THE IMPACT OF RESIDENCE HALL LEADERSHIP ON

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' CROSS-CULTURAL ADAPTATION

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A Dissertation

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By

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the

dissertation entitled

THE IMPACT OF RESIDENCE HALL LEADERSHIP ON
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS CROSS-CULTURAL ADAPTATION

presented by Gregory D. Murdock

a candidate for the degree of doctor of educational leadership and policy analysis,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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Dr. Ximena Uribe-Zarain

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Dr. T. C. Wall

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, who patiently supported me throughout this

long journey. Thank you SuSan, Jordan, Caleb, Nathan, Malachi, Keilah, Noah and

Padon. I am grateful for your encouragement of my pursuit of learning. *"Education is

simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another."* (G.K.

Chesterton)

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ABSTRACT

International students experience cross-cultural difficulties as they seek to adapt to U.S. campuses. Past research has indicated that residence halls can have both positive and negative impacts on students' educational experiences. Employing a qualitative phenomenological approach, this study explored the lived experiences of 13 international students and 20 residence hall leaders from three Midwestern colleges, exploring the impact that residence hall leaders have on the cross-cultural adaptation of international students. Results demonstrated that residence hall leaders can foster international students cross-cultural adaptation through providing useful information that helps the students to become familiar with and understand better the new environment. Residence hall leaders who provide meaningful personal conversation with international students can also contribute to their cross-cultural adaptation through conveying value and acceptance of the student into the residence hall community. Providing residence hall community activities that help build intercultural relationships, establish cultural support networks, and promote a sense of community foster such cross-cultural adaptation as well.

Keywords: international students, residence hall, cross-cultural adaptation, intercultural relationships.

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION TO DISSERTATION

One of the primary objectives of most, if not all, institutions of higher learning, is assisting students in the achievement of their educational goals. If students fail, it can result in high costs to both the institution and the student (Marthers, Herrup, & Steele, 2015). As many institutions struggle to maintain or grow revenue sources, keeping students enrolled and on track toward educational goals becomes a critically important issue. Recognition of the significance of this issue has resulted in a plethora of studies on student success over the last several decades (Millea, Willis, Elder & Molina, 2018) and has led to student retention becoming one of the most broadly and deeply studied subjects in higher education (Tinto, 2006). Research (e.g., Tinto, 1975, 1993, 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005; Astin, 1970, 1977, 1993) has indicated an interconnected relationship between academic and social components of a student's educational pursuits.

One population gathering more attention by United States (U.S.) higher education institutions, both in terms of acquiring and retaining students, is the international student population (Rabia, 2016; Andrade, 2007; Mamiseishvili, 2012; Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2018; Smith & Khawaja, 2011). For a number of reasons, U.S. colleges are attractive to many international students seeking a high-quality college level education (Gautam, Lowery, Mays & Durant, 2016). Despite this growing research interest, there is still considerable room for improvement in the study and understanding of international student's educational experience within the U.S. higher education system (Andrade, 2009; Mori, 2000).

There are a variety of contributions that international students potentially bring to U.S. institutions of higher learning (Gautam, Lowery, Mays & Durant, 2016). International students, with their wide range of diverse experiences, skills, and education,

provide a broad contribution to the overall knowledge capital in the university

environment (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). These students contribute by favorably impacting

both international and domestic economic relationships (Gautam, Lowery, Mays &

Durant, 2016; Hegarty, 2014). The Institute of International Education reported that there

were approximately 1,094,792 international students in the U.S. and those students

contributed roughly $42.4 billion to the U.S. economy (IIE, 2018). The financial

contribution international students currently provide, as well as the potential for growth,

make it a very attractive target population (Machin & Murphy, 2017; Shih, 2017).

Additional contributions can be found in the interactions international students

provide domestic students, exposing them to diverse backgrounds and cultural

experiences. These interactions provide domestic students with cultural and social

experiences that they would likely not otherwise be exposed to (Arkoudis, et al., 2013;

Kudo, Volet & Whitesed, 2018), and can aid in potentially changing perceptions about

people from other countries and cultures (Metro-Roland, 2018). Unfortunately, though

the potential for these interactions would seem to be high, the fact is they are much more

limited than would be expected (Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013; Rose-

Redwood, 2010). This surprisingly low degree of interaction should be a subject of

interest for most institutions of higher learning, as correcting it could potentially lead to

those benefits mentioned earlier. International students add to the creative and intellectual

progress of the U.S., as well as strengthen relationships between the U.S. and other

countries, whether they continue to reside in the U.S. after graduation or return to their

native countries (Leong, 2015).

In view of these various contributions, it becomes important for institutions of higher learning to give attention to helping international students succeed in their educational objectives (Bista & Foster, 2011; Fass-Holmes, 2016). Domestic and International students alike face a number of challenges to their educational pursuits. However, International students often encounter additional challenges that domestic students do not typically face (Le, LaCost & Wismer, 2016; Rabia, 2016). These challenges can include such things as language barriers, cultural adjustments, xenophobic prejudice (Andrade, 2017; Gautam, Lowery, Mays & Durant, 2016; Gomez, Urzua & Glass, 2014) and criticism fostered by perceptions that they are crowding out domestic students from access to U.S. higher education opportunities (Shih, 2017).

Recognizing the impact both academic and social factors have on student retention (Tinto, 2006, Astin, 1993), there have been a number of studies drilling deeper into the social aspect (Akbarov & Hadžimehmedagić, 2015; Hu, 2011). Studies (e.g., Yao, 2016; Smith & Khawaja, 2011) have suggested that due to cultural differences, international students tend to feel less community connection to their campus than do domestic students and often struggle to establish social support relationships. This is significant as social support networks have been indicated to be an important factor in international student's cross-cultural adaptation (Baba & Hosada, 2017; Andrade, 2005). The more international students can socially interact with domestic students, the greater the chance of successful cross-cultural adaptation (Ward & Kennedy, 1993; Kim, 2001). Language proficiency, lack of peer support, culture shock and unfamiliarity with what resources are available on campus can hinder social integration (Chong & Razek, 2014). The challenge for many institutions of higher education, therefore, is discovering how to

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help international students successfully navigate their cross-cultural adaptation through effective communication activities and environmental conditions.

One specific resource that U.S. college campuses have that has been found to have a positive impact on academic success (Blimling, 1999; Turley & Wodtke, 2010) and social integration (Chong & Razek, 2014; Kaya, 2004) is on-campus residential housing. Mayhew, Rockenbach, Bowman, Seifert & Wolniak (2016) suggested that living in on-campus housing fostered positive social integration and sense of belonging, which may indirectly be the cause of improved academic success. On-campus residential environments are viewed as positive influences on the lives of most students (Yao, 2016). The potential for helping international students adapt to the campus community by facilitating opportunities for creating and sustaining social interaction and providing a supportive and receptive environment (Kim, 2001) make the residence hall a significant resource for U.S. colleges (Chong & Razek, 2014). However, very little research to date examines residence hall life from the perspective of international students (Yao, 2016; Andrade, 2007).

Statement of Problem

Problem of Practice

Adjusting to a new environment can be difficult for domestic students, but this adjustment becomes even more of a challenge for international students (Baba & Hosada, 2016; Poyrazli & Isaiah, 2018; Rabia, 2016). For many of these international students who come to the United States to pursue educational opportunities, the social and cultural environment they experience both on and off campus is unfamiliar to them (Olivas & Li,

2006). International students face language barriers, educational systematic differences, prejudice, and loneliness (Gautam, Lowery, Mays & Durant, 2016), and the student's frequent inability to cope with these changes can have significant negative impact on their ability to psychologically and socially adapt to a new and different culture (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). These cultural and language barriers along with a general unfamiliarity of the new culture can create significant levels of stress in international students (Olivas & Li, 2006).

A challenge for institutions of higher learning in the U.S. is helping international students adjust to life in a culture different from what they are accustomed to (Smith & Khawaja 2011; Van Horne, Lin, Anson, & Jacobson, 2018; Zhang & Goodson, 2011). Frequent and consistent communication between the international students and domestic students has been demonstrated to be beneficial to the cross-cultural adaptation process (Church, 1982) and university leaders have opportunity to facilitate such communication both in the classroom and out (Zimmerman, 1995).

On-campus residence halls provide an opportunity for social and cultural engagement and for ensuring that those environments help international students in their cross-cultural adaptation rather than hinder the process (Samura, 2016). Just as the residence halls can be a positive environment for social connection and facilitating community development, they can also have negative influence when perceptions of hostility or rejection are felt by international students (Chong & Razik, 2014). Determining how to maximize the positive potential and minimize the negative possibilities within the residence hall environment becomes an important issue for colleges, especially with respect to international students.

Gaps in Existing Literature

Studies examining international student educational success typically focus on various social factors (Baba & Hosada, 2017; Pyburn, Horst & Erbacher, 2016; Gomez, Urzua & Glass, 2014; Iwara, Kativhu & Obadire, 2017; Phua & Jin, 2011; Rienties & Nolan, 2014) or academic factors (Curtain, Stewart & Ostrove, 2013), but much remains to be explored. There is a paucity of research with respect to the role that on-campus residential housing leadership plays in the cross-cultural adaptation of international students (Mwangi, 2016; Yao, 2016; Alkandari, 2007; Chong & Razek, 2014). This study sought to fill that gap by adding data to the body of research exploring international students' understanding of the role residence hall leadership play in fostering such adaptation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand international students' experiences of cross-cultural adaptation to U.S. institutions of higher education with respect to communication and environment within the residence halls. Specifically, the study explores how residence hall leaders, through communication activities and the environmental conditions they facilitate within the residence hall, foster or impede the international students' cross-cultural adaptation. Studies (e.g., Calder, Richter, Mao, Kovacs-Burns, Mogale, & Danko, 2016; Long 2014) have indicated that residence halls appear to have the potential to play a positive role in contributing to integration and acclimation of students. The impetus of this research builds on these studies.

Research Questions

The research question guiding this study is as follows:

How do residence hall leaders foster or impede international students' cross-cultural adaptation to the American university experience, specifically through (a) communication activities and (b) environmental conditions?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation for this study was built on Kim's (1988, 1990, 2001) highly detailed cultural adaptation theory, which has been utilized to study both international contexts as well as domestic contexts (Pitts, 2016). Kim's (2001) theory seeks to explain the process individuals go through as they struggle to bring equilibrium back into their life having been thrown out of balance by having changed cultures. People exist in an open system that has reciprocal influences and when that system is thrown out of balance, such as happens when one changes cultures, the individuals seek to restore balance and reduce stress (Pitts, 2016). Adaptation takes place at the intersection of the individual and the environment, and communication is the engine driving the adaptive change within the individual (Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2013).

Cross-cultural adaptation is "the phenomenon of individuals who, upon relocating to an unfamiliar sociocultural or cultural environment, strive to establish and maintain a relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationships with those environments" (p. 31). The goal is for the individual to realize "an overall 'fit' between the individual and the environment to maximize the individual's social life changes" (Kim, 2001, p. 31). Because the individual is continuously interacting with this new culture, the process is

dynamic, recognizing the ever-changing nature of the interactions (Kim, 2001). Shafei and Razek (2016) succinctly capture the essence of this concept when they state that individuals facing challenges "struggle for an internal balance through acquiring new cultural communication practices, participating actively in the interpersonal and mass communication processes of the local community and being competent in host communication systems" (p. 706). Living structures cannot be stabilized permanently, but that reality is key to growth (Kim, 2001).

As demonstrated in Figure 1, this stress-adaption-growth process explains what the adaptation process looks like for the individual experiencing stress and anxiety as they seek to integrate into the host culture while also retaining elements of their native culture. This stress can prompt efforts to avoid the discomfort that can be manifested through actions like isolating oneself or becoming depressed. As the individual navigates the change, taking on new habits, they move forward and the cycle continues to repeat itself. This dynamic process represents a growth progression for the individual. This process is not a smooth and quick progression. Rather, it involves a continuous cyclical movement forward and upward toward adaptation. As Kim (2001) notes, international students "respond to each stressful experience by 'drawing back,' which in turn activates adaptive energy to help them reorganize themselves and 'leap forward.'" (p. 57). This concept, according to Kim (2001), resonates well with the tenets of transformational learning articulated by Mezirow (1984). Over time, the stress reactions and adjustments become less severe, which slowly leads to the student's internal condition becoming more peaceful (Kim, 2001).
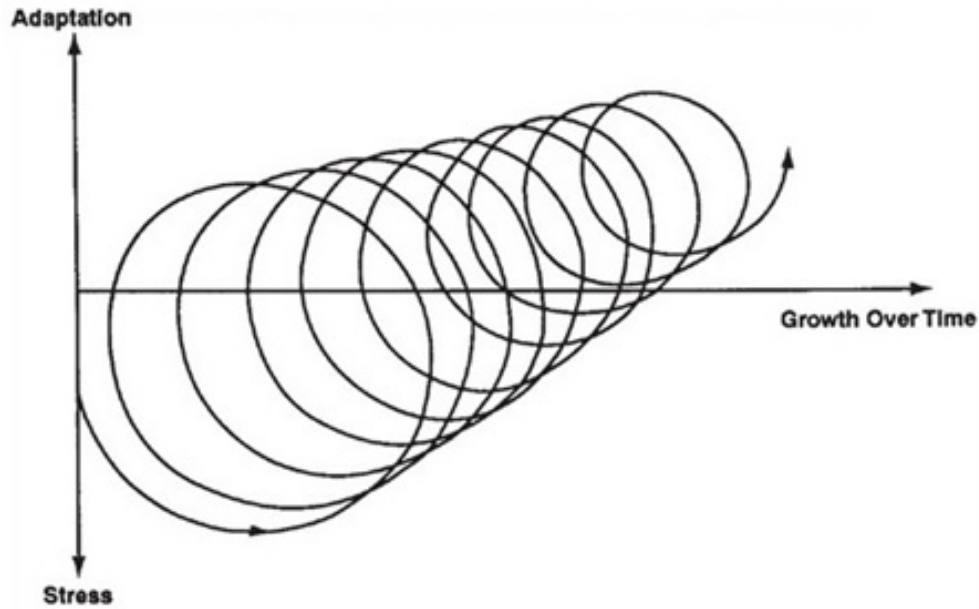
Figure 1. Stress-adaptation-growth dynamic. This figure shows the stress-adaptation-growth dynamic which occurs in cross-cultural adaptation. Adapted from "Becoming Intercultural: An Integrative Theory of Cross-Cultural Adaptation," by Y.Y. Kim, 2001, p. 59. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rather than simply adding components of life in a new culture on top of another culture, the process is multi-dimensional interacting in new layers of transformation (Kim, 2001). Adaptation is a complex and dynamic process that brings about a qualitative transformation of the individual. As the individual interacts with the environment, both internal and external conditions impact the process of adaptation. The adaptation process is complex because individuals are complex and because so many factors are interacting often simultaneously, this process is not linear, but follows a more semi-cyclical pattern.

