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# Journal of International Students



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## **International Students and Higher Education: New Perspectives on Cultures and Communities**

*Catherine Montgomery, PhD*  
University of Hull, UK

I was very pleased to be invited to be the guest editor for this issue of the *Journal of International Students*, not least because the journal presents cutting edge research that is generating new perspectives in the field. The journal is filling a gap in the literature and its significance is drawing attention from other established journals such as the *Journal of Studies in International Education* (see the editorial of JSIE, 16 (1) 2013, p.3). One of the main strengths of the journal is its combination of contributions from established researchers and emergent researchers many of whom have experienced international mobility themselves and are undertaking doctoral studies in this field. Previous work has noted the under-exploited nature of research work carried out by international students and staff themselves and its potential in informing the field.

Too much of the early research relating to international students and their experience of higher education concentrated on individuals or national groups and, at times, sought to problematize the international student experience. In previous decades, ‘culture’ was used as an explanatory concept for tensions in the higher education learning environment and this allowed for the racialization of interaction between international students and their teachers and peers (Lee and Rice, 2007; Trouillot, 2003). It is striking to see in the collection of articles in this volume that perspectives on cultures and communities in higher education have changed. Many of the articles here present a broader view of the cultures of university campuses and communities beyond, underscoring the significance of enabling all students to experience wider engagement with faculty staff. Luo and Jamieson-Drake’s article (this volume) presents a convincing and well-evidenced argument for “the role of the institutional environment in providing students with varied academic and social opportunities for involvement with new ideas, people and experiences.” This focus on the part played by the institutional learning environment is an important step away from laying ‘blame’ with the students and towards recasting our conceptions of the social and learning experience of all participants in the university environment. These new perspectives on the cultures and communities generated by internationalisation depict contexts where intercultural interaction enables all participants (students and staff) to question their own beliefs and positions and develop the criticality so highly prized in higher education (although I sometimes question if we really know what we mean by this – see Vandermensbrugge, 2004). A number of the contributions in this issue suggest this link between positive intercultural learning environments and educational outcomes. The aim is to improve intercultural interaction not because it is kind or because it supports international students but because it is important for the learning experience of the whole academic community.

Contemporary perspectives on cultures and communities of higher education acknowledge the blurring of the boundaries between the academy and the community beyond. Nguyen’s article

(this volume) points to the crucial role of sustained and personalised relationships between students and staff, underlining the impact of these relationships on academic outcomes, not just within the university but on students' experiences in the longer term. The significance of the world beyond the university is a recurring theme throughout this collection, with Manguvo, Whitney and Chareka (this volume) presenting research which examines the role of 'volunteerism' in promoting social inclusion within the university. The authors suggest that the social and cultural capital gained during involvement in active voluntary work contributes to the development of "high quality social networks, a sense of belonging and trust, and an enhancement of self-esteem" (p.113), all qualities which provide positive conditions for learning (Cope and Kalantsiz, 2009). Acknowledgement of the role of volunteering (or what is sometimes called 'service learning' in the US) in higher education is not a new phenomenon, however. Caruana (2011) charts the development of service learning in the US across the 1960s and 1970s and considers its role in preparing multi-skilled graduates. The association between international students, intercultural interaction and service learning or volunteering presented by Manguvo, Whitney and Chareka (this volume) is significant though, as it demonstrates the different ways in which the cultures and communities of international higher education are being construed. Engagement with voluntary activities not only makes a link between the formal learning of the university and real world experience but has the potential to reshape reductionist views of the world (Caruana, 2011) through encountering people "with sharply differing backgrounds, ideas and perspectives" (Luo and Jamieson-Drake, this volume).

The different perspectives presented in the articles in this issue could not be realized without the broad range of methodologies inherent in the research. Claims regarding the international student experience have in the past been dogged by anecdotalism and a lack of systematic empirical enquiry. The articles in this issue contextualise the international student experience in a range of theoretical frameworks and engage a range of research paradigms, thus enabling new and different perspectives to emerge. The discourse analysis approach employed by Rommerhausen (this volume) is a case in point. The documentary analysis of the discourse of handbooks and webpages of universities illuminates the cultural and institutional values implicit in the texts. The particular approach to generating data in this case gives us a unique insight into the interaction between the university and the student, highlighting ways in which universities construct their learning and assessment environments. Rommerhausen implies that these constructions can be clumsy and may lack a nuanced response to the individual student. It is also clear that such discourses that continue to present a deficit model of international students can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. A contrasting approach to this research is evident in the work of Zhang, Jie and Hagedorn (this volume) where survey data exploring female Chinese students' choice and intentions in studying abroad provides a gendered perspective that is unusual in the literature. In some of the research here it is the sampling methods which provide the new perspective and the focus on data gathered from alumni across three decades in Luo and Jamieson-Drake's article (this volume) is a fascinating, large data set that outlines the major predictors of intercultural interaction at university. One of the final contributions to the volume (Veal) is in stark contrast to the large scale quantitative projects of the two preceding articles (Zhang, Jie and Hagedorn; Li, Liu, Wei and Lan) as it is a narrative travelogue of the author's experience of study abroad. Despite the fact that these sorts of accounts are not based on the systematic research I mentioned above, I always find something of value in these sorts of narratives whenever I come across them. In fact, I seek out these sections in the back issues of the *Journal of International Students*. In reading Veal's account in this issue I was particularly struck by her choice of quotes for the epigrams that begin each section. As this is a summer issue and plans are being made for summer holidays, who could fail to be struck by the quote: 'A good traveller has no fixed plans, and is not intent on arriving' Lao Tzu (p.168, this volume). This is particularly pertinent to me personally as I am currently planning a summer trip with a close friend who I met when I was an undergraduate. We are planning to revisit (in a rather Proustian way) our undergraduate travels by train and these always began with no fixed plans, with

the details of arrival usually rather scant. Thirty years later we are setting off with a much more detailed itinerary and we are quite focused on both arriving at our destination and returning home!

I have very much enjoyed reading and editing the articles in this issue. Both this collection and the rest of the *Journal of International Students* present fresh perspectives on a field that needs such new and innovative work.

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### About the Guest Editor:

**Dr. Catherine Montgomery** is Reader in Education and Graduate Research Director in the Faculty of Education at the University of Hull, UK. Catherine's research interests center on intercultural education, internationalization of the curriculum and the development of graduates as 'global citizens'. She has published widely in this field including the book *Understanding the International Student Experience* published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2010 and her book co-authored with Val Clifford *Moving Towards Internationalization of the Curriculum for Global Citizenship in Higher Education*, which came out in 2011. Catherine was previously the Research Director for the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Northumbria University, UK, where she led a research team focusing on the impact of innovative assessment in Higher Education. Catherine was awarded a UK National Teaching Fellowship in 2010 in recognition of her contribution to internationalization in Higher Education and her innovative teaching and learning in diverse student groups.

## Examining the Educational Benefits of Interacting with International Students

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### Abstract

*Through the analysis of alumni survey data from three graduating cohorts, this study examined the influence of interaction with international students on domestic students' college outcomes and explored factors that helped to promote international interaction on college campuses. The findings indicate that in comparison to non-interactive domestic students, highly interactive domestic students reported significantly higher levels of development in a wide range of areas across the three cohorts. Also, the findings suggest that active engagement in college activities, such as coursework outside the major, contact with faculty outside class, ethnic or cultural clubs or organizations, and visiting speakers, was likely to promote interaction across cultures.*

**Keywords:** international interaction; questioning beliefs; skill development; educational benefits; college activities; college outcomes.

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Over the past half century, a growing number of international students have enrolled at U.S. colleges and universities. According to the latest report by Farrugia, Chow and Bhandari (2012), the number of international students in the U.S. reached an all-time high of 764,495 in the 2011/12 academic year, reflecting a 31% increase over a decade ago. This steady increase is largely due to the active recruitment efforts by many U.S. academic institutions and the actions by the U.S. government to promote American higher education as well as a rising middle class in key source countries that could afford to send their children to study abroad (Fisher, 2009).

With the greater involvement of many countries in the global free trade economy and a new environment of budgetary cuts, the competition for talented and self-funded international students among nations has become intense and strategic in recent decades for two major reasons. First, international students provide a strong talent pool and make academic and cultural contributions to college campuses (Andrade, 2009; Choudaha & Chang, 2012; McCormack, 2007). Second, international students make a significant contribution to the economy of host countries (Farrugia,



Chow, & Bhandari, 2012). In 2011/12, for instance, international students contributed over \$22.7 billion to the U.S. economy through expenditures on tuition and living expenses.

Although many institutions world-wide aspire to maintain their financial health by aggressive recruitment of international students, it is claimed that the main purpose of most colleges and universities in recruiting international students is “to provide international and cross-cultural perspectives for their students and to enhance their curricula” (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p. 293). The significant impact of international students on the local, state, and national economy is apparent and has been quantified in indisputable monetary terms. Also, a sizable body of research highlights the challenges international students face while adapting themselves to the living and learning environments of the host country (e.g., Abe, Talbot, & Geelhoed, 1998; Lee, 2010; Trice, 2004; Ward, 2001). Despite these facts, few empirical studies have systematically examined the extent to which international students contribute to the intellectual and cultural environments on U.S. college campuses from the perspective of domestic students (Geelhoed, Abe, & Talbot, 2003).

This study seeks to provide empirical evidence for claims of potential outcomes and to equip institutions with useful information on how to develop programs to enhance students’ collegiate experiences, by examining whether interaction with international students benefits U.S. students’ college experiences and to identify factors that are likely to promote such interaction. Three research questions guide this study: (a) To what extent does international interaction influence U.S. students’ questioning of beliefs and values about politics, religions, and the nature of human beings or society during the course of their undergraduate studies? (b) To what extent does international interaction correlate with U.S. students’ perceived cognitive and affective skill development in comparison to other potential factors? and (c) What factors are likely to promote students’ international interaction? As a concept, international interaction includes interaction with people who are international, such as international undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and staff. As this study focuses on interaction of native U.S. college students with international undergraduate students, however, we define international interaction as domestic undergraduate students’ engagement with international undergraduate students in discussion and exchange of ideas and perceptions both inside and outside the classroom.

## **Review of Related Literature**

### **Perceptions of International Diversity**

Several authors claim that international students, who have been previously raised and educated in cultural and social environments different from those of the host country, constitute an important source of diversity; they are a rich resource for international education on college campuses, enriching not only student population but also campus culture and intellectual life (Choudaha & Chang, 2012; Mamiseishvili, 2012; Zhao, Kuh, & Carini, 2005). Presumably, the presence of international students would expose domestic students to different cultures, and the interaction between domestic and international students would not only lead to a deeper understanding of each other’s culture but also develop networks that would be mutually beneficial in terms of exchanges of information, ideas, and support in the future (Andrade, 2009; Grayson, 2008).

In order to promote intercultural interactions and friendships, many institutions worldwide have developed peer-pairing programs to match international students with domestic students for substantial interaction outside the classroom (Summers & Volet, 2008). In examining the effects of such a program on international student adjustment, Abe et al. (1998) found that international student participants at a Midwestern U.S. public university scored higher on social adjustment than did nonparticipant students. Also, in a comparative study of international students in such a matching program in both Canada and Australia over a period of four years, Westwood and Barker

(1990) noted that international participants in these matching programs had higher academic achievement and retention rates than did nonparticipants. The interactions with local students appeared to have enabled the international participants to learn and gain a deeper understanding of “the unwritten codes of the local culture” (p. 260). Also, studies show that intercultural interactions and friendships demand effort from both international and domestic students (Pavel, 2006; Russell, Rosenthal, & Thomson, 2010).

### **Benefits of Interaction with International Students**

In the past decade, researchers have also begun to examine the educational benefits of the peer-pairing programs for domestic student participants. For instance, Geelhoed et al. (2003) found that U.S. participants gained new cultural perspectives, developed empathy, and became more competent in their intercultural interactions. Particularly noteworthy, ongoing interactions of U.S. students with their international partners positively affected U.S. students’ family and friends’ attitudes toward international students. Also, in her study of the impacts of intercultural business communication, Cheney (2001) noted that structured international interaction could generate two specific benefits for both groups of students: (a) increased awareness of language usage in both English and foreign language and (b) the development of international friendships, which might “serve as a valuable source of social, cultural, political, and economic knowledge when US students enter the workforce” (p. 99). Moreover, with increased cultural sensitivities and skills needed to work effectively with people from different backgrounds, domestic students could well have “a competitive advantage” in the marketplace in an increasingly interconnected, globalized world (Calleja, 2000; Montgomery, 2009).

In addition, interacting with international students seems to benefit domestic students in the development of their cognitive skills. In their study of the effects of diversity experiences, Pascarella, Palmer, Moye, and Pierson (2001) found that having serious discussions with international students had a significant, positive effect on third-year critical thinking for Caucasian female students. In a similar study on diversity impacts, Hu and Kuh (2003) noted that male students, juniors, and seniors were more likely than female students, freshmen, and sophomores to interact with international students. Also, they found that interactional diversity experiences had substantial, uniformly positive effects on all college outcome variables (i.e., general education, personal development, science and technology, vocational preparation, intellectual development, total gains, and the diversity competence measures). Because the study did not examine the unique effects of each of the six items of the interactional scale, the effect of international interaction on college outcomes per se was not specifically explicated.

Through the use of alumni survey data and the documentation of the perceptions of three graduating cohorts on their collegiate diversity experiences, this study seeks to build on previous research and identify the effects of international interaction over time for a nuanced understanding of the impact of international interaction on college outcomes. The alumni survey data were chosen for the inquiry for three reasons. First, former students had gained through their rich experiences in various areas after college, useful perspectives on the subsequently most beneficial skills and capacities that they acquired in college, perspectives which provide the ultimate form of accountability for their collegiate learning experience (Bowen & Bok, 1998). Second, as an appropriate and effective method for collecting required information about institutional and program effectiveness, alumni research has enjoyed, and will continue to enjoy, a powerful advantage for the future conversation about accountability and U.S. policies (Ewell, 2005). Third, the examination of alumni’s retrospective assessment of their undergraduate experiences offers us an important avenue to replicate, validate, and even extend the findings of previous research.

## Theoretical Perspectives

As concluded by Sanford (1966), learning is a process of challenge and response: For development to occur, students must be presented with environmental challenges balanced by support. Indeed, active engagement with the college environment plays a crucial role in student development. According to Astin (1985), “Students learn by becoming involved” (p. 133). The more actively students are engaged with their college environment, the more learning and growth will occur. Astin’s theory of involvement not only emphasizes the central role of students in determining the quality and magnitude of their college development, but it also stresses the vital role of the institutional environment in providing students with varied academic and social opportunities for involvement with new ideas, people, and experiences (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

In light of the person-environment interaction theories and research advances in cognitive psychology, we consider learning as a constructive process (Bruning, Schraw, & Ronning, 1995), and international interaction provides not only a forum for students encountering ideas and perceptions differing from their own but also an important way to foster students’ development of more complex modes of intellectual and moral reasoning as well as intercultural competence (Grayson, 2008). Also, we hypothesize that a larger number of international students on campus could provide more opportunities for domestic students to interact across cultures and challenge their existing belief and value systems. Institutional initiatives and structures that foster higher levels of international interaction and serious questioning of beliefs and values could ultimately influence students’ intellectual growth and skill development not only substantially but also consistently.

## Data and Methodology

### Data, Instrument, and Sample

This study used data from comprehensive alumni surveys of former students from the 1985, 1995, and 2000 graduating cohorts of four U.S. private, highly selective research universities, administered roughly 5, 10, and 20 years after graduation. The four universities were chosen as a convenience sample (Creswell, 2011) for three major reasons. First, they were members of a research consortium and agreed to share survey data. Second, despite variations in location and size, they are coeducational and residential and offer similar undergraduate academic programs. Third, they share a general goal of promoting diversity in all aspects of university life and enroll an increasing number of international students to that end. For instance, the proportion of international students in the total cohort population at one of these universities amounted to 3.8% in the 1985 cohort but reached 4.9% in the 1995 cohort and 7.4% in the 2000 cohort.

Developed by a research consortium and designed to gather the perceptions of former students on a variety of issues, the survey instrument, which had been used for more than three decades by the consortium members, contained three sets of questions relevant to the present purpose. One set of questions asked respondents to indicate on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*none*) to 5 (*very high*) the level of involvement in 25 college activities, including academic and extracurricular activities and on- and off-campus employment (Table 5). The second set asked respondents to indicate the extent to which they interacted with groups of fellow students while in college and whether they had seriously questioned their beliefs or values in 7 areas during college (Table 3). Responses for the question on interaction with students from outside the U.S. on campus were measured on a 4-point scale: 1 (*none*), 2 (*little*), 3 (*some*), and 4 (*substantial*), whereas response options for the questioning of beliefs were “yes” or “no.” The third set asked respondents to indicate how much their undergraduate institution contributed to their development in 21 areas, with each response measured on a 5-point scale, with 1 indicating “very little or none” and 5 “a great deal” (Table 2). Other questions in the survey asked for factual demographic information.

The survey was conducted online by the research consortium in spring 2005, with a response rate of nearly 41%, almost equal across cohorts and institutions. The 2005 alumni survey data were chosen over the alumni survey data in more recent years for the present inquiry mainly because the 2005 survey instrument included all key variables of interest. For this study, only respondents who indicated they were U.S. citizens ( $N = 5,676$ ) were examined. As indicated in Table 1, although U.S. male respondents outnumbered U.S. female respondents in the 1985 cohort (56% vs. 44%), the gender representation in the 1995 cohort was roughly equal. In contrast to the 1985 cohort, U.S. female respondents in the 2000 cohort outnumbered their male counterparts (52% vs. 48%), reflecting the general national trend that women are making gains in college participation and degree attainment. Excluding roughly 2% of students across cohorts who did not indicate their race or ethnicity, the study indicated that there were approximately 14% non-Caucasian students in the 1985 cohort, 28% in the 1995 cohort, and 33% in the 2000 cohort. As in the cohort population, the sample representation of students of color was more than doubled in the 2000 cohort when compared with that of the 1985 cohort, with a notable, triple increase of Asian students. Also, social science majors outnumbered any other majors. The sample representation by gender, race or ethnicity, and major field reflected on the whole the general characteristics of the cohort population.

Table 1

*Characteristics of Respondents and Degree of International Interaction by Cohort*

	Characteristics of Respondents			$\chi^2$		
	Cohort 1985	Cohort 1995	Cohort 2000			
Gender				26.59**		
Men	56.0%	49.6%	47.5%			
Women	44.0%	50.4%	52.5%			
Race/ethnicity				176.83**		
Asian	6.8%	17.2%	19.5%			
African American	4.4%	6.2%	6.9%			
Hispanic	3.4%	5.2%	6.9%			
Caucasian	83.6%	69.9%	65.0%			
Other	1.8%	1.5%	1.7%			
Major field				33.64**		
Humanities	12.7%	13.4%	11.1%			
Social sciences	31.2%	30.5%	32.8%			
Natural sciences	15.9%	18.8%	19.2%			
Engineering	19.5%	13.8%	15.0%			
Other	20.7%	23.5%	21.9%			
<i>N</i>	1494	1993	2189			
	Degree of International Interaction by Cohort			$\chi^2$		
	Cohort 1985	Cohort 1995	Cohort 2000			
Degree of international interaction				80.53**		
None	3.5%	1.9%	1.5%			
Little	29.5%	23.4%	20.0%			
Some	43.2%	45.2%	44.8%			
Substantial	23.8%	29.5%	33.7%			
Mean Comparisons of International Interaction by Cohort						
	Cohort 1985		Cohort 1995		Cohort 2000	
	<i>N</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
<i>F</i>	1494	2.87 (0.81) <sup>ac</sup>	1993	3.02 (0.78) <sup>bc</sup>	2189	3.11 (0.77) <sup>ab</sup>
				39.43**		

Note. One-way ANOVAs were used for mean comparisons. *Post hoc* Dunnett T3 results: a, b, and c indicate the pairs of groups significantly different at  $p < .01$ , with a = Cohort 1985 vs. Cohort 2000, b = Cohort 1995 vs. Cohort 2000, and c = Cohort 1985 vs. Cohort 1995.

\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*  $p < .001$ .



## Variables and Analytical Procedures

The primary dependent variable of this study was students' assessment of their alma mater's contribution to their development in 21 areas. Although we referred to self-reported gains in abilities in the 21 areas as "skill development," most of the items included actually involve complex development of not only intellectual and practical competence but also social and leadership capacity, covering both cognitive and affective college outcomes. To examine these areas' internal structure, we conducted an exploratory, principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation, which identified four factors, accounting for roughly 53% of the total variance (Table 2): (a) General Education (Cronbach's alpha = .78), (b) Leadership Skills and Personal Development (Cronbach's alpha = .77), (c) Intellectual Development (Cronbach's alpha = .75), and (d) Science Literacy (Cronbach's alpha = .67). When appropriate, these four scale variables were used as the primary dependent variables in regression analysis.

The key independent variables of this study comprised two sets of variables. The first set included student demographic characteristics, such as race, gender, major field, and year of graduation, and the second set consisted of peer interactions, questioning beliefs, and involvement in college activities. The variable "questioning beliefs" was made up of the total number of topics students seriously questioned while in college. By taking account of these possible, influential factors, we hoped to accurately characterize the unique contribution of international interaction to skill development. For our analyses, we grouped respondents into three broad categories based on their responses to the question on international interaction: (a) none or little, (b) some, and (c) substantial. When reporting the findings, we referred to, for brevity, U.S. students who indicated having none or little international interaction as non-interactive U.S. students; U.S. students who had some international interaction as somewhat interactive U.S. students; and U.S. students who reported having substantial international interaction as highly interactive U.S. students.

To answer the first research question, we performed Chi-square tests and ANOVAs to determine significant differences. In addressing the second research question, as multiple groups were involved and the results of Levene's test showed unequal group variances in most cases, we conducted ANOVA analyses, followed by the Dunnett T3 post hoc tests for group comparisons because it was considered robust to the analysis of unequal variances (Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2005). To reduce the risk of a Type 1 error that tended to accumulate over a series of post hoc tests, we used the alpha level  $p < .01$  to determine significant differences. Finally, to answer the third research question, we controlled for students' personal attributes, cohort effects, and campus differences and performed multiple regression analyses to identify significant factors likely to promote international interaction.

## Major Findings

### Extent of International Interaction

Overall, approximately 67% of U.S. respondents in the 1985 cohort reported having some or substantial international interaction, whereas 75% in the 1995 cohort and 79% in the 2000 cohort reported so (Table 1). In comparison to the 1985 cohort, the percentage of highly interactive U.S. students in recent cohorts increased significantly by 6–14% (up from 24% in the 1985 cohort to 30% and 34% in the 1995 and 2000 cohorts, respectively),  $\chi^2(4, n = 5676) = 80.53, p < .001$ . To examine the magnitude of the effect, we calculated Cohen's (1988)  $d$  using the mean difference divided by the pooled standard deviation, and the results showed effect sizes ranging from 0.12 to 0.30. Also, logistic regression showed that with more international students on campus, the odds of U.S. students in the 1995 and 2000 cohorts engaging in substantial international interaction

increased considerably, approximately 1.4 and 1.6 times as great as the odds for corresponding U.S. students in the 1985 cohort, respectively.

### **Questioning Beliefs**

As indicated by the higher average number of topics students questioned during college, highly interactive U.S. students across three cohorts appeared far more likely than their non-interactive U.S. peers to have widely challenged the belief and value systems of society as well as their own (Table 3). Particularly noteworthy, a significantly larger proportion of highly interactive U.S. students in the 2000 cohort not only seriously questioned their political beliefs, but also challenged their beliefs about other religions, other races or ethnicities, and people with other sexual orientations, than did their non-interactive peers.

### **Skill Development**

In comparison to non-interactive U.S. students, highly interactive U.S. students indicated significantly higher levels of skill development in 9 areas across all cohorts (Table 2): (a) reading or speaking a foreign language; (b) relating well to people of different races, nations, or religions; (c) acquiring new skills and knowledge independently; (d) formulating creative or original ideas or solutions; (e) synthesizing and integrating ideas and information; (f) achieving quantitative abilities; (g) understanding the role of science and technology in society; (h) using computers; and (i) gaining in-depth knowledge of a field. The effect sizes for the 9 areas ranged from 0.20 to 0.73. Also, somewhat interactive U.S. students reported higher levels of engagement in 4 of the aforementioned areas (i.e., b, d, g, and h) than non-interactive U.S. students across all cohorts.

Student skill development was influenced by a variety of factors, including personal characteristics, peer interaction, and participation in academic and extracurricular activities (Table 4). Notably, with the control for gender, race or ethnicity, major field, and cohort, international interaction was significantly positively associated with general education ( $\beta = .08, p < .001$ ), leadership skills ( $\beta = .08, p < .001$ ), intellectual development ( $\beta = .06, p < .001$ ), science literacy ( $\beta = .08, p < .001$ ), and total gains ( $\beta = .10, p < .001$ ). Also, questioning beliefs was correlated with all the outcome categories except science literacy.

### **Major Predictors**

International interaction was significantly correlated with gender and cohort (Table 5). Among academic activities, engagement in coursework outside the major ( $\beta = .05, p < .001$ ), contact with faculty outside class ( $\beta = .06, p < .001$ ), and study abroad ( $\beta = .04, p < .01$ ) contributed positively to international interaction. Of extracurricular activities, involvement in ethnic or cultural clubs or organizations ( $\beta = .04, p < .01$ ) and visiting speakers ( $\beta = .09, p < .001$ ) made positive contributions to international interaction. Participation in a fraternity or sorority displayed, however, a negative association with international interaction ( $\beta = -.07, p < .001$ ). With the control for gender, race or ethnicity, major field, cohort, and level of participation in academic and extracurricular activities and on-campus employment, individual campus also emerged as a significant predictor of international interaction, suggesting the vital role the institutional environment played in fostering international interaction.

**TABLE 2**  
**Factor Structure of Skill Development Items and Comparisons of Skill Development by Degree of International Interaction**

Factor Structure of Skill Development Items	Factor Loadings	Comparisons of Skill Development by Degree of International Interaction								
		Cohort 1985			Cohort 1995			Cohort 2000		
Skill Development Scale Label and Loading Items		None or Little ( <i>n</i> = 451) <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Some ( <i>n</i> = 582) <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Substantial ( <i>n</i> = 335) <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	None or Little ( <i>n</i> = 455) <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Some ( <i>n</i> = 834) <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Substantial ( <i>n</i> = 534) <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	None or Little ( <i>n</i> = 422) <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Some ( <i>n</i> = 882) <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Substantial ( <i>n</i> = 671) <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )
<b>General Education</b>										
Acquire broad knowledge in the arts and sciences	.75	3.75 (1.07)	3.86 (1.03)	3.69 (1.20)	3.82 (0.97)	3.85 (1.02)	3.90 (1.07)	3.81 (0.97)	3.87 (0.98)	3.93 (1.01)
Appreciate art, literature, music, drama	.71	3.57 (1.18)	3.67 (1.15)	3.48 (1.27)	3.58 (1.15)	3.70 (1.13)	3.69 (1.22)	3.40 (1.14) <sup>bc</sup>	3.65 (1.10) <sup>c</sup>	3.69 (1.17) <sup>a</sup>
Place current problems in historical perspective	.69	3.45 (1.12)	3.56 (1.17)	3.44 (1.26)	3.43 (1.15) <sup>bc</sup>	3.64 (1.10) <sup>c</sup>	3.67 (1.22) <sup>a</sup>	3.52 (1.15)	3.47 (1.16) <sup>b</sup>	3.68 (1.16) <sup>b</sup>
Develop an awareness of social problems	.68	3.01 (1.11)	3.14 (1.07)	3.03 (1.21)	3.20 (1.09) <sup>bc</sup>	3.39 (1.10) <sup>c</sup>	3.45 (1.22) <sup>a</sup>	3.05 (1.13) <sup>bc</sup>	3.26 (1.08) <sup>c</sup>	3.37 (1.17) <sup>a</sup>
Read or speak a foreign language	.52	2.28 (1.27) <sup>a</sup>	2.39 (1.29)	2.58 (1.36) <sup>a</sup>	2.54 (1.28) <sup>a</sup>	2.65 (1.32)	2.84 (1.39) <sup>a</sup>	2.41 (1.40) <sup>a</sup>	2.60 (1.30) <sup>b</sup>	2.83 (1.43) <sup>ab</sup>
Identify moral and ethical issues	.48	2.84 (1.09)	2.94 (1.08)	2.86 (1.24)	2.84 (1.08) <sup>a</sup>	3.00 (1.06)	3.15 (1.10) <sup>a</sup>	2.76 (1.10) <sup>bc</sup>	2.96 (1.08) <sup>c</sup>	3.06 (1.20) <sup>a</sup>
<b>Leadership Skills and Personal Development</b>										
Function effectively as a member of a team	.76	2.80 (1.13)	2.79 (1.09)	2.87 (1.11)	2.96 (1.09)	3.10 (1.08)	3.09 (1.13)	3.04 (1.17) <sup>bc</sup>	3.24 (1.13) <sup>c</sup>	3.28 (1.16) <sup>a</sup>
Lead and supervise tasks and groups of people	.72	2.55 (1.14)	2.61 (1.16)	2.61 (1.17)	2.69 (1.13) <sup>c</sup>	2.88 (1.14) <sup>c</sup>	2.84 (1.21)	2.75 (1.23) <sup>bc</sup>	2.99 (1.16) <sup>c</sup>	3.06 (1.20) <sup>a</sup>
A healthy lifestyle	.62	2.25 (1.09)	2.24 (1.05)	2.19 (1.10)	2.43 (1.14)	2.38 (1.12)	2.35 (1.14)	2.28 (1.22)	2.39 (1.11)	2.41 (1.21)
Understand myself	.59	3.09 (1.15)	3.14 (1.22)	3.11 (1.25)	3.33 (1.12)	3.47 (1.17)	3.39 (1.21)	3.28 (1.24)	3.47 (1.17)	3.47 (1.24)
Develop self-esteem, confidence	.57	3.17 (1.21)	3.18 (1.18)	3.16 (1.34)	3.22 (1.22)	3.27 (1.18)	3.30 (1.22)	3.03 (1.26) <sup>a</sup>	3.22 (1.20)	3.28 (1.28) <sup>a</sup>
Relate well to people of different races/nations	.39	2.96 (1.18) <sup>bc</sup>	3.34 (1.13) <sup>bc</sup>	3.78 (1.10) <sup>ab</sup>	3.27 (1.11) <sup>bc</sup>	3.70 (1.05) <sup>bc</sup>	4.05 (1.02) <sup>ab</sup>	3.23 (1.19) <sup>bc</sup>	3.68 (1.10) <sup>bc</sup>	3.95 (1.07) <sup>ab</sup>
<b>Intellectual Development</b>										
Acquire new skills and knowledge on own	.75	3.82 (0.99) <sup>bc</sup>	4.08 (0.91) <sup>c</sup>	4.18 (0.94) <sup>a</sup>	3.83 (1.06) <sup>a</sup>	3.98 (0.96)	4.09 (1.01) <sup>a</sup>	3.85 (1.00) <sup>a</sup>	4.00 (0.94)	4.14 (0.98) <sup>a</sup>
Formulate creative and original ideas	.73	3.47 (1.00) <sup>bc</sup>	3.76 (1.01) <sup>c</sup>	3.87 (1.06) <sup>a</sup>	3.48 (1.01) <sup>bc</sup>	3.66 (1.04) <sup>bc</sup>	3.86 (1.04) <sup>ab</sup>	3.50 (1.08) <sup>bc</sup>	3.69 (1.00) <sup>bc</sup>	3.85 (1.02) <sup>ab</sup>
Synthesize and integrate ideas and information	.63	3.98 (0.88) <sup>bc</sup>	4.16 (0.86) <sup>c</sup>	4.18 (0.95) <sup>a</sup>	3.94 (0.91) <sup>a</sup>	4.05 (0.87) <sup>b</sup>	4.23 (0.89) <sup>ab</sup>	3.95 (0.94) <sup>a</sup>	4.05 (0.87)	4.16 (0.92) <sup>a</sup>
Communicate well orally	.51	2.99 (1.12)	3.12 (1.13)	2.93 (1.25)	3.05 (1.10)	3.19 (1.12)	3.13 (1.24)	3.03 (1.17) <sup>a</sup>	3.16 (1.12)	3.25 (1.19) <sup>a</sup>
Write effectively	.46	3.63 (1.15)	3.74 (1.12)	3.52 (1.24)	3.75 (1.10)	3.77 (1.08)	3.71 (1.17)	3.69 (1.14)	3.81 (1.09)	3.78 (1.13)
<b>Science Literacy</b>										
Quantitative abilities	.75	3.11 (1.29) <sup>a</sup>	3.32 (1.24) <sup>b</sup>	3.71 (1.29) <sup>ab</sup>	2.95 (1.31) <sup>bc</sup>	3.18 (1.30) <sup>bc</sup>	3.46 (1.31) <sup>ab</sup>	3.15 (1.35) <sup>a</sup>	3.32 (1.26) <sup>b</sup>	3.57 (1.29) <sup>ab</sup>
Understand the role of science and technology	.66	2.86 (1.14) <sup>bc</sup>	3.21 (1.10) <sup>c</sup>	3.23 (1.20) <sup>a</sup>	2.84 (1.12) <sup>bc</sup>	3.05 (1.10) <sup>bc</sup>	3.33 (1.19) <sup>ab</sup>	2.97 (1.12) <sup>bc</sup>	3.25 (1.05) <sup>c</sup>	3.38 (1.15) <sup>a</sup>
Use computers	.63	2.30 (1.32) <sup>bc</sup>	2.59 (1.37) <sup>bc</sup>	2.95 (1.44) <sup>ab</sup>	2.62 (1.28) <sup>bc</sup>	2.92 (1.26) <sup>bc</sup>	3.18 (1.32) <sup>ab</sup>	3.26 (1.22) <sup>bc</sup>	3.53 (1.19) <sup>c</sup>	3.59 (1.24) <sup>a</sup>
Gain in-depth knowledge of a field	.54	3.59 (1.11) <sup>a</sup>	3.79 (1.09)	3.94 (1.09) <sup>a</sup>	3.49 (1.12) <sup>a</sup>	3.61 (1.12)	3.73 (1.15) <sup>a</sup>	3.54 (1.13) <sup>a</sup>	3.68 (1.09)	3.82 (1.11) <sup>a</sup>

Note. One-way ANOVAs were used for mean comparisons of skill development. Post hoc Dunnett T3 results: a, b, and c indicate the pairs of groups significantly different at  $p < .01$ , with a = Substantial vs. None or Little, b = Substantial vs. Some, and c = Some vs. None or Little.

