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Examining the Role of Structural Diversity in Intercultural Competence

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Abstract

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the United States have identified intercultural competence as a priority for students in the modern, globalized economy. Increasingly, institutions utilize an intersectional approach to understand how individuals from different backgrounds engage with global learning and international educational experiences. This is an exploratory study which examines the association of institutional diversity and individual students' race/ethnicity with the outcome of global learning. The study includes two women's colleges: a predominantly white (77%), faith-based liberal arts institution in the US Midwest and a majority-minority (61%) liberal arts college in a Southeastern metropolitan area. Findings indicate that incoming students at the majority-minority college have higher Global Perspectives Inventory (GPI), (Braskamp, Braskamp, Merrill, & Engberg, 2012). scores when compared with the students, pre-study abroad, at the predominantly white institution (PWI) and that people of color (minority group members) had higher GPI scores than their white peers. Moreover, white students entering the majority-minority college had higher self-reported intercultural competence than white students at the PWI. Finally, controlling for majority/minority group status, institutional racial/ethnic makeup predicted GPI scores such that being a student at the majority-minority was associated with higher intercultural competence scores. Implications for institutional diversity are discussed as they relate to intercultural competence initiatives and outcomes.

Keywords: intercultural competence; institutional diversity; international education

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the United States have identified intercultural competence as a priority for students in the modern, globalized economy (e.g., Jones & de Wit, 2012; Lazor, et al., 2010). Upon students' completion of secondary education, these same positive cognitive and learning outcomes help students successfully navigate an international economy and job market that demand flexible, self-aware citizens who are able to skillfully traverse cultural boundaries (Altbach & Knight, 2007). It is likely that institutions with different

cultural makeups (e.g., a predominantly white institution compared to a majority-minority one) attract students who enter the higher education environment with different levels of interest in and skills related to intercultural competence. This study examines that hypothesis to better inform how institutions approach their culturally-informed educational efforts.

Institutional diversity and student outcomes

Assuming the value of intercultural competence as an education outcome, there is a substantial body of literature that establishes how attending a higher education institution with a more diverse student body composition—a feature also referred to as structural diversity—is correlated with higher levels of student intercultural competence. These researchers have also found an array of other positive educational outcomes such as cognitive complexity and openness (Gottfredson, et al, 2008, Gurin, et al., 2002, Denson & Bowman, 2013). These data were cited in the 2003 Supreme Court ruling that institutions of higher education have a “compelling interest in attaining a diverse student body” (*Grutter v. Bollinger*, 2003). Justice O’Connor wrote for the majority that “numerous studies show that student body diversity promotes learning outcomes, and better prepares student for an increasingly diverse workforce and society, and better prepares them as professionals” (*Grutter v. Bollinger*, 2003). For just one specific example of these studies, Saha and colleagues (2008) found in a study of 20,112 graduates from 118 medical schools that white students at the more racially and ethnically diverse medical schools rated themselves as more prepared to care for minority populations and as having stronger attitudes endorsing equitable access to healthcare.

However, since many of these studies are correlational in nature, it is difficult to establish the causation direction that is presumed by O’Connor’s statement that student body diversity promotes these learning outcomes. This study aims to explore whether there might in fact be a slightly different chicken-and-egg effect, where students who are higher in intercultural competence to begin with self-selecting into schools with more diverse student bodies. In addition, if both directions of causation are in fact at work, this could create yet another valid educational justification for higher education institutions to pursue a diverse student body: to attract students into their communities who already bring with them strengths in intercultural competence.

Domestic Diversity and Cross-Cultural Experiences

Often, HEIs approach the goals of internationalization and domestic diversity as separate pursuits (Stier, 2003). The perceived discreteness of these objectives is expressed using institutional practices such as having distinct learning outcomes, courses, and even departments to promote and measure domestic and global diversity. Typically, there is no attempt to envision the underlying themes as being complementary or similar (Olson, Evans, & Shoenberg, 2007; Stier, 2003). While there are fundamental differences between these pursuits (Kahn & Agnew, 2015), both internationalization and multicultural education ask students to take the perspective of another, to recognize cultural context, to engage in self-reflection, and act in a socially responsible manner (Braskamp, 2014; Kahn & Agnew, 2015). Given their underlying

similarities, these goals can, and, moreover, maybe should, bolster the development of one another.

Students who engage in frequent interactions with diverse peers show a greater openness to diverse perspectives and a willingness to challenge their own beliefs (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2013). In the study cited in the previous section, Saha, Guiton, Wimmers, and Wilkerson (2008) found that increases in white medical students' cultural competency were found only when students perceived a positive climate for interracial and intercultural interactions. Thus, preparedness to engage academically and socially in both international and diverse domestic cultures may be complementary. Notably, a similar effect was not replicated in black medical students; the authors argue that this was due to the presence of a ceiling effect for cultural competency in the black medical student population regardless of institutional composition. Considering this, it seems important to explore how White students and students of color may interact differently with the structural diversity of their institutions and engage differently with intercultural competence development. The current study sets these questions as its goals.

Intersectionality of Race and Gender in Global Learning

Until recently, the education abroad field has largely approached intercultural competence as a culture-general construct. In the past, the homogeneity of primarily White students of a high socioeconomic profile studying outside of the United States may have masked some of the nuanced differences of students' cultural competence development processes (Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2011). Tools to assess students' intercultural competence outcomes, like the Global Perspectives Inventory (Braskamp, Braskamp, Merrill, & Engberg, 2012), were developed to be distributed and interpreted in the same way for individuals from different racial, gender, and religious backgrounds (Braskamp, Braskamp, & Merrill, 2009).

In the past decade, some scholars in the field have called for an intersectional approach to examining globally-related intercultural outcomes of interest (Willis, 2012; Huber, 2010). Intersectionality--a term attributed to Kimberle Williams Crenshaw--highlights how interconnected identities related to systems of oppression (e.g., gender, race, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation) interact in important ways and shape individuals' identities and experiences (Collins, 2015). The current study takes a first step in exploring students' racial and gender identities and the role that they may play in cultural competence. Additionally, the study seeks to incorporate the macro-context of the institution. All participants are studying at small, liberal arts colleges for women: something that only one percent of the population of college-going women in the United States do. Despite this shared experience, we hypothesized that these students would still have significant differences in their cultural competence given their selection of colleges with vastly different institutional racial and cultural makeup (Snyder & Dillow, 2012). Within each institution, we also sought to understand how these culturally-related outcomes may differ for women of color and white women. To better understand the intricacies of college students' outcomes, we take a culturally-informed approach to examining women

college students' cultural competence and incorporating a look at macro-level, institutional diversity.

In conceptualizing what factors might contribute to students' global competence development during college, we look to Astin's (1993) Input-Environment-Outcomes (I-E-O) model. The I-E-O model is a template developed to guide research on outcomes of interest in HEIs. The I-E-O model posits that student outcomes are influenced by characteristics that students have before attending college (e.g., race, gender, family experiences) as well as what they do in college (e.g., social engagement, study abroad engagement). The Input-Environment-Outcomes (I-E-O) model has been applied to studies of a range of student outcomes including satisfaction and retention for minority students (Strayhorn, 2012) and the impact of study abroad programs (Zhai & Scheer, 2002). When applied to college students' intercultural competence development, it highlights the importance of considering how college students' individual characteristic and previous experiences interact with the environment to affect outcomes.

Methods

Participants

All students in the sample attended a private, liberal arts, all-women's college. Of the total 295 women, 195 (66%) were enrolled in a majority - minority institution (MMI) and 100 (34%) a predominantly white institution (PWI). At the MMI, 42% self-identified as White only, 31% as Black, 4% as Latina, and 23% as other or not identified, whereas at the PWI, 59% self-identified as White, 5% as Black, 5% as Latina and 31% as other or not identified.

The majority - minority institution is located near a large metropolitan city in the Southeastern United States. Ninety-two percent of the college women in this sample identified the United States as home. The predominately white institution is located in an economically and racially diverse community region of approximately 500,000 residents. Over the last seven years, the college has seen approximately 50% of its students study abroad at some point prior to their graduation.

Materials and Procedures

Both colleges employ a multi-modal method to evaluate study abroad outcomes and contacted students with a link to complete the survey. Students at the MMI completed the surveys prior to the start of their first year at college (early August 2015, before beginning participation in Summit), and the students at the PWI completed the surveys prior to the semester they studied abroad. At the MMI, 279 of the enrolled students were contacted with a link to complete the survey using Qualtrics online survey software. Initial recruitment and reminder messages were sent via electronic mail to the students' college-affiliated addresses. Additional messaging about the survey was posted on the incoming class's official Facebook page. The survey questionnaire took an average of ten minutes to complete. At the PWI, 149 students were contacted after they had been accepted into the program and asked to complete the surveys prior

to their time abroad. Reminder messages were sent via email to the students' college-affiliated addresses.

Among the various measures used, students at both schools completed the Global Perspectives Inventory (GPI), (Braskamp, Braskamp, & Merrill, 2007). Many higher education institutions throughout the United States and abroad utilize the Global Perspectives Inventory (Braskamp, Braskamp, Merrill, & Engberg, 2012) to assess their students' global learning outcomes. The GPI explores the multifaceted aspects of college students' pluralistic identity and global awareness. It is a self-reporting, 35-item questionnaire that has been nationally normed and is designed to assess the holistic development of intercultural maturity on the dimensions of cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal domains (Braskamp, Braskamp, & Merrill, 2007). Each of the tested dimensions has two subscales.

The cognitive dimension consists of the knowing subscale (the degree of complexity in one's view of the importance of cultural context in judging what is important) and the knowledge subscale (the degree of understanding and awareness of various cultures). The intrapersonal dimension consists of the identity subscale (the level of awareness of one's unique identity, purpose, and philosophy of life) and the affect subscale (the level of acceptance of cultural perspectives different from one's own and degree of emotional confidence when living in complex situations). The interpersonal dimension consists of the social responsibility subscale (the level of interdependence and social concern for others) and the social interactions subscale (the degree of engagement with others who are different from oneself and degree of cultural sensitivity in living in pluralistic settings). (Braskamp, Braskamp, & Engberg, 2014).

The GPI is utilized to collect baseline information from incoming first year students and includes items related to students' academic and co-curricular high school experiences. Students responded using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree) on questions related to their own cultural identity and feelings towards those who are culturally different. Sample items included "Some people have a culture and others do not," "I see myself as a global citizen," and "I frequently interact with people from a different race/ethnic group than my own."

Analysis and Justification

This exploratory study examines differences in baseline intercultural competence for students of color and White students nested within different institutional contexts (i.e., a predominantly white and majority - minority women's college). To do this, first, we use a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to check for differences in the outcomes based institutional affiliation. Then, we use a MANOVA to explore differences in intercultural competence outcomes of interest for students of color and White students, separating the findings by institution. Finally, to better understand the impact of campus diversity not only on students of color but also White students, we examined the outcomes for White students only, analyzing differences for White students attending a predominantly white versus majority - minority institution.

Findings

The first MANOVA tested for potential differences in intercultural competence for students enrolled at the predominantly white (PWI) versus the majority - minority institution (MMI). Overall, students enrolled at the MMI ($M = 3.86$, $SD = .35$) had higher scores on the overall measure of intercultural competence compared to students at the PWI ($M = 3.60$, $SD = .47$); $F(1, 286) = 28.98$, $p < .001$. Results indicated that students at the MMI ($M = 3.69$, $SD = .50$) had higher scores on the Cognitive Knowing subscale when compared to students at the PWI ($M = 3.38$, $SD = .42$); $F(1, 286) = 28.49$, $p < .001$. On the Interpersonal Social Interaction subscale, students at the MMI ($M = 3.51$, $SD = .74$) had higher scores than students at the PWI ($M = 2.86$, $SD = .73$); $F(1, 286) = 50.52$, $p < .001$. Women at the PWI ($M = 4.18$, $SD = .73$) had higher levels on one subscale (Intrapersonal Affect) when compared with the women at the MMI ($M = 3.86$, $SD = .57$); $F(1, 286) = 16.85$, $p < .001$. For the three other subscales (Cognitive Knowledge, Intrapersonal Identity, Interpersonal Social Responsibility), there were no significant differences between the groups.

After confirming differences in these areas of intercultural competence, we separated the subsequent analyses by institution. From there, we assessed differences for students of color and White students within their individual institutions. For the PWI institution, there were no differences in intercultural competence scores for students of color when compared with White students. Looking at the MMI, the MANOVA revealed differences on the Cognitive Knowing subscale, such that White students had higher scores ($M = 3.83$, $SD = .49$) compared to students of color ($M = 3.63$, $SD = .50$); $F(1, 165) = 6.44$, $p = .012$. Students of color had higher scores on both the Intrapersonal Identity ($M = 4.10$; $SD = .48$) and Interpersonal Social Interaction ($M = 3.65$; $SD = .71$) subscales of the GPI compared to White students' Intrapersonal Identity ($M = 3.90$; $SD = .52$); $F(1, 165) = 6.66$, $p = .011$ and Interpersonal Social Interaction scores ($M = 3.28$; $SD = .75$); $F(1, 165) = 10.49$, $p = .001$.

Next, we examined intercultural competence outcomes for White students alone. To do this, we executed a final MANOVA assessing possible differences for White students at the PWI and at the MMI. White students at the PWI ($M = 4.25$, $SD = .44$) had higher levels of Intrapersonal Affect on one subscale when compared to White students at the MMI ($M = 3.76$; $SD = .50$); $F(1, 125) = 33.31$, $p < .001$. On the overall measure of intercultural competence, White students at the MMI outperformed students at the PWI ($M = 3.81$; $SD = .33$); $F(1, 125) = 11.54$, $p = .001$. White students at the MMI ($M = 3.83$, $SD = .49$) had higher score on the Cognitive Knowing subscale compared to PWI students ($M = 3.42$, $SD = .24$); $F(1, 125) = 34.01$, $p < .001$. White students at the MMI ($M = 3.28$, $SD = .75$) had higher Interpersonal Social Interaction scores compared to PWI students ($M = 2.79$, $SD = .64$); $F(1, 125) = 15.09$, $p < .001$.

Discussion, Limitations, and Directions for Future Research

Discussion

The main overall finding is that it appears that the more racially and ethnically diverse college may attract students with higher scores on a common measure of intercultural competence. This finding suggests that today's more sophisticated students in terms of these issues may be looking for a rich multicultural learning environment. Moreover, these findings control for the possibility that this difference is in itself a result of the greater diversity (caused, for example, by students of color having developed more complexity around these issues given their different lived experiences), since the white students by themselves at the more diverse school have higher scores on average than their counterparts at the less diverse school (and there is no significant difference between white students and students of color at the less diverse school). These findings underline the urgency of continued efforts to diversify student populations and curricula to attract students who are engaged with the intercultural competencies so needed in the workforce today.

Finally, the racial comparison at the more diverse school is a bit more complex: While incoming students of color do score higher than their white classmates on most of the subscales, there was one subscale (Intrapersonal Affect measuring level of acceptance of cultural perspectives different than one's own) which showed the reverse pattern. Further research into other possible difference between these groups, such as diversity of home community or distance traveled to college) would be necessary to interpret this finding.

Limitations

It must be stated that in an exploratory comparative study conducted by analyzing existing data, the most serious limitation is that the time of data collection was different at the two institutions, examining the experiences of new arrivals to the MMI and more experienced students preparing for studying abroad in the PWI. Therefore, in the latter case, it must be stressed that these results can only yield potential insights about who the college is attracting, rather than claims of any kind about the intercultural learning happening at the College.

Future Research

Much more analysis beyond the scope of this brief report needs to be done at the more diverse school to understand these racial differences, as suggested above. In addition, it will be necessary to compare these scores with those of students who entered before the launch of the bold focus on global learning to try to tease apart the effect of its ongoing demographic diversity from the effect of this new initiative in terms of the type of students it is attracting. Also, it will be very interesting to compare post-study abroad data from the two institutions, because the less diverse school also has high levels of participation in high-quality international programs and general education requirements in intercultural competence and global learning. Finally, since these two institutions are both women's colleges, it would add another dimension to compare these data to that of women students at co-educational colleges. Overall, the increasing interest

in and interconnectivity of both diversity and global learning in higher education compels more research into the intersection between these two areas, to best equip all our students to be effective change agents in this complex global society.

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Bridging the Divide: Cross-Cultural Mediation

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Abstract

The article strives to contribute to the growing field of conflict resolution by analyzing contrasting cross-cultural perceptions through insights from multiple areas to resolve intercultural conflicts and disputes. Western-centric mediation techniques are dissected in juxtaposition to indigenous methodologies in degrees of (1) substantiality and its prominence in indigenous communities; (2) connectivity in the ability for these methodologies to resonate within other cultures; and (3) determinism through application to aid in the manifestation of possible resolutions. By analyzing various global indigenous systems, we argue individualistic and collectivist mediation techniques often lack synergy between peoples in cross-cultural conflicts, which can lead to miscommunication. In this paper, we present the Cross-Cultural Mediation Model and methodology for managing conflict that incorporates a wide variety of mediation techniques found throughout the world at every level of society.

Keywords: culture; cross-cultural; mediation; collectivism; individualism; conflict resolution

Conflict is a naturally occurring process and part of the human experience regardless of one's culture. Just as there is diversity in the way conflict manifests and operates, there is diversity in how conflict is resolved. As our world continues to become more globalized, it is more important than ever to look for new and innovative ways to resolving conflict. Today, we have countless processes and tools--interpersonal, meta-level, and international--to solve conflict constructively; "learning from the ways other cultures understand and resolve conflicts is an important part of maintaining healthy relationships in our increasingly interactive world" (Stobbe, 2015, p. 30).

Conflict, as defined by the West is "an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals" (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001, p. 4). Though this definition translates to just about every other part of the world, how one thinks of, reacts to, and resolves conflict varies. Even with these variances, many conflict scholars acknowledge the reliance on the concepts of neutrality, impartiality, and the existence of a "third-party" alongside a growing body in opposition to the application of these concepts in various cross-cultural situations. These concepts designate the function of conflict resolution as a concept to exist on a plane that is contradictory by attempting to provide prescriptions while maintaining distance from becoming

too involved; thus, conflict resolution practitioners act as both interventionists and non-interventionists. This proves to be an obstacle as the ability to provide structure for transforming conflicted situations necessitates removing the practitioner so that conflicted parties may determine the direction conflict proceeds, either perpetuation or resolution. While this contradictory notion exists, even inasmuch that conflict is cyclical, this process cannot determine rationally based solutions without an objective third-party. This is a scholastic argument that revolves around Western-centric practices within the field of conflict resolution. Now, whereby Western-centric practices operate per this cyclical function within the field is subjective, but is there an alternative to this debate (see, for example, Cobb, 1997; Brigg and Bleiker, 2011)?

By relying on the opposite of stereotypical Western-centric notions of culture (and therefore, attributable methods of conflict resolution), one would automatically assume that collectivist cultures would provide an effective prescription to this cycle. However, the difference within the individualist-collectivist binary is determined through various modes of communication; along the spectrum from low-context - to - high-context. Therein, multiple methods of communication are exhibited along this spectrum, whereas oral methods function low-contextually, and bodily methods function high-contextually. This is not to denote a degree of ineptitude between low-context or nuance in high-context situations, but rather indicates substantially ineffective methods for communication in both contexts. By hypothetically combining multiple methods found within these contexts, we promote a cross-cultural communication model that addresses an expansive array for transforming conflicted situations, as well as integrates various modes of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) techniques into the network of Conflict Resolution.

Low-context methodologies via oral communication tend to ignore nuance. Conflict resolution practitioners often utilize the function of Alternative Dispute Resolution to resolve this ignorance, and therefore debase the efforts of conflict transformation¹ (Väyrynen, 2011: 39) by restricting conflicted parties to re-contextualize in the face of (Western-centric) “third culture”/third-party structures² (Patel, Li, & Sooknanan, 2011). This method is designed to base conflict resolution techniques on the interests of the conflict practitioner and not on the parties; thereby subjugating the notions of neutrality, impartiality, and the essence of a third-party to institutionalized biases.

Subjectivity in dialogue encourages the expansion of emotional positions that can promote self-determination; this self-determination of conflict is dependent upon the direction the parties lead the resolution process. On the contrary, Western-centric methodologies require conflicted parties to seek a re-positioning and re-telling of narratives and interests to re-contextualize conflict to mutually find compromise and communication so that discourse may occur. In this contradiction, subjective dialogue can be used as both an inhibitor and a promoter towards transformation.

The importance of the third-party is not considered moot in any respect, as its inclusion constructs an environment respective to positions and interests; and seeks to shift discourse to acknowledge narrative through balancing relationships by providing agency to disenfranchised groups (Winslade and Monk, 2000; 2008); thereby creating a “third culture” that substantiates

the importance of narrative within mediation. While Western-centric techniques ought to account for subjectivity, mediation tends not to accommodate emotion into discourse as this can exacerbate and divert objective factual-based information from communicable resolution. Further, the lack of prioritizing narrative techniques symbolically and structurally opposes alternative forms of contextual communication; thereby misconstruing basic human needs, incorrectly analyzing complex social constructs and distorts power dynamics between conflicted parties. This can be viewed as a neo-colonialist, economic interpretation of conflict, which alienates parties from specific cultural fundamentals of conduct. Such alienation makes these situations rigid, which can impede transformation (*e.g.* Indonesia-Netherlands 1945; Israel-Palestine 1949; Egypt-Israel 1979; Iran-United States ‘Nuclear Deal’ 2016). Therein, it is critical to involve narrative practice within mediation to remove subliminal assumptions inhibitive towards possible resolution (Cobb, 2013).

