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The Role of Academic Self-Confidence on Thriving among International College Students in the U.S. and Canada

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ABSTRACT

Set in the context of four-year colleges and universities in the United States and Canada, this study examined how the level of thriving differs for international students and their domestic peers, how the level of thriving differs across various subgroups within international students, and how academic self-confidence is associated with the level of thriving for international students. Using data from the 2017 Thriving Quotient, this study found that international students were less likely to thrive during their college years than their domestic peers and that Asian international students were less likely to thrive than their international peers of other racial groups. Findings also suggested that academic self-confidence was significantly and positively related to international students' thriving during their college years.

Keywords: academic self-confidence, international college students, thriving

INTRODUCTION

While the higher education landscape has been increasingly globalized, international students are often ignored in student success literature (Telbis et al., 2014). Furthermore, studies on the success of international students tend to rely on a narrow definition of student success that focuses on graduation rates and learning outcomes (Telbis et al., 2014). To address this research gap, the current study focuses on student thriving[1] as an integrated outcome measure of college students, which entails students' academic success as a portion of their overall well-being (Cuevas, 2015). The concept of thriving derives from positive psychology and it is a particularly important success outcome to consider for international college students because of its holistic approach to student success (Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2010). Furthermore, research has documented the positive relationship between academic self-confidence and academic success among international and other populations in universities and colleges (Lemoyne et al., 2017; Shoemaker, 2010; Stankov et al., 2012; Telbis et al., 2014; Wang, et al., 2018). Therefore, this study also attempts to add to the literature by examining the role of academic self-confidence on international college students' thriving.

The purpose of this study is to improve understandings of international college students' success by examining the effect of academic self-confidence on thriving among this population. Specifically, the authors seek to answer the following three research questions: (1) Are there differences in the level of thriving between international undergraduate students and their domestic peers attending four-year colleges and universities in the United States and Canada? (2) Are there differences in the level of thriving among various subgroups of international undergraduate students in these institutions? (3) How does academic self-confidence affect the level of thriving for international undergraduate students, after controlling for student demographics, college environment, and college experience?

[1] The authors use lowercased thriving when referring to the idea of thriving (i.e., flourishing). On the other hand, the authors use uppercased Thriving when referring to the Thriving Quotient, the Thriving Project, or Thriving literature, which are proprietary. The Thriving literature refers to empirical and conceptual articles, books, dissertations, and presentations on Thriving.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Thriving

In recent decades, student success scholarship has expanded beyond graduation, retention, and GPA in order to encourage leaders in higher education to consider other student success measures. Braxton (2006), for example, expanded these definitions of achievement, outlining eight markers of student success: academic attainment, acquisition of general education, development of academic competence, development of cognitive skills and intellectual dispositions, occupational attainment, preparation for adulthood and citizenship, personal accomplishments, and personal development. Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, and Whitt (2005) likewise expanded the dominant paradigm of student success to include more communal and psycho-social aspects while others consider satisfaction to be an optimum goal of student success (Curtis, 2020). More recently, Schreiner (2010b, 2010a) and Schreiner, Louis, and Nelson (2012) broadened the dominant student success paradigm to a more holistic approach that concerns one's engaged learning, diverse citizenship, social connectedness, positive perspective, and academic determination.

Within the Thriving literature, much research has been conducted on thriving among non-international students of color. There are four posited pathways to thriving concerning how non-international students of color specifically achieve thriving differently than White students: Psychological sense of community, institutional integrity, spirituality, and faculty interaction (Ash & Schreiner, 2016). For these students, spirituality, for example, is a more salient predictor of thriving than other experiences. Consideration of these four predictors of thriving among non-international students of color elucidates unique pathways, such as improving faculty sensitivity to the needs of diverse learners (Ash & Schreiner, 2016). In other words, when students feel that their experiences with faculty are that they are sensitive to diversity, the students are more likely to report a higher thriving score.

Across other marginalized populations, research has also documented some important findings with regard to thriving. Studies have found that academic determination and institutional integrity predicted thriving for high-risk students (Tharp, 2017) while mentoring and psychological sense of community were predictive of thriving among first-generation college students (Pothoven, 2015; Sparks, 2017). A significant volume of studies also suggest that psychological sense of community is predictive of thriving among diverse student subgroups such as low-income students, community college students, and Latinx students at Hispanic-serving institutions (Dy, 2017; Romero, 2016). Despite this robust research on pathways of thriving

amongst various marginalized populations in higher education, little is known about thriving of international college students.

