations, and discuss possibilities for organizing and presenting findings. This negotiation continued until consensus was reached.

FINDINGS

In this section we report findings in relation to our two research questions: (a) What are the academic acculturation stories of Chinese international students with low oral English proficiency? (b) How do these students describe their motivation for learning oral English in relation to their academic acculturation experiences?

Academic Acculturation Stories of Chinese International Students with Low Oral English Proficiency

Through the processes of narrative re-storying (Creswell, 2005) and general inductive analysis (Thomas, 2006), it became apparent that the academic acculturation stories of the six participants in this study were penetrated with four overarching themes: (a) excitement and shock, (b) pain and anxiety, (d) loneliness and isolation, and (e) helplessness and resignation. Although the magnitude of these psychological responses varied among the six participants due to individual differences, all these responses were present and significant in each of the participants' stories.

Excitement and Shock

The theme of excitement and shock refers to the high hopes and optimistic outlook participants held for their international education journey before their arrival in Canada and the unexpected discrepancy between their hopes and reality. The theme was prevalent in all six participants' narratives.

The participants described positive feelings when they first arrived in Canada stemming from high expectations for their overseas study experience and an optimistic outlook regarding communicating in English. As Kandy framed it, "It's just speaking ABCs. How hard could it be?" This optimistic outlook made them confident and excited about embarking on an international journey of study. The participants also described looking forward to communicating with people from other

countries and making international friends. Lisa imagined herself "talking and laughing out loud on campus with Canadian friends."

However, once they started using English to communicate in an authentic English-speaking environment, with native English speakers engaging in conversations at normal speed, they were shocked. Kandy repeatedly used the exclamatory phrase, "Oh my God!" when describing her disbelief, while Kevin claimed that "the real English communication in Canada was totally different" from what he had learned in China. All six participants were overwhelmed by the discrepancy between the anticipated reality and the actual reality of English communication in Canada. The excitement Kandy and Kevin had felt for studying abroad was based on false confidence in their English capacities, derived from the praise of their parents and teachers in China who only focused on grades. The realization of their inability to communicate orally in Canada was a grim awakening to the challenges of academic acculturation.

Similarly, before arriving in Canada, Nick and Lisa anticipated "some English communication problems" (Lisa) but were still optimistic. However, as Nick lamented during his first interview, "I never thought the problems would be this insurmountable." Amanda and Selina also underestimated how severely their English oral communication deficiency would negatively impact their experiences. Amanda explained she had thought her "English would be improving very quickly by listening to and speaking English all the time in Canada." However, the reality was very different: "Even after more than a year of study in Canada, I still can't make Canadian friends and speak English with a strong accent." (Selina)

Pain and Anxiety

Following their preliminary feelings of excitement, and then shock, participants identified pain and anxiety resulting from the communication barriers they encountered during their academic acculturation process both in academic and non-academic domains.

Participants frequently used the words "frustration," "embarrassment," "shame," and "pain" to describe their feelings while adjusting to a Canadian academic setting. As Nick painfully pointed out, "For a task that took one hour for Canadian students, I would probably need five hours."

While the academic pressure was a little less for Selina and Amanda, in the preparatory language program, the other four in the undergraduate program could not communicate with professors or other Canadian students for help to tackle the academic challenges they faced. Low oral English proficiency resulted in the four participants "working alone and working extra-long hours" (Kandy), leaving them constantly stressed, as Nick explained, "both physically and psychologically.

In addition to frustrations in the academic domain, the participants' nonacademic oral communication experiences were no less frustrating. All six participants experienced barriers dealing with even basic daily life situations such as getting the right food in a restaurant. In the social aspects of their lives, none of them was successful in developing relationships with Canadians because they were "not capable of having in-depth and efficient social conversations in English" (Kevin). As

Kandy explained, the "heart-wrenching feelings" resulting from her inability to communicate made her feel like "that person in The Scream" (the famous painting by Norwegian Expressionist artist Edvard Munch).

Accompanying the painful feelings resulting from various communication barriers was a strong feeling of anxiety for all six participants. After arriving in Canada, they realized that the English they were taught to speak in China was very different from the authentic colloquial language used by native English speakers. As a result, they became anxious and nervous, because they knew that they were "supposed to participate by speaking English" (Kandy), yet they were "not able to express themselves in English" (Selina). Kandy even got to the point of nervously "tapping her feet whenever sitting in the classroom," while Selina felt "afraid to speak English" with other international students. Nick got so anxious that his "brain would just go blank when talking in English in front of people."

The perceived discrepancy between themselves and other students undermined their confidence, leaving them feeling "somehow not good enough" (Nick), "lame" (Kandy), or "not equal" (Lisa) to the students who could communicate in English freely. Participants constantly compared themselves with Canadian students or international students with high oral English proficiency, leading to a feeling of inferiority, which in return further exacerbated their anxiety when communicating in English.

Loneliness and Isolation

Finding themselves alone in a foreign country, far removed from their usual social support systems, and separated from the Canadian community due to their inability to communicate in oral English, participants described intense loneliness and isolation.

"Being far away from home all alone" (Kandy) without familiar social supports such as family and friends weighed heavily on the students. Compounding this challenge was the difficulty, due to communication barriers, of connecting with the Canadian community. Because of their low oral conversation capacity, the participants "could not engage in meaningful social conversations" (Amanda). Consequently, they "could not bond with Canadian students" (Kevin), even though all of them felt Canadian students were very welcoming and friendly.

As a result, all six participants perceived themselves as "outsiders" (Kevin). They felt Canada was "not a world of their own" (Nick), and they felt rejected by the host culture community. The feeling of rejection caused them to feel isolated. As Kevin expressed: "Without relationships with the Canadians, no matter how beautiful Canada seemed to be or how well I did academically, I still felt empty inside and alone."

Helplessness and Resignation

After repeated futile attempts to communicate in English, and failure to access local social supports to provide help or empathy for the psychological stress they were experiencing, participants described feeling helpless and resigned.

Being international students, all the participants' established support systems, family and friends, were in China. However, even though those support systems were accessible via phone and electronic communication, all participants described feeling that their family and friends in China could not offer the empathy they needed because they "had not lived the academic acculturation experiences" (Kevin). Participants also felt embarrassed to discuss their difficulties with friends in China; Kandy explained that her friends perceived her study abroad to be "colorful and exciting" (Kandy), and she did not want to have to explain the reality to them.

When Selina tried to explain to her parents about the difficulties she was experiencing in Canada, her parents blamed her for not working hard enough. Similarly, Nick eventually chose to lie to his parents by saying his oral English was getting better even though in fact it was "not improving at all," because his parents kept hectoring him as to why he did not converse with Canadian students and improve his English quickly. Other participants withheld the language deficiency difficulties they encountered from their parents out of "fear of disappointing them" and because they were "reluctant to worry them" (Kandy).

Both Kandy and Nick pointed out that they were not able to voice their feelings of frustration to their Chinese friends in Canada either. They were afraid that such conversations would just make things even heavier and more depressing for all of them. In addition, although there were counseling services available through the university, it was no help due to the participants' inability to communicate with the counselors. Four of the six participants clearly stated in the interviews that they needed help from psychological counseling, but they did not feel the service the university offered would be of any use to them. Amanda and Nick were not even aware that campus counseling services were available.

Eventually, after repeated communication frustration, participants gave up trying to find a place in the Canadian community. Instead, the participants only socialized with other Chinese students. As a result, their daily communications always involved speaking Chinese. Despite their recognition that they needed to learn English to study or do "almost everything" (Kandy) in Canada, they chose to speak Chinese out of "communication efficiency" (Kandy) and "avoidance of embarrassment" (Nick). Consequently, they resigned themselves to being separate from the host culture community and "not living in an English-speaking environment" (Nick), even though they were studying in an English-speaking university.

In summary, the academic acculturation stories of the participants in this study clearly demonstrated that, as a result of their limited oral English capacity, they faced constant and significant challenges in the new academic setting. These challenges resulted in a constellation of negative emotional responses. It was evident that the participants' language communication difficulties severely impacted their psychological well-being during their time studying in Canada.

Oral English Learning Motivation in Relation to Academic Acculturation Experiences

As a result of their extremely difficult academic acculturation experiences in Canada, the participants described increased motivation for enhancing their oral

English proficiency. In the light of the expectancy–value theory, this increased motivation can be explained by the continually increasing subjective value participants came to attribute to learning oral English. However, expectancy of success also plays a role in motivation. While the expectancy of success for oral English acquisition peaked briefly at the beginning of the students' academic acculturation, when they first arrived in Canada, it soon started to decline as they realized that they would not learn to communicate in English as easily as they had anticipated. For a visual representation of the students' shifting subjective valuing of, and expectancy of success for oral English learning in relation to their academic acculturation experiences, please see Figure 1.

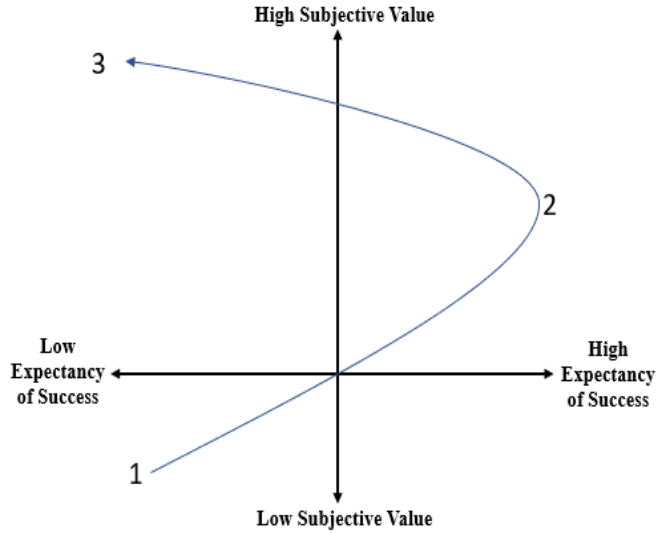

Figure 1: Oral English Learning Motivation in Relation to Academic Acculturation

The visual representation indicated in Figure 1 was created by the researchers to illustrate the students' shifting subjective valuing of and expectancy of success for oral English learning in relation to their academic acculturation experiences.

Low Subjective Value Before Academic Acculturation

When asked how they valued oral English before they began their studies in Canada, five of the six participants referred to oral English as "unimportant" because it was not addressed in their English tests. Only Selina, who attended an international high school, thought spoken English was somewhat important. All participants reported that the English teaching and learning they had experienced only focused on material that would be tested in written exams, which confirms the prominent

washback of English language testing in China (He & Shi, 2011). As a result, before they arrived in Canada, all six participants assigned little value to the spoken component of English language learning, because it did not figure prominently in the teaching and testing they experienced in China.

Even when these students had to take non-Chinese English proficiency tests that had an oral component, such as IELTS or TOEFL, they still focused on "wordlist memorizing" (Selina) and "test paper drilling" (Amanda) during their preparations. All six participants took IETLS or TOEFL test preparation courses in private tutoring centers, but all the course content heavily "emphasized test-taking skills instead of actual language communication ability" (Lisa). None had any idea that an oral English deficiency could influence their lives so profoundly in an English-speaking country. In short, before their study in Canada, none of the six participants subjectively valued oral English.

Rising Subjective Value of Oral English During Academic Acculturation.

However, because the participants' inability to communicate orally in English resulted in such harsh academic acculturation experiences, they came to a painful but clear realization that oral English proficiency was vital for their international study. The initial shock that resulted from the inability to "talk like a normal person" (Nick) with native English speakers in daily social settings made participants see the value of oral English that they had not seen before they came to Canada.

After repeated frustrations when engaging in conversations with Canadians, the participants perceived their inability to communicate in oral English as "the biggest gap" (Lisa) between Canadian students and themselves. They recognized that they were not able to express themselves in oral English in an academic context. The recognition of this deficiency subsequently led to acute feelings of anxiety for their academic performance, and inferiority in comparison to the Canadian students surrounding them. As Nick shared,

> Lots of project assignments require substantial oral communication with Canadian students, and participation alone accounts for a portion of the final grade. I got very anxious when I found out my roommate received a grade of zero for a group project because he failed to communicate with his Canadian teammates.

When the participants realized the academic stakes associated with oral English communication, they assigned further value to oral English learning in relation to their study in Canada.

As their academic acculturation progressed, the students began to notice that their low oral English proficiency undermined their "life in Canada in every way" (Kandy). This was another reason to assign additional value to oral English learning. As Lisa opined, "Improving oral English is more important than the academic courses." As her acculturation continued, she recognized that her limited oral English not only influenced her academic study but also cost her many other affordances that she used to have in China, such as close personal relationships, leaving her lonely and isolated,

like a "barren tree that has lost all of its leaves." Again, realizations such as these boosted the students' subjective valuing of oral English learning.

Low Expectancy of Success Before Academic Acculturation

When asked about the possibility of successfully acquiring a high level of oral English proficiency in China, all six participants described it as impossible. As Selina commented, "My teachers spoke 'Chinglish' with an accent that was totally odd! How good can my spoken English be?" Additionally, all participants identified the lack of authentic English-speaking environment within the Chinese context as a key reason why they were not confident in achieving oral English proficiency in China. Therefore, before they arrived in Canada, while still in China, the participants had a very low expectancy of success for oral English language learning.

Peaked Expectancy of Success at the Beginning of Academic Acculturation

When all six participants first arrived in Canada, they were very excited to start their journey in an English-speaking environment filled with opportunities to be in contact with native English speakers. The students imagined they would be "speaking to Canadians every day" (Amanda) and "walking with foreign students, boys, and girls all together on campus" (Lisa). This expectation of abundant opportunities to be in contact with authentic English speaking drove their expectancy of success for oral English learning to a high level at the beginning of their academic acculturation.

Decreased Expectancy of Success as Academic Acculturation Progressed

However, the initial brief excitement of being immersed in an English-speaking environment was soon replaced by shock. Participants were astonished when they discovered the oral English they learned in China was "worlds apart from the English spoken by Canadians" (Kandy). When their "Chinglish" stopped them from having smooth conversations with native English speakers, their excitement at being able to utilize the authentic English-speaking environment to practice and improve their spoken English was dampened. The students' expectancy of success for oral English learning began to diminish.

Increasingly, after continuous communication frustrations and failed attempts to bond and form friendships with Canadians, participants felt rejected by the Canadian community. Lisa realized that "even though Canadian students are all very friendly and nice, they are not going to talk too much with you if you speak English with a very strong accent." Nick explained: "Without the ability to produce clear and fluent oral English speech, it is impossible to make real Canadian friends." The sense that they had been rejected by the Canadian community left the students feeling "lonely," "insecure," and "isolated" in a foreign country. As a result, participants turned to other Chinese-speaking students so they would feel "secure" (Kandy) and "connected" (Nick). The students' expectancy of success for oral English learning decreased further as the students recognized they were isolated from the Canadian community, not able to access authentic English-speaking opportunities.

Although all six participants continued to desire to integrate into English-speaking communities, they felt helpless, because they could not have meaningful conversations with Canadians. The students eventually gave up trying to find a place in the Canadian community and stayed in the Chinese community. This resignation and their daily Chinese-speaking academic acculturation reality continued to diminish their expectancy of success for learning oral English.

The subjective value that these six students attached to oral English proficiency continually increased in relation to their academic acculturation experiences, which positively impacted their oral English learning motivation. In contrast, their expectancy of success only peaked at the very beginning of their academic acculturation process. Their perceived high expectancy of success declined as they encountered repeated communication frustrations and weakened further when they experienced isolation and resigned themselves to communicating only in Chinese with other Chinese international students, which negatively influenced their oral English learning motivation. Overall, due to the extremely high subjective value for oral English proficiency that all six participants acquired over the course of their harsh academic acculturation, all students described an increased motivation for oral English learning.

DISCUSSION

The data in this study clearly illustrate the positive relationship between oral English proficiency and successful academic acculturation for Chinese international students, as previously identified by Sawir et al. (2012). The Chinese international students with low oral English proficiency suffered severe consequences academically, socially, and emotionally during their academic acculturation process due to their inability to communicate orally, as has also been reported by Zhang and Beck (2014). As a result of their painful academic acculturation experiences, the students' subjective valuing of oral English communication increased, as did their motivation for oral English learning. However, their expectancy of success for oral English learning peaked only at the beginning stage of academic acculturation, and then decreased as they realized they were unable to cultivate meaningful relationships or practice oral communication with English-speaking peers.

It seems commonsensical to reiterate that oral language is perhaps the most critical form of communication for international students and speaking the same language as their host country peers is the best way to communicate. However, this seemingly commonsensical understanding was not held by the participants in this study, who were educated in a context that emphasized the value of silence in classrooms (Sun, 2009; Yang, 2011) and English language learning practices that focused solely on success in test-taking (He & Shi, 2011; Jin, 2015). The subjective value that the participants ascribed to oral English learning before their academic acculturation in Canada was low. The participants only came to a clear realization of the value of oral English for their international study and became motivated to learn oral English after their painful academic acculturation experiences.

Research indicates that Chinese students tend to have distinctively low motivation during their decade-long English education program in China (He & Shi,

2011; Jin, 2015). This lack of motivation contributes to the relatively low oral English proficiency of Chinese students as an international student group (G. Li et al., 2010). Consequently, Chinese international students tend to experience substantial academic acculturation difficulty and psychological stress (Meng et al., 2018). What would help these students?

Expectancy–value theory suggests that recognizing the high value of a learning activity is not sufficient on its own to motivate engagement. Learners also need to have at least a reasonable expectancy of success. To better design and anchor support for international students, it is necessary to understand not only how and why they value oral English for communication and survival but also how and why their motivation for learning oral English might shift before and during academic acculturation. Even though it is common for someone to value a new language as a means of communication in a foreign country, a low expectancy of success such as the participants in this study experienced, resulting from a lack of opportunity to speak with host country peers, will negatively influence their oral English learning motivation and impede their successful academic acculturation. Perhaps, if more accessible social support and better language learning support had been provided at the beginning stage of their academic acculturation—before they began to feel isolated and helpless—the students would not have lost their initial high expectancy of success. With both a high subjective value of oral English learning and a high expectancy of success in place, students would likely have been highly motivated. Accordingly, they would have been better positioned to gain oral English proficiency, and so experience a more successful academic acculturation.

Implications

The findings have various implications for stakeholders in the Chinese context as well as host country institutions. To support and facilitate successful academic acculturation for Chinese international students in English-speaking countries, there is much that can be done.

Implications for Chinese Students, Parents, Chinese English-Language Educators and Test Designers

Chinese parents and students need to be made aware of the value of oral English proficiency and the relationship between oral communication and international students' successful academic acculturation. Chinese parents and students are willing to invest in English language education. However, evidence from this study and elsewhere (e.g., Matoush & Fu, 2012) suggests that Chinese parents and students need to be cognizant of the limitations of test preparation centers and invest more generously in language educational services that emphasize authentic language learning that values speaking alongside listening, reading, and writing. Parents and students can make effective English language education choices only when they understand and recognize the value of oral English proficiency.

In addition, the English testing system (as well as English teaching and learning) in China needs to be enhanced for better testing quality (Cheng, 2008) by the addition

of a mandatory speaking component. Not only would this addition render the tests more authentic as a measure of a student's English language capacity, but the washback would likely exert a positive influence on English teaching and learning. With the speaking component made mandatory for high-stakes admission and graduation English tests, the firmly entrenched practice of teaching to the test would require the focus of attention to expand from only reading and writing to include speaking.