Further, such rigidity distances conflict resolution practitioners from those involved within conflict, creating an interventionist – non-interventionist dichotomy. This dichotomy seeks to penetrate the conflictual sphere with an external influence while simultaneously creating distance between the practitioner and conflicted parties to allow the situation to self-determine towards possible resolution (without direct/holistic intervention). Within this dichotomy, the distance created often separates the personal connectivity between practitioner and conflicted parties which can then manifest as a disservice to those involved, as well as towards deeper understandings of *who* and *how* we operate in societal complexes. This creates a paradox, however: conflict practitioners conduct ADR methodologies in full belief of resolution without operating under the context that the generation of a result may be inherently more complicated than the initial conflict or process (Lederach, 2010). The inability to provide a personal connection with out-group cultures limits the actualization of operable functionality; conflict resolution becomes a comical and moot process.

However, high-context cultural conflicts also need third-parties but require different training to adjust accordingly to cultural modes of conduct. The exotic sensibility of including high-context methods of conflict resolution to various conflicts are phenomenologically Western, and do not understand the importance of low-context communication apart from the exhibitionist performance of such communication. This perception of exhibitionism questions the intent of performativity, acceptability, and equitability of high-context cultures. On the other hand, the notion that neo-colonialist techniques of conflict resolution bar these methods of providing prescription towards resolution. Both practices are equally (and yet uniquely) juxtaposed towards incorporating either societal methodology. These communication formats both lack the ability to completely identify all factors in contribution to the situation; and may misappropriate conflict resolution techniques to applications that neither necessitate nor seek such mechanisms. It is the responsibility of the third-culture to identify these nuances and establish a channel of communication that is culturally-sensitive which can bridge divides based on a holistic and cosmopolitan network of conflict resolution techniques. Further, this third-culture must be constructed based upon cultural-exceptionalism that attunes itself to specific cultures yet binds the differences between each.

Therein, how do indigenous practices of conflict resolution seek to transcend communal violence, and how can these indigenous practices then contribute to the larger network of ADR? Therefore, this paper seeks to illuminate a bridging technique to improve differential perceptions involving intercultural conflicts. In this effort, we strive to contribute to the growing field of conflict resolution by integrating various indigenous techniques into Western ADR through anthropological and philosophical lenses. This intercultural analysis incorporates and justifies these approaches through the capacity for cultural sensitivity and competence in the hopes to transform incompetence within conflict resolution. The combination of collectivistic- and individualistic- praxes bypass rigid structures so that conflict practitioners can be wary of miscommunication between current Western techniques and re-structure appropriately for long-lasting resolution.

Traditional, pre-colonialist notions of indigenous methods for conflict resolution revolve around the capacity for spiritual awakening and harmonious re-balancing. These notions elevate and highlight the inclusion of communitarian and familial intervention to nurture conflicted parties towards finding resolution. On the contrary, it is our belief that Western ADR techniques are influenced by secularist and individualistic beliefs that alienate low-contextual communitarian notions of re-balancing and spiritual awakening. Whereby alienation distances parties from this nexus that connotes parties involved to acquire resources or tangible interest-based objects, essentially weakening the structures implemented for conflict management.

As cultural diversity and intercultural relations continue to represent one of society's largest challenges to date, academic and non-governmental organizations are vital in addressing global issues through educating students in collectivistic-individualistic conflict resolution techniques. The importance of these organizations to engage in conflict resolution via cross-cultural techniques enables individuals to adapt to changing tides as more people choose to travel, study, and live abroad. We seek to foment institutional practice to address and bridge cultural differences in the hope of achieving accommodation, tolerance, and integration. Efficacy towards establishing peaceful transitions to resolution, in addition to modeling applications toward conflict resolution, creating dialogue and reflective practice re-balances communities through cross-cultural techniques.

We wish to note that this research does not attempt to elevate or romanticize non-Western techniques of conflict resolution, or that the mere inclusion of these methods is exotic; but rather expose how practitioners tend to rely on Western forms of conflict resolution techniques and consider non-Western techniques as exotic (and therefore, inapplicable), thereby distorting meaning and applicability into global conflicts. It is important to keep this perception in mind and to seek alternative methods. Further, we address the misconception that conflict resolution techniques are limited by geographic or cultural boundaries; but can be integrated into the network scheme at-large through an improved understanding of differential cultural practices, especially through mediation and reconciliation.

Culture is one of the most challenging processes to define. Numerous scholars attempt to explain and define culture, inter-/intra-cultural conflicts, cultural communication, and cross-cultural conflict resolution (see for example, Augsburger, 1992; Avruch, 1998; Barnes, 2007;

Black & Avruch, 1989; Cohen, 2004; Faure & Rubin, 1993; Gudykunst, 2003; LeBaron, 2002, 2003; Lederach, 1995; Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2006). However, for this research, we define culture as a shared pattern of behaviors and cognitive constructs that dictate how interactions with others operate in a manner that all parties can understand. Though we desire to signify methods of conflict resolution, we are conscious of the fact that culture is multidimensional with each society possessing aspects unique to itself, and we do not attempt to disregard this uniqueness. Throughout this research, we highlight the methods and practices attributable to other cultures to showcase such exceptionality within conflict resolution. G. Hofstede (2011) and Bruce E. Barnes (2006) warn that when describing particularities in relation to dimensionality and universal relativism that the latter cannot maintain a dominant narrative when discussing cultural distinction or exceptionality. The two most important dimensions of culture discussed in this text exhibit *power distance* and *individualism versus collectivism*. While the latter may seem obvious between the variances between culture and context, nuances exist insofar as perceptions and narratives differentiate per individuals within a collective culture and vice-versa. Culture presents different notions of power between conflicted parties vis-à-vis utility and mechanization. To holistically acknowledge dimensionality between Western and Eastern cultures, the extension of how far power can reach within and without cultural boundaries poses significant challenges through compare/contrast analyses for conflict practitioners.

Power directly relates as society normalizes its adherence to such structures. This presents an obstacle to creating dialogue between cultures that might otherwise perceive the social Other as distinct and overt. By remaining within the structures that are naturally constructed as per cultural distinction, a note must be given here to operate within the confines between respective cultural operation. This is an appreciative inquiry only insofar as to become competent and sensitive with respect to differences--and in respect to the intersection of cultural-structural sets.

By connecting culture through conflict resolution, it is imperative to simultaneously enculturate and acculturate with cultural competency. *Enculturation* encompasses understanding internal culture--colloquialisms, linguistic remarks, tonality, mannerisms, and other forms of nonverbal communication to holistically create in-group identity and norms. *Acculturation* encompasses understanding the external culture as well as adapting to such cultural-exceptionality through long periods of time for holistic empathy (Patel, Li, & Sooknunan, 2011). Interaction with others must be performed in such a way to remain culturally competent, sensitive, and aware in such respects to operate appropriately within external cultures. While acculturation cannot be fully realized without full immersion, inter-cultural adaptation and adjustment begins the process towards understanding cultural differences (Matsumoto & Juang, 2012).

Within this paradigm, Western conflict resolution techniques often lack the structure to understand intercultural adaptation by implementing rigid communicative methods that result in impeding interaction between groups. Physical, social, psychological, and physiological aspects of mediation operate variably within conflict resolution methods; and each is crucial in providing agency, equality, and dialogue. By limiting any one of these factors, conflict resolution

practitioners (albeit unknowingly) may therein inhibit holistic communicative devices that would otherwise uncover resolutions. Brigg and Bleiker (2011) note the centrality of conflict resolution and the techniques involved as phenomenologically Western, specifically contending that (neo)colonialism distorts indigenous techniques, and often denotes such techniques as invasive to the (neo)colonialist agenda. De-colonization has not returned the exceptionality of indigeneity to these cultures to reverse the distortion.

Kevin Avruch and Peter Black (1991) also contend this notion by claiming that the false approach to conflict resolution is to solidify and foment Western techniques. Indigenous techniques are necessary to recognize and actively include cultural concepts to become competent, thereby providing agency to conflicted groups. By engaging in dialogue, conflict resolution practitioners prioritize cultural differences and contexts, and promote inclusivity in lieu of implementing Western-centric structures. On the contrary, conflict practitioners become invasive to conflict resolution and remove group agency and cultural-exceptionalism.

Further, Western conflict resolution techniques tend to fall short of appropriately integrating indigenous conflict resolution methods, insomuch that Western techniques do not derive a sense of cultural competency and negate the very cosmopolitan essence of its foundation. Brian Bloch (2009) criticizes conflict practitioners as residing within positions of power that neither understand aspects of conflict nor the conflicted parties, thereby leaving residual notions of conflict that fester. Vivienne Jabri (2007) further notes that “The local [conflicted individual] is in these [conflicted] circumstances [as] the exotic, the private, the traditional, the parochial, the non-democratic, the non-political. Culture... [constitutes] that which is associated with the other of the modern, the progressive, the universal” (p. 267). This draws upon the belief that conflict resolution progression should not be dominated by Western methods, but rather diverts attention to an integrative approach. Western conflict resolution cannot provide appropriate frameworks to holistically account for cultural competency, social complexity, and communicative differentials; it is thus imperative to integrate various techniques to the current framework to ensure appreciative inquiry.

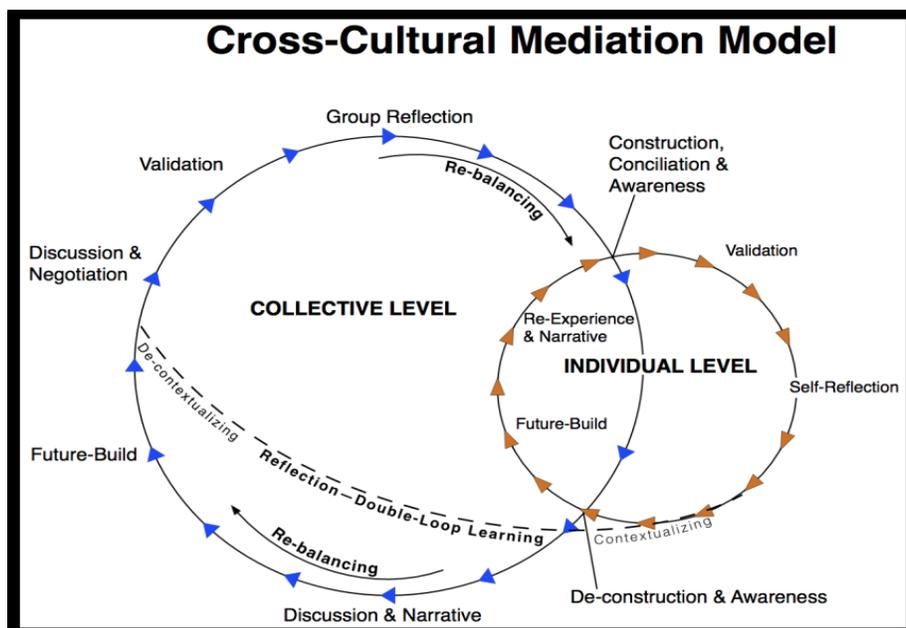
Operating through current institutions and structures provides a system for integrating indigenous techniques into Western practices. Indigenous systems are built upon a connectedness and rootedness to itself in the sense that such systems create the nucleus of collective societies. Through these similarities, indigenous communities capture fundamental beliefs throughout different indigenous societies. The impetus for harmony and peacebuilding exists from understanding the gravitas of sanctity; peacemaking is a process for re-establishing “sacred justice” (Meyer, 1995: 30) as the priority re-focuses on harmonizing individuals and groups for restitution, apology, and forgiveness. This presents a linkage between indigenous groups to conflict resolution by perceiving social order through cosmological and communitarian lenses. Therefore, this linkage applies to a multitude of different techniques for conflict resolution. Through integration, conflict resolution can become a globalized network of possible applications; the very idea that conflict resolution is phenomenologically Western is unethical and debased insomuch that culture derives society and thrives based on various modes of conflict resolution. Sacred justice cannot be sought after from the rigidness of Western techniques

insomuch that secularization, individuation, and objectivity negate cosmological connectivity between conflict and resolution. We contend that by incorporating various indigenous methods, Western conflict resolution can adapt (and therefore be applied) to several other types of conflict.

Therefore, to combine the cautions through applying various conflict resolution methods to a conflict, we propose the utilization of the Cross-Cultural Mediation Model (Model).³ By utilizing this method of conflict resolution, the Model proposes an in-depth communication technique that derives validation and legitimacy from emotional subjectivity and storytelling to determine holistic information for intense discussion and analysis. The Model is reservedly generic from the point that a multitude of indigenous conflict resolution methodologies can be applied to its framework to configure its unique properties towards various cultural conflicts. This promotes the wide usage and applicability towards all conflicts rather than resorting to rigid frameworks institutionalized by Western-centric notions of conflict resolution.

As exhibited in Figure 1, the Model is comprised of three procedures that incorporate mediator(s) into the midst of conflicted parties while guiding each individual conflicted party towards determining separate narratives: (1) the *individual level*, (2) the *reflection – double-loop learning curve*, and (3) the *collective level*. The first procedural is processed through *construction, conciliation, and awareness*. By encouraging communication ADR application is folded into the scheme for transformation. Mediator(s) and conflicted parties construct new narratives and re-contextualize the conflict in and of itself. A similar process follows along the second procedural, *contextualization – de-contextualization*, through which mediator(s) and parties determine context for former and newly constructed narratives. It is important to consider exclusionary narratives as violently inhibitive towards imagining constructive resolutions, especially that the mediator must destabilize narrative to improve and enhance re-contextualization of the Other. Both processes combine within the third procedural as

Figure 1
Cross-Cultural Mediation Model



mediator(s) and parties *compromise* towards the *realization* of the conflict and seek to *actualize future-building* goals in the transformative, *re-balanced* relationship. The procedure is complex as the determination of conflicted parties within positionalities negate transformation; but only through this transformation and negation can the mediator(s) definitively refine processes to change positions to interests and seek alternative methods for development.

Construction, conciliation, and awareness necessitate legitimacy from four procedural advances: (1) Validation of narratives, norms, and the definition of conflict: *What are the definitions of conflict and context, and how do these concepts form the narrative presented?* (2) Self-reflection to determine positionalities and interests: *What were the determinations mechanized in this narrative to produce the current positionality? Is it possible to shift this positionality towards an interest-based argument? What incremental construct can be utilized to ensure this process of a newly constructed narrative?* (3) Future-building to seek goals beyond intermittent or gradual accommodative/integrative processing: *How is resolution perceived? What are the incremental steps towards realizing that resolution?* (4) Re-experience and narrative re-construction to re-determine the new confines approached through the integral constructive processes: *Can the narrative be changed to accommodate these newly determined aspects of the conflict?* Through this, the mediator(s) and conflicted parties (separated in deliberation) construct alternative definitions and conceptualizations of these concepts to nurture positions for detailed negotiations.

Once the mediator(s) determine(s) that each conflicted party is essentially prepared for the collective level procedural, the mediator(s) initialize(s) a reflective, double-loop learning practice so that each conflicted party may determine for itself the priorities and necessities for what possible outcomes the conflict may result in from whence resolution is found. Contextualizing the narrative, and further de-contextualizing such narrative, accounts for fluctuation through re-determining and re-constructing alternative viewpoints towards reconvening with conflicted parties occur: *From the individual level procedural, how can this be integrated into the future-building construct from contextualizing and de-contextualizing individuality towards a collective a futuristic collective response?* Double-loop learning promotes a re-convening technique to cooperatively alter context to prepare for a collaboration within the collective level procedural.

This process is similar with the first procedural whereas all parties re-define the concepts of context and conflict, and then re-negotiate the nuances of these terms for each application in the determination of conflict and resolution. All aspects of the conflict are revisited through a future-building lens that allows more complex, collaborative narratives to emerge for “...new angles, opportunities, and unexpected potentialities that surpass, replace, and break the shackles of historic and current relational patterns...” (Lederach, 2010: 37). The process integrates seven different nodes of communication and determinism (discussed below) so that the mediator(s) convenes parties in to further determine the root causes of conflict. Much in the way of peeling back the layers of an onion (Meyer, 1995), the conflict is uprooted to determine *what the conflict is* and how it manifests into the quandary which is then present.

The following nodes are vital to the transformation of the conflict, each determined with the mediator(s) and parties in collaboration: (a) Discussion and Negotiation: *What are the individual narratives and how can these be negotiated to fully determine the course and construction of the conflict?* (b) Validation: *Through peeling back the layers of the conflict, how can emotional subjectivity enhance the narratives and understanding for negotiation to further individual future-building?* (c) Group-Reflection: *What does each narrative provide during the conflict and relationship stabilization? Are there aspects to each narrative, validation, and negotiation that benefit or decrease the vitality of the relationship?* (d) Construction, Conciliation and Awareness: *How can these aspects construct a reconciliatory response for the construction of a contextual narrative? Further, what needs to be addressed for conflict sensitivity and competency?* (e) De-construction and Awareness: *Take (4) a step further—how can this context be de-constructed so that alternative aspects can be discovered, addressed, and determined for a collaborative, personable, and enhanced awareness?* (f) Discussion and Narrative: *How can a new narrative be constructed given the recent points of discussion? What is that new narrative, and does it account of all points of importance for each party?* (g) Future-Building merges with the last aspect of the Model: Re-balancing—each dependent upon the other inasmuch that spirituality, cosmology, and harmony dictate the necessity and functionality of conflict resolution within communitarian means (individually and collectively). The merger of these two concepts for social function initiate a convergence of multiple ADR methodologies for various futuristic goals. Each party in conflict describes the determinations and goals for what the future may look like once the conflict is *managed*. This allows each party (separately and collectively) to imagine determinations for what transformation may look like, and then the mediator(s) may help the parties to realize these goals. The function of the mediator(s) is to support conflicted parties to realize futuristic goals by imagining alternative methods in which these parties can initialize futuristic ideas of what they desire and to actualize these processual steps. It is not the function of the mediator(s) to create a path for these conflicted parties to avoid or end conflict, but rather to create a possible framework to constructively and actively engage with future conflicts.

Once the conflicted parties have re-imagined these futuristic steps, there are finally means for which each party may rebalance the health and harmony of re-constructed relationships. Rebuilding and rebalancing is a constructive process that cannot wholly ensure peaceful transitions from conflict - to - peace. There is no guarantee that the process secures transformation, but rather the process allows a discussion to take place to engage in future conflict constructively. Before conflict turns to direct violence, by engaging in this framework, conflict may divert from any degree of violence towards peaceful resolution via in-depth communication and understanding. By allowing these forms of communication through this framework, empathy and recognition enable the conflicted parties to constructively assure peaceful encounters for communitarian development rather than instigating residual conflict.

This stage of the conflict Model is where the conflicted parties have already cooperated to determine the future that they both agree on (albeit the most difficult phase). They have cooperated to create a path parties have agreed upon. Once they have reached an agreement and

have processed through this entirely--where each party desires to be--it is time for reparations to be made where parties can openly acknowledge (empathetically) the tragedies and losses experienced (by all parties) through the conflict. Only then can conflict transformation take place. Though we do not argue that once this transformation takes place that this will stabilize the situation. The goal of working through this process via the Model is to provide conflicted parties with the necessary education and tools to engage future conflicts constructively without engaging in direct physical violence.

The Model should not be considered, in this case, as a definitive framework for ADR to adhere to one single alternative for conflict transformation, but rather initiate an alternative form of communication so that residual conflict does not imitate economic transactions as is indicative within Western-centric techniques. We argue that the field of conflict resolution relies too heavily on Western phenomenological structures of ADR; and we encourage the incorporation of indigenous methods of conflict resolution into the larger network scheme of the field. It is imperative for conflict resolution to depend on numerous alternative methods of contextual forms for communication within all conflicts to expand the possibilities of peaceful transformation to diminish the possibility of residual conflict from occurring.

It is imperative that cultural competency and sensitivity not be regarded as inferior or non-applicable to the field of conflict resolution, but rather that current Western-centric structures views conflict as transactional and impersonal. By incorporating various methods into the Western structure, we believe that the larger network of ADR and conflict resolution may be applied to a broader range of conflicts, especially those that concern cross-cultural miscommunication/misunderstanding. Within this framework, we hope to provide alternative methods for conflict resolution that continue to promote exceptionality of indigeneity and conflict resolution methods, and such significance within the network for ADR. The field of conflict resolution must consider its current lack of cultural competency and sensitivity education for its practitioners and theorists; and prioritize the necessary instruction to bridge the divide.

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Notes

¹ Rather, from irrationally deposing the organic socio-psychological structures between individuals to communicate and organize rationally based on dialogue.

² "Third culture" and "third-party" are essentially similar, but the notion of a "culture" in mediation does not equate to neutrality, whereas a "third party" equates neutrality.

³ Stemming from the "Integrated Scaffolding and Maturing Practices Mediating Informal Learning at Work" from the Learning Layers Project from the European Commission within the 7th Framework Programme under Grant Agreement #318209, under the DG Information society and Media (E3), Unit of Cultural Heritage and Technology-Enhanced Learning--we incorporate original conceptual workings into the scaffold structure.