Interdependent factors, all working together, impact the individual's adaptation to a new culture (Kim, 2001). These factors include the internal and external communication activities of the individual, the environmental conditions, psychological resources the individual possesses, and identity transformation, which includes functional

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fitness, psychological health and intercultural identity (Karamehic-Muratovic, Cheah & Matsuo, 2017; Pitts, 2016). Kim (2001) further noted that psychological factors, or the individual's internal capacities, will also influence how well they adapt. Key to this is how well they handle change, how close their ethnicity approximates the host cultures main ethnicity, how open they are to new things, and whether they tend to be more positive or negative (Karamehic-Muratovic, Cheah & Matsuo, 2017). The intercultural identity articulated by Kim (2008) contrasts with the concepts of assimilation, where the individual transforms to fit the new culture, and instead represents individuals as maintaining insights of their original culture which interact with learning the new host culture (Lee, 2018). In other words, the individual holds cultural distinctiveness of the original culture while also being shaped by the new culture. Part of Kim's (2001) theory includes the necessity for host culture language competence (Lee, 2018). This is the capacity of the international student to communicate using meaning systems and symbols of the host society. This capacity is "inseparably linked with host social communication activities of the host environment. (Kim & Kim, 2016, p. 64)

Two levels of communication were identified by Kim (2001). The micro-level communication process in the adaptive process is the interpersonal communication, while the macro-level consists of broader social communication (mass communication) such as television and newspapers (Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2013). The communication processes of interest for this study are the interactions of international students with residence hall leadership within the environment of the on-campus residence halls. Impacting the capacity of the international student to interact with domestic and international students in the host environment are such factors as how open the host

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environment is to international students, how much pressure the host puts on international students to conform to U.S. culture and how many other ethnic students are present (Kim & Kim, 2016).

Design of Study

This study was designed and conducted as a phenomenological qualitative case study (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, Merriam, 1998) involving three institutions of higher learning. As Creswell (2014) affirms, qualitative research involves "exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups of individuals ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 4). It is founded on the concept that people continuously construct knowledge by interacting and making meaning from activities, experiences and/or phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Additionally, a foundational assumption of qualitative study is that rather than residing in an objective world, multiple realities exist as varied backgrounds, experiences, and beliefs shape the way people engage and perceive a phenomenon (Merriam, 1988).

Within the umbrella of qualitative research, phenomenological studies seek to describe commonality among the lived experiences of individuals, and the purpose of such an approach is to "reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of a universal essence" (Creswell, 2013, p. 76). This is an appropriate vehicle for documenting and examining international student's cross-cultural adaptation experiences.

A case study is "an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') in depth and within the real-world context, especially when the

boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (Yin, 2018, p. 15). Case studies focus on a specific phenomenon, use rich and thick descriptive terms, provide insight or understanding and rely on inductive reasoning (Merriam, 1988). Involving multiple institutions, rather than one, and comparing the research data from each provides results that may be seen as "more compelling" (Yin, 2003, p.46) and contributes to the robustness of the study in general.

The Setting

In an effort to provide a broader range of input for understanding international student experiences, this study was conducted at three institutions of higher education located in the Midwest. These institutions were selected because they have a population of international students living in on-campus residence halls and have allocated financial and personnel resources toward assisting those students in their adaptation to their respective educational cultures. Additionally, though similar in structure and purpose, these institutions differ in type (two-year community college versus four-year college/university and private versus public), source of funding, residence hall leadership structures, and size of student population. While there are some differences in the purpose and structure of residence hall leadership amongst the three institutions, there exists a great deal of similarity as well. All three institutions are within approximately a thirty-mile radius of each other, which facilitated ease in collecting the data.

 Missouri Southern State University

The first institution which participated in the study is a public university with a total student population of approximately 5,700 students, including about 170 international students. The institution offers four-year bachelor's degrees and a few

master's degrees. The public university seeks to assist it's international student population by providing on-campus opportunities to interact with domestic students and other international students, as well as a number of services, including helping them with immigration and visa assistance, obtaining a driver's license and social security number, as well as providing information about insurance and healthcare options. This site was chosen because of its size of international student population as well as its stated mission to intentionally pursue and support international students.

The campus has twelve residence halls, consisting of varying types of room arrangements. There is also diversity of population within the residence halls as some are populated by males only, females only or a mix of both genders. The total on-campus population is approximately 950 students, with approximately 120 international students contributing to that number.

The residential leadership consists of two full time resident directors (RD), and 24 resident assistants (RA) who report to the RDs. Most of the direct interaction with residents within the residence hall involves the RA and the student. The RDs provide planning oversight, support for the RAs and engage with events that impact the broader residential community. The RAs work directly to assist students in their acclimation to the residence hall community, handle discipline issues for residence hall violations, and provide leadership for a specific residence hall.

Crowder College

The second institution included in this study is a public community college with approximately 5,000 students attending (on multiple campuses), including around 85 international students. Although the institution has prioritized recruiting, enrolling, and

supporting international students, efforts to do so have only recently moved from strategic planning to specific policies and programs. Resources, including an International Program coordinator have been allocated toward serving the international student population. Similar to the four-year public university, the public community college offers assistance to international students including helping them with immigration and visa assistance, obtaining a driver's license and social security number, as well as providing information about insurance and healthcare options. This site was selected because, despite the number of similarities to the public university in term of size of total student population and residence hall facilities and leadership, this public community college has a smaller on-campus residential population and slightly different residential leadership structure.

The on-campus housing at this community college is located on the main campus and consists of a complex of 15 buildings housing around 180 - 250 students. The institution also provides an apartment complex that contains 64 apartments, housing nearly 96 students. Combining these two types of structures yields a total on-campus population of around 300 – 350 students. Approximately 30 international students are a part of that on-campus residential population. Although the total student population of the community college is close to that of the public university, the size of its on-campus residential community is less than one-third of the public university.

The residential leadership involves a Director of Campus Life who provides broad leadership for the on-campus housing. The Assistant Director of Campus Life, who functions as a support for the Director of Campus Life, lives in the residence hall and coordinates activities of the RAs. The RAs are the on-campus residential leaders that

have the most frequent, direct contact with the students residing in the residence halls. The RAs are responsible for assisting the students in their acclimation into the community of the residence halls, as well as serving as peer counselors and the primary enforcer of residence hall rules and policies.

Ozark Christian College

The final institution which participated in this study is a private religious college granting four-year undergraduate degrees. The institution has a student population of around 600 students, including approximately 18 international students. Although the international student population is small for this college, institutional leaders have invested resources, including personnel to better serve current international students as well as to recruit and enroll prospective international students. Despite the many similarities to both the four-year public university and the public community college, in terms of residence hall leadership and the existence of an international student population, it is a slightly different institution in terms of its mission, funding and campus culture.

The on-campus housing consists of six residence halls, housing a population of between 450 – 500 students, with approximately one dozen being international students. Although the entire student population of the private college is a little more than 10% of either of the other two institutions, the on-campus housing population is substantially higher as a percentage of total student population. A large contributing factor to this is the institution's requirement that unmarried students below the age of 25 are required to live in on-campus housing until they complete 90 hours of higher education courses.

The leadership structure of the on-campus residential halls of the private religious college consists of six married couples serving as RDs. One couple serves one of the six residence halls. These RDs report directly to the Vice-President of Student Affairs. Within each residence hall, the RDs lead a team of three RAs. Similar to the other two institutions serving as sites for this study, the RAs for the private religious college also serve as key residential leaders assisting students in acclimating to the residence hall, enforcing policy and rules, and serving as a peer counselor.

The Participants

The intent of qualitative research involves purposefully selecting individuals with a rich knowledge of, or experience with, the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). These individuals also should be able to provide the researcher the best opportunity to understand the question or problem being studied (Creswell, 2014; Ryan, Coughlin & Cronin, 2007, Merriam, 1988) and be available and willing to participate (Bernard, 2002; Spradley, 1979). Purposeful sampling involves establishing criterion that serves as the basis for identifying potential participants (Merriam, 1988). Additionally, for the focus groups, the desire was to create a group where the participants would feel a similarity with one another, which would aid in compatibility (Morgan, 1998).

Each institution participating in this study has an administrative individual who has primary oversight of that institutions efforts to assist and support international students within their student body. At each of the institutions, this individual assisted in identifying all eligible international students who met the criterion outlined below and also assisted in the email contact of those students, seeking participation in the survey.

Additionally, the individuals assisted in identifying a broad range (gender, home country, year of school) of participants meeting the criterion for this study as potential participants in the focus groups. Similarly, each institution participating in this study has an administrative individual who has primary oversight of that institution's on-campus residential leadership. At each of the institutions, this individual assisted in identifying and providing contact information for all of the residential hall leaders who met the criteria given above. With the assistance of these key campus leaders, two specific groups of participants were identified at each of the participating institutions.

The first group included international students currently enrolled at a participating institution and whose home country is not the U.S. Additionally, these students were currently residing in an on-campus residence hall at the same institution. There were a total of 29 international students who participated in the survey and 13 international participants in the focus groups. These participants were selected because they were able to provide first-hand insight as to their cross-cultural adaptation experience as well as perceptions of whether the communication activities and the environmental conditions of the residence hall and it's leaders were helpful or impeded that adaptation.

The second group of participants were individuals who were currently serving as residence hall leaders at one of the participating institutions. The residence hall leader participants included 17 RAs and 3 RDs. These leaders provided insight into challenges they face in seeking to foster international student cross-cultural adaptation into the campus community. These participants were selected because they have direct and frequent contact with the international students and are primarily responsible for the culture and communication within the residence hall environment.

Data Collection Tools

For each setting, data was gathered from multiple sources and triangulated to guide analysis, helping to identify points of convergence (Creswell, 2013; Yin 2002). Data was gathered through surveys, face-to-face semi-structured interviews and focus groups (Fink, 2017; Krueger & Casey, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Because of social distancing requirements enforced by government officials, in an effort to limit the spread of COVID-19 virus, the interviews and focus groups were conducted through the use of phone and internet resources such as the video conferencing application ZOOM.

Surveys

With the assistance of the appropriate institutional staff identified earlier, international students residing in the selected institution's on-campus residence halls were invited to participate in an online survey consisting of a series of closed and open-ended questions. Qualtrics online survey software, which meets University of Missouri security requirements for gathering restricted data, was utilized in the collection and reporting of the online survey information.

Because the population of international students living in the residence hall was a relatively small number, all were sent an invitation to participate in the 28 item survey (Appendix A). The survey was designed to obtain information related to student experiences as they relate to the research questions for this study. Some of these questions were adapted (with permission) from a questionnaire utilized in Kim & Kim's (2016) study examining the differences in cultural adaptation between Asian and European students studying in the U.S. As mentioned earlier, the survey for the present study utilized both closed and open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions utilized

various point Likert-type scales (Fink, 2017). Items 1-6 collected demographic data.

Items 7-17 addressed the student's perceptions of how residence hall leaders have

impacted their social interactions within the residence hall. Items 18-28 addressed the

student's perceptions of how they have adapted to various situations. The survey was

designed to be completed in approximately ten minutes and was first piloted with a small

group of former international students who did not participate in the official research

survey. The survey responses from the current international students were used to inform

the development of in-depth qualitative interview questions for the focus groups.

Interviews

The use of interviews is an essential component of case studies (Yin 2003) and for

this study they served as a primary means for documenting the multiple realities of the

RD's perceptions and experiences (Stake, 1995; Merriam, 1988). Face to face individual,

semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, Krueger & Casey,

2015; Seidman, 2013) were conducted with one RD from each of the institutions. One

student was also interviewed, as that student was unable to attend a student focus group

but wanted to participate in the research. An interview protocol (Appendix B) was

utilized to guide the interview process. Topics covered included the RD's perceptions of

their own contribution to international student experience in the residence hall as well as

the contribution of the RAs. They also discussed the challenges that they face in seeking

to help international students in their cross-cultural adaptation and what efforts seem,

from their perspective, to help. The discussion also included potential resources they felt

would enhance residence hall leaders ability to assist international students in their cross-

cultural experience.The interviews lasted between 30–60 minutes. With participants'

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consent, the interviews were digitally recorded to help ensure accuracy of recording responses. With the exception of one international student who was unable to participate in a focus group, but still desired to participate in the study, the only individuals that were interviewed were RDs.

Focus Groups

This study also utilized focus groups to gather further data from participants. Research has suggested that focus groups are an effective approach for creating a comfortable environment for transparent, uninhibited conversation between individuals from diverse cultures and language groups (Halcomb, Gholizadeh, DiGiacomo, Phillips & Davidson, 2007). "The goal in focus groups is to gain insight and understanding by hearing from people in depth…" (Morgan, 1998, p. 56).

At each institution, a focus group of 4-5 international students and a separate focus group of 4-7 RA's was conducted, lasting approximately sixty to ninety minutes in length and sought to gain more detailed information related to the research questions and to provide additional insight to compare and contrast with responses of the surveys (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Questions for the focus groups were couched in familiar language (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), and for international students that required careful attention to language and sentence construction (Birks, Chapman, & Francis, 2007). Focus group questions included experiential, opinion, and feeling oriented questions, as well as demographic and knowledge focused questions (Patton, 2015).