TABLE 3

## Percent of Students Who Seriously Questioned Their Beliefs or Values during College by Degree of International Interaction

	Cohort 1985				Cohort 1995				Cohort 2000			
	None or Little	Some	Substantial	$\chi^2$	None or Little	Some	Substantial	$\chi^2$	None or Little	Some	Substantial	$\chi^2$
1. Own political beliefs	51.3%	53.7%	61.5%	9.10*	54.3%	57.6%	64.8%	13.55**	52.5%	57.0%	62.7%	13.00**
2. Own religious beliefs	44.7%	45.9%	51.0%	3.58	44.5%	45.1%	49.7%	3.92	41.4%	48.2%	47.9%	6.66
3. Own moral ethical values	45.9%	44.5%	48.4%	1.43	47.0%	48.9%	55.7%	9.63*	48.3%	52.7%	55.9%	6.64
4. Beliefs about nature of humans or society	57.5%	64.3%	65.0%	7.01	63.4%	66.9%	71.6%	8.57	63.0%	67.2%	71.1%	8.56
5. Beliefs about other religions	50.9%	57.5%	60.9%	9.02*	53.0%	57.3%	64.2%	14.51**	53.5%	59.7%	64.9%	15.58**
6. Beliefs about other races or ethnicities	40.3%	45.1%	48.9%	6.18	51.8%	52.4%	57.8%	5.34	45.7%	51.1%	56.7%	14.12**
7. Beliefs about people with other sexual orientations	47.0%	56.2%	56.2%	11.08*	53.3%	61.4%	64.0%	14.01**	46.5%	53.3%	58.2%	15.83**

	Cohort 1985				Cohort 1995				Cohort 2000			
	None or Little (n = 476)	Some (n = 626)	Substantial (n = 342)	F	None or Little (n = 487)	Some (n = 875)	Substantial (n = 575)	F	None or Little (n = 459)	Some (n = 965)	Substantial (n = 722)	F
Number of Beliefs Questioned	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)		M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)		M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	
Questioned	3.39 (2.32) <sup>a</sup>	3.67 (2.27)	3.89 (2.41) <sup>a</sup>	4.76*	3.65 (2.32) <sup>a</sup>	3.89 (2.34) <sup>b</sup>	4.29 (2.34) <sup>ab</sup>	10.49**	3.50 (2.26) <sup>bc</sup>	3.90 (2.36) <sup>c</sup>	4.17 (2.25) <sup>a</sup>	11.91**

Note. The "Number of Beliefs Questioned" referred to the total number of topics students seriously questioned while in college. One-way ANOVAs were used for mean comparisons. Post hoc Dunnett T3 results: a, b, and c indicate the pairs of groups significantly different at  $p < .01$ , with a = Substantial vs. None or Little, b = Substantial vs. Some, and c = Some vs. None or Little.

\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*  $p < .001$



Table 4

*Standardized Regression Coefficients for Analyses on the Impact of International Interaction and Questioning Beliefs on Skill Development*

Independent Variables	Skill Development				
	General Education	Leadership Skills	Intellectual Development	Science Literacy	Total Gains
Interaction with International Students	.08**	.08**	.06**	.08**	.10**
Number of Beliefs Questioned	.15**	.06**	.07**	.02	.11**
Academic Activities	.18**	.17**	.27**	.24**	.28**
Extracurricular Activities	.14**	.23**	.10**	.03	.18**
Employment	-.04	-.07**	-.04	.00	-.05**
Gender (Male)					
Female	.05**	.03	.02	-.07**	.02
Race/Ethnicity (Caucasian)					
Asian	.02	.05**	-.01	.04**	.04*
African American	.00	-.02	.03	.01	.00
Hispanic	.05**	-.00	.03	.01	.03
Major Field (Humanities)					
Social Science	.02	.05*	.01	.02	.03
Natural Science	-.10**	.01	-.08**	.24**	.01
Engineering	-.35**	-.01	-.10**	.38**	-.06**
Cohort (Cohort 1985)					
Cohort 1995	.03	.08**	-.03	-.02	.03
Cohort 2000	-.03	.08**	-.06*	.08**	.03
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.25**	.14**	.13**	.28**	.20**

*Note.* Regression coding schemes: (a) Gender: female = 1, male = 0; (b) Race/ethnicity: African-American = 1, Asian = 1, Hispanic = 1, and Caucasian = 0; (c) Major Field: Social Science = 1, Natural Science = 1, Engineering = 1, and Humanities = 0; and (d) Cohort: Cohort 1995 = 1, Cohort 2000 = 1, and Cohort 1985 = 0. Male, Caucasian, Humanities, and Cohort 1985 were used as comparison groups for gender, race/ethnicity, major field, and cohort, respectively. Total Gains referred to sum of skill development.

\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 5

## Standardized Regression Coefficients on Factors That Contribute to International Interaction

Variable Blocks	Standardized Regression Coefficients				$B^{\dagger}$		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4			
Background	Female	-.10**	-.10**	-.11**	-.11**	-.17	
	Asian	-.00	-.02	-.02	-.04	-.08	
	African American	-.01	-.01	-.02	-.03	-.10	
	Hispanic	.03	-.01	-.01	-.01	-.04	
	Social Sciences	-.00	-.00	-.00	.01	.02	
	Natural Sciences	.04	.04	.05*	.04	.08	
	Engineering	.07**	.09**	.08**	.02	.05	
	Cohort 1995	.11**	.12**	.12**	.13**	.21	
	Cohort 2000	.14**	.14**	.14**	.13**	.21	
Academic Activities	Coursework in major	-.01	.01	.01	.02	.02	
	Coursework outside major	.08**	.06**	.07**	.05**	.05	
	Internships	.02	.02	.01	-.00	-.00	
	Independent study	.03	.03	.02	.02	.01	
	Faculty research	.05*	.06**	.05*	.01	.01	
	Faculty contact outside class	.06**	.04	.04	.06**	.05	
	Interaction with pre-major advisor	.04*	.04	.04	.02	.02	
	Interaction with major advisor	.00	-.00	.00	-.01	-.01	
	Contact with campus staff	.07**	.05*	.03	.03	.02	
	Study abroad	-.03	-.02	-.01	.04*	.02	
	Off-campus study in the U.S.	-.02	-.02	-.02	-.01	-.01	
	Extracurricular Activities	Student or campus government		-.02	-.02	-.03	-.02
		Intercollegiate athletics		.03	.03	.01	.01
Intramural sports			.04	.03	.01	.01	
Student publications			.01	.01	.00	.00	
Performing arts or music			.03	.03	.01	.01	
Political organization or club			.02	.02	.01	.01	
Ethnic or cultural club			.06**	.05*	.04*	.03	
Community service			-.01	-.02	.01	.01	
Fraternity or sorority			-.09**	-.09**	-.07**	-.04	
Religious groups or activity			.01	.01	.02	.01	
Residential hall life			.02	.02	.04	.02	
Visiting speakers			.07**	.07**	.09**	.07	
Employment	On-campus employment			.07**	.07**	.04	
	Off-campus employment			.05**	.03	.02	
Campus	Campus A				.30**	.67	
	Campus B				.22**	.37	
	Campus C				.13**	.23	
$R^2$	.073	.093	.101	.155			
Change in $R^2$	.073**	.020**	.008**	.055**			
$F$	18.61**	15.13**	15.69**	23.56**			
$N$	4516						

Note. Regression coding schemes: (a) Gender: female = 1, male = 0; (b) Race/ethnicity: African-American = 1, Asian = 1, Hispanic = 1, and Caucasian = 0; (c) Major Field: Social Science = 1, Natural Science = 1, Engineering = 1, and Humanities = 0; (d) Cohort: Cohort 1995 = 1, Cohort 2000 = 1, and Cohort 1985 = 0; and (e) Campus: Campus A = 1, Campus B = 1, Campus C = 1, and Campus D = 0. Male, Caucasian, Humanities, Cohort 1985, and Campus D were used as comparison groups for gender, race/ethnicity, major field, cohort, and campus, respectively.

†Unstandardized coefficients for Model 4.

\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*  $p < .001$ .

## Discussion

Our findings suggest that among other factors, with more international students on campus, U.S. students were more likely to have opportunities to engage in international interaction and encounter various ideas and perspectives sharply different from their own both inside and outside the classroom (Astin, 1993; Chang, 1996). Also, the findings support previous research, which documented that students who engaged in frequent interactions with diverse peers showed a greater openness to diverse perspectives and a willingness to challenge their own beliefs (Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn, & Terenzini, 1996). Importantly, this study shows that substantial international interaction contributed to U.S. students' serious questioning of their beliefs and values. Further analyses revealed that students' questioning their beliefs and values was positively related to their acquisition of general education, leadership skills, and intellectual development.

Most notably, our study shows that substantial international interaction was positively correlated with U.S. students' perceived skill development in a wide range of areas across three cohorts. When identifying factors likely to contribute to international interaction in the regression analysis, we found that international interaction was significantly correlated with students' personal attributes. Consistent with the study by Hu and Kuh (2003), this study shows that even with the control for major field, male U.S. students were more likely than their female counterparts to interact with international students. Also, the 1995 and 2000 cohorts were more likely than the 1985 cohort to engage in international interaction. This increased international interaction is, as this study suggests, strongly associated with a larger enrollment of international students and institutions' commitment to enriching students' collegiate experiences. Of course, this finding by no means implies that the mere presence of more international students on college campuses will automatically lead to substantial interaction between U.S. students and their international peers. Rather, it underscores the important role institutions have in leveraging greater international diversity and other forms of diversity as well. As revealed by the regression analysis, college campus was a robust predictor of international interaction. With the campus environment now more diverse than ever before, institutions should promote a welcoming, caring, and productive learning environment and foster opportunities for meaningful, substantial interactions in order to enhance students' educational experiences.

Our analysis also reveals that both academic and extracurricular activities provided important contexts for international interaction to occur. Among the academic activities, most notably, engagement in coursework outside the major emerged as a consistent, solid booster for international interaction. This is mainly because supporting courses from outside the department sponsoring the major are more often designed expressly to foster interaction across cultural and social boundaries and focus on issues of identity, diversity, globalization, and power. Taking these courses appears to have provided students with not only opportunities for interacting across disciplines but also chances for interacting across cultures.

Moreover, our analysis shows that contact with faculty outside class was significantly correlated with international interaction. Informal contact between students and faculty with intellectual substance and depth has been shown to have substantial impact on student learning, personal development, and the amount of effort they devoted to other educational activities (Kuh & Hu, 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Apparently, operating at a more personal level and covering a broader range of issues, informal contacts with faculty outside the classroom might have strongly stimulated students' active engagement in college activities and extensive interaction with international students.

Furthermore, our analysis demonstrates that study abroad was positively associated with international interaction. Study abroad benefits undergraduates across a number of dimensions,

including greater intercultural awareness, greater tolerance and acceptance of others, increased interest in international economic, political, and cross-cultural issues, higher commitment to peace and international cooperation, and greater friendliness for visiting foreign nationals (Geelhoed et al., 2003; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Indeed, as noted by Geelhoed et al., 12 of the 16 host student participants in their peer-pairing program had previously studied or traveled abroad and indicated a high level of comfort with international students. Apparently, U.S. students' previous international experiences had both equipped and motivated them to find common ground for engagement in substantial interaction across cultures.

Finally, our analysis reveals that involvement in ethnic or cultural clubs or organizations, visiting speakers, and on-campus employment provided U.S. students with opportunities for interacting across cultural boundaries. Participating in cultural clubs or organizations offers opportunities for students to meet new people, learn about various cultures, and become cognizant about and connected with the campus environment (Baxter Magolda, 1992) and positively affects students' intellectual and psychosocial development, multicultural competence, interpersonal skills, and leadership capabilities (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Also, attending visiting speakers series, which are used on many university campuses, helps to bring alive the beliefs and theories studied in the classroom and builds strong connections with issues and challenges in the real world, and having a job on campus provides another way for students to get involved in campus life. Through participation in these and also many other activities during their undergraduate years, students are likely to encounter people with sharply differing backgrounds, ideas, and perspectives. This type of encounter produces cognitive disequilibrium, dissonance, or incongruity, which promotes mental activity and cognitive growth (Piaget, 1985). As international students tend to have a stronger background in math and science (Moore, 2008), engaging in substantial interaction with international peers might also benefit U.S. students in the development of their quantitative abilities and computer skills. Considered in conjunction with these research findings, small wonder that highly interactive U.S. students reported greater development in a wide range of areas, providing strong evidence that international diversity supports not only the developmental goals of higher education but also the intellectual and social goals of internationalization.

### **Limitations**

This study has several limitations. First, as the three graduating cohorts were 5, 10, and 20 years apart, events that occurred during these years as well as possible age and maturational differences and different sociopolitical environments might have had positive or negative impact on former students' retrospective perceptions of their previous educational experience. Second, using the 2005 alumni survey data, this study did not examine the changes that might have happened during the intervening years, which may affect people's perceptions. Third, this study relied mainly on former students' self-reported improvement in skill development rather than on more objective measures of student learning such as standardized test scores. Fourth, this study focused on the characteristics of former students in private, highly selective, and residential research institutions. As student academic backgrounds and educational experiences may vary with types of institutions, the international interaction patterns at other types of institutions may be somewhat different. Finally, this study did not examine the effects of interacting with U.S. students on international students' skill development, nor did it investigate with which international cultural groups U.S. students interacted.

As some regions or countries have cultures or educational systems sharply different from those of the U.S., future research may examine the interaction patterns of both U.S. and international students and identify the unique impact of interacting with specific international cultural groups. Doing so may yield interesting information that would be useful in guiding the design of campus programs to foster higher levels of international interaction.



## **Implications**

While it is encouraging to note that increasingly more U.S. students in recent cohorts engaged in substantial international interaction in our sample, we also found that roughly 22-25% of U.S. students in recent cohorts indicated having none or little international interaction. Apparently, there is still a need for institutions to strengthen programs to foster greater international interaction. To stimulate discussion among faculty, administrators, and student affairs professionals on strategies for promoting beneficial international interaction and increasing gains in international diversity that institutions have achieved in recent years, we offer a few recommendations below.

First, institutions should reinforce faculty's commitment and engagement with undergraduates. As contact with faculty outside class was significantly related to international interaction, enhancing faculty-student interaction is of vital importance to leveraging the increasing representation of international students on U.S. domestic campuses for greater intellectual growth of all students, domestic and foreign alike. Through their roles as undergraduate instructors and advisors, faculty members can promote international interaction, both directly or intentionally and indirectly or serendipitously. Hence institutions can encourage faculty members, for instance, to take a more proactive role in helping students develop a positive attitude toward international interaction and in advising clubs or organizations to be more open and inclusive. Also, institutions can promote student participation in international activities by calling upon faculty members to attend such activities together with students.

Second, as coursework outside the major was positively correlated with international interaction, institutions should underscore the importance of crossing disciplinary boundaries in the curriculum and enlist faculty's help in designing interdisciplinary courses or programs. Engaging students in interaction across disciplines will not only likely foster integrative learning but also likely produce interdisciplinary perspectives and create original solutions to problems.

Third, as depth of interaction can play a decisive role in students' collegiate experience, institutions should encourage deep and collaborative interactions between U.S. and international students. To this end, faculty and student affairs professionals may think about strengthening both groups of students' involvement with the campus community via sponsoring, for instance, campus cultural events and debates on global issues of mutual interest. Furthermore, institutions can encourage faculty to place greater emphasis on group or cooperative course projects involving both U.S. and international students in order to create a natural environment conducive to enhancing group process abilities, fostering leadership skills, and developing multiple perspectives. When designing such projects, however, faculty should heed the timeframe for the projects and make it sufficiently long for culturally different participants to overcome initial difficulties and enjoy the ultimate benefits of cultural diversity (Summers & Volet, 2008).

Fourth, as study abroad is a significant predictor of international interaction, institutions may bring international students and U.S. students who have studied abroad together to share their experiences and knowledge with other students who are unable to participate in study abroad programs due to various reasons. As the number of students able to study abroad is still extremely small on many campuses, doing so can increase intercultural awareness and foster campus international interaction on a larger scale. For better results, intercultural communication experts should be invited to guide such talks.

Fifth, institutions should encourage students to extend their social activities beyond participation in only culturally homogenous social groups. As participation in a fraternity or sorority was negatively associated with international interaction, Greek letter organizations may be encouraged to examine the extent to which their group personae deter international student

participation or encourage assimilation of differing cultures to their group identity rather than appreciation of difference and engagement on a mutually beneficial footing. Also, in our sample, while 54-65% of international respondents across three cohorts participated in ethnic or cultural clubs or organizations, only 20-31% of U.S. respondents did so. To enable U.S. students to gain more opportunities for international interaction, institutions may encourage them to attend campus cultural events or better to join cultural and service-oriented groups (Trice, 2004). Involvement in more cultural clubs or organizations could help students find a place to belong and develop friendships with individuals who know what it is like to be different from everyone else. The social skills gained through such involvement could also be invaluable for all participants. Meanwhile, international students should be encouraged to expand their friendship networks beyond their bonds with mainly fellow citizens or students from other nations (Bochner, Hutnik, & Furnham, 1985) and become more actively involved in campus activities.

Finally, institutions should regularly evaluate their existent programs to identify areas for further improvement and intentionally implement new initiatives to foster substantial international interaction. Studies have shown that international students desired more intercultural interaction than they had actually experienced (Ward, 2001) and cited “lack of opportunities to interact with U.S. students” as the biggest barrier to the development of meaningful intercultural relationships (Yang, Teraoka, Eichenfield, & Audas, 1994). Research has also noted that domestic students had generally favorable perceptions of international students, but they were largely uninterested in initiating contact with their international peers (Pavel, 2006; Spencer-Rodgers, 2001; Ward, 2001). To address these issues, institutions should evaluate their residential or service programs vis-a-vis the goals of fostering international interaction, and purposefully create more and better structured opportunities for both groups of students to engage in substantive interaction. To stimulate student interest, institutions may proactively promote the potentially mutual benefits of substantial international interaction to both groups of students and communicate evidence for meaningful links with their educational and professional goals. Also, providing both groups of students with essential intercultural communication skills will likely reduce their stress, increase their self-confidence in interacting across cultures, and promote more active involvement in these and other campus activities. Doing so will not only assist international students in acquiring higher levels of proficiency in the English language, gain deeper understanding of the unwritten codes of the host culture, and better handle social, psychological, and academic challenges, but it will also help U.S. students reinforce their language skills, strengthen their intercultural communicative competence, and enable them to function more effectively in an increasingly globalized world.

### **Conclusion**

Through the analysis of alumni survey data from three graduating cohorts, this study examined the influence of interaction with international students on U.S. students’ college outcomes and explored factors that helped to promote international interaction on college campuses. The findings indicate that international interaction was consistently and positively correlated with college outcomes and that U.S. students who interacted extensively with international students reported higher levels of engagement in college activities, such as coursework outside the major, contact with faculty outside class, ethnic or cultural clubs or organizations, and visiting speakers. The consistent patterns this study has identified about the effects of international interaction across three cohorts provide clear and strong evidence of the educational benefits of international interaction. To maximize the gains in international diversity institutions have achieved in recent years, institutions should intentionally implement new initiatives to foster greater interaction across cultures.

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## Faculty Advisors' Experiences with International Graduate Students

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### Abstract

*The current study explored the experiences of faculty advisors working with international graduate students (IGS). Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and a demographic survey and was analyzed using open, axial, and selective coding strategies. Three central categories emerged from the analysis: (a) advisors' perceptions of IGS, (b) lessons learned by advisors, and (c) indicators of success. A model for advisors' experiences emerged using the data gathered. Overall, advisors reported positive experiences with current and former advisees. Advisor perceptions' of IGS were used to develop strategies and approaches that they believe enhance their experiences as well as the advisees' experiences. At the core of the Advisor Experiences Model are variables that convey success regarding the relationship between advisors and their IGS. These variables are: (a) sustained relationships and (b) student success rates. Advisors all reported that the sustained relationship is one of the most rewarding aspects of being an IGS advisor.*

**Keywords:** international graduate student; multicultural counseling; advisor advisee relationship

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For the 2010/2011 academic school year, there were 723,277 international students studying in the United States (Institute of International Education, 2010/2011). This was a 4.7 percent increase from the previous academic year's enrollment (Institute of International Education, 2010/2011). The current trend suggests that international student enrollment in the United States appears to be increasing with each passing academic year (Institute of International Education, 1948-2011). Institutions should prepare to help these students with different needs since the literature suggests that they face many obstacles once they arrived at their respective American universities and colleges (Mori, 2000; Olivas & Li, 2006; Rice, Choi, Zhang, Villegas, Ye, Anderson, Nestic, & Bigler, 2009). Upon their arrival at their universities and colleges, international students have to adjust to a new culture as well as adjusting to different academic demands and expectations than they were accustomed to (Olivas & Li, 2006). Other difficulties include language barriers, alienation, isolation, discrimination, homesickness, and lack of social support (Bevis & Lucas, 2007; Kilinc & Granello, 2003; Klomegah, 2006; Lee & Rice, 2007; Perrucci & Hu, 1995; Sumer, Poyrazli, & Grahame, 2008). In a review of the literature, Mori (2000) listed language barrier as the "most significant prevalent problem for most international students" (p.137). In addition, The Test of English as Foreign Language (TOEFL) might not serve as an accurate indicator of international students' verbal communication skills (Mori, 2000). This suggests that international students who meet the minimum TOEFL score for admission into a U.S. university or college might not have enough proficiency to achieve success. Language proficiency is an important component of academic success and, without it, international students' academic performance will be affected. This will affect their ability to comprehend lectures and complete their readings. It may take

international students longer to complete reading assignments due to difficulty with understanding the language (Mori, 2000). In addition to academic performance, language proficiency can affect mental health. Sumer, Poyrazli, and Grahame (2008) found that international students with lower levels of English proficiency reported higher levels of depression and anxiety (p. 435).

Isolation and lack of support are also issues that confront international students (Kilinc & Granello, 2003; Klomegah, 2006; Lee & Rice, 2007; and Sumer, Poyrazli, & Grahame, 2008). In a study about depression and anxiety in international students, Sumer, Poyrazli and Grahame (2008) found that social support significantly predicts depression. Lower levels of social support predict higher levels of depression in international students. Feelings of alienation, discrimination, and homesickness are also reported in international students (Kilinc & Granello, 2003; Klomegah, 2006; Lee & Rice, 2007; Perrucci & Hu, 1995; and Sumer, Poyrazli, & Grahame, 2008.) Perrucci and Hu (1995) found that perceived discrimination, to self-esteem, contact with U.S. graduate students, and perceived attitudes towards their native countries are linked to international students' satisfaction on U.S. campuses. This suggests the importance of the social environment and social context of the campus in determining international students' levels of satisfaction on U.S. campuses. In addition to social support and language proficiency, the relationship with the faculty advisor has been shown to increase satisfaction with academic experiences (Rice et al., 2009; Zhao, Golde, & McCormick, 2007). This relationship is significant for international graduate students (IGS) since many of their funding and dissertation work depends on this relationship (Rice et al., 2009). IGS sometimes hesitate to voice their concerns to their graduate advisors for fear of reprisal. They might remain with an advisor even though they have no interest in the research. Some IGS stay with their advisors even though they perceive unfair treatments regarding long work hours and low wages. Other IGS reported abusive and prejudice behaviors by their advisors and feel that they are bullied and looked down upon (Rice, et al., 2009). Contrasting the negative experiences that some IGS have with their advisors, Rice et al. (2009) also reported some positive experiences with advisors where IGS perceived support and understanding from their advisors. In terms of emotional stress and help-seeking at a counseling center, Hyun, Quinn, Madon, and Lustig (2007) found that international students who have positive relationships with their academic advisor appear to have less stress-related or emotional problems.

Schlosser, Knox, Moskovitz, and Hill's (2003) found that counseling psychology doctoral students in positive advisor and advisee relationships reported frequent meetings and discussions about research, theses and dissertation, being encouraged to participate in more professional conferences, and getting support from their advisors. Knox, Schlosser, Pruitt and Hill (2006) followed this study with another study from the advisors' perspectives. Knox et al. (2006) reported desirable traits in graduate students as perceived by advisors. These traits include being goal-directed, motivated, genuine, respectful, hard-working, reliable, and passionate about their careers. Although Knox et al. (2006) study was specific to the advisor and advisee relationship in a counseling psychology doctoral program, the components of the relationship can serve as a template to assess the relationship between advisors and international advisees (Rice et al., 2009). In addition, Zhao et al. (2007) found that students' satisfaction positively correlates with the academic advising relationship with their advisor. Students' satisfaction also positively correlates with the advisors showing an interest in their advisees' well-being, personal life, and interests. Among Korean IGS, Kim (2007) found that the relationships between advisors and advisees in terms of expectations can be problematic. Kim (2007) found that Korean IGS reported that their advisors' limited availability and indifferent attitudes are "barriers to advancing the advising relationships" (p.186). Korean IGS also reported distress in the advising relationship when their advisors do not meet their expectations of what the role of an advisor entitles. This means being attentive and available in terms of guidance throughout their academic process. This indicates how important the advisor and IGS advisee relationship is in terms of IGS satisfaction in their program and on campus. The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of faculty advisors in working with IGS.

The author hoped to ascertain the core themes that constitute an effective advisor-advisee relationship with these students. Since the study was exploratory, no theoretical framework was used as a guide, and no hypotheses were tested.

### **Method**

Grounded theory (Creswell, 2007) was utilized to identify emerging themes in the relationships between faculty advisors and international graduate students. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to gather data for analysis. Grounded theory is appropriate for the current study since there are no concrete theories about faculty advisor and international graduate student relationships. Using grounded theory could lead to proposed model that could be applicable to advisors and their international graduate student advisees. Since there are limited models and theories on advisor and international graduate advisee relationships, this study will attempt to suggest a model based on the data collected using grounding theory. Strauss and Corbin (1990) defined grounded theory as “inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents” (p. 23). In grounded theory, the interested area of study is allowed to emerge and is verified through the data collection and analysis. A well-developed grounded theory must have fit, understanding, generality, and control (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Fit refers to how the theory would match with the interested area of study. Understanding refers to the comprehension of the theory by the general population and professionals using the theory. Generality means that the theory could generalize with many groups of people and control means that there should be flexibility in the theory to accommodate for new data.

### **Participants and Procedures**

Eight faculty advisors working at a large university in a southern city in the United States were recruited. The faculty advisors were asked to participate in the study through emails containing the study information and researcher contact information. Once the advisors expressed interest in participating, the researcher contacted them through email and phone calls to set up the interviews.

The interviews were semi-structured, face to face, and lasted between 50 minutes to one hour. Before the interviews were conducted, the participants filled out a demographic survey inquiring about field of specialty, frequency of contact with IGS, amount of interaction with IGS, groups of IGS they have the most experience with, and if they have lived outside of the United States prior to their current position at the institution. All interviews were audio recorded to be transcribed for analysis.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim and emerging themes were identified by the primary researcher. After the interviews were transcribed, all the transcripts were sent to the thesis advisor, who served as the advisor for this study, and a doctoral candidate, who was also involved with the research, for further analysis. The primary researcher, the thesis advisor, and the doctoral candidate analyzed each interview and identified emerging themes on an individual basis. After this was completed, the research group, consisting of the primary research, the thesis advisor, and the doctoral candidate met to discuss the themes that each researcher had identified. The group then decided which themes were the central themes recurring in each interview. These central themes were then grouped into categories that summed up the advisors’ experiences.

### **Data Analysis**

Of the eight interviews, two were not included in the analysis because these advisors had very minimal contact with IGS in their time at the university and therefore did not meet the role criteria

of faculty advisor. The other six participants have had years of experience working with IGS and have weekly, if not daily contact, with their advisees.

Investigator triangulation was utilized and included comparing and contrasting the identified themes with themes identified in the literature (Kim, 2007; Knox et al., 2006; Rice et al., 2009; Trice, 2003; Trice, 2005) and asking an external auditor with extensive experience working with multicultural students to assist in identifying themes. Following the investigator triangulation process, open, axial, and selective coding were used to analyze the data.

Open coding was used to label and categorize the phenomenon being studied after careful examination and exploration of the data collected (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). After open coding, the data were put together in new ways as resulted from making connections between categories in axial coding. In axial coding, the researcher tried to relate the data together through the various identified categories.

After axial coding, the focus shifted to identifying the core category and relating that to the other categories identified. The relationships between the core category and subcategories were validated in selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The end result of selective coding was the integration of the categories identified in axial coding in order to form a grounded theory.

Once open, axial, and selective coding were completed, the researcher contacted the participants via email and asked them to examine the initial results. The researcher solicited participants for their feedback and comments to ensure that their perspectives were captured. Four of the six participants replied and stated that they had no objections or questions concerning the results. Two participants did not reply even after the second emails asking them for their feedback.

## **Results**

Based on the advisors' demographic information, three were foreign born and all six have lived or worked outside of the United States for prolonged periods of time, ranging from one month to 29 years. Years of experience working with IGS ranged from 10 to 36 years. The amount of contact between advisors and IGS ranged from "almost every day", "dozens", to "100 times" per semester and the number of IGS these advisors currently work with ranged from 0 to 15. The two types of IGS the advisors currently work with are graduate students and graduate research assistants. Most students and research assistants are from China, India, Taiwan, Korea, Brazil, Thailand, Japan, Mexico, and Iran. Of the six participants, three reported that they have the most international graduate students from China and India.

During the selective coding process, three central categories emerged: (a) Advisors' Perceptions of Students, (b) Lessons Learned by Advisors, and (c) Indicators of Success. To protect the identity of the six advisors, pseudonyms from P1 (participant 1) to P6 (participant 6) are utilized in this study.

### **Advisors' Perceptions of Students**

#### **International graduate students are very hard working**

All the advisors interviewed stated that IGS are very hard working. One advisor (P4) stated, "Of course it's very difficult to do doctoral work in a second language and so they have to struggle but they do a good job because they work so hard." The same advisor also affirmed a common perception that IGS are highly motivated. The advisor (P4) stated, "International students almost always [are] very highly motivated just because they have to be to be here and to be able to do what they want to do." Another advisor (P2) exemplified the perception of IGS as hard working by

stating that, "Overall, international students in terms of school work, they always work very hard." In terms of work ethics, IGS are on average "better than domestic students" according to the same advisor (P2). Another advisor (P1) stated that in terms of publishing, IGS "just work harder; [they have] more drive to publish."

It appears that a common observation all the advisors have made of IGS is that they are very hard working and driven. The advisors cited the fact that, because they are IGS, they have to be hard working in order to get to where they are currently. This strong work ethic has helped IGS find success despite the difficulties that surround them. It seems that, when compared to domestic students, IGS work hard and are more driven when it comes to their education and research.

### **International graduate students are respectful to their advisors and faculty**

IGS are respectful to their advisors and other faculty and five of the six advisors mentioned this respect in great detail. One advisor (P4) said IGS are "always super respectful and super formal compared to US students." Another advisor (P6) added "they've [IGS] have always been nice people who are respectful." One advisor (P2) stated:

The huge thing I learned, one because of culture, either Asian student or South, Central student I work together, even African student I work with or Indian student, you always learn that they're much more respectful to professors than domestic students.