International College Student Success

Some scholars have examined the challenges international college students face during their college years, and the research clearly indicates that culture, finances, and language are significant barriers to international students' academic and social success in postsecondary institutions in the North America (Andrade, 2006; Martirosyan, et al., 2015; McClure, 2007; Sherry et al., 2010; Smith, 2016; Yeh & Inose, 2003; Zhou, et al., 2008). However, much of this literature begins with a deficit model of success, viewing this population as lagging in certain characteristics that prohibit success, with some exceptions (Le et al., 2016; Sümer et al., 2008). Lee and Rice (2007), for example, challenge the pervasive idea that cultural adjustment, or an international student's inability to adjust, is the issue. Instead, they suggest that institutions in the United States bear the burden of responsibility; it is these institutions that have the inability to host international students, not the other way around. Similarly, Vasilopoulos (2016) warns against essentializing international student success into clearly linear relationships, as the complexity and unpredictability of ever-changing processes can affect the success of international students. Notwithstanding the deficit approach of most research on international students' success, there are three major themes in the literature concerning predictors of college success among international students: social connectedness, support, and confidence.

Social Connectedness

When international students indicate belonging on campus, they are more likely to succeed (Glass et al., 2015; Palmer, 2015). This sense of belonging or community is a widely articulated finding in student success literature, and appears to hold true for most measures of success among international students. Van Horne, Lin, Anson, and Jacobson (2018), for example, found that feelings of being welcomed and social satisfaction lead to a sense of belonging for international students at large research universities. At historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), international students struggle to connect socially as they maintain their national and cultural identity while adjusting to racial expectations in the United States (Mwangi, 2016). International students of Asian cultural heritage also struggled to adjust to cultural differences and therefore had difficulty in building social connections (Yao, 2016). Still, some scholars see the value in international student cultural heritage as a cause of success, rather than as an

obstacle. Metro-Roland (2018), for example, found that developing a sense of community across national identity can lead to belonging and success. Similarly, participating in service-learning or volunteerism can help diverse international students identify common ground and build a sense of connection and belonging (Manguvo, et al., 2013). Regardless of institutional type and cultural heritage, the research generally agrees that when international students, like most other students, feel socially connected, they are more likely to succeed. There are unique challenges that international students face, such as cultural and linguistic adjustment; however, these challenges can also be a source of connection and belonging when there is a critical mass of international students on campus.

Support

If sense of belonging and connection leads to success, what leads to belonging and connection? A survey of the literature suggests that when international students feel supported, they are more likely to feel socially connected (Encinas & Ammigan, 2016; Tchoh & Mertan, 2018; Wolf & Phung, 2019). García et al. (2019) found, for example, that international students who are more socioacademically integrated tend to graduate and be retained at higher rates in community colleges. They explained that when international students feel supported socially and academically, they have a higher sense of belonging, which in turn leads to success. Further, when international students appreciate the support around them, they are more likely to feel that they have mastered their environment and surpassed the stressors that might have inhibited their success earlier in their arrival (Aldawsari et al., 2018). These findings challenge researchers and student affairs professionals to better understand the contours and complexities of supporting international students (Briggs & Ammigan, 2017; Madden-Dent et al., 2019).

As a part of the effort to better support international students, Smith (2016) devised a typology of support services that international students may require: academic, financial, health/wellness, sociocultural, transition, immigration, accommodation, and employment. Other support may include more specified services such as targeting writing support, family member programs, residential, and professional development or vocational support (Martirosyan et al., 2019; Montgomery, 2017). Other studies have also identified peer support as an important contributor of college success for interactional students (Lee, 2017; Luo et al., 2019). At the institutional level, Bai (2016) found that when international students perceive little to no academic, cultural, or moral support, they are more stressed.

Confidence

Social connectedness and support, including institutional and peer support, highlight the importance of community and institutional intervention in ensuring success among international students. However, there are individual characteristics in the literature that influence international students' success. An individual's characteristics are an incomplete predictor of success, as institutions still may structurally be inadequate at helping international students succeed (Nguyen, 2016). Nevertheless, research has shown that some individual characteristics may predict success for international college students. Brunsting, Smith, and Zachry (2018), for example, found that a specifically tailored transition course designed to improve international undergraduate students' intercultural skills increased students' self-efficacy and social connection, thus leading toward their success. Self-efficacy is a student's belief about their capacity of accomplishing a task (Zorkina & Nalbone 2003). As such, it is a referent of motivation and achievement, and has been found to predict success among many populations, including international students (Mostafa & Lim, 2020; Wang et al., 2018). Another characteristic, self-esteem, has also been shown to relate to social connection and support (Lopez & Bui, 2014). Lopez and Bui (2014) found that an international student's English language confidence predicted self-esteem, which influenced their success in colleges and universities.