Focus group protocols (Appendix C) were utilized to help guide the reliable collection of data (Stake, 1995) In moderating the focus groups, I employed a funnel approach (Morgan, 1998). This approach moves from broader, open-ended questions to

facilitate initial exploration of the topic and develop comfort within the group toward more specific, sharply focused conversation. Each of the focus groups was unique because the individuals making up the group were unique. This made it necessary to adapt and create questions as the interview unfolded (Stake, 1995). The goal of the focus group was to provide accurate voice in representing the multiple views participants expressed (Krueger & Casey, 2015). To help ensure accuracy of the dialogue in the focus groups, the conversations were audibly recorded and transcripts produced from those recordings.

Data Analysis

As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) observe, the point of data analysis is to "make sense out of the data" (p. 202). It is a complex process with a continual movement between the data and abstract ideas, between what has been described and the interpretation of that description (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Content analysis is an important vehicle in this process (Merriam, 1988). An Excel database (Hahn, 2008) was utilized, coding each site's data with a unique code to facilitate ease in locating and identifying sources of information (e.g., survey, interview or focus group) and data gathered (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The quantitative survey data was collected, quantified and entered into tables presenting institution specific results along with overall aggregate results of all the institutions participating. This data was presented in columnar format, both in actual response numbers and those numbers as percentages to the aggregated total. This allowed for quick comparative observation both between institutions and to the aggregate. The data was grouped by three main sections: Demographic, responses

regarding leaders and environment of the residence hall, and finally, self-evaluation with respect to the respondent's perceptions of their own cross-cultural adaptation experience.

The qualitative data gathered from the interviews and focus groups was recorded, transcribed, and then studied, searching for any ideas, concepts and observations that emerged, and notes were made of those themes in the margins of the transcripts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Creswell's (2013) progression from raw material to themes was followed. This involved reading the text, segmenting the information within those texts, and then assigning a code to those segments. The segments were then reduced in number, combining redundant or overlapping themes, and finally that smaller number of segments was combined into broader themes (Creswell, 2013). As the data was viewed over all three institutions, what became of most interest were those themes that seemed to be consistent and shared in common (Patton, 2015).

Limitations, Assumptions, and Design Controls

Limitations

This study is qualitative in nature, seeking to understand the lived experiences of the participants. Because those experiences are unique to the individual, even for those at the same or similar settings, it is difficult to draw generalized conclusions. In an effort to mitigate this limitation, the study broadened the input of experiences by involving students from three different institutions.

Although the study did include three institutions of higher learning, those institutions are located within thirty miles of each other in the U.S. Midwest, which

represents a geographical limitation on the study. This, again, makes it difficult to draw generalized conclusions about all institutions of higher learning.

Role of Researcher

Qualitative studies recognize the researcher as a vital instrument in the investigative process. "Both the readers of case studies and the authors themselves need to be aware of biases that can affect the final product" (Merriam, 1988, p. 34). In this present study, I served as the primary researcher and I also serve at one of the participating sites as an RD. This reality meant that I had to be conscientious about how my own experiences as an RD might color the way I asked questions, interpreted responses and drew conclusions (Creswell, 2016; Shenton, 2004; Birks, Chapman & Francis, 2007). Several measures were incorporated in the study to help minimize potential bias, including having colleagues and non-participating international students preview questions, involving multiple sites and triangulating the data between those sites, as well as utilizing member checking of results. Additionally, guidance was sought from one of my professors, who has experience as an international student and educator.

Throughout this case study, as I probed for clarity, I learned the importance of balancing the value of a potential response against the potential distress for the participants. My alertness was heightened, as an RD, by remembering that "sensitivity to and respect for other people's values, norms and worldviews is as needed at home as abroad" Patton, 2002, p. 394). During the interviews and focus groups, it was important for me to frame questions in a way that allowed participants to maintain their dignity while they told the stories that are important to them. As the interviews progressed, the confidence of the interviewees grew and evolved as did the information I sought.

Assumptions

This study assumes that the participants have a clear understanding of the questions being asked and the concepts being discussed, even though many of the participants are non-native to this culture. It also assumes that the participants have the capacity to communicate effectively their perceptions, thoughts and feelings connected with the issue being studied.

Design Controls

Because there is a possibility of the researcher selectively highlighting data from a case study that seeks to indicate virtually anything they might like to conclude, it was important for this study to utilize controls that prevent such an occurrence (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) have stated, "all research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner" (p. 237).

Towards that end, a case study protocol was developed to guide the research and aid in conducting a reliable study (Yin, 2003). Survey, interview, and focus group protocols were developed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Missouri. As mentioned earlier, questions included in those protocols were reviewed by colleagues and international students (non-participants in this study) for guidance and input, in order to avoid bias and improve clarity, accuracy and relevance.

This study utilized triangulation of the data from all three institutions to "see if what we are observing and reporting carries the same meaning when found under different circumstances" (Stake, 1995, p. 113). Additionally, triangulating the survey and focus group data and comparing it to other research aided in ensuring that the findings are

trustworthy, consistent and reliabile (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, Yin, 2003).

Additionally, the study included having some of the participants provide feedback to initial findings connected with their input, helping to provide necessary guards against misinterpretation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This included having selected international students read over the reflections and conclusions drawn from his/her contribution to verify accuracy in the representation of their perceptions (Creswell, 2014; Stake, 1995; Merriam, 1988).

In addition to ensuring accurate data collection, this study sought to ensure the protection and welfare of participants. As Creswell (2014) noted, qualitative research is being seen more and more as a moral inquiry, which requires the researcher to be sensitive to perceptions of power, avoiding exploitation of participants and to be sensitive regarding the types of data to be collected. Avoiding intentional misconduct in this research, as well as following responsible methods of research practice and respecting and protecting the welfare of those participating in the research were an important objective throughout the entire process (Horner & Minifie, 2011).

Informed consent information, including who would be conducting the survey, procedures to be utilized, purpose of the study, risks of participating, benefits that will follow from the study, any compensation provided for participants, steps for withdrawing from the survey, and how confidentiality is being maintained was provided to participants (Fink, 2017). In order to protect the welfare of study participants, as well as to ensure the integrity of the process and procedures (Ryan, Coughlin, & Cronin, 2007), approval of data collection processes, including informed consent, privacy protection, and safety of

the participants was sought from the Institutional Review Board of both the University of Missouri and the individual host institutions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Definitions of Key Terms

In order to effectively comprehend this study, a clear understanding of key terms used herein is essential. Therefore, the following definitions are offered:

International Students: A student "pursuing their education in a country outside their home country" (Shafaei & Razak, 2016, p. 702). For the purpose of this study, international students are non-native individuals, born in and residing for the majority of their life in a culture other than the United States, and enrolled in a higher education institution located within the United States of America.

Acculturation: The process individuals go through whereby they acquire portions of the host culture they are residing in (Kim, 2001; Berry, 2009).

Adaptation: Berry (2005) notes that adaptation is "the relatively stable changes that take place in an individual or group in response to external demands" (p. 709). This does not mean that the individual or group necessarily changes in an effort to become like the environment they find themselves in. In fact, they may engage in challenging that environment toward changing it or they may choose to leave it altogether (Berry, 2005).

Intercultural Adaptation: This study utilizes Kim's (2001) definition of intercultural adaptation as the "dynamic process by which individuals upon relocating to new, unfamiliar, or changed cultural environments, establish (or reestablish) and

maintain relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationships with those

environments" (p. 31).

Residence Halls: On-campus living spaces provided for students to reside in while

attending an institution of higher learning (Chong & Razek, 2014; Yao, 2016).

Residence Hall Leaders: For the purposes of this study, residence hall leaders consist of

the equivalency of Resident Directors (RD's) and Residence Assistants (RA's).

RDs have primary oversight of residence halls and serve as supervisors to RAs.

RAs are residence hall student leaders, serving under the authority of and

accountable to the RDs.

Communication: Kim's (2001) definition of communication, as "All activities of

message exchange between an individual and the environments. All actions and

events are communicative messages as soon as they are perceived by a human

being" (p. 32) serves as an effective definition for the purpose of this study.

Environment: The environment of the residence hall is not just the geographical

parameters, but also includes the communal influences, affiliations and activities

of the residents. This definition aligns with the recognition that environment

encompasses "built or perceived elements that might affect how a person is able

to act or react in a situation" (Brandon, Hiat, & Cameron, 2008, p. 65).

Significance of the Study

The research presented in this dissertation, including the findings and

recommendations, contribute both academically, by adding to the scholarship available

regarding international student success, and practically, by providing insight and guidance in the development of practices for institutions of higher learning.

Scholarship

As the literature continues to grow in the area of research into international student success, this study adds to the collective knowledge in several specific areas. First, this study contributes to our knowledge of the impact communication by residence hall leadership has on the cross-cultural adaptation of international students. By providing specific, highly descriptive insights into the feelings and reactions of international students in these institutions, scholars have access to information that may help them gain a useful perspective in shaping additional research.

Second, this study adds to the existing scholarship connected to student experiences in on-campus residence halls in general, residence hall impact on student success, and residence hall leadership. Because this study provides thick and rich insight from both international students and residence hall leaders, researchers can draw from these insights to enhance understanding and expand the knowledge base of these subjects. Thoughts and feelings of residence hall leaders connected to helping international students acclimate are given a voice through this study and adds a distinctive contribution toward efforts to understand and analyze effective leadership capacity within residence halls.

Practice

In addition to contributing to the collective knowledge base, this study provides insight for policy and training in developing and guiding residence hall leadership communication and action practices as it pertains to helping international students feel

accepted and connected to the institution's culture. Indications from the study could impact communication processes, design practices and strategies for incorporating international students.

This research also provides insight which could prove helpful to the development and implementation of specific efforts of practice within residence halls to facilitate the acclimation and adaptation of international students into the community of the residence hall and the broader campus environment.

The detailed insights recorded within this study could also help students and leaders in higher education have a better understanding of the perceptions international students have regarding U.S. educational leader's efforts to positively impact their cross-cultural experience. Such understanding could assist in the development of broader, more comprehensive programs and policies to help international students to feel "at home" on U.S. campuses and assist in their cross-cultural adaptation.

Summary

The contributions of international students to U.S. institutions is varied and significant. In order to encourage international students in their academic achievements and recognizing the potential impact of residence halls on international students' cross-cultural adaptation, U.S. higher education institutions would benefit from effectively utilizing residence hall leadership to aid in this process. This qualitative study provides student responses from three different Midwestern institutions of higher learning, seeking a better understanding of the impact residence hall leadership has in assisting international students in their cross-cultural experience. Relevance, reliability, and

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consistency were important objectives as data was collected and analyzed. This focus

helped to ensure that the findings would be of value to practitioners and researchers as

they seek to advance the quality of practice and future research.

SECTION TWO: PRACTIONER SETTING FOR THE STUDY

Introduction to the Setting

The individual settings for this study were three higher education institutions, all located in Southwest Missouri. The institutions include a four-year private religious college, a two-year public community college and a four-year public university. Each of these institutions provide on-campus residential housing for students some of whom are international students. A general familiarity with the history of higher education in the United States, and particularly in the Midwest, as well as the use and impact of residence halls is beneficial and helps foster a better understanding of the context for this study. Therefore, in the following paragraphs, a very brief historical background is provided. Additionally, as the focus of the study is the impact of leadership within these institutions, specifically leadership within the residence halls, a brief discussion of the broader institutional structure and leadership model of each of the institutions is presented to help gain a clear understanding of the leadership environment within which the residence hall leadership and the international students operate.

History of The Organizations

Education has been an important issue in the United States, exemplified in the fact that even before the revolutionary war nine institutions of higher education were created within the colonies (Rippner, 2016; Tewksbury, 1932). Like many advanced learning institutions in western civilization, higher education in the United States has been greatly influenced by practices and philosophies that date back to the medieval period, which in turn had been influenced by Greek and Roman educational development (Good & Teller, 1969; Rudolph, 1962). In those medieval periods, monks and religious leaders focused on liberal arts (writings of Plato and Aristotle, for example), philosophy and theology (Good

& Teller, 1969). These medieval monastic communities provided learning environments and preserved libraries, and both of these actions would impact the development of educational efforts across western Europe and beyond for centuries to follow (Wang & Frederick, 2018). Ultimately, civil governments became interested in fostering learning environments that provided education to broader constituencies. Universities began to form across northern and western Europe in the 12th century A.C.E. These institutions were "independent corporations of students and professors devoted to higher learning" (Good & Teller, 1969, p. 109).

In England, two such universities were formed, Oxford University and Cambridge University, and these institutions would wield particularly strong influence on much of the formulative creation of U.S. higher education in the colonial period of the new country's development (Rippner, 2016; Good & Tellar, 1969; Rudolph, 1962). Other universities also had an impact, for example the concept of external boards to provide guidance and accountability were drawn from Scottish universities, but the influence of Oxford and Cambridge Universities was most prominent, as many of the key early educational leaders were themselves educated in those institutions (Rippner, 2016). With respect to leadership, many of those colonial institutions were overseen primarily by a group of clergy, a President and faculty/tutors (Harper & Jackson, 2011; Good & Tellar, 1969). This initial leadership by religious leaders, combined with continued expansion of the growing country (resulting in larger geographical separation various groups of people) contributed to a more decentralized structure of governance, the fingerprints of which are present today in all three of the institutions serving as settings for this study (Rippner, 2016).

The target of much of the colonial higher education was a more aristocratic population, educating religious, political and educational leaders (Rudolph, 1962). Slowly, state and federal governmental authorities became more engaged in the facilitation and development of U.S. institutions of higher learning (Good & Tellar, 1969; Rudolph, 1962; Tewksbury, 1932), with an interest in broadening the community of learners. In the period between the American Revolution and the U.S. Civil War, many state governments began to take an interest in education, developing laws, governing boards and state agencies, but still leaving much of the administration to either the court system or outside officials (Good & Tellar, 1969). A significant event occurred in the early 1800's, with the passage of the Land-Grant College Act of 1962 (Morrill Act). This legislation created land-grant colleges which, in addition to key subject areas taught by other institutions of higher education, focused primarily on mechanical and agricultural education (Rippner, 2016). The construction of these land-grant colleges helped fuel an objective among institutions of higher learning that emphasized practical career development which would become a focus of many U.S. colleges and universities. It was in this period, moving into the early twentieth century, that the two public institutions in this study were birthed, and they bore many of the characteristics of this evolving portrait of educational development.