In addition to their work ethics and drive to succeed in their academics, IGS are seen as being respectful to their advisors and other faculty members. This respect for advisors and faculty could be the result of the IGSs' cultural background or educational system. Having such high respect for advisors could be responsible for the strict hierarchy in the advising relationship. IGS might not feel comfortable interacting with their advisors or faculty on a casual level because of the strong respect they have for them. IGS could view their advisor or faculty at a higher level in the relationship hierarchy and, therefore, could not imagine interacting with them on a casual basis. For these reasons, IGS might feel discomfort when they are invited to join their advisor or other faculty members on casual departmental outings, outside of the academic setting. As one advisor relayed, often, they do not come or they come out of respect since they believe that declining an invitation by an advisor or faculty is a sign of disrespect. It would be interesting to get the IGS perspectives on the topic of socializing outside of the academic setting to see what their thoughts are.

### **Language barriers**

The most common problem that IGS encounter on U.S. campuses is the language barrier. All six advisors mentioned language barriers as a big challenge for IGS. One advisor (P4) observed that if IGS have difficulties, "It's probably language difficulties." Recognizing this, he confessed to being "more permissive with their written work." He added, "When they write, I can't be as critical about their writing as I want to be with the domestic students, and I'm willing to do that knowing it's a second language." One advisor (P5) noted "100% of all the students we have here are going to the international language English training." Another advisor (P3) added that in order to prepare IGS for his program at the university, there are "language proficiency standards that they need to meet. Often times, that may not be the case." One advisor (P6) noticed that language difficulty can create a lack of confidence with IGS. She noted that Asian female IGS might be proficient in English but "not confident." She (P6) stated:

At the end of formal presentations, when people start asking questions or on a job interview or something like that, the lack of confidence in their English skills, even though their English is good, sort of takes over.



The advisors' observation that IGS have difficulty with language reiterates what the literature about IGS has indicated regarding international students' difficulty with the language of their host country (Kilinc & Granello, 2003; Klomegah, 2006; Lee & Rice, 2007; Sumer, Poyrazli, & Grahame, 2008; and Rice, et al., 2009). For some students, the difficulty with English could lead to some discrimination on campus. This could be in the form of domestic students not wanting to work or interact with them. One advisor (P6) noted that, "there were some domestic students that didn't seem all that accepting of them [IGS]." This perceived discrimination on the IGS' part may lead to a lack of interaction with domestic students at an academic and social level. Another advisor (P2) observed that, "outside of school work, the whole issue would be to encourage them to interact with American students." He stated that "in [the] old days, it's easier because you don't have so many international students so [you] are forced to do it." He used himself as an example, "When I was a Ph.D. student at University X, the whole building, I was the only Chinese student so I had to speak English. I had no choice." However, since there are more international students on U.S. campuses than when he was a student, he noticed that IGS "have a lot of peers along with them so they somehow say, 'I can survive hanging out with my friends from my home country so why do I bother to do that [interaction with domestic students]." According to the advisors in this study, language barriers and perceived discrimination are contributing factors to a lack of interaction between IGS and domestic students. At the academic level, the lack of interaction between the two groups could be explained by the IGS' educational system.

### **International graduate students' educational system**

The largest groups of international students are from Asia where the educational system is different than in the United States. One frequent topic that came up during the interviews was IGS' lack of understanding of the concept of plagiarism. One advisor (P3) summarized the problem that IGS often face:

In terms of the concept of plagiarism, what does that mean? In some cultures, if it's out there, it's public information, and working on papers or doing something, they'll just think it's there for them to use and often times, may not reference it.

In the United States, this is a concern because this is considered plagiarism. The IGS' lack of knowledge about plagiarism is a reason it takes time for them to learn and incorporate this concept into their writing.

Another frequent observation that advisors noted about IGS was that they lack creativity and the ability to create new ideas. An advisor (P2) observed that, "they [IGS] all want to learn but they don't think so much about [the fact that] they have to create." The same advisor (P2) also observed that when working in groups, international students "do most of the work, but the idea will come from the domestic students who [are working] with them." One advisor (P5) noted:

A lot of students that we face, they are good students [who] take exam and get good grades, but they're not good at doing independent research. That makes the process of doing independent research thesis more difficult. So the advisor has to basically guide him or her all the time until he or she is finally on his or her own.

Another advisor (P1) added, "I've always had wonderful students who have no aims, no drive, no driving force; only when you [tell] them exactly what to do, they do. Other than that, they have no creativity." This lack of creativity may strain the relationship between advisors and students since one advisor (P1) listed "be creative, to be active, and to be thinking" as desirable characteristics of her graduate students.

All six advisors mentioned that IGS are very silent regarding their needs in the classrooms. One advisor (P2) said, “They’re [IGS] [are] always quiet in the classroom. It’s very difficult to know where they’re running into problems in their study.” He added that for Asian students and other international students with the same educational system, the objective is “go to class, [...] [go] to learn, try to memorize it, [and] go to [take the] exam.” Another advisor (P6) corroborated this observation stating that “with some of the students that come from a different culture, they expect to be lectured to and be tested.” Another advisor (P4) also observed that “if they don’t understand sometimes they act as though they do because they don’t want to impose on my time or whatever.”

This idea of imposing on the advisor or professor’s time is highlighted by another advisor (P6) who stated that “the only thing they might fail on, which is not a huge failure, is coming to me if they have something they need to have fixed.”

Overall, the advisors noticed that the strategies that IGS use as students such as rote memorization might be detrimental to their creativity and critical thinking skills, which in turn could affect their research. The advisors cited the IGSs’ educational background as a main reason for their methods of studying and thinking. Since IGSs’ studying habits and patterns are ingrained, it could be difficult for them to break away from these habits and patterns. Advisors also noted that IGS do not come to them whenever they encounter a problem in the classroom. The advisors identify this as a problematic setback for IGS success.

### **International graduate students’ needs**

International graduate students “have very little demand. If they have demand, they won’t say it,” according to an advisor (P2). The majority of advisors stated that financial difficulties are something IGS have to deal with constantly. One advisor (P5) said:

The challenge is finances. A lot of them don’t have enough money [for education] and they just come and they think the system will eventually support them somehow. They [want to] find a job but they cannot find a job.

This advisor (P5) also noted that financial worries sometimes cause IGS “stress [and] homesickness” and they “lose their concentration and their grades go down.” Some students would team up in a lab that they have no genuine interest in because of financial needs. However, as one advisor (P1) pointed out, “that adds unnecessary restraints to their relation to their advisor because advisor expect them to do things because [they’re] paying [them] and the students [have to] [do] those things because they have no other choices.”

One main area of needs that advisors noted is the financial needs of IGS. Even though they might need help in this area, the advisors also noted that they would keep silent about it. This financial stress could affect IGS concentration with their courses and research obligations, and thus affect their overall academic performance. This adds to the financial stressors that IGS face and many find themselves worrying about their academic performance as well as how they will fund their education.

### **Lessons Learned by Advisors**

Over the years, many advisors have developed successful strategies to enhance the students’ experiences on campus as well as to improve their own experiences in working with these students.

### **Personalization of the relationship**

Many advisors mentioned that they like to get to know the IGS on a personal level when they begin working with them. One advisor (P1) said, "I'd like to shake hands and get to know them personally" to "put them at ease and feel comfortable with me [...] then learn their background." Another advisor (P4) asks about the students' native country. He said, "I want to know where they're from and they always appreciate it if I've been to a place where they are." This adds some commonality between them and may help form a connection.

Personalizing the relationship also involves home visits. IGS are invited to their advisor's homes during holidays and other family get-togethers. One advisor (P3) found that "taking international students to your home really personalizes relationships" because "they get to see how you really live so to speak and the differences, just driving around the community." One advisor (P4) invites international students to his house for Easter, Christmas, and Thanksgiving and does this "just about every year." Another advisor (P2) also invited students to his house for barbecues and Christmas and Thanksgiving dinners. A third advisor (P6) stays connected with her research group by inviting them to "lunch at the end of every semester," and other Ph.D. students are invited to happy hours with their advisors and other faculty members on Fridays.

From the advisors' point of view, sharing meals with their IGS appears to be a successful method they have tried and continue doing. Another successful strategy involves inviting international students over to their houses to share with them a more personal side of U.S. culture. Opening their homes to their IGS also serves as a way to help ease IGS in the presence of their advisors outside of academic settings. Even though this appears to be a successful method, advisors should be sensitive to IGS who are uncomfortable with these types of invitations due to their perception of the hierarchy of the advisor and advisee relationship.

### **Need for cultural awareness**

The advisors interviewed have all visited, lived, or worked outside of the United States. This helps to enhance cultural awareness and understanding of students from various cultures. One advisor (P4) said, "They always appreciate it if I've been to a place where they are. We can talk about the things that are there." Another advisor (P6) admitted that "being exposed to all these different cultures, ways of thinking, ways of, as far as they tell me, the ways they're used to be taught, it's just fascinating." An advisor (P4) summed up cultural awareness with:

I think the biggest component of any world view that has to do with people who are different than you are. It is willingness to understanding other people's culture and be sympathetic for the restrictions and limitations that they have. [You] just have to be other-culture oriented.

Many advisors take their experiences living and working in other countries into consideration when interacting with IGS. They understand the outsider perspective of incoming international students and understand what it feels like to be a foreigner. These experiences also serve as a commonality that connects advisors and advisees. This could help to further enhance understanding and appreciation for the experiences that IGS are facing at their institution.

### **Cultural introduction**

Many advisors have attempted to introduce IGS to various cultural events in the U.S. One advisor (P3) described his attempt to introduce IGS to American culture:

We took them to the rodeo and they really got excited about that. We followed up with, one of our students had a ranch, and we took them horseback riding and things of that nature.

Another advisor (P4) attempted to introduce IGS to American culture by taking them “on field trips,” to “basketball games” and “to the rodeos.” For these advisors, it was important to show international students what American culture is like and coordinated events they felt would provide a glimpse of the culture.

### **Be patient with students**

The most mentioned lesson that advisors learned from working with IGS was to be patient in different aspects such as communication style, instructional style, and adjustment rate. Regarding IGS making presentations, one advisor (P4) stated: “They also have much more difficulties making presentations to other students. It’s always a difficult problem so you have to, I have to be patient. The other students have to be patient.”

Another advisor (P6) admitted that “it’s being patient with them [IGS] but it’s also being patient with myself as I try to figure out what the best ways to deliver news [are], whether it’s good news or bad news.” She also admitted that she has to show “patience then from their perspectives, in terms of being patient with them, that it may be very hard for someone, [...] to ask what they really want to ask directly if they’re from a culture that isn’t used to being direct and blunt and all of that.” This advisor listed patience as one of the key components of a successful advising relationship with IGS. For another advisor (P1), having patience with the IGS’ adjustment rate and lack of research exposure means giving them a longer starting time compared to that of domestic graduate students.

Recognizing that IGS have difficulty adjusting to life on campus, advisors might give them a longer time period to get situated in a lab and learn protocol. Advisors also recognize that the students’ cultural background might hinder communication so they have to be patient and go with the students’ pace. The advisors also try to be patient with how fast students understand the material and with their academic presentations.

### **Advisor flexibility**

Flexibility is also important when working with IGS. When IGS come onto campus, their expectations might differ from what they actually get so advisors have to be flexible to accommodate their needs. One advisor (P3) said, “we want them to leave here feeling they had a good educational experience, they had good social experience.” Flexibility can also be seen when an advisor adapts to the style of the IGS he or she is working with. This can also mean that an advisor changes his or her teaching style to accommodate for language difficulties and rate of understanding by IGS.

### **Open communication**

Open communication is important in an advising relationship. One advisor (P1) pointed out that “it’s important to maintain conversation, [and] communication with them.” Having open communication and conversation with the advisor might help lessen the student’s homesickness or other distress. The advisor (P1) added that “if we have a way of better communication, maybe those kind of things [students falling into “emotional traps”], at least it could be kind of relieved a little bit [of] the stress for the students.”

Even though the advisors list open communication as an important element in the advisor and advisee relationship, this might be difficult with IGS. A reason for the lack of open communication between IGS and their advisors could be the hierarchy of the relationship where IGS believe it is not appropriate to address concerns they might have because it may be seen as

disrespectful. They might also not address any concerns with their advisors for fear of being reprimanded and their funding might be affected if they say anything. Even though the advisors say open communication is important, it might not be completely realistic.

### **Acceptance of students**

For one advisor (P1), acceptance of students means finding “what is our strengths and what’s our weakness and direct them appropriately to amend the weakness and to hopefully [adapt] to their strengths to use them that way.” For another advisor (P6), acceptance of students might mean that she has to accept that “some of the foreign students can’t quite wrap their mind around the fact that we [department] invite them to happy hour or we have them over to our house for a party.”

It appears that the advisors try to work with the IGS that come into their classrooms and their research teams by focusing on the IGS strengths. The advisors also appear to be accepting of the different characteristics of individual IGS and work with those different characteristics.

### **Strategies and approaches**

With experience, advisors have developed strategies for resolving conflicts. Some are direct with advisees while others are indirect. For one advisor (P5), dealing with conflicts between him and an IGS means having “them come face to face, one on one in my office. I’ll tell them what bothers me, they make an assessment, and they try to fix it.” Another advisor (P2) would “joke with them” because he doesn’t “want to make it very serious with them.” He would take the student out “to the cafeteria” or “to the bar” and “then [he] would talk with them individually.” Other non-direct approaches that he tried included playing basketball with them and “would just talk at the basketball court.” When they rest on the bleachers, he would “mention to them about some comments about their work when they’re relaxed.” He stated, “I don’t want to talk to them in my office because then they get nervous.”

Other approaches that advisors utilize are the *Team* approach and the *Family* approach. According to an advisor (P6) the *Team* approach means “having the oldest member of the group train the new person.” The *Team* approach of the advisor (P6) ensures that “there’s always continuity in terms of how I do things and some of these research projects are long term so there’s never a gap of someone that doesn’t know what’s going on in my research team.” The *Family* approach encourages members to be involved in each other’s lives. One advisor (P5) described his *Family* approach:

I run my lab on my team as a family. It’s like a close knit family. If a new foreign or international student arrives at the airport, a few of the students are in the airport waiting for them.

He added, “two years later, the student who was greeted would go to the airport to greet someone else.” These two approaches encourage current members to actively train and help new members adjust while the advisors’ role is to make sure the team or family is running smoothly.

### **Indicators of Success**

Advisors pointed out keeping long term contact to sustain their relationships with their students and having their students succeed after graduation constitutes a successful advising relationship. Student success is measured by different variables such as degree obtained, professional achievement, and publications.



### **Sustained relationships**

Sustained relationships refer to after an IGS has graduated and gone back to his or her home country, contact is maintained with the advisor in the United States. Forms of communication include emails, Christmas cards, letters, phone calls, and other communication means such as connecting through Facebook. Another advisor has framed pictures of all his IGS hanging in his office. He (P2) described his relationships with all his previous IGS advisees: "Right now all of them work very closely with me. Even some of them, sometime I write to them, [or] email, even now. This is a picture of all my students when I moved from state X."

Keeping long term contact also means collaborating on projects. This advisor (P2) admitted that "Even now, [there are] some students who graduated about ten years ago, [and] we're still writing papers together." For another advisor (P5), keeping long term contact means helping "their kids, their second generation, and their second generation graduated." He also added, "I love my students. It's the best part of my job." One advisor (P1) believes that:

A successful advisor advises your students after graduation, [that] would be [after] many years to keep [in] contact with you. They may have various issues and want your help, recommendations, professional growth, so it's not a short relation just in school; in fact it could be a lifelong impact.

For other advisors, long-term contact includes meeting up with former advisees in their home countries. One advisor (P6) described her relationship with her former advisees, "When we were in Hong Kong, we flew to Shanghai and two of my students that I've had two years before gave us a tour and took us to dinner and all of that. So the relationships continue." Another advisor (P4) has a similar relationship with his former advisees, "I'm saying out of those ten years of students, there are only five or six of them that I regularly write to, send Christmas cards. When I got to China, I get in touch with them." He also mentioned that he still maintains contact with students he taught in Beirut 40 years ago.

### **Student success rates**

For advisors in this study, the student success rate is measured by the number of students who have graduated with higher degrees and their professional accomplishment. One advisor (P5) said, "If you look at my resume, you see that student names [are] everywhere, very often first author." He also added, "I have at least 17 minority Ph.D.s and I have probably 25 minority Masters. They've all got jobs, been successful."

For one advisor (P2), the student success rate means that "they be successful in what they're doing," and "if they go out to private sector, [I] hope they have a good life, they enjoy what they're working on." Most advisors have had successes with their former advisees and have continued to follow their academic and professional progress. One advisor (P4) summed this up with, "a number those students went on to get Ph.D.s and I follow their careers, and I know where they are, what they're doing and we get together."

From the results, advisors' perceptions of IGS, based on their experiences, led to the strategies and approaches to use when working with IGS. Many advisors reported high success rates with their students using the strategies and approaches they implemented. A successful relationship between advisors and their international advisees is measured by the students' success and the sustained relationships with each other.

### The Advisor Experiences Model

The current study attempts to convey the various experiences of advisors working with IGS through the formulation of the Advisor Experiences Model using the themes discussed above. The outer layer of the model consists of the faculty advisors' perception of IGS. These are the observed characteristics of IGS by their advisors. The second layer of the model consists of the strategies and methods compiled and utilized by advisors based on their experiences working with and their perceptions of IGS. At the core of the model are the indicators of a relationship, deemed successful, between advisors and their international graduate advisees. The model attempts to present a picture of the relationship between advisor and their international graduate advisees from the advisors' point of view.

#### Overview of the Theoretical Model of Advisors' Experiences

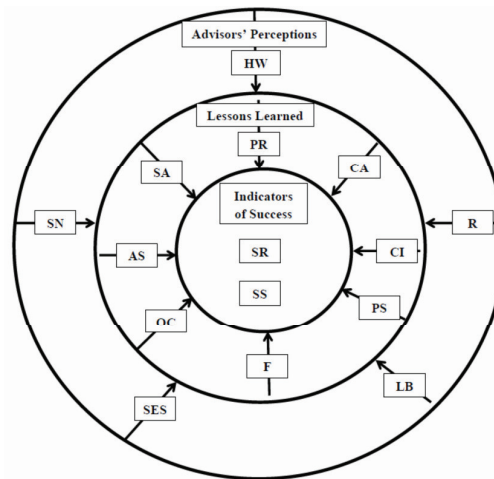
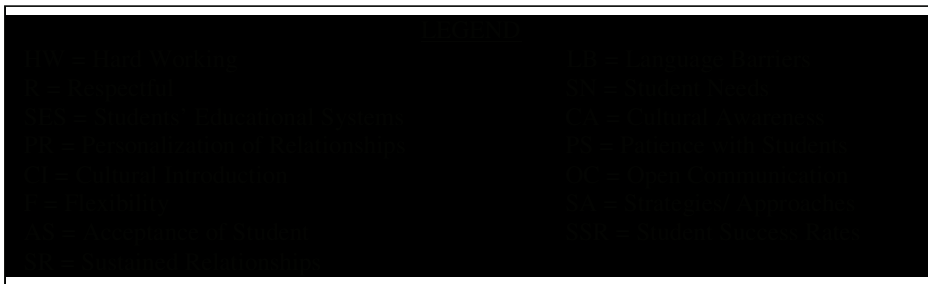


Figure 1: *Model of Advisors' Experiences Working with International Graduate Students*



This model begins at the *Advisors' Perception* which represents the perceptions of IGS by the advisors. Each arrow from the *Advisors' Perception* layer represents different characteristics of IGS as perceived by the advisors through their experiences. These perceptions help advisors develop different strategies to work with their advisees. Each arrow from the *Lessons Learned* layer represents the different strategies the advisors have adopted to shape the relationship with their advisees. All of the arrows (perceptions and lessons learned) lead into the core layer, the *Indicators of Success*. At the core of the model is a relationship between advisors and their IGS. The model is continuous since advisors' continually use their perceptions to inform their strategies when working with IGS. This in turn helps guide them to positive advising experiences and sustained relationships with their advisees.

## **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of advisors working with IGS. Overall, the advisors reported positive experiences with their current and former advisees. The advisors recognized that IGS have unique needs, most significant among them being financial needs and adjustment to the American educational system. The advisors working with IGS also recognized that IGS have strong work ethics, motivation, and drive to succeed yet their success might be hindered by their lack of language proficiency. To help IGS in their lab and classroom, advisors sometimes allow the students more time to adjust to the lab environment and show leniency in their grading. Throughout their experiences with IGS, advisors reported that they have adopted different methods to work with IGS to best serve the students' needs. Many of the advisors' perceptions of IGS and their approaches and strategies are similar to the strategies that Trice (2005) found in a study about how different departments response to international students' needs.

Advisors use their perceptions of IGS and experiences working with IGS to develop strategies and approaches that they feel enhance their experiences as advisors as well as their advisees' experiences on campus. The Advisor Experiences Model was introduced as a template for the various factors that influence an advisor and international advisee relationship. At the core of the Advisor Experiences Model are the indicators of success of the advisor and international advisee relationship. These indicators of success are sustained relationships and student success rates. Advisors all reported that long term contact is one of the most rewarding parts of being an IGS advisor. Most advisors keep track of their former advisees' careers and professional development. Some advisors reported that they are still collaborating on research projects and publications with their former international advisees. Overall, the advisors in this study relayed that they enjoyed working with IGS and have gained a lot of experiences working with these students. It appears the advisors will continue using the strategies and approaches they have adopted when working with IGS with future IGS. In addition, Trice (2003) found that advisors working with international students reported that these students bring added cultural values to their programs. According to some advisors, international students also bring important "international perspective" to the lab and these students' presence prepare domestic students with experience for the "real world where they would interact with people from many cultures" (p. 391). Overall, IGS add diversity and important perspectives to their campuses as well as provide advisors and other students with different working experiences and interactions.

## **Implications**

This study provides the advisors' perceptions of IGS and could help counselors, graduate advisors, and other personnel with frequent contact with IGS to understand IGS needs and concerns. This study also provides some suggestions of certain useful methods when interacting with IGS to further address their needs. The suggested Advisors' Experiences Model could serve as a template for the different factors making up a successful advisor and IGS advisee relationship. The suggested model has similar components to the the models proposed by Rice et al. (2009) and Perrucci and Hu (1995).

This study also reiterates challenges such as language difficulties and financial needs that IGS need to address before coming to an American campus. Recognizing this, American universities could develop ways to effectively prepare IGS with adequate English skills to succeed once they are here. Universities could also take steps, such as providing students with financial resources, before accepting them for admission. Universities could offer more international student grants as well as create more on campus jobs for which international students are eligible for. Strategies and approaches utilized by advisors in this study when working with advisees could be expanded upon and encouraged with other advisors working with IGS. Universities with large

number of international student enrollment could create liaison positions in different departments specifically addressing international student issues. These liaisons would be familiar with resources available to international students and could act as guides when questions about available resources on campus arise. Each department could also create a position for international student representatives to address the common needs and concerns of international students to the department head or administrator. This would facilitate communication between department heads and international student communities on campus.

### Limitations and Future Research

Some limitations of this study are: (1) the advisors are self-reporting, and therefore might have portrayed themselves in a positive manner; (2) the study was conducted with only a small number of advisors and therefore cannot generalize to other advisor-international advisee relationships; and (3) the advisors work at a university with a limited number of IGS; results might have varied if it was conducted at a university with a larger and more distributed IGS population. Future research could examine the issue of silence with IGS. Advisors' perceptions indicated that this behavior stemmed from the students' educational systems but it would be interesting to understand silence from the students' experiences and understanding of their own educational systems. From this study, ideas could be generated to help students adapt to the U.S. educational system by addressing concerns they might face in the classroom and on campus.

Future studies could identify the IGS who have had satisfactory relationships with their advisors and examine their perspectives compared to the advisors' and identify discrepancies, if any, between the two viewpoints. Another interesting topic to explore would be the informal relationships outside of the academic setting between advisors and IGS. This would lead to what IGS are comfortable with and what they are not regarding having an informal relationship with their advisors.

Future studies could also look at the importance of open communication in an advisor and IGS advisee relationship and what open communication looks like from the viewpoint of the IGS. This could address whether IGS believe that open communication exist or is possible with their advisors. The study could also address the difficulties, if any, IGS encounter when attempting to have open communication with their advisors.

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## **The Role of Volunteerism on Social Integration and Adaptation of African Students at a Mid-Western University in the United States**

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### **Abstract**

*This study examined the role of volunteer experiences on Black African international students' social integration and adaptation at a predominantly White Mid-Western university in the United States. The study explores micro-level interactions and relationships fostered during volunteering as well as feelings of inclusion/exclusion and personal satisfaction. Thirteen participants who had volunteered in services that required substantial interactions were interviewed. Four themes on the positive influence of volunteering on social integration and adaptation were identified, namely; fostering of feelings of inclusion and belonging, enhancement of social cohesion of diverse people, fostering of feelings of self-validation, and attainment of social, cultural, and human capital. However, other participants in this study felt inadequate, alienated, and devaluated during the volunteer process. Fear of not being understood, feelings of incompetence, and the cumbersome bureaucratic process in the application process deterred some participants from volunteering with some services. The authors conclude by providing recommendations for international students in general, institutions of higher learning, and volunteer agencies.*

**Keywords:** social integration; volunteerism; adaptation; international students; multicultural environment; student participation

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International students' adaptation to a new culture is a major concern in higher education research (Constantine, Anderson, Berkel, Caldwell, & Utsey, 2005; Tanaka, 2002). Studies have shown that some international students experience disillusionment as they seek to acquire expected behaviors that are needed for participation as competent members of the host society, and this often results in stress, negative perceptions of self, and frustration (Mellow, van Slyck, & Eynon, 2003). It is not surprising that negative feelings of social and cultural detachment by incoming college students is

cited as one of the leading causes of students' dropping out of college (Nuñez, 2004). The Student Integration Model proposed by Tinto (1975) provides a useful theoretical framework to conceptualize the social integration of international students in general. The central concept of Tinto's model that is of interest to this study is the degree to which the integration of college students into the social and academic aspects of the university determines their levels of persistence or dropout. The higher the degree of integration, the greater will be the commitment to college completion. Drawing from this model, it is quite evident that the social integration of international students into the formal and informal social systems of US college environment can play an important role in ensuring their adaptation and eventual academic success. This study draws on the fact that international students studying in the United States are more likely to experience social and cultural detachment on and off campus, given the rifts between their heritage and the American cultures. Undoubtedly, social integration of these international students into the formal and informal social systems of the host environment is crucial. Maundeni (2001) defines social integration as the provision of equal opportunities accompanied by an atmosphere of mutual tolerance. Social integration, therefore, entails feelings of belonging, inclusion, connectedness, participation, and recognition, which are of paramount importance for the adaptation of international students.

It is, however, debatable if the process of integration is the same for all international students given that they come from different countries representing multitudes of cultures (Manguvo, 2012). From an earlier study that compared the levels of acculturative stress among international students from different regions, Constantine et al. (2005) reported that African students at US campuses exhibited significantly more signs of acculturative stress and depression than their Asian and Latin American counterparts. In response to such eventualities, Manguvo (2012) argues that the context of reception of international students is dependent upon the attitudes, beliefs, and stereotypes that members of the host have toward specific groups of international students. In the case of African students, their social integration is possibly complicated by negative stereotypes, for example, in the areas of crime, violence, and drugs that are often associated with their African Americans counterparts; because of the racial homogeneity between the two groups of people (Nwadiora, 1996). Furthermore, negative images about Africa such as famine, poverty, sickness, and war that are embedded in the minds of some people in Western countries may result in negative perceptions of African students (Manguvo, 2012; Traore, 2006). Such negative perceptions can have paramount ramifications on the capacity of African students to adapt and socially integrate. Given these trends and arguments, this study sought to establish some insights into how African international students negotiate into the social fabric of their new environment.

We perceive volunteer experiences as one of the avenues by which we can examine the social existence of African international students when relating to social integration and adaption. The conceptual framework for this study is based on the fact that volunteering is associated with broader social processes and outcomes, one of which is social integration (Berger, Dinca-Panaitescu, Foster, & Meinhard, 2005). A previous study with several ethnic groups in Canada by Berger et al. (2005) provided evidence that volunteerism impacts positively on social integration through provision of high quality social networks, a sense of belonging and trust, and an enhancement of self-esteem to various ethnic groups. Other studies have also shown that involvement in volunteerism may ease the process of adaptation for immigrants/sojourners. For example, Handy and Greenspan (2008) observed in a study with Canadian immigrants that volunteering could potentially attenuate the effects of relocation as immigrants sought to regain the social and human capital lost in the migration process. In a related study, Ksienski (2004) reported that involvement in volunteering helped to socialize and affiliate sojourners into the mainstream culture.

Our goal in this study was, therefore, to examine how African international students make sense of their social conditions of existence through volunteerism, given how social integration may

be intertwined with civic participation. We hypothesized that, through participation in volunteerism, African students would foster feelings of belonging which would enhance their social integration and adaptation into the American academic and social environment.

### **Research Questions**

- To what extent is volunteering related to Black African international students' adaptation and social integration into the cultural and social fabric of their host society?
- What barriers deter Black African international students from volunteering?

### **Methods of Study**

#### **Research Paradigm**

This study adopted an interpretivist research paradigm because its underlying assumptions are useful for an investigation of feelings of social integration and adaptation among sojourning international students. Interpretivists assume that knowledge and meaning are acts of interpretation; as such, there is no objective knowledge that is independent of people's thinking and reasoning (Gephart, 1999). In concurrence, Myers (2009) posits that the interpretive paradigm is underpinned by observation and interpretation, where observation entails data collection, while interpretation involves drawing inferences from the observations and making judgments based on the observed patterns and some abstract patterns. Furthermore, the interpretivist paradigm is concerned about understanding reality from the subjective worldview of the participants; as such, it heavily relies on the subjective relationship between the researcher and the participants (Reeves & Hedberg, 2003). In line with these assumptions, the findings and conclusions of this study were a fusion of observations made through data collection processes and inferences drawn as relating to social integration and adaptation of African students.

In seeking a research methodology that would provide an ontological and epistemological fit within an interpretive theoretical paradigm, we employed a narrative approach to investigate feelings of social integration and adaptation among African students. A narrative approach seeks to understand how people put meaning onto events and how they shape themselves through the stories they create about themselves, others, and the world around them (Roscoe & Madoc, 2009). Therefore, we presume narratives as powerful ways by which African students in the United States may reflect and interpret the conditions of their existence as they navigate into their new environments.

#### **Participants**

Approval for the study was granted by the Institutional Review Board and potential participants were reached out to through the African Students Association at one Mid-Western university. At the time of data collection, the university had a total enrollment of over 32,000 students, of which only 64 were from Sub-Saharan Africa. Originally, 27 African students volunteered to participate in the study but some had never volunteered in the United States, whereas others had either volunteered in services that did not allow much interaction, or had last volunteered for more than six months; as such, these were excluded in the final sample.

The final sample consisted of 13 participants who were involved in volunteer services that required substantial interactions and were either involved or had been recently (less than six months) involved in volunteering at the time of data collection. This was intended to have information-rich cases for an in-depth understanding of their volunteer experiences and how they possibly impacted on their social integration and adaptation. Table 1 below shows the demographic characteristics of the participants and the volunteer services in which they were engaged. In order to

protect participants' identity and maintain confidentiality, the names given in Table 1 are all pseudonyms.

Table 1

*Demographic characteristics of the participants in this study and their volunteer services*

Participant	Gender	Age	Program	Country	Yrs in US	Volunteer Service
Sam	Male	24	Graduate	Cameroon	3	Church
Chaka	Male	26	Graduate	Rwanda	2	Food bank, church
Rebecca	Female	32	Graduate	Zimbabwe	4	Hospital, campus events
Adam	Male	40	Graduate	Kenya	2	Refugee camps, food bank
Jorum	Male	21	Undergrad	Nigeria	1	Campus events
Chido	Female	21	Undergrad	Ghana	2	Hospitals/ health centers, church
Lavenda	Female	35	Graduate	Zimbabwe	3	Church
James	Male	37	Graduate	Kenya	4	Refugee camps, church
Tunde	Female	19	Undergrad	Nigeria	5	Campus events, food bank
Nunu	Female	36	Graduate	Zimbabwe	4	Attorney general, campus events
Solani	Female	21	Undergrad	Nigeria	6	Campus events, church
Nyasha	Female	27	Graduate	Ghana	4	Public schools, campus events
Obert	Male	27	Graduate	Rwanda	2	City council

### Data Collection and Analysis

We employed the interview guide approach recommended by Beechem, Anthony, and Kurtz (1998), where the same general areas of information was collected from each participant regardless of their diverse volunteer experiences. This allowed a degree of freedom and adaptability in getting information from the participants. The interviewer and principle investigator was an African international student studying at the same university which might have posed some limitations in this study. With the positionality of the interviewer, it is apparently evident that some form of bias was inevitable. To deal this potential bias, as advised by Corbin and Strauss (2008), one of the co-authors, a non-African researcher reviewed the codes, themes, and subthemes in order to identify objective versus subjective ones.