This study also has implications for English as a second language (ESL) teacher training in China. ESL teachers need specific professional training for teaching the oral component of English, so that they are able to help students communicate in spoken English confidently and effectively and afford students a reasonable expectancy of success. If ESL teachers can only speak "Chinglish," with an accent that severely hinders communication with native English speakers, it is very unlikely that their students will feel confident about achieving oral English proficiency.

Implications for Host Country Academic Institutions and Educators

Academic institutions should pay particular attention to the design of programs that actively help international students at the beginning of their academic acculturation journey, with targeted oral English language learning support and opportunities to socialize with host country peers (thereby increasing their expectancy of success for oral English learning). Additionally, support services such as academic and personal counseling need to be made accessible throughout the students' programs of study with a foregrounded recognition that low oral proficiency inherently creates a barrier for many international students to access and benefit from such programs.

Meanwhile, educators who work with international students should be made aware of the particular challenges that students with low oral English proficiency face in academic contexts—for example, challenges related to group work, oral presentations, and the inability to confidently articulate questions. It is extremely valuable for institutions to offer ESL language programs to international students with low English proficiency. However, it is key that such programs pay particular attention to supporting oral proficiency—for example, by emphasizing the often-neglected sound system of the English language to help students develop solid ability and confidence for oral English communication. Research confirms that effective teaching of English pronunciation can make an important difference in helping international students to integrate socially into the host culture (Derwing & Munro, 2005).

Limitations and Future Research

Due to the in-depth narrative nature of this study, only six undergraduate Chinese students from one Canadian university were included. The participants represented students in math, engineering, arts, and science, and the English language program. For future research, it would be informative to study the academic acculturation experiences and oral English learning motivation of Chinese international students

with low oral English proficiency from a variety of universities and include participants from more programs, particularly the business programs whose curricula require substantial oral communication (Brink & Costigan, 2015).

This research was also limited by its focus on participants with low oral English communication capacity. Additional research that examines how Chinese international students with a high level of English oral communication capacity in English-speaking countries acculturate into their overseas studies would help to further develop understanding of the relationship between oral proficiency and academic acculturation.

CONCLUSION

Chinese international students, who make up a significant portion of the international student body in English-language academic institutions all over the world (G. Li et al., 2010), often demonstrate low oral English proficiency and so are frequently perceived as "the silent group" on campus, separated from the host culture community (Yi, 2014). However, this study introduced to us that the six Chinese international students with limited spoken English were in fact very eager to communicate with and acculturate into the host culture community. They experienced isolation resulting not from personal choices, but from frequent, often insurmountable, oral communication barriers.

Over the course of their academic acculturation, the participants in this study experienced shock, anxiety, social isolation, and helplessness. Their painful academic acculturation experiences did, to a certain degree, increase the students' motivation for oral English learning as a result of their increased subjective valuing of oral communication in authentic English. However, the grim reality of isolation and helplessness also made them view the goal of speaking fluent and authentic English to acculturate as unrealistic, leading to a low expectancy of success that undermined their motivation.

This research provides insight into the interactions between Chinese international students' oral English proficiency, academic acculturation, and motivation for oral English learning. The understandings gained suggest important implications for enhancing the practices of those involved in the English language education and host institution support of Chinese international students. Students who seek out international study and the institutions who welcome them recognize the potential for both to benefit. This study identifies the importance of supporting international students' successful academic acculturation in order to realize those benefits, how supporting oral English learning can help, and what those supports could look like.

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DEYU (CINDY) XING, MEd, is a recent graduate in the Faculty of Education at Queen's University, Canada. She earned both her BEc and BA at Beijing Foreign Studies University in China prior to Queen's. She has worked in various educational settings, from language education centers to universities. Her current research interests include international students' academic acculturation, second language acquisition, arts-informed research, at-risk youth, child development, and parenting. Email: xing.deyu@queensu.ca

BENJAMIN BOLDEN, PhD, music educator and composer, is an associate professor and the UNESCO Chair of Arts and Learning in the Faculty of Education

at Queen's University, Canada. His research interests include arts education systems around the world, the learning and teaching of composing, creativity, arts-based research, preservice music teacher education, teacher knowledge, and teachers' professional learning. As a teacher, Ben has worked with preschool, elementary, secondary, and university students in Canada, England, and Taiwan. Ben is an associate composer of the Canadian Music Centre and his compositions have been performed by a variety of professional and amateur performing ensembles. In 2016 he won the Choral Canada Competition for Choral Writing. Ben was editor of the *Canadian Music Educator*, journal of the Canadian Music Educators' Association/L'Association canadienne des musiciens éducateurs, from 2007–2014. He is the proud father of three rascally boys.

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Understanding Ostracism from an Attachment Perspective: Testing a Moderated Mediation Model

Ning Hou
St. Cloud State University, USA

Jinyan Fan
Auburn University, USA

James Tan
St. Cloud State University, USA

Melissa Stuhlman
Auburn University, USA

Cong Liu
Hofstra University, USA

Gustavo Valdez Paez
St. Cloud State University, USA

ABSTRACT

The perception of being ostracized in a foreign country is a great obstacle that may lead to international students' strain. The present study aimed to understand ostracism from the perspective of adult attachment. We proposed a moderated mediation model in which attachment anxiety was hypothesized as an antecedent of ostracism and as a moderator of the ostracism – strain links. Participants were 119 international students enrolled at a large public university in U.S. Results largely supported the model, which showed that the attachment anxiety exaggerate the harmful effects of perceived ostracism on depression and physical symptoms. Theoretical and practical implications were discussed.

Keywords: attachment anxiety, moderated mediation, ostracism

International students have the difficult task of adjusting to life in a different country, while adapting to a new academic system. In addition, they may also encounter perceived and/or actual ostracism from others. Individuals feeling isolated or ostracized may experience negative outcomes that can affect them mentally and physically (O'Reilly, Robinson, Berdahl, & Banki, 2014; Williams, 2002). People's perception of being ostracized and their reactions after perceived ostracism vary and may be partially explained by personality traits, such as the Big Five, narcissism, and trait self-esteem (Kong, 2016; Wu, Wei, & Hui, 2011; Xu, 2012). Since ostracism threatens international students' need to belong, we argue that attachment theory may play an important role in understanding social interaction threats. To our knowledge, attachment style as an antecedent of ostracism has not yet been empirically tested, and evidence for attachment as a moderator of the ostracism process has been inconsistent (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2010). As empirical research linking the two literatures has only been tested in the lab (Hermann, Skulborstad, & Wirth, 2014; Waldrip, 2007; Yaakobi & Williams, 2016), we undertook this research to test the relationship in the field.

The study contributes to the ostracism literature by investigating attachment style as an antecedent, as well as moderator, of the ostracism consequence. Our research also contributes to the expanding of the study of attachment style from its major focus on dyadic relationships to broader group relationships. Finally, our study investigates ostracism in a more realistic setting by using a sample of international students who may experience ostracism.

OSTRACISM

Ostracism is typically defined as being ignored and excluded, and it often occurs without excessive explanation or overt negative attention (Williams, 2007). The temporal framework of ostracism proposes that individuals feel the pain of ostracism, which threatens their need for belonging and esteem. Individuals will then respond to cognitive appraisals of the situation in order to remedy it (Scott & Duffy, 2015; Williams & Zadro, 2005) as well as be motivated to be more vigilant of social signals in order to attain success in future interactions. Ostracism has been linked with many detrimental outcomes, such as lower workplace commitment (Zheng, Yang, Ngo, Liu, & Jiao, 2016), psychological distress (Niu et al., 2018; Wu, Yim, Kwan, & Zhang, 2012), and even physical pain (Eisenberger, 2012; Riva, Wesselmann, Wirth, Carter-Sowell, & Williams, 2014).

The link between ostracism and detrimental outcomes is particularly clear in international student populations. Specifically, international students often feel a sense of isolation and exclusion when they enter a foreign university and become a member of a new heterogeneous minority group (Hirai, Frazier, & Syed, 2015). They not only need to become accustomed to a new culture and language, but also must acclimate to those of their fellow international students. Because international students face the possibility of being ostracized on two fronts (by the host nationals as well as fellow international students), they are a natural population to study naturally occurring ostracism. We expect to replicate the previous findings showing strong and positive associations between ostracism and physical and psychological

distress (Niu et al., 2018; Schmitt, Spears, & Branscombe, 2003). Consistent with prior research, the present study focused on two common physical and psychological distress concepts: physical symptoms and depression (Ferris, Brown, Berry, & Lian, 2008; Robinson, O'Reilly, & Wang, 2012). These negative outcomes have the potential to affect school performance and could prevent international students from completing their education program (e.g., Chambel & Curral, 2005; Sommer, 2013).

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship (a) between ostracism and depression and (b) between ostracism and physical symptoms.

Furthermore, ostracism threatens one of the most fundamental human needs—the need of belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). From the evolutionary adaptation perspective, people desire interactions with others, and therefore seek proximity (Baumeister & Tice, 1990; Buss, 1990). This proximity-seeking behavior is built in early childhood through interactions with caregivers. Thus, attachment theory, which offers insights into proximity seeking as the core tenant, appears to be a relevant conceptual framework that may help researchers better understand ostracism.

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory traces its roots to the work of John Bowlby (1969, 1973), who formulated the basic principle that infants inherently have the tendency to maintain proximity to their caregivers. The characteristics of caregivers during the times of stress, uncertainty, and fear results in different attachment styles. When the attachment figures are unavailable, inattentive, or unresponsive, attachment strategies are utilized to help deal with the distress. Attachment theory has since been studied using adult samples in areas such as romantic (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Pietromonaco & Beck, 2015) and workplace relationships (Harms, 2011). The majority of the research on attachment theory in the workplace has been focused on the dyadic relationships (e.g., leader–member exchange; Richards & Hackett, 2012); therefore, the present study contributes to the current literature by investigating attachment theory at the group level.

Attachment and Ostracism

The present study proposed a moderated mediation model with attachment as an independent variable and moderator, ostracism as mediator, and psychological strain (i.e., depression and physical symptoms) as outcomes (see Figure 1). When the need of belonging is threatened in a stressful environment, ostracism is likely to be perceived. It is also a "top-down" process where the perception of ostracism is impacted by one's attachment style—for example, anxiously attached individuals tend to exaggerate the feelings of rejection.

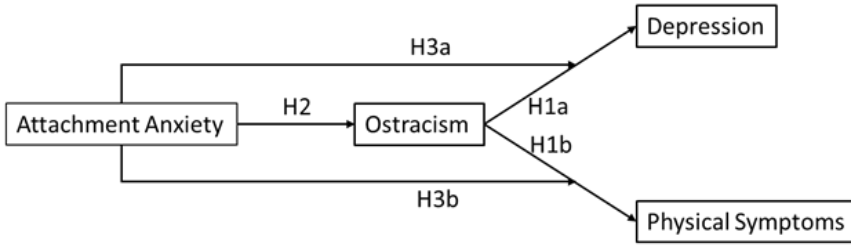

Figure 1: The Theoretical Model of the Present Study

Attachment Anxiety as Antecedent

Personality traits been shown to influence an individual's perception of ostracism (Kong, 2016; Robinson et al., 2012; Wu et al., 2011). Though not empirically tested, Williams (2002) suggested attachment styles as possible antecedent of ostracism. There are two perspectives on why people with different attachment styles tend to have different levels of ostracism perception. First, the behavior systems of people with different attachment styles lead them to be treated differently by others. Second, when facing ostracism, the individual's attachment style leads to different ways of appraising and interpreting their perceptions.

An anxious attachment style results from inconsistent responses from an attachment figure when distress occurs. Attachment-anxious individuals tend to use hyperactivating strategies, which might scare or annoy other people. Moreover, those who are anxiously attached tend to have an intense fear of rejection, jealousy, and abandonment, and a preoccupation with relationships (Brennan, Wu, & Loev, 1998). This preoccupation may be attributed to the individual attempting to satisfy an unmet need for attention and acceptance (Popper & Mayseless, 2003) and therefore they put a lot of effort into trying to avoid being rejected (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2013).

Anxious attachment is also characterized by holding negative beliefs about one's self-worth and self-efficacy, and positive beliefs about the abilities and characteristics of others (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). These negative self-images cause an anxiously attached individual to develop a need for approval from others, which could increase their susceptibility to perceived ostracism (Williams, 2002), because ostracism is a lack of approval at its core. Finally, anxious individuals are sensitive to rejection (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Sato, Yuki, & Norasakkunkit, 2014) and tend to exaggerate their feelings when they encounter ostracism. Therefore,

Hypothesis 2: There will be a positive relationship between anxious attachment and the perception of ostracism.

Attachment Anxiety as Moderator

Isolation from others can create a sense of loneliness, which is a known risk factor for social withdrawal, physical symptoms (Ernst & Cacioppo, 2000), and depression (Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004). Though the link between

ostracism and many detrimental outcomes has been empirically established, research is needed to investigate whether this relationship may also be impacted by contextual factors or individual differences. Research has been conducted that supports the moderating role of variables, including loneliness, social avoidance, and distress during but not after an ostracism episode (Wesselmann, Wirth, Mroczek, & Williams, 2012); group composition (Wittenbaum, Shulman, & Braz, 2010); proactive personality and political skill (H. Zhao, Peng, & Sheard, 2013); and other variables (Oaten, Williams, Jones, & Zadro, 2008; Zadro, Boland, & Richardson, 2006). In contrast to the empirically supported moderating variables listed previously, other studies have shown that reactions to ostracism are resistant to moderation (McDonald & Donnellan, 2012; Wesselmann et al., 2012; Williams, 2009; Yaakobi & Williams, 2016).

Researchers argued that these inconsistent findings may be due to the time period being measured—during or after the ostracism episode. However, this difference between time periods seems to be a concern only in lab-induced (e.g., artificial) ostracism scenarios while it is a long-term concern for international students. Other scholars have also argued that the inconsistent findings might be due to the nature of the moderator—that is, whether the moderator variable is a salient trait or not (Yaakobi & Williams, 2016). When the personality was a salient trait, it is more likely to see individual differences in how the person is affected by the ostracism. To further investigate the moderation effect, we used a trait (i.e., attachment style), which has strong theoretical link with ostracism, and tested the effect in a realistic ostracism episode.

Since ostracism threatens the need to belong, it can be argued that the detrimental outcomes of ostracism might be moderated by how an individual conceptualizes belongingness and whether they employ attachment strategies, congruent with Cassidy, Shaver, Mikulincer, and Lavy's (2009) argument that individuals show different responses to hurt feelings when they have different attachment orientations.

The characteristics of attachment anxiety, such as fear of rejection, vigilance to possible threats, exaggeration of threats, tendencies to rumination, and self-blame (e.g. Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007), might lead higher anxiously attached individuals to experience more detrimental outcomes when they perceive ostracism. Specifically, people who are anxiously attached are less likely to have constructive reactions, and are more likely to have exaggerated feelings of rejection and negative emotions. During a stressful situation (such as being ostracized), anxiously attached individuals show a higher accessibility to worries regarding rejection than those who are avoidant or securely attached (Mikulincer, Birnbaum, Woddis, & Nachmias, 2000). In other words, the increase in vigilance and tendency to catastrophizing may lead an anxiously attached individual to become hyper-aware of the perceived ostracism situation.

The ease of accessibility of these worries of ostracism means that they are more likely to think about what it is that is worrying them, which, in this case, is the perceived ostracism by their peers. An anxiously attached individual, who tends to ruminate and self-blame (Ognibene & Collins, 1998), will be more likely to experience the negative outcomes of ostracism such as depression and physical symptoms. This will occur because the anxiously attached individual will ruminate

on the perceived ostracism, which will heighten their experience of that pain, and increase the likelihood of negative outcomes occurring. When one dwells on the negative experience, the undesirable aspects of that situation will be amplified in one's memory (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001). These adverse experiences stick with use, and by ruminating more on them, anxiously attached individuals put themselves in a position where the magnitude of the ostracism will be increased in their mind, and therefore the risk of negative outcomes will also increase.

While there is limited empirical evidence for the moderating role of attachment anxiety on the negative consequences of ostracism (Arriaga, Capezza, Reed, Wesselman, & Williams, 2014), Waldrip (2007) tested the moderating role of a similar concept, social anxiety, and showed that participants high in social anxiety perceive more threat after controlling for the exclusion. Therefore, we expect a moderating role of attachment anxiety in the ostracism process:

> **Hypothesis 3:** Attachment anxiety will moderate the relationship (a) between ostracism and depression and (b) between ostracism and physical symptoms, such that the relationship will be stronger when attachment anxiety is higher.

Moderated Mediation Model for Attachment Anxiety

We also expect that at different levels of attachment anxiety, the indirect effects of attachment anxiety on depression/physical symptoms through ostracism may vary. We therefore propose: Attachment anxiety will moderate the mediating effect of ostracism on the relationship between attachment anxiety and (a) depression as well as (b) physical symptoms such that the mediating effect is stronger when attachment anxiety is higher (see Figure 1).

METHOD

Sample and Procedure

Participants were 119 international students (61% men) enrolled in a public university in the Southeast US, with an average age of 26.09 years old (*SD* = 3.85), and 34 months average staying time in the US. Among them, 41 (37%) were from China, 35 (31%) were from India, and the other 32% were from other countries. An email invitation was sent through an international student organization's mailing list to complete an anonymous online survey. A random code was generated after they finished the survey to claim a $5 cash reward. The code to claim the cash reward was not identifiable and only the principal investigator had the list of the codes to distribute the cash rewards.

Measures

Attachment Anxiety

We adapted Leiter, Price, and Day's (2013) Short Work Attachment Measure to measure international students' attachment anxiety. Items were rated on 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all like me*) to 5 (*very much like me*). One sample item for attachment anxiety was "Others are often reluctant to be as close as I would prefer at class/school." And one sample item for attachment avoidance was "I like to have close personal relationships with people at class/school (reverse coded)." The scale's alpha coefficient is .83.

Ostracism

We adapted Ferris et al.'s (2008) 10-item workplace ostracism measure for use in a university context. The measure has a 7-point scale (1 = *Never*, 2 = *Once in a while*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Fairly often*, 5 = *Often*, 6 = *Constantly*, 7 = *Always*; see Bass, Cascio, & O'Connor, 1974). One sample item was "Your greetings have gone unanswered at school/class." The alpha coefficient for the current sample is .85.

Depression

We adapted Radloff's (1977) 5-item Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D; Bohannon, Maljanian, & Goethe, 2003) to measure symptoms of depression. One sample item was "My sleep was restless." Frequency of the feeling or behaviors during the past week was measured using a 4-point scale (1 = *Rarely or none of the time* [*less than 1 day*], 2 = *Some or a little of the time* [*1–2 days*], 3 = *Occasionally or moderate amount of time* [*3–4 days*], and 4 = *Most or all of the time* [*5–7 days*]). The alpha coefficient for the current sample was .81.

Physical Symptoms

We used somatization items in Derogatis's (1975) Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI) to measure physical symptoms. The scale uses a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Not at all* to 5 = *Extremely*). A sample item was "Feeling weak in parts of your body." The alpha coefficient for the current sample was .89.