Multi-Dimensionality of Acculturative Stress Among Chinese International Students: What Lies Behind Their Struggles?

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Abstract

This study aimed to identify the underlying dimensions of acculturative stress that Chinese international students may encounter in the U.S. In addition, we re-examined students' background characteristics and perceived social support from family, friends, and their school as predictors of students' different dimensions of acculturative stress. In total, 262 Chinese international students (average age 23 years; 142 male and 120 female students) from a diverse university completed an online questionnaire in the U.S. This study identified multiple dimensions of acculturative stress, including perceived discrimination, fearfulness, homesickness, stress due to change, and guilt, among Chinese international students. The results indicated that students' comfort level in using the English language and academic status (i.e., undergraduate/graduate) significantly predicted acculturative stress. Notably, as students' comfort level in using the English language increased, their feelings of perceived discrimination, fearfulness, homesickness, and stress due to change decreased. Undergraduate students reported more discrimination and fearfulness than did graduate students. Perceived social support from family indicated an intriguingly different pattern than perceived social support from school in relation to acculturative stress among Chinese international students. This study confirmed the multi-dimensional nature of acculturative stress and highlighted the role of students' background characteristics and perceived social support systems in illuminating each acculturative stress dimension among Chinese international students.

Keywords: acculturative stress, Chinese international students, cross-cultural experience

For many international students, coming to the United States to further their studies can be exciting, since it can be a path to fulfill personal, familial, or career goals. However, their experience may also involve many challenges regarding adaptation into another society, such as switching to a new language, learning to self-manage finances and housing, and fitting into social norms while families and friends might not be with them (Wan, 2001; Wei et al., 2007). Given these challenges, students often undergo a process of adjustment to how the dominant host culture may expect them to behave in a way that differs from what is done in their home culture (Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006; Wei, Liao, Heppner, Chao, & Ku, 2012). When individuals find it difficult to adjust and discouragement leads them to see the challenges they face as insurmountable, adapting to the new culture can be stressful (Sam & Berry, 2010).

To facilitate cross-cultural education in America's higher education settings and assist international students in smoothly adapting into American universities, understanding their adaptation experiences in relation to their psychological concerns, stress levels, and the other factors associated with students' adjustment is a necessity. Studies focusing on international students have stated that individuals' psychological stress during cultural adaptation (i.e. acculturative stress; Ward, 1996) is complex and multidimensional (Abe-Kim, Okazaki & Goto, 2001; Lee et al., 2004; Zhang & Goodson, 2011). Additionally, past research has suggested that an individual's background characteristics (Andrade, 2006; Chung & Epstein, 2014; Yan & Berliner, 2010; Ye, 2005) and support systems (Lee et al., 2004; Lin, 2006; Misra et al., 2003; Ramsay, Jones, & Barker, 2007; Ye, 2006a; Ye, 2006b) influence one's interpretation of the stress experiences during adaptation; therefore, individuals are likely to vary in their understanding and degree of stress experiences.

In this study, we gave particular attention to examining Chinese international students' acculturative stress experiences for the following reasons. According to the Institute of International Education (IIE) network, Chinese international students remain the largest and fastest-growing group among the international students in American universities (IIE, 2016). According to the IIE (2016), in 2015-2016, Chinese students comprised 31.5% (328,547) of the total international student enrollment across colleges and universities in the U.S. This is more than a 400% increase in Chinese student enrollment in the U.S., within a decade (from 62,582 enrolled students in the 2005-2006 school year to 328,547 in the 2015-2016 school year). Chinese international students' experiences in American universities are worthy of exploration, considering that their experiences may transmit to other prospective students in China. Studies have frequently claimed that Asian students (Chinese international students as the major group represented in such research) experience higher levels of acculturative stress than those from other backgrounds (e.g. European students) (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Yan & Berliner, 2009; Yeh & Inose, 2003). However, research on Chinese international students has not fully articulated individuals' stress experiences during their integration into the host society, as well as the factors associated with their stress feelings. As such, understanding the complex underlying dimensions of acculturative stress and examining correlates of acculturative stress among Chinese international students are the foci of the current study.

Acculturative Stress in International Students

Sam and Berry (2010) suggest an acculturation framework which explains at an individual level how well individuals can behaviorally and psychologically adapt to the new cultural environment. This acculturation framework provides us a lens to understand one's acculturative stress. It suggests that people from different cultural backgrounds who come to a new culture for a short- or long-term stay (e.g., international students studying in a place other than their native country) may experience adaptations and changes related to many aspects of life, such as learning a new language and acquiring new social norms to fit into new environments (Wei et al., 2007).

Facing the new environment, individuals may experience psychological discomfort or distress due to struggles in adapting to the host culture (Allen, Amason, & Holmes, 1998). Studies on international students' acculturative stress have suggested that this concept consists of separate dimensions, including perceived discrimination (Chung & Epstein, 2014; Ye, 2005), negative feelings due to change (Bradley, 2000), and feelings of guilt (Constantine et al., 2005). For example, Asian international students commonly experience perceived discrimination or stereotypes from the majority group (Chung & Epstein, 2014; Kim et al., 2011; Rice et al., 2012). Especially those international students travelling from Far East to the Western world may face culture shocks due to change and difficulties in cross-cultural adjustment (Li, Chen, & Duanmu, 2009). Another study specifically investigated Chinese international students who were studying and living in foreign countries for a long time. Students reported that they felt guilty because they were not fulfilling their responsibilities to take care of their parents due to absence from their families (Constantine et al., 2005). Ye (2005) examined East Asian international students (N=115, average age: 28, most of whom were from Mainland China, Taiwan, Korea, and Japan) from one large, diverse university in the southeastern U.S. In this study, acculturative stress was interpreted as belonging to five dimensions: fearfulness, perceived discrimination, perceived hatred, homesickness, and cultural shock (Ye, 2005). As these different dimensional breakdowns show, acculturative stress may not be a single construct and can be interpreted as different experiences by different individuals. The current study collected a sample from Chinese international students and sought to identify the underlying dimensions of acculturative stress. The study also explored how these students' background characteristics were associated with different dimensions of acculturative stress. In addition, according to the stress and coping model under the acculturation framework (Sam & Berry, 2010), individual's stress experiences during adaptation are influenced by their personal characteristics and support systems that operate as coping resources for stress reduction (Kim & Omizo, 2006). As such, background characteristics and social support system are important factors in understanding individuals' acculturative stress.

Background Characteristics

Building on the literature noted above, we examined the three important background characteristic variables in this study. First, international students' skill and comfort level with the English language was found to be strongly associated with their acculturative stress levels (Misra & Castillo, 2004; Msengi, 2003; Poyrazli, Kavanaugh, Baker & Al-Timimi, 2004; Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2002; Sumer, Poyrazli, & Grahame, 2008; Yeh & Inose, 2003). While studies (Rice et al., 2012; Ye, 2005) found a positive association with students' self-rated scales from poor to excellent in English proficiency, another study (Wang et al., 2012) used standardized test scores (e.g., TOEFL or IELTS) and found that students' actual English test scores were not related to acculturative stress among Chinese international students. These studies showed that students' personal assessment of their own skills and proficiency of English are related to their acculturative stress yet their actual testable proficiency is not. According to these studies, the measurable correlation may not be between proficiency and acculturation stress, but it is between

students' self-assurance in English (or perceived proficiency) and acculturation stress. According to Lin (2006), from the perspective of intercultural adjustment, a good indicator of successful adaptation is an individual's feeling comfortable in a new cultural environment (e.g. being comfortable using the language or behaving in the ways the host culture expects). Therefore, we examine students' comfort level in using English in association with students' acculturative stress and expect that the more comfortable they are in using English the fewer stressful experiences they may have during adaptation.

Second, a student's field of study tends to be an important factor in influencing that individual's cultural adaptation experiences. A larger number of Chinese international students (42% of total outbound Chinese students in 2014, according to IIE) come to the U.S. majoring in STEM-related fields. According to a qualitative study (Yan & Berliner, 2011), interviews with Chinese international students about their experiences and concerns studying in the U.S. revealed that students majoring in social science-related fields appeared to have more stress than did students majoring in STEM ("hard" Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), perhaps because the social sciences majors may require that students have higher English language skills as well as a better understanding of American culture, values and social norms compared with STEM-related majors. If social science students fail to meet these many demands and expectations, they may have to face more pressures and potential setbacks to their progress. Although this qualitative study suggested that identifying major fields of study could help explain Chinese international students' stress experiences during adaptation, to our knowledge, no quantitative study has validated this association between fields of study and students' acculturative stress.

Third, academic level (i.e. undergraduate versus graduate) is a salient demographic factor to consider since undergraduates and graduates may differ in their experience of acculturative stress. One study (Nesheim, Guentzel, Ansemer-Topf, Ross, & Turrentine, 2006) suggested that both undergraduate and graduate international students may experience similar adjustment challenges, such as language difficulties, dealing with culture shock and adapting to a new social environment; however, undergraduates reported more problems and difficulties in social interactions with American students (Nesheim et al, 2006), a higher level of difficulties in cultural and personal adjustment, and more psychological needs (Hanassab & Tidwell, 2002). Other studies did not differentiate between international undergraduate and graduate students (Andrade, 2006; Hendrickson, Rosen & Aune, 2011; Misra et al., 2003; Zhang & Goodson, 2011). Although international undergraduate and graduate students might be different in their perception of the adjustment difficulties, there is a lack of research on the similarities and differences in acculturative stress as a function of their academic level.

As such, the current study explores associations between acculturative stress and the background characteristic variables of students' comfort level in using English, fields of study (STEM/non-STEM) and academic level (undergraduate/graduate) among Chinese international students.

Perceived Social Support

Perceived social support refers to a person's perceived access to social resources (Misra & Castillo, 2004). It reflects an individual's appraisal of both the actual function and the quality of those available resources (Misra & Castillo, 2004). Past studies have stressed the positive function of individuals' perceived social support and classified it into different forms on the basis of an individual's demands for specific supports to cope with life difficulties and psychological stress. For example, researchers stressed the importance of international students' perceived emotional support and informational support (Hendrickson et al., 2011; Poyrazli et al., 2004; Ramsay et al., 2007) for emotion-sharing (e.g., joy, suffering, or pressure) and information exchange as ways students can better cope with adjustment difficulties and stress in the host country (Lin 2006; Ramsay et al., 2007; Ye, 2006a). Therefore, individuals may search out different sources as ways to obtain the specific supports they need (Ye, 2006b). To all students on campus, including international students, family, friends, and the school itself are important sources that they commonly have access to, but their perception of the available support from these different sources may influence to whom or where they tend to reach out and how comfortable they feel in accessing these supports in times of stress. However, fewer studies to date have investigated the role of international students' perceptions of the support provided by family, friends, and school in their coping with complex acculturative stress experiences.

Current Study

This study first investigated the underlying dimensions of acculturative stress among Chinese international students to better understand their acculturation experiences. Building on previous research that indicates that students' background characteristics and perceived social support influence their acculturation experiences (Andrade, 2006; Chung & Epstein, 2014; Yan & Berliner, 2010; Ye, 2005), we further examined the association between students' background characteristics (i.e. comfort level in using English, field of study, and academic level) and each dimension of acculturative stress, and the association between students' perceived social support from family, friends, and school and each dimension of acculturative stress.

Method

Participants

A sample of 262 Chinese international students (M age = 23; $SD=2.8$; range: 18-39) from a Northeastern U.S. university participated in this study by completing the consent form and survey on-line. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the university. Of the sample, slightly more than half (54 %) identify as males and slightly less than half (46%) identify as females. Most (75%) participants were graduate students, and the remainder (25%) undergraduates. Half of the students (49.4%) were majoring in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) related fields, and the other half were majoring in non-STEM areas (e.g., business or the social sciences). Students also provided information about their comfort in using English. Of the sample, few (10%) students reported that they were very comfortable using

English; most students (70%) reported that they were somewhat comfortable using English, and the remaining (20%) students reported that they were not comfortable using English.

Measures

The English language instruments used to gather information from students about their background characteristics, acculturative stress, and perceived social support are described in detail below.

Student background characteristics. This section included Chinese international students' age, gender identification, comfort in using English, field of study, and academic status. Students' comfort level in using English was measured as students' self-reported perception of comfort when using English (1=not comfortable; 2=comfortable; 3= very comfortable). Students indicated their field of study. Based on their responses to the field of study question, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics were coded as STEM fields, and social science, business and other majors were coded as non-STEM fields. Students were also asked to indicate their academic level and were coded as undergraduate or graduate students.

Acculturative stress. Students completed a 26-item modified Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students (ASSIS), which was created by Sandhu & Asrabadi (1994). This measure has been used with international students previously and shows high reliability and validity (e.g. Ye, 2005). Originally, when Sandhu and Asrabadi developed the ASSIS instrument, there were 36 items, and they reported these items can be decomposed into six factors: perceived discrimination, homesickness, perceived hate/rejection, fear, stress due to change, and guilt. They also reported that 10 items failed to group on any one factor and thus called these 10 items non-specific concerns. Consistent with previous studies (Ye, 2005; Ye, 2006a), we only included the remaining 26 items in the analysis. A 5-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used for each item. The reported Cronbach's alpha for the 26-item scale was 0.95 in the current study.

Perceived social support. Students' perceived social support was measured with the 12-item modified Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS; Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988), which was originally designed to assess to students' perceived social support from friends (4 items), family (4 items) and significant others (4 items). This measure had previously been tested on general groups of college students (e.g., Bishop, 1997) and specifically on international students (Moore & Constantine, 2005) and shows high reliability and validity. The current study used the original eight items that assessed perceived social support from family and friends, but we modified the four items used to measure perceived social support from significant others into three items that measured students' perceived social support from school resources (e.g., "The International Student Center on campus is available when I need it."). Response choices were presented on a 7-point Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 (very strongly disagree) to 7 (very strongly agree). In the present study, we calculated

Cronbach's alpha of 0.88, 0.96 and 0.91 for subscales of perceived social support from family, friends, and school, respectively.

Analytic Plan

The analyses were executed in two stages. First, we performed a series of preliminary analyses, including Pearson correlations and independent T-tests. Pearson correlations were conducted for overall acculturative stress, students' background characteristics, and perceived social support from family, friends, and school. Independent T-tests were conducted to examine acculturative stress in students with different background characteristics (e.g. gender identification, comfort in using English, field of study, and academic status).

Second, we aimed to investigate two issues. First, the 26 acculturative stress items were analyzed using principal components exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with Varimax rotation to decompose acculturative stress. The internal consistency of the underlying dimensions of acculturative stress was then examined with Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients. According to Cortina (1993), an alpha coefficient of greater than 0.65 (≥ 0.65) indicates that items are justified as measuring the same concept and can be combined into a single index (Cortina, 1993).

We then examined predictors of the confirmed dimensions of acculturative stress. A series of hierarchical regression analyses was conducted to further examine students' background characteristics and perceived social support from family, friends, and school in predicting different acculturative stress dimensions. Before conducting regression analyses, we examined whether there were any violations in regression modeling assumptions of multicollinearity, normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity of residuals by correlation matrix, normal P-P plot, scatter plot, and Mahalanobis distance (J. Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). Then, students' background characteristics were entered as the first group of predictors to explore their predictive power in relation to the different acculturative stress dimensions. Perceived social support from family, friends, and school was entered as the second group of predictors to explore the relationship between perceived social support and the different dimensions of acculturative stress while controlling for students' background characteristics.

Results

Descriptive Analyses

The current sample had a moderate level of overall acculturative stress ($M=2.41$, $SD=0.67$). Male-identifying ($M=2.36$, $SD=0.69$) and female-identifying ($M=2.46$, $SD=0.65$) students had similar levels of acculturative stress ($t=0.95$, $df=167$, $p>.05$). Students with a greater comfort level in using English were more inclined to report less acculturative stress ($r=-0.33$, $p<.05$). There was no difference between students in STEM ($M=2.35$, $SD=0.66$) vs. non-STEM majors ($M=2.46$, $SD=0.75$) in acculturative stress ($t=-0.79$, $df=123$, $p>.05$). Undergraduate students ($M=2.65$, $SD=0.76$) reported a higher level of overall acculturative stress than graduate students ($M=2.35$, $SD=0.63$; $t=2.5$, $df=166$, $p<.05$). In addition, this sample of Chinese international students perceived a low level of social support from school ($M=4.81$, $SD=1.31$)

but a high level of social support from family ($M=5.4$, $SD=1.35$) and friends ($M=5.45$, $SD=1.37$).

Dimensions of Acculturative Stress

The EFA of the 26-acculturative stress (ASSIS) items revealed five factors accounting for 70.84% of the variance in acculturative stress. We determined the number of factors using the following criteria: 1) Kaiser's criterion of eigenvalues greater than 1.0 (Kaiser, 1960); 2) a scree-plot test to obtain the number of data points above the "break," which indicates the number of factors to retain (Costello & Osborne, 2005); and 3) the conceptual meaningfulness of factors (Field, 2009). Items that loaded less than 0.40 or loaded on two factors were deleted (Stevens, 2002). The factor loadings for acculturative stress scale is shown in Table 1. All loadings were above 0.40, but three items were cross-loaded between factors and thus were excluded, leaving 23 items. Re-running the numbers after these exclusions, the EFA with the 23 items revealed five factors explaining 71.27% of the variance in acculturative stress.

Table 1
Factor Loadings for Exploratory Factor Analysis of Acculturative Stress Subscales among Chinese International Students

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
	Perceived discrimination	Fearfulness	Homesickness	Stress due to change	Guilt
AS ₁ . I was treated differently because of my race.	.86	.11	.02	.09	.10
AS ₂ . I was treated differently because of my color.	.83	.20	.06	.07	.08
AS ₃ . I was treated differently in social situations.	.77	.06	-.08	.03	.13
AS ₄ . My people are discriminated against.	.76	.10	.02	.06	.32
AS ₅ . I feel that I receive unequal treatment.	.69	.28	.31	.10	.07
AS ₆ . Others are biased toward me.	.68	.29	.19	.11	.19
AS ₇ . People show hatred toward me nonverbally.	.63	.05	.20	.03	.36
AS ₈ . Others are sarcastic toward my cultural values.	.63	.25	.26	.11	.22
AS ₉ . I'm denied what I deserve.	.61	.46	.46	.06	-.07
AS ₁₀ . Many opportunities are denied to me.	.60	.42	.44	.05	-.04
AS ₁₁ . Others don't appreciate my cultural values.	.58	.35	.42	.07	-.03
AS ₁₂ . I'm fear for my personal safety because of my different cultural background.	.25	.81	.07	.15	.25
AS ₁₃ . I frequently relocate for fear of others.	.28	.80	.17	.10	.15
AS ₁₄ . I feel insecure here.	.22	.79	.10	.18	.25
AS ₁₅ . I generally keep a low profile due to fear.	.16	.75	.25	.22	.15
AS ₁₆ . I miss the people and country of my origin.	.12	.03	.83	.17	-.13
AS ₁₇ . I feel sad leaving my relatives behind.	.04	.06	.79	.20	.30
AS ₁₈ . Homesickness bothers me.	.05	.31	.76	.07	.07
AS ₁₉ . Multiple pressures are placed on me after migration.	.26	.15	.27	.72	.05
AS ₂₀ . I feel uncomfortable to adjust to new foods.	.19	.17	.16	.72	.10
AS ₂₁ . I feel uncomfortable to adjust to new cultural values.	.17	.38	.18	.67	.19
AS ₂₂ . I feel guilty to leave my family and friends behind.	.06	.01	.26	.38	.75
AS ₂₃ . I feel guilty that I'm living a different lifestyle here.	.17	.37	.00	.25	.72

As shown, the factors were labeled as relating to perceived discrimination (11 items), fearfulness (4 items), homesickness (3 items), stress due to change (3 items), and guilt (2 items). The factor loadings were between 0.58 and 0.86 for perceived discrimination, 0.75 and 0.81 for fearfulness, 0.76 and 0.83 for homesickness, 0.67 and 0.72 for stress due to change, and 0.72 and 0.75 for guilt.

After the five dimensions of acculturative stress had been generated with a principal component analysis, we examined the inter-correlations among these five dimensions. The inter-correlations among the five acculturative stress dimensions indicated that perceived discrimination, fearfulness, homesickness, stress due to change, and guilt had moderate to strong positive associations that ranged between 0.26 ($p < .01$) and 0.59 ($p < .01$). Additional correlates were displayed in Table 2. All factor loadings were between 0.61 and 0.81 for perceived discrimination, 0.79 and 0.89 for fearfulness, 0.63 and 0.77 for homesickness, 0.67 and 0.81 for stress due to change, and 0.65 and 0.91 for guilt. Each of the first-order latent variables loaded highly on the second-order construct of acculturative stress (perceived discrimination = 0.77, fearfulness = 0.86, homesickness = 0.61, stress due to change = 0.77, and guilt = 0.70). All factor loadings were significant at $p < .05$. Cronbach's reliability for perceived discrimination ($\alpha = 0.93$), fearfulness ($\alpha = 0.91$), homesickness ($\alpha = 0.78$), stress due to change ($\alpha = 0.79$), and guilt ($\alpha = 0.75$) indicated these factors had high internal consistency. These results indicated that this measure of acculturative stress contained five underlying dimensions of perceived discrimination, fearfulness, homesickness, stress due to change, and guilt among the current Chinese international student sample. Comparing the mean values among these dimensions, homesickness was the most concerning among Chinese international students ($M=3.09$, $SD=0.87$) and was followed by stress due to change ($M=2.66$, $SD=0.90$), perceived discrimination ($M=2.28$, $SD=0.73$), guilt ($M=2.20$, $SD=0.86$), and fearfulness ($M=2.12$, $SD=0.82$).