Students' self-confidence, however, has been rarely studied in the literature on international college students; hence, scholars and practitioners need more studies on international students' self-confidence and its impact on their success. In sociocultural theory, self-confidence is a composite of self-efficacy and self-esteem (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy refers to one's belief that they can effectively accomplish a task or goal, or influence the events in one's life (Bandura, 1977) whereas self-esteem refers to one's belief that they are inherently worthy (Branden, 1969). Confidence, then, refers to a level of assurance in one's capacities (as opposed to abilities), judgments, and qualities (Bandura, 1977). The concept of self-confidence is much more difficult to evaluate because it is focused on the future based on the past, rather than one's efficacy or esteem in the present (Gebregergis, Mehari, Gebretinsae,& Tesfamariam, 2020). However, the well-documented positive relationship between academic self-confidence and academic success among international and other populations in universities and colleges (Lemoyne et al., 2017; Shoemaker, 2010; Stankov et al., 2012; Telbis et al., 2014; Wang et

al., 2018) warrants the examination of the role of academic self-confidence on thriving among international college students.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study draws upon Astin's (1975, 1993) Input-Environment-Outcome (IEO) model. In this model, individual students bring various characteristics with them to college, the inputs. As these characteristics interact with the college or university environment, various outcomes can occur. For example, researchers often hypothesize that students' demographic variables (inputs) interplay with college environment (e.g., faculty interactions, peer interactions), resulting in a desired college outcome (thriving in this case). The authors understand there to be an importance of individual student characteristics interfacing with institutional and structural factors to produce certain outcomes. In this study, the authors conceive of "self-confidence" as an important input, students' experiences with community as part of the university "environment," and "thriving" as a key outcome. In essence, the authors focus on the investigation of the relationship between international students' academic self-confidence and their thriving, controlling for their input characteristics and institutional experience and environment.

METHODS

Data Source and Sample

This study used data from the 2017 Thriving Quotient. The Thriving Quotient is comprised of 24 survey items to measure students' thriving, which include academic, intrapersonal, and interpersonal aspects of student success (Schreiner, 2010a; 2010b). Specifically, the concept of thriving is captured by its five subscales in the survey instrument: engaged learning, diverse citizenship, academic determination, positive perspective, and social connectedness. The survey also includes a variety of other variables such as psychological sense of community, interaction with faculty, and quality of campus experience as well as student demographic and outcome variables. The survey was distributed in fall 2017 to domestic and international students across colleges and universities in the U.S. and Canada via Qualtrics. Institutions, who voluntarily registered to participate in the survey, randomly sampled their undergraduate students, and the survey was sent to this sample, resulting in 3,984 student respondents. Out of these respondents, 148 were international undergraduate students at fourteen institutions in the United States and Canada. These institutions consisted of nine public research universities and five private liberal arts colleges.

Table 1

Demographic Compositions of International Student Sample (n =148)

Demographic Characteristic	n	%
Gender		
Male	56	38.6
Female	89	61.4
Ethnic Heritage		
African	22	14.9
First Nations	3	2.0
Asian/Pacific Islander	35	23.6
Caucasian	25	16.9
Latinx/Hispanic	39	26.4
Other	20	13.5
Prefer not to respond	4	2.7
Household Income	58	39.7
< $30,000	54	37.0
$30,000 - $59,999	19	13.0
$60,000 - $89,999	9	6.2
$90,000 - $119,999	6	4.1
$120,000 +		
Class Level		
First-year	50	34.3
Sophomore	37	25.3
Junior	24	16.4
Senior	29	19.9
Other	6	4.1
Enrollment Status		
Part-time	17	11.56
Full-time	129	88.4
Residential Status		
On-campus	77	67.5
Off-campus	37	32.5
First-generation College Student		
Yes	49	33.1
No	99	66.9
Age		
< 17	6	4.1
18-20	73	49.7
21-23	42	28.6
24+	26	17.6
Transfer Student		
Yes	25	16.9
No	123	83.1

Table 1 demonstrates the descriptive statistics on demographic compositions of the international student sample (n = 148) of the study. The majority of students in this study identified as female (61.4%), non-first-generation (66.9%), lower income (76.7%), and full-time (88.4%). Students derived from across continents and were primarily in residence at their institution (67.5%). Overall, the sample was comprised primarily of students in their first or second year (59.6%) as well as students who lived on campus (67.5%).

Variables

The dependent variables of this study were students' overall thriving and its five subscales (i.e., engaged learning, diverse citizenship, academic determination, positive perspective, and social connectedness). The level of thriving was a factor scale and measured by the average score of its five subscales aforementioned. Table 2 displays indicators of five thriving subscales and an overall thriving factor scale.