Control Variables

We controlled for the following demographic variables: gender, age, and tenure in the US.

Data Analysis

We used the SPSS Macro (PROCESS; Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007) to measure the moderated mediation of attachment. This macro estimates the conditional indirect effects of ostracism between attachment style and depression/physical symptoms using bootstrapping methods.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics, reliability estimates, and correlations of the study variables are presented in Table 1. The results of the regression analyses (see Table 2) showed that there were significant positive associations between ostracism and depression (β = .24, p < .01) and between ostracism and physical symptoms (β = .39, p < .01) after controlling for gender, age, and tenure supporting Hypotheses 1a and 1b.

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, Reliability, and Correlations Among Study Variables

		M(*SD*)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Gender	1.39 (.49)	—						
2	Age	26.09 (3.85)	.04	—					
3	Time	34.05 (36.35)	.22*	.37**	—				
4	Anxiety	2.53 (.81)	−.07	−.05	−.04	.82			
5	Ostracism	1.86 (.78)	−.05	.17	−.01	.28**	.86		
6	Depression	1.63 (.60)	.20*	−.06	−.07	.28**	.22*	.81	
7	Symptom	1.58 (.68)	.08	−.07	−.13	.31**	.39**	.54**	.89

Note: Numbers on the diagonal are coefficient alphas for various scales. Gender: 1 = Male, 2 = Female; Time = time in U.S.; Symptom = physical symptom; *p < .05, **p < .01.

Table 2: Regression Results

Variable	Ostracism						Depression						Physical Symptoms					
	B	*SE*	*β*	*t*	*F*	R^2	B	*SE*	*β*	*t*	*F*	R^2	B	*SE*	*β*	*t*	*F*	R^2
Control					1.58	.04					2.35†	.06					.94	.02
Gender	-.11	.15	-.07	-.76			.29	.11	.24	2.52*			.17	.12	.12	1.38		
Age	.04	.02	.20	1.98			-.00	.02	-.00	-.01			-.01	.02	-.08	-.80		
Time	-.00	.00	-.07	-.71			-.00	.00	-.13	-1.25			-.00	.00	-.12	-1.24		
Mediator											3.58**	.11					5.69**	.17
Ostracism							.18	.07	.24	2.63**			.33	.08	.39	4.41**		
Moderator					4.00**	.12					4.51**	.17					6.17**	.18
Anxiety	.27	.08	.29	3.30**			.18	.07	.24	2.69**			.19	.07	.23	2.62*		
Interaction											4.40**	.19					5.92**	.20
Anx × Ost							.17	.09	.80	1.83†			.20	.10	.84	1.99*		

Note. Time = time in U.S.; Ost = ostracism; Anx = anxiety. † p < .10, * p < .05, ** p < .01.

To examine the moderated mediation model, we tested the relationship between attachment (i.e., IV) and ostracism (i.e., mediator), the Attachment × Ostracism interaction effect and the moderated mediation index significance. Results showed significant associations between attachment anxiety and ostracism (β = .29, p < .01) after controlling gender, age, and tenure, supporting Hypothesis 2. Next, we examined the moderation effect of attachment style on the Ostracism – Strains

relationship. Results showed marginal significant interaction effects of attachment anxiety and ostracism on depression (β = .80, p < .10) as well as on physical symptoms (β = .84, p < .05). The positive interactions suggested that the effect of ostracism on depression/physical symptoms became stronger when attachment anxiety was higher. Accordingly, Hypothesis 3 was supported.

Recall that in our model, attachment anxiety was tested as the independent variable and moderator, ostracism was tested as the mediator, and the strains (e.g., depression and physical symptoms) were tested as the dependent variables. When depression was tested, the bootstrapping result showed a significant index of moderated mediation, which was .05 with 95% CI = [.001, .134]. We then examined the conditional indirect effect of attachment on depression through ostracism at two levels of attachment anxiety (Preacher et al., 2007). First, we tested the indirect effect at 1 *SD* above and below the mean of attachment using the model number 74 and controlled for gender, age, and tenure. Results showed that when individuals' attachment anxiety is low (−1 SD), the indirect effect of ostracism between anxiety and depression was not significant (β = −.00, 95% CI = [−.07, .05]); when individuals' attachment anxiety is high (+1 *SD*), the indirect effect was stronger and significant (β = .07, 95% CI = [.01, .16]). Similar results were found for physical symptoms with index equals to .05 with 95% CI = [.001, .135]; specific indirect effects see Table 3). The moderated mediation model for attachment anxiety was supported.

Table 3: Results of Testing Moderated Mediation

	Level	Conditional indirect effect	*SE*	*LLCI*	*ULCI*
DV = depression					
Anxiety	Low (mean −1 *SD)*	−.00	.03	−.07	.05
	High (mean +1*SD)*	.07	.03	.01	.16
DV = physical symptoms					
Anxiety	Low (mean −1 *SD)*	.03	.03	−.02	.11
	High (mean +1*SD)*	.11	.03	.04	.24

Note. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit. n = 119.

DISCUSSION

For international students, maladjustment in a foreign country (Mesidor & Sly, 2016; Takeuchi, Tesluk, Yun, & Lepak, 2005) may lower their self-confidence (e.g., Mak & Tran, 2001; Telbis, Helgeson, & Kingsbury, 2014) and prevent them from completing their education program. Moreover, the families of these overseas students may also be affected psychologically and financially because of high expectations placed on the students and the high expenses of tuition and living (L. Zhao, 2010).

These compounding issues drive our continuing attention to international students' maladjustment issues. We therefore devised the current study to attempt to address this issue. Due to the interpersonal relationship nature of ostracism,

attachment style, which can strongly influence relationship quality, can be used as a strong indicator of their maladjustment. Therefore, in the present study we hypothesized attachment insecurity would be positively related to ostracism (Hypothesis 2), which would in turn lead to psychological and physical strain (Hypothesis 1a & 1b). Results supported these hypothesis.

In addition, we proposed a moderated mediation model that ostracism has a conditionally indirect effect between attachment anxiety and strain variables (i.e., depression and physical symptoms) at different levels of attachment anxiety, based on the literature of attachment and ostracism. Specifically, when attachment anxiety is higher, the harmful effect of high attachment anxiety to strains through ostracism become stronger and when their attachment anxiety is low, this indirect effect disappeared. The strong association between attachment anxiety and perceived ostracism may be due to the anxious individual's strong demand for attention, which may be difficult to satisfy and may lead to them feeling undervalued or underappreciated. An anxious individual's tendency to catastrophize, ruminate on negative experiences, and become hypervigilant also influence the outcomes of perceived ostracism (Baumeister et al., 2001). The results confirmed our theoretical arguments that attachment anxiety exacerbates the perception of ostracism and aggravates the harmful effect of perceived ostracism on strain.

Practical Implications

As the results showed that international students' perception of ostracism has a detrimental effect on psychological health, it indicates the importance of reducing their tendency to perceive ostracism where there may be none. To reduce the perception of ostracism, learning the culture and interpretation of behaviors in the host country becomes considerably important. Only when the international students can better attribute the behaviors of others in the host culture can they minimize the unnecessary misunderstanding and reduce the perception of ostracism.

Furthermore, as attachment anxiety conditionally moderates the mediation effect of attachment anxiety on strain, we should focus on the individual's attachment style as well. Individuals who are highly anxiously attached should be of more concern. Based on attachment theory, when individuals perceive a safe environment, their attachment system will not be activated. In the foreign culture, if the new environment is perceived as secure and safe, international students' attachment anxiety pattern might not be activated. For this reason, it becomes critical to increase host-country students' awareness of new international students' maladjustment issues. Events or activities are encouraged to increase interaction opportunities among host-country and international students.

Interventions might also be implemented to help international students, especially those focused on anxious-attached individuals. Various types of interventions have been found to be efficacious such as writing therapy (Wright, 2002), stress coping (Fan & Wanous, 2008), and mindfulness training (Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004). Researchers have also tested several interventions to specifically address international or minority students' sense of inclusion/belonging and their social ties. For instance, Sakurai, McCall-Wolf, and

Kashima (2010) investigated the effects of a multicultural intervention program and showed the program enhanced the social ties of international students in Australia. Walton and Cohen (2011) examined a brief social-belonging intervention and results showed that, over a 3-year period, the intervention helped African American students' academic achievement (e.g., GPA) as well as their well-being. Hausmann, Ye, Schofield, and Woods (2009) designed a program to increase the sense of belonging of first-year students, but results were mixed and showed the intervention was only effective for White but not African American students. Besides intervention, other methods have been shown to have positive effects in promoting the sense of inclusion, such as advisor support (Curtin, Stewart, & Ostrove, 2013) and counseling groups (Delgado-Romero & Wu, 2010). Future interventions could be developed based on this study targeting on insecure attachment styles.

Limitation and Future Research Directions

There are some limitations for the current study. First, this is a cross-sectional study with all self-reported data, which makes it difficult to establish the causality. However, the results of the moderated mediation help alleviate the drawbacks of common method variance (Preacher et al., 2007). Second, previous experience in the US or other foreign countries before the current trip might confound the international students' current perceived experience. This previous experience may serve to reduce anxiety one feels when traveling to an unfamiliar place (e.g., Chambless & Ollendick 2001; Szabo, Ward, & Jose, 2016). Third, no objective information (e.g., other-rated ostracism, GPA) was collected. Such measures (e.g., GPA) may serve as dependent variables in future studies. Lastly, it might be interesting to test international students' perception of intention of others, which could better help us learn the process of ostracism for international students.

Previous researchers have argued that there are three stages after ostracism, namely (a) reflexive, (b) reflective, and (c) acceptance stages (e.g., Williams, 2007). The current study focused on the reflexive stage and thus future studies should examine the last two stages of ostracism that international students may experience.

Finally, the current study tested international students' ostracism perception from a negative perspective (i.e., insecure attachment style). Future studies could also test the impact of some positive personalities, such as gratitude, which might have a buffering effect on the perception of ostracism.

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NING HOU, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Management & Entrepreneurship at St. Cloud State University. Her major research interests include cross-cultural adjustment and training, attachment style, as well as leadership. Email: nhou@stcloudstate.edu

JINYAN FAN, PhD, is an Associate Professor in the Psychology Department of Auburn University. His research interests are in the domains of personnel selection, newcomer orientation and socialization, and cross-cultural adjustment and training. His work has appeared in premier outlets such as the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, and *Journal of Management*. Email: jinyan.fan@auburn.edu

JAMES TAN, PhD, is a Professor in the Department of Management and Entrepreneurship at St. Cloud State University. His major research interests include personnel selection, employee development, and the impact of individual differences on organizational outcomes. Email: jatan@stcloudstate.edu

MELISSA STUHLMAN is a doctoral candidate in Industrial and Organizational Psychology at Auburn University and a doctoral research fellow for the Consortium of Research Fellows Program. Research interests include personnel selection, big data, and training. Email: mjs0064@auburn.edu

CONG LIU, PhD, is a Professor of Psychology at Hofstra University. Her major research interests focus on occupational health psychology, which concerns the application of psychology to improving the quality of work life, and protecting the safety, health, and well-being of workers. Her current research projects examine workplace mistreatment, such as workplace ostracism, interpersonal conflict, and abusive supervision. She is particularly interested in individual value of harmony and how harmony affects employees' experience of, perception, and reaction to workplace mistreatment. Her second research area focuses on different mechanisms of challenge and hindrance stressors. She is interested in how individual difference (e.g., self-efficacy) plays a role in coping with challenge and hindrance stressors. She has done cross-cultural/cross-national studies comparing Chinese and American employees' job stress experiences, such as interpersonal conflict at work, conflict with a supervisor, organizational constraints, and lack of job autonomy. Email: cong.liu@hofstra.edu

GUSTAVO VALDEZ PAEZ is an art student at St. Cloud State University. His research interests include personality, online self-portrayal, and influence of music on brain development. Email: gvaldez@stcloudstate.edu

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Examining the Correlation between American Students' Cultural Intelligence, Political Affiliations, and Their Social Distances from Their International Peers

Sami Mejri
Tiffin University, USA

ABSTRACT

Guided by the theories of cultural intelligence and social distance, the purpose of this quantitative non-experimental study was to determine whether first-year American-born college students' political party affiliations and cultural intelligence (CQ) relate to their self-reported social distances (SDs) from international students. One hundred and twenty-one first-year college students at a 4-year Midwestern university participated in this study. Regression analysis showed that political party affiliation (β = .194, t = 3.074, p = .003), metacognitive CQ (β = −.239, t = −.2.885, p = .005), motivational CQ (β = −.363, t = −4.225, p = .001), and behavioral CQ (β = −.215, t = −3.078, p = .003) of American-born college students were statistically significant predictors of their social distances from international peers. However, cognitive CQ (β = .009, t = .112, p = .911) was not a statistically significant predictor of social distance between these two groups of students. Recommendations for future examination of CQ and SD in the context of American higher education were provided.

Keywords: American students, cultural intelligence, international students, international student mobility, political affiliation, social distance

Some scholars view education as one of the most effective vehicles for social mobility and competitiveness in today's globalized and knowledge-based economy (Brezis & Hellier, 2018; Pfeffer, 2015). Others regard it as a liberating journey, which allows persons and groups of various cultural and national backgrounds to interact in ways

that nurture their personal and cognitive developments (Butz & Askim-Lovseth, 2015; Buzzelli, 2016). However, interactions between American students and their international peers is critical to the acculturation of the latter group due to the sociocultural, emotional, and educational challenges that they face (Fahad, 2015; Gautam, Lowery, Mays, & Durant, 2016; Huhn et al., 2016).

The increase in international student enrollment at American higher education institutions has had positive economic impacts on the economy of the United States. According to a 2018 report by *Open Doors*, international students added 42 billion dollars to the U.S. economy during the 2016–2017 academic year (Institute of International Education [IIE], 2018). In addition to the economic value international students provide, their interactions with their American peers provide opportunities for cultural exposure critical to their career aspirations in today's global economy (Chao, Paiko, Zhang & Zhao, 2017; Holtbrugge & Engelhard, 2016). Furthermore, having international students as classmates or roommates may be fundamental in altering the biased beliefs and misperceptions that American students may have toward people of other nationalities (I-Ching, Ahn, Kim, & Lin-Siegler, 2017; McFaul, 2016). Researchers have also emphasized the prominence of social interactions in shaping the acculturation processes and academic success of college students (Buzzelli, 2016; Tawagi & Mak, 2015).

However, despite these research efforts, current literature has focused primarily on growth in enrollment numbers, its economic benefits, and the various processes of international students' acculturations (Buzzelli, 2016; E. J. Lee, 2016; Li, Heath, Jackson, Allen, Fischer & Chan, 2017). There are limited investigations of the perceptions of American-born students toward their international counterparts, and ways in which cultural barriers can be bridged. This is not to say that American students and institutions are inclined to approach common challenges to international students, but most of the research focuses primarily on the views of and challenges faced by the latter group. To this end, such investigation would help improve acculturation and learning outcomes for both domestic and international students (Haugen & Kunst, 2017; Li et al., 2017). This study shows that political party affiliation and three of the four dimensions of cultural intelligence (CQ) of American-born students were significant predictors of their self-reported social distances (SDs) from their international peers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The pressure of competing for the recruitment of international learners coupled with an increase in student mobility, particularly from growing economies such as China and India, have led to a record level of enrollments of international students in the 2016–2017 academic year (Institute of International Education, 2018). IHowever, international students continue to face myriad challenges while studying in the United States, particularly concerning their sociocultural adjustments and integration (Buzzelli, 2016; E. J. Lee, 2016; Li et al., 2017; Shu, McAbee & Ayman, 2017). Such challenges may limit the cross-cultural experiences between international and American-born students. Recent studies have shown that friendship formation and interactions among American and international students are mutually beneficial to

both groups (Buzzelli, 2016; Imamura & Zhang, 2014; Tawagi & Mak, 2015). The purpose of this quantitative correlation study was to examine the relationship between the CQ of American students and their self-reported SDs from their international peers, considering whether political party affiliation is also a predictor of American students' sense of distance from their international peers.

Envisioning the Globalized Classroom Environment

Globalization has become one of the catchphrases of the 21st century in both scholarly and popular discourses (Kacowicz & Mitrani, 2016). Studies have examined who benefits and who loses from globalization within the context of an interdependent and interconnected world economy (Bergh, Mirkina, & Nilsson, 2016; C. Lee, Lee, & Chiou, 2017). For some, the emergence of globalization was similar to that of the capitalistic system, which has further divided the world into geopolitical structures of power and economic dependencies, thus widening the gap between the social classes (Antràs, de Gortari & Itskhoki, 2017; Wu, Perrings, Kinzig, Collins, Minteer & Daszak, 2017). For Bergh et al. (2016), globalization represents a socio-economic phenomenon that reduces poverty, even in countries with low institutional quality. To this end, the paradoxical outlook on globalization has been shaped by the way in which resources and intellectual capital is being distributed around the world.

The rise of the network society, which was catalyzed by advancement in information technology and the subsequent increase in the use the Internet throughout the world, has revolutionized human connection (Baker, Warburton, Hodgkin & Pascal, 2014). Globalization has catalyzed the computerized and digitalized nature of human connections (Baker et al., 2014; Antràs et al., 2017). From this standpoint, the social network provides a historical and logical framework for examining globalization, especially concerning the interconnectedness of social, economic, and educational spheres (Bergh et al., 2016). Globalization has reshaped the nature of educational policy and practice around the world through the increase in student mobility, presence of international branch campuses, and international baccalaureate programs (Healey, 2015; Menashy & Dryden-Peterson, 2015). These international functions of the university altered the role of the educator, the learner, and the environment in which they interact.

International Student Mobility

International student mobility is a complex phenomenon that can be tied to sociocultural, political, and economic factors (Choudaha, 2017; Macrander, 2017; Prazeres et al., 2017). For Prazeres et al. (2017), the individual's desire and motivation for accumulating future economic and cultural capital is one of the primary pulling factors for student mobility. Prazeres et al. (2017) also posited that internationally mobile students are motivated by the competition for symbolic capital, which is associated with the place and the ranking of the college they attend. Employment, social benefits, and the political stability of both the student's country of origin and country of destination are also predictor factors for international student

mobility (C. Lee et al., 2017; Okeja, 2017). However, international student mobility is not solely tied to economic and political factors.

In the case of China, which is the country of origin of the largest number of international students in the world with over 363,000 students in 2017 (IIE, 2018), researchers have claimed the existence of other cultural and historical push factors (Lee et al., 2017; Liu, 2016). For example, Liu (2016) examined the impacts of culture on student mobility and argued that China's education-first culture, as well as a saving culture and extended-family culture, continue to play an outbound factor. Ultimately, the US has become a top destination for Chinese international students, who constitute the majority of incoming sojourners (IIE, 2018).

The United States receives the largest number of international students, which accounts for more than a third of all international students around the world (IIE, 2018). However, changes in immigration policies and the political stance on immigration have created sporadic phases of inbound and outbound mobility for international students (Choudaha, 2017; Macrander, 2017). Choudaha (2017) examined the nature of student mobility to the United States over the past two decades and identified three phases of movements that are tied to significant events.