On a positive note, the positionality of the interviewer helped in gaining access to and formulating a sense of trust with the participants. This was especially important given the potential sensitivity of some of the issues that were discussed. The interviewer was able to create an empathetic relationship with the participants, who in turn were open to share their feelings and experiences. In general, the interviews lasted between 45 and 93 minutes.

After taping and transcribing the interviews, member checking with participants was conducted before coding to make sure the transcripts accurately represented their authentic responses. Next, as highlighted by Miles and Huberman (1994), data reduction was conducted by using descriptive codes, which summarized participants' responses. In line with the goals of this study; words, phrases, or sentences related to feeling of inclusion/exclusion, adaptation, and social integration were identified and recurring ideas were clustered and classified into categories of description. Four major themes were generated and several subthemes were drawn from each theme, each demonstrating qualitatively different ways by which volunteer experiences may have possibly impacted on participants' social integration and adaptation. After identifying the themes and subthemes, raw data were reviewed again to verify the themes and subthemes that had emerged.

Lastly, peer debriefing among co-investigators was done to decrease possibilities of unconsciously overemphasizing and/or overlooking some information by the principal investigator.

## **Results**

Four major themes linked to adaptation and social integration were identified; each of the themes describe the various positive ways by which volunteer experiences potentially enhanced participants' social integration and adaptation. The third theme describes negative feelings that some participants felt during volunteering and the last theme addresses barriers that deterred some of participants from actively engaging in certain volunteer services.

### **Theme 1: Positive Influence of Volunteerism on Social Integration**

Volunteerism provided an opportunity for participants to positively engage in society, creating cohesion among diverse people and enhancing feelings of inclusion, self-validation, and belonging among the participants.

**Subtheme 1: Social inclusion.** In line with findings from previous studies (e.g. Ksienski, 2004), one dominant subtheme that emerged on the positive influence of volunteerism on social integration was the enhancement of feelings of social inclusion and belonging, as highlighted by Sam, who had just volunteered at a church renovation project:

The whole project was very exciting for me because of how receptive everyone was to me. They were all very interested in getting to know me, they didn't even care that I didn't speak good English. They loved to teach me things. They were very understanding and patient to communicate, so, I was part of the team from day one.

Participants also felt socially accepted as volunteers and confessed that the host society presented them with equal opportunities to volunteer as those provided to citizens:

Interviewer: Have you ever been turned down after making a request to volunteer?

Solani: Um, so far I have never been turned down at all; maybe it's also that I have just applied to those two places. But I don't think anyone can discriminate me because I am from Africa because the places I went to, the people were very nice, they really wanted people to come and volunteer, so I think they would want to accept everyone who applies.

**Subtheme 2: Social cohesion.** Berger et al. (2005) define social cohesion as an ongoing process of developing a community of shared values, challenges, and opportunities among people of diverse orientations. Previous studies have shown that volunteerism can have a social cohesion effect as it glues people of diverse backgrounds together in their capacity both as clients and as peer volunteers (e.g. Berger et al., 2005; Jenson, 2002). Participants in this study reported that they shared a common cause when they offered to do good for their society; and as such, they tended to devote little attention to racial and ethnic differences that were inherent among them. This is portrayed by James and Adam respectively:

Recently, I worked with people from Myanmar; I think that is the new name of Burma. We were working with them, they don't speak English, but we were working with them setting up a house and I was so impressed. Now I have friends from Burma. Some of them when we meet, we feel that there is that personal touch. And then about Caucasian Americans, they all became friends.



There are so many people who want to volunteer in refugee camps but you find that they are not able because of language differences. But I have seen many of them helping them in things like athletics, buying them things like clothes or taking them out to do an activity, and it's really good. I remember one time we took the refugees out for fishing and it turned that these refugees had very good fishing skills, because they grew up fishing, there in Africa, and they really know it [fishing]. So we went to the lake of the Ozark [to fish], and these guys [Caucasians] were very surprised and they actually learned fishing techniques from the refugees.

**Subtheme 3: Self-validation.** Consistent with findings by Musick and Wilson (2003) that volunteering produces self-validating feelings, participants in this study had positive feelings of personal satisfaction after engaging in various forms of volunteerism. Some participants were confident that they possessed skills that were highly valued and that they could positively improve their community:

Interviewer: How were you welcomed when you visited the organization and informed them of your willingness to volunteer?

Adam: The moment I went to the people who are managing the volunteer organization, they were so impressed because they lacked people who could work with the Burundi refugees, they had very, very few staff to help them because of language difficulties, because most of the refugees don't speak English, but some speak Swahili. Because those refugees fall sick, I have to take them to hospital, and I have to go there [hospitals] and translate their ailments and what the doctor is saying.

Another participant, Nunu, who helped translating audio tapes at the Attorney General's office, had this to say:

It was a very busy time of the semester; exams, term papers, and stuff. I could have simply said "I am busy" because the translations are so involving. But then I thought of the family of the victim, and imagined if it was me. The suspect gets away with it simply because no one could translate the tapes, because no one could understand what he [the suspect] was saying. So it gives you energy. So I left all my work, put it aside, and did the translation. It's about justice, social justice, justice for the victims' family. So I felt very good to be doing that.

## **Theme 2: Capitals for Social Integration**

Participants in this study gained human, cultural, and social capital during their volunteer activities, which are necessary ingredients for sojourners' navigation into the social fabric of their new environment.

**Subtheme 1: Social capital.** Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) define social capital as the sum of resources that are accrued from a durable network of institutionalized relationships (such as those fostered during volunteerism). Consistent with theoretical arguments put forward by Putnam (1993), our study showed that participants gained social capital through numerous networks that were fostered during volunteering:

Interviewer: Have you made new connections from volunteering at that refugee camp?

Adam: Oh! Truly, I have come to know so many people, counselors, professional people from guidance and counseling because these are the people I have ever worked with. I am now in contact with some professors, be it professors of law, when they come for volunteer work, they don't come as professors, they come to make contacts. I am in touch with many

teachers in [name] public schools and I am also in touch with several nurses and doctors when I take them [the refugees] to hospital.

Aroian (1992) argues that the main source of support for sojourners is their own social networks. In this study, participants' wider social networks provided access to social benefits as they profited from the resources of their volunteer networks. The social networks fostered during volunteering provided aid in situations of need, as Obert testified:

I know one lady whom I was working with and the husband happens to be an auditor, and when I was doing my tax returns, I actually didn't know how to file them, so I talked to her and she introduced me to the husband and the husband helped me. I was able to now get in touch with this family and the husband really helped me unlike other places where you have to pay, actually, he did my tax returns for free.

**Subtheme 2: Cultural capital.** According to Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), cultural capital refers to attitudes, knowledge, and preferences of a community. Similar to findings by Handy and Greenspan (2008), four participants in this study were reportedly presented with an opportunity to learn norms and values and other codes of behavior that were appropriate for their adaptation through volunteerism. For example, Jorum, who volunteered with a peer mentoring program on campus, said the encounter gave him an opportunity to learn how to communicate in a culturally appropriate way:

I learned a lot about American culture. . . and also other cultures because the [peer mentoring] program is for all students, even non-Americans. Like I now know the things to say and what not to say, how to say them and to whom. Like in my culture we often don't speak directly when we discuss important issues. We kind of, go round in circles; I think you know what I mean. Americans tend to be more direct. . .

**Subtheme 3: Individual human capital.** Participants also gained individual human capital through involvement in volunteerism, which is one of the key factors in the adaptation process of sojourning students. Several alternative forms of individual human capital include job experiences, language proficiency, work habits, and other general skills (Sicherman, 1991). In this study, Chido, for example, who was a practicing physician in her home country reportedly learned new work habits when she volunteered extensively in hospitals:

. . . like when I was in Zimbabwe, you would go to a patient and just say "hi, I am so and so, I want to do this", and then from there you are quiet, you do your stuff and you don't talk to the patient. But here I have realized that you don't do that, you go there, take your time maybe two minutes or so introducing yourself who you are what you are doing there, what you gonna do for how long and how exactly will you do that and afterwards when you are actually doing the procedure you talk to the patient and make them feel very comfortable. So you continuously talk to your patient as you do things, so that you have a very good working environment.

Chaka also shared similar sentiments on the gaining of individual human capital:

The people I have been working with are very hard working people; very hard working, people who would go to greater length to ensure that what we are doing has been perfected and what we are doing is actually helping. So, something I have learned from them is tenacity, to be able to follow on to what you are doing so that you improve the life of the people.

We also found that volunteerism was connected with language proficiency in some ways as it provided a platform for practicing and perfecting language skills, especially for Adam and Nunu who volunteered to translate for refugees and the Attorney General's office respectively:

. . . I speak with refugees who are from Burundi and the only language that those people speak is Kirundi, most of them cannot even speak Swahili, neither can they speak English, so translating has helped both my English and my Kirundi, I am now, I can say I am now more fluent in both languages.

. . . I had never translated, I mean an official translation like this before and the tap plays very fast and you are listening, and writing at the same time. One tape is like one hour another like one and half hours, and you have 10 of them. So you need to be really fast and accurate so you don't misrepresent what the person [suspect] is saying. So, word selection is very important because you are doing it really fast.

### **Theme 3: Negative Experiences**

Despite the many positive ways by which volunteerism potentially enhanced social integration and adaptation, other participants reported somehow negative feelings of alienation, devaluation, and inadequacy after their volunteer experiences, and these feelings potentially had long lasting effects.

**Subtheme 1: Social alienation.** Two participants reported having feelings of alienation while volunteering in a group dominated by Caucasian Americans. Alienation refers to conditions, feelings, and orientations that discourage participation (Kalekin-Fishman, 1996). For example, Jorum, who volunteered with the peer mentoring program on campus, narrated how he felt alienated as he could not relate with most of the participants during and after the workshop:

. . . in another way I felt like I was not exactly within the group because after the training and if we get sometimes to meet, say during lunch break, you would see that the culture and stuff, you don't really feel like this is what I am but, otherwise during the training, I really feel that we are doing good together, but after that you realize that, well we are a little bit different, you will begin to think that well, I am a foreigner, but they [colleagues] were very nice but you just feel that we are from different places.

**Subtheme2: Inadequacy and self-devaluation.** Nyesha developed feelings of inadequacy when she volunteered as a child minder at her church. Such feelings of inadequacy potentially resulted in self-devaluation and negative perceptions of own competence:

At first I was very excited to help out with the kids. Kind of paying back because other parents also watch over my kids during church services. So I felt like I should also volunteer, and also because I wanted to interact with kids, like pre-kindergarteners. Naturally, I just love kids anyways, and then what happens? I go there; the kids just stare at me, and they look very uncomfortable. I felt very bad. Maybe they [the kids] don't interact that much with Black adults, because the church is predominantly White. This was an embarrassment, I never signed up to help with the kids again.

**Subtheme 3: Failure to make connections.** Some participants in this study failed to make significant networks during the entire periods of volunteering as Rebecca, who was volunteering with a local hospital, testified below:

After volunteering and stuff, everybody will be rushing home, someone rushing to school, so there was no time to foster relations, but otherwise they were so nice, if I had tried really hard, like take somebody's phone number or email, I think I would have made friends.

#### **Theme 4: Barriers to Volunteerism**

The literature records numerous reasons that hinder sojourning people in the United States from volunteering with mainstream organizations. Although all participants in our final sample had been involved in volunteerism in one way or another, the desire to volunteer with some services for two participants was inhibited by fear of not being understood because of their accents, which made them seriously reconsider whether to volunteer or not:

Interviewer: Are there any factors that sometimes hinder you from volunteering?

Lavenda: I think the only thing that may actually make me think twice about going is probably my accent, more like I will ask myself “are they gonna hear me properly, what I say?” So most probably I would go to any organization but I would think twice to go to some organization like will they be able to hear me, will they take me because of the way I speak? Because you may speak to some people and they don’t hear anything at all. So, maybe I just think twice.

Nyasha: [Name of organization] has this wonderful program. We go out to [name given] public schools and read stories to kids, middle schools. I love this program because as graduate students of color, we reach out to them, and inspire them, especially children of color, so it’s a noble idea. So our president [of the organization] asked for volunteers. But middle scholars may have a hard time hearing me; I mean my accent, especially when someone hears me for the first time. So I just told him no, and he looked very upset. It was difficult to express my actual fears to him, so I just said no.

Another factor that was reported by most participants as a deterrent from volunteering is the cumbersome bureaucratic process involved in the application process. James testifies:

In Kenya, when you hear there is a crisis, be it hunger or anything and you want to help, you simply take some food and go and help the starving people, you do not need to fill in any papers or get approval from any office. Here it’s a different story, we wanted to go to Joplin, but hey, the accreditation process was so frustrating, eventually, we managed to do something but the bureaucratic process here may actually be discouraging.

All in all, findings from this study show that participants had varied volunteer experiences relating to feelings of inclusion, belonging, and self-validation. Interestingly, most participants developed positive feelings during and after the process of volunteering that could potentially hasten their social integration and adaption to the host culture.

### **Discussion**

This study examined the role of volunteer experiences of Black African international students in their process of integrating and adapting to the American society. In this study, participants had varied experiences; both positive and negative, when relating to social integration and adaptation. Interestingly, and consistent with findings from previous studies (e.g. Chareka, Nyemah, & Manguvo, 2010; Handy & Greenspan, 2008; Musick & Wolson, 2003), volunteerism fostered positive feelings of belonging, inclusion, self-validation, and recognition in most participants, which potentially facilitated adaptation and integration to the host culture. By providing equal volunteer opportunities for all aspirants regardless of nationality of origin, the host society helped foster a sense of inclusion and belonging in participants, which potentially helps eradicate feelings of foreignness that most international students have upon entering US colleges and universities.

In our study, volunteerism provided opportunities for participants to meet with diverse people while taking civic action in the community. Because volunteerism cuts across barriers of race, ethnicity, and nationality, which isolate and alienate people, it challenges society to be tolerant

to diversity (Jenson, 2002). As Leonard and Onyx (2003) point out, by bridging diverse cultures, volunteerism is socially cohesive by creating a society based on a common cause. For international students seeking to adapt to the host society, this cohesion can have a positive impact on their adaptation and social integration process.

Consistent with findings by Handy & Greenspan (2008), the findings from this study also showed that volunteering can attenuate the effects of relocation for international students as they seek to regain the capital lost in the migration process. Volunteerism was an important tool from which participants learned several aspects of the host culture that could potentially hasten their successful integration and adaptation even in other professional and nonprofessional endeavors. For example, this study showed the role of volunteerism in building social networks. As noted by Berry, (1997), the quantity and quality of interpersonal relationships fostered during volunteering determine participants' orientation towards the host culture. In this study, networks fostered during volunteering created productive social relationships between participants and members of the host, which in turn could be crucial for social integration and adaptation.

When international students arrive in a host country, they may find that the human capital they brought with them is not very relevant to their adaptation (Aguilera & Massey, 2003). As highlighted in this study, volunteering provided opportunities to learn norms and values and other codes of behavior that are appropriate for adaptation; for example, how to present themselves and how to behave at work. If successfully adopted, some of these norms, values, and work habits may serve as both a baseline and compass to their adaptation (Ksienski, 2004).

Despite the aforementioned positive influences of volunteerism on social integration, findings from this study also showed the negative experiences from volunteering that potentially impedes the social integration and adaptation process. For example, two participants in our study reported feelings of alienation, self-devaluation, and inadequacy following their initial volunteer experiences, which could further inhibit them from volunteering in future. As a result, a vicious circle may be created in which negative volunteer experiences lead to withdrawal, which in turn might make it difficult for members of the host to foster relationships with the sojourning international students. Thus, the initial volunteering experience is crucial as it can have long-lasting effects on future involvements. There is a need, therefore, for volunteer agents and peer volunteers to regularly affirm the competency of new international volunteers through appreciation and encouragement.

We also found factors that could potentially act as barriers to participants' volunteering. Consistent with findings by Chareka et al. (2010), formal volunteering with an organization was not well known among Sub-Saharan African students, therefore it became difficult for them to engage in highly structured and professionalized forms of volunteerism.

Our findings also showed that participants' accent was a major deterrent factor especially with volunteer services that required interaction with kids. Furthermore, previous experiences of inadequacy and fear of being racially discriminated against discouraged other participants from volunteering. Such negative feelings may lead to self-segregation, thus, potentially impeding the social integration and adaptation process.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The pursuit of international students' social integration and adaptation is of paramount importance to the multicultural US institutions of higher learning. This study raised an important indicator that researchers might use to explore international students' lived experiences relating to their adaptation processes and social integration in the United States. If social integration of international students is



conceptualized by their social roles, or the number of social ties they have, then there is an argument that volunteerism can help by adding roles and promoting social ties (Musick & Wolson, 2003). Thus, civic participation through volunteerism is one of the avenues by which universities might pursue as they seek to create better contexts for international students. As demonstrated by the findings of this study, and consistent with findings from previous studies, promoting and facilitating volunteerism among international students can go a long way in combating their social exclusion.

### Limitations

Our findings, however, should be considered in light of potential limitations. First, because our goal was to examine the influence of volunteerism on social integration; it is possible that our perceptions uniquely influenced the formulation of our research questions, which, in turn may have affected the data we acquired. Second, our final sample of 13 participants is small, and thus, generalizability of the findings to other African students is cautioned. Third, although international students from the continent of Africa arguably share some fundamental cultural similarities, we may have lost some unique experiences associated with each country by analyzing data from participants from six African countries. Fourth, our study was conducted at a proportionally White dominated university located in a predominantly White community; hence, the generalizing the findings to other universities and communities is cautioned. Despite these notable limitations, our findings are still deemed reliable and usable in understanding the role that volunteerism can play in international students' social integration and adaptation.

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## Strategies to Enhance Student Success: A Discourse Analysis of Academic Advice in International Student Handbooks

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### Abstract

*As the population of international students continues to rise at U.S. colleges and universities, multiple academic obstacles pose barriers to success. Research on strategies of intervention has primarily included face-to-face interactions while an exploration of other assistance approaches is minimal in comparison. This study explored the role that mediated discourse plays in supporting international students with navigating paths through U.S. colleges and universities, by examining seven institutions' assistance handbooks. Discourse analysis allowed for an in-depth investigation of the academic advice available to international students concerning classroom culture, instructional styles, relationships with instructors, assessment, and academic honesty.*

**Keywords:** International students; student handbooks; student success; discourse analysis

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An investigation into the experience of international students in the United States is an essential task to understand the cultural politics of U.S. higher education further. Studies on international student experiences are marginal in number in light of the rapidly increasing population of international students and contributions to American higher education in recent years (Bevis & Lucas, 2007). Davis (1997) explained that 457,984 international students attended U.S. institutions of higher education in the mid-1990s, which was a "...1,200 percent increase since 1954" (p. 67) (as cited in Peterson, Briggs, Dreasher, Horner, & Nelson, 1999). As of November 2011, this number increased to 723,277 (Open Doors, 2011). Peterson et al. (1999) asserted that the international student presence is becoming increasingly vital to an institution's economic development, reputation, and instruction of rarely studied subject material. Although colleges and universities recognize the advantages of having a more diverse community, there still remains a "need to articulate the benefits of international students to many publics" (p. 68).

One area of inquiry that lacks investigation is the role of campus resources available to assist international students in their educational endeavors—in particular, those resources that are not delivered through interpersonal interactions. In the current era when students look for assistance beyond regular meetings with peers or faculty, it is imperative to investigate the role of other types of resources available to international students. Using mediated discourse, this study explored the role that international student guides and handbooks perform in providing assistance to international students at U.S. institutions of higher education.

By further exploring the discourse within such handbooks, this study will broaden an understanding of assistance strategies that are offered by institutions of higher education to help international students adjust to U.S. college and university life. It will also help answer the following research question: What experiences do U.S. colleges and universities wish international students to have as members of the U.S. culture of higher education?

## **Literature Review**

### **Barriers to International Student Success**

As the interest in attracting more students outside the United States has steadily increased, so has attention toward investigating the experiences that international students have in their educational and cultural interactions while away from their home countries. Much of the literature over the past thirty years has focused heavily on topics concerning hurdles that international students face while attending schools in the United States (e.g. Hanassab & Tidwell, 2002; Owie, 1982; Schram & Lauver, 1988). Pedersen (1991) claimed that numerous international students experience unique difficulties in transitioning to the college or university setting. The need for resources of assistance is essential when considering the research findings that education in the United States can be a difficult transition because of culture shock or adjustment difficulties (Olaniran, 1996; Zhao, Kuh, & Carini, 2005), fear of failure (Hanassab & Tidwell, 2002; Pedersen, 1991), and isolation (Zhao, Kuh, & Carini, 2005; Olaniran, 1996; Owie, 1982; Mori, 2000; Pedersen, 1991). The implications of these issues may lead to a negative perception of U.S. higher education and could hinder a student's ability to succeed.

An international student's journey will vary according to age (Andrade, 2006; Mori, 2000), gender (Hanassab & Tidwell, 2002; Manese, Sedlacek, & Leong, 1988), and national background (Trice, 2004; Sadowsky & Placke, 1992), illustrating that the international student path is an individualized journey that holds unique obstacles and advantages for each student.

### **College and University Intervention Strategies**

Two of the most successful intervention strategies that have been used by colleges and universities to assist this population include: (a) the fostering of community building amongst international students, and (b) building integration with native students and faculty in the larger college and university community. Al-Sharideh and Goe (1998) noted that in the wake of numerous problems that international students can face, participation in "ethnic communities" can allow students to maintain a connection to their native cultures while working to integrate into the U.S. higher education community. However, in their conclusions, the authors also articulate that while solely participating in a community comprised of students from similar backgrounds increases self-esteem, such a strategy does not necessarily contribute to stronger relationships between international and native U.S. students. When international students of similar backgrounds participate in communities comprised of individuals who share their nationality, students will likely experience less loneliness. However, "one recognizes that language and cultural barriers, as well as discrimination, are not easily removed" (Trice, 2004, p. 685). Regardless of the disadvantages associated with either strategy, Al-Sharideh & Goe (1998) provide a strong justification that the benefits of participating in a social community while away from one's home country holds significant benefits and overwhelmingly makes the transitions to U.S. colleges and universities a smoother process.

Colleges and universities have attempted to make socialization more integrated in hopes of providing international visitors with the most meaningful higher education experience possible.

Another development in recent years includes peer programs that are intended to join international and U.S. students together and to foster socialization (Abe, Talbot, & Geelhoed, 1998). These programs, which have been praised by other studies (e.g., Westwood & Barker, 1990; Quintrell & Westwood, 1994), can support international students in academic achievement and involvement in campus life. The broader research on peer-assistance programs makes general assertions that such intervention strategies are undoubtedly helpful. However, based upon the compelling claims that these programs have achieved numerous successes, strategies that include interactive components between international students and U.S. peers demonstrate the potential to construct successful means of assistance. Exploring how strategies that are not interactive shape the international student experience is necessary to create a more comprehensive understanding of the resources available to aid in student success.

### **Methods**

It is difficult to clarify the definition of discourse analysis concretely because the written and spoken forms of communication blend together when researchers use these phenomena for study (Alba-Juez, 2009; Brown & Yule, 1983). Traditionally, the process of discourse analysis included qualitatively written or transcribed works to conclude how language functions (Alba Juez, 2009). However, discourse analysis has evolved as a methodology by focusing on the relationship between both written and spoken communication and the context of the discourse (De Saussure, 2007). De Saussure also noted that discourse analysis is a broad methodology that can be practiced in differing ways and takes on different forms in various academic disciplines.

Discourse analysis was used in this study to examine a series of web assistance guides from colleges and universities designed to help international students navigate the higher education system in the United States. The author categorized academic advice available in guides into thematic groups to illustrate the many facets of students' experiences to produce holistic meanings. Because the process of discourse analysis takes varying forms, in this study the researcher used open coding and categorization, an approach that places ideas in larger theoretical groups (Pandit, 1996). It is common for colleges and universities to have institution-sponsored web pages intended to help international students navigate a course through their new educational experiences. Assistance guides and handbooks are readily available to students on such web-pages. The author used such sources for this study.

The guides selected for this study were chosen based on the following criteria: (a) broad representation of student populations, (b) accessibility of guides to prospective and current students, and (c) the inclusion of academic advice. With regards to representative student populations, guidebooks were collected from colleges and universities made up of an international student body of 3.2%-11% of the total student population. A decision not to include advice from schools that had a uniquely high percentage of international students was made so as to understand the transitional challenges for more conventional campuses. The selection also excluded colleges and universities that did not have international student resource centers or assistance-based resources on the web, since the study did not involve travel to these institutions. Guidebooks were selected that addressed the international student population as a singular audience instead of distinguishing between students from different regions or countries.

Second, the availability and accessibility of the materials was important to the selection process. Schools that did not have international student handbooks available on their websites as singular and downloadable documents were excluded because current and prospective students would likely not have exposure to transitional advice. Finally, handbooks were selected for inclusion because they included separate sections directly addressing transitions to the U.S.



academic environment rather than only addressing issues outside the context of the classroom (e.g., finances, immigration, etc.).

Search engines were used to identify college and university international student center homepages to gain access to the handbooks included in this study. Given the selection criteria, seven handbooks were selected from both private and public institutions that have web-based documents that offer academic advice. Two-year institutions were not included in this study because the academic experience with peers and faculty differs significantly from four-year colleges and universities. Based on the quantity and categories of information available, the author chose to eliminate nineteen handbooks from this study which either did not have multiple categories of academic advice for international students or were not easily accessible to a student in a single published document.

Analyzing mediated discourse in handbooks that are readily available on college and university webpages is a justified approach to this study because these documents are widely available and the likelihood of a student encountering these documents online in the contemporary era would be higher than gaining access to them in a printed form. Also, the accessibility of the documents enables both current and future students to encounter these guides.

The author chose to analyze the web-based discourse of seven institutions of higher education to understand a comprehensive view of how universities and colleges in the United States advise and guide new international students toward success. Handbooks represent various regions of the northeastern, midwestern, and southeastern U.S., sizes, and types (public and private) of colleges and universities. These institutions include: The University of Alabama, Chatham University, The University of Maine at Fort Kent, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, The University of Minnesota, Denison University, and Macalester College. Although the final count includes seven handbooks, more than 300 pages of content are included for analysis in this study.

### **Research Findings**

In analyzing the discourse contained in international student handbooks, it became evident that multiple forms of advice abound. Suggestions were offered for all students of various backgrounds, yet were uniquely for those who are new to the U.S. education culture. Handbooks emphasized that the U.S. education culture is significantly different from the educational systems that international students have experienced in their home countries. Handbooks offered advice concerning the unique nuances of the U.S. culture of higher education. At times advice was offered specific to the culture of a school, while in other instances statements were adapted from textbooks or from another college or university's handbook. In most cases, these handbooks acknowledged their borrowing of another's work. In some cases however, there were questionable instances of not acknowledging the origin of all sources.

Regardless of origin, the handbooks addressed several issues concerning the culture of academics in the United States. The specific sub-categories that emerged included: Classroom culture, instructional styles, relationships with instructors, assessment, and academic honesty.

#### **U.S. Classroom Culture**

Most handbooks addressed the interesting nuances of the U.S. academic structure of higher education and summarized a series of unique characteristics intended to help non-native students prepare for their educational experiences away from home. These statements attempted to expose readers to the idea that there are a variety of differences between the education system in the United States and other nations. Examples included:

[P]rofessors will often provide an outline of the course, known as a syllabus. This guide is designed to help you understand the goals, format, and grading system of the course. If you have questions about the syllabus, what the course will cover, or the evaluation system in the class, ask the instructor. (University of Alabama, 2007, p. 27)

“Normal” classroom behavior in another country might include students’ absolute silence and obedience, whereas in the U.S., students are expected to comment, ask questions, and even challenge or contradict the professor’s lecture. (Chatham University, 2011, p. 23)

To succeed in it [the U.S. academic system], you will need to learn how it is organized and how it works. (Macalester College, 2011, p. 57; University of Maine at Fort Kent, 2011, p.22)

These statements represented a rhetorical strategy that generalizes U.S. education styles and places less emphasis on acknowledgment of the differences across disciplines and instructional styles. One handbook adapted a large summary of short statements developed by faculty members Paige & Smith (1988) and revised by Stuck (1993) to more thoroughly summarize the diverse characteristics of academics in the United States.

The U.S. cultural values listed in the previous section shape the academic environment in the following ways: 1. Active classroom participation is expected. 2. Time pressure is high - often there are many small assignments due each week - and time management is an important skill to develop. 3. Critical thinking must be developed. 4. Independent thinking is highly valued. 5. Presenting ideas concisely in class is expected. 6. Assignments (reading, writing, homework, tests) are numerous. (University of Minnesota, 2011, p. 24)

This short list offered by the University of Minnesota (2011) listed some components of Western education to expose new students to the system to a variety of concepts and ideas that are comparatively different from other nations. This discourse contained several concepts that many college and university handbooks list to help international students adjust to U.S. higher education culture.

### **Instructional Style**

Beyond briefing international students about the characteristics of U.S. higher education, international student handbooks further specified strategies for adapting to these differences. An important aspect discussed in several handbooks concerned the structure of U.S. academic courses. Handbooks made several generalizations concerning the way that U.S. instructors may approach the dynamics of teaching. In almost all instances, international student handbooks were invested in acknowledging that the U.S. college classroom is often more relaxed than others and not solely grounded in the lecture method of instructing. Because this characteristic is acknowledged, handbooks also advised international students regarding how to adapt to unfamiliar styles of pedagogy.

University classes are set up on lecture or interactive formats, but most use a combination of the two. The lecture format stresses learning and applying information, whereas the interactive format stresses communication and adapting information to changing contexts... You must actively participate in your education; it will not be given to you. (UA, 2007, p. 28)

Some instructors prefer a more formal style of lecture with a possible question and answer period at the end; others prefer a more conversational style and encourage interaction throughout the class...When expressing your views in class, be ready to defend your ideas. (CU, 2011, p. 23) Source: *Beyond Language: Cross Cultural Communication*, Levine, Deena R. and Adelman, Mara B., Prentice Hall, 1993. (p. 24)

When the class is too large to permit questions and discussion, or if for some reason you do not have the opportunity to raise questions, you may see your teacher privately during his/her office hours or make an appointment for another convenient hour, to discuss any questions you may have. (MC, 2011, p. 55)

Handbooks from both large public and small private institutions acknowledged that international students should do more than passively listen in a course. Regardless of class size, the advice remained the same: in order to succeed in the U.S. college or university, a student must take on an active role in his or her own education both inside and outside a classroom. With regards to the statements above, the first acknowledged that most classrooms will require such participation, while the two statements that followed emphasized the importance of becoming actively self-involved in the educational process. Rather than ask students to adapt to each classroom, handbooks emphasized the need for students to be active members of their courses.

### **Relationships with Instructors**

Beyond describing how teachers will teach, handbooks also stressed the importance of taking initiative to build meaningful relationships with faculty. Also, because some handbooks were quick to acknowledge that the student/teacher relationship may be separated by a large power differential in other nations, handbooks highlighted that in the U.S., students and teachers have closer interactions. For example:

Equality is a value in the U.S., and although students are subordinate to professors in the U.S., it may not be readily apparent... Some instructors are very relaxed in their behavior - walking around the classroom, sitting next to the students, drinking coffee, or sitting on the table are common manifestations of this egalitarian American attitude. (CU, 2011, p. 23; *Beyond Language: Cross Cultural Communication*, Levine, Deena R. and Adelman, Mara B., Prentice Hall, 1993.)

The First Year Office will assign an academic advisor to you based on your interests. Your advisor will assist you with course selection, registration and guidance on academic issues. Feel free to drop in and meet your advisor as frequently as you wish. (Denison University, 2011, p. 10)

Do you call a professor by a title such as “Professor Brown,” or do you call her by first name, “Judith,” as you may hear other students do?... It is best when dealing with professors and TAs to err on the side of politeness and use their titles — Professor, Doctor, Mr., or Ms. (UM, 2011, p. 11) Adapted from *American Ways* by Gary Althen, University of Iowa. (p. 12)

Handbooks highlighted the relevance of having friendly interactions with instructors outside of class and acknowledged that such friendly interactions must be negotiated with a respect for the instructor in the classroom. Furthermore, the generalization that U.S. teachers tend to be less formal with students is juxtaposed against a series of statements which acknowledge the need to address teachers with more formal language. Regardless of the multiple complexities which were included in handbooks to help international students understand the nature of relationships with

instructors, handbooks pointed out that there are several unique aspects which may characterize such relationships in the United States.