Multi-Dimension of Acculturative Stress, Students' Background Characteristics and Perceived Social Support

Pearson correlation testing was conducted to examine the associations between students' background characteristics and the five dimensions of accumulative stress as well as the associations between the five dimensions of acculturative stress and students perceived social support from family, friends, and school. As shown in Table 2, students' comfort level using English was negatively correlated with all acculturative stress dimensions, including perceived discrimination ($r = -0.22$, $p < .01$), fearfulness ($r = -0.29$, $p < .01$), homesickness ($r = -0.18$, $p < .01$), stress due to change ($r = -0.30$, $p < .01$), and guilt ($r = -0.15$, $p < .05$). Students' STEM or non-STEM majors had no significant correlation with any acculturative stress dimension. Undergraduate students in our findings were more likely to experience perceived discrimination ($r = -0.18$, $p < .01$) than graduate students. The patterns among the different acculturative stress dimensions and perceived social support from family, friends, and school indicated that perceived social support from family was positively associated with students' homesickness ($r =$

Table 2

Correlation Matrix for Background Characteristics, Perceived Social Support and Dimensions of Acculturative Stress

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Background characteristics											
1. Comfort level of using English	-										
2. STEM/Non-STEM	-.17**	-									
3. Academic status	-.08	.47**	-								
Perceived social support											
4. PSS from family	.20**	-.15*	-.00	-							
5. PSS from friends	.28**	-.18**	-.00	.69**	-						
6. PSS from school	.22**	.00	-.02	.51**	.65**	-					
Acculturative stress											
7. Perceived discrimination	-.22**	-.11	-.18**	-.06	-.17*	-.23**	-				
8. Fearfulness	-.29**	-.00	-.12	.02	-.10	-.20**	.59**	-			
9. Homesickness	-.18**	.02	.03	.19**	.11	-.02	.26**	.40**	-		
10. Stress due to change	-.30**	.06	.01	.10	-.05	-.15*	.47**	.52**	.46**	-	
11. Guilt	-.15*	.05	-.02	.00	-.09	-.21**	.46**	.48**	.32**	.46**	-
Mean	-	-	-	5.40	5.45	4.82	2.28	3.09	2.12	2.66	2.20
SD	-	-	-	1.23	1.24	1.18	.73	.87	.82	.90	.86

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

Note. Means and standard deviations are presented for main continuous variables. Comfort level of using English was coded as follows: 1 (not comfortable), 2 (comfortable), and 3 (very comfortable). STEM/Non-STEM was coded 1 (STEM majors) and 0 (Non-STEM majors). Academic status was coded 1 (undergraduates) and 2 (graduates). PSS from family = Perceived social support from family. PSS from friends = Perceived social support from friends. PSS from school = Perceived social support from school.

0.19, $p < .01$). Perceived social support from friends was negatively associated with students' perceived discrimination ($r = -0.17$, $p < .05$). Perceived social support from school was negatively associated with students' perceived discrimination ($r = -0.23$, $p < .01$), fearfulness ($r = -0.20$, $p < .01$), stress due to change ($r = -0.15$, $p < .05$), and guilt ($r = -0.21$, $p < .01$).

The normal P-P plot of regression standardized residual, scatter plot, and Mahalanobis distance were examined and confirmed that there was no violation of normality, linearity, or homoscedasticity. However, a correlation matrix indicated that there were strong correlations in the explanatory variables; that is to say, academic level was highly correlated with STEM/non-STEM ($r = 0.47 > 0.30$, $p < .01$), and perceived social support variables (i.e. perceived social support from family, friends and school) were highly correlated with each other ($r = 0.51$ to $r = 0.69$, $p < .01$; see Table 2). These correlations might suggest a multicollinearity issue, which might obscure the pattern of the regression results (Mansfield & Helms, 1982). To diagnose this potential multicollinearity issue, we examined variance inflation factors (VIFs) for the predictors. The predictor of perceived social support from friends had a VIF equal to 2.61 (> 2.5), and the VIF of other predictors ranged from 1.1 to 1.9, which suggested the variable of perceived social support from friends might cause multicollinearity (Chatterjee, Hadi, & Price, 2000). To avoid the potential problem of multicollinearity, we decided to remove perceived social support from friends from the model at this point and only used perceived social support from family and perceived social support from school for the regression analysis. After the variable of perceived social support from friends was removed from the model, the VIF of all predictors ranged from 1.1 to 1.4, indicating that multicollinearity was no longer a concern in the study (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003).

Students' background characteristics. Table 3 presents the hierarchical regression models with students' background characteristics predicting the different dimensions of acculturative stress. Students' comfort in using English was significantly negatively correlated with students' perceived discrimination, fearfulness, homesickness and stress due to change. However, it was not significantly correlated with students' feelings of guilt. Students' field of study (i.e. STEM/Non-STEM) was not significantly correlated with any dimension of acculturative stress. Students' academic level (undergraduate/graduate) was negatively correlated with students' perceived discrimination and fearfulness. This analysis indicated that, on average, graduate students were 0.36 times less likely to experience perceived discrimination and 0.31 times less likely to experience fearfulness than were undergraduate students. In these models, students' background characteristics, including students' comfort level of using English, STEM/Non-STEM major, and academic level, explained 9% of the variance in perceived discrimination, 11% of the variance in fearfulness, and 9% of the variance in stress due to change. However, students' background characteristics only explained 4% of the variance in homesickness and 3% of the variance in students' feelings of guilt. Together, these findings suggest that students' experience of fearfulness, perceived discrimination and stress due to change were more likely to be affected by students' background characteristics compared with the other two dimensions of acculturative stress (i.e. homesickness and guilt).

Perceived social support. As shown in Table 3, after controlling for students' background characteristics, perceived social support from family had a significant positive

correlation with students' experience of fearfulness, homesickness, stress due to change, and guilt. Students' perceived social support from school was significantly and negatively correlated with students' perceived discrimination, fearfulness, stress due to change and guilt. However, perceived social support from school had no significant correlation with homesickness. After controlling for students' background characteristics, perceived social support from family and school explained an additional 5% of the variance in perceived discrimination, 5% of the variance in fearfulness, 5% of the variance in homesickness, 6% of the variance in stress due to change, and 5% of the variance in guilt.

All exploratory variables (i.e. background characteristics and perceived social support variables) together accounted for 14% of the variance in perceived discrimination, 16% of the variance in fearfulness, 9% of the variance in homesickness, 15% of the variance in stress due to change and 8% of the variance in guilt (see Table 3).

Discussion

This study viewed Chinese international students' studying and living in the U.S. as a process of adaptation through an acculturation framework lens (Sam & Berry, 2010). We found that acculturative stress was multi-dimensional. Students' background characteristics carried different weights in explaining different dimensions of acculturative stress. Perceived social support from family indicated different impacts on students' perceived discrimination, fearfulness, homesickness, stress due to change, and guilt, compared the impacts from perceived social support from school.

This study identified five distinct but related dimensions of acculturative stress among Chinese international students. These dimensions included perceived discrimination, fearfulness, homesickness, stress due to change, and guilt. This is consistent with previous studies that indicate that international students' acculturative stress experience is multi-dimensional (Ye, 2005; Ye, 2006a). However, the difference between this current study and previous studies (Ye, 2005; Ye, 2006a) lies in the items that have been loaded onto the specific dimensions. Past studies (Ye, 2005; Ye, 2006a) have reported that perceived discrimination and perceived hatred/rejection were separate dimensions among East Asian international students, but our study found that these were one dimension among Chinese international students. One possible explanation is that our participants tended to strongly associate their sense of negative feedback from others (e.g., perceived rejection or hatred) with a stereotype or prejudiced attitude towards a group (e.g., perceived discrimination). In other words, they were likely to attribute the feeling of being rejected to discrimination. Variations in the underlying factor structure may reflect a difference in the individual's interpretations of these abstractions, such as "discrimination," "hatred," or "rejection." Future research may need to address the subtle differences in interpreting international students' experiences of being "discriminated" against, "hated" or "rejected" to better understand their acculturation experiences.

Table 3

Hierarchical Regression of Background Characteristic and Perceived Social Support on Acculturative

Predictors	B	SE B	β	R ²	ΔR^2	ΔF (df)
Perceived discrimination						
Step 1 (n=230)				.09**	.09**	7.75 (3,226)
Comfort level in using English	-.28	.09	-.21**			
STEM/Non-STEM	-.06	.10	-.04			
Academic status	-.31	.12	-.19**			
Step 2 (n=230)				.14**	.05**	5.63 (2,224)
PSS from family	.08	.04	.14			
PSS from school	-.15	.05	-.25**			
Fearfulness						
Step 1 (n=230)				.11**	.11**	9.16 (3,226)
Comfort level in using English	-.43	.09	-.28**			
STEM/Non-STEM	.11	.17	.07			
Academic status	-.36	.13	-.19**			
Step 2 (n=230)				.16**	.05**	7.29 (2,224)
PSS from family	.16	.05	.23**			
PSS from school	-.17	.05	-.25**			
Homesickness						
Step 1 (n=230)				.04*	.04*	2.71 (3,226)
Comfort level in using English	-.34	.11	-.22**			
STEM/Non-STEM	.05	.13	.03			
Academic status	-.04	.14	-.02			
Step 2 (n=230)				.09**	.05**	7.24 (2,224)
PSS from family	.20	.05	.28**			
PSS from school	-.07	.06	-.10			
Stress due to change						
Step 1 (n=230)				.09**	.09**	7.86 (3,226)
Comfort level in using English	-.50	.11	-.31**			
STEM/Non-STEM	.13	.13	.07			
Academic status	-.14	.14	-.07			
Step 2 (n=230)				.15**	.06**	8.17 (2,224)
PSS from family	.21	.05	.28**			
PSS from school	-.16	.06	-.22**			
Guilt						
Step 1 (n=230)				.03	.03	2.07 (3,226)
Comfort level in using English	-.19	.11	-.12			
STEM/Non-STEM	.16	.13	.09			
Academic status	-.17	.14	-.09			
Step 2 (n=230)				.08**	.05**	6.52 (2,224)
PSS from family	.13	.05	.18*			
PSS from school	.20	.06	-.27**			

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

Multi-Dimensionality of Acculturative Stress

Predictors of Different Dimensions underlying Acculturative Stress

Students' background characteristics. This study first highlighted the importance of students' background characteristics in understanding Chinese international students' perceived discrimination, fearfulness, and stress due to change. Specifically, our study suggested students' comfort level in using English language and academic level are two important factors in understanding these students' acculturative stress experiences.

The findings support our earlier expectation and are similar to previous studies (Constantine et al., 2005; Lee & Rice, 2007; Yeh & Inose, 2003) that have emphasized the importance of English language ability in one's adjustment process. Our findings further suggest that Chinese international students who are more comfortable in using the English language may experience less specific acculturative stress experiences such as perceived discrimination, fearfulness, homesickness, and stress due to change. Another significant predictor, academic level (i.e., undergraduate/graduate), indicated different patterns in students' fearfulness and perceived discrimination. Specifically, undergraduates are more likely to experience higher perceived discrimination and fearfulness than are graduate students. Because undergraduates and graduates differ in many aspects, such as academic requirements, time management, and relationships with friends, Chinese undergraduate and graduate international students may have different learning and living microenvironments despite broadly sharing the same university. However, in the current study students' field of study (STEM vs. Non-STEM) was not associated with any acculturative stress dimension. Past research has not explored the international students' academic status or field of study in association with their acculturative stress; thus, future studies may need to validate these findings and address why background characteristics have different impacts on international students' different acculturation experiences.

Perceived social support. This study showed that Chinese international students' perceptions of family support and school support were associated with acculturative stress in different patterns. Perceived social support from family was positively associated with acculturative stress dimensions of fearfulness, homesickness, stress due to change and guilt. In contrast, perceived social support from school was negatively associated with acculturative stress dimensions of perceived discrimination, fearfulness, stress due to change and guilt. This finding may imply that students' perceived family support did not help them address stressful experiences due to acculturation and instead increased students' stressful experiences, whereas students' perceptions of school support help students cope with their difficulties and challenges during studying and living in a new culture. According to Sam and Berry's (2010) stress and coping theory, in the context of acculturation, individuals' perceived social supports act as coping resources that help them re-appraise stressful acculturation situations. Our study contributes to this theory by finding that this effect is not consistent across different types of perceived social support. In fact, while this expectation held true for some sources of perceived

social support, other sources of perceived support showed a very different correlation and may accentuate acculturative stress.

Interestingly, our sample of Chinese international students reported relatively higher levels of perceived family support compared to perceived school support. However, in terms of coping with the multi-dimensions of acculturative stress, specifically in students' experiences of perceived discrimination, fearfulness, stress due to change, and guilt, students' perception of family support is less helpful compared with perceived school support as a coping resource. One possible explanation is that in the context of adaptation to a new cultural environment, these students may often have high expectations of their academic achievement to honor their families back home, as Chinese culture highly values academic achievement (Leong & Chou, 1996; Wei et al., 2007). In the face of difficulties or challenges in the new cultural environment, the sense of school supports may assure and encourage them to overcome these difficulties and reduce their stressful feelings. In contrast, the sense of family support may turn into pressure that adds to Chinese international students' likelihood of experiencing fearfulness, homesickness, stress due to change, and guilt, and thus their perceived family support actually increases the stress feelings in those acculturative stress dimensions.

However, this study also contains several limitations. First, the unequal sample size of STEM and non-STEM students may have reduced the statistical power needed to explore whether Chinese international students' fields of study influenced their acculturative stress experience. Compared with STEM majored students, non-STEM majored students, specifically those who are majoring in liberal arts or the social sciences, may have higher stress because the university may have more requirements for their English language abilities. In addition, because Chinese international students appear to prefer to major in STEM or business-related fields in comparison to liberal arts or the social sciences, it is not clear whether the large proportion of fellow students from the same country benefits Chinese students in adjusting to American universities or whether this prohibits them from reaching out to establish a new support system from local students. Future research should examine how international students' fields of study influence their adjustment process. Second, when examining students' perceived social support from friends, this study was not able to detect its correlation with different dimensions of acculturative stress due to its high correlation with other perceived support sources. Future research may examine international students' friends' support separately from other support sources in relation to their adjustment processes. Third, the current study only collected a sample from one private university that was located in the northeastern U.S. Therefore, it limited the ability to generalize from the sample to Chinese international students in other regions of the U.S. Future studies should recruit participants from different regions and investigate whether international students' acculturation experiences are related to local culture based on geographical location.

Conclusion

The present study examines Chinese international students' acculturative stress by identifying five dimensions of acculturative stress that this population may encounter in the US: homesickness, fearfulness, guilt, stress due to change, and perceived discrimination. Not only does the study highlight the multiple dimensions of acculturative stress, but it also re-examines

students' background characteristics and perceived social support from family, friends, and school as predictors of different dimensions of acculturative stress. The results highlight that students' comfort in using the English language and academic level (i.e., undergraduate/graduate) is important in understanding students' acculturative stress. Moreover, this study finds that perceived social support from family and school has different association patterns with the five dimensions of acculturative stress. Family support is positively associated with acculturative stress, whereas school supports are negatively and non-significantly associated with acculturative stress.

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Utilizing the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale (IES) to Enhance International Student Travel

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Abstract

This paper highlights how one institution used the International Effectiveness Scale (IES) to support intercultural exploration and development for short-term undergraduate travel programs. Authors discuss utilization of the IES to explore students' intercultural development, how it can be applied to create an individualized action plan, and how it can identify intercultural goals during university-sponsored international travel opportunities. The strengths of the IES will be highlighted alongside a discussion of how intercultural learning and personal growth are central to the intercultural exploration process.

Keywords: intercultural learning; undergraduate students; international travel; study abroad; intercultural skills; international education

Wildavsky (2010) argues that globalization has led to intensified competition and increased mobility in higher education, including both an increase in the number of American institutions opening international campuses and a rise in the mobility of students traveling outside of their home country to seek educational opportunities. This globalization of higher education has also contributed to the expansion and success of global study abroad programs, as the number of study abroad students has increased by 40% since 2000 (Maslen, 2014). As the number of undergraduate students traveling globally is on the rise, through experiences like semester study abroad or short-term international service-learning programs, higher education practitioners and educators should prioritize intercultural competency education by equipping students with opportunities to explore new cultures and perspectives, navigate cultural differences, and build intercultural communication skills. Wang and Ching (2015) define intercultural competence as the "ability to recognize, respect, value and use productively cultural conditions and orientation patterns with respect to the interpreting and shaping the world" (p.16). Intercultural communication skills are an integral part of cultural competency. Portella and Chen (2010) identify three interrelated dimensions of intercultural communication competence: intercultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity, and intercultural effectiveness, all of which contribute to the ability to effectively communicate between different identities within a culturally diverse environment. Intercultural learning and the development of intercultural skills have been identified as key benefits of studying abroad and short-term international exchanges (Wang and Ching, 2015).

Higher education practitioners and educators can help students create meaningful opportunities to explore their intercultural competence, recognize their level of intercultural awareness, enhance their intercultural communication skills, and develop a plan for cultural exploration. This topic is relevant to the field of international education, as it supports the holistic development of the undergraduate students selected for international travel opportunities and recognizes both self-awareness and cultural awareness as part of the international learning experience. International education advisors, academic advisors, faculty, and other educators can create opportunities for students to engage in intercultural exploration both prior to their travel abroad experience and during their time abroad. This can be done through one-on-one coaching, group advising, and/or by offering journaling prompts to support continuous self-reflection on intercultural communication skills and cultural exploration.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight how Carnegie Mellon University-Qatar (CMU-Q) has used the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale (IES) as a tool to define students' intercultural competence skills. CMU-Q is an international branch campus located in Doha, Qatar in the Arabian Gulf with 400 undergraduate students representing 45 different nationalities. The university offers multiple opportunities for international travel experiences (service-learning programs, academic conferences, study abroad, and faculty-led academic programs) with over 58% of students having the opportunity to travel during their undergraduate career.

The Division of Student Affairs began incorporating the IES assessment tool into their international travel experiences in spring 2016. The IES measures the three key dimensions of Continuous Learning (with sub-dimensions of self-awareness and exploration), Interpersonal Engagement (with sub-dimensions of global mindset and relationship interest), and Hardiness (with sub-dimensions of positive regard and emotional resilience). It provides students an overall scale of their intercultural competency as well as scores in each of the key and sub-dimensions. Using this scale allows educators to advise students on tangible ways they can develop the three key dimensions or six sub-dimensions of the IES scales when connecting with others from different cultural backgrounds and/or adapting to new cultural environments. The Division of Student Affairs uses the IES to measure intercultural competency for short-term university travel programs as it demonstrates how these experiences allow for self-reflection and growth in one or more areas of cultural competency.

Methods

After a competitive application process, students are selected for a short-term travel experience. It is here that the students commit to participating in a series of pre-departure workshops to discuss program logistics and engage in discussions that explore risk management procedures, the concepts of privilege and social responsibility, and cultural exploration. At the first workshop, students complete the IES pre-program assessment after being informed that the Student Affairs program leaders are not looking for students to have certain intercultural characteristics or skills. Students are also informed that the IES scores have no bearing on their eligibility to participate in the program. Upon completing the IES pre-assessment, students sign

up for a time to individually meet with the Program Leaders to discuss their results, learn how the described characteristics of each dimension may apply to their experience, and create an individualized action plan for developing one of the three dimensional areas based on their personalized pre-program IES results. The action plan often targets the dimension in which students have received the lowest score; however, in the event students have equal scores, action plans are created for the intercultural dimension where the student feels least confident. Action plans can vary based on the development levels of students and can range from reading two news articles a week about the new country (for those students looking to increase global mindset sub-dimension or Continuous Learning key dimension) or leading a debrief session during the program to assist peers in examining the magnitude of their experiences (for those students looking to increase positive regard sub-dimension/Hardiness key dimension). Individualized action plans are logged by program leaders and revisited with each student throughout the course of the program. During each international travel opportunity, students are engaged in multiple opportunities to increase their intercultural communication skills and work towards goals outlined in their action plan for personal and cultural exploration.

On the final day of the international experience, students complete a post-program IES assessment to gain an idea of how the cultural immersion experience has affected them in the key dimensions of Continuous Learning, Interpersonal Engagement, and Hardiness. Prior to completing the post-program assessment, students are informed that they may see positive, negative, or no changes in their scores. When comparing the pre/post-program IES assessment scores, students are advised to recognize and reflect on the expectations of how they thought the international experience would impact them versus the reality of the experiences they encountered. Students are not required to meet with program leaders to discuss their post-program results but are offered the opportunity if they are interested.