The 9/11 terrorist attack influenced the first phase of international student mobilization during the first decade of the 21st century (Choudaha, 2017). During this time, the U.S. government placed more restrictions on student visas, particularly from the Middle Eastern and North African countries. Given that 11 of the 19 hijackers were from the Middle East, these travel bans aimed at reducing terror threats and ensuring national and global security (Shammas, 2015). The second wave of inbound movement of international students took place during the 2008 financial recession, which triggered an economic motivation for the recruitment of international students (Choudaha, 2017; Macrander, 2017). This financial motivation is due to the fact that American systems of higher education have long struggled with funding their operational expenses and improving graduation rates while at the same trying to minimize tuition increases (Choudaha, 2017; Li, 2017). However, during and after the 2008 recession, appropriation per full-time equivalent had fallen by 23% in 48 out 50 states (Doyle & Zumeta, 2014). This unprecedented decline in government funding made the recruitment of international students into U.S. higher education an alternative pathway for tuition revenue (Fabricius, Mortensen, & Haberland, 2017; Gautam et al., 2016). The third phase of influence to outbound mobility was shaped by a myriad of economic and geopolitical events such as the UK's referendum to leave the European Union, a slowdown in the growth of rising economies, and the outcome of the recent U.S. elections (Choudaha, 2017).

These geopolitical events may not have a direct impact on the nature of cross-cultural interactions between American students and their international counterparts. However, such events play a significant role in shaping the public's attitudes toward immigration and level of acceptance to people from other nationalities (Fuchs et al., 2014). For example, the racist and xenophobic rhetoric of the U.S.'s 2016 presidential campaign and the Trump administration's hard line stance on immigration, particularly from Muslim nations, only served to push back on globalism and support for isolationism (Ramswell, 2017). This nationalistic political approach changes the concept of globalization from a phenomenon that has allowed for the free movement

of financial and intellectual capital to symptomatic of lost sovereignty, rights, and identities (C. Lee et al., 2017; Ramswell, 2017). This new wave of nationalistic and somewhat hostile political ideologies sought to demonstrate that nationalism and populism can serve the public by regaining its cultural identity and lost traditions (Ramswell, 2017). As indicated above, these political dynamics could potentially influence the American public's stand on immigration and shape the nature of cross-cultural interactions with people of other nationalities, including international students (Fuchs, Dreher, & Nunnenkamp, 2014; Ramswell, 2017; Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2017).

Acculturation of Sojourners

Researchers who have studied the lived experiences of international students have concluded that this population of students faces a variety of sociocultural, psychological, and educational challenges (Fahad, 2015; Huhn et al., 2016; Rose-Redwood et al., 2017; Zhen et al., 2017). International students come from different countries and are accustomed to different values, codes of attitudes and behavior, and different cultural and religious backgrounds and thus may not be fully integrated into American higher education (E. J. Lee, 2016; Li et al., 2017; Lombard, 2014; Zabo, Ward, & Jose, 2016). Additionally, the academic and cultural inclusiveness of international students may depend in part on the quality and frequency of interactions with their American peers (E. J. Lee, 2016).

Sociocultural Challenges

Researchers have revealed that students studying abroad face a variety of sociocultural and emotional problems (Bierwiaczonek, Waldzus, & Zee, 2017; Fahad, 2015; Gautam et al., 2016; Huhn et al., 2016). In a quantitative study, Imamura and Zhang (2014) found that domestic students were more willing to communicate with their Chinese counterparts, only if the latter group was assimilated into the American way of life (Imamura & Zhang, 2014). American students considered assimilation to American culture as speaking with a clear accent, being able to engage in group discussions, and being understood (Imamura & Zhang, 2014; E. J. Lee, 2016).

In more distressing studies, international students have identified themselves as subject to prejudice as a result of threats, social dominance, and right-wing authoritarianism by their domestic counterparts (Bierwiaczonek et al., 2017; Charles-Toussaint & Crowson, 2010). Brown and Jones (2013) also examined the various occurrence of racism and religious discrimination that international students experience while studying abroad. Using survey research, the study concluded that international students, particularly those from Arabic-speaking countries, have experienced various forms of verbal and physical abuse (Brown & Jones, 2013). However, issues related to social and academic inclusion are not always limited to religious affiliation and national origin (Ching et al., 2017). There exists a wide range of psychological, emotional, and intellectual challenges (Ching et al., 2017; E. J. Lee, 2016; Li et al., 2017). In another study, Geary (2016), who has lived the international

student experience, indicated that social connections, adjustment to new cultures, and overcoming linguistic hurdles were the primary challenges facing international students.

Educational Challenges

Sixty percent of international students come from countries where English is not the primary language (IIE, 2018). Ultimately, one of the obvious educational challenges for international students studying in the U.S. is how and to what extent they grasp the English language (Butz & Askim-Lovseth, 2015; Gautam et al., 2016; Geary, 2016; Imamura & Zhang, 2014). However, the use of technology and appropriate teaching strategies have proven useful in reducing language anxiety for international students (E. J. Lee, 2016; Gautam et al., 2016). For example, E. J. Lee (2016) examined the impacts of teachers' corrective feedbacks on student's anxiety about speaking English. Findings from this study showed that most of the teacher's feedback lowered student anxiety about the language (E. J. Lee, 2016).

In a similar study, Butz and Askim-Lovseth (2015) used a hybrid learning environment to compare the oral communication skills of international students based on the modality of instruction. Findings from this study showed that international students in the hybrid environment outscored their counterparts in the face-to-face environment (Butz & Askim-Lovseth, 2015). As such, future research should consider the use of computer-aided instructions as a platform for promoting cross-cultural engagements and the acculturation of international students. Additionally, information technology, which offers students opportunities for virtual interactions, is a vehicle for reducing communication anxiety and the fear of social exclusion (Huhn et al., 2016).

Attitudes and Perceptions toward International Students

From a global standpoint, Stein and Andreotti (2016) offer the concept of "global imaginaries" as the explanation for the passionate recruitment of international students, who oftentimes encounter experiences of racism and alienation. This conceptual image is rooted in the history of Western supremacy and economic dominance for many centuries (Stein & Andreotti, 2016). Within this image of political and economic hierarchy, the Western world is viewed as the paradigm for humanity and technological advancements, while the rest of the world tails behind (Collier, Rosch, & Houston, 2017; Tan, & Chua, 2015).

The Ideological Frameworks of Western Supremacy

Based on the argument that Stein and Andreotti (2016) presented, the term "racism" here is not used in the context of discrimination by members of the host country (i.e., students, faculty, and staff). Rather, the term is indicative of the inherited nature of such perceptions toward the international learner (Stein & Andreotti, 2016). These structured and racialized logics place Western higher education as a globally desirable product that provides economic incentives for

recruiters of international students, while at the same time exposing the biases and contradictions that are associated with the recruitment and sociocultural alienations (Stein & Andreotti, 2016).

This perception of influence and dependence on Western ideals is also echoed in the field of comparative and international education, particularly in the area of global aid for education and international assessments (Pfeffer, 2015; Shields & Menashy, 2019). Shields and Menashy (2019) argued that the flow of aid is based on former colonial relationships and that motivation for resource allocation is structured around the political, economic, and security interests of donor states. To some critics, global aid for education establishes an extension of existing colonial relationships whereby education becomes a vehicle for assertion and preservation of the normative views and narrative of former colonial powers (Pfeffer, 2015).

Perceptions and Attitudes Toward International Sojourners

In higher education, the attitudes and perceptions of host-national students, faculty, and staff toward international students play a critical role in shaping the lived experiences of international students (Bierwiaczonek et al., 2017; E. J. Lee, 2016; Li et al., 2017). E. J. Lee (2016) examined the perceptions of American and international students about the benefits of informal English conversations and found that international students have gained augmented linguistic and cultural skills when engaging with their peers (E. J. Lee, 2016). On the other hand, American students reported that cultural awareness was the primary benefit from the conversations and that they were less likely to engage with international students who seemed unassimilated to the American culture (E. J. Lee, 2016). Ruble and Zhang (2013) found that American students hold stereotypical beliefs about Chinese students. The authors conducted exploratory factor analysis, which revealed five primary stereotypes about international students, including that they are smart, hardworking, shy, have bad English skills, and are not assimilated (Ruble & Zhang, 2013).

In examining the attitudes and perceptions of American students toward their international peers, it is important to point out that race, nationality, and religious beliefs of the latter group play an important role in shaping the views and attitudes of their American peers (E. J. Lee, 2016; Li et al., 2016; Shammas, 2015). For example, after 9/11, Arabs and Muslims living in the United States have been the primary targets of the government's national security and counterterrorism program. Over the past two decades, a series of highly charged events, including the ongoing wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the toppling of dictatorship regimes in the Middle East and North Africa, have led to the curtailment of civil rights of Muslim student organizations (Fahad, 2015). In 2013, two men from the former Soviet State of Kyrgyzstan conducted a terrorist attack against Marathon runners in Boston Massachusetts. These events have also given rise to an anti-Arab and anti-Muslim discourse in American society (Fahad, 2015; Shammas, 2015). The political rhetoric seeps into the attitudes of the American way of life, particularly as it relates to higher education and the nature of intergroup contacts between national and international student groups (Ron, Solomon, Halperin, & Saguy, 2017; Shammas, 2015).

However, it is also fair to point out that the attitudes and perceptions of American-born students have not always been negative toward their international peers. American-born students' attitudes toward their international peers seem to be more positive when it comes to athletics and collaborative sporting events (Buzzelli, 2016; Foo, Wells & Walker, 2015). Foo et al. (2015) showed that American students did not hold negative views concerning the recruitment of international student-athletes (Foo et al., 2015). Additionally, Rice at al. (2016) found that there was no significant difference between domestic and international students concerning the building of advising alliances. These findings confirm the hypothesis developed by Allport (1979) and those of Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) that the existence of a common goal between social groups is critical to enhancing intergroup relations.

As to perceptions and attitudes of faculty and staff toward international students, the findings tend to vary based on the context and whether the views were related to classroom interactions or academic assessments (Sheppard, B. E., Elliott, & Baese-Berk, 2017). College faculty's assessment of international students' abilities differs across disciplines and focus areas of study. For example, Sheppard et al. (2017) examined college faculty's attitudes and perceptions of international students' speech and comprehension and concluded that these skills differed based on their areas of specializations. English for Academic Purposes Instructors (EAP) and content faculty listened to international students' speeches and provided comprehensibility ratings for international students. Sheppard et al. (2017) found that comprehensibility ratings and intelligibility scores for both groups were similar, but EAP instructors were able to transcribe more accurately for less fluent speakers (Sheppard et al., 2017). Furthermore, content faculty with more negative attitudes toward EAP learners provided lower ratings (Caplan & Stevens, 2017; Sheppard et al., 2017).

RESEARCH METHOD

The increasing trend of international student mobility, particularly toward the US, has given rise to scholarly discussions concerning cross-cultural interactions within educational spheres, as well as the importance of developing cultural competency in today's interconnected and knowledge-based economies (Holtbrugge & Engelhard, 2016). International students continue to face a myriad of sociocultural challenges, including building friendships with American-born peers (I-ching et al., 2017; E. J. Lee, 2016; Tawagi & Mak, 2015). As such, depending on their background variables, CQ, and self-reported SD from international peers, the American-born student could play a significant role in reducing such challenges and developing cross-cultural competencies (Chao et al., 2017).

Population and Sample

To determine the minimum required sample for the study, a G*Power analysis using five predictors of Social Distance, an effect size of .15 and an alpha value of .05 showed that a minimum sample of 92 participants was needed. Although, 92 responses were needed, a total of 121 students out of a total of 689 undergraduate first-year American-born students who were enrolled at a small private Mid-western

university participated in the study. Of the first-year students, 46% identified themselves as White, 15% as Black, 4% as Hispanic/Latino, and 24% as unknown, 1% as Asian, 1% more than one race, and 10% international students. Fifty-four percent of the students identified themselves as females and 46% as males. The total on-campus population at the selected university for this study consisted of approximately 4,100 undergraduate students and 1,000 graduate students. During the 2016–2017 school year, a total of 380 international students representing 27 countries were enrolled in both graduate and undergraduate programs at the university (Center for International Affairs, 2016). Due to F1-visa sponsorship and other regulations, most international students are not permitted to enroll in online courses. As such, American-born students who were enrolled in online programs would have little to no interaction with international students, and thus only students who were enrolled in the face-to-face courses were invited to participate in the research study. Additionally, American-born students who have lived outside the US for more than 3 months, as students or visitors, were not eligible to participate in this study. The reason for this exclusion is that travel experiences may have changed the perceptions and views of American-born students toward people of other cultures and nationalities. Given the categorical and continuous nature of the variables, the analysis was based on multiple linear regression with five predictors; an assumed medium-effect size, a power level of .80, and a significance level of .05. Table 1 provides a summary of the parameters for the outcome of the final sample size for this study.

Table 1: Power Analysis

Parameter	Value
Predictors	5
Effect size	.15
Alpha	.05
Power	.80
Total sample size	92

Material/Instrumentation

The survey instrument consisted of a CQ component, a SD component, and a demographic component. Early and Ang's (2003) 20-item questionnaire with a composite reliability and validity exceeding .70 was used to measure CQ (Van Dyne & Ang, 2008; Van Dyne et al., 2012). The CQ questionnaire is in the form of a Likert-scale ranging from one to seven (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). The survey instrument included the CQ scale of Van Dyne and Ang's (2008), which is a 20-item self-report measure designed to measure an individual self-scoring on the four dimensions of CQ. The four dimensions are metacognitive CQ (four items; Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$), cognitive CQ (six items; Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$), motivational CQ (five items; Cronbach's $\alpha = .76$), and behavioral CQ (five items; Cronbach's $\alpha = .78$).

The instrument also included a SD component and a demographic component. The metacognitive CQ items (e.g., "I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I use

when interacting with people with different cultural backgrounds"), cognitive CQ items (e.g., "I know the legal and economic systems of other cultures"), motivational CQ items (e.g., "I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures"), and behavioral CQ items (e.g., "I change my verbal behavior [e.g., accent, tone]) when a cross-cultural interaction requires it"). The most recent CQ list, which was developed by Ang et al. (2007), appears in Appendix A. Presbitero (2016) also used the CQ questionnaire to show that CQ moderates culture shock and reverse culture shock of students. Shu et al. (2017) also used the same survey to show that CQ is a predictor of cross-cultural adjustments. Although researchers have used several different forms of cultural assessment tools, the instrument that Van Dyne et al. (2012) created is the most valuable for this study.

The second tier of the instrument consists of a 12-item rating scale of SD, which is an updated version of the Bogardus SD scale that was adopted by Norman, Windell, and Manchanda (2012). This section of the survey consists of a scale ranging from one to five (1 = *I certainly would*, 5 = *I certainly would not*) and has an established reliability of .081 (Yoshii, Mandai, Saito, & Akazawa, 2015). To use SD as a dependent variable in the multiple regression, a composite score of the responses was computed. The third layer of the survey consists of three background questions, and political party affiliation represents one of the independent variables.

RESULTS

To address the research questions, multiple regression analysis and an analysis of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to identify significant correlations between the dependent and independent variables. The backward option was entered into SPSS to ensure that only significant correlations were identified. Multiple linear regressions were calculated to predict the SD of American-born students based on their political party affiliations and the four dimensions of CQ. Based on Model 2, as shown in Tables 3 and 4, a significant regression equation was found, $F(4, 117) = 38.932$, $p < .001$, with an R^2 of .571. The multiple regression equations indicate the existence of a statistical relationship between one or more predictor variables and the dependent variable.

Following the tests of assumptions, the significance of the overall regression model was evaluated using the F test at a significance level of .05. Additionally, R^2 was computed to determine the proportion of variability in criterion variable scores by the set of predictor variables (i.e., four dimensions of CQ and political party affiliation). The overall backward model was used and four predictors (metacognitive CQ, behavioral CQ, motivational CQ, and political party affiliation showed significance, and cognitive CQ was the predictor that was not significant, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Model Summary

					Change statistics				
Model	*R*	R^2	Adjusted R^2	*SE* of est.	R^2 change	*F* change	df_1	df_2	Sig. *F* change
1	.756[a]	.571	.553	.50923	.571	30.885	5	116	.000
2	.756[b]	.571	.556	.50707	.000	.013	1	116	.911

Note. The dependent variable was social distance. Est. = estimate; Sig. = significant.
[a]Predictors: (Constant), Political, Cognitive, Metacognitive, Behavioral, Motivational
[b] Predictors: (Constant), Political, Metacognitive, Behavioral, Motivational

Individual model coefficients were evaluated at a significance level of .05. The sign of the B coefficients informs the direction of the relationship between the variables. The above statement meant that a positive relationship is shown in the proportional increase in the scores of the criterion and the predictor variables. Negative coefficients indicate that as scores on the predictor variables increase, scores of the criterion variable decrease. The significance of the model coefficients corresponding to political party affiliation, the four dimensions of CQ and SD, were used to test the research questions respectively.

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between American-born students' reported political party affiliation and their self-reported SD from international peers?

Hypothesis 1: There is no relationship between the political party affiliation of American-born students and their self-reported social distances from international students.

Based on Model 2 of the coefficient Table 3, political party affiliation was found to be a statistically significant positive predictor of SD ($\beta = .194$, $t = 3.074$, $p = .003$). This means that the students' SDs increased by .194 units as political affiliation increased by one unit in the political affiliation spectrum. The political spectrum ranges from (0 = extremely liberal, Democrat; to 100 = extremely conservative, Republican). These findings suggest that SD tend to increase as political party affiliation moves from liberal to conservative. Ultimately, H1 was rejected.

Table 3: Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of squares	*df*	Mean square	*F*	Sig.
1	Regression	40.044	5	8.009	30.885	.000[a]
	residual	30.080	116	.259		
	total	70.125	121			
2	Regression	40.041	4	10.010	38.932	.000[b]
	residual	30.083	117	.257		
	total	70.125	121			

Note. The dependent variable was social distance. Sig. = significant.

[a]Predictors: (Constant), Political, Cognitive, Metacognitive, Behavioral, Motivational
[b] Predictors: (Constant), Political, Metacognitive, Behavioral, Motivational

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between the metacognitive CQ of American-born students and their self-reported SD from international peers?

Hypothesis 2: There is no relationship between the metacognitive CQ of American-born students and their self-reported social distances from international students.

Based on Model 2 of the coefficient Table 3, metacognitive CQ was found to be a statistically significant negative predictor of SD ($\beta = -.239$, $t = -.2.885$, $p < .005$). These results meant that the students' SD decreased by .239 units as their metacognitive CQ increased by one unit. Given these findings, H2 was rejected. The metacognitive variable was computed as the average score of four questions on the responders' consciousness about and adjustments to cultural situations.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between the cognitive CQ of American-born students and their self-reported SD from international peers?

Hypothesis 3: There is no relationship between the cognitive CQ of American-born students and their self-reported social distances from international students.

Based on Model 2 of Tables 3 and 4 of the excluded variables, cognitive CQ was found not to be a statistically significant predictor of SD ($\beta = .009$, $t = .112$, $p = .911$). These results meant that the students' SDs decreased by .009 units as their cognitive CQ increased by one unit. Consequently, H3 was not rejected. The cognitive variable was computed as the average score of six questions of the CQ questionnaire, which focused on an individual's factual knowledge about other cultures and norms.