Another key event that impacted higher educational institutions in the U.S. was the GI bill (Serviceman's Readjustment Act) passed in 1946, which opened up higher education to thousands of servicemen returning from World War II (WWII) (Rippner, 2016). The U.S. Veterans department, along with military leaders, were anticipating 700,000 WWII veterans to take advantage of the GI bill, but nearly eight million

returning veterans (just over half of the WWII veteran population) took advantage of the bill's benefits, with just over two million of those choosing to attend higher education institutions (Bannier, 2006). This influx of new student populations put tremendous pressure on educational systems and made higher education available to tens of thousands of students who might not otherwise have been able to attend. At the same time, this massive influx of students and revenue influenced changes and impacted culture within higher education institutions across the U.S. to better serve the career objectives of this expanding community of learners (Bannier, 2006).

Ozark Christian College

Out of this evolving educational background, all three of the institutions serving as the setting for this study were established and have operated. The first school participating is a small, private, religious institution of higher learning. Ozark Christian College (OCC) was founded as a private religious college in 1942 with an emphasis on educating men and women for ministry leadership. From the very beginning OCC provided living space for students "on-campus." Thus, the college has a rich history of creating living environments in the learning environment. Originally located in Bentonville Arkansas, the institution moved to a residential section of Joplin, Missouri in 1944, where it steadily grew from a handful of students to nearly 600 students when it relocated to a larger tract of property in 1963 (Gardner, 1991). The mission guiding the college from the very beginning has been to train men and women for ministry or evangelistic work both domestically and internationally. The school has maintained its foundational theological roots as well, being led by staff and faculty from the more conservative perspective of the Church of Christ and Independent Christian Church

denomination, which had risen from a movement in the mid-nineteenth century called the Restoration Movement (Gardner, 1991). With the move to a new campus in 1963, as mentioned earlier, the new location allowed for considerable expansion of facilities, to accommodate a growing body of students. To emphasize their educational commitment to the global community, the first building constructed on the new location was the intercultural studies building (Gardner, 1991).

Crowder College

The next two institutions in the study emerged from the movement to create institutions of higher education that offer only the first two years of undergraduate level curriculum. These institutions are often referred to as junior colleges or community colleges. Before 1900 there were almost no two-year colleges in the United States (Thornton, 1972). During the early part of the 1900's, through concerted effort and support of strategic educational leaders from larger urban cities, the number of two-year higher education institutions grew to a couple of hundred by 1921 (Thornton, 1972). By the late 1930's the concept of the two-year community college was accepted and supported by leaders at the national and state levels (Thornton, 1972).

Crowder College, the second location for this case study, was established in the same year that Ozark Christian College relocated, 1963. In the years just prior to that, two very important events took place. First, the United State Army declared Camp Crowder, a training facility that had been utilized during World War II, surplus, which meant that the facility would now be available for some other purpose (James, 2006). At approximately the same time, the state of Missouri changed the laws concerning community colleges, moving them from being an extension of a local school board, to allowing for the

establishment of community college districts over several counties. These two opportunities were capitalized on by leaders from Newton and MacDonald counties in Missouri, and with support from business and government leaders in the state, legislation was passed in 1963 creating Crowder College as a community college. The first classes were held in 1964 with 360 students (James, 2006) and the college has steadily increased their enrollment to the current levels of approximately 5,000 students.

Missouri Southern State University

The embryo of what would eventually evolve into Missouri Southern State University (MSSU) began when the Joplin Junior College (JJC) was formed in 1937 (Renner, 1993). At that time, in Missouri, community colleges had to be connected and funded as part of a local school board. JJC operated in this manner until 1963 when a separate board of trustees was established along with independent funding mechanisms. The new entity was named the Jasper Community College. This opportunity for a broader base arose through the work of Joplin School District Superintendent Roi Wood, at the time serving also as President of the Missouri Association of School Administrators, who helped to facilitate a state law allowing for the creation of special junior college districts (Renner, 1993). The following year, 1964, legislation was written and passed and signed by the Governor of Missouri creating Missouri Southern State College. The junior college classes and faculty were funded by the tax base within the county, while the senior college portion of the institution was funded by the state of Missouri (Renner, 1993). The institution operated in this dual funding manner until June of 1975 when Missouri Governor Christopher Bond signed legislation moving Missouri Southern State College to full funding by the state. Understanding the background of the broader

development of education in the U.S., and the specific development of these three institutions helps to form a context in which to view the institutions as they are today. Another perspective that helps provide a better contextual understanding is the organizational framework and culture of the institutions.

Organizational Analysis

Institutions of higher education today are frequently hybrid organizations, a combination of professional bureaucracy and corporate leadership (Manning, 2013; Harper & Jackson, 2011). To some degree, each of these institutions serving as a setting for this study would fit that structural classification. These institutions contain solidly bureaucratic structure but elements such as tenure, shared governance, dual systems of authority, and academic freedom are also inherent components, (Harper & Jackson, 2011). Various autonomous divisions or departments within the overarching entity function interdependently (Harper & Jackson, 2011). This structural relationship is sometimes referred to as loose coupling (Firestone, 1985; Harper & Jackson, 2011). The departments work together to achieve common goals and objectives, but their connection is somewhat loose, providing for significant freedom for each department.

Bureaucratic elements such as the utilization of numerous committees, involving both faculty and staff creates an often slow, but fairly thorough process (Wang & Frederick, 2018). In reaction to this perceived cumbersome and slow process within bureaucracies, pressures from external economic factors have pushed modern institutions of higher learning to function more like business organizations, whereby smaller groups of trustees or Board members operate with a tight group of professional executives to

make quick decisions to further the institutions momentum toward achieving strategic objectives (Harper & Jackson, 2011).

Bureaucratic structures have power and authority centralized at the top and it flows downward, through well-defined, formal layers (Manning, 2013). This structure relies on specialized labor, which is meritoriously appointed. Though the concept of appointing the "best" individual to function at a given level is theoretically possible, it is quite often not achieved in practice (Manning, 2013). Dealing with issues of span of control and efforts toward structure that minimize redundancy, bureaucracies provide stability of personnel and clear lines of authority and responsibility. However, institutions of higher education have also been identified as organized anarchy, given the variety of stakeholders participating in decision making, the lack of clarity as to objectives, and the wide range of teaching methodologies utilized (Manning, 2013. For example, faculty senates and unions provide a key stakeholder voice that the institutional administration would do well to pay heed to (Wang & Frederick, 2018).

Institutional Structures

The organizational structures of the three institutions serving as a setting for this study model the typical leadership structure of most public and private colleges. Private colleges are typically led by self-perpetuating boards and public educational institutions are led by elected or appointed trustees or governors (Blumenstyk, 2014). Additionally, these institutions have multi-layered, shared leadership, which draws in numerous stakeholders (Wang & Frederick, 2018). The flow of accountability, guidance and strategic vision for the institution moves from top tier board leadership, through the President and ultimately to the staff and faculty for implementation.

This organizational flow is demonstrated through the following organizational charts. At OCC, for example, the President, who reports to a Board of Trustees, is supported by five leaders, including four Vice-Presidents and a General Counsel, (see Figure 2). These leaders provide strategic planning and guidance for the organization to carry out the mission and purpose as articulated by the Trustees. The number of Vice Presidents reporting to the President for OCC is similar to MSSU, even though OCC is a much smaller institution.
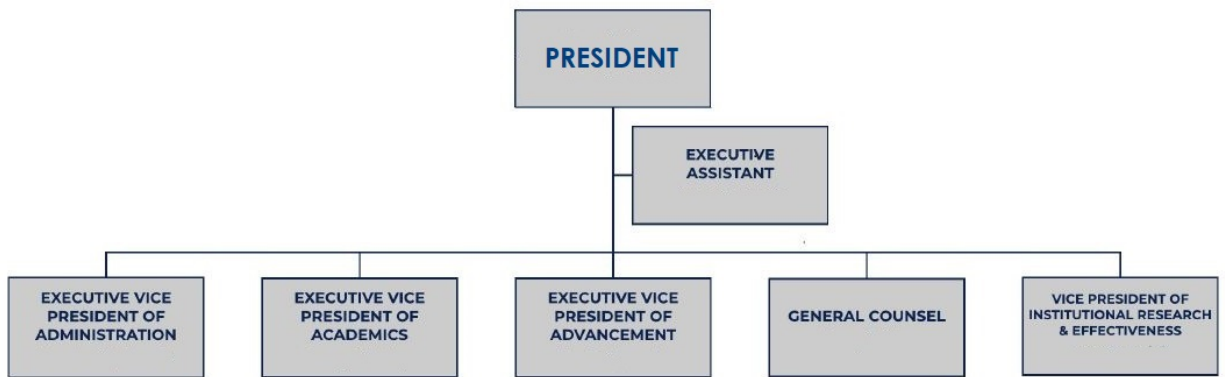
Figure 2. Organizational Chart – Ozark Christian College. This figure shows the organizational chart of leadership for Ozark Christian College. Adapted from "OCC Personnel Handbook," by Ozark Christian College, January 2020, p. 9. Joplin, MO: OCC.

Crowder College operates with a similar structure (see Figure 3), though with only three Vice Presidents (Finance, Academics, and Student Affairs) reporting to the President. Crowder College makes use of Associate Vice-Presidents, to allow each Vice-President to oversee a wider area of responsibility.

For MSSU (see Figure 4) this top tier leadership is an eight- member board of Governors. For Crowder College it is six-member board of trustees. For OCC it is twelve-member Board of Trustees. Each of these boards work closely with the President

of their respective institution and their associated Vice-Presidents and Deans to carry out the strategic objectives of the entity.
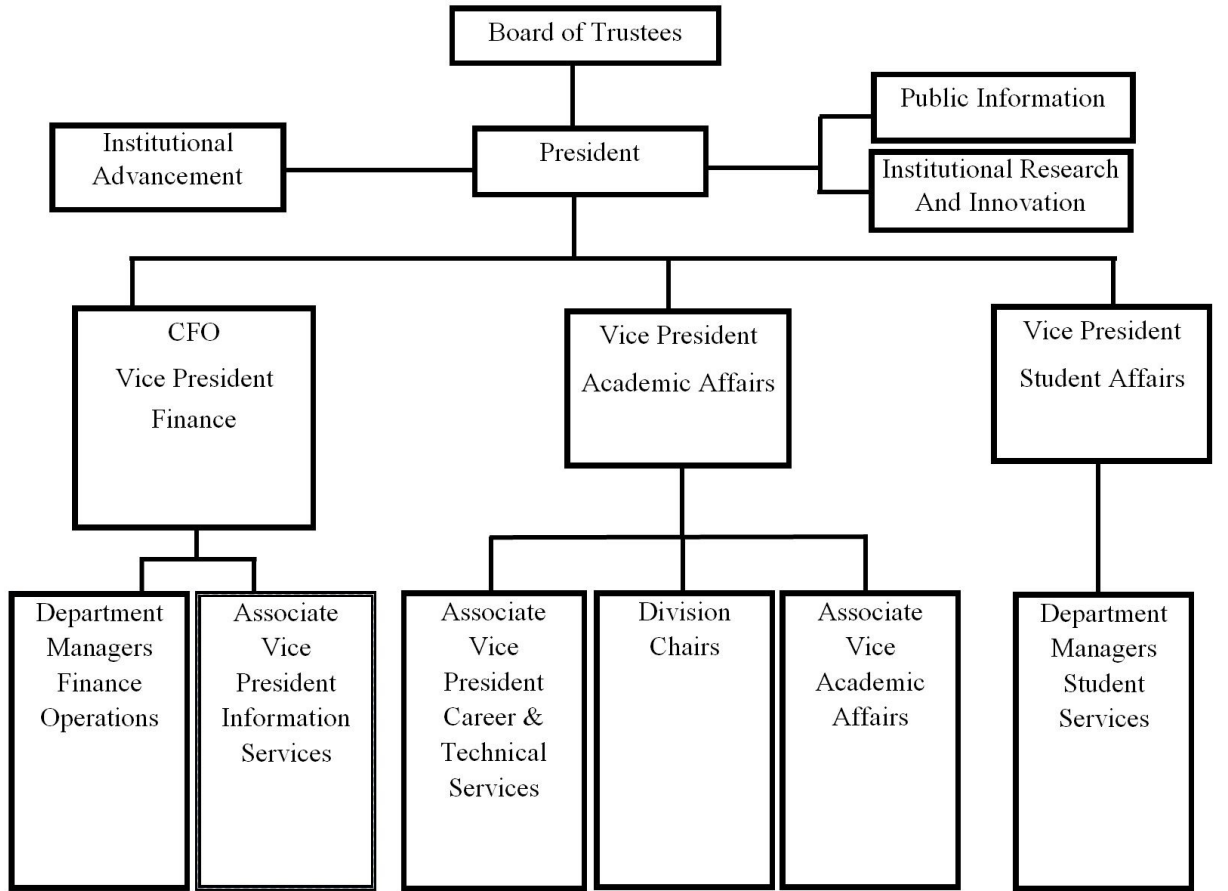
Figure 3. Organizational Chart – Crowder College. This figure shows the organizational chart of leadership for Crowder College. Retrieved and adapted from Crowder College website: www.crowder.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/Organizational_Chart.pdf.