### Assessment

Several handbooks described various ways that learning is assessed and evaluated in the U.S. classroom, namely: participation and testing.

**Participation.** Handbooks' descriptions elucidated that the expectations of learning in the classroom and relationship with instructors necessitate students to be active participants in their education as this is a crucial part of assessment and evaluation. Several examples of statements noted the relevance of actively participating in the U.S. classroom:

Passively receiving information and repeating it is not good enough...[Y]our active participation in the learning process will greatly enhance your education. Once again, when teachers see you are putting forth an effort, they are much more likely to help you out if you get behind in their classes. (UA, 2007, p. 28)

Sit in the front of the class. It will help you focus on the lecture, and it sends a non-verbal message to the instructor that you are motivated and interested in the class. (CU, 2011, p. 25) (Adapted from: University of Iowa's *Handbook for Foreign Students and Scholars* 1997-1998, pgs. 84 -85. (p. 25)

Class attendance policies are up to the instructor's discretion, but never assume a lack of policy means it is acceptable to skip class. Consistent class attendance and participation are key factors in succeeding on the college level. (DU, 2011, p. 7)

One particular justification for this advice focused on being an active student who regularly attends class and is visible is that the behavior will likely result in instructors who will like the student more. Although not directly stated, such advice concluded that an instructor's liking toward a student is an essential part of the evaluation process.

**Testing.** The concept of large tests was acknowledged in sections which concerned assessment. Handbooks pointed out that classes may have more tests than one final exam and that these assessments could be constructed in various ways. Two examples included:

A typical U.S. course will have three tests (including a mid-term and final) and at least one paper. This can be good and bad; it gives you more chances at increasing your grade in the class. However, it also means that you may have more day-to-day studying for your classes. (University of North Carolina-Greensboro, 2011, p. 7)

Almost every class has a "final examination" at the end of each semester. These tests can be cumulative, which means they cover material from the entire course, or non-cumulative, which means they only cover material since the previous test. (UA, 2007, p. 32)

You are usually given a deadline by which to complete a take-home exam outside of the classroom. Often, you can use your books and notes, but you cannot get help from other people. (MC, 2011, p. 55)

The notion of testing was described in various ways by several college and university handbooks. All of the guides included in this analysis were concerned with exposing students who were new to the U.S. culture of higher education to testing that may differ significantly from other approaches of

assessment that rely solely on one exam at the end of a course. Also, the description of these statements showed an interest in not only describing the various types of exams, but also acknowledging that any test should be taken seriously. To avoid problems such as cheating, one guide emphasized that students could not work with each other on take home exams. Though this may not be true for every classroom, the guide encouraged it.

### **Academic Honesty**

Advice about academic honesty was commonplace in student handbooks. Because violations of academic honesty policies could lead to serious repercussions (including expulsion), handbooks included detailed descriptions of the types of academic dishonesty so as to expose readers to the importance and complexity of this aspect of U.S. higher education.

Academic standards and practices are influenced by culture. What is considered appropriate academic behavior in your home country might be different from what is appropriate in the United States. Therefore, it is important that you understand U.S. standards and practices. Not meeting these standards can result in charges of academic dishonesty and possible expulsion. (UM, 2011, p. 24; MC, 2011, p. 56)

This statement, used in two handbooks but created by the University of Minnesota (2011), provided a very detailed description to expose students to the potential consequences of academic dishonesty. Furthermore, these handbooks highlighted that such policies are grounded in a U.S. culture which privileges individualism rather than collective accomplishment. The handbooks not only gave comprehensive descriptions of these concepts, but also offered advice about avoiding plagiarism.

Not all cultures consider it cheating to use someone else's writings or ideas—but this is a very serious form of cheating in the U.S. Plagiarism is the practice of copying from a publication, a lecture, or web site without proper acknowledgment of the source of that information...Talk with your instructors about what constitutes plagiarism. Request advice on the preferred method(s) of citation. If you are still unclear on what constitutes plagiarism, visit the Writing Center... (DU, 2011, p. 10)

In general, Americans prize independence and individual effort. In [the] academic world they value independent thought. The most serious offense in the academic world is that of representing another person's work as one's own...Plagiarizing the work of another scholar can result in expulsion from the university. (UMFK, 2011, p. 29)

Handbooks advised that students must always consult with faculty or a research guide when writing to avoid plagiarism. Although such policies concerning plagiarism are stressed for all college/university students, international student guides were careful to advise students about these policies knowing that cultural differences and ignorance of U.S. approaches to plagiarism are not acceptable reasons for committing such offenses.

### **Discussion**

With regards to the various categories of academic advice available in international student handbooks, all showed a strong interest in helping international students adapt to the culture of higher education in the United States. Many of the statements advised students on what to do in order to succeed were grounded in acknowledging that various elements of the U.S. higher education system differ significantly from other cultures. Furthermore, the thematic analysis in several categories demonstrated a crucial message concerning U.S. cultural values. Individualism is



pervasive in both U.S. culture and education and promotes the belief that it is the student's responsibility to succeed in the U.S-American classroom. This individualism places the responsibility on students to take control of their situations in a variety of regards and responds to the previously reviewed literature regarding problems that may hinder reaching success. The promotion of individualism attempted to integrate international students into a higher education community pervaded by the promotion of personal responsibility.

The advice across these handbooks also addressed many of the areas that previous scholarship has argued are unique obstacles for international students in colleges and universities. Handbooks acted as another form of an intervention strategy for success because these guides included comprehensive suggestions for dealing with diverse issues both inside and outside the college or university classroom. Several suggestions were primarily pragmatic guides to help students adapt to U.S. culture while others prompted students to think more broadly about the philosophical grounding of higher education in the United States. Advice attempted to help international students efficiently navigate through immediate barriers and demonstrated a desire for students to have an educational experience in which they are not overwhelmed by larger social, political, and economic concerns. Handbooks guided international students to have meaningful and positive educational experiences by subliminally addressing questions related to the purposes of a U.S. education and through attempts to focus on pragmatic concerns rather than larger philosophical ones.

### **Conclusions**

The handbooks used for the critical discourse analysis in this study made for a limited set of conclusions due to type and quantity. First, handbooks reflected the cultural value of individualism not solely through content but also through the dissemination of the documents by having placed large components in a text that a student is expected to read and comprehend. Second, these handbooks suggested generalities of how students should think about the American classroom while providing specific directives. Finally, handbooks solely addressed categories of information that principally concerned various face-to-face contexts and did not reflect the evolving delivery of hybrid and fully web-based course instruction.

Having chosen seven documents for analysis, the author aimed to understand what a select few handbooks reveal about the kind of experiences that colleges and universities want international students to have. These handbooks represented public and private colleges and universities - both large and small - from different areas of the country. Guides provided a sample of what some institutions deem necessary for international students to know before embarking on their educational journeys. However, while many of these handbooks shared opinions and ideas, they also generalized the classroom experiences of students across course levels and disciplines. Advice was, nevertheless, directed toward helping students understand that communicating with faculty was paramount to success, in addition to the general recommendations to take the initiative to maintain personal responsibility in decision-making.

This study revealed a current need to investigate topics related to international students to better understand the role of mediated discourse rather than interpersonal interaction with students and faculty. While it is important to interview and directly study international students to continue to understand their perceptions to barriers in their journeys, scholars must also study other forms of discourse that impact the international student. More research concerning educators' pedagogical strategies and institutions' approaches to intervention will help complete the puzzle for understanding international student experiences - especially as the need to build a stronger college or university community is necessary with a rise in applications and the desire for higher education institutions to support student success.

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## Studying Overseas: Factors Impacting Intention of Female Students in Mainland China

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### Abstract

*The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that impact Chinese female students' intention to study overseas. This study also aimed to understand how these factors impact female students' decision making process. Using a survey questionnaire, data were collected from 96 female undergraduates who enrolled in a 4-year public university in North Central China fall 2010. Descriptive analyses, exploratory factor analyses, and structural equations modeling were utilized to answer the research questions. The results of the study indicated that students' satisfaction with campus experience, English proficiency, and only child status had significant direct effects on their intention to study overseas. The results also identified parents' education, Level of Institutional Support, Quality of Campus Relationship as significant indirect effects.*

**Keywords:** Study overseas; mainland China; female students

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Mainland China is the largest source of overseas students in the world and the number of Chinese students pursued higher education overseas has been steadily growing in the past decades. According to Ministry of Education (MOE) statistics, in 2011, 339,700 Chinese students studied overseas, of which, over 90% studied on their own expense (Ministry of Education of People's Republic of China, 2012). The reasons for the increased interest in international study by Chinese prospective students include their country's sustained economic development and stable political environment that has made their option to study abroad more affordable (EIC Group, 2012). In addition, cultural changes such as the "one-child" policy have also contributed to increased family ability to support the single offspring, especially their daughters (Hagedorn & Zhang, 2010).

Despite the influx of international students, there has been only minimal attention paid to how these students make their choice of an international postsecondary institution (e.g., Chen & Barnett, 2000; Maringe & Carter, 2007; Habu, 2000; Ren, Hagedorn, & McGill, 2011; Weiler, 1984). In fact, the topic of college choice has been concentrated on domestic students (e.g., Chapman, 1984; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Jun & Colyar, 2002; McDonough, 1997). Even less information is available on the context of Chinese students seeking to study overseas. And almost

nothing is available about the choice and decision making specifically of female students who choose to pursue postsecondary education overseas.

According to a Chinese proverb, “women hold up half of the sky,” a considerable number of students who participate in study-abroad activities are females. Born after the one-child family policy which was first implemented in 1978, the current generation of China’s young women is not only able to run on unfettered feet but also have unprecedented personal options, opportunities, and responsibilities denied to previous generations (Hagedorn & Zhang, 2010). It is important to invest in obtaining a better understanding about Chinese female students’ choice and decision making process as they play an increasingly important role in study-abroad activities. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that impact Chinese female students’ choice to study overseas and how these factors impact their decision making process. The specific research questions driving our investigation are:

1. How do the background characteristics of female students who intend to study abroad differ from their female counterparts who choose to remain in mainland China?
2. What are the specific factors that predict female students’ intent to study abroad and what are the relationships between those factors?

### **Review of Relevant Literature**

#### **Factors Influencing Choice of Study Abroad**

The decision to study abroad may be considered as the most significant and expensive commitment students and their families ever make (Mazzarol, 1998). Numerous researchers (e.g., Agarwal & Winkler, 1985; Daily, Farewell & Kumar, 2010; Lee & Tan, 1984; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; McMahon, 1992; Pimpa, 2003) have studied factors that impact international students’ choice of education destination. For instance, Barnick (2006) found that Canadian students considered studying in a different country as an investment to their future success by becoming global citizens and internationally competent knowledge-workers. Maiworm and Teichler (1995) claimed that European students were motivated to study abroad to learn a foreign language, gain a better understanding of the host country, and improve career prospects. A study with a focus on American students (Carlson, Burn, Useem, & Yachimovicz, 1990) indicated that students were seeking opportunities overseas to enhance their future careers. Studies of international students from Indonesia, Taiwan, India, and mainland China (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002) identified 14 common factors impacted international students’ decision to pursue a degree in Australia. These factors included students’ positive perception of education abroad, inclination to a foreign culture, accessibility of information on the host country, students’ knowledge of the host country, educational quality in the host country, recognition of a foreign degree in the home country, recommendations from family and friends, costs of education in home and host countries, a low-crime rate, a presence of students from the home country, and family ties in the host country.

Research (Bodycott, 2009) specifically focused on students from mainland China indicated the three most important factors motivating students to study abroad: 1) immigration to the hosting country after graduation, 2) a perceived better quality of education, and 3) a competitive tuition. Zhang (2010) found that Chinese students who intended to pursue a bachelors’ degree consider studying abroad as an opportunity to enrich their personal experiences in a different country, to receive a better higher education, and to become more competitive when they return to China. In a study of Taiwanese students (Chen & Zimitat, 2006), researchers found that the most important factor shaping Taiwanese intention to study in the U.S. was family and peers. Bodycott and Lai (2012) also indicated that Chinese parents have a strong influence on their children’s decision-making process regarding study overseas, although the children have become more involved.



In order to make a sound decision, international students consider what is important for them and make a conscious or unconscious trade-off among the features (Soutar & Turner, 2002). Unlike domestic students, the factors that influence international students' decision-making extend beyond the typical indicators presented in college access research in the U.S. (gender, race, social class, parents, high school preparation, etc.). International students wanting to pursue higher education in a foreign country have a different process of making decisions as well as a unique set of influencing factors.

Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) indicated that the college choice decision process for international students consists of at least three steps: 1) to study internationally; 2) decide upon a host country; and 3) decide upon a specific institution. They explored "push" and "pull" factors that impact students' choice. "Push" factors are the factors that "operate within the source country and initiate a student's decision to undertake international study," and "pull" factors are those "within a host country to make that country relatively attractive to international students" (p. 82). Other researchers (Bourke, 2000; Srikatanyoo & Gnoth, 2002) also found evidence that international students tend to choose the country first followed by the institution.

International students' choice to study abroad is a complex and a multi-level decision making process. A wide range of factors involved in the process could be categorized as factors from the home country that "push" and ones in the host country that "pull" students to study abroad (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

### **Chinese Students' Study Abroad**

During the past century, having students studying overseas has been a significant strategy to enhance the nation's modernization (Orleans, 1988). The practice is not new as the first group of 30 Chinese students were sent to America by the Imperial government in 1872. After the People's Republic of China was established in 1949, an increasing number of students were asked to study the state-of-the-arts technology and foreign languages overseas in order to strengthen the development of the country when they return. However, the destination countries were limited. Study abroad became more available since 1978, when the Open Door Policy was first implemented, but it was not until the mid-1980's that study abroad began to become a possibility to regular students in urban China (Orleans, 1988).

China's increasing economic growth in the past three decades has fuelled increased interest in study abroad and it has become more acceptable and affordable for many Chinese students. From 1978 to 2011, a total of 2,245,100 students studied abroad, including those who were funded by family, work, and the Chinese government. In 2011, 339,700 Chinese students studied overseas, which increased 19.32% from the previous year (MOE of People's Republic of China, 2012). The United States (U.S.), Australia, and the United Kingdom remained as the top three destination countries (EIC Group, 2012). For instance, The Institute of International Education in the U.S. (IIE, 2011) reported that the number of international postsecondary students in the U.S. higher education has reached an all-time high with China exporting the largest number. In the 2010-11 academic year, one in every five international students studying in the U.S. arrived from China (IIE, 2011). It is expected that the number of Chinese students pursuing higher education overseas will continue to escalate.

### **Progress of Gender Equity in China**

Mainland China has a long and interesting history of gender equity progress. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Chinese women were forced to perform foot binding; while 100 years later, the current generation of female students can attend higher education through a genderless admission process.

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, new laws and regulations were established to grant women equal rights with men. As a result, an increasing number of women chose to work outside of the home and female employment has gradually become common and acceptable. "Equal pay for equal work" was adopted as a primary guide to enhance employment equality and was commonly employed in state-owned companies (Jiang, 2004). Another national policy that contributed to the progress of gender equity in mainland China is the one-child family policy. Although it has been critiqued by the West since its inception, the one-child family policy slowed down the rate of population increase in mainland China (Greenhalgh, 1994). More importantly, this policy challenged the traditional norm that women should be responsible to bear a large family. As a result, implementation of this policy allowed women to have fewer children and allowed mothers to pursue a career outside the home. Additionally, this policy empowered daughters' status at home and weakened preference for sons. Daughters, particularly daughters without any siblings, received considerable attention and the best their parents could provide for their education and career development (Hagedorn & Zhang, 2010). With the continuous support from their parents, the young generation of women in China is able to make full use of their academic talents and take advantage of study abroad programs and other educational opportunities.

### Theoretical Framework

Considering education as a service, Cubillo, Sánchez, and Cerviño (2006) developed a theoretical model of international student college choice to determine prospective international students' purchase intention. In their study, purchase intention is "used as a predictor for the preferential choices of consumers, and is defined as the intention of the student regarding the destination country as provider of the education service" (p. 104). This model comprises the purchase intention as a dependent variable and summarizes 19 independent variables into four factors: personal reasons, country image, institution image, and program evaluation (see Figure 1).

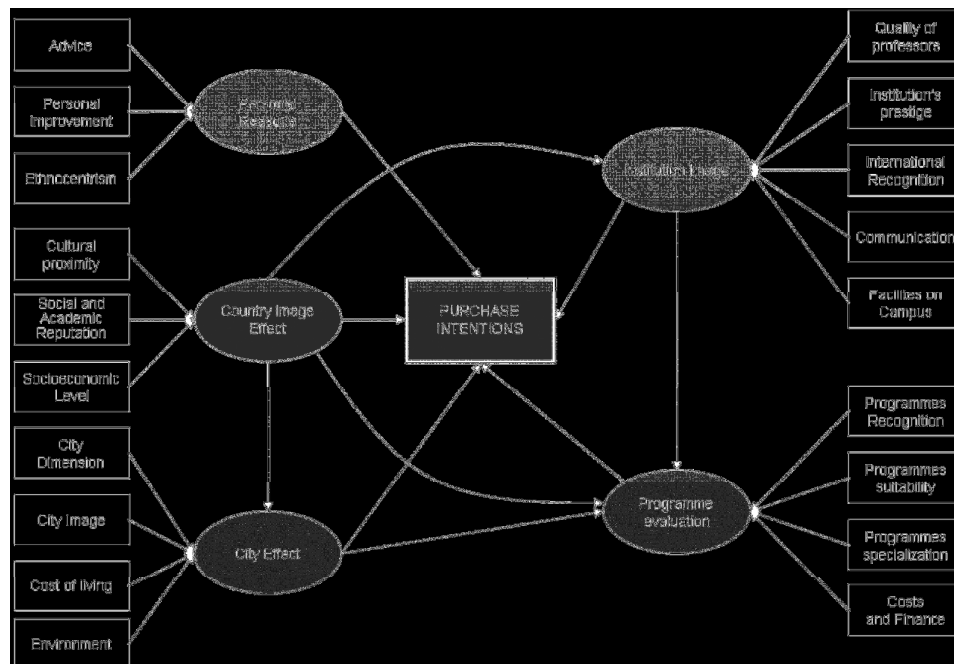


Figure 1. A model of international students' preferences (Cubillo, Sánchez, & Cerviño, 2006, p. 107)

Students' personal reasons include personal improvement, skill development, further career opportunities, reorganization of the institution and programs, service expectation, and advice from others. Country image can greatly influence the purchase intention of students and their perception of education. It is also the first source that consumers consider in the decision making process because it was found that consumers' attitude towards the products or series are associated with their conceptions of the country of origin. Prospective students tend to hold a higher perceived value of the quality of higher education in countries for which they hold a positive or favorable attitude. City image also has an influence on students' choice since the city represents the environment where international students will attend college. Institution image, including academic reputation, quality and expertise of faculty, attractiveness of the campus, quality of facilities, students' services and activities, institutional cultures, etc., can strongly impact students' choice of institutions. The last factor, program evaluation, influences students' selection of a program and a major. Suitability, selection of courses, entry requirements, costs, and opportunities of financial support will be considered before a prospective student decides in which program to enroll.

## Methodology

### Data Source

Data for this study were collected in North Central China fall 2010. Approximately 150 students who enrolled in a 4-year public university participated in the study but only the responses from female students are included in the current inquiry. In total, 96 female students completed the survey. Students filled out a paper-based survey with questions regarding background information, academic performance, choice of study abroad, and college experience. The surveys were personally hand delivered to each student in an auditorium setting. The survey was written in Chinese in order to provide a natural setting for the participants where they can most authentically reflect their thinking.

### Analytic Approach

These analyses were conducted in three steps. First, descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the characteristics of the overall sample. In step two, we employed exploratory factor analyses as a data reduction tool to identify the underlying factor structures. Exploratory factor analyses also served as *a priori* structures for further model specifications. In step three, we used the confirmatory factor analyses to check the measurement models using AMOS 19.0.

Additionally, we tested the structural relations among the variables using structural equation modeling techniques. We assessed goodness of fit using a number of measures and indices. First, we checked the *chi-square* statistic. A *chi-square* that is not significant is indicative of adequate model fit. In addition a ratio of less than 3 of the *chi-square* to degree of freedom comparison is also evidence of acceptable fit. Other fit indices, such as the Incremental Fit Index (IFI), Tucker-Lewis Fit index (TLI) and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) of value above .90 indicate a reasonable fit. If the values of the above fit index are greater than .95, the model is cast as having a good fit. Root Mean-Square Error Approximation (RMSEA) of less than .08 is indicative of a good fit.

### Variables

The variables used in this study are explained below.

**Dependent variable.** The dependent variable of the study was a dichotomous measure of whether students intend to pursue an advanced degree overseas.

**Independent variables.** The independent variables included student background characteristics and three latent variables regarding students' college experiences. The latent variables were:

- Overall Satisfaction with the University evaluated the extent to which students were satisfied with the university.
- Level of Institutional Support explained the extent to which students felt supported by the university.
- Quality of Campus Relationship measured the quality of students' relationships with peer students, faculty members, and administrators.

Table 1. *Background Characteristics of Female Students in China by Choice of Study Abroad*

Variables	SO Student	Non-SO Student
	(n = 40)	(n = 56)
Only child	28.2%	9.1%
Age		
22 or younger	92.5%	94.5%
23 or older	7.5%	5.5%
Ethnicity		
Han (Majority)	92.5%	92.9%
Minority	7.5%	7.1%
Province		
Henan	92.5%	94.6%
Other	7.5%	5.4%
Grade		
Freshman	2.6%	0.0%
Sophomore	30.8%	50.0%
Junior	33.3%	19.6%
Senior	33.3%	30.4%
Father's highest degree		
Middle School and lower	35.0%	42.9%
High School	35.0%	39.3%
Associate's	10.0%	10.7%
Bachelor's	17.5%	5.4%
Master's	2.5%	1.8%
Mother's highest degree		
Middle School and lower	47.4%	64.2%
High School	26.3%	20.8%
Associate's	15.8%	13.2%
Bachelor's	7.9%	1.9%
Master's	2.6%	0.0%
Ranking		
Medium low	5.0%	1.8%
Medium	20.0%	41.1%
Medium high	45.0%	41.1%
High	30.0%	16.1%
The highest degree plan to obtain		
Bachelor's	0.0%	3.9%
Master's	26.3%	60.8%
Ph.D.	73.7%	35.3%

## Results

### Descriptive Analyses

Among the 96 female students, 42% reported that they planned to study overseas to continue their higher education or pursue an advanced degree (i.e., SO students) while 58% did not (i.e., non-SO students). SO and non-SO students shared many common characteristics (see Table 1). The majority was 22 years old or younger, almost all of them were from Central China, and only a small proportion was identified as ethnic minority. Differences were also found between the two groups. A higher proportion of non-SO students had siblings but a larger percentage of SO students ranked medium high or high in their cohort, planned to obtain a doctoral degree, and have parents with at least a bachelor's degree.

### Exploratory Factor Analyses

Our hypothesized model based on the existing literature is presented in Figure 2. Principal axis factoring (PAF) was performed to extract the underlying factors from the survey items. The survey instrument consisted of several sections and an exploratory factor analysis was conducted within each section respectively.

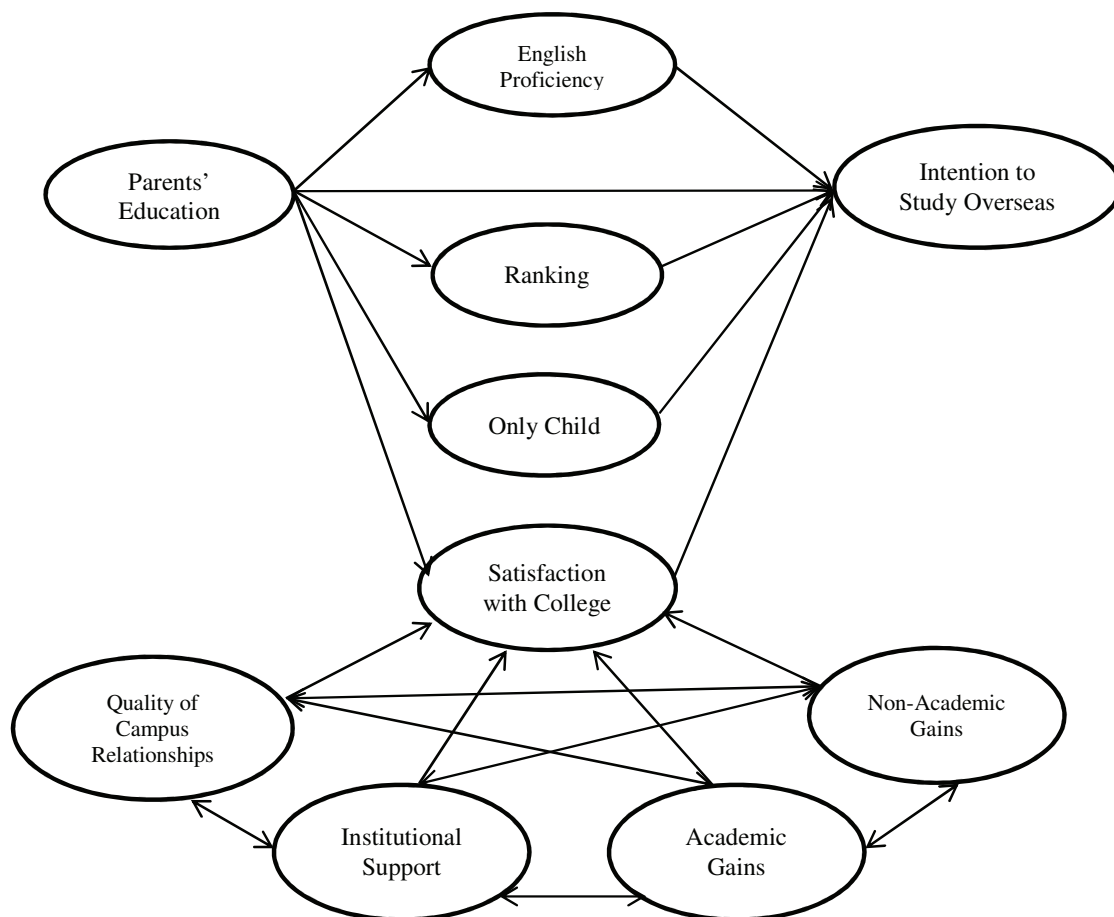


Figure 2. Hypothetical model

A promax solution was used for rotation to gain the simple structure. The number of factors was determined by the parallel analysis as well as examining eigenvalues which were greater than 1. If the number of factors indicated by the parallel analysis was greater than that of eigenvalues which were greater 1, we fixed the number of factors in PAF at all the numbers between and



compare all the pattern matrixes. The number of factors whose corresponding pattern matrix was closest to the simple structure was chosen.

The results of exploratory factor analysis showed there was a factor underlying the four variables of English self-reported abilities: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing, accounting for 48.49% of the variance. A clear one-factor structure was identified for relationships with students, faculty, and administration offices, explaining 60.8% of the variance. A one-factor solution was obtained for institutional support, accounting for 41.54% of the variance. In the 27 survey items addressing the gains through coursework, interaction with faculty and peers, the initial exploratory factor analysis results suggested a four-factor solution. However, several items had cross- or low- loadings and were removed them from the analysis. As a result, two factors were identified for the remaining items, explaining 48.67% of the variance. After reviewing the contents of the items, we named these two factors “Academic Gains” and “Non-Academic Gains.” Table 2 presents the factor loading of each item on the corresponding factors as well as Cronbach’s alpha as the reliability statistic.

Table 2. *Factors and Factor Loading*

Factors	Items	Labels	Factor Loadings	$\alpha$
English Proficiency	B1L	English Listening	.678	0.787
	B1S	English Speaking	.751	
	B1R	English Writing	.662	
	B1W	English Reading	.691	
Quality of Campus Relation (OCR)	D1_1	Relationships with students	.588	0.799
	D1_2	Relationships with faculty	.930	
	D1_3	Relationships with administrative personnel and officers	.783	
Institutional Support	D2_1	providing the support I need to help myself succeed academically	.405	0.755
	D2_2	encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds	.462	
	D2_3	helping me cope with my non-academic responsibilities	.675	
	D2_4	providing the support I need to thrive socially	.874	
	D2_5	attending campus events and activities	.692	
Academic Gains	B7_1	coursework increased-overall intellectual growth	.574	0.880
	B7_2	coursework increased-ability to critically analyze ideas and information	.715	
	B7_3	coursework increased-ability to understand numerical or quantitative concepts	.665	
	B7_6	coursework increased-ability to understand scientific concepts	.727	
	B8_1	Interaction with faculty increased-overall intellectual growth	.780	
	B8_2	Interaction with faculty increased-ability to critically analyze ideas and information	.801	
Non-Academic Gains	B8_3	Interaction with faculty increased-ability to understand numerical or quantitative concepts	.743	0.904
	B8_6	Interaction with faculty increased-ability to understand scientific concepts	.630	
	B7_5	coursework increased-motivation to pursue ideas presented in class	.733	
	B7_7	coursework increased-interested in learning more about things that are new to me	.594	
	B7_8	coursework increased-ability to work with others in groups	.550	

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B7_9	coursework increased-confidence that I can perform successfully in college	.864
B8_5	Interaction with faculty increased-motivation to pursue ideas presented in class	.435
B8_7	Interaction with faculty increased-interested in learning more about things that are new to me	.515
B8_9	Interaction with faculty increased-confidence that I can perform successfully in college	.516
B9_5	Interaction with peers increased-motivation to pursue ideas presented in class	.707
B9_7	Interaction with peers increased-interested in learning more about things that are new to me	.733
B9_8	Interaction with peers increased-ability to work with others in groups	.503
B9_9	Interaction with peers increased-confidence that I can perform successfully in college	.798

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### Structural Equations Modeling

All the confirmatory factor analyses were performed based on the five latent variables and five observed variables. The five latent variables are the five factors extracted in the previous exploratory factor analyses: English Proficiency, Quality of Campus Relationship, Level of Institutional Support, Academic Gains, and Non-Academic Gains. The five observed variables include the highest level of parents' education, the academic ranking in class, whether the only child in family, students' satisfaction of the campus experience and their intention to study abroad. Since the three latent variables, Level of Institutional Support, Academic Gains, and Non-Academic Gains, consisted of at least eight items respectively, we combined the items into three composite constructs with the purpose of reducing the dimension of covariance matrix in the following confirmatory factor analyses.

Initial evaluation showed that the fit of the hypothesized model was not satisfactory. The analytic results indicated that the academic ranking in class did not have a significant effect on students' intent to study abroad; neither did it have a significant relationship with students' English proficiency. Other factors such as Academic Gains and Non-Academic Gains were not found as significant predictors to students' satisfaction with their campus experience nor their intention to study abroad. In sum, the three variables, Class Ranking, Academic Gains, and Non-Academic Gains did not have a significant contribution to predict student intention to study abroad. Thus, they were removed from the model and were not included in further analyses. We argue that the trimming and restructure of the hypothesized model is appropriate due to the experimental nature of the model. Although we are guided by the literature, we also acknowledged that there is very little guidance for a study of this nature.

The modification indices suggested that more variance would be explained if a path from Quality of Campus Relationships to English proficiency was added. A better relationship with faculty, staff, and peer students may create a more positive learning environment, which could help students to perform better in their academic studies. The positive relationship on campus may also provide more support when they encounter difficulties in their study. Therefore, it was deemed appropriate to add a path from Quality of Campus Relationships to English proficiency.

In the final model (see Figure 3), the chi-square was not significant (chi-square=91.24, df=72, p=0.063). Additionally, the RMSEA value was .053, which was lower than the .08 threshold

and the IFI, TLI and CFI were .954, .927, and .950 respectively. These indexes indicated that this model fit the data well. Moreover, the regression coefficients for paths were all significant at  $\alpha=0.05$  level and their standardized values are displayed in table 3.