Table 2

Thriving Construct and Its Five Subscales

Factor Scale	*Measures*
Academic Determination.	*A composite measure comprised of six items (α = .83):* *a. I am confident I will reach my educational goals* *b. Even if assignments are not interesting to me, I find a way to keep working at them until they are done well,* *c. I know how to apply my strengths to achieve academic success* *d. I am good at juggling all the demands of college life* *e. Other people would say I'm a hard worker* *f. When I'm faced with a problem in my life, I can usually think of several ways to solve it*
Engaged Learning.	*A composite measure comprised of four items (α = .85):* *a. I feel as though I am learning things in my classes that are worthwhile to me as a person* *b. I can usually find ways of applying what I'm learning in class to something else in my life* *c. I find myself thinking about what I'm learning in class even when I'm not in class* *d. I feel energized by the ideas I am learning in most of my classes*

Positive Perspective.	*A composite measure comprised of two items (α = .83):* *a. My perspective on life is that I tend to see the glass as "half full" rather than "half empty"* *b. I look for the best in situations, even when things seem hopeless*
Social Connectedness.	*A composite measure comprised of six items (α = .81):* *a. Other people seem to make friends more easily than I do (reverse-scored)* *b. I feel like my friends really care about me* *c. I don't have as many close friends as I wish I had (reverse-scored)* *d. I feel content with the kinds of friendships I currently have* *e. I often feel lonely because I have few close friends with whom to share my concerns (reverse-scored)* *f. It's hard to make friends on this campus (reverse-scored).*
Diverse Citizenship.	*A composite measure comprised of six items (α = .80):* *a. I spend time making a difference in other people's lives* *b. I know I can make a difference in my community* *c. I value interacting with people whose viewpoints are different from my own* *d. It's important for me to make a contribution to my community* *e. It is important to become aware of the perspectives of individuals from different backgrounds* *f. My knowledge or opinions have been influenced or changed by becoming more aware of the perspectives of individuals from different backgrounds*
Overall Thriving	*A composite measure comprised of the five subscales above (α = .81)*

Note*: Each individual item is measured on a 6-point scale: 1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree.*

Academic self-confidence is the primary independent variable in this study. Academic self-confidence is a composite measure and consists of three items that assess students' self-ratings on their academic ability: (1) I am confident that, if I wanted to, I could adjust the extent of my involvement in student organizations and leadership roles, (2) I am confident I will reach my educational goals, and (3) I am sure of my major. Table 3 displays the items and factor loadings for the academic self-confidence factor scale.

Table 3
Factor Loadings and Reliability Estimate for Academic Self-Confidence Factor Scale

Item	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha
Academic Self-Confidence		.80
I am confident that, if I wanted to, I could adjust the extent of my involvement in student organizations and leadership roles	.88	
I am confident I will reach my educational goals	.73	
I am sure of my major	.68	

Note. Sample size = 148

This study also includes some control variables including psychological sense of community, spirituality, and faculty interaction. The psychological sense of community derives from positive psychology and refers to a student's sense of belonging. This scale is comprised of four items: "I feel like I belong here," "Being a student here fills an important need in my life," "I feel proud of the college I have chosen to attend," and "There is a strong sense of community on this campus." The spirituality scale is comprised of three items: "My spiritual or religious beliefs provide me with a sense of strength when life is difficult," "My spiritual or religious beliefs give meaning and purpose to my life," and "My spiritual or religious beliefs are the foundation of my approach to life." The faculty interaction scale is comprised of several items regarding students' various encounters with their faculty: "Interaction with faculty outside of class," "Discussed career or grad school plans with faculty," "The amount of contact you have had with faculty this year," "The quality of the interaction you have had with faculty on this campus so far this year," "Faculty sensitivity to the needs of diverse learners," and "Faculty encouragement for students to contribute diverse perspectives in class discussions." The authors also utilized some student demographic variables (e.g., race, gender, and income) as control variables.

DATA ANALYSIS

To answer the authors' first research question, the authors utilized a set of independent-samples t-test to identify if there was a difference in the level of thriving between domestic and international college students. Creswell (2014) suggests that a t-test should be used to analyze mean difference between two groups. To answer the authors' second research question regarding the differences in the level of thriving across various students subgroups within the international student sample, the authors utilized a series of one-way ANOVAs with Tukey HSD post-hoc analysis, following Creswell's (2014) suggestion. Lastly, the authors used hierarchical multiple regression analysis to answer the authors' final research question regarding the effect of academic self-confidence on thriving among international students, following Creswell's (2014) best practice. For the regression analysis, the authors entered independent variables in three blocks. The first block consisted of student demographic variables including gender, income, and age variables. The second block consisted of college experience variables such as advising support, faculty interaction, psychological sense of community, and spirituality, while the third block consisted of the main independent variable of the study: the academic self-confidence factor.