The leadership of most interest for this specific study is the leadership that typically falls into the Student Affairs area, which in all three of these institutions is led by a Vice-President of Student Affairs. Deans of Men and Women evolved from early days in collegiate life, as Presidents of these institutions of higher learning sought to provide leadership focused on providing guidance and

Board of Governors

Foundation Board

President

Executive Vice President
Executive Director Missouri Southern Foundation

Director of Athletics

Vice President Business Affairs

Vice President Student Affairs Enrollment Management

Vice President Academic Affairs Provost
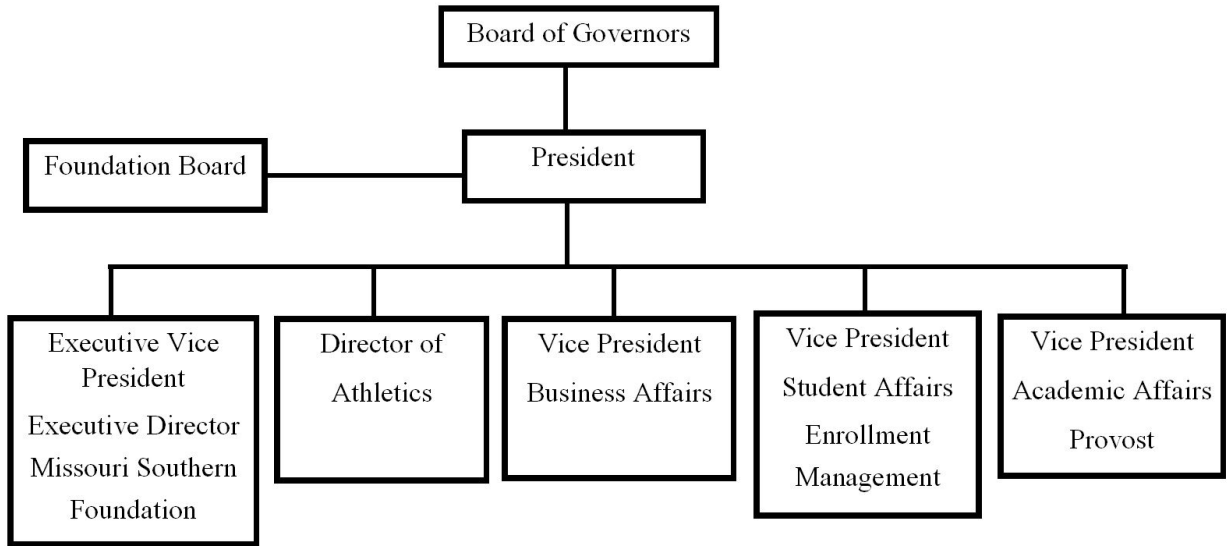
Figure 4. Organizational Chart – Missouri Southern State University. This figure shows the organizational chart of leadership for Missouri Southern State University. Adapted from "MSSU Faculty handbook," by Missouri Southern State University, July 2018, p. 102. Joplin, MO: MSSU

discipline and the fulfillment of the *en loco parentis* role (Wang & Frederick, 2018). This role seeks to provide the oversight and guidance for students that parents often provide when those students are at home. These deans, which were faculty as well, eventually evolved into housemothers and fathers which oversaw dormitory life (Blumenstyk, 2014).

On-Campus Housing Leadership

All three of the institutions serving as a setting for this study employ RDs who carry on the tradition of these housemothers and fathers, overseeing the functioning of the residence halls. These residence hall leaders report directly to Student Affairs Leadership. Additionally, each of the institutions employs RAs. These leaders are the staff that deal directly with the students, seeking to help the students acclimate into the community,

ensure rules and regulations are followed and provide support and resource information to students who have a need for guidance.

Leadership Analysis

Pressure on U.S. institutions to operate more along the lines of a business model, in pursuit of competitive advantage, continue to increase, especially as competition for the provision of higher education expands globally with the aid of technology (Kok & McDonald, 2017). At the same time, there are those in leadership advocating a more "distributed leadership" approach which relies on collective decision making (Bolden, Petrov, & Gosling, 2009). The concept of academic freedom, a prized concept among institutions of higher learning, provides autonomy for faculty that assists in providing diversity of perspective in the formulation and execution of leadership (Tierney& Corwin, 2007).

Servant Leadership

The leadership model followed by each institution in this study is somewhat distinct. MSSU follows a transactional leadership approach, which emphasizes order and structure (Northouse, 2016; Li, Bhutto, Nasiri, Shaikh, & Samo, 2018). Crowder College and OCC model a Servant Leadership approach, which emphasizes the importance of meeting needs of employees (Northouse, 2016; Greenleaf, 1977). A study of community colleges by Elliott (2012) indicated that employees who operated under supervisors modeling servant leadership were very satisfied with their work experience. For OCC, this model is articulated by top tier leaders, and is summed up in the institution's motto: "Not to be served, but to serve." Both institutions work toward creating an encouraging

and empowering environment for staff and students. Such efforts are marks of organizational cultures fostered by servant leadership (Liu, 2019).

Institutions of higher learning traditionally include a broad range of stakeholders in the planning and operation and employ a shared governance model in terms of decision making (Harper & Jackson, 2011). Trustees serve as formal top-tier governance, they delegate a considerable amount of authority to executive leaders, such as the President, Vice-Presidents and various deans (Harper & Jackson, 2011). Educational environments also interact with teaching faculty whose expertise and autonomy combined with the power of their collective community influence and impact the leadership of any higher education institution (Bolman & Galos, 2011). Because of this, traditional approaches to leadership often manifested in business organizations may not be effective in influencing certain members of the academic leadership team, especially faculty (Harper & Jackson, 2011).

Religious institutions of higher education find increased pressure to utilize models of secular universities, but one model that would seem a natural fit would be to adopt leadership models employing transformational components, especially servant leadership (Burch, Swails & Mills, 2015). A servant leader gives priority to taking care of the needs of others (Greenleaf, 1977; Liu, 2019). It is this priority to address the needs of others that moves the servant leader to step into leadership (Greenleaf, 1977; Beck, 2014).

Elements of Servant leadership resonate closely to concepts of transformational leadership and authentic leadership especially with respect to the importance these leadership approaches place on the personal development of the follower and the significance of moral perspective (Beck, 2014). Within an institution, that means that

servant leaders conduct themselves in an ethical and caring manner, emphasizing the personal growth of the staff and faculty, including them in decision-making (Harris, Hinds, Manansingh, Rubino, & Morote, 2016). Servant leaders provide leadership that enhances the overall health of the organization and encourages and supports the personal development of the employees (Harris et al., 2016). Servant leaders believe that their organization has an influential moral role to play in society (Beck, 2014). Schein indicates that one of the most critical actions of leaders is the creation, maintenance and, when necessary, the destruction of culture within an organization (Schein, 1992). Schein (1992) suggests that the creation and maintenance of culture is the only significant thing leaders do. Transformative leaders help followers achieve their objectives as well as to educate and motivate them to pursue group objectives (Yammarino & Bass, 1990; Northouse, 2016). Transformative leaders are vulnerable and open (Autry, 2001; Batten, 1998) and driven by principles (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). In order to be gain buy-in, servant leaders have to pay attention to the personal values of followers as they do to the organizational values (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). Servant leaders are collaborative and empower others (Bolman & Deal, 2001).

Residence Hall Leadership

In the United States student and professional leaders have been a part of life in on-campus residence since the colonial period (Winston & Finch, 1993). A residence hall is a microcosm of the broader world, filled with individuals from diverse backgrounds, experiences and cultures (Wang & Frederick, 2018). Faculty, in those early days, cared for students residing on campus in a capacity similar to parents, exercising *en loco parentis* to help shape and influence the conduct and development of the students in their

care (Early, 2016). Over time, these roles became more professional and specifically focused on providing holistic care, in support of student's pursuit of academic objectives (Donahue, 2015; Early, 2016). RAs are typically upper-level student leaders working under the authority and direction of the student affairs department/division (Stark & Anderson, 2016; Russell, Allen & Wircenski, 2001). RAs exercise leadership in their roles providing various types of counseling, academic advice, disciplinary actions, emotional support and efforts toward helping students acclimate and function within a new culture (Stark & Anderson, 2016), as well as potentially serving as an ethical role model (Blimling, 2010). RAs can have life-long impact on students and can serve as key contributors to creating a more stable and supportive environment for students (Stark & Anderson, 2016).

There are six dormitories on campus at Ozark Christian College. Three of them house female only students, and the other three, only male students. Each residence hall has a married couple who serve as RDs for the individual dorms. These RDs oversee the flow of activity in the dorm, request repairs and maintenance, are available for students within the dorm who need advice, basic counsel, or just need to talk. The concept is that the RDs help facilitate a family and home environment as much as possible. The RDs also coordinate and manage the student RAs for the residence hall. These RAs live on each floor, and provide leadership in establishing a positive, healthy culture within the dorm. Each dorm holds between 70 and 100 students on average each semester.

Two different on-campus housing environments exist on the campus of Crowder College. The first environment is the Brown Complex, which can hold between 180 – 250 students. Within the complex there are 15 individual houses, and each one of those

has 6 suites. Like OCC, students living in the complex are required to have a meal plan. The second on-campus housing environment at Crowder College are the student apartments, called Roughrider Village. There are a total of 64 apartments, half of them one bedroom and the other half two-bedroom apartments, in Roughrider Village. RAs live in the complex and are available on-call 24 hours.

Missouri Southern State University has four different types of housing: Quads, Apartments, Suites and Traditional Dormitory Rooms. Over 900 students can be housed in these facilities. The leadership structure within the residence halls consists of a Director of Residence Life, three full-time RDs and a large number of RAs.

Implications for Research in the Practitioner Setting

All three schools have expressed an interest in helping international students acclimate to their new and different culture, and they have allocated financial and personnel resources to facilitate this. Leaders in these institutions, especially those espousing servant leadership as a guiding principle, care deeply about the aspirations of their students, and this study can serve as a tool in that effort.

As Student Affairs leaders wrestle with programs aimed at helping international students, a better understanding of the impact residence halls and the residence hall leaders can have on cross-cultural adaptation can be useful. This study provides information that can be of valuable assistance in the development of training for residence hall leaders, with respect to communication and activities. Additionally, it can help leaders understand how their actions might be perceived by international students. As residence hall leaders become aware of how their actions and communication are

perceived, such awareness can inform the development of protocols and practices that would enhance their ability to serve that student population.

This study provides insight to aid in understanding the challenges faced by resident hall leaders as they seek to assist international students in their efforts to acclimate to this new environment. Such understanding can guide leadership and support staff as they seek to encourage and equip such residence leaders to fulfill their mission.

Summary

Each of the institutions involved in this study have a heritage founded in scholarship and preparation for contributing to community through career and service. Tracing the historical roots from colonial times through modern evolutions helps provide a contextual background of the influences and efforts that have contributed to the development of each of these institutions. Recognizing that each of these institutions has a leadership structure that somewhat blends a typical bureaucratic environment with servant leadership and some "loose coupling" of differing objectives and philosophies of leadership, helps to provide context for understanding better the role of the RDs and RAs for each of the institutions.

SECTION THREE: SCHOLARY REVIEW FOR THE STUDY

Introduction

The focus of this study is to understand and describe the impact that residence hall leaders have on the cross-cultural adaptation of international students, from their lived experiences in residence halls in U.S. higher education institutions. It is appropriate, therefore, to review the extant scholarly literature focusing on research that is relevant to this focus.

This literature review first considers residence halls and especially residence hall leadership as it pertains to international student cross-cultural adaptation. Next, an examination is presented of research related to the process of cross-cultural adaptation. Understanding international students' experiences in adapting cross-culturally, including factors that are known to have an influence on this phenomenon, is central to comprehending the significance of the present study. Third, a review of scholarship addressing the cross-cultural adaptation theoretical model informing this study is presented. Following this, a review of literature related to social integration and language as it relates to cross-cultural adaptation is considered. This overall review is presented to provide a broader context of the current scholarship available regarding the subject of this study and to provide a clear understanding of how this study adds to that scholarship.

This present research is at home in the midst of scholarship focused on assisting students in achieving their academic objectives and has been informed by foundational research contributions such as Spady (1970), Astin (1970a, 1970b, 1977) and Pascarella (1980) to name a few. Tinto's (1975, 1993) Institutional Departure Model is particularly salient for the present study in that it was influenced to some degree by Van Gennep's (1960) research of the rites of passage within tribal societies (Aljohani, 2016). Tinto

(2017) explained that in order for students to succeed they would need to travel through three stages. First, they would have to separate themselves from the social communities they have been a part of, followed by a period of transitioning, where the student would begin taking on norms and behaviors of the new community. Finally, they would become integrated into the new community. This focus on the community aspect of the student life, and the imperative of the student feeling as if they are part of the academic community is highlighted in Tinto's (2017) observations.

Residence Halls

Residence halls have long been considered a significant environment to positively impact student success (Tinto, 2006; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1984), especially as it relates to sense of belonging (Johnson et al., 2007). For international students specifically, however, there has been very little research regarding the benefit of residing on-campus (Mwangi, 2016; Yao, 2016; Alkandari, 2007; Chong & Razek, 2014). Residence halls have been indicated to facilitate higher levels of peer-to-peer and faculty-to-student social interaction, stronger academic and social integration, increased integration into college life and facilitate success for students when compared to students who live off-campus (Blimling, 2010; De Beer, Smith, & Jansen, 2009; Bronkema & Bowman, 2017; Schudde, 2011; Turley & Wodtke, 2010; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Astin, 1993). Living in residence halls have been indicated to impact student learning (Alkandari, 2007).

Domestic and international students residing on campus have relatively easy access to social support and opportunities for participation and integration to the academic community (Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008), and residence halls

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can have an influential impact on motivating students to take advantage of those benefits (Pike, 1999). A study by Berger (1997) suggests that the sense of community that the residence hall can help create has a positive impact on increasing student retention. Saidla and Grant (1993) found that American roommates had stronger levels of trust, understanding and intimacy than non-domestic students. The residence halls provide increased opportunity for international students to interact with native students (Savicki, 2010) and the easier it is for international students to engage in relationships with host students the more likely the cross-cultural relationship will happen (Kudo & Simkin, 2003). Interestingly, many of the early studies on the development of friendship relationships between international students and host students took place in on-campus residence halls (Hendrickson, Rosen & Aune, 2011).