Description

The use of the IES was piloted in April 2016 for an international service-learning program to Romania, with 13 students and two Student Affairs program leaders completing the pre/post-program IES assessment. As this was the pilot program for the IES, the program leaders completed the assessment alongside the students to give them a better understanding of its content and ability to engage in more meaningful conversations as students created their personal action plans. The two-week international program provided students with multiple opportunities for cultural immersion, including the following experiences:

- A language class covering the Romanian alphabet and commonly used phrases, a history lesson, and a tour of the Csikszereda town area
- Participating in conversational English lessons with locals and university students to assist them with practicing the English language
- Connecting with local school children through volunteer lessons during class time
- Learning about Csikszereda's agricultural sustainability through assisting with gardening projects to sustain the accommodation lived in throughout the program

- Clearing and building a dam to assist with the area’s water supply
- Cultural exploration programs to explore Bran’s Castle and free time to explore multiple cities including Csikszereda, Brasov, and Bucharest

In December 2016, students were given the opportunity to participate in an international health and well-being program to Indonesia; 14 students completed the pre/post-IES assessment for this program. During their time in Indonesia, students had multiple opportunities to increase their intercultural communication skills and implement goal setting for personal and cultural exploration. This 10-day international program provided students with multiple opportunities for cultural learning, including the following experiences:

- A walking tour of Ubud and Kuta and connecting with a local guide
- Learning about the Balinese culture and history through a welcome orientation
- Taking a Bahasa language class
- Participating in a food tour and cooking local Indonesian dishes
- Connecting with local school children through volunteer projects
- Visiting cultural sites: Water Temple, Tegalalang rice fields, Ubud Palace
- Interacting with locals at the markets or informal connections at guest house

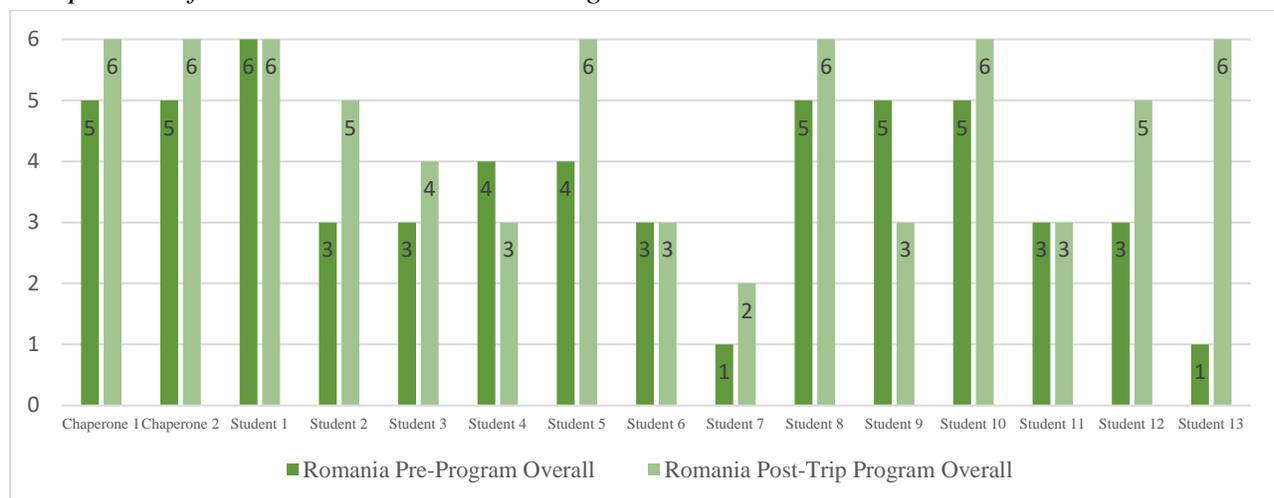
In addition to engaging in cultural exploration through food, language, conversations and historical visits, participants had the chance to explore and learn from each other’s cultures during the days of travel and the group discussions. The group conversations allowed participants to learn from other’s cultural perspectives, and to analyze how these are like (or different from) their own cultural backgrounds and experiences.

Findings

The IES was piloted in April 2016 (pre-program) and May 2016 (post-program) with 13 students and two staff program leaders completing the IES pre/post assessment, as part of an international service-learning program to Romania (see Chart 1, below).

Chart 1

Comparison of IES Scores: Pre and Post Program – Romania

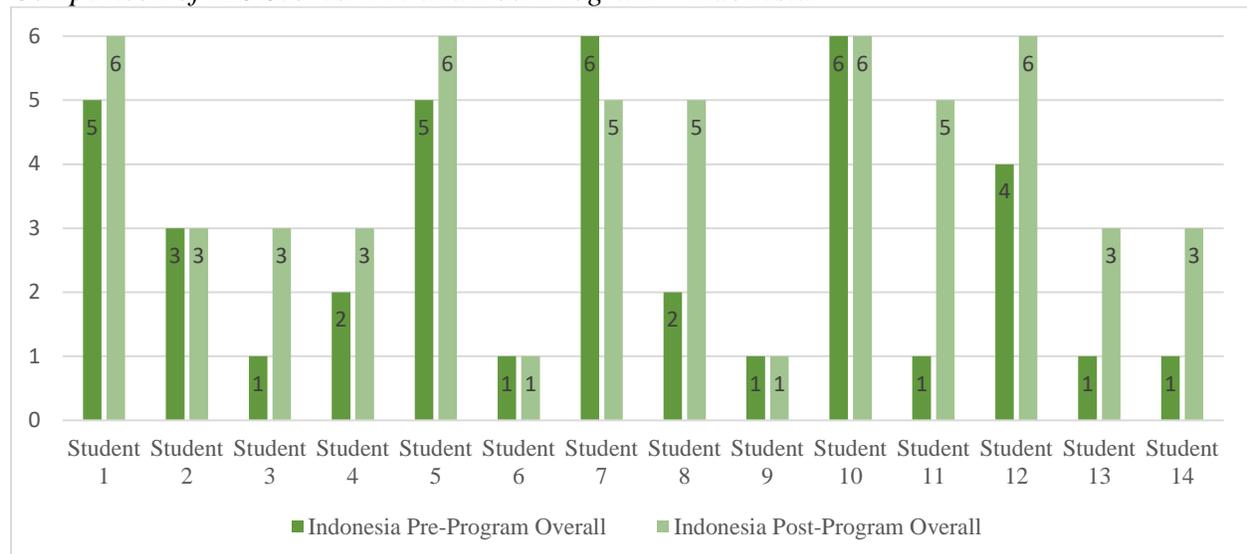


Ten participants from the Romania program (including the two program leaders) experienced overall growth, as shown in the comparison of pre/post-program overall IES scores. This indicates that they increased their competencies in one or more of the three key dimensions of Continuous Learning, Interpersonal Engagement and/or Hardiness during their cultural immersion experience in Romania. Three participants (Student 1, Student 6, and Student 11) did not experience an overall increase in their level of intercultural effectiveness, but did experience growth in one or more of the six sub-dimensions of the scale, indicating development within the areas of self-awareness, exploration, global mindset, relationship interest, positive regard and/or emotional resilience. Two participants (Student 4, Student 9) experienced a decrease in their overall level of intercultural effectiveness, indicating a decrease in one or more of the three key dimensions of Continuous Learning, Interpersonal Engagement and/or Hardiness. The lower post-program overall IES score can also indicate that the international travel experience presented challenges, which inhibited intercultural development.

The IES assessment was also used in December 2016 (pre/post-program), with 14 students completing it as part the requirements for the international health and well-being program to Indonesia (see Chart 2, below).

Chart 2

Comparison of IES Scores: Pre and Post Program – Indonesia



Nine participants who traveled to Indonesia experienced growth areas in their overall IES score, indicating that they had an overall increase in one or more of the three key dimensions of Continuous Learning, Interpersonal Engagement and/or Hardiness. Four participants (Student 2, Student 6, Student 9, and Student 10) did not experience an overall increase in level of intercultural effectiveness (same pre- and post- IES overall score), but did experience growth in one or more of the sub-dimensions of self-awareness, exploration, global mindset, relationship interest, positive regard and/or emotional resilience. Only one participant (Student 7) experienced a decrease in their level of overall intercultural effectiveness, again likely indicating

that the international travel experience presented challenges, which inhibited intercultural development.

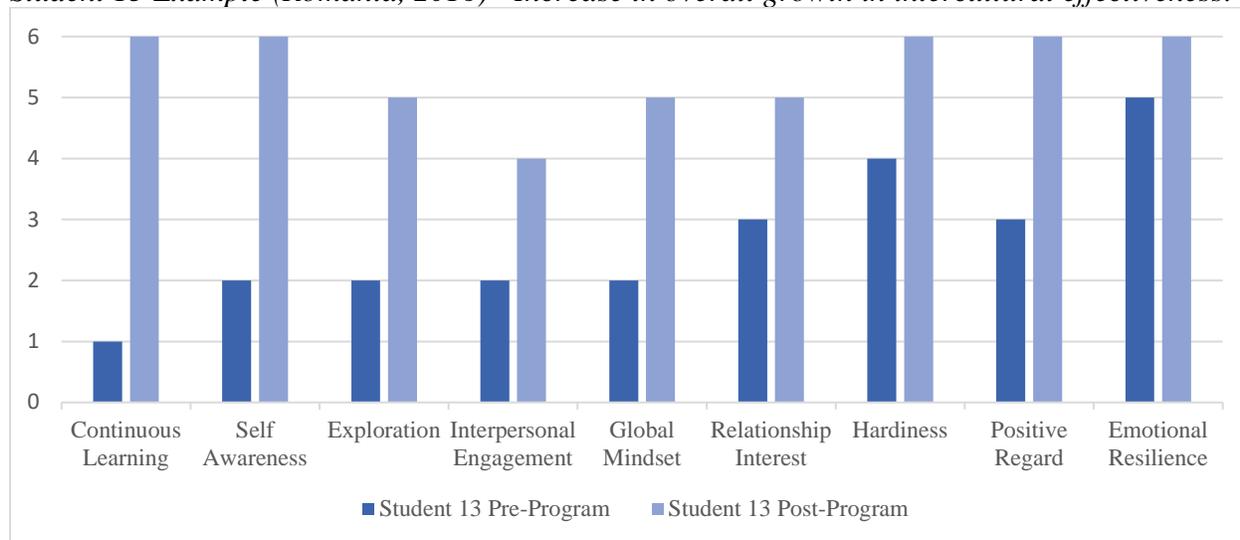
Discussion

Using the IES as a pre/post-program measurement tool allowed educators and students the opportunity to quantify their intercultural development using a scale of 1(low) to 6 (high) and observe intercultural development within the six sub-dimensions as well as overall growth resulting from their cultural immersion experiences. In both the Romania and Indonesia programs, students either increased in their overall IES score; received the same IES pre/post score, but experienced growth in a sub-dimension; or experienced a decrease in their overall IES score, with most of them falling into the first category, fewer into the second, and the smallest number the third group.

In some instances, students experienced significant growth as a result of their participation in their international travel experiences. Student 13 on the Romania program (see Chart 3 below) had an increase in overall IES scores, with a pre-program score of 1 and a post-program score of 6. As seen from the pre/post-program IES comparisons, this student experienced growth in the three key dimensions of intercultural effectiveness (Continuous Learning, Interpersonal Engagement, and Hardiness) as well as the two corresponding sub-dimensions for each key dimension (self-awareness, exploration, global mindset, relationship interest, positive regard and emotional resilience). This demonstrates that, by the end of the international experience, s/he could effectively communicate within an intercultural context, manage emotions and stressors, and claim a successful intercultural learning experience which led to growth in intercultural competency.

Chart 3

Student 13 Example (Romania, 2016) - Increase in overall growth in intercultural effectiveness:

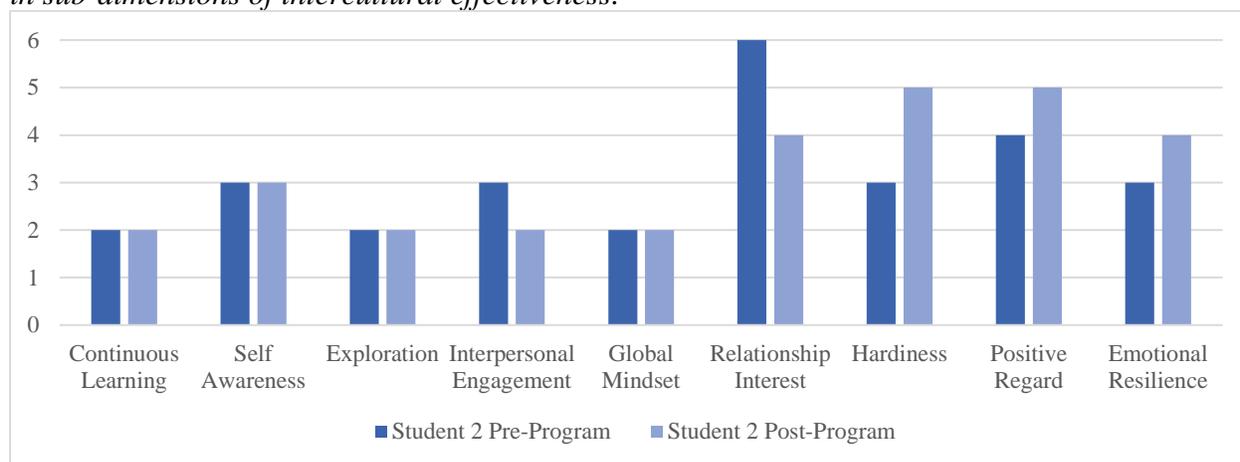


Other students received the same overall IES pre and post-score but demonstrated growth in one of the three key dimensions. As shown in Chart 4 below, Student 2 increased in the

Hardiness dimension (including sub-dimensions of positive regard and emotional intelligence) although the overall IES score did not change from the pre- to post-assessment. The student experienced challenges and declined in their Interpersonal Engagement dimension (including sub-dimension of relationship interest). This could be due to the relationships they were able to create and maintain during their travel experience, either with other participants on the program or with locals in Indonesia. This student was encouraged to identify ways s/he can build competency in Continuous Learning and Interpersonal Engagement dimensions to have greater success in future intercultural experiences.

Chart 4

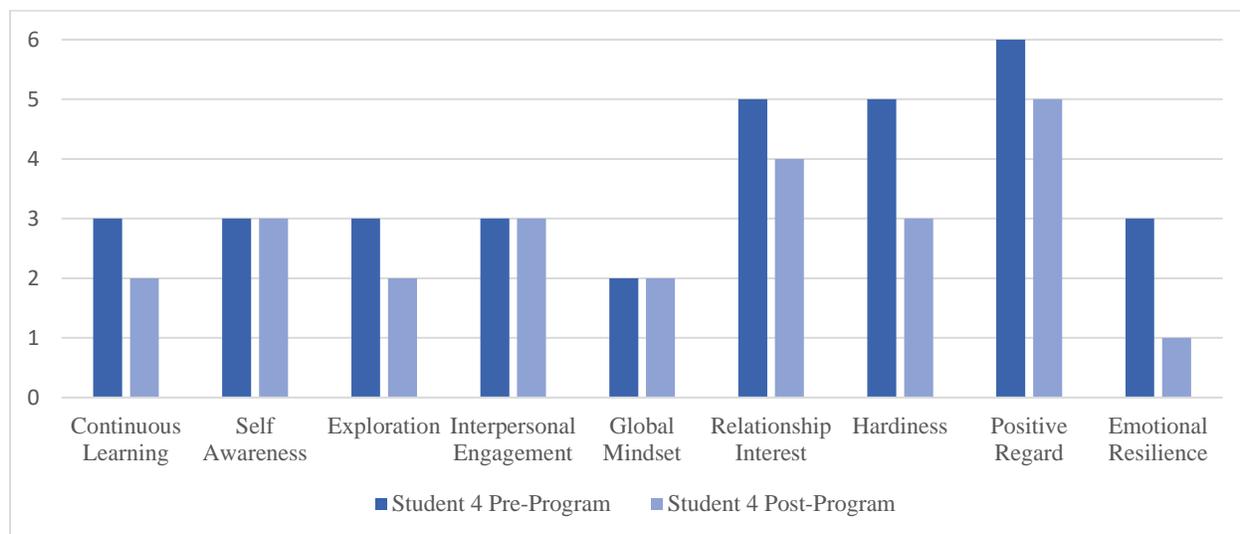
Student 2 Example (Indonesia, 2016) - No change in overall IES Score, with experienced growth in sub-dimensions of intercultural effectiveness:



A few students experienced a decrease in their overall IES score indicating that the international travel opportunities presented challenges when building cultural competence through the intercultural learning experiences. As shown in Chart 5 below, Student 4 experienced challenges in the Hardiness dimension (and corresponding sub-dimensions of positive regard and emotional resilience), indicating that the program presented challenges to his/her ability to effectively communicate with people from other cultures, resulting in increased stress and frustration levels. The cultural immersion experience in Romania tested her/his competency in the areas of Continuous Learning (a sub-dimension of exploration) and Interpersonal Engagement (a sub-dimension of relationship interest) in some way that s/he does not experience while in Qatar. This student was encouraged to identify ways to build emotional resilience after the program that will hopefully help her/him cope with challenging cross-cultural situations and future intercultural experiences.

Chart 5

Student 4 Example (Romania, 2016) - Decrease in overall growth in intercultural effectiveness



Limitations and Future Research Directions

The authors have considered a few limitations to the data reported. With a small population of 400 students, participants have high levels of interaction with students, faculty, and staff from over 45 different cultures and countries. Because of the unique diversity of the campus community, the pre-program IES assessment scores reported may be higher than would be seen in institutions whose student bodies are less diverse. Institutions located in more homogeneous environments may experience more difficulties in facilitating students' intercultural development.

Another limitation to the assessment of the IES is the mindset of the student at the time they take the assessment. As the IES offers insight into the dimensions of emotional resilience (sub-dimension) and Hardiness (key dimension), students who are experiencing interpersonal difficulties at the time of assessment may notice a skewed score based on their current situation. While the IES tries to capture an overall picture of the students' intercultural competency skills, the assessment can be susceptible to situational factors that affect how the student views the dimensions of Continuous Learning, Interpersonal Engagement, and Hardiness.

Another limitation is the number of opportunities for a student to travel internationally throughout their academic careers. Students have the opportunity to travel up to three times a year, to different cultural environments. Students participating in multiple international travel programs organized through the Division of Student Affairs would take the IES pre/post-program assessment multiple times within a six-month period, which could result in survey fatigue.

Future research can focus on utilizing the IES with students participating in longer cultural immersion experiences, such as study abroad. This data could be helpful for the students to create an individualized action plan and identify goals for international learning during their semester abroad.

Future research would also benefit from exploring the intercultural growth of international students throughout their undergraduate career. Using the IES to measure cultural

competency as a pre-assessment tool upon matriculation and a post-assessment tool just prior to graduation. This data could be beneficial in helping higher education practitioners and educators explore the international student experience, ways the undergraduate experience influenced intercultural competence, and how the institution can better support this population.

Conclusion

The utilization of the IES in short-term international travel experiences provided many benefits to the overall student experience. First, utilization of the IES assessment allowed students to learn about their individual areas of strengths and weaknesses before they traveled abroad, which helped them anticipate any challenges they may have with intercultural communication or personal development during their experience. Second, it allowed each participant to develop their own individual action plan based on his/her IES report to foster intercultural exploration and growth. Third, upon return to campus, students completed the post-program IES assessment and it helped them identify areas of growth, stability, or decline in their own intercultural effectiveness. This gives students data that they could use to reflect on and compare to their lived experiences abroad.

Student Affairs program leaders utilized the IES as an assessment tool in pre-departure workshops to educate students and guide discussions on the various components of intercultural communication. Additionally, it allowed them to examine each student's intercultural strengths and weaknesses as well as the entire group as a whole. Program Leaders used this information when making roommate selection, by pairing students with low positive regard and high positive regard together, so that they could complement each other's perception with regards to Hardiness. Another benefit of utilizing the IES is that it allowed program leaders to have a sense of how the cultural immersion experiences and time abroad enhanced student learning and development. Program leaders used IES data as part of the overall evaluation of the Romania and Indonesia programs. If a majority of the students progressed on their individualized action plan, and the IES data supports growth, then the program was assessed as positive. Similarly, if there was a negative or challenging experience that influenced many students staying stable or declining in their intercultural development, program leaders used this data to revise the cultural immersion activities, aspects of the program, or the program as a whole, for future international learning experiences.

These findings indicate that the IES is a useful tool to measure intercultural skills and growth. Students reported that the individualized action plan helped them work towards intercultural skills development. Students can create an additional action plan and identify goals based on their post-program assessment which allows them to continue to develop in one or more of the dimensions they are interested in developing. Program leaders can continue to serve as a support system for students working on revised action plans and connect them with campus or local resources as they work on achieving greater intercultural awareness.

After their short-term international travel experience, students are also encouraged to seek out additional learning experiences that support ongoing intercultural connections and

exploration. This could include continued connections to individuals they have met in the host country, engagement in cultural campus programming, and/or attending local cultural events happening beyond campus (i.e. celebrating Holi or Lunar New Year celebrations and/or watching a cultural performances) to foster more intercultural learning and wider connections with the surrounding community.

Because of its usefulness for these early programs, the IES has been incorporated into future short-term international programs facilitated through the Division of Student Affairs at CMU-Q. Based on the benefits of student intercultural exploration and development, it was recommended to utilize the IES on other student travel experiences, including faculty-led academic programs, academic conferences, and/or study abroad experiences.