Table 4: Coefficients

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	4.519	.279		16.182	.000	3.966	5.072					
	Metacognitive	-.161	.057	-.241	-2.849	.005	-.273	-.049	-.607	-.256	-.173	.518	1.930
	Cognitive	.006	.049	.009	.112	.911	-.092	.103	-.415	.010	.007	.615	1.627
	Motivational	-.253	.061	-.365	-4.140	.000	-.374	-.132	-.665	-.359	-.252	.476	2.100
	Behavioral	-.137	.047	-.218	-2.887	.005	-.231	-.043	-.525	-.259	-.176	.649	1.540
	Political	.005	.002	.193	3.023	.003	.002	.008	.371	.270	.184	.911	1.098
2	(Constant)	4.517	.278		16.275	.000	3.967	5.067					
	Metacognitive	-.160	.055	-.239	-2.885	.005	-.270	-.050	-.607	-.258	-.175	.534	1.873
	Motivational	-.251	.060	-.363	-4.225	.000	-.369	-.134	-.665	-.364	-.256	.497	2.011
	Behavioral	-.135	.044	-.215	-3.078	.003	-.221	-.048	-.525	-.274	-.186	.753	1.328
	Political	.005	.002	.194	3.074	.003	.002	.008	.371	.273	.186	.925	1.081

a. Dependent Variable: Social Distance

Table 5 of the stepwise regression analysis also shows that cognitive CQ was the only excluded variable, which indicates its non-statistical significance for predicting SD. The non-significance of cognitive CQ meant that American student's factual knowledge about the cultural norms and traditions of international students was not a predictor of their self-perceived SD toward them.

Table 5: Excluded Variables

Model		Beta in	*t*	Sig.	Partial correlation	Collinearity statistics		
						Tolerance	VIF	Min. tolerance
2	Cognitive	.009[a]	.112	.911	.010	.615	1.627	.476

Note. The dependent variable was social distance. Sig. = significance; Min. = minimum.

[a]Predictors: (Constant), Political, Metacognitive, Behavioral, Motivational

Table 6: Model Summary

Model Summary[e]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.665[a]	.442	.438	.57079	.442	95.238	1	120	.000	
2	.709[b]	.502	.494	.54154	.060	14.315	1	119	.000	
3	.735[c]	.540	.529	.52257	.038	9.797	1	118	.002	
4	.756[d]	.571	.556	.50707	.031	8.321	1	117	.005	1.744

a. Predictors: (Constant), Motivational

b. Predictors: (Constant), Motivational, Behavioral

c. Predictors: (Constant), Motivational, Behavioral, Political

d. Predictors: (Constant), Motivational, Behavioral, Political , Metacognitive

e. Dependent Variable: Social Distance

Research Question 4: What is the relationship between the motivational CQ of American-born students and their self-reported SD from international peers?

Hypothesis 4: There is no relationship between the motivational CQ of American-born students and their self-reported social distances from international students.

Motivational CQ was found to be a statistically significant predictor of SD ($\beta = -.363$, $t = -4.225$, $p < .001$). These results meant that SD between American-born students and their international peers decreased as motivational CQ increased. Specifically, SD decreased by .363 units as motivational CQ increased by one unit. The motivational variable was computed as the average score of five questions in the motivational dimension of CQ. Based on these results, H4 was rejected.

Research Question 5/hypothesis 5: What is the relationship between the behavioral CQ of American-born students and their self-reported SD from international peers?

Hypothesis 5: There is no relationship between the Behavioral CQ of American-born students and their self-reported social distances from international students.

Based on Model 2 of Table 3, behavioral CQ was found to be a statistically significant predictor of SD ($\beta = -.215$, $t = -3.078$, $p = .003$). These results showed that SD between American-born students and their international peers decreased as motivational CQ increased. Specifically, SD decreased by .363 units as motivational CQ increased by one unit. Based on these results, H5 was also rejected.

Evaluation of the Findings

Statistical analysis for this study showed that political party affiliation was a significant predictor variable for American-born students' self-reported SD from their international peers. Specifically, SD increased as the affiliation shifted from liberal to conservative. The findings of this study were in alignment with existing research that there is a growing anti-immigration stance in the United States and other parts of the Western world (Choudaha, 2017; Macrander, 2017). Events like the 9/11 attack, the Boston Marathon bombing, and the recent ban on immigrants from predominately Muslim countries may have shaped public views and perceptions about foreign nationals, at least among conservatives (Shammas, 2015). However, other circumstances such as difficulty in communicating with students of different nationalities and the limited nature of training specific to these types of intergroup interactions may also have been a factor in the outcomes.

The analysis also showed that metacognitive CQ was a statistically significant predictor of students' self-perception of their SD from their international peers. This finding also echoes those of Tawagi and Mak (2015) and Shu et al. (2017) that adjustment to and being conscious about one's cultural knowledge is critical to the quality of interactions between social groups. To this end, American-born students who have scored high on this dimension of CQ seemed to have a perception of closeness to their international peers (Buzzelli, 2016; Michalec, Giordano, Dallas, & Arenson, 2017).

When it comes to cognitive CQ, results showed that this dimension was not a significant predictor of the SD. Cognitive CQ focuses on the individual's factual knowledge about the legal and social norms of other cultures, and not so much on the quality of interaction between groups (Engle & Nash, 2016). The findings reiterated the fluid and transferable nature of cultural phenomena as a concept that builds on interactions rather than factual knowledge. For example, Racicot and Ferry (2016) found that increased opportunities for cultural exposure lead to higher levels of cognitive CQ. In a similar study about the role of language in intercultural communication, Presbitero (2017) found that while language ability plays an important role, motivational CQ plays an even more prominent role in attaining those tasks.

The next two predictors of SD were motivational and behavioral CQ. Both independent variables were computed as the average score of responses to questions relating to an individual's ability to acquire and adopt behaviors and attitudes that are appropriate for interacting with a new culture (Engle & Nash, 2016). The findings of the study echoed those of Presbitero (2017) that training, sensitivity, personal, and professional intergroup contact reduce SD and unconscious biases.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings of this study suggest that the researcher was able to bridge the theories of CQ and SD, thus creating a new framework for predicting and assessing intergroup contact based on cultural and demographic circumstances. The theory of CQ has been used as a framework for predicting job satisfaction (Presbitero, 2017; Ramsey & Lorenz, 2016). In other studies, CQ was used to study students' levels of satisfaction with study abroad programs (Racicot et al., 2016). In the area of cross-cultural affairs, CQ has been used

in the context of language anxiety and cultural adaptation (Harwood et al., 2017; Schumann, Klein, Douglas, & Hewstone, 2017; White et al., 2015). Through this study, the research has built on existing frameworks and areas of interest to provide an approach for bridging the theories of CQ and SD within the context of higher education in the United States.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

As global society becomes more mobilized, millions of people travel across political and cultural boundaries in search for educational opportunities (The World Bank, 2017).This reaffirms the role of education in building cultural and intellectual capital through international student mobility (Fabricius, Mortensen & Haberland, 2017). However, international students studying in the United States continue to face sociocultural challenges because of how their American-born peers perceive them (I-Ching, Ahn, Kim, & Lin-Siegler, 2017; E. J. Lee, 2016; Tawagi & Mak, 2015).

International students experience isolation and difficulty in making and maintaining close SD with American-born students and local communities, both of which present significant challenges to their sociocultural adjustments and academic engagements (Chao, Paiko, Zhang, & Zhao, 2017; E. J. Lee, 2016; Wang, Heppner, Wang et al., 2015). Without focused assistance in inclusion and engagement, international students may continue to face acculturation challenges and experience social isolation, which could lead to withdrawal and disengagement from the learning process (E. J. Lee, 2016; Li et al., 2017; Tawagi & Mak, 2015; Wang et al., 2015). Additionally, a significant decline in international enrollment would adversely affect existing jobs and the more than 35 billion dollars that recent enrollment numbers have added to the U.S. economy (IIE, 2015; NAFSA, 2016).

One of the limitations of this study, which may have constituted a threat to external validity, was the choice of a quantitative research method instead of using a qualitative or mixed-method approach. This limitation is inherent in the intertwining nature of qualitative and quantitative research designs in that neither method alone can provide scholars and readers with a comprehensive understanding of the studied phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). However, to achieve objectivity in capturing the perceptions of American-born students about their international peers, the quantitative design method was an appropriate approach to testing the research hypotheses. Another limitation, which constitutes a threat to internal validity, is the data was gathered through student self-reporting, which suggests the potential of susceptibility to social desirability and bias (Brenner & DeLamater, 2016).

Recommendations for Practice

Recommendation for practice derives from the uniqueness of this study. The researcher has not come across any research design that uses CQ and SD in the context of higher education. Researchers who have studied the educational and cultural experiences of international students have done so from the perspective of international students, and almost none of the explored literature has focused on the views of American students. Findings from this study are important in the sense that

the relationship between CQ and SD is not limited to students and higher education. This research design may be replicated by industries and corporations where interactions between Americans and people of other nationalities are critical to the success of the company (Aberson, 2015; Presbitero, 2017). Airline companies, law enforcement agencies, medical facilities, etc. could replicate this study to assess the SDs of their employees from customers of other nationalities.

Another recommendation for practice is that institutions of higher education could use this survey instrument as a method for assessing and promoting cultural awareness and sensitivity among students. In this cross-section correlation study, the sample was American-born students who were enrolled in their first year of college. One of the exclusion criteria was that participant has not lived outside the United States as students or visitors for more than 3 months. These frameworks were based on the fact that travel experiences and study abroad programs increased an individual's cultural competencies, which would have skewed the findings (Oyserman, 2016; Roy et al., 2017).

One recommendation for future research is to conduct a longitudinal study, which would assess how the relationship between CQ and SD changes over time. A lagged study may inform on the impacts, if any, of institutional training on intergroup contacts. The same study could also be replicated, but instead of using American-born students as the target population, researchers could study American-born faculty or staff. Future research may also seek to focus on intervention strategies and identify those that are effective in promoting cultural competencies and reducing misperceptions across social groups (Tawagi & Mak, 2015). Finally, future research may capitalize on the use of the Internet in amplifying the frequency and speed of social interactions, which can play a critical role in improving intergroup relations (Harwood et al., 2017; Schumann et al., 2017). In conclusion, it is important for faculty and administrators in higher education institutions to recognize the role of social and cultural constructs such as political affiliation and cultural intelligence in predicting the level of connectedness between students of different nationalities.

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SAMI MEJRI, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Science and Education in the School of Arts and Sciences at Tiffin University. His major research interests lie in the area of comparative and international education, online learning, virtual learning, and higher education research and multiculturalism. Email: mejris@tiffin.edu

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Familiarity as a Family: Close Friendships Between Malaysian Students and their Co-National Friends in the UK

Nur Hafeeza Ahmad Pazil
Universiti Sains Malaysia

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore close friendships and intimacy practices of Malaysian students in the context of living abroad. Some of the new close friends, specifically co-national friends in the UK, are perceived as "family" although some of them have not yet acquired family-like qualities in their relationships. Due to the situation of living abroad, the students acquired the "familiarity as a family" relationship—a new concept introduced in this study to explain this complicated relationship, with co-national friends in the Malaysian community in the UK. A sense of belonging and homophily, and shared physical space and activities are two key factors that influenced these practices of intimacy, which will foreground the discussion in this paper.

Keywords: close friendships, co-national friends, familiarity, homophily, Malaysian students, sense of belonging, space

Studying abroad represents a phase of life when a student who has chosen to earn a degree in another country needs to adapt to a new environment and to choose whether they want to maintain their long-established friendships or to develop new close friendships abroad. It is interesting to find that new friends formed abroad—when the Malaysian students are studying in the UK—are listed as close friends although the friendships are still new. It is intriguing to explore how students' mobilities abroad transform new friendships into close ties within a short period. However, it seems that the new close friends are not being valued as meaningful and intimate as their families and long-established close friends, although almost all the students listed at least one new friend abroad as a close friend. When the researcher took into consideration that these students may have a need for geographically close friends, it

raises a question of whether new friends abroad are equally important as family and long-established friends.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Jamieson (2011, p. 1) referred to intimacy as "the quality of the close connection between people and the process of building this quality." She argued that close relationships are a type of subjectively experienced personal relationship and may also be socially recognised as close. The quality of "closeness" portrayed as intimacy can be emotional and cognitive, with individual experiences, including a feeling of mutual love, like-mindedness, and specialness to each other. Jamieson conceptualized intimacy as a specific kind of association characterized by openness, the sharing of thoughts and the expression of feelings, and used the term "disclosing intimacy" to speak about the quality rather than the structure or status of relationships (Jamieson 1999, 2005, 2011).

Based on previous studies (Budgeon 2006; Chambers 2013; Forstie 2017; Jamieson, 2011), intimacy might also refer to non-familial and non-sexual relationships, such as friendship, in this context. Closeness may also be physical, but intimacy practices in relationships need not be sexual. Indeed, bodily and sexual contact can occur without intimacy. Jamieson (2011, p. 1) argued that "the cultural celebration and use of the term 'intimacy' are not universal, but practices of intimacy are present in all cultures." Therefore, it is important to highlight that this study draws on Malaysian cultural and religious practices.

This study highlights the context of students and living temporarily abroad, in which it shows the changes in the ways Malaysian students practice intimacy in a different context, that are certainly different from the West. The researcher's argument is in line with Holmes (2010), who indicated that people act out emotions in interaction with context and that context helps to shape intimate relationships. The international students felt the sense of "home" when they acquired familiarity with the language, people, and situations. The students who live abroad intend to develop a sense of comfort and familiarity in their daily life abroad not only to gain a sense of local belonging but also to form a new "home" (Prazeres, 2016, p. 13). Prazeres (2016) suggested that the feelings and ideas of comfort, familiarity, and home are transformed through students' mobility abroad. However, she argued that it is challenging to make the unfamiliar become familiar and the uncomfortable become comfortable in order to fit in with the local environment. Indeed, Lim and Pham (2016, p. 2184) argued that the international students may not feel completely welcome in their host countries but may also start to grow feelings of estrangement from their home countries.

It is clear that one of the ways to develop a sense of comfort and familiarity is to form new friendships abroad. Accordingly, Bilecen (2014) and Nielsen (2014) found that international students prefer to befriend those who share a similar nationality, and then, to make friends with other international students and have limited interaction with host students. Consistent with these findings, Maundeni (2001) in her research in the UK found that international students have little and "formal" contact with British students because they are reluctant to initiate contact with them on the

assumption that host students are reserved and prefer to socialize with each other. Indeed, British students played a minimal role in the adjustment process for international students (Maundeni, 2001), compared to co-national contact, which becomes more influential over time as co-nationals are important for promoting cultural adjustment and managing stress (Geeraert, Demoulin, & Demes, 2014).

Coleman (2015) described international students' friendships as being within a concentric circle. He found that the international students begin by socializing with co-nationals and they add other international students to their social circles over time. The students then include host students depending on particular circumstances, including duration of study abroad as well as their motivations, attitudes, actions, and initiatives (Coleman, 2015, p. 44). Moreover, Coleman (2015) claimed that each circle does not replace another. Instead the process is additive. The circle broadens across time and shows the progression of friendship. Indeed, Nielsen (2014) discovered that shared social space, such as accommodation, classes, services, and societies on campus that develop activities for international students foster intercultural interaction. However, she pointed out that local students rarely participate in those activities. Therefore, the international students have fewer opportunities to develop close contact with local students compared to co-national and other international friends.

In their study of Malaysian and Indonesian students in Jordan, Alazzi and Al-Jarrah (2016) claimed that leaving family responsibilities, expectations of academic performance, as well as unfamiliar cultural norms, language, friends, and food lead to stress and anxiety of living away from home. They indicated that personal, academic, sociocultural, and problem-solving strategies are four main concerns encountered by Malaysian and Indonesian students while living in Jordan (Alazzi & Al-Jarrah, 2016, pp. 735–737). The students not only faced challenges of time management and academic achievement, but they also reported feelings of loneliness and homesickness as they did not fit in with the norms, languages, and food. However, Weiss and Ford (2011) in their study of Malaysian, Indonesian, and Singaporean students in Australia claimed that living temporarily abroad seems likely to strengthen rather than weaken national identity. The students tend to take part in country-specific students' society, as there is a Malaysian Student Association in each Australian university.

Although co-national friends are important for international students, it is surprising that Malay students have fewer interactions and close ties with Malaysians from different ethnic backgrounds while studying abroad as discussed in the previous studies (Ahmad, Mirza, Mohd, Pawanteh, & Salman, 2014; Weiss & Ford 2011). Weiss and Ford (2011) found that although Malay students formed more friendships with Chinese and Indian friends than they had in Malaysia, friends from other ethnic backgrounds remained a relatively small part of their close friendships as Malays tend to speak Malay among themselves and tend to speak in English with Chinese and Indian friends. In this case, language use is the main problem as Weiss and Ford (2011) argued that speaking English underpinned the sense of "otherness" of non-Malays, leading to less intimate interaction between Malay students and other Malaysian students from the different ethnic background, while abroad. Similar to findings from the West, Alazzi and Al-Jarrah (2016) pointed out that the Malaysian

students in Jordan preferred to interact with co-national friends or other international students who had the same language, culture, and beliefs. They found that the students sought emotional support from co-national and Southeast Asian friends rather than local students. From the debates above, it is clear to highlight that familiarity and a sense of home seem significant for students abroad.

METHOD

This study focuses on Malaysian students in the UK, their experiences of living abroad and their practices of intimacy in close friendships. It is essential to explain the process of data collection and the background of this study, including the demographic profile of the students who participated. One group of international students, specifically Malaysian students in the North West of England, United Kingdom, aged between 20 to 25 years old were chosen in this study. The purpose of focusing on one group of participants who share a similar age group and background is to understand what is the expected and accepted behavior based on one background culture (Uski & Lampinen, 2016). Besides that, it is essential to identify whether Malaysian cultural and religious practices have a significant impact on the close friendship practices for this particular group.

Data Collection

The goal of this study was to gain a broad perspective on close friendships and intimate interaction between the students with their geographically close friends. The interviews were conducted in a private and informal setting. English and Malay languages were used for the interviews. Upon reading the participant information sheet and agreeing to participate, 18 students completed a consent form, and the researcher asked brief questions about their demographic information and close friendships. Before the first meeting, the students were asked to prepare a list of friends up to 20 names, who were considered as close and important in their life. The meaning of "close friends" in this study was open to participants' considerations about close friendship, which include family members and other personal networks as reported in the findings. Preparation of the list of close friends before the meeting was to give time and space for the students to think and choose which friends would be included or excluded in their list.

One A4 size friendship map with concentric circles as shown in Figure 1 was given out to each student during the meeting. Based on the list of close friends prepared, the students were asked to write a code name for each one, for example, F1 through F20, and arrange the code names in order of importance on the map before the interview. From the arrangement of the names, the nearer to the center of the concentric circle is the closest friendship (Spencer & Pahl, 2006). The purpose of using the friendship map in this study was to identify the friendship network, to focus on the details of friends who are close and important for the students, and to explore the meaning of friendship based on the students' experiences. All names reported in this study, including the students and their friends, have been changed to maintain confidentiality. The students used the code name in the friendship maps and

interviews to refer to their friends, instead of using the real names. The researcher also asked the students about their experiences and impressions of close friendships, the style of interaction with close friends, as well as the general use of the Internet and social media, including evaluations of the types of social media use, duration, frequency, and weekly amount of use. The resulting maps formed the basis for the interviews.