A study by Alkandari (2007) found that Kuwait University students residing in residence halls were satisfied with the environment of the resident hall, but that there were differences in those perspectives between genders and length of stay in the hall. Chong and Razek (2014) examined first year perceptions of international students living in residence halls, specifically looking at their perceptions of community life, racial environment and diversity. Their findings suggested that the degree to which the international students felt a part of the host community at the beginning stages of their occupancy in the residence hall had an influence on their perceptions of hall staff as well as the diversity of the residence hall.

With respect to underrepresented populations, there have been indications that residence halls can negatively impact the sense of belonging for minority students (Means & Pyne, 2017) and that sensitivity in residence hall leaders communication

(verbal and non-verbal) with minority students would be prudent (Johnson-Durgans, 1994). Residence hall leaders who are not sensitive to intercultural interactions between domestic and international students may struggle to engage the two in healthy interactions (Chong & Razek, 2014).

Yao (2016) studied Chinese students residing in residence halls and found that although they anticipated the arrangement to positively facilitate their cross-cultural adaptation, it was, in reality, difficult for them to form meaningful connections. If the residence hall has a socially supportive environment, that also seems to promote inclusiveness, this will contribute to a positive impact to international student sense of belonging (Johnson et al., 2007).

When the residence hall staff seem to encourage acceptance and appreciation of diverse cultures, the overall perception of students will be that the residence hall is inclusive and accepting (Hughes, 1994). Institutions should be aware of student perceptions of their environment and experiences when crafting plans to create an inclusive environment for supporting cross-cultural adaptation (Johnson et al., 2007). For international students, an individual's capacity to function within the host culture depends on their ability to make some degree of personal changes, a process known as acculturation (Barker, 2015).

Acculturation

Acculturation occurs when individuals or groups of individuals from a particular culture experience changes resulting from on-going, first-hand interaction with a culture that is different from the native culture (Berry, 1997; Kim, 2001). Kim (2001) notes that earlier concepts of cross-cultural adaptation assumed that in order to effectively fit in

with a new culture, the student would need to give up their native culture and assimilate into the host culture. That view has been challenged with more recent scholarship (see Barker, 2015), exemplified in Kim's (2008) concept of "intercultural personhood," seeing individuals as members of an "increasingly integrated" community (local and global), that is "built on a dynamic, adaptive and transformative identity conception – one that conjoins and integrates, rather than separates and divides (p. 360). Studies potentially adding credence to this concept have revealed evidence indicating that an individual can internalize multiple cultures and function well within them (Benet-Martinez, Leu, Lee & Morris, 2002; Chen, Benet-Martinez, & Bond, 2008; Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000).

The psychological and sociocultural adaptation process of an individual is impacted by both their native and host cultures, and research (e.g., Berry, 1997, 2009; Ward, 2008) indicates that there is a dynamic interaction between those cultures that effect the process as does various other moderating factors that are brought into or arise during the process. Berry (2005) identified four distinct acculturation categories based on how the non-native answers two questions. The first question is whether or not the native cultural identity and significant customs are to be retained, and the second is whether or not the individual or group values positive relations with the broader host culture (Berry & Sabatier, 2010). Based on how the individual or group answers these two questions, there are four possible acculturation modes: "(a) 'integration' (yes, yes) (b) 'assimilation' (no, yes); (c) 'separation' (yes, no); and (d) 'marginality' (no, no)" (Kim, 2007, p. 246).

While Berry (1997) recognizes assimilation as a form of acculturation and notes that to many researchers the two terms have almost become synonymous, Kim (2001) suggests that assimilation is a "more comprehensive change" (p. 15) akin to being

absorbed into the host culture. At the same time, other studies suggest that acculturating individuals can assimilate to a new culture in less significant or more public areas (Navas, Rojasb, Garcia, & Pumaresd, 2007) while retaining deep held values from their native culture (Kim, 2001). Barker (2015) suggests that it is quite possible for international students to adopt host culture customs for a personal sense of adjustment or to fulfill academic objectives while not internalizing that culture.

Cross-Cultural Adaptation

The theoretical foundation for this study is Kim's (1988, 1990, 2001) intercultural adaptation theory. Basically, the theory seeks to explain the process individuals go through as they struggle to bring equilibrium back into their life having been thrown out of balance by changing cultures (Kim, 2001). At the heart of this theory is the concept that this adaptation process for all cultural strangers (non-natives) is a communication process (Kim, 1988).

Kim's (1990) theory of cross-cultural adaptation is grounded in the General Systems concepts, which assumes that individuals facing challenges in a particular environment will adapt and "try to maintain equilibrium within the system by using various forms of communication" (Lee, 2018 p. 316). General systems concepts further view individuals as 'open systems,' having their very existence and capacity to function inseparably linked to their environment (Kim, 1990). When changes within their environment are drastic, and they are unable to adapt to these changes, the equilibrium is shaken which results in stress within the systems (Kim, 1990). This stress then prompts the individual to seek to restore balance and reduce stress (Pitts, 2016). Adaptation takes place at the intersection of the individual and the environment, and communication is the

engine driving the adaptive change within the individual (Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2013).

Kim (2001) defines cross-cultural adaptation as "the dynamic process by which individuals, upon relocating to new, unfamiliar, or changed cultural environments, establish (or reestablish) and maintain relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationships with those environments" (p. 31). Because the individual is continuously interacting with this new culture, the process is dynamic, recognizing the ever-changing nature of the interactions. Shafei and Razek (2016) succinctly capture the essence of this concept when they state that individuals facing challenges "struggle for an internal balance through acquiring new cultural communication practices, participating actively in their interpersonal and mass communication processes of the local community and being competent in host communication system" (p. 706).

Rather than simply adding components of life in a new culture on top of another culture, the process is multi-dimensional, interacting in new layers of transformation (Kim, 2001). As the individual interacts with the environment, both internal and external conditions impact the process of adaptation. The adaptation process is complex because individuals are complex and because so many factors are interacting often simultaneously, this process is not linear, but multi-directional.

Kim (2001) identifies factors that are interdependent, all working together to impact the individual's adaptation to a new culture. These factors include the internal and external communication activities of the individual, the environmental conditions, psychological resources the individual possesses, and identity transformation, which includes functional fitness, psychological health and intercultural identity (Karamehic-

Muratovic, Cheah & Matsuo, 2017; Pitts, 2016). An additional factor of the individuals

home culture has been proposed by other scholars (Martin & Harrell, 2004; Pitts, 2016).

Pyburn, Horst, and Erbacher (2016) point to the welcoming nature of the new

environment, the degree of pressure on individuals within that environment to conform as

well as the level one's ethnic group is present in the new environment as key components

impacting cross-cultural adaptation. Key to this process is how well individuals handle

change, how close their ethnicity proximates the host culture main ethnicity, how open

they are to new things, and whether they tend to be more positive or negative

(Karamehic-Muratovic, Cheah & Matsuo, 2017).

Kim's (2008) intercultural identity contrasts with the concepts of assimilation,

where the individual transforms to fit the new culture. This concept of intercultural

identity represents individuals as maintaining insights of their original culture which

interact with learning the new host culture (Lee, 2018). In other words, the individual

holds cultural distinctiveness of the original culture while also being shaped by the new

culture. Part of Kim's theory also includes the necessity for host culture language

competence (Lee, 2018).

Within the theory, Kim indicates that the micro-level communication process in

the adaptive process is the interpersonal communication, while the macro-level consists

of broader social communication (mass communication) such as television and

newspapers (Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2013). The micro-level communication processes

are of interest in this study, specifically the interactions of international students with

residence hall leadership within the environment of the on-campus residence halls. These

communication processes involve both verbal and non-verbal. While recognizing the

value of international and domestic student interaction in facilitating the international

student's adjustment to a new social and academic culture as well as the intercultural

competence of both groups (Schartner, 2015; Leong, 2015; Sheridan, 2011; Leask, 2009)

there is also evidence that such interactions are limited both in number (Harrison, 2015)

and depth (McKenzie & Bladassar, 2016).

Social Integration and Students' Cross-Cultural Adaptation

Understanding the intercultural process that occurs between non-natives and

individuals of host cultures is critical as that is the foundation upon which cultural change

will happen in both groups (Lee, 2018). Complications emerging from adjustment to a

new culture can make the socialization process more difficult (Chong & Razek, 2014). In

an effort to better understand student intercultural relationships and the intercultural

adaptation process, a variety of factors have been studied (Kudo, Volet, & Whitsed,

2018). There has been considerable attention given to challenges faced by international

students (Mamiseishvili, 2012; Gautam, Lowery, Mays, & Durant, 2016; Rajapaska &

Dundes, 2003). Many studies on this issue, however, are either narrowly focused on

cultural factors or transitional issues and pay little heed to environmental factors, or vice-

versa (Chong & Razek, 2014). The result is that scant knowledge is available regarding

the interplay between environment and individuals in developing intercultural

relationships (Kudo, Volet, & Whitsed, 2018).

Various emotional conditions among international students have been identified

including a sense of powerlessness and marginality, a perception of inferiority, feelings

of loneliness, and perceived alienation as well as discrimination (Gautum, Lowery et al.,

2016; Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1998). International students encounter academic and

financial stress as well as cultural barriers, discrimination, homesickness, feelings of alienation, perceived absence of social support, and they have difficulty making friends (Yeh & Inose, 2013; Hotta & Ting-Toome, 2013; Rabia & Karkouti, 2016; Poyrazli & Isaiah, 2018). O'Loughlin & Arkoudis (2009) found that international students gravitated toward socializing with other internationals, regardless of those student's cultural background, rather than domestic students. This tendency to not form relationships with domestic students is important as the degree to which international students develop strong ties with host students will have an impact on the cross-cultural adaptation of the international student to the new environment (Karamehic-Muratovic, Cheah, & Matsuo, 2017).

Social support networks in the host environment are important to international students' cross-cultural adaptation (Aldawari, et al., 2018). Misra, Crist & Burant (2003) cite social support as one of the most essential determinants of psychological well-being of international students. When international students have positive relationships with domestic students, they experience less acculturative stress (Sullivan & Kashbeck-West, 2015) and the relationships aid in the adaptation process (Jackson, et al., 2013). One such social support network that has received considerable attention in research is the impact of friendships on international students' cross-cultural adaptation (Hendrickson et al., 2011). One of the challenges institutions have is to generate interest in domestic students to participate in the efforts the establishment of cross-cultural interactions, as some studies (e.g., Lee & Rice, 2007; Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013, Glass, Gomez, & Urzu, 2014) suggest that there is a lack of interest in such interactions from the host

community. Host students are not willing to expend the energy they perceive necessary for the integrative relationships (Dunne, 2013; Harrison & Peacock, 2009).

Communication (both verbal and non-verbal) is at the heart of the intercultural adaptation theory, as it serves as the transport of both culture and social relationships (Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2013; Lee & Chen, 2000). Communication challenges, especially connected to English proficiency are a significant barrier that faces international students (Amos & Rehorst, 2018). Institutions seeking to help international students with cross-cultural adaptation would need to give consideration to the impact language has on creating such an atmosphere.

Language

Host communication competence, or the capacity to communicate effectively with the host culture is an important component to cross-cultural adaptation (Kim, 2001). "Communication is the carrier of culture and social relationships" (Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2013, p. 99). Language barriers have been indicated to impact the adaptation of international students into host cultures (Briguglio & Smith, 2012; McMahon, 2011, Andrade, 2006; Tidwell & Hanassab, 2007; Wright & Schartner, 2013). Yeh and Inose (2003) found that language difficulties led to feelings of alienation among international students and limited social interaction between classmates, instructors and overall campus community and international students. Accents and language struggles often contribute to Asian students being perceived as less intelligent (Amos & Rehorst, 2018).

In their study Harrison and Peacock (2010) suggest that a lack of proficiency with English could lead to the perception of inadequate communication skills among non-natives, and that perception can create a power relationship with the host population

being seen as experts while the international population perceived as deficient. Along similar lines, Amos and Rehorst (2018) suggest that typically, because international students often struggle with language proficiency, domestic students tend to dominate conversations leaving international students to function mainly in a listening role.

A more balanced position, with respect to the intercultural relationship, would be for the power to be more equal between the two groups (Amos & Rehorst, 2018). This struggle to strike a balance in conversational equality is a familiar theme among many English-speaking countries as they seek to enhance interaction between domestic and internationals (Arkoudis, Watty, et al., 2013; Guo & Chase, 2011). Communication between international and domestic students is significant as studies have shown that struggling with communication ability created sense of inadequacy and internal frustration in Asian students (Kim, 2006; Liu, 2001; Morita, 2004).

Lack of familiar communities of support and encountering a new and often unfamiliar culture, along with language struggles seem to contribute to creating feelings of loneliness among international students (Gautum, Lowery, et al., 2016; McClure, 2007; Sawir, Marginson, Deaumer, Nylland & Ramia, 2008; Ip, Chui, & Johnson, 2009). Sam (2001) suggest the need for social support and social networking for international students.

Tinto (1993) postulated that such social connectedness was an essential component for a student to become socially integrated within the institution's community, which he felt was a necessity for student's to persist toward academic goals. Feelings of separation, loneliness and a lack of social support all create a sense that the international student doesn't belong. It is essential for students to feel as if they are a part

of the academic community and valued by faculty, fellow students, and other campus community members (Tinto, 2017; Bean & Eaton, 2001; Stableton, Sori, Huesman, & Torres, 2014). Student sense of belonging has been indicated in research to impact his or her desire to fulfill their academic objectives (Museus, Yi, & Saelua, 2018; Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007).

Summary

A review of the extant research literature reveals that while there has been significant progress in understanding some of the challenges faced by international students in their cross-cultural adaptation to new and different cultures, there is still much to be explored. Kim's (1988, 1990, 2001) cross-cultural adaptation theory helps to understand the process students go through as they come to the U.S. to attend institutions of higher learning, and it provides a solid foundation for exploring the research question guiding this particular study. Research exploring the impact of cross-cultural relationships and international students' challenges with respect to communication and other issues provides a relevant and helpful framework from which to consider how residence hall leaders can assist international students in their cross-cultural experience.