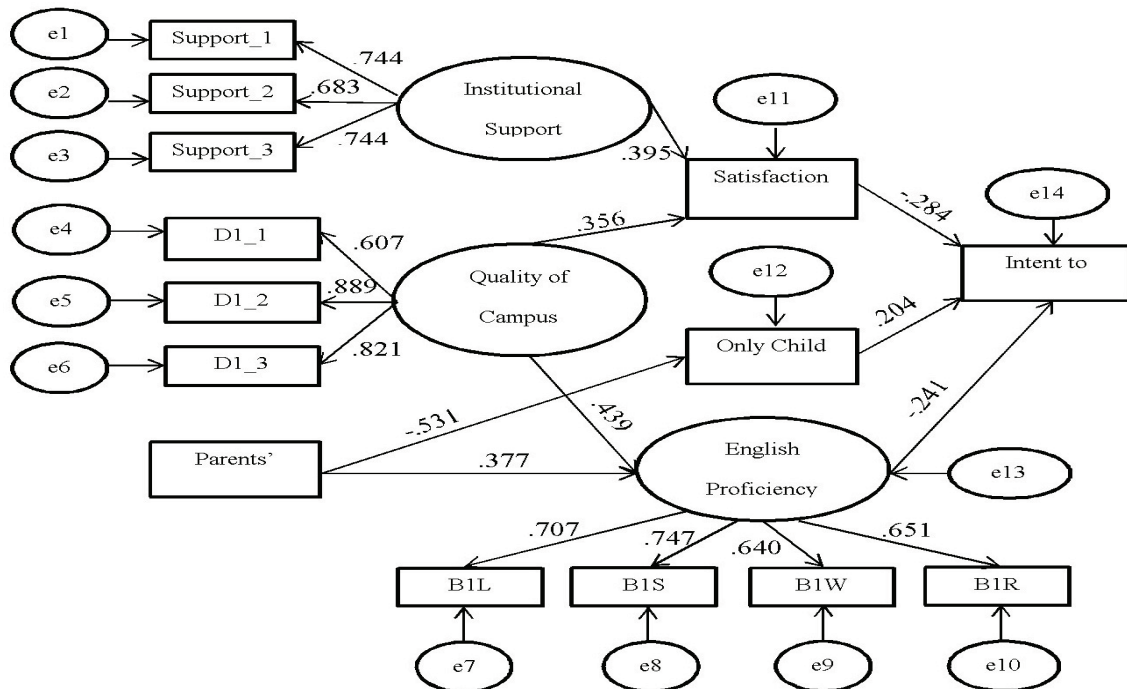


Figure 3. Modified structure equation model

The decomposition of the total effects into direct and indirect effects is displayed in table 4. As displayed in the table, students' satisfaction of the campus experience, their English proficiency, and whether they were the only child in the family had significant direct effects on their intention to study abroad. Students having a higher satisfaction with their campus experience in China were less likely to pursue an advanced degree in a foreign country. Students without any siblings were more likely to choose to study abroad compared to those with siblings. In addition, women who reported a higher level of English proficiency were less likely to plan to study abroad; however, the  $p$  value associated with the path from English proficiency to student intention to study abroad was only 0.04, which indicated that the effect was marginal.

Institutional support and Quality of Campus Relationships have indirect effect on students' intention to study abroad through the mediation of Evaluation variable. Using the formula

$$Z = \frac{IE(P_a P_b)}{se(IE)} = \frac{IE(P_a P_b)}{\sqrt{P_a^2 \times se(P_b)^2 + P_b^2 \times se(P_a)^2}}$$

to test the significance of these indirect effects, after inputting the path coefficients and its corresponding standard deviations, the Z scores for Level of Institution Support and Quality of Institution Support to students' intention to study abroad were -2.10 and -2.02 respectively. Since both values have a larger magnitude than 1.96, it indicated that the indirect effects from the Level of Institutional Support and Quality of Campus Relationship to students' intention were statistically significant at  $\alpha=0.05$  level. Student who received higher level of institutional support and had a better quality of campus relations tend to have a higher level of satisfaction with their campus experiences, thus, they were less likely to choose to study abroad. As indicated by the coefficients

in Table 3, parents' education had a significant direct effect on whether the woman was the only child in the family. Parents with higher level of education were less likely to have more than one child. The Z score for parents' education on students' intention to study abroad through the variable Only Child was -.18 with a magnitude less than 1.96. This indicated that the indirect effect of parents' education on whether students choose to study overseas was not statistically significant.

Table 3.  
Regression Coefficients and Standardized Values

Predictor variable	Criterion variable	Estimate
Institutional Support	Support_1	0.744
Institutional Support	Support_2	0.683
Institutional Support	Support_3	0.744
Quality of Campus Relations	D1_1	0.607
Quality of Campus Relations	D1_2	0.889
Quality of Campus Relations	D1_3	0.821
English Proficiency	B1L	0.707
English Proficiency	B1S	0.747
English Proficiency	B1W	0.64
English Proficiency	B1R	0.651
Institutional Support	Evaluation	0.395
Quality of Campus Relations	Evaluation	0.356
Parents' Education	Only Child	-0.531
Parents' Education	English Proficiency	0.377
Quality of Campus Relations	English Proficiency	0.439
Evaluation	Intent to Study Abroad	-0.284
Only Child	Intent to Study Abroad	0.204
English Proficiency	Intent to Study Abroad	-0.241

Table 4.  
Direct and Indirect Effects

Standardized Total Effects	Institutional Support	Quality of Campus Relations	Evaluation	Parents' Education	Only Child	English Proficiency
Study Abroad	-0.112	-0.207	-0.284	-0.199	0.204	-0.241
Only Child	0	0	0	-0.531	0	0
Evaluation	0.395	0.356	0	0	0	0
English Proficiency	0	0.439	0	0.377	0	0

Standardized Direct Effects	Institutional Support	Quality of Campus Relations	Evaluation	Parents' Education	Only Child	English Proficiency
Study Abroad	0	0	-0.284	0	0.204	-0.241
Only Child	0	0	0	-0.531	0	0
Evaluation	0.395	0.356	0	0	0	0
English Proficiency	0	0.439	0	0.377	0	0

Standardized Indirect Effects	Institutional Support	Quality of Campus Relations	Evaluation	Parents' Education	Only Child	English Proficiency
Study Abroad	-0.112	-0.207	0	-0.199	0	0
Only Child	0	0	0	0	0	0
Evaluation	0	0	0	0	0	0
English Proficiency	0	0	0	0	0	0

## Discussion

The results of descriptive analyses provided an overall picture of the female students who participated in the study. This study surprisingly demonstrated that almost half of the participants were considering study abroad to continue their current study or to pursue a more advanced degree. Most of the participants were traditional-aged students, identified as Han people (ethnic majority in mainland China), and almost all of them were from Henan province. This was not surprising since the university was a comprehensive, residential university located in Henan Province. Compared to those who did not intend to pursue a degree outside of China, a higher proportion of students who planned to study overseas were the only child of their families, ranked medium high or high in their classes, willing to pursue an advanced degree in the future, and had parents with more education. Parents had a strong impact on students' decision to study abroad (Pimpa, 2004). Another research study (Bodycott, 2009) of mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong acknowledged the influence of Confucian values of *filial piety* and confirmed that parents play an integral role in students' decision making processes. Students whose parents received less education may not be aware of the possibility of studying outside of China. In contrast, parents who had obtained higher degrees may have a better understanding about the education opportunities in both China and overseas. They were also more likely to provide financial support to assist their children to pursue higher education in a foreign country. Students' academic preparation and self-motivation may be another important factor that influences students' intention to study overseas. This study indicated that students who had a stronger desire of pursuing higher degrees in education may be more willing to explore opportunities in other countries.

In this study, we also evaluated the relationships of student characteristics, English proficiency, parent's education, and their college experiences with the university in China. A measurement model comprised of seven variables was robust. The results of structural equation modeling indicated that students' satisfaction, being an only child in the family, and level of English proficiency were identified as significant factors that impact directly on students' intention to study abroad. Among the three variables, students' English proficiency and students' satisfaction with college had negative associations with the students' intention. In other words, students who were less satisfied with the university, being an only child in the family, and reported a lower English proficiency level were more likely to choose to study abroad.

Student satisfaction has been utilized as a key indicator to organization effectiveness (Cameron, 1978), quality of student life on campus (Kara & DeShields, 2004), and student persistence (Bean, 1980, 1983). In the current study, it was not surprising that students who expressed a higher level of satisfaction with the current Chinese university were less likely to pursue education overseas. In contrast, students who were less satisfied with the university tend to search for other options and more likely to consider studying in a different country.

Being an only child in the family significantly increased the likelihood of students choosing studying abroad. This may indicate that students with limited resources and support may consider studying overseas intimidating thus less likely to pursue the opportunity. Wang (2010) also indicated that the one-child family policy greatly promoted the gender equity in China and reduced the gap of educational opportunities between male and female students.

English proficiency was also a significant predictor. A possible explanation could be that students with lower level of English proficiency consider studying overseas as an important opportunity to improve their language skills, thus tend to be more likely to choose to study outside of China. Learning a foreign language, particularly English, has been viewed as a significant part of education and one's English skills could be directly linked to his/her future career success. Numerous researchers (DeKeyser, 2007; Dwyer & Peters, 2004; Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, &



Pascarella, 2009) have found that improving foreign language skills an important benefit of attending education programs outside one's home country.

Several indirect effects were identified. Although parents' education did not have a direct effect on students' intention, it affected students' English proficiency and whether the student was the only child in the family. Students' satisfaction was affected directly by extent to which they were supported by the university and the quality of relationships with faculty, staff, and peer students. Numerous researchers (Machado, Brites, Magalhaes, & Sa, 2011) have found evidence that the level of institutional support and quality of relationships on campus were positive predictors to students' overall satisfaction with the university.

### Conclusions and Implications

The results of the study provided a better understanding regarding characteristics and college experiences of female students in north central China with or without a plan of studying abroad. This study also identified factors that impact these students' choice of study abroad as well as the relationships between them. This study contributed to existing literature of international students' choice process and extends current knowledge to women students. International recruiters, admissions officers, and policy makers could gain a better understanding about factors that influence female students' choice in the context of international education. Future researchers can conduct a comparative study between male and female students, exploring gender differences in choices of studying overseas. Future researchers can also take a qualitative approach to understand why students decide to study abroad and how they make the decision.

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## Acculturation, Internet Use, and Psychological Well-being Among Chinese International Students

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### Abstract

*In this study, the authors examined the relationships of acculturation as measured with two subscales of cultural maintenance and cultural assimilation, Internet use, and psychological well-being among Chinese international students. A total of 170 Chinese international students participated in this study. Bivariate correlation analyses revealed that an individual can identify with two different cultures, minority and dominant culture. Results of multiple regression indicated that cultural assimilation was a significant predictor to psychological well-being, but not cultural maintenance. The study also found that younger Chinese international students (e.g., students pursuing bachelor's degrees) suffered significantly higher levels of stress and depression in the acculturation process as compared to their older counterparts. Implications for counseling and recommendations for future research were discussed.*

**Keywords:** Acculturation; Internet use; Psychological well-being; Chinese international students.

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Educational globalization creates international training opportunities for students all over the world (Hallak, 1998). Recently, an increasing number of international students choose to continue their education in the United States higher education institutions. In the 2010-2011 academic year, of 723,277 international students studying on campuses in the United States, 50% were from Asian countries, with China and India representing the two largest portions of students (Institute of International Education, 2011). China was the leading place of origin for international students, with 157,558 students from China studying in the U.S., accounting for more than 21.8% of the total international student population (Institute of International Education, 2011). The longitudinal research revealed that adopting a new cultural environment (acculturation as defined by International Organization for Migration, 2004) has a great social and psychological influence on ethnic minority individuals (Berry, 1997; Bochner, 2006; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001; Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008). Empirical findings indicated that psychological problems such as depression, loneliness, and homesickness are commonly encountered by international students during the acculturation process (Chae & Foley, 2010; Brunette, Lariviere, Schinke, Xing, & Pickard, 2011; Ye, 2005). Further, a review of past research on the relationship

between Internet use and psychological well-being has yielded several mixed findings. Some researchers argued that the Internet has an overall positive effect on well-being (Shaw & Grant, 2002; Wesier, 2001). Others found that Internet use has the negative influence on psychological well-being (Chen & Persson, 2002; Wang & Sun, 2009). A review of literature indicated that no studies have yet been done on the relationships of acculturation, Internet use, and psychological well-being among Chinese international students. As such, the purpose of this research was to (a) examine the relationships of these three variables (i.e., acculturation, Internet use, and psychological well-being), and (b) generate suggestions for future research in this area.

## **Literature Review**

### **Acculturation**

According to Berry, Phinney, Sam, and Vedder (2006), the classic definition of acculturation originated in anthropology and was first proposed by Redfield, Linton, and Herskovists (1936); it focuses on “continuous first-hand contact” between different cultures (p. 149). More than a half-century later, the International Organization for Migration (IOM; 2004) revised the term acculturation as “the progressive adaptation of elements of a foreign culture by persons, groups or classes of a given culture” (p. 5). As a dynamic socialization phenomenon, acculturation was primarily described and interpreted as either unidimensional, in which individuals or groups substitute the dominant cultural identity for their original one (Gordon, 1964; LaFromboise, Coleman & Gerton, 1993; Triandis et al., 1988) or a bidimensional process, in which individuals or groups identify with the dominant culture and in the meantime retain the original identity (Berry, 1980; Zak, 1973). More recently, multi-dimensional approaches to acculturation have emerged to conceptualize ethnic minorities’ cultural adaptation (Abe-Kim, Okazaki, & Goto, 2001; Chae & Foley, 2010). Berry’s (1997) acculturation strategies and the self-identification acculturation research of Suinn and colleagues (Suinn, Khoo, & Ahun, 1992; Suinn, Richard-Figueroa, Lew, & Vigil, 1987) indicated that an individual may typically display one of four acculturation patterns as depicted in the fourfold theory by Rudmin (2003): integration (or bicultural identified), assimilation (or Western identified), separation (or Asian identified), and marginalization (or alienated).

### **Psychological Well-being**

A large body of acculturation research has shown that there are strong relationships between individuals’ acculturation styles and their levels of psychological well-being among ethnic minority immigrants (Berry, 1997; Phinney, Chavira, & Williamson, 1992; Jasinskaja-Lahti & Liebkind, 2007). Using Berry’s model of four acculturation patterns (1997), Abu-Rayya (2007) found that female immigrants who adopted integration and assimilation styles scored higher on self-esteem, marital satisfaction and intimacy than ones living in the separation and marginalization patterns. Moreover, many researchers indicated that the integration or assimilation style is related to high levels of psychological well-being. For instance, assimilated individuals reported high levels of self-esteem (Phinney et al., 1992), high level of satisfaction with life (Brown, 2001; Lieber, Chin, Nihira, & Mink, 2001), high marital satisfaction and intimacy (Abu-Rayya, 2007), low level of stress (Berry, 2003), and low level of depression (Park, 2009). On the other hand, some research findings revealed that acculturation is likely to be inversely related to psychological well-being (Chae & Foley, 2010; Jasinskaja-Lahti & Liebkind, 2007; Sue & Sue, 1971). In the investigation of ethnic identity, acculturation, and psychological functioning among 334 Chinese, Japanese, and Korean American, Chae and Foley (2010) found that their Korean American participants who were more highly assimilated scored lower on psychological well-being. One possible explanation is that highly acculturated individuals are likely to have strong conflicts between their self-identity acculturated to the host culture and their home environment (Sue & Sue, 1971).



## **Internet Use**

Internet use may be considered as a means of accessing resources for dealing with challenges during the acculturation process. The connection between acculturation and Internet use can be traced back to the relationship between acculturation communication and media. Scholars have long accepted that individuals' levels of acculturation are related to both communication and media use (Chen, 2010; Kim, 1980; Ye, 2005). Kim (1980) concluded that communication may be considered as a significant determinant of the acculturation level for individuals in the acculturation process. In 1980, Kim proposed a communication framework based on his finding that ethnic communication within individual's own ethnic group has negative effects on acculturation. Kim (1980) emphasized that ethnic communication limits the opportunity of intercultural communication that has a positive effect on acculturation. Similarly, ethnic media has been found to have negative impacts on acculturation (Beck, 1998; Chen, 2010; Kim, 1977). In recent years, researchers found that the Internet may be considered as a mass medium with the ability to fulfill personal communication and mediated needs (Charney & Greenberg, 2002; Morris & Ogan, 1996; Wang & Sun, 2009). The interactive nature of the Internet can allow users to seek information, pass time, make fun, look for a job, and communicate information (Charney & Greenberg, 2002; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). Accordingly, many studies regarding acculturation and Internet use were conducted including motives for Internet use in cross-cultural adaptation (Wang & Sun, 2009), Internet-usage patterns of immigrants (Chen, 2010), acculturative stress and Internet use among East Asian international students (Ye, 2005), and online support networks among Chinese international students (Ye, 2006).

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships of acculturation, Internet use and psychological well-being among Chinese International students studying in American colleges and universities and whether or not using the Internet was positively related to international students' acculturation and psychological well-being. In accordance with prior research regarding the Asian international students, the authors expected a positive relationship between Internet use and students' acculturation levels and psychological well-being. Further, the authors expected students in assimilation and integration styles to have positive psychological well-being. These students may use the Internet for more intercultural and/or less interethnic communication than those in separation and marginalization styles.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

All participants were Chinese international students pursuing their undergraduate or graduate degrees in a large southwest research university in the United States. The two criteria for participants in this study were that participants must be both currently enrolled at the time of data collection and from Mainland China. To keep students' email address and personal information confidential, the researchers requested the current president of Chinese Student Association to distribute a recruitment email to all members in the mailing list. A total of 170 students responded to the survey. Table 1 presents the demographic statistics of participants.

### **Measures**

In this study, the questionnaire was designed to measure major variables of interest, including: demographics, acculturation, psychological well-being, and Internet use.

**Demographics.** A demographic questionnaire was developed specifically for use in this study. Chinese international students who participated in the study were asked to provide information on (a) gender, (b) age, (c) academic level, (d) length of residency in the United States, and (e) GPA.

Table 1  
*Descriptive Statistics of Participants (N = 170)*

Demographics	<i>n</i>	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	63	37.1
Female	74	43.5
Missing	33	19.4
<i>Age</i>		
18-23	34	20
24-29	78	45.9
30 and above	23	13.5
Missing	35	20.6
<i>Classification</i>		
Undergraduates	30	17.6
Master's students	53	31.2
Doctoral students	52	30.6
Missing	35	20.6
<i>Length of Stay in US</i>		
Under one year	55	32.4
One to two years	38	22.4
Three to four years	27	15.9
Five years or above	16	9.4
Missing	34	20

**Acculturation.** *Acculturation Index (AI)* (Ward & Kennedy, 1994; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999) was modified and used to measure participants' acculturation strategies in the current study. The original version of AI consists of two sub-scales of cultural maintenance and cultural assimilation with 21 cognitive and behavioral items that assess domains of acculturation (e.g., dressing style, food, friendship network). Participants rated each item on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* (1) to *Strongly Agree* (5). The scores on the sub-scales of acculturation identification and acculturation assimilation allowed researchers to investigate acculturation from either the bi-dimensional perspective or Berry's four acculturation strategies (Wang & Sun, 2009). Wang and Mallinckrodt (2006) conducted a study on Chinese international students in the U.S. and reported that coefficient alphas for the home and host culture subscales as .95 and .92 separately.

**Psychological Well-being.** *Depression Happiness Scale (D-HS)*. The D-HS is a 25-item self-report instrument that purports to measure positive and negative affective states (Lewis & Joseph, 1997; McGreal & Joseph, 1993). The D-HS consists of 12 items that measure positive indexes of well-being and 13 items that measure negative thoughts and feelings, such as "I felt cheerful" and "I felt sad." The total score ranges from 0 to 75, and items that measure negative affective states were reverse keyed to reduce acquiescence. Participants are asked to circle the

response that is most applicable to them (e.g., 0 = *never*, 1 = *rarely*, 2 = *sometimes*, 3 = *often*). Internal consistency of the instrument was reported .90 (McGreal & Joseph, 1993).

**Internet Use.** Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) developed an instrument for measuring amount of Internet use as the total number of hours of Internet use in a day. Respondents were presented with a grid, and asked to answer how many minutes they used each type of Internet function (e.g., reading email, staying chat room, reading news, listening music, playing games, and watching videos) on an average day. A total of Internet use was obtained by adding up different types of use. According to Papacharissi and Rubin (2000), the method has been used successfully to assess the amount of television viewing. Wang and Sun (2009) also adopted it to examine Chinese students' Internet use and cross-cultural adaptation. In this study, Internet use was measured by participants' self-reported time spent on each type of Internet function such as "reading email," "browsing websites," and so on.

### Analyses

A power analysis was conducted to determine the number of participants needed in this study (Cohen, 1988). The estimated minimal required sample size for this study was calculated from a-priori sample size calculator software. Given an anticipated effect size ( $f^2 = .15$ ), desired statistical power level (.08), number of predictors (3), and probability level (0.05), the software tool yielded a minimal sample size of 76 for the regression analysis. This sample size was also corresponding to the calculated result for an ANOVA analysis based on power of .80 and a large effect size ( $f^2 = .40$ ). All following analyses were performed using SPSS v20 for Windows.

### Results

Prior to data analyses, the data were screened for univariate normality and reliability. In order to operationalize the individuals' acculturation styles according to Berry's theory (1997), the two subscales (cultural assimilation and cultural maintenance) of *Acculturation Index* (AI) were examined separately. Likewise, Internet use was split to interethnic Internet use and intercultural Internet use. Reliability for each scale was assessed using the internal consistency method. The reliability coefficients were as follows: cultural maintenance (.88), cultural assimilation (.87), psychological well-being (.86), interethnic Internet use (.89), and Intercultural Internet use (.79). Next, the univariate normality was checked for each variable of interest. According to Field's (2009) criteria of skewness ( $|z_{skewness}| > 1.96$ ), cultural assimilation ( $z_{skewness} = -2.74$ ), interethnic Internet use ( $z_{skewness} = 6.34$ ) and intercultural Internet use ( $z_{skewness} = 4.69$ ) were identified as being significantly skewed. To satisfy the assumption of normality, square root transformations were performed on the cultural assimilation and natural logarithms transformation on intercultural and interethnic Internet use.

Next, bivariate correlations were computed among cultural maintenance, cultural assimilation, psychological well-being, and Internet use. The results of the correlational analyses presented in Table 2 shows that only three of 10 correlations were statistically significant: intercultural Internet use, as expected, was inversely related to cultural maintenance ( $r = -.46, p < .01$ ). Likewise, individuals' interethnic Internet use positively correlated with their intercultural Internet use ( $r = .45, p < .01$ ). It was worth noting that the correlation between cultural assimilation and cultural maintenance was trivial ( $r = .04, p = .68$ ), which supports that individuals can identify with the dominant culture and retain their original identity in a bidimensional process. Finally, cultural assimilation significantly correlated with psychological well-being ( $r = .23, p < .05$ ). Both Internet use variables negatively correlated with psychological well-being.

Table 2

*Correlations Among Acculturation Patterns, Internet Use, and Psychological Well-being (N = 170)*

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Cultural Maintenance	--				
2. Cultural Assimilation	.04	--			
3. Intracultural Internet Use	-.08	-.04	--		
4. Intercultural Internet Use	-.46**	.14		--	
5. Psychological Well-being	.17	.23*	.45**	-.18	--
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Cultural Maintenance	--				
2. Cultural Assimilation	.04	--			
3. Intracultural Internet Use	-.08	-.04	--		
4. Intercultural Internet Use	-.46**	.14		--	
5. Psychological Well-being	.17	.23*	.45**	-.18	--

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$

Multiple regression analyses were performed for predicting the psychological well-being. First, to determine which demographic variables possibly affect the outcome variable, psychological well-being was regressed on each of coded demographic variables (e.g., gender, age, length of stay, degree being pursued, and GPA). Two of the variables were found to be significant predictors in the respective linear equations: age ( $\beta = -.21, p < .05$ ), and degree being pursued ( $\beta = -.25, p < .01$ ). Given that age and degree being pursued were normally equivalent, especially for younger students, a multiple regression analysis was performed using the stepwise method. The results were significant,  $R^2 = .06$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .05$ ,  $F(1, 108) = 6.65, p < .05$ . Degree being pursued remained as the only predictor in the equation, ( $\beta = -.29, p < .01$ ). Next, a multiple regression analysis was performed with degree being pursued, two acculturation variables, and two Internet use variables. To control for the effect of the demographic variable, degree being pursued and the other variables were entered as two ordered sets of predictors to assess whether acculturation levels and Internet exposure predicted psychological well-being over and above degree being pursued. The acculturation variables and Internet exposure accounted for a significant proportion of the psychological well-being variance after controlling for the effect of demographics,  $\Delta R^2 = .09, F(4, 102) = 2.75, p < .05$ . Table 3 summarizes the regression coefficients of the final multiple regression model. The four predictors altogether accounted for 12% of the variance in psychological well-being. Nevertheless, only degree being pursued ( $\beta = -.22, p < .05$ ) and cultural assimilation ( $\beta = .29, p < .01$ ) were found to be significant predictors. The strength of the relationships was .26 ( $p < .01$ ) between psychological well-being and cultural assimilation and  $-.26$  ( $p < .01$ ) between psychological well-being and degree being pursued. Cultural maintenance ( $\beta = .04, p = .71$ ). Interethnic Internet use ( $\beta = .04, p = .75$ ), and intercultural Internet use ( $\beta = -.07, p = .56$ ) did not demonstrate significant predictive power.

Given that cultural assimilation and cultural maintenance were independent of each other, the two indices were used to categorize the participants into four acculturation types. Using a median-split method based on the transformed scores, the individuals' acculturation types were identified as integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. Table 4 presented the descriptive statistics of the four acculturation types.

Table 3

*Regression Analysis Summary for Variables Predicting Psychological Well-being (N = 170)*

Variable	B	SEB	$\beta$
Degree Being Pursued	-.10	.05	-.22*
Cultural Maintenance	.03	.07	.04
Cultural Assimilation	.68	.22	.29**
Intracultural Internet Use	-.03	.10	-.04
Intercultural Internet Use	-.07	.11	-.07

$R^2 = .16$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .12$ , ( $N = 170$ ,  $p < .01$ ). \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$

Table 4

*Descriptive Statistics for Psychological Well-being, Internet Use According to Acculturation Type (N = 115)*

Acculturation Type	n (%)	Chinese Internet Use		American Internet Use		Psychological Well-being	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Integration	33 (28.7)	2.37	0.31	2.24	0.31	2.06	0.39
Assimilation	27 (23.5)	2.61	0.51	2.35	0.40	2.00	0.33
Separation	28 (24.3)	2.41	0.36	1.98	0.34	1.88	0.35
Marginalization	27 (23.5)	2.49	0.43	2.37	0.47	1.90	0.36

To evaluate the group effects of acculturation type on psychological well-being and Internet use, three separate one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) were performed. The ANOVA with psychological well-being was not significant,  $F(3, 108) = 1.61$ ,  $p = .19$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ , nor was that with Chinese Internet use,  $F(3, 106) = 1.89$ ,  $p = .14$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ . Only the ANOVA with American Internet use was significant,  $F(3, 106) = 6.10$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .15$ . The strength of relationship ( $\eta^2 = .15$ ) was revealed a large effect size (Cohen, 1977). Follow-up tests were conducted to evaluate pairwise differences among the means using Tukey HSD test. The post hoc comparisons revealed that the separation group spent significantly less time using the American Internet than any of the other three groups.

### Discussion

The results of the data analyses partly supported the hypotheses. First, it was consistent with the popular assumption of acculturation research that a person can appreciate and identify with two different cultures independently (Rudmin, 2003). No significant relationship was found between Chinese international students' cultural maintenance and cultural assimilation. Second, among the hypothesized predictors of Chinese students' psychological well-being, only their cultural assimilation (e.g., identification with the U.S. culture) appeared to be a significant predictor. In other words, whether and to what degree Chinese international students maintain their Chinese identification does not have significant effects on their psychological well-being in the United States. The findings of the current study were consistent with Eyou, Adair and Dixon's (2000)



study with adolescent Chinese immigrants in New Zealand, which indicated that strong ethnic identity (e.g., Chinese identification) was not necessarily linked to psychological well-being. Third, while the results of this study did not endorse the effects of Internet use on psychological well-being, the non-significant yet negative regression coefficients suggest a possible negative impact of Internet use on psychological well-being (Morahan-Martin & Schumacher, 2000). The possible explanation is that very few participants spent more than 8 hours on the Internet. This finding adds to the current literature examining the relationship between Internet use and psychological well-being (Chen & Persson, 2002; Huang, 2010). Finally, it is also worth our attention that younger Chinese international students (ages 18-23) suffered significantly higher levels of stress and depression as compared to their older counterparts.

While no significant relationship was found between individuals' acculturation type and psychological well-being, it must be noted that the variances of the two acculturation variables were attenuated in the process of categorization, which has plausibly reduced the statistical power of the analysis. In terms of Internet use, the four acculturation types demonstrated significant differences in their American Internet use, but not Chinese Internet use. The separation group which particularly favored Chinese culture over the U.S. culture had a significantly lower level of exposure to American Internet, and individuals of this group also showed the lowest score of psychological-wellbeing. This finding was consistent with Chen (2010) who reported that Chinese immigrants who communicate via the Internet more frequently with local people were more adapted to the host country. On the other hand, those immigrants who spent more time on home culture via the Internet were less adaptive. Another possible explanation regards Internet use motives (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Wang & Sun, 2009; Ye, 2005). Prior research identified Internet use motives including social involvement, acculturation, life satisfaction, and ethnic maintenance.

### **Conclusion**

The authors concluded the study with the following recommendations. First, to enhance Chinese international students' psychological well-being, the top priority is to facilitate their acculturation process towards the identification with the U.S. culture. For instance, university authorities should help international students learn the U.S. culture so that they can successfully navigate the social, economic, and cultural spheres. Such an acculturation process does not entail the detachment from their Chinese identification. Second, results indicated that individuals with higher levels of cultural maintenance (e.g., Chinese identification) are likely to depend less on the Internet for intercultural and interethnic communication. Nevertheless, such an acculturation pattern does not necessarily lead to the impairment of one's psychological well-being. The integration group, for example, showed a medium level of Internet use but the highest level of psychological well-being among the four acculturation groups. Finally, particular attention needs to be paid to the undergraduate student population given that they suffer substantially higher levels of stress and depression. This issue is critical considering the rapid increase in Chinese undergraduate enrollment in recent years (Fischer, 2009).

### **Limitations and Implications for Practice**

There were several limitations to the current study. First, the sample size ( $N = 170$ ) was limited by a notable proportion (approximately 20%) of missing data. Such a sample size prevented us from performing more sophisticated data analyses. For example, some studies suggested that the relationship between Internet exposure and individuals' well-being is curvilinear, which adds to the complexity of the contribution of Internet use in the present study (Chen, 2010; Wang & Sun, 2009). The curvilinear (quadratic) function, however, can be best examined using structural equation modeling which is made impossible by the sample size. Second, the sample tended to be homogeneous in terms of demographics. The majority of participants were graduate students and

nearly half of them were between 24 and 29 years old. Furthermore, nearly one-third of participants had stayed in the United States for no more than one year. Therefore, the results of the present study might not be generalizable to other populations such as the emerging international undergraduate population. Lastly, although the application of the fourfold theory of assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization yielded significant results in the present study, the theory itself had met much criticism in the past two decades. Rudmin (2003) summarized the criticism as “the critics . . . argued that it lacks utility and explanatory force” (p. 4). More importantly, a factor-analytic study (Vijver, Helms-Lorenz, & Feltzer, 1999) indicated that the four acculturation types measures only one dimension, not two or four. As a result, the authors recommended future studies investigate the psychometric characteristics of the fourfold theory scales prior to further analyses.

The present review offered two important implications for multicultural practitioners in counseling and psychotherapy. First, although Chinese international students encountered psychological challenges during the acculturation process, the intensity of the challenges was mediated by various factors. This review suggested that cultural assimilation is a significant predictor to Chinese international students’ psychological well-being. It may be helpful for counselors to encourage clients to learn how to adapt themselves to the local culture. For instance, counselors may encourage clients with lower levels of acculturation to participate in social networkings to improve their cultural assimilation. Second, one principle of ACA Multicultural Counseling Competencies (Arredondo et al., 1996) is to help culturally skilled counselor improve his or her knowledge and information about a particular group, particularly for clients who are student sojourners. As noted in the current investigation, acculturation patterns were associated with psychological well-being. These findings may provide implications for the counselors with regards to client’s acculturation pattern during the therapeutic process.

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## International Student Migration: Outcomes and Implications

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### Abstract

*The present study examined the possible correlation between six life circumstances of international students (N=124) admitted entry into the United States for the purpose of academic study and their geographic choice of location upon graduation. This paper improves upon the current literature by offering actual migration outcomes (rather than intentions), by including three factors not previously analyzed, and by considering graduate students from a new subject field. The independent variables included: duration of study, scholarship award, doctoral study, participation in optional practical training, application for a temporary work visa, and the economic classification of the student's country of origin. The dependent variable was student geographic location as of 15 May 2011, categorized as in the United States or outside of the U.S. Data from foreign student graduates (academic years 2000-2011) from 43 countries were analyzed in binary logistic regression. Results show three variables (scholarship aid, optional practical training and temporary work visa application) were significantly correlated to a graduate's choice of residence. Findings are relevant for academic institutions and government agencies interested in international education, student migration behavior, comparative data as well as strategic policies.*

**Keywords:** international education; international student; migration; academic study; study abroad; population distribution; human geography

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In a world of expanding global corporate collaborations and transnational social networks, the appeal for internationally-educated professionals has dramatically increased in the last thirty years. With that has come a remarkable surge in students pursuing foreign degrees: 0.8 million students were enrolled abroad in 1975; 3.7 million were recorded as studying outside of their country of citizenship in 2009 (OECD, 2011).