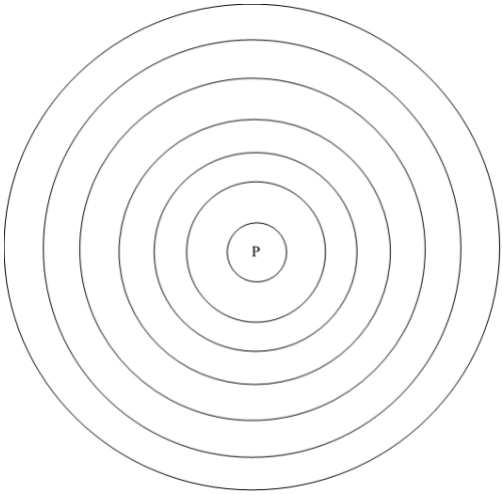

Figure 1: Friendship Map

Participants

This study intended to gain deeper understanding of the intimacy practices in close friendship of young people who live temporarily abroad for the purposes of higher education. For that reason, the researcher focused on small sample size of international students, specifically Malaysian students in the North West of England aged between 20 and 25 years old. Although the age of the subjects will make the results have limited generalizability, this age group was chosen because most of the young people at this age are undergraduate and master students in the United Kingdom (Universities UK and Higher Education Statistics Agency 2013). The participants were 18 Malaysian undergraduate and master's students, nine male and female students respectively, in three universities in the North West of England. All were unmarried and came to the UK without family members. Almost all the students came to the UK for the first time for the purposes of study.

The reason for choosing Malaysian students as the participants is not only because the researcher is a Malaysian but also because the Malaysian community living in the UK is approximately 60,000 people as reported in the UK census (Office for National Statistics, 2017). Moreover, Malaysia is one of the top non-EU sending countries for higher education in the UK (UK Council for International Student Affairs, 2015). As Malaysia is a multi-ethnic and multicultural country, the researcher

determined the diverseness of the students and chose from various ethnicities and religious beliefs. For that reason, 10 Malay students, five Chinese students, two Indian students, and one Siamese-Chinese student were chosen as participants in this study. All Malay students are Muslim, Indian students are Hindus, and the Siamese-Chinese student and all Chinese students are Buddhist, except one who was Christian.

Table 1: Demographic Background of Participants

Name	Age	Ethnicity	Religion	Period of mobilities (years)	Co-national close friends		
					Malay	Chinese	Indian
Male							
James	21	Siamese-Chinese	Buddhist	4	—	—	—
Jason	22	Indian	Hindu	1	—	2	2
Ken	21	Chinese	Buddhist	1	5	11	—
Alvin	21	Chinese	Buddhist	2	1	—	1
Adam	20	Malay	Islam	2	—	—	—
Izhan	23	Malay	Islam	1	8	—	—
Alif	22	Malay	Islam	1	12	—	—
Zain	25	Malay	Islam	1	7	—	—
Saiful	23	Malay	Islam	2	8	—	—
Female							
Yana	22	Indian	Hindu	1	—	2	—
Jenny	22	Chinese	Buddhist	1	—	1	—
Sweeli	25	Chinese	Buddhist	1	—	—	—
Tiffany	23	Chinese	Christian	2	—	2	1
Aina	25	Malay	Islam	4	1	1	—
Lily	22	Malay	Islam	1	2	—	—
Nora	24	Malay	Islam	1	—	—	—
Fira	25	Malay	Islam	1	2	—	—
Mila	22	Malay	Islam	1	—	—	—

By using snowball sampling technique, the participants who fit the specific purpose of this study were identified and they were asked for assistance to introduce the researcher to other students who share similar characteristics and interests. As living temporarily abroad is the main focus in this study, it is important to highlight that the students who participated were those who had lived in the UK for more than a year, but not more than 5 years. The demographic background of participants is illustrated in more details in Table 1 above. The researcher used pseudonyms for the names of participants and universities to maintain the confidentiality of the data provided by the participants.

FAMILIARITY AS A FAMILY

A significant aspect of the theories of intimacy is that they show how it might also be produced and practiced through sharing similar spaces, situations, experiences, familiarity, and sensibilities in living abroad. The ways in which Malaysian students define and practice intimacy in new close friendships are different from the way they define and practice intimacy with families and long-established close friendships. This study shows that 74% of new close friendships are co-national friends in the UK, which is categorized by three different ethnicities: Malay, Chinese, and Indian, as illustrated in Table 1. These results are consistent with those of other recent studies (Coleman 2015; Geeraert et al. 2014; Glass, Gomez, & Urzua, 2014; Lim & Pham 2016; Rienties & Nolan, 2014). which suggested that the international students socialize more with co-national friends.

Table 1 above shows that there are gender response differences in co-national close friendships. Male students were reported to have more co-national close friends than female students. The researcher found that the female students prefer to have a small number of close friends compared with male students. They are more selective in choosing their close friends compared with the male students. The female students perceived someone as close and intimate not only in terms of openness, intimate talk, and mentality but also in terms of shared activities and the length of the friendship. These are some criteria of ideal qualities of intimacy that the students expected in close friendships. The qualities of close friendships are not only built on expressiveness, intimate talk, and self-disclosure but also through activity-based friendship practices and instrumental support. However, the practices of intimacy with new friends are not similar to family members and long-established friends. Although new friends formed abroad are needed for face-to-face and physical activities, long-distance close friends are still important to discuss and share about personal and non-urgent matters. Hence, it leads to the paucity of the female students' co-national close friendships.

It is important to highlight that some of the Malaysian students in this study used the word "family" to describe Malaysian people in the UK—particularly in the same university, even though they stated that they did not have close relationships with all those people. In this context, physical distance and sense of belonging change the intimacy practices between the students with their new friends in the UK transforming them from strangers to close friends. Nevertheless, the students use of the term "family" focuses on the sense of familiarity rather than family practices. Thus, as previously mentioned, the term "familiarity as a family" was introduced to describe students' close friendships when they are far from home. The concept of familiarity as a family offers some valuable insight into the concept of familiarity discussed in the studies of students living abroad (see Ahmad et al., 2014; Alazzi & Al-Jarrah, 2016; Prazeres, 2016; Weiss & Ford, 2011) as well the studies of family and friendship.

The sense of familiarity formed some new practices of intimacy that are different from the practices of family and friendships. This kind of intimacy practice seems different to the friend-like or family-like intimacy qualities in the family and close friendships as discussed by Spencer and Pahl (2006). Instead, this is a new form of

intimacy achieved in specific relationships in the specific situation of living temporarily abroad. Even though these kinds of relationship did not yet establish intimate bonds and achieve the ideal qualities of intimacy as in family and childhood friendship, the Malaysian students feel emotionally connected with their co-national friends abroad as they share a similar nationality and cultural background as well as their shared experiences as sojourners. Certainly, there are two key factors that influence the practices of intimacy between the students and new close friends formed in the UK: a sense of belonging and homophily, and shared physical space and activities, which will foreground the discussion in this paper.

A Sense of Belonging and Homophily

Sharing similar nationality is one of the significant factors in creating intimacy in friendships. Previous studies (see Bilecen, 2014; Brown, 2009a) also noted the importance of new friendships for international students and these studies indicated that co-national friendship networks could be developed very quickly prior to arrival of the students in the host countries. In agreement with Beech's (2014), the researcher found that the students were actively searching for new contacts who could offer them advice and support related to studying abroad before they arrived in the country. It is also interesting to note that some students formed new friendships before they arrived in the UK through friends of friends. Here, Jenny talked about the only new close friend that she had in the UK. She got to know Lee who was initially a friend, and then a boyfriend, through her long-established close friends in Malaysia.

> Jenny: I met my boyfriend, Lee, in Manchester last year. He is a third-year student and my senior in accounting and finance. Actually, he is my friend of a friend. I never met him in Malaysia but one of my close friends in the list [friendship map], knew him since in Malaysia. He helped me and my friend to settle down, and we become friends since then, and we got together this year.

Although Jenny and Lee had never met each other in Malaysia, Lee was really helpful to provide information and support, especially in arranging accommodation and helping Jenny to settle down. For that reason, co-national friends abroad seem to be important in providing instrumental support about practical aspects of living and studying in the UK. These findings are consistent with those of Lim and Pham (2016) who claimed that the readiness to give support to the newly arrived students during their initial difficult phase of adaptation cemented the feelings of friendship and good-will among co-nationals. As Jenny came alone to further her study and came to the UK for the first time, the support received from Lee during initial arrival and settling in period in the UK was meaningful. Thus, it has developed high levels of intimacy in their friendship. Indeed, the early adaptation stage of living abroad is an important time for the Malaysian students to strengthen the bond with their new friends.

However, status homophily also became a barrier to intercultural contact, which resulted in fewer close friendships between the Malaysian students and the host students as well as with other international students. This study, as well as other recent research (Beech, 2016)found that the reality of living and studying in the UK could

have very different results than the belief that studying overseas will help the students to engage with the British student community. In this context, the concept of "cultural cliques" used by Beech (2016) represents the formation of Malaysian students' co-national close friendships. The formation of cultural cliques is because the students felt that it was easier to interact with people from their home country or to those from a similar cultural background who would be able to understand better the emotions experienced and the struggle faced from leaving home. Here, Ken and Tiffany shared their feelings about their new Malaysian friendships formed abroad.

> Researcher: Based on your friendship map, most of your close friends are Malaysian who live here in the UK. Why they are included as your close friends?
>
> Ken: My Malaysian friends here make me feel the hometown feeling. It is hard to mingle with other people, although they came from Chinese backgrounds like the students from China, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Although the appearance is almost the same, our mindset and the ways of thinking are different. The Malaysian population here is quite big and active. Malaysian student's society is quite active, and every time they organize an event, I can meet a lot of Indian, Malays, and Chinese and I can make a lot of new friends.

National and cultural bonds are important in recreating family and home abroad. Familiarity makes sense of family-type connections between new friends, and this familiarity provides ontological security by making a new context feel more secure or homely. Similar to Brown (2009a), the researcher found that interacting with co-nationals too, frequently led the students to sometimes feel that they had not left their home countries at all. The feeling of oneness generated by shared national culture has created a sense of intimacy between the Malaysian students and their co-national friends abroad. Indeed, this study found that the students considered all Malaysians that they know as friends and the Malaysian community as a family. Here, Tiffany talked about how she perceived all Malaysian students in her university as her friend.

> Tiffany: Even though we did not really keep in touch, but as long as I know that you are a Malaysian, you are considered as my friend. I try to be close to other Malaysian students because I am a Malaysian and I have a mindset that we are in a foreign country, so we need to help each other.

It is interesting to highlight how students' mobility has transformed the way in which they perceive intimacy and close friendship. The researcher found that mobility to the UK has transformed the co-national students from strangers into friends and surprisingly into close friends in a short period. The sense of belonging and connectedness as well as understanding the struggle of living alone in the UK are the reasons why the students believe that they need to help each other. This study shows that co-national friends create a sense of belonging or fitting in as they share common beliefs, values, and social norms that can help them to cope with their diverse setting.

Moreover, this study found that different ethnic groups, as well as religious beliefs, did not restrain the feeling of oneness in the co-national friendships. Indeed,

Malaysian interethnic close friendships are notable in this study. Although recent students' mobility studies (see Bilecen, 2014; Brown, 2009a; Gu & Maley, 2008) discussed the relationship between international students and co-national as well as transnational friendships, they omitted to discuss further these aspects from a multi-ethnic and religious perspective. As Malaysia is a multicultural country where the people come from different ethnicities and practice a different religion, the debate about interethnic friendships has gained fresh prominence with many showing that Malaysian students abroad (see Ahmad et al., 2014) reported having close ties with people from similar ethnicity and religion.

On the contrary, this study shows that one-third of the Malaysian students had listed new co-national friends abroad from a different ethnicity and religion as close friends. Here, Aina, who only listed two new friends formed abroad as close friends, claimed that sharing a house and common interest has helped her develop closer ties with her new Malaysian Chinese friend, Zaza. She listed Zaza as a new close friend as they shared the same house and course of study. They share a similar interest in movies and food, and they always talk about work placement in the hospital as well as the upcoming exams as they are both studying medicine. However, as a Malay and a Muslim, Aina talked about the difficulties that she needs to face due to a different culture and religious beliefs.

> Researcher: Most of your close friends are Malays and Zaza is the only Chinese friend that you considered as a close friend. Can you share with me your experiences of close friendship with Zaza who came from different ethnic and religion?
>
> Aina: Our religions are different, and sometimes I found it is hard to explain about our culture and I am afraid that the topic is too sensitive to talk about. Our friendship is still new, so I still carefully choose the topic to talk with her. We do not have any problems especially related to food because Zaza does not really like to eat pork and she rarely cooks in our house. I do not mind if Zaza bought and ate pork in our house because she will wrap it and used the different compartment in the fridge to store it. I am okay with that as long as I did not touch it.

Although living with a Muslim guaranteed the avoidance of non-halal meat as Muslims friends offered the reassurance of shared values and practices, Aina argued that she never sees the culture and religious difference as a barrier in her friendship with Zaza as they both respect each other's beliefs. In Aina's case, intimacy was created through the act of respect and acceptance of different cultural and religious beliefs. The researcher found that Aina's claim is different from Brown's (2009b) findings, which stated that feeling understood brought a sense of ease that would not be found with a non-Muslim friend. Indeed, living together as housemates has strengthened the friendships between Aina and Zaza. Moreover, some of the Malaysian students claimed that living together as housemates or flatmates makes them feel like a family. It is important to highlight that the concept of family, in this context, is different from family-like relationships, but it is more related to the notion of familiarity as a family. In this regard, I found that sharing similar physical space

as well as participating in physical activities has developed the idea of family in new close friendships, which will be discussed next.

Shared Physical Space and Activities

Besides homophily in terms of social background and identity—nationality, ethnicity, and religion to be specific—sharing similar social space, such as housing, academic courses, and personal interests, as well as physical activities and social events also influenced the way in which Malaysian students define close friendships and intimacy. This study argues that new co-national friends in the UK provide academic, material, and emotional support. It is important to highlight that the different time zone and physical space limits the students from asking for practical help from friends at-a-distance and new close friends can give immediate response and support. Indeed, similar to Brown's (2009) finding, the researcher found that access to practical help in everyday life is the main reason for the formation of co-national close friendships or cultural cliques (Beech, 2016). These non-kin ties are treated as part of the family due to weakly bounded family practices, which are notable in the situation of living abroad (Morgan, 2011).

Sharing similar physical and social space is significant in creating intimate relationships between Malaysian students and new friends formed abroad. People are more likely to have contact with those who are closer to them in geographic location rather than those who are distant (Mcpherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). Although sharing the same nationality reaffirms the sense of belonging, which is significant in emotional connectedness, the researcher argues that sharing physical and social spaces became the key reasons for the production of intimacy in new friendships. Most of the new close friends went to the same university and some of them shared the same accommodation, tutorials, and lectures. Sharing accommodations with other co-national students resulted in close friendships. Here, Tiffany talked about her experiences of living together with other Malaysian students and she described how they feel like a family as the result.

> Researcher: Why did you consider Malaysian students here as friends and some of them as a family?
>
> Tiffany: I feel quite warm when I meet Malaysian people because, at my university, the Malaysian population is small compared to other universities. Some of them even stay in the same flat as mine. So, the time that we meet with one another is quite a lot. I feel like we are a family because we live under the same roof for almost three years. I think that we became closer because we cook and eat together, and spend time together in our flat.

Sharing similar space, doing daily routines, as well as spending time together has strengthened the friendships between the students and co-national new friends. The students perceived co-national friends, especially their housemates/flatmates as a family as they practice the "love, care, and share" qualities in their friendships that are associated with family. Sharing accommodation creates the sense of familiarity as a family among students. Indeed, the intimacy qualities of family and friends remind the students of being in a family and consequently, they start acting like a

family. This is similar to Morgan's (2011) argument that these family practices create some activities, spaces, and times as family. Although their friendships were still new and admittedly not as intimate as family and long-established friends, sharing a similar physical and social space triggered more social interactions and participation that are vital in the development of close friendships. Indeed, sharing similar physical and social space has changed the way in which Malaysian students define and practice intimacy.

Besides sharing accommodation, universities' Malaysian societies events are also opportunities for the students to socialize and form new close friendships. The students talked about how these societies help the new students to adjust to their lives in the UK as well as connect to all Malaysians through various cultural events and festivals. Izhan, the president of the Malaysian society in his university, claimed that Malaysian students are supportive and involved in most of the Malaysian societies' events. Indeed, during the interview, Izhan was busy organizing a Deepavali celebration for Malaysian students in his university, and the researcher found that a lot of Malaysian, as well as British and other international students, participated in that event.

> Izhan: Malaysian students here are really supportive. When we want to organize an event, other Malaysian societies, like UMNO Club are willing to help us and work together to make our event a huge success. I think it is maybe because our Malaysian community here is small compared to other universities. That is what makes us feel like home and strengthens our relationships as a Malaysian.

As previously mentioned, the students considered all Malaysians that they know as friends because the Malaysian community is small in some universities. Most of the students talked about their participation in most of the cultural events organized by the Malaysian society in their university and made new friends through those events. However, the researcher argues that the students did not find a suitable word to describe their relationships with their co-national friends. The students use the word "family" because they practice the similar routines, such as cooking and playing games as well as celebrating cultural events and festivals together just like a family. For that reason, this study shows that physical contact, immediacy, and co-presence are essential in sustaining as well as producing intimacy in friendships. Physical proximity and touch often indicate and complement other demonstrations of intimacy, including other ways of showing and giving care (Jamieson, 2013). Similar to Weiner and Hannum (2012), the researcher found that due to the inability to convey social support over distance, family members and long-established friends in Malaysia cannot be as directly supportive as new friends in the UK. Geographically close friends could provide more social and instrumental support than long-distance close friends. Thus, long-distance close friends were being asked for less support than geographically close friends because the students already acquired spatial sensibilities and mutual understanding in long-distance close friendships.

CONCLUSION

Familiarity as a family as a concept shows how Malaysian students perceived intimacy in their new close friendships formed abroad and act upon it based on their notions of the ideal family. This study contends that the roles of family and friends are not changed or suffused, but the relationships became closer and special due to the choices, commitment, as well as the high levels of intimacy gained within the relationships. The students use the word "family" and "friend" to highlight the strong feeling and bond as there is insufficient vocabulary to describe it otherwise. The sense of familiarity of being in a family and family practices brought the qualities of the family into close friendships. In the context of living temporarily abroad, some new friends are perceived as family members as they share more similarity or homophily in terms of nationality, physical space, and activities. Familiarity makes sense of family connection between new friends, and this familiarity provides ontological security which makes the students feel more secure—as if they are still living in Malaysia. For that reason, it is not surprising that the Malaysian community in the UK is perceived as a "Malaysian family" as claimed by all participants in this study. This study shows that the limitation of co-presence and immediacy due to physical distance has strengthened the geographically close friends and new close friendships. New friends who live near to the students replace family members and long-established friends who live at a distance especially in gaining physical and emotional support. The routines, such as cooking, eating, and celebrating Malaysian cultural events and festivals together have created some activities, spaces, and times that remind the students of being in a family. Consequently, familiarity makes a sense of family connection. The students started to act like a family and feel emotionally connected with their close friends.