SECTION FOUR: CONTRIBUTION TO PRACTICE

To be presented to Residential Housing Director (or equivalent) and Director of International Student Services (or equivalent) of each of the participating institutions, to be presented in first week of October of 2020 on the campus of each individual institution. The presentation includes an Executive Summary and a PowerPoint Presentation.

Executive Summary: The Impact of Residence Hall Leadership on International Student's Cross-Cultural Adaptation

Statement of Problem: International students face unique challenges as they cross-culturally adapt to a new environment in their university experience. While residence halls are often considered to be a generally positive influential environment for students (Yao, 2016), little is known as to how the residence hall leaders impact the adaptation process of international students.

Purpose of the Study: To understand and describe international student's lived experiences in the residence halls in three institutions of higher learning in the midwestern USA. Specifically, the study sought to understand how residence hall leaders, through communication activities and environmental conditions they facilitate can either foster or impede international student's cross-cultural adaptation.

Research Question: How do residence hall leaders foster or impede international students' cross-cultural adaptation to the American university experience, specifically through (a) communication and (b) environmental conditions.

Theoretical Framework: This study was informed by Y.Y. Kim's (1988, 1990, 2001) cross-cultural adaptation theory model, which has informed many studies both internationally and domestically (Pitts, 2016).

Design of Study: This was a phenomenological qualitative case study, exploring the lived experiences of international students in on-campus residence halls.

Paricipants: 29 international students representing 21 countries completing an online survey, 13 international students and 20 residence hall leaders in focus groups and interviews.

Data Collection Tools: Survey, Interviews, and Focus Group Sessions.

Data Analysis: Frequencies, Descriptive Analysis, Axial Coding, Category Construction and development of Emergent Themes.

Findings:

➢ By providing information about processes and practices of the residence hall and campus (how the cafeteria works, where to go to attend a class, how the library works, etc.) residence hall leaders can help international students become familiar with their new environment, reducing stress and aiding in the international students' cross-cultural adaptation.

➢ Residence hall leaders can provide cultural insight to international students that can assist those students in understanding actions and communications that may differ from their home cultures.

- ➢ By assisting international students in their awareness of local resources for international food and transportation, residence hall leaders can help these students experience a smoother cross-cultural experience.
- ➢ When residence hall leaders engage in personal communication with international students that moves beyond casual conversation, it can help those students feel accepted and included in the residence hall community.
- ➢ By designing and carrying out residence hall activities that do not require either domestic or international students to initiate interaction, residence hall leaders provide opportunities for social support networks to be developed.
- ➢ Residence hall leaders can cultivate a sense of inclusion through involving international students in the planning and execution of residence hall activities, and through consideration of international student interests when identifying residence hall activities.

Implications:
- Having culturally competent residence hall leaders is valuable to helping international students cross-culturally adapt. Therefore, recruiting, training, and equipping such leaders would be a prudent investment.
- In equipping residence hall leaders to provide helpful information as international students develop a familiarity with their new environment, institutions would benefit through developing a system for collecting, organizing, and communicating information for these leaders.
- Residence hall leaders should seek to incorporate international students in planning and implementing residence hall activities.
- Residence hall leaders should implement activities intentionally designed to create social support networks for international students including opportunities for interaction with domestic students.
- There was some indication that actions by residence hall leaders reflecting a Servant Leadership approach were more likely to promote a sense of belonging, support and inclusion among international students than actions aligned with transactional leadership.

Limitations:
- Qualitative study limited to lived experiences of these specific students.
- All three institutions Midwestern, within 30 miles of each other.
- Researcher serves as a Resident Director for one of the three institutions.
- The majority of interviews and focus groups had to be conducted through phone or internet (ZOOM).

Future Research:
- Exploring if the same conclusions are drawn by examining institutions from urban geographical areas.
- A study of these three institutions focusing on the impact residence hall leadership philosophy has on the cross-cultural adaptation of international students.
- Exploring this research question by comparing only private institutions.

Impact of Residence Hall Leadership on International Students' Cross-Cultural Adaptation

Gregg Murdock

1

Background

Higher Education Mission — An important objective of most institutions of higher learning is helping International students to achieve their educational objectives.

International Student Contributions — International students provide financial, diversity, global connectivity.

Challenges of Fitting in a New Culture — International students face unique challenges that institutions of higher learning can address (Rabin, 2016).

2

Statement of the Problem

- International students face unique challenges as they cross-culturally adapt to a new environment in their university experience (Gautam et al., 2016). While residence halls are seen as a generally positive influential environment for students (Yao, 2016), little is known as to how the residence hall leaders impact the adaptation process of the international students.

3

Gap in Literature

- Studies on international students often focus on social factors (Baba & Hosada, 2017; Pyburn et al., 2016; Gomez et al., 2014).

- There is paucity of data about residence hall impact on international students' cross-cultural adaptation (Mwangi, 2016, Andrade, 2007).

4

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand and describe international students' lived experiences in the residence halls at three institutions of higher learning in the midwestern USA. Specifically, the study sought to understand how residence hall leaders, through communication and the residence hall environment they help to facilitate, either foster or impede international students' cross-cultural adaptation.

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Research Question

How do residence hall leaders foster or impede cross-cultural adaptation to the American university experience, specifically, through(a) communication and (b) environment?

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Theoretical Framework

- Anchored in Kim's (2001) intercultural adaptation theory:
  - Internal and External Communication
  - Environmental Conditions (Host receptivity/Conformity Pressure/Ethnic Group support)
  - Psychological Resources (Preparedness for change/ethnic proximity/Adaptive Personality)
  - Identity Transformation (Functional Fitness/Psychological Health/Intercultural Identity)

- Adaptation takes place at the intersection of the individual and the environment, and communication is the engine driving the adaptive change within the individual (Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2013),

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Theoretical Framework

- Anchored in Kim's (2001) intercultural adaptation theory:
  - Host Communication Competence
  - Environmental Conditions (Host receptivity/Conformity Pressure/Ethnic Group support)

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Theoretical Framework

- Anchored in Kim's (2001) intercultural adaptation theory:
  - Host Communication Competence
  - Environmental Conditions (Host receptivity/Conformity Pressure/Ethnic Group support)

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Theoretical Framework (Cont.)

The interplay of individual internal communication and external environmental communication creates a continuous movement back and forth between stress induced withdrawal and adaptive energy surging forward. Over time, the swings become less volatile as the student experiences less feelings of alienation from the host society (Kim, 2001).
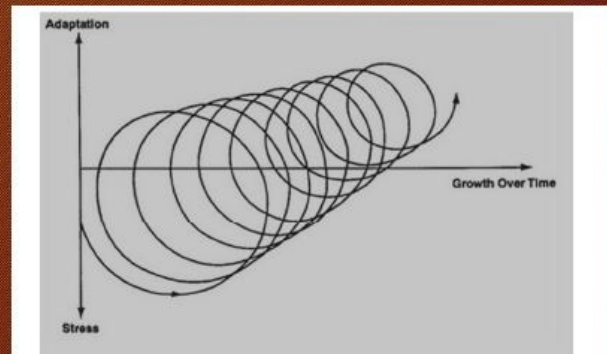
Figure 1. Stress-adaptation-growth dynamic. This figure shows the stress-adaptation-growth dynamic which occurs in cross-cultural adaptation. Adapted from "Becoming Intercultural: An Integrative Theory of Cross-Cultural Adaptation," by Y.Y. Kim, 2001, p. 59. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

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Design of the Study

- This was a phenomenological qualitative case study (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Merriam, 1998).
- Explored the lived experiences of international students in the residence halls.
- Phenomenology seeks to "reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of a universal essence" (Creswell, 2013, p. 76).
- Patton (2002) underscores the foundational question to be, "what is the meaning, structure, and essence of the live experiences of this phenonmenon for this person or group of people (p. 104).

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Setting

- Missouri Southern State University
  - Student Population: 5,700
  - International Students: 170
- Crowder College
  - Student Population: 5,000
  - International Students: 90
- Ozark Christian College
  - Student Population: 600
  - International Students: 18

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Participants

- International students residing in on-campus residential housing
  - 29 international students residing in on-campus residential housing across the three institutions participated in an online survey.
    - Dispersion of students: MSSU – 14, Crowder – 7, OCC – 8
  - Four to six international students (13 total) residing in on-campus residential housing from each of the three institutions were purposefully selected and participated in focus group discussions.

Residence hall leaders
  - One Resident Director from each institution was purposefully selected and participated in a one-on-one interview.
  - Four to six students (17 total) from each institution were purposefully selected and participated in focus group discussions.

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Data Collection

- Surveys
  - All currently enrolled international students living in on-campus housing were invited to participate in a secure online Qualtrics survey of closed and open-ended questions.
    - The survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete.
    - Survey questions included demographic, lived experiences, and perceptions.

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Data Analysis - Quantitative

The quantitative data was analyzed and presented as both institutional specific numbers and as an aggregate for all participating institutions. Frequencies for the institution as well as percentages were presented for each institution as well as comparatively to the aggregate.

Data Analysis

Qualitative Data

Coding

Themes

Qualitative data was recorded and transcribed. Utilizing constant comparative analysis (Yin, 2003), themes and concepts were developed through axial coding, as the collection tools revealed consistent, repeated ideas, phrases or concepts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Creswell, 2016).

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Findings

Communication

Environment

Findings related to Residence Hall Leader Communication with International Students

Familiarity
- Providing information about residence hall and campus that helps international students to become more familiar with new culture.

Cultural Competence
- Help build cultural competence of international students by providing cultural insight about their new culture.

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Findings related to Residence Hall Leader Communication with International Students

Cross-Cultural Experience
- Build awareness of options for food and transportation, making for a smoother cross-cultural experience.

Build Sense of Acceptance and Belonging
- Leaders engaging in personal conversation with international students communicated acceptance and belonging to those students.

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Findings related to Residence Hall Environment with International Students

Social Networks
- Residence hall activities created opportunities for "risk-free" social network development.

Belonging
- Including international students in planning and executing activities helped those students feel a part of the community.

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Implications

- *<u>Recruiting, hiring, and training residence hall leaders to be culturally competent</u>* as well as informed about the residence hall, campus and community would strengthen their capacity to help international students adapt.
- *<u>Develop systems for collecting and communicating</u>* information to residence hall leaders that will equip them to provide international students with helpful information about the campus and community.
- *<u>Strategically planning events</u>* to intentionally create social support networks for international students, and to be inclusive of their interests would be helpful in the adaptation process.

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Limitations

- Qualitative study that explores lived-experiences of these specific students.
- All three institutions are within 30 miles of each other, so significant geographic limitations.
- Researcher is a Resident Director, so an awareness of biases that could affect the final conclusions must be considered. Member checking as well as triangulation of data will contribute toward validity of findings.
- COVID-19 requirements forced interviews and focus groups to be held via telephone or online (ZOOM). Additional research and training for conducting online interviews/focus groups helped minimize this limitation.

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SECTION FIVE: CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOLARSHIP

The Impact of Residence Hall Leadership on International Students' Cross-Cultural

Adaptation: A Qualitative Study

to be submitted to

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As many institutions struggle to maintain or grow revenue sources to fund pursuit of their mission, keeping students enrolled and on track toward educational goals becomes a critically important issue. One population gathering more attention by United States (U.S.) higher education institutions, both in terms of acquiring and retaining students, is the international student population (Rabia, 2016; Andrade, 2007; Mamiseishvili, 2012; Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2018; Smith & Khawaja, 2011). In view of the many and varied contributions that international students potentially bring to U.S. higher learning campuses (Gautam, Lowery, Mays & Durant, 2016), it behooves institutions to give attention to helping these students succeed in their educational objectives (Bista & Foster, 2011; Fass-Holmes, 2016). International students often encounter challenges that domestic students do not typically face (Le, LaCost, & Wismer, 2016; Rabia, 2016). These challenges include such things as language barriers, cultural adjustments, xenophobic prejudice (Andrade, 2017; Gautam, LaCost, & Wismer, 2016; Gomez, Urzua & Glass, 2014) and criticism fostered by perceptions that they are crowding out domestic students from access to U.S. higher education opportunities (Shih, 2017).

Studies (e.g., Yao, 2016; Smith & Khawaja, 2011) have suggested that due to cultural differences, international students tend to feel less community connection to their campus than do domestic students and often struggle to establish social support relationships. This is significant as social support networks have been indicated to be an important factor in international students' cross-cultural adaptation (Baba & Hosada, 2017; Andrade, 2005). The more international students can socially interact with domestic students, the greater the chance of successful cross-cultural adaptation (Ward &

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Kennedy, 1993; Kim, 2001). Language proficiency, lack of peer support, culture shock and unfamiliarity with what resources are available on campus can hinder social integration (Chong & Razek, 2014). The challenge for many institutions of higher education, therefore, is discovering how to help international students successfully navigate their cross-cultural adaptation through effective communication activities and environmental conditions.

One resource that many U.S. college campuses possess and that has been found to have a positive impact on academic success (Blimling, 2010; Turley & Wodtke, 2010) and social integration (Chong & Razek, 2014; Kaya, 2004) is on-campus residential housing. Mayhew, Rockenbach, Bowman, Seifert and Wolniak (2016) suggested that living in on-campus residential housing fostered positive social integration and sense of belonging, which they indicate may indirectly be a cause of improved academic success. The potential for helping international students adapt to the campus community by facilitating opportunities that create and sustain social interaction and provide a supportive and receptive environment (Kim, 2001) make residence halls a significant resource for U.S. colleges (Chong & Razek, 2014). However, little research to date examines residence hall life from the perspective of international students (Yao, 2016; Andrade, 2007).