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Strategies of Supporting Chinese Students in an International Joint Degree Program

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Abstract

The international joint degree program is one of the recent ways of international collaborations in Higher Education. Those programs involve intensive academic collaborations as well as institutional alliance. Such programs could provide a supportive environment for international students through international partnerships. The article provides a case study on sharing the practices of building an effective supporting system for international students in an international joint degree program. In specific, the authors shared academic, cultural, and individual growth support programs and services designed by Oklahoma State University to best facilitate academic and social integration of the Chinese students. Those programs are designed and implemented in a three-phase approach: Pre-engagement, Transition and Integration, and Connection at Oklahoma State University.

Keywords: International joint degree program; Chinese undergraduate students; academic and social integration; international partnership

The international joint degree program, the recent model of international exchange and internationalization strategies, has developed rapidly in the field of transnational higher education. European and United States institutions are taking the lead in this trend. They typically partner with Chinese institutions (IIE, 2011). In most cases, universities collaborate intensively on curriculum and award a combined, or two separate degrees to graduates of those programs. The rationale for building such programs may vary across regions and countries, but the primary rationale for American institutions is the sustainable international partnerships that could lead to curriculum innovation, financial gain, and an international reputation (Knight, 2011). Oklahoma State University (OSU) initiated their China programs aiming to enhance their international reputation while increasing the campus diversity. Although the enrollment in the dual or joint degree programs comprises only a small portion of the international student enrollment, such programs are gaining more attention in scholarly research. Recent studies have examined the structure, organization and quality assurance of such programs (Crosier et al, 2007; Goodman & Ruland, 2013); while others review the experience of international students enrolled in joint degree programs (Knight, 2011; Steber, 2013).

Chinese students are the main participants for the international joint degree programs in recent years (Knight, 2011). In the case of joint degree programs between Chinese institutions and American institutions, students first spend two or three years in China and then transfer to the American partner universities to complete the remainder of their degree program. As of

March 2016, there were a total of 2403 joint degree programs and institutes approved by Chinese Ministry of Education (Zhang, 2016). Upon the completion, they receive diplomas from both institutions. Many joint degree programs are cohort-based programs. The cohort size may vary. Some are as small as 15 to 20 students, while other could be 100 to 200 students as a cohort. Students start their first year as a joint degree cohort in China and then transfer to the U.S. The cohort-based program has many merits, such as providing tailored curriculum, more focused services and activities; while many scholars have doubts over their campus integration process, particularly their social integration process as a cohort. Their Chinese peer group dynamics could also directly affect their campus experience. Tinto (1975) found that students' campus integration has direct impact on their retention and persistence in college. The integration is defined by Tinto (1975) as a process by which an individual establishes membership in the college community. In Tinto's academic and social integration model, academic integration includes academic performance and intellectual development, whereas social integration refers to the interactions among peers and with faculty (Tinto, 1975, 1993).

Therefore, we are curious of the transition and adjustment process of Chinese students in the dual degree program. We wondered how the joint degree program student integrates academically and socially into the campus. What strategies are best to facilitate their campus experience and integration process? More specifically, we hoped to find effective approaches to address the challenges identified by Chinese students in their campus integration process. This can help institutions to design and implement programs and services to best support the international joint degree programs, as well as enhancing retention and satisfaction of Chinese students enrolled in those programs.

Purpose of the Study

This study focuses on Chinese undergraduate students and international joint degree program. The purpose of the study is to describe and analyze the approach that facilitates and promotes campus integration of Chinese undergraduate students. This preliminary study intends to identify the strategies that can support Chinese students and extends a growing body of research focused on understanding the current Chinese students' population in the U.S. higher education.

Literature Review

Academic and Social Integration of International Students

The review of the relevant literature identified three main issues related to the academic integration process of international students: communication barriers, classroom norms and learning preference, and faculty relationships (Church, 1982; Liberman, 1994; Wang, 2003). Many international students from non-English countries struggled with note-taking and class participation (Wang, 2003). Sometimes, international students try to apply their developed learning habits and previous classroom norms to the American classroom setting and often had a hard time adjusting to the new classroom norms (Sun & Chen, 1997). The limited research on relationship of faculty and international students found out that the close connection with faculty

and staff is important to international students' academic adjustment, but the language and cultural barriers limited such interaction (Trice, 2001).

Academic integration directly affects international students' persistence. However, social integration has a strong influence on their academic success as well. Although the benefits of social interaction with local natives is well documented (Schram & Lauver, 1988; Trice, 2004; Wang, 2003), research indicates that international students tend to form friendship with someone from the same culture and have difficulties forming long-lasting friendships with someone from the host culture (Church, 1982; Zhang, 2004). The challenges in limited social integration is due to cultural differences and language barriers (Jiang, 2010; Nicholson, 2001). With the increased popularity and availability of the international joint degree program, more attention needs to be given by researchers in understanding the academic and social integration experience of international students, particularly Chinese students' population.

Chinese Students' Campus Experience

Since the early 1980's, many American campuses have experienced the rapid growth in the enrollment of Chinese students; due in large part to the social economic changes in Chinese society (Huang, 1997; Qian, 2002). China's Open Door Economic Reform policy by the Chinese central government not only promoted international exchange of students and scholars sponsored by the government, but also provided financial feasibility for individual family to send their child abroad. In 2016, 31.5% of international students studying in the U.S. are from China (IIE, 2017).

Chinese students face similar challenges and difficulties experienced by international students in general, such as language barriers and academic adjustment (Wang, 2003). Moreover, the strong Chinese cultural background also shaped their adjustment to the new environment. As strong connections with the home culture affect the cross-cultural adaptation process (Kim, 2001), it is important to examine the influence of Chinese culture on Chinese students' academic and social integration process as well.

Many studies pointed out that Chinese students' language barriers and unfamiliarity with the American classroom norms are directly related to the low class participation among Chinese students in the American classroom (Sue & Kirk, 1973; Todd, 1997). However, Hodkinson and Poropat (2013)'s study focused on the "silent Chinese student" phenomenon from the cultural perspective. They distinguished the Western dialogic interactive learning model from the Chinese "competition-oriented and authority-centered" model (p. 432). The traditional Chinese teaching and learning emphasizes: "memorization, understanding, and reflection" (Hodkinson & Poropat, 2013, p. 433). Therefore, Hodkinson and Poropat concluded that Chinese students pose questions after they master sufficient knowledge rather than learning while participating through posing questions. This is also related to the notion of 'face culture' of Chinese society; and defined as "the need to be respected by others and not be embarrassed in social situations" (Hwang, Ang, & Francesco, 2002, p. 74). Face culture also shaped the attitude towards class participation of Chinese students. They may avoid posing questions in the classroom as they do not want to lose face in front of their peers.

Huang (1997) examined the academic experience of Chinese students and found out that Chinese students study very hard and often times have high academic achievements. Although they are interested in learning about American culture, they still prefer to form their own Chinese circle for the social interaction. Sue and Zane (1985) examined social and emotional adjustment processes of Chinese students and found that they were more reserved and anxious during their adjustment in comparison to other international student groups. Lewthwaite (1996) studied the adaptation process of Chinese graduate students in New Zealand. The study revealed that Chinese students are generally satisfied with their academic performance, but often had struggles with being afraid of losing their Chinese cultural identity in the new cultural and social environment. The influential Chinese culture supported Chinese students in their commitment to academic achievement, but also cause their fear of distancing themselves from the home culture while learning the new culture and social norms. Such feeling was identified as one of the sources of causing their anxiety (Sue & Kirk, 1973; Wang, 2003).

Chinese Students in the International Dual Degree Program

To better understand the challenges and supports in the academic and social integration of Chinese students, a case study was conducted in an urban setting public institution in the Midwest region (Wang, 2017). The study applied a case study method to understand Chinese undergraduate students' college integration processes in an international joint degree program. Participants in the study identified Chinese peers, Chinese faculty and staff, program coordinators, and the orientation programs as the major sources of support. In terms of the barriers in their academic and social integration process, it includes insufficient language proficiency in social settings, the lack of intercultural communication skills, and the housing arrangements (Wang, 2017). This study also highlighted the importance of international partnership, which could offer tailor-designed programs and services to support Chinese students and in return to strengthen the partnership.

The section of the literature review discussed the related research and provides an overview of the academic experiences of international students, and Chinese students in particular. Although some studies have focused on Chinese students and explored the academic and social integration process of Chinese undergraduate students, there is limited research focus on the strategies and approaches that institutions can adopt address the challenges faced by Chinese students;

Given the preceding context, the next part of this article provides a closer review of Oklahoma State University joint degree program and its effective strategies on how the institution can prepare to better address the integration of Chinese students in the joint degree program. Although there is limited data to evaluate fully the approaches presented in the next section, the study serves as the exploratory study to inform the future in-depth study.

Case Study of Oklahoma State University Joint Degree Program

Research Design

Case study method is selected for this study, to provide rich information and an in-depth understanding of effective approaches of supporting the college transition and integration process of Chinese students. By utilizing the case study method, the study can incorporate multiple sources for data collection. Those data sources include exit interviews and survey, program assessment self-study report and other documents related to the study. The findings of this qualitative study provide faculty and student affairs staff with a better understanding of strategies and approach of enhancing students' academic and social experience in an international joint degree program.

Research Context

Oklahoma State University (OSU) is a public land-grant institution located in the state of Oklahoma. The main campus is located in Stillwater, a college town with a population of around 50,000. Stillwater is about 60 miles from the Tulsa and Oklahoma City metropolitan areas. The full-time enrollment at OSU Stillwater campus is around 25,000 students. Stillwater is one of the five campuses of OSU, but it is the main campus. Oklahoma State University has a diverse student body. Students come not only from Oklahoma, but also from across the nation and more than 100 countries. As of fall 2017, OSU has more than 2,000 international students with over 470 from China.

About OSU-CAU Joint Degree Program

The CAU-OSU Joint Program, an undergraduate joint degree program between China Agricultural University (CAU) and Oklahoma State University (OSU) is a recent OSU China initiative. The OSU and CAU partnership was formed in 2011. The joint degree program, built upon the strength of two universities who are leading institution in agricultural fields in their respective countries, offers the first Agribusiness undergraduate degree in China. The program was approved for recruitment by Chinese Ministry of Education in 2013. The joint degree program was implemented at OSU through efforts and planning of several units on campus, including the OSU Provost office, School of International Studies and Outreach, Office of International Students and Scholars, College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, and Department of Agricultural Economics. The development and success of the program was also dependent on the collaborative partnership with faculty and administration at CAU, including their office of International Exchange and Cooperation, The International College Beijing, and the Undergraduate Education Office.

The joint degree program is structured to allow qualified Chinese students to complete their two or three years at International College Beijing of CAU, and then transfer to the OSU College of Agricultural Sciences & Natural Resources, Department of Agricultural Economics for the last one or two years. The curriculum was developed between the two institutions to reflect a four-year academic degree, with all the courses being taught in English.

Upon the successful completion of the program, students earn a Bachelor of Management Sciences degree and an undergraduate diploma in Agricultural/Forestry Economics and Management from CAU, and Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources degree with a major in Agribusiness from OSU. The recruitment target of this program was sixty students per year. The first cohort of 43 students began their first year at CAU in 2013 and 22 of them transferred to OSU in the fall of 2015 and successfully graduated from OSU and CAU in May 2017.

Program Strategy

The Department of Agricultural Economics sets the goal to help students accomplish the academic success, gain enriched cultural experiences, and pursue careers in relevant businesses that serve the growing needs of agriculture and related industries in China. In efforts to enrich CAU-OSU students' academic and cultural experience while enrolled in a joint degree program, a three-phase strategy is implemented: Pre-Engagement Phase, which is before students arrive at OSU and while studying at CAU; Transition and Integration Phase, which is upon students arriving at OSU and while studying at OSU; and the Connection Phase, which is upon approaching graduation and preparing for the next phase. For each phase, several action steps are implemented that are aligned with the goal of the program. The three-phase approach aims to enhance students' academic and social integration process. The next section will discuss each phase in details.

Phase I: Pre-engagement. The primary focus of Phase I is to build connections with students while they are at CAU and to ensure smooth logistical transition to OSU. The goal is to pre-engage students enrolled in the joint degree program and get them ready for the transfer to the American study and OSU campus culture. The Freshman Orientation course and weekly journal communication are the two approaches that are designed to meet the goal.

AG 1101 Freshman Orientation course is a required course for all Agricultural Economics majors. A revised version of this course is being taught in China by an OSU Agricultural Economics faculty member. The goal of delivering this course in China is to connect CAU students to OSU starting from their freshman year. Having this course taught by an OSU faculty member has helped students adopt the mindset of belonging to two academic institutions (CAU and OSU). It also allows the early connection between students and faculty members. Such early stage faculty interaction and connection is an important factor that could later enhance the social integration once they arrive in Stillwater campus.

Other than the orientation course offering, the department of Agricultural Economics continues to communicate with students through social media and weekly journals. Weekly journals (see Appendix A) are sent to the students during the fall and spring semesters while they are studying at CAU. Journals are one-page articles that cover wide-ranging and varying topics about life at OSU and in the Stillwater community. These journals are a way of connecting students to the culture of OSU in a simple, informative, and relaxing format. In addition, the

department uses WeChat, a Chinese social media platform, for announcements and direct interaction with students.

Students in their sophomore year at CAU receive guidance and assistance with their transfer process to OSU. In addition to working with the office of Undergraduate Admissions and other offices at OSU on transfer related logistics, students also receive information and advisement on course selection and major/minor options. Logistical arrangement could be challenging for international students. Therefore, the department also serves as the liaison for on-campus housing assignment and airport pickup arrangements for students prior to their arrival to OSU.

Understanding the Chinese culture is an important component of establishing and maintaining a successful partnership. Chinese culture values personal relationships and appreciates personal connections. With respect to that, the department schedules periodic faculty and staff visits to CAU to build rapport and maintain academic relationships with faculty, staff, and students. Such frequent visits not only form personal relations with CAU faculty, but also foster positive student and faculty relationships early on.

Phase II: Transition and integration. The goal of Phase II is to ease the transition. The second phase takes place when students study at OSU. The approach addresses students' needs to help with their transition and support their campus integration. In this phase, several tactics are designed and implemented to help students adapt and do well in the new academic and social environment.

Transition approaches. When students arrive a week before the start of the academic semester, the department of Agricultural Economics plans a comprehensive itinerary (see Appendix B) that includes settlement within the community and orientation programs on university, college, and department levels. The itinerary is given to the students prior to their arrival so that they are aware of, and prepared for, what is ahead of them during Welcome Week. As international students starting life away from home, ensuring that their basic settlement-related needs are met is important; as it can positively affect their readiness to begin the academic semester. Therefore, the OSU program facilitates each student's airport pick up, housing check in, personal shopping, bank account issuance, cell phone purchase, and other activities.

During the Welcome Week, the Department of Agricultural Economics plans and delivers a two-day departmental orientation session, covering different topics such as classroom courtesy, academic integrity, cross-cultural topics, university online resources, and more (see Appendix C). One of the highlights of the departmental orientation agenda is the student-faculty luncheon. This opportunity has helped Chinese students and faculty meet each other, ask questions, and get to know each other on an individual basis. We also include a question and answer session with domestic students in the departmental orientation agenda, with students grouped into small teams to allow conversations and queries on a peer-to-peer level. Afterwards, these domestic and Chinese student small teams go on a tour around the campus in an effort to create opportunities for engagement between domestic and Chinese students. Such activities and

arrangements cited above, including faculty, domestic students and Chinese students foster the connection and interaction among peers and with faculty.

Another action to enrich students' experiences on the academic level is the creation of a new course AGEC 3810 Domestic Agribusiness Tours. The intent behind this course is to expose students to U.S. agriculture through a series of visits and field trips. This course has become a vital element to complement classroom instruction. It includes tour destinations in the state of Oklahoma and other states. Having the course open for both domestic and international students has created one more opportunity for students from different backgrounds and cultures to interact with each other while traveling together. The department has also established a new section for a core course, AGEC 3101 Professional Career Development, with a syllabus modified for international students to address issues and concerns that international students may face. It also addresses careers that students may pursue.

Integration approaches. Faculty advisement is a unique advising structure, which is only available in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources at OSU. Faculty members serve as academic advisors for all undergraduate students in the college. With such structure, and based on students' preference and advisors' capacity, CAU-OSU program students are assigned to faculty members for ongoing academic advice, from the time they start at OSU until they graduate. Such structure continues to enhance the interaction and connection between faculty and students outside of the regular classroom.

Moreover, on the individual level, the academic coordinator in the department also conducts one-on-one meetings with CAU-OSU students periodically. The intent is to encourage students to share their concerns; especially those related to homesickness and to help them find resources if needed. On the cultural level, a series of events to foster cultural understanding and appreciation between CAU-OSU students and domestic students are planned, such as sporting events, holidays, and cultural events. The department also works with Chinese students in the program and organizes the Chinese New Year Luncheon and Celebration. During the Luncheon, Chinese students present a variety of Chinese culture performance, such as Chinese Tea Culture. Program students also join the rest of Chinese students at OSU to celebrate various Chinese holidays and festivals. Several program students also serve as the leaders in the Chinese students' community. All these events and connections to the Chinese community on campus allow the program students to share and celebrate their cultural identity with domestic students and faculty. Such cultural celebrations supported by the academic department creates a sense of pride for students and promote cultural understandings among Chinese and domestic students.

The Peer Mentor Program is another effective tool implemented to help CAU-OSU students adjust to life in their first year at OSU. The mentors are selected through an application process and they receive compensation for their services. The selected individuals go through an orientation session before starting their job. The mentorship is focused on three areas: academic, cultural, and individual. On the academic level, the peer mentors help students locate assistance from the different resources available on campus such as tutors, the student success center, library resources, and others. On the cultural level, peer mentors plan and/or attend campus life

activities with their mentees that offer cultural exposure. On the individual level, student mentors encourage mentees to share their concerns during their transition and answer their questions that are within their capabilities and limits. The peer mentors are required to plan a total of four hours of weekly encounters with the students, provide weekly reports to the academic program coordinator (see Appendix D), and attend weekly meetings with the academic program coordinator. The Peer Mentor Program has been a valuable tool to help CAU-OSU students with the adaptation process in a quick and effective manner. On the other hand, the relationship between the mentor and the mentees creates an opportunity for the mentors to develop leadership skills through practicing reliability, responsibility, and maturity in different situations.

Phase III: Connection. The focus of Phase III is to get students prepared for their future and stay in touch with OSU as alumni after they graduate. As a cultural characteristic and with our experience with CAU-OSU students, we realize that they plan their next endeavors ahead of time. Based on a survey that was conducted, most of the students expressed a desire to pursue graduate studies, and the remainder leaned towards starting a professional career. With that learned, the department delivers a Graduate School Information Session to give guidance to students on program applications, processes, and expectations, as well as to answer questions. Chinese students are provided with detailed information about the immigration regulations related to post-graduation employment. In this activity, the department collaborates with the Office of International Students and Scholars to provide special sessions on Optional Practical Training for F1 visa students and the SEVIS transfer process.

In this phase, various career-related educational activities are offered by the department and the respective offices on campus. Students are provided the opportunity to join departmental field trips to have direct conversations with employers and alumni in agricultural and related industries. The main goal of these activities is to expose students to career information and develop connections with potential employers and alumni, in addition to helping them remain connected with OSU after graduation.

Program Assessment

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the strategies to enhance Chinese students' integration process at OSU. With the first cohort of Chinese students graduating in May 2017, the study has only received preliminary information on students' satisfaction and feedback. Therefore, the assessment information discussed in this research is drawn from the program mid-term self-review conducted in 2015 and exit interview of graduating cohort conducted in spring 2017 semester.

Eighty percent of the first cohort of this program, graduating in May 2017, were admitted to graduate schools in prestigious universities in the United States, Japan, and Australia. Of the 22 students in the cohort that graduated from OSU, 95.5 % rated the overall experience as very good and 4.5% rated as somehow good (see Appendix E). In terms of their academic experience, 86.4% rated their academic experience as very good overall and only 13.6% rated as struggling sometimes. The exit interview also specifically evaluated the mentor program offered by the

department. Ninety and nine-tenths percent (90.9%) of the students considered peer mentor program as very useful and 9.1% considered it as somewhat useful. This information is very important for us as we consider the role the peer mentor program played in their integration process. Students were also asked about their perception of their cultural experience at OSU. Students were asked to rate their cultural experience at OSU. For 72.7% the cultural experience was rewarding, while 27.3% of respondents believe their cultural experience was limited.

The self-study assessment survey conducted by CAU side unveils that students found the program a good platform that offers a wide range of options for future career and academic development. Students found the curriculum design is effective for them to develop a comprehensive and solid knowledge in their major while allowing their choices for either options. Program students enjoyed personalized faculty advisory system and felt that they could visit their academic advisor to discuss their questions in learning and life, and discuss the opportunities for personal development.

In the fall of 2016, the second cohort of 32 students arrived in Stillwater and in the fall of 2017, the third cohort of 43 students transferred to OSU. Historically, the department of Agricultural Economics at OSU had few international students for its undergraduate program. The CAU-OSU joint program has increased diversity and internationalization of the undergraduate student population of the department.

With the partnership between OSU and CAU, the department of Agricultural Economics also offers study abroad programs to China for the first time after the joint degree program launched. The faculty-led study abroad program foster mutual cultural exposure and learning between Chinese and American students. The university level reciprocal exchange program and the departmental short-term faculty-lead study abroad program not only enhance the partnership between OSU and CAU, but also create peer relationships between Chinese and domestic students. American students have a better understanding and appreciation of the cultural differences after attending study abroad program and are more inclined to help Chinese students when they come to OSU.