Governments, institutions, and universities stand to benefit if more can be determined about what moves highly-skilled individuals across borders. For the decision-making process in migration, considerable research remains (Mahalingam, 2006). Van der Velde and van Naerssen (2010) discussed the macro- and micro-influences on cross-border mobility, conceptualizing three thresholds as well as various *keep* and *repel* factors involved. Structural pressures as well as individual rationality impact migration. The connection between personal motivations and migration outcomes has been studied as well (Bradley, Longino, Stoller, & Haas, 2008; Whisler, Waldorf, Mulligan, & Plane, 2008). Bradley et al. (2008) found that the number in the household

and the type of move affected migration intention, with the mental expectation *to move* predicting later mobility. A transnational comparison of five countries showed that different background variables (economic resources, age, home ownership, etc.) were a better predictor of migration behavior rather than a place-utility model of migration, which is based on the perceived cost-benefit analysis between any two locations (Simmons, 1986). Descriptive models of the process of migration and motivation have also been offered (De Jong, 2000; Hazans, 2003; Kok, 2006).

Newbold (2001) showed that within Canada, economically depressed areas were typically depleted of and not replenished by migrants. In particular, in Newbold's theory (2001, p. 35), "non-return migrants tend to be younger, better educated, and more highly skilled." Low retention rates were related to depressed areas with a higher turnover of residents, while in-migration rates were associated with areas having more economic viability. Newbold's study also illustrated that return migrations were "planned events," influenced by perceived cost-benefit analyses and familial input. Return migration was related to age, economic status, and family presence, among other factors. Newbold (2001, p. 23-24) argued that a "location-specific capital," namely, any current connection anchoring one's choice of location, would prove a better definition of where one considers "home." However, his study was not focused on international migration or the educated professionals in particular.

Overall, the migration of highly-skilled and educated workers has not been studied extensively. Further, research on migration outcomes specifically for international students who study outside their home country for any degree level is lacking. While considerable migration research exists, few studies observe the subsequent migration behavior of foreign graduates as it pertains to the United States (Vasta & Vuddamalay, 2006).

The number of immigrants entering the United States for educational purposes has increased considerably in the last fifty years, as well as their degree levels attained prior to entrance (Agarwal & Winkler, 1985; Bhagwati, 2003): In the 1949-50 academic year, 26,433 internationals began studies in the U.S. In the 2011-12, about 764,495 international students were enrolled in U.S. institutions, comprising 3.7% of total post-secondary student enrollment. Three countries possess 48% of the total number: China, India, and South Korea (Chow & Bhandari, 2012).

Academic migration raises pertinent questions regarding the causes and effects of such a significant demographic movement of highly-skilled individuals. The broad phenomenon of migrants departing their country of origin, gaining a higher level of skill or education abroad, and not returning home, has created such concepts, well-known in educational circles, as "brain drain." This pattern of movement highlights several issues for consideration:

- *What is their choice of residence after studying abroad in the U.S.? Why?*
- *What are their migratory intentions, if any, and when do these intentions appear (before, during, or after their course of study)?*
- *What observations have come to light with respect to the migration of these post-secondary graduates?*

Articles discussing the theoretical global implications of brain drain or brain gain are plentiful and worthy of review (Adnett, 2010; Gribble, 2008; Mahroum, 1999, 2005; Rosenzweig, 2007; Stark, 2005). Whether or not countries should participate in stemming or encouraging the most highly skilled to migrate (and even the existence of brain drain for the sending country) is disputed (Bhagwati, 2003; Borjas, 2004). Studies (Borjas, 2002; Regets, 2001) have also sought to determine the degree to which the international student population leads to displacement of U.S. nationals as students. Shao (2008) and Suter (2008), on the other hand, investigated the government policies which encourage the settlement and non-return of their foreign graduates. However, caution

is warranted when considering migration only in terms of bidirectional flows rather than in terms of integrated circularity (Piper, 2009).

Considering the United States, prospective overseas students can apply for a student visa for a temporary duration of stay. An international student is defined by this temporary academic status to study in the United States with an established intent not to immigrate. Ironically, the very international students approved for F-1 or J-1 *non-immigrant* visas at U.S. embassies around the world, end up legally and successfully changing their status while *within* the United States to remain resident. With this relative ease to apply to stay in the United States to immigrate, this is a welcome victory for “open borders” proponents and an issue of concern for those who consider non-immigrant visa entrances should remain just that. Lu, Zong, and Schissel (2009) argued that immigration policies do impact student decisions and called for research to include actual migration outcomes in the study of their relationship.

Research has focused particularly on foreign doctoral graduates and their rates of stay for the degree fields of economics, science, and engineering. Bhagwati (2003) suggested that academic study in the United States is the simplest method foreigners use to immigrate to the U.S. and estimates that over 70% of foreign-born PhD graduates remain in the United States long-term. According to Borjas (2002), among the foreign students who remain in the U.S.: Almost two-thirds of all petitions are a result of marriage (over 50%) or relatives already in the U.S. (10%); One third is due to employment-based applications (28%). Aslanbeigui and Montecinos (1998) studied the example among economics students (actual stay rates after graduations were not measured):

- 40% planned to leave the U.S. upon graduation;
- 45% planned to remain working in the U.S.;
- 15% intended to stay in the U.S. permanently.

Finn (2012) showed successive “stay rates” by foreign nationals who obtained doctorates in the U.S., by data extracted from tax records of international doctoral students who remained in the U.S. following graduation. However, the study reflects only the stay rates of doctoral graduates receiving science and engineering degrees: 62% of those who received PhDs were residing in the U.S. five years after graduation with rates remaining stable over a ten-year period. Citizens of certain countries exhibited the highest stay rates: China and Iran (89%), Romania (85%), former Yugoslavia (84%), India and Bulgaria (79%). The lowest stay rates were exhibited by students from Saudi Arabia (5%), Thailand (12%), and South Africa (28%).

Card (1979) conducted a longitudinal study to compare the migration outcomes in 1979 of Filipino graduate students studying in the U.S. to their stated intentions of migration in 1970. It is one of the very few studies with longitudinal data of migration behavior in addition to the present study. Interestingly, there was no significant difference in student attitudes between 1970 and 1979 or in their perceived notions of economic conditions between the U.S. and the Philippines. Circumstantial changes during their stay in the U.S. determined migration behavior, especially for those who, having planned in 1970 to return home to the Philippines, had not done so by 1979. Stay rates were affected primarily by student age, opportunity to remain in the U.S., and an overall embrace of the American culture, as opposed to immigration intentions prior to travel to the U.S.

Migration intentions rather than actual outcomes are more often the focus of attention (Lu, Zong, & Schissel, 2009; Soon, 2010b). Other studies examine the migration of students departing from their home country. Gibson and McKenzie (2011) tracked migration behavior for high school students leaving their home country (New Zealand) and related return factors. Constant and D’Adosto (2008) investigated scientists and researchers leaving their home, Italy, and their choice of destination. Similarly, de Grip, Gouarge, and Sauermann (2010) inspected the countries to which European science and engineering graduates migrate and why. In summary, what is lacking is

research on the return migration of postgraduate international students (in fields other than science, economics, and engineering) from the host country of study. The purpose of this study is to investigate actual international student migration outcomes, from the host country of the United States, and determine which factors relate to whether they remain in the U.S.

- *What percentage of international graduates returned to their country of origin?*
- *What personal and socioeconomic factors were related to their decision (marital status, gender, age, length of study, type of degree, employment)?*
- *How were migration outcomes related to perceived commitment to their home country, economic opportunity in the host country, and/or changing motivations during the period of study?*
- *Did the type of scholarship aid lead to a difference in rates of return?*
- *Did a contractual obligation to depart the U.S. (required to receive scholarship aid) then lead to actual student departure from the United States?*
- *Should the policies of the graduate school, in order to better meet institutional goals, be altered to accommodate these findings?*

Three types of variables comprise almost all of the research on international student migration: demographic and family-related, education-related, and perception of the country of origin (Soon, 2010a). Three variables of the present study (length of stay, type of degree, and purchasing power parity) reflected one of each of those three types in order to confirm previous research findings. An additional three variables (scholarship aid, practical training, and work visa application) were introduced to the previous literature.

This study is one of the few which offer actual foreign graduate migration outcomes from the host country of study. Card's (1982) study of the Filipino student population is outdated. Hawthorne & Hamilton (2006) focused on foreign medical students in New Zealand. This study supplements the current literature by offering migration outcomes from the United States, by including three additional factors not previously analyzed, and by considering graduate students from a new subject field: theology. This research builds the collective set of comparative data and is useful for universities and companies invested in promoting their stay or return as well as offering new directions for research. This paper will consider possible implications for educational and political organizations as well as the present academic institution. Current scholarship requirements and guidelines, as well as institutional communications, may be impacted by the findings of this study. On a broader scale, this study offers relevant findings and implications for educational institutions interested in the promotion of reciprocal international influence and government policymakers responsible for immigration regulations and international student trends.

### **Variables and Hypotheses**

The correlation between six life circumstances of international students (admitted entry into the United States for the purpose of academic study on a non-immigrant visa) and their geographic choice of location upon graduation was examined. The six independent variables were: Length of study; Type of scholarship; Type of degree; Participation in optional practical training; Application for a temporary work visa; and the economic classification of the student's country of origin.

The dependent variable was student geographic location as of May 15, 2011, whether remaining in the United States after their period of study abroad or living outside of the U.S. Two variables were continuous: Duration of study; and the purchasing power parity (PPP) for each student's country of origin. Duration of study was counted by each academic year of two full semesters, starting from August through May of the following spring. Four variables were dichotomous categorical variables: scholarship award, doctoral studies completed within the U.S.,

participation in post-completion Optional Practical Training, and non-immigrant application for three year work visa (Table 1).

The initial research questions and hypotheses were:

1. Is the length of time an international student studies in the United States related to their residence upon graduation? The length of time for degree(s) completion is positively correlated with United States residence following graduation.
2. Is receiving special scholarship aid given by the institution (with students' contingent agreement to depart the U.S. upon completion of studies) related to an international student's location after graduation? Receiving this designated scholarship aid is negatively correlated with U.S. residence following graduation.
3. Is the type of degree studied in the United States related to an international student's residence upon graduation? Completing doctoral studies in the United States is positively correlated with U.S. residence following graduation.
4. Is applying for the immigration benefit called post-completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) related to the international student's location after graduation? Applying for post-completion OPT is positively correlated with remaining in the U.S. following graduation.
5. Is applying for a 3-year temporary work visa (still requiring evidence of non-immigrant intent) during the course of studies related to the international student's location following graduation? Applying for a work visa change of status is positively correlated with ultimate residence in the United States after the term expires; conversely, maintaining the same non-immigrant visa status (F or J) is associated with a return to home country residence.
6. Is the Gross Domestic Product per capita known as the purchasing power parity (PPP) rating [as assigned by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)] for the international student's country of origin related to his or her location after graduation ("CIA World FactBook," 2011)? The PPP economic indicator of a foreign students' country of origin is associated with residence location after graduation. Namely, the lower the country of origin's PPP, the more likely residence will be in the U.S.

Table 1  
Summary of Variables

	Type of Variable	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	
<b>Independent Variables</b>	Length of Study	Continuous	N/A	100.0	100.0
	Type of Scholarship	No Contract/No Full Tuition	69	55.6	55.6
		Contract/Full Tuition	55	44.4	100.0
	PhD degree Completion in U.S.	No PhD	101	81.5	81.5
		Completed PhD	23	18.5	100.0
	Optional Practical Training (OPT) <sup>a</sup>	No OPT	97	78.2	78.2
		OPT Participation	27	21.8	100.0
	Change of Status (COS) to Temporary Work Visa <sup>b</sup>	No COS	96	77.4	77.4
		COS Application	28	22.6	100.0
	<b>Dependent Variable</b>	Purchasing Power Parity <sup>c</sup>	Continuous	N/A	100.0
Geographic Location		Not in the U.S.	95	76.6	76.6
		In the U.S.	29	23.4	100.0

Note. N = 124. No cases missing.

<sup>a</sup>Optional Practical Training (OPT) is an approved 12-month period of work authorization immediately upon graduation by the Citizenship and Immigration Services.

<sup>b</sup>Change of Status (COS) is an application to alter one's non-immigrant student visa to a non-immigrant work visa (H or R) for an initial three-year term of work authorization if approved by the Citizenship and Immigration Services.

<sup>c</sup>Purchasing power parity (PPP) is the economic rating for each student's country of origin as rated by the CIA. The CIA categorized 228 countries with PPP ratings ranging from \$200 to \$122,100.



## Research Method

### Participants

International students were defined as an individual born outside of the United States who entered the U.S. on a non-immigrant F or J student visa and enrolled in a residential degree program. Participants in this study were international students who had enrolled and completed a master's or doctoral degree in theology at a private graduate school in the south central United States.

- 296 international students representing 61 nationalities (Hong Kong and Taiwan being counted as separate entities from China) comprised the foreign graduates of classes 2000-2011.
- Countries with the largest percentage of students were South Korea, India, and Canada (15.1%, 7.2%, and 6.8%, respectively).
- Out of the 296 graduates, 184 students responded to the consent forms sent.
- 5 students declined participation.
- 179 students consented to be included in group analysis, thus yielding a response rate of 62.2%.

The final graduate student sample ( $N=124$ ; 31 female, 93 male) included 120 individuals who entered the United States to commence a master's degree and 4 students commence a doctorate. Fourteen of the graduate sample, who had entered as a master's level student, continued doctoral studies at the same institution. Age data were not included for this study (Table 2).

Table 2

#### *Sample Frequencies*

	Students	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Female	31	25.0	25.0
	Male	93	75.0	100.0
Household Type <sup>a</sup>	Single	46	37.1	37.1
	Married	78	62.9	100.0
Completed U.S. Degree	MA	101	81.5	81.5
	PhD <sup>b</sup>	23	18.5	100.0

*Note.*  $N = 124$ .

<sup>a</sup>Marital status as of entry into the U.S. to commence studies.

<sup>b</sup>PhD includes a minority of residential doctor of ministry (DMin) students prior to 2003, after which all DMin international students were non-residential.

Graduating classes from 2000-2011 were defined as the fall, spring, and summer graduating classes for each academic year. As an example, the Fall 1999, Spring 2000 and Summer 2000 semesters comprised the graduating class for the academic year 1999-2000. Foreign-born students with an immigration status of "permanent residence" or "employment in the United States" were considered "immigrant students" and not included in this study. Twenty five students began studies but did not complete at least one degree (due to withdrawal, transfer, death, currently enrolled without a first degree from the institution, or who otherwise had not yet graduated). These students were excluded from the sample.

In order to maximize the validity of this study, 8 students, who could not be verified as initial students entering on an F or J visa, were excluded from the sample (Students who completed at least the master's degree and attempted, but have not completed or are still enrolled in a second degree program, were included in this study. Two individuals, classified as "non-degree," were considered under the Certificate of Graduate Studies program for the clarifying purposes of this study. Any individual with the outmoded degree classification of Doctor of Theology (ThD) was

modified to PhD based on the two degree programs' similarities). International students who, after completion of their first degree, lived overseas for a period of time and re-entered the U.S. for a second degree, were noted as "in" the United States. At the completion of their second degree, their resulting location will be re-assessed.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security mandated institutional compliance by August 2003 of the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). This change dictated that foreign students could no longer live in the United States without studying in a residential degree program at a government-approved institution. In that year, 3 individuals were living residentially and studying a non-residential degree prior to the law change and are included in the study. Since 2005, all international students in non-residential programs were not included in this study. Post-completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) in this study is defined as the one-year period of work permission granted by the U.S. government after graduation.

### **Research Materials and Procedure**

First, alumni reports were obtained from the institution's registrar and alumni offices. Second, student files contained in the international student office were analyzed to transcribe the name on each file; the files were incomplete prior to the graduating year 2000. The three lists of names from the three departments (registrar, alumni, and international office) were then crosschecked to confirm immigration status and create a master list of complete names. Office files were compared against the institution's computer database, since the database was known to include false positives in the sample list (e.g., permanent residents included along with those on an F and J visa). The Alumni directory is limited to those alumni who voluntarily respond to the department's request for information and consequent updates.

Multiple faculty members and staff, who had a personal acquaintance with and considerable knowledge of students' present locations, reviewed the compiled list. The author, current advisor directing the International Student Office, has worked in this office since 1999 and possesses extensive personal knowledge of student location, having maintained personal contact with them. The finalized list of students was used to research each member of the sample. Informed consent was obtained, reducing the number of graduates available for study from 296 to 179. Office staff utilized the last known e-mail of the students and Internet search engines (e.g. Google, Facebook, etc.) to confirm knowledge of student location, and the location of all participants was determined. Data collection began formally in 2006 and was completed in 2011. Inevitably, a few students' migration outcomes alternated over the course of ten years; therefore, the migration outcomes for each participant were reviewed and reflect the residence as of May 15, 2011.

Scholarship aid was defined as a contractual scholarship awarded to the student by the educational institution. The eligibility terms for this kind of scholarship were: 1) Preceding evidence of intent to depart the U.S. upon completion of study, and/or 2) A signed contract to that effect by the student upon arrival. Out of the 69 students granted scholarships based on their agreement to return to their country of origin: 55 students received full tuition scholarships with the first year of living expenses covered; and 14 received a full leadership scholarship (all tuition and living expenses covered). These two groups were combined to code the scholarship variable. All other kinds of partial scholarship aid were not included. Any external or private scholarship aid students may have received was not included in this study.

### **Data Analysis and Results**

Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS Version 18.0, employing binary logistic regression. For all analyses, probability values below 0.05 were considered statistically significant. Data for the

dependent variable of the students' present location (1 = in the U.S., 0 = not in the U.S.) were available for 100% of the total sample, as were the values of independent variables. The following analysis was done for this particular set of complete data. As of May 15, 2011, roughly three-fourths (76.6%) of the international graduate sample ( $N=124$ ) were residing outside of the United States. This percentage varies greatly, based on which groups of graduates are included (see Table 3 for an explanation of this variance).

Binary logistic regression was performed to measure which variables may be related to the likelihood of foreign students' residence in the United States after completion of their degree program (see Table 4). Testing the full model compared to a model with intercept only was statistically significant,  $\chi^2(6, N = 124) = 87.25, p < .001$ , which indicates that the model was able to distinguish between students with residence in the United States and those whose residence was not in the United States. The model correctly classified 91.9% of cases, showing its efficacy to distinguish cases and appropriate goodness of fit.

Three of the six independent variables showed statistical significance a correlation to the dependent variable. The duration of study did not demonstrate any correlative effect. Receiving contingent scholarship aid was negatively correlated with ultimate residence. The odds ratio for a special scholarship award (inverted for clarity;  $1/\text{Exp}(B)$ ) was 15.38 with a 95% confidence interval (166.67, 1.54) and showed students who received scholarship aid with a contractual return were 15 times more likely to depart the United States than their counterparts (see Table 3). The type of degree did not demonstrate any correlative effect.

In support of the fourth and fifth hypotheses, participation in the 12-month optional practical training and application for the 3-year work visa was positively correlated with U.S. residence. Given the 12-month length of Optional Practical Training (OPT), the post-completion OPT variable was run including only graduating years 2000-2010. The odds ratio for application of post-completion Optional Practical Training was 24.40 with a 95% confidence interval (3.59, 165.97). This showed that if students delayed departing the United States for a one-year term of temporary employment, they were twenty-four times more likely to remain in the United States.

Table 3

*Location Frequencies of Foreign Student Graduates*

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
International Students	Not in US	95	76.6	76.6
	In US	29	23.4	100.0
	Cases Unknown	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Total	124	100.0	100.0

*Note.* Location as of May 15, 2011. The original sample ( $N=179$ ) included 26 graduates currently enrolled in the U.S., 6 currently on 12-month OPT, 5 on 36-month work visa, and 18 who married U.S. citizens or otherwise applied for permanent residency. 51 of those 55 were residing in the U.S. If the total number of graduates (including those who during their studies applied for a permanent change of residence, but excluding those graduates who are currently enrolled or on temporary work permission) were considered ( $N=142$ ), the percentage of international graduates residing outside of the US dropped to 67.6%. If all graduates ( $N=179$ ) were considered, then 44.7% (80 of 179) of international graduates from classes 2000-2011 held U.S. residence with 55.3% of graduates residing abroad.

Table 4

*Predictors of Migration Outcome*

Variable	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% CI for Exp(B)
Total Time for Studies	.069	.145	.226	1	.635	1.071	[.806, 1.424]
International Scholarship	-2.741	1.177	5.424	1	.020	.065	[.006, .648]
Completion of PhD	1.896	1.179	2.586	1	.108	6.656	[.660, 67.075]
Post-Completion Optional Practical Training	3.195	.978	10.665	1	.001	24.400	[3.587, 165.973]
Change of Status to Work Visa	4.176	.927	20.283	1	.000	65.083	[10.574,400.571]
Purchasing Power Parity	.000	.000	2.908	1	.088	1.000	[1.000, 1.000]
Constant	-2.455	1.125	4.756	1	.029	.086	

Note. N = 124. CI = confidence interval.

<sup>a</sup>Variables entered: Total Time for Studies ( $M = 4.34$ ,  $SD = 3.02$ ,  $N = 124$ ), Scholarship ( $M = 0.44$ ,  $SD = 0.50$ ,  $N = 124$ ), Completion of PhD in U.S. ( $M = 0.19$ ,  $SD = 0.39$ ,  $N = 124$ ), Post-Completion Optional Practical Training ( $M = 0.22$ ,  $SD = 0.41$ ,  $N = 124$ ), Change of Status to Temporary Work Visa ( $M = 0.23$ ,  $SD = 0.42$ ,  $N = 124$ ), Economic Purchasing Power Parity Rating of Country of Origin ( $M = 20509.68$ ,  $SD = 15991.900$ ,  $N = 124$ ).

A change of immigration status was hypothesized to be correlated with remaining in the U.S. Those students, who applied for a short-term work visa which requires an attestation of non-immigrant intent in the application, were analyzed. Considering the temporary three-year term of a work visa, the work visa change of status variable was run including only graduating years 2000-2008. Applying for a work visa had a statistically significant odds ratio of 65.08 with a 95% confidence interval (10.57, 400.57). Despite the temporary nature of a work visa application, this variable possessed the greatest positive predictive value, in that students who applied for a 3-year work visa were strongly correlated with remaining in the United States long-term, compared with those who did not seek a temporary term of work. The PPP economic rating of the country of origin was not shown to be statistically significant in relation to the dependent variable.

### Discussion

To reiterate the research questions of the study: *What were the actual international migration outcomes of graduates after their term of study abroad was completed? Which variables were associated with staying in or leaving the United States?* Six factors (length of study, scholarship aid, type of study, post-completion practical training one-year term, application for a change of status for a three-year work visa, and the purchasing power parity of the country of origin) were tested to investigate their relationship to the dependent variable, location of residence. Of the six variables tested, three were significantly correlated to a student's location upon graduation, in accordance with the hypotheses.

Duration of study, the total length of time a student remained in the U.S. while enrolled, showed no significant correlation to location outcome, despite earlier research to the contrary (Card, 1982). Soon (2012) also found that the length of stay is related to migration intention to not return home. More research is necessary to show that the length of stay in the host country affects migration outcomes directly. The awarding of scholarships with a conditional requirement that students return to their country of origin is not a new concept (Kwok & Leland, 1982). Receiving a contingent type of scholarship aid (that is, the recipient was awarded with a conditional requirement that they return to their country of origin) showed a negative correlation to U.S. residence upon

graduation, confirming the hypothesis. These findings affirmed the value of a contractual agreement for impacting return migration, which Card (1982) also has shown. This encourages the continued institutional practice of a scholarship contract offer as having effect and worth administrative effort. However, the scope of this study could not determine causation between this type of contractual scholarship and location upon graduation. The higher rate of return could have been affected by the signed contract, with its binding ethical considerations or by the institution's initial selection based on the applicant's evidence of strong home ties, as being more committed to return home from the start. Soon (2010b) found that those who initially intend to return home upon completion of studies in New Zealand more often do. In five years, a new and larger sample of graduates (academic years 2000-2015) and will be re-analyzed for significance and longitudinal comparison.

The type of degree, and the completion of doctoral study, showed no significant correlation. That is, completing either an intermediary level of graduate or terminal doctoral study seemed not to impact the graduate's ultimate choice of residence after graduation. This is noteworthy as other research has shown an extremely high stay rate or intended stay rate for those leaving their home for doctoral study (Aslanbeigui & Montecinos, 1998; Constant & D'Agosto, 2008; Finn, 2012). Soon (2010a, 2012) established that doctoral level students are more likely to intend not to return home. Given that many of the doctoral students in the present study were still enrolled as of 2011, this variable will be reanalyzed.

Confirming the hypotheses, participation in the one-year practical training and application for a three-year work visa were confirmed to have a significant correlation to geographic location, despite both having a temporary term and the classification of non-immigrant status. As the data spanned almost twelve years, the findings showed where graduates chose to reside even after their one-year or three-year term of employment had expired. If given a legal occupational opportunity to stay, this may trump their original intention to leave. Hazen and Alberts (2006) found that students' intentions to migrate were largely economic and professional factors. Although the study did not assess student motivations prior to study, it established that economic ties are related to international students staying in the U.S.

Delaying departure from the United States after graduation may indicate changing immigrant intent. Rosenzweig (2007) has shown that students may be driven by the same motivation as the general population in migration: economic benefit. In addition, the above variables coincide with earlier research that stay rates increase with the permission to remain legally in the foreign country of study, and therefore, delay a return to one's home country (Card, 1982). The "seduction by an appealing alternative to the original plan" dictates migration outcomes rather than the "strength of the original commitment to return home" (Card, 1982, 23). An investigation of these matters can offer valuable information to corporations and institutions which may be eager to recruit certain populations to remain in the U.S. or, alternatively, to return overseas.

Whereas the variable, purchasing power parity of the country of origin (PPP), was hypothesized to be positively related to migration outcomes, this study showed no significance in their correlation. In other words, the study showed no relation to the objective economic differences of a student's country of origin and their choice of residence after graduation. Great value lies in this finding. It serves to correct assumptions about any particular student's migration outcome. To *label* students, based on the economic earning power of their home country (and perceived country status), as more or less likely to depart the United States was *not* validated by the data. Suanet and Van de Vijver (2009) hypothesized that using country-level measures of country wealth (such as Gini and Hofstede's dimension of country economic wealth) were associated with foreign exchange student perception of cultural distance, yet the association was similarly *not* confirmed by their findings. This seems to fit Piper's (2009) argument that the dichotomy between



developed and non-developed nations should be eliminated in favor of the complex interrelatedness of human migratory processes. Students are not merely remaining in the U.S. if they originate from a particular nation; rather, a variety of complicated factors impact the decision. This lack of correlation can inform academic staff and donors of how to properly address and advise international students without making presumptions about their migration outcome.

However, researchers have found evidence to the contrary. Szelenyi (2006) suggested that the economic development of the country is related to international migration. Further, Hawthorne and Harrison (2010) detected that nationality did factor as a significant variable in their study of migration intentions and outcomes. Finn (2012) found that graduates from particular countries of origin showed significantly higher stay rates, namely, China, Iran, India, and parts of Eastern Europe. This evidence rests on how the variable is defined, e.g., as student perception of the country's development or nationality itself rather than the PPP rating. Further research on this type of variable is warranted.

### **Limitations of Study**

Although this study is unique in its measurement of actual migration outcomes of an international student population, a caution should be mentioned. The study analyzed one institution and, with a relatively small sample size, has limited generalizability. Also, the sample size discouraged an investigation of gender difference in migration. This is in large part due to the lower rates of female international enrollment as just 25% of the sample population. According to the current study, future graduates will be combined with the current sample to increase the overall population. With a larger sample size, additional factors (age, gender, marital status, and country of origin) will be added to confirm the work of Lu, Zong, and Schissel (2009) who found that gender and marital status affected stay rates.

The present study combined the migration outcomes of all graduates as of May 15, 2011. The number of graduates, who changed their location more than once between their respective graduating year and 2011, was miniscule. However, future assessment will distinguish the sample by two-year, five-year, and ten-year stay rates (in addition to the overall calculation of outcomes at a specific date in time). These results will be compared to Finn's study (2012) of doctoral graduates.

### **Areas for Further Research**

This initial study encourages avenues of further research, for example, a comparison of the migration outcomes between students from different disciplines of study (e.g. students of science versus theology). Little data are available on actual international student migration outcomes, and the present study was the first to consider students of theology. Finn (2012) found that science and engineering graduates had a very high rate of stay after completion of their doctoral degree in the U.S. Doctoral students in economics seem similar in this regard (Aslanbeigui & Montecinos, 1998). Due to the small sample size of theological doctoral graduates in this study, a comparison with doctoral students from other disciplines will be made in the future. Perhaps students of theology have a heightened sense of responsibility to contractual agreements and/or more of a moral obligation to reciprocate by returning to their home countries than students of other disciplines.

Another avenue for research is the investigation of timing, as to when during their sojourn do the migration intentions of students change, considering that all foreign students must convince the U.S. Department of State of their non-immigrant intent in order to receive an initial F or J student visa. For the present sample, a follow-up questionnaire will be sent to the international alumni to self-report the reason and motivation behind their migration decision in hindsight. Since 2009, incoming international students have completed a questionnaire at orientation regarding their

migration intention upon entry. Data collection will continue through 2013 and will be compared to actual migration outcomes upon graduation.

While gender and family factors influencing migration intention have been considered (Lu, Zong, & Schissler, 2009; Soon 2012), further study of student perception of cultural distance (that is, cultural dissimilarity between country of origin and foreign educational context) and the role it plays in leading these initial migrants to stay is valuable, especially to elicit desired labor migration (Suanet & van de Vijver, 2009). Determination of the factors that lead these highly skilled graduates to move can inform institutional policy in sufficing labor demands and strategic goals.

### Concluding Remarks

The results, however, were useful in designing the future research and for the comparison with other studies. These results—in demonstrating what factors were and were not related to location upon graduation—provide relevant information for the institution to clearly communicate to its constituency and administration as to the correlated factors associated with the migration behavior of foreign students and tomorrow's international leaders. In addition, if an educational institution has a special initiative for international exchange and reciprocation, this study offers strategic information on capitalizing on achieving desired outcomes.

Research on the factors and patterns of international student migration can be used for multiple purposes by educational institutions, corporations, and national governments. Many schools track their current international student enrollment but may wish to follow their international alumni; this study is a guide to further this goal. Moreover, these findings were directly relevant to the current institution in the review of its admission and administrative policies. Applications, such as the scholarship contract (the grantee agreement to return overseas upon degree completion), were reviewed to improve the efficiency of administrative procedures. With the result that those who received scholarships were more likely to return abroad, the additional paperwork required was deemed efficient. Additionally, the results of this study enabled staff members to describe more clearly to donors and the extended institutional family what percentage of our international students have returned overseas as well as what factors impacting their migration. These findings were also useful to commence further in the areas of international education, migration behavior, and educational reciprocity.

As migration involves “individual behavior with respect to movement across space,” the present research discussed migration for international study in particular (Fawcett, 1986, p. 5). International migration is a complex engagement of personal motivations, economic prospects, geopolitical factors, and cultural transitions. In that process, this study offers important data adding to the current lack of research. Foreign student migration, with its impact both on the host and home country as well as on the individual lives of migrants, is an area worthy of continued research. Specifically, the discovery of the factors involved in why people move can prepare educational institutions in how to help their international students to transition during their temporary stay of study and plan for their future.

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**About the Author**

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## **Study Abroad: My Experience as an Exchange Student in China**

*Jenny Veal (Undergraduate Program)*  
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*“The world is a book and those who do not travel read only a page;” - Saint Augustine*

Studying abroad is an opportunity to grow and test one's limits. In the interest of encouraging other students to pursue international education I would like to share my experiences and the general bits of wisdom I gained along the way. I was inspired by and chose to study abroad due to my interest in foreign languages. In my life I have always had an unwavering dream. My dream was about equality, diversity and understanding. I grew up in a small town where everyone knew each other and everybody held some kind of prejudice. While people judged others I tended to wonder about cultural differences with intrigue. This led to my interest in foreign languages and culture. I always knew that I wanted to travel and study in Asia. I believe that in order for our society to work efficiently we must understand each other, embrace our differences, and learn from one another. My journey was only truly able to begin because of my parents' encouragement, their struggles and morals. They taught me to always be sincere, treat everyone equally, be responsible for my actions, and, most importantly, that perseverance is the key to my success.