Contribution

The concept of familiarity as a family in the context of living abroad contributes to the wider debates on friendship, intimacy, and family practices. This concept illustrates new forms of close friendships and intimacy practices of Malaysian students living abroad. It is interesting to show how they can inform debates more broadly especially in family studies. Past studies have explored the concept of familiarity and the adaptation of living overseas. However, the concept of familiarity as a family was used in this study to explain a new form of relationship as a result of living alone and temporarily abroad. The common aspect of doing family life—e.g., sharing a house and cooking—has created a sense of family between the students and their co-national friends abroad without a need to acquire the family-like intimacy qualities in their relationships. The concept of familiarity as a family in this study is different from the concept of families of choice in non-heterosexual relationships in previous studies (Gillespie, Frederick, Harari, & Grov, 2015; Weeks, Heaphy, & Donovan, 2001). The researcher argues that intimacy has been viewed ethnocentrically so it is important for western studies to explore whether the western view of intimacy is relevant and applicable in other situations or cultural practices.

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NUR HAFEEZA AHMAD PAZIL, PhD, is a Senior Lecturer in the Section of Anthropology and Sociology, School of Social Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia. Her major research interests lie in the area of friendship and intimacy, gender practices, religion and cultural norms, social media, social mobility, international students and higher education. Email: hafeezapazil@usm.my

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Mentoring and Supervising International Students in School Counseling Programs

Bridget Asempapa
West Chester University of Pennsylvania, USA

ABSTRACT

Graduate counseling programs in the United States have increased their population of international students. However, limited studies have addressed the challenges of international students, specifically in school counseling programs. Considering the cultural disparities that exist for international school counseling students and the challenges associated with being an international student in general, this article identifies and delineates a culturally appropriate mentoring and supervision model that has the potential to shape the experiences of international students in school counseling training programs. The model presented through a case study argues that intentional mentoring and supervision for international school counseling students enhance productivity during students' field experiences in U.S. school systems.

Keywords: counselor education, culturally appropriate mentoring, graduate international students, school counseling, supervision

Data reported over the years have indicated that U.S. colleges and universities have consistently observed an increase in enrollment of international students. As evidenced in the 2017 Open Doors report, data recorded showed a total enrollment of 623,805 international students for the 2007–2008 academic year as compared with 1,078,822 international students' total enrollment in the 2016–2017 academic year. The same report indicated that international students constituted about 5.3% of the total U.S. enrollment (Institute of International Education, 2018). With this type of growth, international students' needs have become relevant to various academic institutions and fields, including counselor education programs, which has resulted in increased research studies that focus on this population (Hegarty, 2014; Leong, 2015; Ng, 2006).

The interest in international students' growth prompted Ng (2006) to investigate the number of students enrolled in U.S. counselor education programs accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). Findings indicated that 73 out of 96 accredited programs that participated in the study reported enrollment of international students during the spring semester of 2004. A recent report from CACREP (2016) showed that of 1,741 doctoral students enrolled in CACREP accredited counseling programs, 4.14% were international students. The same report indicated that international students constituted about 1% of master's students in CACREP accredited counseling programs. These studies did not report data on counseling specializations. Nevertheless, studies from related fields such as marriage and family therapy (Mittal & Wieling, 2006) and rehabilitation counseling programs (Zhu & Degeneffe, 2011) have investigated the challenges of international students. Additionally, Behl, Laux, Roseman, Tiamiyu, and Spann (2017) have examined the acculturative needs of international students in CACREP programs. A consistent theme in these studies points to the essence of personal, academic, social, and cultural support for international students in counseling programs.

Unfortunately, there is a dearth of literature that speaks more directly about supportive measures that foster international school counseling students' training in U.S. school counseling programs. International school counseling students, in this context, imply international graduate students enrolled in master's level school counseling programs. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to: (a) address the gap in the literature concerning the challenges international students often face in school counseling programs; (b) explore culturally sensitive mentoring and supervision alternatives required for promoting international school counseling students' learning; and (c) create an awareness of the individual and global benefits of such measures for all stakeholders.

As school counseling gains credence worldwide, international students are coming to the US in search of graduate training in this area of counseling. The presence of international school counseling students adds multicultural value not only to counseling programs but also to U.S. PreK–12 school systems. The interactions that occur between international school counseling students and their domestic counterparts create multicultural awareness (Behl et al., 2017). Additionally, the presence of international students in counseling programs provide experiences and continued opportunities for increased internationalization (Leong, 2015) among domestic students, faculty members, and the site supervisors. Moreover, there is economic benefit for U.S. colleges and universities because of the tuition disparities between international and domestic students (Hegarty, 2014).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Needs of International Counseling Students

A plethora of studies have supported the assertion that international students generally experience social, personal, cultural, and academic challenges that may hinder their success when studying in the US (e.g., Boafo-Arthur, 2014; Burlew &

Alleyne, 2010; Mittal & Wieling, 2006; Olivas & Li, 2006). Specific to professional counseling, Tidwell and Hanassab (2007) administered a 50-item self-report questionnaire to 640 international counseling students (ICSs) from public universities in the west coast of the United States to investigate their needs and experiences. Results from the study indicated that the highest needs pertained to issues regarding immigration, academic information, and career development challenges. When asked about their personal changes in awareness, the participants reported that the greatest change was related to philosophical and cultural awareness. Moreover, ICSs have also reported challenges with language proficiency, discrimination, and acculturation related to theory, practice, and supervision in an environment other than their native countries (Mittal & Wieling, 2006; Ng & Smith 2009; Nilsson, 2007). Nilsson's (2007) study provided a synopsis of the impacts of understanding both culture and language proficiency on the client–counselor and the supervisor–supervisee relationship as described in the following: (a) cultural understanding being paramount to empathy; (b) language proficiency being vital to communication; (c) acculturation influencing self-efficacy in ICSs as well as affecting the working alliance between supervisor and supervisee; and (d) correlation between ICSs' well-being and productivity versus understanding of culture and proficiency in language.

Counselor education programs are likely to do a disservice to their ICSs if instructions and curriculum are presented without consideration to cultural disparities. Ng and Smith (2009) compared the experiences of domestic students and ICSs, and highlighted some of the pertinent differences that exist in these groups. The results from the study indicated that compared to domestic students, ICSs have:

> higher levels of academic problems, English proficiency issues, cultural adjustment problems, social/relational problems with peers, difficulties in clinical courses, problems fitting in at clinical sites, problems communicating with clients due to language barriers, conflicts with Western understandings, approaches to treating mental health, discrimination by faculty members, and discrimination by fellow American trainees (p. 66).

While these problems may be true of many international students, Ng and Smith (2009) cautioned the generalization of these results. Nevertheless, most universities have established protocols by which they monitor and attempt to resolve some of these issues. For instance, most universities assess English language proficiency to ensure that international students (Education USA, 2018), including ICSs, who are not proficient in English language enroll in English language classes to enhance their proficiency. In recognizing the potential disorientation and acculturative difficulties, some institutions have specific measures, such as mentoring programs (Yip, 2014), to help international students adjust to the U.S culture. Despite these general challenges and supportive measures, international school counseling students (ISCSs) are likely to face important and specific school counseling related issues that are missing in the literature.

Challenges ISCSs Face in U.S. School Counseling Training Programs

A review of the literature surprisingly revealed little to no studies on exploring international school counseling students' (ISCSs) development and experiences. None of the previous studies (Behl et al., 2017; Ng & Smith, 2009) about ICSs focused on ISCS. Ng and Smith's (2009) work mentioned the inclusion of four school counseling students in the sample for their study. However, there was no specific analysis in relation to the students' program of study when compared to other programs. The next paragraphs provide a summary of the expectations for a master's degree in school counseling, and the specific challenges ISCSs might face in U.S. school counseling training programs.

School counseling programs accredited by CACREP (2015) are guided by standards to develop curricula that offer eight common core courses, contextual and elective courses, and placement in PreK–12 school settings for field experience. Although the minimum requirement for a school counseling program is expected to be 60 credit hours by July 1, 2020, currently the expected minimum is 48 credit hours. Included in most school counseling curricula are the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) standards and national models (ASCA, 2012, 2016) that serve as foundation and framework for practice. Students engage in 100 clock hours of practicum and 600 clock hours of internship. During that period of field experience (practicum and internship), onsite and faculty supervisors provide a minimum of 1-hr and 1.5 hr per week supervision respectively for students. These requirements are uniform for both domestic students and ISCS.

Anecdotal experiences show that most students are able to complete these requirements in two-years, with the first year serving as preparation for field experience. By the second year, most full-time students are beginning field experience. However, unlike the domestic students, ISCS have no experience with the American school systems, and do not understand the operations in PreK–12 schools. Although it could be argued that out-of-state domestic students experience some level of unfamiliarity, it does not compare to the experiences of ISCSs. The first year for ISCSs is often used to gain familiarity with the American culture, teaching, and learning style. This is evidenced by reports of international students' adjustment struggles with acculturation (Hanassab & Tidewell, 2002; Hirai, Frazier, & Syed, 2015; McDowell, Fang, Kosutic, & Griggs, 2012). To further complicate issues, most of the ISCSs (like their domestic colleagues) have the responsibility of finding school sites for field experience. Again, this generates stress for ISCSs as they compete for school placement sites with their domestic colleagues who sometimes have prior network connections in the schools. When it comes to field placement, an issue that is of great importance is proximity. If an ISCS does not possess a driver's license during the field placement, lack of mobility becomes an added challenge.

Some may argue that ISCSs are not required to complete the program within 2 years, especially with some counseling programs transitioning from 48 to 60 credit hours. Nonetheless, given that most ISCSs are paying fees out of pocket or are on scholarships (Gautz, 2017; Schulte & Choudaha, 2014) they are not afforded the luxury of pacing themselves in their academic pursuit. According to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS, 2018) regulations for international

students, ISCSs are required to maintain full-time student status to retain their legal status in the US. Moreover, when the scholarships offered to students are time restricted (usually within 2 years), it creates further financial burden if ISCSs prolong the duration of their study. In addition, scholarships sometimes do not cover summer classes, and international students' tuition fees are higher in comparison to the domestic students' tuition fees (Hegarty, 2014). Moreover, international students are often limited in finding job opportunities because employability is often restricted to university campuses (Behl et al., 2017), making it increasingly difficult for ISCSs to have financial freedom that could allow a comfortable pacing of their training.

Considering the political, economic, and social-systemic influences on the operation of PreK–12 schools in the US (Lunenburg, 2010), one of the biggest challenges ISCSs face with field experience is acculturative stress. Acculturation to the U.S. culture has proven to be a significant source of stress for most international students. Adjustment (McDowell et al., 2012), psychological and sociocultural (Hirai, et al., 2015), and academic challenges (Hanassab & Tidewell, 2002) are among some of the documented acculturative stresses. International counseling students are not exempt from these identified acculturative stresses (Behl et al., 2017). However, because PreK–12 schools are operated as social systems that have defined population, goals, and expected interaction with the external environment (Norlin, 2009), it can be stressful for ISCSs to navigate the various elements, including access to resources, transformation processes, outputs, and feedback received from the external community (Lunenburg, 2010).

ISCSs are obligated to understand the internal operations that affect the success of all stakeholders within the school system. They need to acquire knowledge about the cultural dynamics in the school system, and understand how the various professional standards (not just ASCA standards and models but the current teaching standards—e.g., Common Core) apply to the work they do with all stakeholders in their assigned schools during their field experience. ISCSs have a responsibility to provide counseling to U.S. school children at their field placement during practicum and internship experiences, and are expected to collaborate with school stakeholders whose culture they may not fully understand. Cultural competence requires understanding and receptivity, which Nilsson (2007) has explained requires "…knowledge about traditions, beliefs, values, and non-verbal norms, [and] is fundamental to being able to empathize with clients' feelings and experiences" (p. 36). Inherently, international students need time, exposure, and experience to understand the American culture and school system.

SUPERVISION AND MENTORING: WHY IT MATTERS TO ISCS

A critical component that is generally considered mandatory and paramount to the development of all students—domestic and ISCS— is supervision (ASCA, 2016; CACREP, 2015). Bernard and Goodyear (1998) defined supervision as a professional relationship between a more senior member of a profession to a more junior member of the same profession, with the purpose of enhancing professional competence, evaluation, and gatekeeping. In other words, the supervisor/supervisee relationship is a formal interaction that ensures that the ISCS is appropriately monitored to guarantee

no harm to their potential clients. When ISCSs begin field experience, supervision also serves as an avenue to fill in the missing gaps; thus this is the period where they apply the knowledge and harness skills gained in the classroom. However, given its hierarchical and evaluative nature (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014), supervision in isolation is insufficient to bridge the gap related to acculturative stress in ISCSs.

On the other hand, mentoring serves as an appropriate supplement to supervision. Mentoring can be a formal or informal relationship where an experienced well-regarded individual provides guidance to another individual who seeks to develop on a personal or professional level (Mellen & Murdoch-Eaton, 2015). In instances where mentoring has been used and valued, peer mentors (Lee, 2017) or a more experienced person have mentored the less experienced person (Ku, Lahman, Yeh, & Cheng, 2008). For instance, Yip (2014) described a mentoring program in Ohlone College, where faculty and staff were invited and encouraged to be mentors to international students in the college. Yip reported that on average, 20 to 25 mentors were involved in the program each semester to provide support, encouragement, and most importantly to help the international students adjust to a new environment. The experiences shared by mentors and mentees indicated a mutual benefit (personal and cultural development) for both parties.

In training ISCSs, mentoring seems appropriate, especially during the first-year curriculum because it is free of evaluation. Mentoring can be made an integral part of the ISCS curriculum to provide culturally sensitive transitions and understanding of PreK–12 school systems. Most importantly, the use of mentoring before supervision could be equated to some of Lev Vygotsky's discussion of sociocultural learning theory, specifically related to zone of proximal development (ZPD) and scaffolding (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996; Peer & McClendon, 2002; Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky defined ZPD as the period in which an individual is capable of accomplishing a task independently versus doing so with support. Within the ZPD is a critical component of scaffolding, the act of providing developmentally appropriate support by a more capable individual. As part of the support, the social environment is made conducive for active learning and a gradual experience of independence to occur. With ISCSs being new to the U.S. education system and culture, it seems mentoring as part of the curriculum would offer the necessary scaffolding for them to adjust to the U.S. education system and culture. This may also help the ISCSs to develop self-efficacy as they gain confidence in their knowledge and abilities.

In the following sections, the author of this article describes two critical periods when mentoring can be offered to the ISCSs: (a) prior to field experience, and (b) as part of supervision during field experience. The author recommends that a more experienced professional (a school counselor) should provide mentoring to the ISCSs. Because consistency, continuity, and comfort are so critical to developing confidence and productivity, it is further recommended that ISCSs maintain the same mentor and site in both Part A (where ISCSs receive mentoring prior to field experience) and Part B (where ISCSs receive mentoring as part of supervision during the field experience phase). Both parties need to be in agreement of continuing the professional relationship. If for some reason, the mentor in Part A is unable or unwilling to serve as supervisor–mentor in Part B, it is recommended that the ISCS should be placed with a school counselor within the same school district. Following the discussion of

this culturally sensitive mentoring-supervision model is a simulated case presented to illustrate how mentoring before and during supervision becomes helpful to ISCSs.

PROPOSED CULTURALLY SENSITIVE MENTORING AND SUPERVISION MODEL FOR ISCS

Part A: Mentoring Prior to Field Experience

For the purposes of mitigating acculturative stress, it is proposed that ISCSs should be paired with practicing school counselors who will serve as mentors at the onset of the ISCS school counseling education in the US. This initial mentoring prior to supervision creates the avenue for ISCSs to establish trusting relationships with knowledgeable and experienced school counselors who can serve in the role of a guide and a teacher. Reese (2006) described the mentor–mentee relationship as the former guiding the latter through the pathway of life. Unlike a faculty mentor, a practicing school counselor can guide the ISCS by providing developmentally appropriate exposure to the school system, and supplement the theoretical or conceptual knowledge gained in the classroom. In the spirit of exposing the ISCS to the U.S. PreK–12 school system, a peer mentor might not suffice because a peer mentor may not have easy access to the knowledge that comes from practice.

Ideally, faculty members in school counseling programs should take on the responsibility of contacting school counselors within close proximity to the university and enlisting interest from school counselors who can and are willing to help the ISCS understand and become familiar with the PreK–12 school system. It is essential that the selected school and the school counselor are in close proximity as most ISCSs may not have cars or the license to drive at the time of their enrollment. Additionally, the faculty members need to make the arrangements on behalf of the ISCS because the ISCS will not have access and may be unfamiliar with the local community. Faculty members can also collaborate with the international students' offices within their institutions to offer a workshop that adequately prepares the selected school counselor-mentors for their roles. Moreover, the ISCS should be given the courtesy of making the decision to engage in the mentoring process. In essence, the mentoring program should be an added resource which is highly encouraged, and not necessarily a mandate.

Once both the school counselor and the ISCS have made contact they could engage in activities including: (a) making arrangement about meeting schedules; (b) creating opportunities to know each other; (c) educating ISCSs about the U.S. culture and the PreK–12 school culture; (d) discussing the ISCS's goals and aspirations; (e) discussing roles and responsibilities; (f) finding commonalities in activities the mentor and mentee can explore; and (g) developing a plan for the mentoring activities. During this phase of their professional relationship, the mentor and mentee can foster multicultural competence in each other. But most importantly, the ISCS is provided a conducive environment to receive support, exposure, and encouragement. The next section (Part B), is a discussion of mentoring as part of supervision for the ISCS. It is worth mentioning that ISCS and supervisee are used interchangeably in Part B.

Part B: Mentoring as Part of Supervision during Field Experience

Supervision is an essential component of the ISCS's development as a school counselor in training (CACREP, 2015). Consequently, a suitable proposed supervision model for this phase of ISCS development is the Discrimination Model Reconceptualized (DM-R; Pillay, Fulton, & Robertson, 2015). The DM-R model integrates mentoring into supervision, and can be applied to the school counseling setting as a supportive measure for ISCSs during the field experience phase of the training. In the DM-R, Pillay and his colleagues adapted Anderson and Shannon's (1988) mentoring model and integrated it into the Discrimination Model of supervision (Bernard, 1979; Bernard & Goodyear, 2014). The DM-R supervision model suggests that the onsite supervisor functions in six roles with three foci as a supervisor-mentor, namely: teacher, counselor, consultant, sponsor, encourager, and friend, with focus on conceptualization, intervention, and personalization to enhance growth for the supervisee. This creates a pairing of 6 Roles × 3 Foci in the model.