Discussions and Implications

The unique structure of the international joint degree program allows the institutions to provide more focused services and programs to support international students. The supporting structure also allows the institution to continue serving future students well. The approaches, such as the frequent visits of the OSU faculty and staff and the special tailored orientation programs held by the Department of Agricultural Economics, are effective ways to engage international students. The efforts of the two institutions on the logistical level are crucial to ensure a smooth transition of students from CAU to OSU. The social integration is fostered as early as their first arrival week in Stillwater. The special arrangements of peer interaction programs and mentor programs creates a welcoming environment for Chinese students to be socially engaged. The faculty advisement structure provides efficient and focused academic

support for Chinese students. It also builds another layer of faculty interaction outside of the classroom, which could promote students' social integration.

This study described and presented the three-phase approaches aiming to ease students' transition and engage students academically and socially. The strong connections built among peer students and with faculty fostered a sense of security and belonging. This feeling of connection is particularly important to Chinese students as Chinese culture places emphasis on a sense of community.

As stated in the research design section, this study utilizes the case study approach to understand the approaches of supporting a group of Chinese undergraduate students enrolled in a joint degree program. The study is limited by the choice of the objective, the boundaries associated with the setting. There are other issues associated with the international joint degree program, such as student learning outcomes or internationalized curriculum; however, they fall outside of the scope of this study. The campus location and setting provide a significant contextual factor for the college experience and campus culture. Thus, the findings of this study should be interpreted carefully within such a context. It may not apply beyond the research setting of the study, but they can be a reference for similar or further studies.

The existing limited exit interview and survey data reflects students' perspective on their academic and cultural experience, yet no available data to evaluate the effectiveness of each approach. The existing exit interview among all graduating students, which include both domestic and Chinese students, did not have specific questions regarding their interactions or the benefits of having such international joint degree program in the department.

Although the current study provided a detailed description of the supporting program focusing on enhancing Chinese students academic, social and personal growth, further research is needed to explore the impact of the joint degree program on domestic students and the campus internationalization process. This study extends a growing body of research focused on establishing international partnership and delivering joint degree programs. However, further research is needed to develop a deeper understanding and the knowledge of the growing Chinese student population on American college campuses. Researchers need to continue to explore and advance our understanding of best strategies to support this group of student population as well as strategies to develop effective international partnership and international programs.

This case study has significant implications for American institutions. While not every American institution has international joint degree programs in place, many institutions have a high enrollment of Chinese undergraduate students. The approach discussed in the case study identifies Chinese students' needs and addresses their concerns through three phases. This case study provides insights and suggestions for university administrators and faculty and student affairs professionals in creating a supportive and welcoming campus environment for Chinese undergraduate students.

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Appendix A

Weekly Journal 'A Week at OSU'

University Dining Services held a series of activities for healthy dining, "Choose Orange", this week. Information tables were set up to provide resources and information on the campus wide "Choose Orange" healthy options food labeling program. Nearly every dining location has healthy food choices labeled by an orange sign on the menu. Baked potatoes, pan-seared salmon, and vegetables are popular options.



Valentine's Day was on Tuesday and Oklahoma State University held the "Orange Crush: Share your OSU love story" contest this week. Many people shared their stories about how they met each other while at OSU, fell in love, got engaged, and made many lasting memories. Some campus dining spots, such as Red Earth Kitchen in the Student Union, made Valentine's Day meals: Pan-Seared Salmon, Chipotle Mash, Asparagus, & Chocolate-Dipped Cheesecake with Chocolate Strawberries. Valentine's Day is not only for couples. Whether you are a couple, best friends, or family, you can celebrate Valentine's Day with loved ones.

Appendix B
Welcome Week Itinerary
CAU-OSU Students Welcome Week Itinerary

Date: Sunday, August 7
Event: China Program Orientation and Processing Immigration Documents
Time: 9:00am
Location: Student Union, Room 416
Arranged by: The Office of International Students and Scholars
Attendance: Mandatory

Date: Monday, August 8
Event: TB Test, Issue Student ID, Open Bank Account, and Purchase Cell Phone
Time: 9:00am
Location: Meet in the Student Union, Room 250
Arranged by: The Office of International Students and Scholars
Attendance: Mandatory

Date: Tuesday, August 9
Event: Departmental Orientation Session (Part 1)
Time: 8:20am – 3:00pm
Location: Ag Hall, Room 201
Arranged by: The Department of Agricultural Economics
Attendance: Mandatory

Date: Wednesday, August 10
Event: Collect I-20
Time: 8:00am – 9:00am
Location: Student Union, Room 336
Arranged by: The Office of International Students & Scholars
Attendance: Mandatory

Date: Wednesday, August 10
Event: New International Undergraduate Student Orientation
Time: 9:00am – 3:00pm
Location: Student Union, Room 203 (SU Theater)
Arranged by: The Office of International Students & Scholars
Attendance: Mandatory

Date: Thursday, August 11
Event: Departmental Orientation Session (Part 2)
Time: 9:00am – 3:00pm
Location: Ag Hall, Room 201

Arranged by: The Department of Agricultural Economics
Attendance: Mandatory

Date: Friday, August 12
Event: CASNR New Student Welcome
Time: 12:30pm – 1:45pm
Location: Wes Watkins Center
Arranged by: CASNR (College of Agricultural Sciences & Natural Resources)
Attendance: Mandatory

Date: Friday, August 12
Event: Convocation
Time: 2:00pm – 3:00pm
Location: Gallagher Iba Arena
Arranged by: The Office of New Student Orientation & Enrollment
Attendance: Mandatory

Date: Saturday, August 13
Event: Student Success Center Open House
Time: 12:00pm – 3:00pm
Location: Ag Hall, Room 103
Arranged by: The Student Success Center
Attendance: Optional

Appendix C Orientation Agenda

Agricultural Economics Department Orientation CAU-OSU Students Tuesday, August 9, 2016 Ag Hall, Room 201

- **8:20-8:30am** **Student Check-in, Ag Hall Room 201**

- **8:30-9:00am** **Continental Breakfast**

- **9:00-9:05am** **Welcome Students and Open the Session**
Arakssi Arshakian – Academic Program Coordinator

- **9:05-9:20am** **Overview of the Week’s Schedule and Agenda**
Arakssi Arshakian – Academic Program Coordinator

- **9:20-9:45am** **Health Center and Related Resources**
Jack Henneha – Assistant Director, University Health Services
Cali Martin – Benefits Representative, Human Resources
Topics: 1- Services and resources (including birth control related services and STDs)
2- How to check in
3- Immunization
4- Health Insurance and how to file a claim

- **9:45-10:15am** **CASNR Student Success Center**
Amy Gazaway – Student Success Coordinator
Topics: 1- Services the center provides
2- How to acquire those services
3- Additional university resources

- **10:15-10:30am** **Welcome Students**
Dr. Thomas Coon – Vice President, Dean, and Director of DASNR

- **10:30-10:45am** **Break and Refreshments**

- **10:45am** **Cross Cultural Topics**
- **10:45-11:10am** A) Four Dimensions of Culture
Arakssi Arshakian – Academic Program Coordinator
Topics: 1- Individualistic vs Collectivist
2- Masculinity vs Femininity
3- Power Distance
4- Uncertainty Avoidance
5- Questions and Answers

- **11:10-11:30am** B) Federal Holidays and other celebrations observed in the United States
Dr. Brian Adam – Professor

- **11:30-12:00pm** C) Gestures, Customs, and Cultural Differences between the U.S and
China presented in acting exercise

Topics:

- 1- Handshaking
- 2- Eye contact
- 3- Punctuality
- 4- Periods of silence in social situations
- 5- Informality of interaction
- 6- Queues/line
- 7- Personal space
- 8- The use of “Excuse me”, “Pardon me”, “Please”, and “Thank you” in the American conversation

- **12:00-1:15pm** **lunch Break (on your own)**

- **12:15pm** **Start heading back to Ag Hall, Computer Lab/Room 266**

- **1:30-3:00pm** **Online Resources**
Arakssi Arshakian – Academic Program Coordinator

Topics:

- 1- Banner for course enrollment
- 2- D2L (Desire to Learn)
- 3- O-Key Account Services
- 4- Library Resources
- 5- Academic Calendar

Agricultural Economics Department Orientation
CAU-OSU Students
Thursday, August 11, 2016
Ag Hall, Room 201

- **9:00-10:00am** **Classroom Courtesy**
Dr. John Michael Riley – Assistant Professor

Topics:

- 1- Class attendance and report of absence
- 2- Being on time
- 3- Leaving early while the class is still going
- 4- Syllabus (mark dates for exams, turn in assignments, etc. as professors may not remind students of those dates).
- 5- Asking questions during class
- 6- Taping a lecture
- 7- Cell phone in classrooms

- 8- Assignments (both individual and group)
- 9- Short tests and quizzes
- 10- Addressing a professor
- 11- Making an appointment with a professor
- 12- Communicating with a professor through email and/or phone

- **10:00-10:15am** **Break and Refreshments**

- **10:15-11:30am** **Academic Integrity**
Dr. Tracy Boyer – Associate Professor
Topics: 1- Definition of academic integrity in the U.S system
2- Examples of violation of academic integrity
3- Citations

- **11:40am** **Head to the Wes Watkins Center**
- **12:00-1:15pm** **Lunch with Faculty at the Wes Watkins Center, Room 209**
Dr. Clary – Associate Dean of CASNR to welcome students

- **1:15pm** **Start heading back to Ag Hall, Room 201**

- **1:30-1:45pm** **Aggie-X Club**
Jaclyn Shirley – Aggie-X President
Topics: 1- What is Aggie-X club
2- Activities run by the club
3- How can students be members of the Aggie-X Club

- **1:45-2:15pm** **Overview of the Department of Agricultural Economics**
Dr. Mike Woods – Professor and Department Head

- **2:15-2:30pm** **Q & A with Domestic Students and CAU-OSU Previous Cohort Students**
Students of Agricultural Economics

- **2:30pm** **Tour Around the Campus**
Students of Agricultural Economics
Ag Hall
1- CASNR Student Success Center
2- Ag Econ department head office
3- Computer lab, Room 313
4- Ag Econ Student Center
5- Advisors' offices
6- Lounge, Room 419

- **Other Places on Campus**
1- Colvin Center
2- Health Center

3- IBA Hall

4- Library

5- Student Union including

- Dining facilities
- OSU Book Store
- Postal Services
- Bursar Office
- Student Union Theater
- Student Union Ballroom
- Writing Center, Room 440

Appendix D

Peer Mentor Weekly Report

Weekly Report

Peer Mentor Name:

Date:

1- Activity/Event Report

- What:
- When:
- Who (write down the names of CAU-OSU students who attended, along with any domestic/international students that joined the activity/event):
- Where:
- Duration:

2- Event/Activity Evaluation:

- What did students learn?
- Do you recommend this activity in the future?
- What areas would you improve/add in the activity that would be helpful to our students?
- Any additional notes, concerns, etc.?

3- Provide general developmental feedback on the mentees:

Appendix E
Spring 2017 CAU-OSU Students' Exit Interview Results

Table 1. Overall, how do you rate your experience as CAU-OSU Joint Degree Program Student?

	Frequency	Percentage
Very Good	21	95.5%
Somewhat Good	1	4.5%
Not Good	0	0%

Table 2. How do you rate your Academic Experience?

	Frequency	Percentage
Good Overall	19	86.4%
Struggling Some	3	13.6%

Table 3. How do you rate your Cultural Experience at OSU?

	Frequency	Percentage
Rewarding	16	72.7%
Didn't get much out of it	6	27.3%

Table 4. How do you rate The Peer Mentor Program?

	Frequency	Percentage
Useful	20	90.9%
Somewhat Useful	2	9.1%
Not Useful	0	0%

Table 5. What is your next endeavor?

	Frequency	Percentage
Graduate School	19	86.4%
Seek Employment	3	13.6%

About the Authors

Arakssi Arshakian works at Oklahoma State University where she serves as Academic Program Coordinator in the Department of Agricultural Economics. Arakssi's academic, professional, and personal backgrounds provide strong support to the three-phase approach model adopted by the Department of Agricultural Economics. Arakssi is of Armenian descent, born and raised in Baghdad-Iraq. She received her Bachelor's degree in English from the University of Baghdad and a Master's degree in International Studies from Oklahoma State University. Professionally, Arakssi has eleven years of work experience in the international spectrum. For more information about the CAU-OSU Joint Degree Program, contact Arakssi Arshakian at arakssi@okstate.edu.

Dr. Vivian Wang serves as Manager of China Programs and Development at Oklahoma State University. Dr. Wang is responsible for the university's program development with China. She is the point of contact for multiple Chinese partner universities, facilitates understanding and collaborations between OSU departments and Chinese partners. Dr. Wang works closely with OSU current Chinese students and provides advisement for their success at OSU. Dr. Vivian Wang completed her bachelors of Arts degree in English Education at Shanghai Normal University and Masters of Science and Ph.D. in Educational leadership at Oklahoma State University. Contact: Vivian.wang@okstate.edu.

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An Assessment of Learning Outcomes in Short-Term Study Abroad and Human Rights Education

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Abstract

How does short-term study abroad affect students' attitudes toward human rights? What role does study abroad play in human rights education? This study assesses the learning outcomes of two study abroad programs that aimed to promote human rights education. I applied a mixed methods approach to measure the changes in the opinions of students who completed my courses in two countries with poor human rights scores: The Gambia and Vietnam. I expected that The Gambia course would push the students toward ethnocentrism, and the Vietnam course would push the students toward ethnorelativism, but I was wrong about the impact of both courses. Intergroup contact theory provides the best theoretical framework for explaining these unexpected learning outcomes. My findings suggest that we need to question the compatibility between human rights education and study abroad in terms of learning objectives.

Keywords: short-term study abroad; human rights education; intergroup contact theory

Since 2000, I have taken over 300 students on short-term study abroad courses to Germany, The Gambia, and Vietnam. Human rights education was a component of each of these courses, but I understood assessment merely as assigning grades based on the students' understanding of the various aspects of human rights that we covered in class. Recently, however, I have learned that most international education administrators view assessment as something much broader. Rather than simply grading the students' work, I saw, I needed also to assess the impact of my study abroad courses on the students' attitudes. Did the students become better "global citizens"? Did their "openness to diversity" increase? While these abstractions are valuable questions to ask, they're difficult if not impossible to assess as written; rather than attempting to assess such abstract concepts, I decided to adapt the administrators' approach to my pedagogy. As a result, the more measurable question at the center of this assessment project is: How did my short-term study abroad courses affect the students' views on human rights?¹

Over the past three years, I gathered data from three short-term study abroad courses in The Gambia (West Africa) and one in Vietnam. I focused on changes in the students' intercultural sensitivity. Did they become more ethnocentric or ethnorelativist? Bennett defines ethnocentrism as "assuming that the worldview of one's own culture is central to all reality" (Bennett, 30). He defines ethnorelativism as "the assumption that cultures can only be understood relative to one another and that particular behavior can only be understood within a

cultural context. There is no absolute standard of ‘goodness’ that can be applied to cultural behavior” (Bennett, 46). My aim in this study was to assess whether or not these courses caused my students to adopt a more ethnocentric or a more ethnorelativist view on human rights. In other words, after completing the course, did the students’ beliefs shift in the direction of supporting a Western conception of human rights that defines individual rights as inalienable (i.e. toward ethnocentrism), or did they show greater sympathy for a collectivist approach to human rights that places the interests of the collective over the interests of particular individuals (i.e. toward ethnorelativism)?

I tested three hypotheses that reflected my personal expectations for this study: a) The students in the Vietnam course would shift toward a more ethnorelativist view on human rights; b) The students in The Gambia courses would shift toward a more ethnocentric view on human rights; c) The students who did not take either study abroad course (the control group) would show less attitude change than the students in the Vietnam and The Gambia courses. After a brief review of some relevant scholarly work, I will explain why I entered this study with these expectations.

Scholarship on Study Abroad and Human Rights Education

International education administrators dominate the literature on study abroad assessment. This means that most of the assessment research focuses on the degree to which studying abroad changes the way students view themselves and the global community. Relatively little work has been done on the links between study abroad and attitudes toward human rights. Woolf summarized this paradox: “The topic of human rights is ostensibly ideally suited to the several agendas of study abroad. In practice, however, this area of potential investigation receives muted attention” (Woolf, 20).

The most common approach to study abroad assessment has been to ask students if they thought that the international experience changed them. One example of this approach is Hadis’s (2005) interesting study of the academic benefits of study abroad. As part of the survey, he asked returning students to respond to two statements: 1) “The experience of studying abroad has deepened my interest in world affairs.” 2) “The experience of studying abroad has made me more open to new ideas.” Ninety percent of the students were “in agreement” or “very much in agreement” with both statements (pp. 61, 62). His research supports the findings of most of the literature, namely, that study abroad promotes “global-mindedness” and “open-mindedness.”

Carlson and Widaman (1988) also used a retrospective analysis, but they focused more on changes in the levels of international political concern and cultural cosmopolitanism. They surveyed students who had studied abroad and students who had not, and found that the study abroad experience, relative to the comparison group, made students both more sympathetic toward *and* more critical of the United States.

Greene (2005) provides a rare dissenting conclusion. She surveyed students who had studied abroad and who had not and found no significant differences between the groups regarding “sensitivity to human rights, expression of empathy, or level of cultural competence”

(p.42).

Several studies have moved beyond testing whether or not study abroad improves “global-mindedness” and instead examine the factors that make certain international experiences more effective than others in changing students’ attitudes. Kehl and Morris (2007) show that a full semester abroad results in higher global mindedness scores than does a short-term program (short-term is defined as less than eight weeks). Chieffo and Griffiths (2004) do not refute this argument, but after surveying over 2,300 students, they conclude that short-term programs, nevertheless, “are worthwhile educational endeavors that have significant self-perceived impacts on students’ intellectual and personal lives” (174).

Of greatest interest to me is the literature that focuses on the factors that explain the differences in learning outcomes across different short-term programs. Jones et al (2012) compare four programs and conclude that the structure of the courses, in terms of the degree of cultural immersion, explains much of the variance in transformative learning outcomes. DeGraaf et al (2013) demonstrate an important link between the location of a study abroad experience and the long-term personal impact of the program on the students. Likewise, Tarrant et al (2014) emphasize the importance of the study abroad location for fostering global-mindedness, but they also assess the role of the pedagogy prior to and during the short-term trip. This conclusion caught my eye: “We have demonstrated that study abroad alone is not optimal for nurturing a global citizenry, but it has the potential to do so when the academic content and pedagogical delivery is offered in a synergistic fashion” (p.155). It was my aim in each study abroad course I led to create this type of synergy.

Human rights education is central to all of my courses. One of the most troublesome aspects of human rights education is that there is no agreement in the field on how to define the core concepts of the discipline (Flowers, 2004). For example, I am puzzled that the field does not devote more attention to the inherent tension between, on the one hand, the widespread support for cultural relativism and multiculturalism as positive learning outcomes, and, on the other hand, the widespread belief that every individual deserves to be treated with dignity. For example, do we want students to avoid judging (and condemning) cultural practices that are harmful to women (according to our Western standards)? If you believe that all women deserve to be treated a certain way, how can you respect a culture that denigrates women? As a human rights educator, what is my desired learning outcome? Should I seek to instill a stronger belief in principles that place “universal” individual rights above cultural norms (i.e. ethnocentrism)? Or should I promote the belief that respect for culture is more important than protecting individual rights (i.e. ethnorelativism)?

In my view, this problem in the field of human rights education requires us to examine the links between education and activism. Do we want students to stand up for rights around the world? If yes, how do we define rights? Do we want students to become cultural imperialists (i.e. advocating an agenda of individual rights over cultural tolerance)? Or do we want them to respect political systems that use cultural differences as an excuse to violate individual rights? Reilly and Sanders (2009) criticize the pervasiveness of “buzzwords” such as “global

competency.” They assert: “We can no longer afford to allow study abroad to be reduced to such catch phrases... We argue [instead] that study abroad should deliberately position itself as an activist force in the service of global survival” (pp. 241, 262).

Blaney’s (2002) essay on global education, disempowerment, and the limits of human agency is the most interesting piece I encountered in my review of hundreds of articles in the field of international education because he aims to “locate a balance between empowering our students while cultivating a sense of humility in the face of a complex world, a willingness to live with ambiguity, and an ethos of political self-restraint when in an advantaged position” (p.268). He argues, “if global education aims to cultivate in our students a responsible sense of agency, it should also involve disempowering them in important respects” (p.274). In many ways, this approach to international education has shaped my own pedagogy. As I describe in the next section, I did not aim to push students toward ethnocentrism or ethnorelativism. My approach to human rights education has, instead, been to make them understand how difficult it is to adopt either view.

My Study Abroad Courses

The structure and location of the study abroad courses are key factors in explaining the disparity between my expected results and the actual results. Therefore, it is important that I provide a proper description of each course, and an explanation of the similarities and differences between Gambia and Vietnam.

“Senegambia” was a two-part course. I met with the students every week throughout the semester prior to our travel to The Gambia. In this pre-trip part of the course, we examined Gambian history, contemporary politics, and economics. We examined the performance of Gambian government and the country’s traditional gender roles through the lens of ethnocentric/ethnorelativist debates. At the end of the spring semester, we spent three weeks in Gambia.