During my undergraduate career, I have gained friends from all over the world, learning something new about culture and language every day. I began studying Chinese my first semester. At first it was difficult but after studying a specific language for a while I developed a new way of thinking. During my second semester of college, my roommate was from Turkey. We both shared the same love for cultural understanding. As a result we tried to expand our cultural awareness to everyone in our dorm by hanging a different word on our door every day. After studying Chinese for two years, I decided it was time to study abroad. The main reason for studying abroad, from my perspective, was to improve my language skills through immersion.

### **Making the Dream Come True**

#### **Getting Prepared for the Journey**

The following is a list of fundamental matters that must be handled before going abroad:

- *Apply for and receive passport and visa*
- *Obtain abroad address give to family, friends, and advisor*
- *Visit a physician for checkup and receive any necessary immunizations*
- *Consult with bank (debit cards, abroad ATM fees, and travelers checks)*
- *Research and purchase travel insurance*
- *Read safe travel guidelines*
- *Research the customs of intended destination*

## Scholarships and Resources for Studying Abroad

When I applied to study abroad, initially expressing my worry about funds, my study abroad advisor recommended that I apply for the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship. The scholarship was named after a retired congressman from New York. The mission of this program is to “*diversify the kinds of students who study abroad and the countries and regions where they go.*” Today I am proud to say that I am a recipient of the Gilman Scholarship. The funds I was awarded paid for all of my expenses while I was in China, not only the living expenses but also my traveling expenses. Today there are endless resources available for students from any background to pursue their education desires. My advice to all students is to be above excuses, dare to travel, make your aspirations come true, and inspire others. After I had solved my financial worries, the next step was to prepare for my planned journey ahead.

## Packing

*“Don't forget to pack your **courage** for your journey to greatness.” -David Weinbaum*

The hardest part of studying abroad is not deciding which country to travel to, it is the horrible task of deciding what you need to bring. For all students I recommend making a list, waiting for two weeks then cutting all the items suggested to half. After weeks of considerations I believe that the essentials items for all study abroad destinations are: basic medicine, essential electronics (laptop, iPod, camera), power converter for all electronics, travel documents, and travel toiletries. When I was in China I regretted not bring facial lotion because the air was so arid that my face was constantly dry. From my experience and speaking with other students who have also studied abroad, I have found that they all said that they packed too much. A fact that I discovered the hard way on my first trip to China was that many public restrooms do not provide toilet paper and, in some extreme cases, no hand soap.

Using local products while abroad is a valuable experience. I bought Chinese brands of shampoo and toothpaste. I was amazed that the Chinese brand of shampoo was better for my hair than any American brand I had ever tried! On a more serious note, packing for the study abroad experience gives students the chance to realize what is actually essential for living in this materialistic world. Putting my entire life in a suitcase to sustain me for the next six months definitely granted me a new perspective and understanding of life. My challenge to everyone is to use this as a growing experience and learn to appreciate the things that we have.

Before leaving one must have the right mindset to truly appreciate living in another country. One should approach this opportunity with an open mind and a willingness to try anything and to adapt to a new lifestyle. When traveling to any foreign country it is essential to understand that there are different standards and customs of living. When abroad let your experiences, whether good or bad, serve as unexpected surprises. The final concept to embrace is that you cannot control everything. You should approach all situations with patience and tolerance. While I was in China I kept a blog about all my experiences. It is the best way to keep a record of your experience abroad. There are many free websites that allow you to maintain your blog. I kept one for many reasons, but the defining motivation was so my family and friends could experience China with me.

## Departure

Apart from the time when you decided to study aboard, departing is the most exciting, yet frightening moment. In this moment, gather all your courage and walk confidently through the boarding gates, setting in motion the first step of your experience.

“I can finally sympathize with the entire international student population in the United States or elsewhere who has ever decided to live in a foreign country away from their loved ones. I admire their bravery. The understanding that I have acquired today is that there is no way to prepare yourself for all the emotions you will be hit with the day before and the day you leave. Only time and experience can allow you to adapt to the transition from home to your new home in a foreign country. Everyone’s study abroad experience will be different especially how they feel departing for their trip.”

(Posted on my blog September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011)

### **Studying in China**

#### **My Classmates**

“All the international students at Jinan, myself included; through the same experiences we have become our own little family. We have all approached China with the same open attitude. As a result we have not only learned about China, but also we have learned about each other. We cook, study, clean, and travel together!”

(Posted on my blog September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011)

At my University in Jinan, there were only 7 international students, myself included. There were 3 students from France, 2 from Holland and 1 from the Czech Republic. We quickly formed a close knit family. The friendships that we made are priceless. We were so close because we experienced a lot of the same things, and through this we grew together. We would often cook together, not only learning how to cook Chinese food, but also teaching each other about our own country’s food. One day I was learning how to cook crepes the next a traditional Chinese dish. We learned about each other’s countries, cultures, and languages while we all were living in a foreign one! These are the aspects which make studying abroad such an amazing experience.

#### **My University Experience**

“All of my classes are with the other international students and are taught in English, except for my Chinese class. I am the only foreign student in my Chinese class because I was the only student to study Chinese before I studied abroad. I am taking intermediate Chinese right now. Most of the time I only have homework in my Chinese class but since the semester is coming to an end I have final papers in all my classes. So it has been a blessing that my friends and I have found the perfect place to study in Jinan, Starbucks!”

(Posted on my blog December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2011)

In China I lived in a hotel owned by the university and the international students all lived on the same floor of the hotel. We all had our own rooms with a western style toilet. Later in the semester I saw my Chinese friend’s dorm. I was shocked that she had 7 other roommates, a public restroom, and a shower facility in another building. The living standards between the regular and international students were entirely different. I felt the university provided us with such great living arrangements to make us feel more comfortable.

When I first arrived I was worried that my classes would be difficult but they were very easy. I had 15 credits all taught in English. The classes met twice a week. It was a standard schedule very similar to the schedule at my home university. The only assignments that we had were presentations and final papers. My Chinese class by far was the most compelling for me. It was taught completely in Chinese and I spoke with the best of my ability in Chinese! My language ability improved rapidly due to the one on one teaching.

## **Social Experience**

In general when studying abroad, students will have more free time to enjoy the country in which they are staying. I had a booming social life while I was in China. Chinese people are hospitable and want you to experience their culture and also appreciate their country. I traveled from a small town to a medium sized city in China of about 6 million people. This was a big change for me, but it opened up a whole new world of opportunities for entertainment. China has a drinking culture, so I often went to bars, dance clubs, and karaoke. This is a great opportunity to get to know the younger generation (my generation) in China, but foreigners must be careful. Always go with your close friends. Every week at the club I was approached by strangers just curious about where I was from. I was always offered free drinks. Many Chinese people are curious about foreigners and they want to practice their English. This was a great opportunity for me to make friends and learn about China. While abroad there are endless possibilities and one should take advantage of them. I recommend to everyone to make close friends with the local university students, so they can show you the real, non-tourist parts of the country in which you are staying.

Another issue I would like to mention is romantic relationships abroad. They happen quite often. I had an abroad romance, as did many of my friends, and it added so much to my experience. I dated someone who could not speak English, nor could I speak his mother language. We communicated by our second language, Chinese. I cannot express how much of a thrill it was to speak in my second language every day for every situation possible! Learning to express myself not only to my friends, but also to my boyfriend, in a foreign language was the most amazing and accomplished feeling I have ever felt, even if it was frustrating at times. In retrospect I feel that dating while abroad is a great experience for everyone, but it should be handled responsibly and with realistic expectations. On a final note, we are all responsible adults and studying abroad does not mean you should act in an irresponsible way. You should have fun, enjoy yourself, but be cautious because you are a representative of your country.

## **Traveling in China**

*“A good traveler has no fixed plans, and is not intent on arriving”~Lao Tzu*

### **Qingdao (青岛)**

During the semester, the school arranged for a weekend trip to Qingdao for all of the international students. I love Qingdao for its history and apparent international influence. Qingdao is beautiful coastal city that has a long history, which has been influenced by Germany and Japan. Everywhere in Qingdao you will see this influence not only through the architecture of the city but also the signs translated into 3 different languages.

That weekend my classmates and I feasted on fresh seafood and enjoyed the beach. After the semester had ended I traveled to Qingdao again, but this time I traveled alone. Traveling solitarily was an amazing experience that taught me how to be completely independent. I took a risk...a chance, to see if I could travel in China by myself and I succeeded! I hold Qingdao and it's memory so close to my heart because it is the memory of me traveling alone in a foreign country which always empowers my independent spirit.

### **The Chinese National Holiday in Beijing (北京)**

While abroad I suggest to everyone to travel as much as possible. I had the chance to travel many times during and after the semester had ended. The first place I traveled to was Beijing during the national holiday in China called Guo Qing Jie (国庆节). I left for Beijing with the other

international students from my university. After a night of dancing, with only two hours of sleep, we embarked on the bullet train. This was how we started our trip in Beijing. Everywhere in Beijing was crowded because everyone travels during this holiday. During this time I couldn't take one step in any direction without running into another person. While there I went to all of the normal tourist sites but what I want to talk about is the extraordinary things I experienced.

Once we arrived at the train station in Beijing, we had the option to take the subway or take a taxi to our hotel. This is where the first problem occurred. Being that we were tourists the taxi drivers assumed none of us could speak Chinese or had any knowledge of the normal rate of a taxi. When they saw us, they saw easy money. They tried to charge us three times the normal taxi fee! I acted as the translator and negotiator. If anyone knows me, I am not an aggressive person and definitely the worst possible choice for negotiating. So after that attempt and failure, we decided to decipher the subway map and find our hotel. Using the subway saved us more than 500 Yuan. I recommend this method to anyone traveling in a big city.

I have two favorite memories from Beijing. My friends and I went to a Spanish restaurant for dinner. I had been missing Spanish food intensely since leaving the States. This night we wandered the streets of Beijing trying to find a nice dance club. Eventually we found one, but only after I asked directions in Chinese to two drunken pedestrians who turned out to be Japanese with a very basic level of spoken Chinese! After using what little Japanese I knew to communicate with them, we found a place! But before arriving we found a street vender selling mojitos for 15 Yuan, which was barely over \$2.00!

The second most memorable experience from Beijing was with two of my Korean friends and one Chinese friend. We decided to rent bicycles and ride them from Tianmen square to the Hutongs and then to the Olympic stadium. We rode our bikes for more than 4 hours that day. In my opinion the best times were not at the tourist sites, or even riding the bikes but getting lost with my friends and trying to navigate our way through the streets of Beijing.

## **Guangzhou (广州)**

When the semester was over, I went directly with my Dutch and French friend to Guangzhou. It was just us three girls traveling together. Guangzhou is a beautiful place with a very tropical climate. When I arrived in Guangzhou I felt like I had traveled to another country. In Guangzhou the local language is Cantonese. The Cantonese dialect is completely different from Mandarin which is what I had been studying for three years. The people in Guangzhou can all speak Mandarin but Cantonese is their mother language. I felt like I had been transported to a warm tropical island with no way of deciphering the spoken language. I was just glad that I could read. It was a confusing situation because I could read the writing but everything I heard I did not understand. No one spoke Mandarin unless I asked them a question in Mandarin.

During this trip, I met up with a Chinese friend from my home university in the United States. She showed me all around Guangzhou. I also had my very first experience staying in a hostel. I was a little skeptical, but once I actually stayed in the hostel, it won over my favor. It is a dorm for likeminded travelers. I recommend to anyone traveling abroad to stay in a hostel at least once. Unlike a hotel, for a hostel I had to provide my own towels, toiletries, and a lock to lock up my stuff. We stayed in a room with two sets of bunk beds. The most comforting thing about a hostel is that they offer all the services that a hotel offers except at a cheaper price and there's room sharing.

Later during my week in Guangzhou, I met up with another friend from my abroad institution. I had been his English conversation partner all semester. That day my friend and I were



to meet up with him to go to a tourist site in the city and then celebrate the western New Year with him. I remember that morning vividly because I had to get directions from the front desk of the hostel so I could meet my friend in town. The directions the desk clerk gave me were completely in Chinese and much to my surprise and I could read and understand it all! It was a very rewarding feeling. That night we welcomed the New Year and a new chapter to our lives, by sharing a midnight drink on the outside patio of a quiet bar.

“New Year’s day I said goodbye to my two dear friends at the Guangzhou airport. We had finally reached the time where we would all go our separate ways. Celine, my French friend, was going to Thailand. Suzanne, my Dutch friend, was traveling solo to various places in China. I could finally feel that my semester in China had almost come to an end.”-(Posted on my blog January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012)

### **Living with a Host Family in Lai Zhou (莱州)**

After I said my goodbyes to all my friends in Guangzhou, I traveled to a small city in the Shandong Province called Lai Zhou. I stayed in another friend’s house for a week. Her family welcomed me with open arms. I rested, practiced my Chinese, and enjoyed my time with her family. I recommend everyone to stay with a host family while abroad. It gave me the chance to see the real life of a Chinese family. After my week in Lai Zhou I traveled to Shanghai to take my plane home. I took a 12 hour bus ride from Lai Zhou to Shanghai. I had my own bed in the middle of the bus, but it was a top bunk. The entire 12 hours I felt like I was riding on the watch tower of a boat. I could feel every turn. Everyone who walked on the bus instantly recognized me as a foreigner. Throughout the whole 12 hours I could find someone staring at me. I guess the reason for this was because I was traveling from a small town. Many people from small cities in China are not used to seeing foreigners often.

Every city which I traveled each holds special memories for me. From my travels I will always remember the wonderful time with my friends, and the kindness of my host family. I will always remember the bicycles and \$2.00 mojitos of Beijing, the seaside, sea food, and the beautiful architecture of Qingdao. From Guangzhou I will always remember the lush green scenery, and passing a very warm new year’s night with my friends. While traveling in China I learned many things. Things like never take a taxi unless you’re really good at bargaining, and to always stay in a hostel if possible, it is a great experience! Many great hostels can be found using a travel website, with customer ratings, called *elong*.

### **Culture Shock**

Studying abroad is an amazing experience, but students tend to look at the adventure ahead of them. When they finally arrive at their destination they are blindsided with the other aspects of studying abroad. Something everyone faces abroad is culture shock.

### **Time Difference**

Jet lag is something experienced by all travelers. The time the flight arrives is a very important determinant for jet lag. I recommend booking a flight that will land in the afternoon or early night, so the trip can begin on a normal schedule the following day. My second day in China, I woke up early and ran 5 kilometers. Exercise has been proven to reduce jet lag. The key to overcoming jet lag is to follow your normal routine, of three meals a day and exercise. It is also recommended to not take naps during the day when trying to recover from the time difference. Being hurled into another culture is like opening a book in another language and trying to understand it. Overtime I came to understand the culture in China.

## **Cold Showers**

I vividly remember my first day arriving because I had been traveling for the equivalent of 24 hours! The only thing I wanted to do was take a shower and sleep, but I had not brought any towels. After exchanging my money, buying the things I needed, I was finally able to take a shower. Unfortunately it was a cold shower! For the next week I had cold showers, I thought it was because my shower was broken, but unfortunately it was my ignorance...I hadn't been turning on the hot water in the correct way! In this way I learned patience and even with the minor setbacks I learned to look past them and enjoy the world around me.

## **Restroom Terrors**

The first thing I had trouble with was the Chinese squat style toilet. It is a porcelain hole in the ground. I can say that it was always an interesting experience going to the bathroom. It is also important to mention that China has a different standard of cleanliness. Some of the toilets I encountered took all my courage to use because they were so dirty. If you can imagine me trying to balance while squatting and holding my nose...it was a very awkward and wobbly position. I still vividly remember the public restrooms in the subway and on the streets of Beijing and on the bus from Lai Zhou. After just mentioning how unappealing some toilets are I do not want to discourage anyone. It was on rare occasion that I found an unsanitary toilet. The basic line is that China is a beautiful country that is still developing. Not every city is on the same standard. If you are a little squeamish, I recommend using hotel or restaurant restrooms, which are normally equipped with western style toilets.

## **Metropolitan Life**

My second point of culture shock was adjusting to life in a metropolitan city from crowds to the traffic system. Going from a small city that doesn't even have public transportation to a metropolitan of almost 6 million people can be quite overwhelming. I had to learn to be aggressive. People are always in a hurry and there is no waiting in lines at the subway or train station. I had to push my way to the front. To someone who is not use to this behavior, it may seem rude but it is just a different standard. Even with all the pushing and crowds there are still people willing to help others. The traffic in Xi'an and Jinan had the craziest driving I had ever seen. I felt like the drivers of these cities take the traffic rules as guidelines: advisable, but not necessary. Although the traffic was frenzied, I can say that the system worked because during my stay in China I only saw two car accidents. I found out the hard way that cars do not always stop for pedestrians crossing the street. My friends would always laugh at me when I was crossed the street in a rapid dash. China is a huge country with many different standards across the provinces. This is true for all matters in China from food to culture, even traffic. The city I traveled to with the best traffic regulations was Qingdao. The traffic in Qingdao is very organized and rule abiding.

## **Local Custom**

My final aspect of culture shock was firecrackers. Since I was living in a hotel located on the college campus there were many weddings hosted there. It is tradition in a Chinese wedding to set off tons of fireworks to scare away any bad omens or spirits. It was my second morning in Jinan, when I was woken to the lovely surprise of firecrackers. These weddings always took place on the weekends during the morning. These firecrackers are not like the firecrackers during the Independence Day celebration in America. They are long strands of firecrackers that are about three times louder! The first time I heard them I thought they were gunshots! I jumped from my bed completely alarmed. I thought I was in the Chinese ghetto. It took about two or three more strands of these firecrackers to be set off in order for me to realize what they were. Through all the

experiences that I have had with culture shock or any difficulties that I faced in China, I always felt that I learned pretty slowly.

### **Reverse Culture Shock**

Everyone's experience with culture shock will be different. Everyone will be affected by different things. These are just a few of the major things that I had trouble adapting to. Adjusting to the lifestyle in China was an easy transition for me, much easier than when I returned to America. When I left for China I knew I would suffer from culture shock, but returning home I never realized that I would be hit with culture shock again. In China I had gotten use to a big city, drinking hot drinks, eating fresh vegetables every day, and walking everywhere. Coming home I had to drive everywhere, there was too much meat in every dish, everything I ate was too greasy or sweet, and all the drinks were too cold for my stomach. I also struggled for a month with the time difference. I found myself sleeping for three or four hours at a time, then staying up the whole night, only to sleep away most of the day.

I expected everything to be the same when I came home. On a basic level things were the same, but the small things changed which really gave me the sense that I had been gone for almost 6 months. These are all problems students who study abroad can face when adjusting back to their home country. The only way to overcome these problems is to look at them in a positive aspect. Always keep a positive attitude and be patient. I learned that I had to readjust to my home with the same approach that I took adapting to China.

### **Conclusion**

"In an overview of my semester abroad I wouldn't have done anything differently. Studying abroad was one of the best things I have done in my life. I'm so grateful to have had this opportunity and even more grateful for the wonderful friends that I made during my stay in China. From this experience I learned so much about myself and about the world. I feel that I have become a stronger, wiser person from it. If someone would have told me a year ago that I could study and travel around China by myself, I wouldn't have believed them, but here I am. I did it! I remember leaving home crying and nervous about coming to China, but when the semester was over I found myself crying, sad to be leaving the home I made in China."

(Posted on my blog January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012)

In retrospect studying abroad was the best and most terrifying decision of my young life. I learned that sometimes one must take a chance, take themselves out of their comfort zone to truly grow as a person. Studying abroad not only taught me about myself, but it opened my eyes to the world, to many new perspectives. Before I left for China I had never traveled by myself, but there I was in China by myself traveling, speaking a foreign language, and surviving all on my own. Through this experience I pushed myself to my limits. I learned just how strong and independent of a person I can be. I have a new found confidence and gained a new outlook of understanding and enduring patience. Being an exchange student allowed me to truly blossom into the person I always knew I could be. I finally learned what it felt like to be an international student. I will never forget the international family I made while I was in China, the lessons I learned or the valuable things I discovered about myself. I strongly encourage all students to study abroad or even travel abroad at least once in their life. It is a priceless experience, full of life changing moments.

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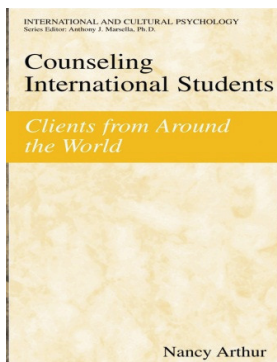
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## Counseling International Students: Clients from Around the World

Arthur, N. (2004). *Counseling international students: Clients from around the world*. New York, NY: Kluwer Academic / Plenum Publishers. Pp. vii+ 149, ISBN 0-306-48069-7

**Reviewed by** Raul A. Leon and Jamie Chmiel, Eastern Michigan University (USA).



International students have emerged as a student population that plays a critical role in the internationalization efforts of institutions of higher education across the world. Currently, the United States leads the world in the number of international students on local campuses. In 2000, a total of 547,867 international students were enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities. According to the Open Doors report, the number of international students reached 764,495 in 2011 (Institute of International Education, 2012). When considering this growth in the representation of international students on U.S. campuses, it is important to acknowledge that institutions have also acquired additional responsibilities, committing to provide services that can fulfill the academic and personal needs of this student sub-population. In line with this commitment, institutions have witnessed a rising number of students seeking counseling services because of psychological problems (Gallagher, 2011). International students are not excluded from this trend.—Arthur (2004) uses her experiences counseling international students to explore how counselors in higher education can better understand this important student group and develop competencies and skills to provide the support services that will encourage these students to succeed.

Arthur (2004) situates this examination within the context of "cross-cultural transition," considering the unique experiences that international students face when making the decision to study in a foreign country. Arthur's approach is simple and effective. In Chapters 1-4, she takes the reader step-by-step through the general process that characterizes the experience of an international student, and explores how differing cultural values, norms, and expectations can influence how students cope with the stresses of traveling overseas to study; interacting with a new culture, adapting to a college environment, facing the emotional ups and downs of culture shock, and finally returning to their home countries.

In Chapter 5, Arthur explains the current multicultural counseling competencies that must guide counselors. She constructs a direct link to how these core counseling skills can be applied when working with international students. Chapter 6 introduces short but compelling individual case scenarios that illustrate the unique problems and issues that international students can face. These scenarios offer an opportunity to consider and reflect on the role of counselors serving international students, and allow the reader to connect literature presented throughout this book to how transitions in a cultural context shape the experience of international students. The final chapter focuses on institutional guidelines to enhance the services and support that are currently

offered for international students. This chapter emphasizes the need to provide services that keep up with the increasing number of issues that arise when larger numbers of students with rich and diverse backgrounds come together on college and university campuses. The chapter concludes by identifying areas for future research.

The strength of Arthur's work is her focused attention on the student experience. She provides a detailed examination of how cultural transitions and differences can influence the decision of international students to seek counseling services, and the process by which counselors should offer these services. Arthur points out that counselors can rely on core competencies that incorporate flexibility when international students seek counseling services. In many cultures, there is a stigma associated with seeking counseling services and students may be unfamiliar and uncomfortable with the dynamics of seeking help from someone whom they may consider to be an authority figure. Arthur advocates flexibility in counseling style, methods, and ethical considerations. To encourage international students to utilize counseling services, Arthur suggests breaking away from conventional counseling methods and implementing strategies such as including family members or conducting informal sessions outside of the counselor's office. With regards to the counseling process itself, Arthur argues that counselors must develop competencies suited to fulfill the needs of each student. This means taking time to learn about the international student population on their campus as a whole, and understanding the varying levels of acculturation held by international students and their home and host cultures. Her position is that each international student has a unique background and personality, and while they may share a common experience of cross-cultural transition, counselors must be cautious and carefully evaluate bias and stereotypes that can be formed when serving a particular student group.

When examining the impact of transitions on international students, Arthur highlights several areas that can emerge as sources of distress for international students. These areas can include difficulty adjusting to foreign teaching styles, language proficiency issues, understanding different gender role expectations in the new culture, and financial difficulties. International students can also have difficulties when they find that their courses are too challenging or not challenging enough based on their background. Lack of social support is also often a major issue that can be compounded by a lack of intercultural communication competence. Counselors must have a good understanding of how to help international students manage the demands of a cross-cultural transition, where anticipating and helping students confront feelings of loneliness, depression, homesickness, discrimination or racism on campus can be central to a student's personal and academic adjustment to a host culture.

Arthur introduces several approaches that counselors can incorporate to ease this transition for international students. Creating awareness of the types of services provided on campus is necessary, but more importantly, she suggests that counselors continuously reach out to international students to urge them to participate in programs that were designed to help with their transition. Likewise, Arthur believes that designing support groups or psycho-educational workshops (e.g., language support, study skills and cross-cultural orientations) can have a great impact in creating spaces for international students to connect with other students. She suggests that creating a culture where students can utilize counseling services in a group context is a powerful tool to remove the stigma attached to seeking these types of services, thus reaching more students and creating networks of support that can help students manage their transition.

*Counseling International Students: Clients from Around the World* is a must-read for all counselors working at an institution that hosts international students. Nancy Arthur provides the reader with a thorough understanding of the shared experiences of international students, and how these experiences can psychologically affect the well-being and success of students. She offers competencies to assist counselors with their professional development, methods for counseling



sessions, and suggestions for programming. This comprehensive work is notable for its humanistic look at how best to serve this valuable student population.

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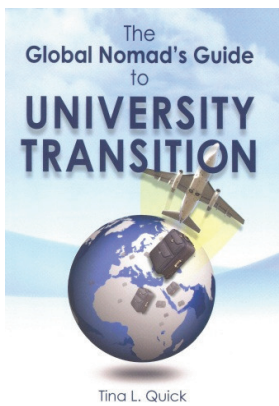
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## The Global Nomad's Guide to University Transition

Quick, Tina L. (2010). *The global nomad's guide to university transition*. London, UK: Summertime Publishing. ISBN: 978-1-904881-21-6

Reviewed by Yi (Leaf) Zhang, University of Texas at Arlington (USA)



*The Global Nomad's Guide to University Transition* (Quick, 2010) is specifically written for third culture kids (TCKs) who will begin their journey into university life. TCKs are defined as those who grew up in places outside of their home or passport cultures and have no sense of belonging in neither the home culture nor host culture. These students usually find their sense of belonging in the third culture, which is the community of people who share the experience of living outside their passport cultures. This book also aims to prepare parents of TCKs to better understand their children's challenges thus assisting them with a smoother transition to college. As a mother of three college-aged TCKs and an adult TCK herself, Tina Quick shared her rich experiences of cross-cultural transition in the book. She also shared practical tips with both TCKs and their parents in overcoming potential difficulties, building new relationships, and finding their own identity. The major audience for this book is TCKs and their parents who may use it as a guide; but the topic and Quick's prose may appeal to a broader readership. This book consists of 11 chapters and emphasizes on the following six aspects of TCKs' transition into university life.

### Transition Cycle

The transition cycle, extensively discussed in chapters two, three, four, and five, is the highlight of the book. Quick adopts the Transition Cycle theory from Dave Pollock who was a recognized authority on TCKs, and incorporates it with her own experiences, stories, and examples. She argues that the transition cycle does not only apply to TCKs, but also to everyone who goes through it. Understanding the five stages of transition (involvement, leaving, transition, entering, and re-involvement) will better assist students to anticipate the changes in their lives. It will also help them better manage the challenges they may encounter in their transition to the third culture. Using colloquial expressions and no jargon, Quick makes the introduction to the Transition Cycle theory fun to read and easy to understand. For instance, she uses "itchy feet" and "dragging feet" to describe the feelings of anxiety and denial students have towards changes. She also uses "fish out of water" to refer to uncertainty and ambiguity in the transition stage.

### Unsolved Grief

In chapters three and four, Quick calls the reader's attention to acknowledge unsolved grief of TCKs, which is often neglected by parents. The high mobility lifestyle exposes TCKs to more losses than other people ever experience in their entire life. Quick argues that TCKs should be given enough time to grieve about their losses and accept the losses. She believes parents play an

important role in this process. As such, she encourages parents to embrace their own losses, understand their child's grief, and provide them with emotional support.

### **Relationships**

Another important contribution of this book is the discussion on how TCKs relate to their home-country peers. This is discussed primarily in chapter six. It is often assumed that it is not an issue for TCKs when they return to their home-country culture. However, Quick provides a totally different perspective. Quick explains specifically why TCKs feel disconnected from their peers in their home-country and why TCKs think their relationship with these peers is superficial. She further points out that TCKs are different from international students in many ways but they tend to be more comfortable with international students since they often share similar cross-cultural experiences.

### **Identity Development**

Personal identity is another important topic in this book. Quick discusses identity issues mainly in chapter seven. TCKs are constantly facing changes of relationships, environment, and cultures. As a result, many TCKs experience difficulties understanding their own identity. She indicates that simple questions like "where are you from?" could cause chaos for TCKs because they may not feel that they have real ownership of any places they lived before. Readers are encouraged to employ Schaetti's TCK Identity Development Model to better understand the global nomad's identity development challenges.

### **College Transition**

Chapters eight and nine emphasize the practical perspective of college life. These two chapters cover a wide variety of topics of college life: health, safety, drugs, alcohol, and financial issues. These chapters provide useful tips and advice to students, but they could be better organized. For instance, finance issues are mainly discussed in chapter nine but it is also mentioned briefly in chapter eight. It may be easier for readers if all issues relevant to the same topic are discussed in the same chapter.

Written by guest writer Vriesendorp, chapter ten focuses on individual differences. This chapter provides a better understanding of differences in personalities. It is hoped that students will be better prepared for differences and can better get along with their roommates, fellow students, faculty, and other personnel on campus.

### **Parental Tools**

Parental tools are provided in the last chapter of the book. Quick does an excellent job in sharing her own experiences as a mother of three TCKs and offering practical advice to parents of global nomads. However, a comment she made regarding foreign students is misleading and needs to be amended. She states "foreign students in the U.S. cannot obtain a Social Security Number (SSN)" (p. 244), but as long as foreign students are authorized to work on or off campus and meet all social security eligibility requirements, international students can obtain a SSN (Social Security, 2011).

In conclusion, this is a wonderful guide book that encourages global nomads to stay on the course during their transition to college life. Quick provides key points of each topic and useful resources at the end of each chapter; however, she does not provide page numbers and year of quoted works in the body. Although this book is primarily designed for college-bound global nomads, it would be beneficial for readers who are willing to research further on their own if more information were provided.

Overall, Quick makes a significant contribution to existing literature of TCKs and adds new knowledge to studies of cross-cultural transition. She synthesizes abstract theories and concepts along with her own experiences and provides a better understanding of TCKs and their transition encounters.

### **Reference**

Social Security: U.S. Social Security Administration. (2011, September). International students and social security numbers. SSA Publication No. 05-10181. Retrieved from <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10181.html#a0=0>

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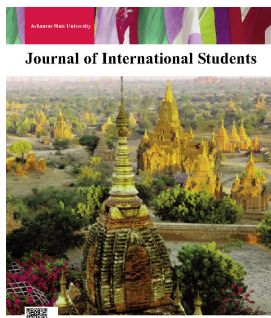
### **Forthcoming Peer-Reviewed Articles:**

1. Home Away from Home: International Students and their Identity-based Social Networks in Australia.  
*Catherine Gomes, PhD, RMIT University (Australia)*  
*Marsha Berry, PhD, RMIT University (Australia)*  
*Basil Alzougool, PhD, University of Melbourne (Australia)*  
*Shanton Chang, PhD, University of Melbourne (Australia)*
  2. Challenges Facing Asian International Graduate Students in the United States: Pedagogical Considerations in Higher Education.  
*Shu-Yuan Lin, EdD, Idaho State University (USA)*  
*Susan Day Scherz, EdD, Hansen School District, Idaho (USA)*
  3. Comparison on the Developmental Trends between Chinese Students Studying Abroad and Foreign Students Studying in China.  
*Xuezhi Liu, PhD, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security (China)*
  4. Factors Caribbean Overseas Students Perceive Influence their Academic Self-Efficacy.  
*Arline Edwards-Joseph, EdD, Georgia Southern University (USA)*  
*Stanley Baker, EdD, North Carolina State University (USA)*
  5. Mental Health Help-Seeking Intentions among International and African American College Students: An Application of the Theory of Planned Behavior.  
*Jean Kesnold Mesidor (Doctoral Candidate), Jackson State University (USA)*  
*Kaye F. Sly, PhD, Department of Psychology, Jackson State University (USA)*
  6. Are International Undergraduates Struggling Academically?  
*Barry Fass-Holmes, PhD, University of California, San Diego (USA)*  
*Allison A. Vaughn, PhD, San Diego State University (USA)*
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