RESULTS

Level of Thriving for International and Domestic Students

To assess differences in the level of thriving between international and domestic college students a set of independent-samples t-test was conducted. Table 4 summarizes the results of independent-samples tests, which answer the authors' initial research question. Results demonstrate that there is a significant difference in the mean thriving score between international and domestic students ($t(4,130) = -2.31$, $p < .05$). The results indicate that international students tend to thrive at lower levels ($M = 4.55$, $SD = .69$) than their domestic peers ($M = 4.68$, $SD = .63$). The effect size d is .20, which is a small typical effect size. Two of the thriving subscales also rendered a significant difference: academic determination ($t(4,130) = -2.27$, $p < .05$) and diverse citizenship ($t(4,130) = -2.24$, $p < .05$). Results again demonstrated that international students thrive at statistically lower levels than their domestic counterparts in these two sub-areas of thriving.

Table 4

Comparison of International and Domestic Students on Thriving

Item	International			Domestic			*t*	*df*	*p*	Cohen's *d*[a]
	Mean	SD	*n*	Mean	SD	*n*				
Overall Thriving	4.55	.69	148	4.68	.63	3,984	-2.31*	4,130[b]	.021	.20
Social Connectedness	4.02	.96	148	4.11	1.03	3,984	-1.05	4,130[b]	.293	.09
Academic Determination	4.74	.91	148	4.88	.76	3,984	-2.27*	4,130[b]	.023	.17
Diverse Citizenship	4.76	.75	147	4.89	.69	3,984	-2.24*	4,129[b]	.025	.18
Engaged Learning	4.69	1.11	148	4.83	.92	3,984	-1.74	4,130[b]	.082	.20
Positive Perspective	4.60	1.03	147	4.68	1.01	3,977	-1.03	4,122[b]	.305	.08

[a] *d* is a measure of effect-size and was calculated using t-values.
[b] Equal variances were assumed.
Note: Sample size: international students = 148; domestic students = 3,984
* $p < .05$

Different Level of Thriving within International Students

The authors also examined how the level of thriving differs across various subgroups of the authors' international student sample and Table 5 displays the results to answer the authors' second research question. Results showed that there were no significant differences between male and female international students for any of the thriving measures. However, there was a significant effect of race/ethnicity on the level of overall thriving, social connectedness subscale, and the academic determination subscale. Tukey HSD post-hoc tests also revealed that the difference in such thriving measures

Table 5

Differences in the Level of Thriving across Subgroups within International Students (M and SD)

Student Subgroup	Thriving Average	SC	AD	DC	EL	PP
Gender						
Male	4.54	4.05	4.71	4.75	4.69	4.65
	(.60)	(.90)	(.89)	(.59)	(1.17)	(1.00)
Female	4.59	4.00	4.80	4.79	4.76	4.60
	(.74)	(1.02)	(.89)	(.84)	(1.02)	(1.03)
F (η^2)	.184	.09	.37	.08	.14	.02
	(.001)	(.001)	(.003)	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)
Ethnic Heritage						
Black	4.69	4.04	5.03	4.81	4.89	4.68
	(.83)	(.83)	(1.12)	(1.01)	(1.10)	(1.13)
Indigenous	3.82	3.80	3.61	4.09	3.25	4.33
	(.79)	(.48)	(1.27)	(.80)	(1.39)	(.76)
Asian	4.20	3.57	4.27	4.50	4.42	4.21
	(.56)	(.85)	(.90)	(.64)	(1.25)	(1.03)
Caucasian	4.70	4.09	4.27	4.72	5.06	4.58
	(.72)	(1.06)	(.90)	(.85)	(.98)	(1.22)
Latinx	4.71	4.27	4.89	4.88	4.66	4.90
	(.64)	(1.11)	(.74)	(.63)	(1.09)	(.74)
Other	4.72	4.29	4.92	4.97	4.84	4.61
	(.42)	(.66)	(.39)	(.54)	(.69)	(1.11)
Prefer not to respond	4.64	3.63	4.67	5.21	4.94	4.75
	(.41)	(1.03)	(.56)	(.63)	(.55)	(.65)
F (η^2)	3.43**	2.19*	4.06**	1.78	1.99	1.47
	(.13)	(.086)	(.148)	(.078)	(.078)	(.059)
Household Income						
<$30,000	4.60	3.97	4.83	4.78	4.66	4.79
	(.72)	(.92)	(.97)	(.82)	(1.23)	(.93)
$30,000-$59,999	4.61	4.03	4.74	4.76	4.81	4.72
	(.69)	(1.13)	(.85)	(.64)	(.95)	(.95)
$60,000-$89,999	4.37	3.93	4.67	4.66	4.64	3.94
	(.44)	(.73)	(.62)	(.65)	(1.06)	(4.42)