Some of the “Course Goals” for The Gambia course were that the students would be able to provide an intelligent answer to several questions. Here are four of the questions (taken from the course syllabus):

- Should we praise or condemn President Jammeh’s performance as president?
- Can/should we use our “democratic values” as the standard for judging President Jammeh?
- Is it a sign of tolerance or condescension if we respect a government that has a poor human rights record?
- Can/should we tell a Gambian woman that she is wrong when she defends cultural practices that are (by our cultural standard) abusive to women?

“Vietnam: Imperialism, Communism, Globalism” was a three-part course. In the fall semester, we met every week to study the history and contemporary politics and economics of Vietnam. During the winter break, we traveled to Vietnam for three weeks. In the spring semester, we met every week, and the students gave post-trip reflective presentations.

Two of the “Learning Outcomes” for this course were that the students would be able to formulate intelligent answers to these questions (taken from the syllabus):

- Were the Doi Moi economic reforms successful? How do we define “successful”?
- Is the Vietnamese government justified in suppressing individual human rights for the purpose of promoting economic development?

“Introduction to International Politics” (my control group) is a one-semester course that I teach every semester on campus to undergraduates representing many different majors. This course does not include an off-campus component.

In each course, I repeatedly required the students to address various aspects of human rights, such as liberalism, women’s rights, the right to development, communalism, ethnocentrism, and ethnorelativism. In The Gambia and Vietnam courses, I made an effort to create a pedagogical “synergy” between the pre-trip course and the concepts we engaged with during each trip (see Tarrant et al). One way of doing this was by conducting many “debriefing sessions” during our time in The Gambia and Vietnam to discuss and debate the students’ daily observations and experiences.

Comparing The Gambia and Vietnam

The differences between these two countries led me to assume, first, that The Gambia course would push the students toward ethnocentrism, and second, that the Vietnam course would push the students toward ethnorelativism. To understand why I expected these outcomes, and to understand my conclusions concerning short-term study abroad, it is important to provide a clear description of the political and economic situation in The Gambia and Vietnam. I derived this summary from the readings that I assigned the students in the two courses.

Gambian President Jammeh (who fled The Gambia seven months after my most recent Gambian study abroad program) gained international attention for his disturbing public statements and behavior. Since seizing power in 1994, he issued a steady stream of public threats against homosexuals, most famously in front of the UN General Assembly. He bragged about his ability to cure AIDS and TB with secret potions. He shut down numerous newspapers and radio stations. He killed journalists who challenged him. He tortured and killed opponents he suspected of being witches (Human Rights Watch).

The Vietnamese government has not acted so outrageously, but their disregard for human rights has been similar to that of Jammeh’s government. In 2016, the CATO Human Freedom Index ranked The Gambia as the 125th worst and Vietnam as the 128th worst out of the 159 countries included in an extensive comparative study (CATO). In the same year, the Economist Democracy Index ranked The Gambia at 143 and Vietnam at 128 out of the 167 countries included in its study (Economist Democracy Index).

Vietnam has a much stronger record than The Gambia in the realm of women’s rights. The World Economic Forum ranked Vietnam at 65 and The Gambia at 104 (out of 144 countries) in gender equity (Global Gender Gap Report). One of the best indicators of the status

of women in any country is the fertility rate (births per woman). The Gambian fertility rate in 1960 was 5.6 per woman over a lifetime. This had risen to 5.7 by 2015. In stark contrast, Vietnam went from 6.3 in 1960 to 2.0 in 2015 (Fertility Rates). Polygyny and female circumcision are not practiced in Vietnam. In 2015, the UN estimated that 75% of Gambian women had been circumcised (Statistical Profile of Female Genital Mutilation). According to the Gambian government, “about one-half of Gambian women and more than one-third of Gambian men were involved in polygynous marriages” (Republic of Gambia Population Data Bank).

The contrast between Vietnam and The Gambia in economic development has been even greater than in women’s rights. The Gambia’s per capita GDP in 1990 was \$350 (in current value). By 2016, it had risen only to \$473. Vietnam’s per capita GDP in 1990 was \$98; in 2016, it was \$2185 (GDP Per Capita). While The Gambia remains one of the least developed countries in the world, Vietnam is commonly referred to as an “economic success story” (Davis).

Finally, there was a stark contrast between the rhetoric of Gambian and Vietnamese governments concerning globalization and the role of the USA in international relations. Jammeh repeatedly denounced Great Britain and the USA as agents of neo-colonialism, and sought to promote Gambian isolationism by, for example, taking The Gambia out of the British Commonwealth and promising to reject English as The Gambia’s official language. By contrast, Vietnam has sought ever-closer ties with the USA and has shown the highest support for globalization in the world (Phillips).

In summary, both countries have poor human rights records, but Vietnam has achieved far more progress in advancing the status of women and in promoting economic development, while The Gambia has managed little economic growth and it remains one of the worst countries in any ranking in terms of gender equity. The Vietnamese government views the USA as a friend, while President Jammeh attacked the USA and globalization at every opportunity.

I expected that the students who traveled to The Gambia would see ethno relativism, in the case of President Jammeh, as primarily an excuse to oppress. Jammeh repeatedly claimed that economic development was a higher priority than Western conceptions of individual rights. I assumed that when the students saw that Jammeh had done very little to promote economic development, and little to promote the status of women, their cynicism would push them toward an ethnocentric view of human rights.

I expected that the students who traveled to Vietnam would shift in the opposite direction. After seeing the remarkable rate of economic development and the impressive improvement in the status of women, I assumed that the students would gain respect for the argument that socio-economic development is a higher priority than defending individual rights.

Methodology

I gave the same pre- and post-trip survey to the 20 students in my summer 2016 Gambia course, to the 17 students on my winter 2016/2017 Vietnam course, and to the 48 students in the control group (two sections of my Introduction to International Politics course). I gave the initial survey to the students in the first class of each pre-trip, semester course. I gave the final survey

three weeks after the students had returned to campus from The Gambia/Vietnam. The control group took the survey on the first and last days of each semester (fall 2016 and spring 2017).

I limited the survey to eight questions because in my previous attempt to gather survey data from the students in my Gambia course (in 2015) only three students completed the 35-question post-trip survey. For the current analysis, therefore, I decided to make the survey far more succinct. The brevity of the survey, plus much encouragement from me, resulted in *all* the students on both study abroad programs completing the pre- and post-surveys.

In addition to the survey, I assigned a five-page paper after the students had returned from The Gambia and Vietnam. The paper topic was the same for both courses: “Is The Gambia/Vietnam an example of ‘good governance’?” I made the prompt ambiguous so that the students would have to choose their own standard for defining and assessing “good governance.” Would they apply an ethnocentric standard, or an ethnorelativist standard? I assigned this paper to the students in my three most recent Gambia courses (55 total students) and to the students in my Vietnam course (due to the structure of this course, only 12 of these students wrote the paper). I did not assign this paper to the control group because we did not cover The Gambia or Vietnam in my Introduction to International Politics course.

Analyzing the Survey Data

For my survey data, I created a scale of ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism as a way to measure changes (or lack of change) in each student’s outlook on human rights. This also allowed me to compare the aggregate changes between the students in The Gambia and Vietnam courses and in the control group. I did not conduct tests of statistical significance for my survey data, since such tests are inappropriate and unnecessary when the sample and the population are the same (Cowger).

Each of the survey questions (see Appendix) was followed by a five-point Likert response set as follows: strongly disagree (=1), disagree (=2), undecided/neutral (=3), agree (=4), strongly agree (=5). For each survey question for each student, I calculated a change score by subtracting the pre-test score from the post-test score. For example, a respondent who answered “agree” (4) to Question 1 on the initial survey and then answered, “strongly agree” (5) to the same question on the post-trip survey, received a change score value of 1 for this question. I coded the answers for each question such that a positive change score indicated a shift toward universalism, while a negative change score indicated a shift toward relativism. A change score of 0 meant no change. Next, I created a variable called *Overall change score*. I created this variable by summing each respondent’s eight individual survey question change scores. Values on this variable ranged from -11 to 12. Again, on this scale, smaller numbers mean a shift toward relativism, while larger numbers mean a shift toward universalism.

I compared the two study abroad groups by conducting a simple comparison of means. The mean on *Overall change score* was .647 (s.d.= 4.15) for the Vietnam group, -1.1 (s.d.= 5.57) for the Gambia group, and .895 (s.d. = 3.2) for the control group. This is not a huge difference, but it does show that on average, students in the Vietnam course and in the control group moved

toward universalism, while students in The Gambia course moved away from universalism and toward relativism.

For my next analysis, I put each student into one of three groups based on his/her overall change score: 1) Shift toward relativism; 2) No shift; or 3) Shift toward universalism. Students with a negative value on *Overall change score* were placed in group 1, while students with a positive value on *Overall change score* were placed in group 3. Students who scored zero on *Overall change score* were placed in group 2. The results of this analysis are in Table 1. While 60% of the students in Gambia course moved toward ethnorelativism, only 35% of the students in the Vietnam course, and 42% of the control group did so. Table 1 also shows that while 47% of the students in the Vietnam course shifted toward universalism, only 35% of the students in the Gambia group did so. Perhaps even more telling, Table 1 shows that while a full 65% of the students in the Vietnam course either moved toward universalism or did not shift, only 40% of the students in The Gambia group either stayed put or shifted toward universalism.

Table 1
Comparison of Relativism – Universalism dimension

<u>Shift</u>	Vietnam (N=17)	Gambia (N=20)	Control (N=48)
(1) Shift toward Relativism	35%	60%	42%
(2) No Shift	18%	5%	8%
(3) Shift toward Universalism	47%	35%	50%

The survey data contradict my expectations in three marked ways. First, the majority of the students in Gambia course became more ethnorelativist. Second, only 35% of the students in the Vietnam course became more ethnorelativist. Third, the students in the control group showed more change than did the students in the Vietnam course.

Analyzing the Open-Ended Essays

The open-ended, five-page essays revealed an interesting divergence between the students in the Vietnam course, on the one hand, and the students in the Gambia course, on the other hand. As shown in Table 2, out of the twelve students who submitted an essay after the Vietnam course, ten concluded that the Vietnamese government was not an example of good governance. These ten students used an ethnocentric standard to reach this conclusion. They all referred to the lack of individual rights, such as restrictions on freedom of speech, as their measure of good governance. Two of the students used an ethnorelativist standard of good governance, arguing that economic development was more important than individual rights in Vietnam. These two students argued that Vietnam’s economic success is an example of good governance.

By contrast, 29 of the 55 students in the three Gambia courses concluded that President Jammeh’s government was an example of good governance, while 26 reached the opposite

conclusion. The most interesting aspect of the Gambia essays was that 40 of the students applied an ethnorelativist standard of good governance, and only 15 used an ethnocentric standard (Table 3). Even though The Gambia, unlike Vietnam, has a poor record of socio-economic development, 73% of the students in the Gambia course were willing to overlook the violation of individual rights as the primary measure of the performance of the Gambian government. As noted above, only two out of 12 students in the Vietnam course adopted this ethnorelativist perspective.

Table 2
Is Vietnam/Gambia an Example of Good Governance?

	Positive view of government	Negative view of government
Gambia Courses (2014, 2015, 2016)	29 students	26 students
Vietnam Course (2017)	2 students	10 students

Table 3
How did the students assess the performance of the Vietnam/Gambian governments?

	Ethnorelativist Standards	Ethnocentric Standards
Gambia Courses (2014, 2015, 2016)	40 students	15 students
Vietnam Course (2017)	2 students	10 students

Like the survey data, the findings from the students' essays refute my hypotheses. Considering the stark socio-economic differences between The Gambia and Vietnam, these results seem to be irrational. A closer examination of the students' essays helps us to understand why more than half of the students in the Gambia course defended an ethnorelativist view of good governance, while most of the students in the Vietnam course defended ethnocentrism.

The most common theme in the essays from the Vietnam course is that the Vietnamese were afraid to talk openly about political topics. Another interesting aspect of the Vietnam essays is that the students rarely mentioned their personal interactions with Vietnamese. They frequently referred to our meetings with Vietnamese government officials. A few of the essays described conversations with a group of Vietnamese students who joined my students in a scavenger hunt in Hanoi. Here are some examples from the students' essays of how their interactions shaped their views of Vietnam:

“On the trip, there were several times when I noticed Vietnamese afraid to say something or to talk about a certain subject. One specific time that I noticed this was when our group met with the mayor of Da Nang.”

“I was continually struck by the reluctance of professionals to say anything that may be interpreted as criticism of the government.”

“The student I interacted with agreed with my argument that development comes before individual rights. He understood that the focus on economic policies over the establishment of human rights was a necessity for Vietnam to develop.”

Aside from the frequent references to our group meetings with state representatives, and the few mentions of political discussions with Vietnamese students during the Hanoi scavenger hunt, the essays resembled typical research papers in an upper level Political Science college course. In short, it was clear that the students’ personal interactions in Vietnam played a small role in shaping their responses to my prompt about defining and assessing good governance.

The essays from the Gambia course were much different in that most of the students drew from their extensive interpersonal relationships during the study abroad experience to define and assess good governance in The Gambia. The depth of the students’ immersion in Gambian culture is evident in their essays:

“It was the people of The Gambia that adjusted my harsh view of their ruler to one that is not as inconsiderate.”

“Who are we as outsiders to come in and declare that the people are wrong, and we know better than they about their own living state?”

“I was very shocked by how many of the individuals in the country were so upbeat and happy although the conditions that they were living in were nowhere up to par to that of the West. Overall, what changed my view of Jammeh was something simple. The people of The Gambia were always in good spirits. Everyone I encountered was happier than people in America. Perhaps The Gambia is so happy because of Jammeh, even if some of his practices may be unorthodox to the average American.”

“Looking from the outside, people might not see Jammeh as a good president, but you have to put yourself in the shoes of the people there. People should not judge Jammeh for how he acts, without going to The Gambia and spending time with the people to really see what is important to them. What is important for their country may not be the same as what is important for our country.”

“After many conversations, observations, and a more developed understanding of Gambian culture, I have a better idea of why President Jammeh rules the way he does. The people there seemed happy and content with their lives, and it took me visiting and experiencing the daily routine to realize why Gambians often do not fight for more freedoms; they are simply trying to get through the day, feed their families, and work to make money. My opinions have changed of him due to my experiences in Gambia.”

Explaining the Results

The surveys and essays show that my short-term study abroad programs produced outcomes that were the opposite of what I expected. I must reject all three of my hypotheses: 1) The students in the Vietnam course did *not* shift toward ethnorelativism; 2) The students in the Gambia course did *not* shift toward ethnocentrism; 3) The students who did not go on either trip (the control group) showed *more* change than the students in the Vietnam course (but *less* than the students in the Gambia course). I created my hypotheses on the assumption that one of the most impactful aspects of a study abroad program is the location of the program. I assumed that the contrast between Vietnam's impressive economic growth and Gambia's economic underdevelopment would be the primary factors in shaping the students' views on human rights. I learned, however, that the structure of the study abroad programs was the most influential factor.

There were significant differences between the levels of cultural immersion in my courses. My findings support Allport's intergroup contact theory, which asserts that prejudice and ethnocentrism can be broken down through contact between members of different groups (1954). For most of their time in The Gambia, the students stayed in a guesthouse located in a residential neighborhood. Four Gambians (my former students at the University of The Gambia) lived in the guesthouse with us. I gave my students in this study a lot of independence to explore the area on foot and by taxi. They developed friendships with Gambians on their own and through my numerous contacts in the country. I put the students in groups of three and placed them in homestays with Gambian families for three days and two nights in the capital region. When we traveled upriver to rural villages, I placed each of the students on their own with a Gambian family for two days and one night. Throughout our program, the students had constant, personal contact with Gambians. The fact that English is The Gambia's official language made it easy for the students to strike up conversations with anyone.

Unintentionally, I structured the Vietnam course in a way that made it much more difficult for the students to experience cultural immersion. For most of our time in Vietnam, we were travelling together by bus, train, boat and plane. Because I wanted the students to see as much as possible, we moved around the country rapidly. In Hanoi, where we stayed for almost half of our program, the students stayed in a Backpacker Hostel. This meant that most of their personal interactions (outside our group) were with other young people from Europe and Australia. In addition to these aspects of the program in Vietnam, the language barrier played a role in limiting the students' immersion in Vietnamese culture.

The results of my study support Wortman's assertion that students on fully integrated programs and students on programs in English language programs show more change in the direction of openness to diversity than students in non-integrated and in non-English programs (Wortman). Likewise, my study confirms Nam's findings from her comparison of short term study abroad programs. Namely, what matters most is the structure of a program. The key factor, she concludes, is the frequency and intensity of interactions with the inhabitants of the study abroad program (Nam). As a strong advocate of study abroad, I am troubled to realize that my

findings confirm Greene's argument that "the anticipated benefits of study abroad experience may need to be reconsidered to accurately reflect any real effects of studying abroad" (p.3).

Pettigrew (1998) builds upon Allport's contact theory in noting the significance of deprovincialization, generalization, and friendship for shaping views of ingroups and outgroups. Pettigrew describes the consequences of effective intergroup contact: "Ingroup norms and customs turn out not to be the only ways to manage the social world. This new perspective can reshape your view of your ingroup and lead to a less provincial view of ingroups in general ('deprovincialization')" (p. 72). Pettigrew affirms Allport's argument concerning the importance of intimate contact, as opposed to trivial contact: "The contact situation must provide the participants with the opportunity to become friends. Such opportunity implies close interaction that would make... friendship-developing mechanisms possible. It also implies the potential for extensive and repeated contact in a variety of social contexts" (p. 76).

Conclusions

My analysis indicates that the strongest factor in changing students' views on human rights was the structure of the study abroad program. The degree of immersion in the local culture had the strongest impact on students' views on human rights. This suggests that deeper cultural immersion produces increased respect among the students for an ethnorelativist understanding of human rights. This suggestion, however, raises another, potentially difficult question: Is this type of understanding a desired learning outcome? Could an intensely immersive study abroad program make students tolerant of *any* "cultural practice"?

This study has forced me to wrestle with some important questions. Did my study abroad program in Gambia promote openness to diversity, or did this program push the students toward cultural condescension? How do I reconcile my determination to promote openness to diversity with Zechenter's assertion that cultural relativism undermines efforts to protect individuals (Zechenter)? Woolf captured the paradox of linking study abroad to human rights education: "Cultural relativism, embedded in study abroad, contradicts the moral imperatives implicit in the idea of human rights that are, theoretically, universal, absolute and applicable across all political, national, and social structures" (Woolf, 29).

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Appendix
Survey Questions

Questions	SD	D	N	A	SA
Q1: “Culture and religion should never be used as an excuse to discriminate against women”					
Q2: “I cannot respect a government that does not allow freedom of speech”					
Q3: “The U.S. has a moral responsibility to condemn human rights violations in other countries”					
Q4: “The right to ‘freedom of speech’ is more important than the right to ‘economic development’”					
Q5: “It is hard for me to respect the opinion of someone who thinks that a dictator can be a good leader”					
Q6: “The U.S./Western standard of ‘inalienable’ human rights works well in the U.S. and Europe, but this standard should not be applied to societies/cultures that don’t yet understand the importance of individual freedom”					
Q7: “I cannot respect a culture that denies individual freedom in favor of the interests of the community”					
Q8: “The U.S. education system should focus more on promoting universal principles of gender equality and focus less on promoting respect for alternative, multicultural values concerning gender roles”					

About the Author

Dr. Emil Nagengast. Emil Nagengast is a Professor of Politics at Juniata College in Huntingdon, PA. He teaches courses on comparative politics and international relations, such as Human Rights, African Politics, and US Foreign Policy. He taught two semesters at the University of The Gambia. He serves on the International Education Committee at Juniata College.

¹ In the course of preparing this study, I discovered an interesting division between the way that course instructors, on the one hand, and international education administrators, on the other hand, approach the assessment of international education learning outcomes. I have experienced these contrasting perspectives several times at my college and at national conferences. In my opinion, administrators focus too much on nebulous concepts such as “global citizenship” that are not part of most professors’ learning objectives and that are difficult to assess; however, I accept that we professors must change how we assess learning outcomes. We cannot merely assign grades based on the students’ acquired knowledge of discipline-specific course content. We need to assess the impact of our courses on students’ attitudes concerning intercultural learning. This study is my attempt to bridge the gap between these two approaches to assessment.



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2. The submission file is in Microsoft Word document file format.
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3. Citations from an on-line source must cite the paragraph: (author, date, para. #).
4. Use *italics* when you want to emphasize concepts or words.
5. Use the *automatic* hyphenation function to keep the character and word spacing at a minimum. In Microsoft Word, users can automatically hyphenate documents by altering the options within the program. The location of the automatic hyphenation option varies depending on the version of Word you are using. In Microsoft Word versions 2007 and 2010, it is found by clicking on Page Layout, Page Setup box, hyphenation. In Microsoft Word 2003, it is located in the "Tools" menu under "Language." Automatic hyphenation is also available in earlier versions of Microsoft Word. Reference the Help menu in the program you're using if you need help with either automatic or manual hyphenation.

Phi (philomatheia) -love of knowledge

Beta (biotremmonia) -valuing of human life

Delta (diapheren) -achieving excellence