During the conceptualization focus, the supervisor-mentor helps the supervisee to understand and process the underlying issues that the clients present during the counseling sessions. The supervisee is able to use that understanding to develop goals and interventions that meet the clients' needs. With intervention focus, the supervisor-mentor observes to ascertain how well the supervisee is applying the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to cases within the school setting. Issues related to the supervisee's personal style and limitations are addressed in personalization. Additionally, during the above-mentioned foci, the supervisor-mentor functions as a teacher; thus, teaching some interventions or skills that may be necessary within the school setting. As a counselor, the supervisor-mentor listens and provides appropriate feedback that enhances growth and wellness for the supervisee. In some situations, the supervisor-mentor may function as a consultant when the supervisee needs to analyze and process issues presented in sessions. In befriending, the supervisor-mentor will provide unconditional positive regard for the ISCS. It is important to note that the supervisor-mentor may need to use judgment in determining the extent of the "friendship." Ideally, the relationship should be built on mutual respect, ensuring appropriate boundaries. Preferably, the author of this paper suggests the use of an "ally" in place of a "friend." Thus, as an ally, the supervisor-mentor will still provide unconditional positive regard, but maintain a level of professional boundary. In the role of a sponsor, the supervisor-mentor will support, advocate, promote, and protect the supervisee. Finally, as an encourager, the supervisor-mentors will encourage self-efficacy and confidence through the empowering activities they engage in with ISCS.

Effective practice as suggested by Borders (2014) indicates that the supervisor has the responsibility at the onset of the field experience to sign a contract with the supervisee, outlining roles and responsibilities. The supervisor-mentor will engage in a discussion with the ISCS about the roles, responsibilities, and expectations for the duration of the field experience. In addition, the supervisor-mentor will engage in the following activities to make for a fluid transition from Part A to Part B of these culturally sensitive mentoring and supervision measures: (a) assessing the ISCS's comfort level with expectations at various stages of the field experience; (b) setting goals and aspirations with the ISCS; (c) providing support and constructive feedback;

(d) teaching; (e) providing opportunities for growth and learning by allowing the ISCS to participate or lead some school counseling activities; (f) continuing discussions on cultural issues; (g) continuing to formulate working relationship; and (h) providing counsel and consultation. The following simulated case study is presented to show how the components of the DM-R can be applied to the case of Nihan in Part A and B.

THE CASE OF NIHAN

Part A: Mentoring Prior to Field Experience

Nihan, a 27-year-old Turkish student, is a first-year ISCS. She has a 2-year scholarship from her government for her studies. Criteria for the scholarship include conducting a thesis on a topic that relates to an issue predominant in schools in her home country. Using strategies learned from being in the U.S. PreK–12 school systems, she is required to make recommendations by developing a program that can help resolve some of the school counseling–related problems in Turkey upon her return home. Table 1 provides a description of six roles in the DM-R model to foster Nihan's and her mentor's interaction.

Table 1: Applying the Mentoring Roles of the Discrimination Model–Reconceptualized Prior to the Field Experience Phase

Mentoring	How it applies to Nihan's situation
Consulting	Nihan indicates that she would like to explore aspects of school counseling she can use to inform her thesis.
	Mentor assists Nihan in identifying issues in Turkish schools, and assists with exploring resources used in U.S. schools that can be applied to the thesis project.
Teaching	Nihan does not know how to begin. She needs input from her mentor.
	Mentor could discuss the American School Counsel Association's three domains with Nihan: academic, career, and personal/social.
Counseling	Nihan identifies that she would like to work on gender disparity issues, mainly focusing on empowering girls to pursue higher education. However, she struggles with her confidence in adequately addressing this issue.
	Mentor assists Nihan in reflecting on the strengths she has, and helps Nihan to gain insight in her role as an advocate.
Befriending "Ally"	Nihan realizes another school counselor within her mentor's school district is running "an empowering girls program." She is interested in connecting with that school counselor.

Mentoring	How it applies to Nihan's situation
	Mentor invites Nihan to school and offers to connect her with that other school counselor. The mentor offers to attend some of the events with Nihan.
Sponsoring	Nihan would like to engage in an action research by replicating the "empowering girls' project" at her mentor's school.
	The mentor provides encouragement, and helps Nihan to put together a proposal for the project.
Encouraging	Nihan and mentor meet during scheduled times as planned.
	Throughout the year, the mentor checks in with Nihan and provides encouragement for the development of the project.

Part B: Mentoring as Part of Supervision during Field Experience

Nihan has now started her practicum and internship. She has some understanding about how the school system works, and has appreciation for the dynamics within the school. She is currently seeing an 18 year old male high school senior who is not interested in college, but wants to explore other options for his career path. Nihan, reports that she does not know how to help this student. Her difficulty stems from her value for education, and also realizing the potential the student possesses. Table 2 shows a description of the application of the DM-R mentoring and supervision model in the case of Nihan.

Table 2: Applying Discrimination Model–Reconceptualized (Mentoring and Supervision) During the Field Experience Phase

Teacher	Counselor	Consultant	Mentor
		Intervention	
Nihan wants to assess the client's interest but struggles with the use of Holland's interest inventory.	Nihan struggles with challenging the client's views and discrepancies associated with college education.	Nihan wants to explore the use of Adler's early recollection to gain insight from the client.	Nihan wants to learn more about career counseling.
Supervisor discusses the use of the interest inventory and its purpose.	*The supervisor offers Nihan the opportunity to say what she would wish to say to the client.*	*Supervisor provides resources about the use of early recollections.*	*Supervisor looks for professional development opportunities in career counseling to attend with Nihan. (Befriending "Ally")*

Teacher	Counselor	Consultant	Mentor
Conceptualization			
Nihan does not explore other factors that may lead to client's refusal to attend college. *The supervisor explains how other factors, such as home conditions, could inform the client's decision.*	Nihan assesses the client as being defiant and disrespectful because of his assertiveness. *Supervisor processes the statements with Nihan to help her appreciate the client's assertiveness.*	Nihan suggests that she would like to discuss the client's issues with his parents. *Supervisor assists Nihan in making that decision based on FERPA regulations.*	Nihan feels incompetent in dealing with some of the issues that the student presents. *The supervisor provides support by assuring Nihan that cultural differences take time to get adjusted to. (Encouraging)*
Personalization			
Nihan's struggles with being alone with a male in a room. *Supervisor reviews video with Nihan and addresses how that may interfere with working alliance.*	Nihan's difficulty with the client inhibits her genuineness with the client. *The supervisor reflects her feelings of discomfort and helps Nihan to reflect on where the discomfort stems from.*	Nihan realizes her collectivist values are getting in the way of respecting client's individualistic values. *Supervisor helps Nihan to process the client's culture.*	Supervisor wants to help Nihan reduce her discomfort with being in the same room with males. *The supervisor offers Nihan an opportunity to work with her and other male staff members on a project. (Sponsoring)*

It is evident in the above simulated case that integrating mentoring in the ISCS curriculum can be a developmentally and culturally appropriate strategy to acclimate the ISCS. The two-phase mentoring added to supervision can be a suitable alternative to the existing curricula. As shown in the case of Nihan, the importance of mentoring provided by a school counselor to an international student at the pre–field experience phase cannot be overemphasized. Moreover, the case study showed the essence of mentoring and how the roles depicted in the DM-R are applicable to Nihan's situation. Part A showed the mentor's roles as Nihan was provided support for a critical component of the scholarship she received from the Turkish government. Through the interaction with her mentor, Nihan received supplemental teaching on the three ASCA domains, and their application to the task required for her

scholarship. Nihan was exposed to practical strategies that she could explore during her field experience phase. This access to the school system and observation of its operations is free of evaluation and it is an essential element to building self-efficacy in ISCS.

In Part B, the full DM-R model was implemented to show the various struggles Nihan encountered, but with critical attention to Nihan's developmental needs, as well as her client's needs. As a Turkish ISCS, we see Nihan experience typical challenges that counselor trainees face at the initial phase of field placements including cultural differences, relationship formation with clients, and feeling incompetent (Park, Lee, & Wood, 2017). When the typical struggles and acculturation challenges such as the clash of cultures conflated, we saw Nihan's internal struggles become pronounced. Nonetheless, the use of the DM–R model allowed the supervisor to provide developmentally appropriate supervision and mentoring to scaffold Nihan's professional growth.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this article was to bring attention to the expectations for a master's degree in school counseling, highlight the challenges that ISCSs often face in U.S. school counseling training programs, and suggest measures that can facilitate learning and enhance the transitions throughout various developmental stages for this population. Research indicates that international students generally encounter a disorientation because of exposure to new culture, teaching, and learning styles in the host country (Leong, 2015). However, this disorientation increases when ISCSs have an added stress that comes with engaging in apprenticeship in American school systems. Considering the DM-R model as being an appropriate mix of mentoring and supervision strategies, and the two-part simulated case study presented above, it represents a more culturally sensitive way to ensure proper scaffolding for ISCS in U.S. school counseling training programs.

Although supervision is a mandate from an accreditation perspective (CACREP, 2015), research is abundant showing supervision as a necessary supportive and accountability measure for counselor trainees (Borders, Brown, & Purgason, 2015; Meany-Walen, Davis-Gage, & Lindo, 2016; Ng & Smith, 2012). Literature about ICSs and supervision also indicate that the supervisory working alliance actually promotes self-efficacy, and that it is likely to reduce role ambiguity in this population (Akkurt, Ng, & Kolbert, 2018). However, the argument presented in this article suggests that, for ISCSs, supervision alone is insufficient. Mentoring, whether by site supervisor, faculty, or peers, can be incredibly helpful to international students (Ku et al., 2008; Lee, 2017; Pillay et al., 2015). Yet, in the case of ISCSs, mentoring provided by a school counselor at the pre–field experience and as part of field experience, has the potential to foster the development of a well-rounded professional who may or may not remain in the US to work.

The case of Nihan is demonstrative of the potential implications mentoring, as part of the DM-R, can have on ISCSs' academic, person/social, and professional development. Academically, we see the DM-R model implemented to reinforce Nihan's learning. The more experienced school counselor (the mentor/supervisor)

used her understanding of Nihan's sociocultural background, as well as Nihan's personal and professional goals to facilitate growth. Through these interactions with various stakeholders in the school system, Nihan had the opportunity to nurture her social and networking repertoire. Although in Nihan's case, there were clear intentions of returning to her home country, there is evidence that in some cases, ICSs do remain in the US as professionals (Karaman, Schmit, Ulus, & Oliver, 2018). Therefore, it is incumbent on faculty and site supervisors to provide sufficient support for personal adjustment and development of relevant skills in ISCSs. Whether they remain in the US or return to their home countries, ISCS competency, self-efficacy, and productivity, will be critical to the services they provide to their stakeholders.

Host universities, local communities, peer support, and faculty are critical elements to the adjustment and success of international students (Leong, 2015; Ramsay, Jones, & Barker, 2007). However, data on international versus domestic counselor educators and supervisors is scarce in the literature. It can be argued that most international students in school counseling programs will learn from and interact with domestic rather than international educators and supervisors. Meeting the needs of ISCSs promotes multicultural education for both the mentors and the mentees. In addition, when an international student's learning is promoted: (a) it increases access to mental health for immigrants and international students in the host country; (b) competently trained professionals can return to their home countries and facilitate mental health to their citizens; and (c) ISCSs can make incredible contributions to existing or nonexisting counseling programs in their home countries (Ng, 2006). Specific to school counseling in the American school systems, the presence of ISCSs is likely to help raise multicultural awareness in all stakeholders within the designated schools.

Aside from the implications stated above, having international students can result in the economic well-being and increased internationalization in American universities (Hegarty, 2014). The American Council on Education (2012) reported that 93% of doctoral, 84% of master's, and 78% of baccalaureate universities have increased their population in internationalization on their campuses in the past few years. These percentages are likely to increase when international students experience goodwill and share positive experiences with other potential students from their home countries. Specifically, when ISCSs return to their home countries, they can speak positively about the American school counselor education programs, and convince potential ISCS to pursue similar career path.

Evidently, the idea of providing support to international students enrolled in school counseling programs is directly related to program leadership in culture as it addresses specific cultural needs of a population in school counseling programs. As the counseling profession is constantly evolving, program coordinators, faculty members, and community school counselors can take the initiative to provide support for ISCSs by paying attention to diversity and multicultural needs. Mentoring and the use of the DM-R serve as an appropriate model to promote effective teaching, make practice relevant, and foster success for ISCSs. This model also seems to ensure that the ISCSs' adjustment needs are factored into the curriculum as part of a developmentally appropriate practice.

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BRIDGET ASEMPAPA, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Counselor Education at West Chester University of Pennsylvania, in West Chester, Pennsylvania. Her research interests include supervision models in school counseling, adjustment challenges among international students in counselor education programs, integrated care, and ethical issues in counseling. Email: basempapa@wcupa.edu

Book Review

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International Students in First-Year Writing: A Journey Through Socio-Academic Space

Megan M. Siczek, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2018. 224pp. Paperback: $25. ISBN 978-0-472-12447-3

Reviewed by Anthony Schmidt, University of Tennessee-Knoxville

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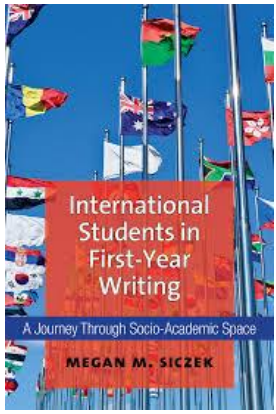

Many in international education are well aware of increased international student mobility trends and internationalization efforts around the world. The United States in particular has been home to over one million international students for the last few years. The push for internationalization has become a buzzword on American campuses. It is within this context that Megan Siczek seeks to put a face to what is often only discussed in numbers. In her dissertation-turned-book, *International Students in First-Year Writing: A Journey through Socio-Academic Space* (2018), Siczek describes the lived experiences of 10 international students enrolled in a first-year writing (FYW) course at an American university.

Chapter 1 points out that the overall goal of Siczek's book is to look beyond traditional conceptualizations of international students. Instead of focusing on numbers, language issues, adjustment challenges, assimilation, or even broader themes of culture, Siczek takes a more individualized approach in order to inform policy and praxis through reality—the lived experiences of students. She follows students as they are "projected" into an FYW course, considered to be the most highly enrolled course in American higher education. In particular, the FYW course at the research site included theme-based courses meant to intellectually engage students while helping develop their writing skills.

Chapter 2 gives background on the 10 participants, who come from China, Mongolia, Korea, Lebanon, Ecuador, and Colombia. Chapter 3 continues exploring

their backgrounds, focusing on their motivations for studying in the United States. Some commonalities include the fact that they have chosen to pursue higher education abroad because of perceived limitations of education in their home countries, awareness of opportunities study abroad can afford them, and a strong desire for self-actualization through independent living in a foreign culture.

Chapter 4 explains the hermeneutic phenomenological approach that Siczek utilized. This approach focuses on the interpretation of participants' experiences as they move through an "arc of projection," from beginning to end of their semester. The research is situated within the "socio-academic space" of the physical FYW classroom. This space is where a number of forces come together to create a socially mediated experience: students' individual educational histories, formal academic learning tasks, social interactions between students, and the implicit hand of enculturation.

While the students' voices and experiences were introduced in earlier chapters, Chapters 5, 6, and 7 offer their voices more breadth, allowing the reader to gain a deeper understanding of their lived experiences. These correspond to the beginning, midpoint, and end of the semester, respectively. Following from the book's methodology, the students' responses are analyzed and interpreted based on emerging themes. These themes include the students' evolving understanding of the FYW course (e.g., its difficulty, its purpose), their self-perception, and their role in the socio-academic space of the classroom. One takeaway is the students' constant comparisons to their domestic classmates in terms of language skills, background knowledge, and even ability to fully participate in the classroom. A related theme is the challenge that this type of course posed to the students. Besides lower self-perception at the beginning of the semester, students often lacked background knowledge on the course themes, had a lack of formal writing training, and were overwhelmed by the quantity of difficult readings. By mid-semester, students had become more knowledgeable about the topics, learned to handle the workload, and had a growing awareness of expectations. By the end of the semester, in addition to a feeling of writing growth, all shared a sense of accomplishment and happiness, even relief, with having completed the course with a satisfactory grade. Students left their FYW course with this advice for future international students: Choose a topic you like, be open, be talkative, and think from an "American perspective."

Chapter 8 focuses on three of the 10 participants during their final semester at the university. Highlights from this chapter include looking at how each participant's self-view evolved over their university experience. Students felt more confident because of their accomplishments. They also felt more "American," being able to speak and think from an American perspective. This chapter also contains students' understandings about what was important to their psychological, social, and academic success. Students spoke on the importance of having same-language peers for times when they needed to be fully themselves. They also spoke on the need for finding a community to be a part of, whether that is with international or American students. Finally, this chapter details the transformative power of studying abroad, with all concluding that studying in the US was "worth every penny" and feeling as though they grew in a way that they could not have in their own countries.

Chapter 9 offers a final interpretation of the entire arc of projection in the theme-based FYW classroom. It iterates the book's main point that international students are not statistics but rather individuals. Contrary to stereotypes of international students, they are a diverse group of students who arrive with varying educational backgrounds and transnational experiences, and they find studying abroad important not only for perceived economic or educational opportunities but also as a quest for self-actualization. In addition to interpretation of student experiences, Siczek also sees the important role the socio-academic space played in socializing students in an academic discourse community through the interaction of writing and content. Siczek also recognizes the contradiction of a university that pushes for internalization while having theme-based FYW courses that have very few topics with global connections.

Chapter 10 looks at the broad implications of this study. One implication is to offer themes with a more global perspective, bringing the "global to the local." Recognizing the importance of background knowledge, Siczek also calls for more ethical placement of students in their FYW courses to avoid sink-or-swim situations. At the same time, she suggests not segregating international students from domestic students, as this often puts more pressure on language specialists for academic development while allowing stereotypes of international students to remain unchallenged.

Several pedagogical implications are also discussed, including the continued use of peer- and professor- feedback in writing. Additionally, Siczek recommends faculty realize the implications of the classroom as a socio-academic space: It is not simply a place of knowledge transmission but rather a site in which a number of social, cultural, and academic phenomenon collide and in turn have profound effects on student development. Finally, a methodological implication is the continued use of the phenomenological approach, which Siczek argues was a valid method to gain insight into the lived experience of the students.

Despite the validity of Siczek's method, with a limited sample size of 10 students during their first semester of university, and even fewer during their final semester, the generalizability of her findings are limited. As the author points out, international students are a very diverse population, and a singular account of their experience during their first semester at an American university cannot be applied to all other international students. Furthermore, Siczek's focus on a singular socio-academic space belies a more holistic experience in which students must also contend with the academic pressures from other courses, suggesting either multiple arcs of projection or one in which all courses are intertwined.

Nonetheless, Siczek accomplished her important goal of giving voice to international student experiences. The book does an excellent job in removing these students from a deficit discourse by showing them as purposeful, strategic, and self-aware individuals—much akin to their domestic counterparts. The book clearly conveys the transformative power of education. Therefore, this book has an important role to play in the continued support of international education.

This book would be very useful for helping FYW instructors gain insight into how international students experience such courses. For English as second language teachers, this book may suggest some ways in which to better prepare students for the socio-academic space. For others who work with international students on American

campuses, this book would give valuable insight into international student motivation and development.

ANTHONY SCHMIDT is a teaching associate at the University of Tennessee's English Language Institute. He has over 10 years of English language teaching experience. In addition, he is also a PhD student in Evaluation, Statistics, and Measurement at the University of Tennessee. His research interests include various aspects of higher education, especially areas that intersect with international students. E-mail: aschmi11@utk.edu

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