Student Subgroup	Thriving Average	SC	AD	DC	EL	PP
$90,000-	4.73	4.33	4.80	5.24	4.67	4.61
$119,999	(.51)	(.83)	(1.06)	(.46)	(1.40)	(.96)
$120,000+	4.00	4.10	4.20	3.87	4.35	3.50
	(.96)	(.73)	(1.00)	(1.33)	(.84)	(1.54)
F (η^2)	1.506	.310	.631	2.872*	.305	4.35**
	(.041)	(.009)	(.018)	(.076)	(.009)	(.110)
Class Standing						
First-year	4.60	4.03	4.77	4.70	4.75	4.74
	(.72)	(1.04)	(.98)	(.85)	(1.18)	(1.00)
Sophomore	4.43	3.92	4.73	4.58	4.60	4.30
	(.67)	(1.03)	(.76)	(.70)	(.95)	(1.06)
Junior	4.50	4.00	4.63	4.84	4.68	4.48
	(.68)	(.78)	(.97)	(.66)	(1.05)	(1.11)
Senior	4.63	4.19	4.63	4.97	4.62	4.76
	(.69)	(.93)	(.99)	(.71)	(1.32)	(.88)
Other	4.87	3.97	5.19	4.89	5.04	5.25
	(.52)	(.99)	(.68)	(.71)	(.68)	(.82)
F (η^2)	.818	.318	.561	1.29	.270	1.972
	(.023)	(.009)	(.016)	(.035)	(.008)	(.053)
Enrollment Status						
Part-time	4.45	3.95	4.50	4.56	4.53	4.71
	(.66)	(.75)	(.85)	(.66)	(1.44)	(.66)
Full-time	4.59	4.03	4.79	4.79	4.74	4.60
	(.68)	(.99)	(.89)	(.76)	(1.05)	(1.05)
F (η^2)	.612	.088	1.561	1.37	.535	.172
	(.004)	(.001)	(.011)	(.009)	(.004)	(.001)
Residential Status						
Off-campus	4.60	3.95	4.72	4.89	4.74	4.72
	(.77)	(1.09)	(.91)	(.85)	(1.10)	(1.10)
On-campus	4.50	3.95	4.70	4.75	4.64	4.47
	(.57)	(.89)	(.84)	(.61)	(1.10)	(.99)
F (η^2)	.610	.001	.017	1.044	.180	1.462
	(.005)	(.000)	(.000)	(.009)	(.002)	(.013)

Student Subgroup	Thriving Average	SC	AD	DC	EL	PP
Aggregate Sample	4.55 (.69)	4.02 (.96)	4.74 (.91)	4.76 (.75)	4.69 (1.11)	4.60 (1.03)

*p < .05, **p < .01
Note: SC = social connectedness; AD = academic determination; DC = diverse citizenship; EL= engaged learning; PP = positive perspective. Sample size = 148.

mostly occurred between Asian and other racial groups. Also, there was a significant effect of household income on diverse citizenship and positive perspective subscales. In contrast, there were no significant differences on any thriving measures depending on students' class level, enrollment status, and residential status.

Table 6
The Effect of Academic Self-Confidence on Thriving among International Students

Variables Entered	Thriving Outcomes					
	Thriving	SC	AD	DC	EL	PP
SOC					-.089	
Wealthier						-.167*
PSC	.319***	.121	.333***	.284***	.263***	.209**
Faculty	.182**		.014	.229**	.185**	
Spirituality	.162**			.228**		.565***
Confidence	.383***	.205*	.509***	.227**	.419***	
Adjusted R^2	.62	.07	.54	.49	.51	.36

* p < .05,
** p < .01,
***p < .001
Note: SC = social connectedness; AD = academic determination; DC = diverse citizenship; EL= engaged learning; PP = positive perspective; SOC = students of color; Wealthier = wealthier students; PSC = psychological sense of community; Faculty = faculty interaction; Spirituality = spirituality index; Confidence = academic self-confidence. Sample size = 148.

The Effects of Academic Self-Confidence on Thriving

After identifying that international students thrive at statistically lower levels than domestic students and after finding a variety of effects of race and income on various outcomes associated with the thriving score, the authors sought to examine the relationship between academic self-confidence and thriving among international college students as part of the authors' third research question. Results of hierarchical multiple regression analysis indicated that academic self-confidence had a significant, positive effect on international students' overall thriving even after controlling for the confounding effects of student input characteristics and other college experiences (ß = .38, $p < .001$). This result suggests that international students who are more academically confident in themselves tend to thrive at higher rates. The results also showed that academic self-confidence had a significant, positive effect on most of the thriving subscales: social connectedness (ß = .21, $p < .05$), academic determination (ß = .51, $p < .001$), engaged learning (ß = .42, $p < .01$), and diverse citizenship (ß = .23, $p < .01$).

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study prompt important points of consideration that mirror, challenge, and enhance existing findings in the literature. In recent years, scholars have increasingly realized that higher education institutions and their members should adapt to different demographics of college students (G*ü*zel & Glazer, 2019). Earlier deficit-minded approaches to college student success assumed that lack of success was a student's fault, which inherently exonerated institutions from responsibility (Clycq Nouwen & Vanderbroucke, 2014). Although institutions certainly hinder or help international students succeed, this study evidences the weight that an individual student's self-confidence has a significant impact on their thriving. An international student's self-confidence in reaching their educational goals, for example, may meet several uncontrollable challenges on the way to graduation (Bai, 2016); however, when international students' self-confidence remains throughout college, they are more likely to thrive.

In the literature, scholars seem to emphasize the importance of community and social connectedness for international students (Mwangi, 2016; Van Horne, Lin, Anson, and Jacobson, 2018; Yao, 2016). Our findings mirror previous studies and theories, suggesting that psychological sense of community and social connectedness are two of the most highly reliable estimates of a student's success, particularly international students in a new context and culture. Glass et al. (2015) and Van et al. (2018), for example, found that positive student-faculty interactions led to international students'

sense of belonging and success. Palmer (2015) highlighted how linguistic and cultural challenges can inhibit a sense of belonging. Though the authors' research did not specifically address experience with faculty or campus climate, these findings would still support that establishing a positive environment for international students leads to a sense of connection, which in turn can influence thriving for international students (Shane, Carson, & Macri, 2020). In contrast to Mwangi (2016) and Yao (2016), the authors' findings suggest that even when international students encounter challenging cultural, linguistic, and even racist environments, their self-confidence can still guide their ability to thrive (Ma, 2020).

Some scholars have previously identified the importance of other internal characteristics for international student success. Typically, however, these scholars highlight international students' language abilities or students' confidence in English as predictive of success (Lopez & Bui, 2014). Other scholars have considered the importance of self-efficacy (Gebregergis et al., 2020). Wang, et al., (2018) suggest that self-efficacy is an index of motivation and achievement. However, self-efficacy is also merely an indicator of one's belief about one's *ability* to accomplish tasks, in this case academic tasks (Shoemaker, 2010). It has been found to actually overinflate success, and has many negative conditions, such as narcissism and self-aggrandizement (Baumeister, 1996). In fact, longitudinal meta-analyses of self-efficacy have long indicated that the variable has at best a questionable correlation with educational success (Hansford & Hattie, 1982). Lopez and Bui (2014), in their reflections on language confidence, distinguish self-efficacy from self-esteem, the latter of which refers to one's believe in their inherent value and can also predict success. However, some research has indicated that self-esteem, as well as self-concept and self-efficacy, is not as strong a predictor of success as self-confidence (Stankov et al., 2012).

Self-confidence, in contrast to self-efficacy and self-esteem, is a more general referent of one's confidence in their *capacity* to succeed, beyond accomplishing tasks. It is more of a holistic measure that may include elements of self-esteem and self-efficacy. Zorkina and Nalbone (2003) highlighted the importance of academic confidence, as opposed to esteem and efficacy, by dividing groups of college students into two induced groups, high-confidence and low-confidence. The high-confidence group was told they were taking a test for high school students, while the low-confidence group was told they were taking the same test, but it was for Ivy League students. The high-confidence induced group scored statistically higher than the low confidence group. Following this study and Telbis et al. (2014), this

study similarly indicates that international students' self-confidence, which is a student's belief in their capacity to succeed, leads to thriving.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our findings suggest that when international students are academically more confident they tend to thrive at higher rates. The individual characteristic of confidence is a small yet significant part of building students' capacity to thriving in the midst of a campus environment that promotes a sense of community. If confidence is an internal construct or input, what might student affairs practitioners, faculty, or other higher education professionals *do* to ensure international students' self-confidence and thriving? How can higher education institutions help shape international students' self-confidence? Informed by the findings of this study, the authors provide recommendations to student affairs practitioners, faculty, and institutions.

First, student affairs practitioners are extremely important in helping students build confidence, which can lead to thriving. For example, student activities and multicultural mentoring programs provide the space for colleges and universities to proactively build confidence through building strong relationships and cultural orientation. Here, it is of utmost importance to understand the difference between self-efficacy and confidence. Self-efficacy is domain-specific; an international student's self-efficacy is inevitably related to their academic success. However, thriving as an outcome is broader than merely GPA or graduation attainment. Thus, international student affairs professionals can help build confidence in all areas of life, including, but not limited to, a student's academic success, sense of efficacy, and even vis-à-vis their family (Grimm et al., 2019). Thriving includes measures for positive thinking, social connectedness, engaged learning, diverse citizenship, and academic determination. Student affairs practitioners have an important responsibility in helping international students build confidence relationally and psychologically. Relationally, international student support groups provide spaces for students from other countries to bond because of the differences. Facilitating opportunities to connect with one another, such as through mentoring or group facilitation activities, provides a level of social support that is interrelated to one's individual confidence (Shane et al., 2020). Psychologically, student affairs professionals can encourage positive thinking and reflection; rewards and celebrations acknowledge accomplishments that are stepping stones to success (Poyrazli & Mitchell, 2020).

Second, faculty are instrumental in helping students of all kinds succeed and thrive. Their influence in and out of the classroom as kind,

encouraging, and confidence-building leaders, educators, and mentors, for example, has a palpable impact on international student thriving. Yet many faculty at colleges and universities are not trained in student success and cultural humility. One important recommendation on building confidence for international students by faculty derives from language acquisition educational theory. Importantly, as many international students are learning English, this theory appropriately addresses language acquisition but can also be applied to other forms of confidence-building in the classroom. Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis refers to a language learners' ability to understand meaning, though they might not understand all individual words or full syntax. Educators, then, can develop curriculum that builds meaning and reduces stress through comprehensible input, which allows students to understand and learn, but also be challenged to learn more (input + 1) (Lin, Su, & McElwain, 2019; Ma, 2020). For language learners, teachers must modify their language so that students can understand. For international students, comprehensible input may mean that when faculty use certain metaphors, phrases, or language, meaning is obscured, hindering international student academic success. Faculty may need to allow international students the time to think and articulate, as even an initial sense of failure can produce a lack of confidence (Billeter, Kalra, & Loewenstein, 2010). Beyond language, however, faculty interactions with international students may hinder their success when these interactions are not comprehensible. Advising in North America, for example, may be a foreign experience that may not convey meaning to an international student; miscommunication and misunderstanding is bound to happen when interacting with students from other cultures. Importantly, faculty can make the effort to learn their students' cultural background to try and accommodate their unique needs and learning styles (Ma, 2020). When international students feel like their classroom experiences and other interactions with faculty are positive, they may build confidence, which will help them thrive.

Third, at the institutional level, administrators also have an important responsibility in developing international student confidence. There are many challenges that can deflate an international student, including visa, financial, and health concerns, among others (Hunter-Johnson & Niu, 2019). Removing obstacles, or minimally providing kind customer support, can build a student's confidence as they navigate foreign institutional norms. For example, staff, in particular, should be trained in customer interaction with students of different cultures. International students should also know what resources are available at the institution, such as counseling or health centers (Chen et al., 2020). Many international students may not be familiar with

departments and resources on-campus and they may also need assistance becoming accustomed to new cultural forms of support. Institutions may also need to better adjust their own services—such as providing multicultural counselors or therapists that specialize in international student concerns (Chen et al., 2020). Further, those that are available and known may not be accommodating for international students; in fact, they may be structurally setup to prohibit international students from participating (Ma, 2020). In order to help build international students' confidence, which can lead to their success and thriving, institutions and administrators are responsible for removing roadblocks and building students' sense of confidence.

LIMITATIONS

This study has some limitations. First, there was a surprisingly higher number of low- income international students in the authors' data. Given common understanding that international student families are paying in-full for tuition, these findings may not be generalizable to international college students who came from higher earning families. Another limitation is that while there are some important student support variables for international students such as wellness support and family/peer support, these variables were not available in the authors' dataset. Lastly, international students' citizenship country was not collected in the survey, and therefore data could not be disaggregated based on regions or cultural heritage of the study's participants.

CONCLUSION

Conclusively, in light of these recommendations, implications, and limitations, further research is needed to elucidate more nuanced aspects of thriving for international students. In particular, identifying student region or citizenship, language, and English-speaking status would further integrate the thriving literature to the international student success literature. Likewise, additional metrics of support, such as how students feel supported by their families back home, would develop a support construct that may affect international students' thriving, among other success metrics. Despite these limitations and the need for further research, this study provides a salient contribution to the thriving literature and the international student success literature. The study expands definition of success for international students to thriving and shows that self-confidence has a significant effect on thriving and success for international students.

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