How Residence Hall Leaders Can Foster Cross-Cultural Adaptation

Adjusting to a new environment can be difficult for domestic students, but such adjustment becomes even more of a challenge for international students (Baba & Hosada, 2016; Poyrazli & Isaiah, 2018; Rabia, 2016). For many of these international students who come to the United States to pursue educational opportunities, the social and cultural

environment they experience both on and off campus is unfamiliar to them (Olivas & Li, 2006). International students face language barriers, educational systematic differences, prejudice, and loneliness (Gautam, Lowery, Mays & Durant, 2016), and the students' frequent inability to cope with these changes can have significant negative impact on their ability to psychologically and socially adapt to a new culture (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). These cultural and language barriers along with a general unfamiliarity of the new culture can create significant levels of stress in international students (Olivas & Li, 2006). Frequent and consistent communication between the international students and domestic students has been demonstrated to be beneficial to the cross-cultural adaptation process (Church, 1982) and university leaders have opportunity to facilitate such communication both in the classroom and out (Zimmerman, 1995). On-campus residence halls potentially provide an opportunity for social and cultural engagement and for ensuring that those environments help rather than hinder international students in their cultural adaptation process (Samura, 2016). However, residence halls can also be a place where perceptions of hostility or rejection are felt by international students (Chong & Razik, 2014). Determining how to maximize the positive potential and minimize the negative possibilities within the residence hall environment becomes an important issue for colleges, especially with respect to international students.

Academic research (e.g., Calder, Richter, Mao, Kovacs-Burns, Mogale, & Danko, 2016; Long 2014) has indicated that residence halls appear to have the potential to play a positive role in contributing to integration and acclimation of students. The impetus of this current study builds on these prior studies, by exploring how residence hall leaders,

through communication activities and the environmental conditions they facilitate, foster or impede international students' cross-cultural adaptation.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation for this study rests upon Kim's (1988, 1990, 2001) cultural adaptation theory. This theory explains the process individuals go through as they struggle to bring equilibrium back into their life having been thrown out of balance by changing cultures (Shafei & Razek, 2016; Kim, 2001). Shafei and Razek (2016) succinctly capture the essence of this concept when they state that individuals facing challenges "struggle for an internal balance through acquiring new cultural communication practices, participating actively in the interpersonal and mass communication processes of the local community and being competent in host communication system" (p. 706). Living structures cannot be stabilized permanently, but that reality is key to growth (Kim, 2001).

Adaptation takes place at the intersection of the individual and the environment, and communication is the engine driving the adaptive change within the individual (Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2013). Rather than simply adding components of life in a new culture on top of another culture, the process is multi-dimensional interacting in new layers of transformation (Kim, 2001). As the individual interacts with the environment, both internal and external conditions impact the process of adaptation.

Kim (2001) identified factors that are interdependent, all working together to impact the individual's adaptation to a new culture. These factors include the internal and external communication activities of the individual, the environmental conditions,

psychological resources the individual possesses, and identity transformation, which includes functional fitness, psychological health and intercultural identity (Karamehic-Muratovic, Cheah & Matsuo, 2017; Pitts, 2016). Key to adaptation is how well the individual handles change, how close their ethnicity approximates the host culture main ethnicity, how open they are to new things, and whether they tend to be more positive or negative (Karamehic-Muratovic, Cheah & Matsuo, 2017). Part of Kim's theory also includes the necessity for host culture language competence (Lee, 2018). This is the capacity of the international student to communicate using meaning systems and symbols of the host society. This capacity is "inseparably linked with host social communication activities of the host environment. (Kim & Kim, 2016, p. 64)

Two levels of communication are identified Kim's (2001) cross cultural adaptation. The micro-level communication process in the adaptive process is interpersonal communication, while the macro-level consists of broader social communication (mass communication) such as television and newspapers (Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2013). The communication processes of interest in this study are specifically the interactions of international students with residence hall leadership within the environment of the on-campus residence halls. Impacting the capacity of the international student to interact with domestic and international students in the host environment are factors such as how open the host environment is to international students, how much pressure the host puts on international students to conform to U.S. culture and how many other ethnic students are present (Kim & Kim, 2016).

Design of Study

The design of this research was a phenomenological qualitative case study (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, Merriam, 1988) involving three Midwestern institutions of higher learning. Creswell (2014) affirms that qualitative research involves "exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups of individuals ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 4). Such research is founded on the concept that people continuously construct knowledge by interacting and making meaning from activities, experiences and/or phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Within the umbrella of qualitative research, phenomenological studies seek to describe commonality among the lived experiences of individuals, and the purpose of such an approach is to "reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of a universal essence" (Creswell, 2013, p. 76). This is an appropriate vehicle for documenting and examining international student's cross-cultural adaptation experiences.

Yin (2018) described the case study as "an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') in depth and within the real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (p. 15). Case studies focus on a specific phenomenon, use rich and thick descriptive terms, provide insight or understanding and rely on inductive reasoning (Merriam, 1988). Involving multiple institutions, rather than one, and comparing the research data from each can provide results that may be seen as "more compelling" (Yin, 2003, p.46) and contributes to the robustness of the study in general.

The Setting

In an effort to provide a broader range of input for understanding international student experiences, this study was conducted at three institutions of higher education located in the Midwest. These institutions were selected because they have a population of international students living in on-campus residence halls and have allocated financial and personnel resources toward assisting those students in their adaptation to their respective educational cultures. Additionally, though similar in structure and purpose, these institutions differ in type (two-year community college versus four-year college/university and private versus public), source of funding, residence hall leadership structures, and size of student population. While there are some differences in the purpose and structure of residence hall leadership amongst the three institutions, there exists a great deal of similarity as well. All three institutions are within approximately a thirty-mile radius of each other, which facilitated ease in collecting the data.

The first institution participating in the study is a public university with a total student population of approximately 5,700 students, including about 170 international students. The institution offers four-year bachelor's degrees and a few master's degrees. The campus has twelve residence halls, consisting of varying types of room arrangements. There is also diversity of population within the residence halls as some are populated by males only, females only or a mix of both genders. The total on-campus residential population is approximately 950 students, with approximately 120 international students contributing to that number.

The second institution participating in the study is a public community college with approximately 5,000 students attending, including around 90 international students.

The on-campus housing at this community college consists of a complex of 15 buildings housing around 180 - 250 students. The institution also provides an apartment complex that contains 64 apartments, housing nearly 96 students. Combining these two types of structures yields a total on-campus residential population of around 300 – 350 students. Approximately 30 international students are a part of that residential population. Although the total student population of the community college is close to that of the public university, the size of its on-campus residential community is less than one-third of the public university.

The final institution participating in the study is a private religious college granting four-year undergraduate degrees. The institution has a student population of around 600 students, including approximately 18 international students. Although the international student population is small for this college, institutional leaders have invested resources, including personnel to better serve current international students as well as to recruit and enroll prospective international students. Despite the many similarities to both the four-year public university and the public community college, in terms of residence hall leadership and the existence of an international student population, it is a slightly different institution in terms of its mission, funding and campus culture. The on-campus housing consists of six residence halls, housing a population of between 450 – 500 students, of which approximately a dozen are international students. Although the entire student population of the private college is a little more than 10% of either of the other two institutions, the on-campus housing population is substantially higher as a percentage of total student population. A large contributing factor to this is the

institution's requirement that unmarried students below the age of 25 are required to live in on-campus housing until they complete 90 hours of higher education courses.

The Participants

The intent of qualitative research involves purposefully selecting individuals with a rich knowledge of, or experience with, the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011) who can provide the researcher the best opportunity to understand the question or problem being studied (Creswell, 2014; Ryan, Coughlin & Cronin, 2007, Merriam, 1988) and who are also available and willing to participate (Bernard, 2002; Spradley, 1979). Purposeful sampling involves establishing criterion that serves as the basis for identifying potential participants (Merriam, 1988). Additionally, for the focus groups, the desire was to create a group where the participants would feel a similarity with one another, which would aid in compatibility (Morgan, 1998).

Each institution participating in this study has an administrative individual who has primary oversight of that institutions efforts to assist and support international students within their student body. At each of the institutions, this individual assisted in identifying all eligible international students who met the criterion outlined below and also assisted in the email contact of those students, seeking participation in the survey. Additionally, the individuals assisted in identifying a broad range (gender, home country, year of school) of participants meeting the criterion for this study as potential participants in the focus groups. Similarly, each institution participating in this study has an administrative individual who has primary oversight of that institution's on-campus residential leadership. At each of the institutions, this individual assisted in identifying and providing contact information for all of the residential hall leaders who met the

criteria given above. With the assistance of these key campus leaders, two specific groups of participants were identified at each of the participating institutions.

The first group included international students (Figure 4) from each participating institution who were currently enrolled and whose home country is not the U.S. Additionally, these students were currently residing in on-campus residential housing at the same institution. There were 29 international students who participated in the survey and 13 international participants in the focus groups. These participants were selected because they were able to provide first-hand insight as to their cross-cultural adaptation experience as well as perceptions of whether the communication activities and the environmental conditions of the residence hall and its leaders were helpful or impeded that adaptation.

The second group of participants (Figure 5) were individuals from each participating institution who were currently serving as residence hall leaders. The residence hall leader participants included 17 RAs and 3 RDs. These leaders provided insight into challenges they face in seeking to foster international student cross-cultural adaptation into the campus community. These participants were selected because they have direct and frequent contact with the international students and are primarily responsible for the culture and communication within the residence hall environment.

Data Collection and Analysis

For each setting, data was gathered from multiple sources and triangulated to guide analysis, helping to identify points of convergence in the data (Creswell, 2013; Yin 2003). Data was gathered through surveys, face-to-face semi-structured interviews and

focus groups (Fink, 2017; Krueger & Casey, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016. Because of social distancing requirements imposed enforced by government officials, in an effort to limit the spread of Covid-19 virus, the interviews and focus groups were executed through the use of phone and internet resources such as the video conferencing application ZOOM.

Surveys

International students residing in the selected institution's on-campus residential housing were invited to participate in an online survey consisting of a series of closed and open-ended questions. The survey was designed and results collected within Qualtrics, an online survey engine located within the University of Missouri online environment. Because the population of international students living in the residence hall is relatively small ($n = < 120$) at each institution, it was possible to initially send a survey invitation to the entire target population. Participants were invited to complete the online survey, which included 28 items, to obtain information about student experiences as they relate to the research question for this study. Some of the survey questions were adapted (with permissioin) from a questionnaire utilized in Kim and Kim's (2016) study examining the differences in cultural adaptation between Asian and European students studying in the U.S. The survey responses from the current international on-campus residential students was utilized to inform the development of in-depth qualitative questions for the focus groups.

Interviews and Focus Groups

The use of interviews and focus group sessions are often employed as an essential component of case studies (Yin, 2003) and for this study they served as a primary means

for documenting the multiple realities of the participants' experiences (Stake, 1995; Merriam, 1988). Face to face individual, semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, Krueger & Casey, 2015; Seidman, 2013) were conducted, either in person or through online ZOOM with one RD from each of the participating institutions. Additionally, RAs and international students from each institution participated in online focus groups. An interview protocol was utilized to guide the interview and focus group process. Focus group questions included experiential, opinion, and feeling oriented questions, as well as demographic and knowledge focused questions (Patton, 2015).

Pseudonym	Institution	Number of Semesters Residing in Residence Hall	Country	Gender
Margarita	Two Year	Two	Dominican Republic	Female
Sophie	Two Year	Three	Netherlands	Female
Nadia	Two Year	Two	Nigeria	Female
Anisa	Two Year	Two	Kenya	Female
Khadja	Private Four Year	Five	Burundi	Female
Alejandra	Private Four Year	Two	Mexico	Female
Lucas	Private Four Year	Four	New Zealand	Male
Jean	Private Four Year	Two	Haiti	Male
Augusto	Private Four Year	Three	Guatemala	Male
Ahmad	Public Four	Two	United Arab Emirates	Male
Louise	Public Four	Two	France	Female
Nia	Public Four	Six	Nigeria	Female
Kaito	Public Four	Seven	Japan	Male

Figure 4. List of international student participants. This figure lists each of the international students participating in the focus groups, using a pseudonym to protect their identity.

Gathering information-rich participants is key to a successful focus-group design (Morgan, 1998). Selection for the focus groups was influenced by a desire to create a homogenous group, where the participants felt a similarity with one another, which helped create compatibility (Morgan, 1998).

Pseudonym	Institution	Role	Length of Service	Gender
Charles	Private 4 Yr	RA	Three	Male
Eliot	Private 4 Yr	RA	Four	Male
Jane	Private 4 Yr	RA	Three	Female
Walter	Private 4 Yr	RA	Two	Male
Charlotte	Private 4 Yr	RA	Two	Female
Ian	Private 4 Yr	RD	Sixteen	Male
Alexander	Public 4 Yr	RA	Two	Male
Emily	Public 4 Yr	RA	Seven	Female
Arthur	Public 4 Yr	RA	Two	Male
Maya	Public 4 Yr	RA	Two	Female
Oscar	Public 4 Yr	RA	Six	Male
James	Public 4 Yr	RD	Eight	Male
Mary	Public 2 Yr	RA	Two	Female
Octavia	Public 2 Yr	RA	Four	Female
Elena	Public 2 Yr	RA	Four	Female
Isabel	Public 2 Yr	RA	Four	Female
Angela	Public 2 Yr	RA	One	Female
Jack	Public 2 Yr	RA	Three	Male
Willa	Public 2 Yr	RA	One	Female
Marie	Public 2 Yr	RD	Fourteen	Female

Figure 5. List of resident hall leader interview and focus group participants. This figure lists each of the residence hall leaders participating in the interviews and focus groups, using a pseudonym to protect their identity.

Data Analysis

As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) observed, the point of data analysis is to "make sense out of the data" (p. 202). It is a complex process with a continual movement

between the data and abstract ideas, between what has been described and the interpretation of that description (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Content analysis is an important vehicle in this process (Merriam, 1988). An Excel database (Hahn, 2008) was utilized, coding each site's data with a unique code to facilitate ease in locating and identifying sources of information (e.g., survey, interview or focus group) and data gathered (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The quantitative survey data was collected, quantified and entered into tables presenting institution specific results along with overall aggregate results of all the institutions participating. This data was presented in columnar format, both in actual response numbers and those numbers as percentages to the aggregated total. This allowed for quick comparative observation both between institutions and to the aggregate. The data was grouped by three main sections: Demographic, responses regarding residence hall leadership and environment, and finally, self-evaluation with respect to the respondent's perceptions of their own cross-cultural adaptation experience.

The qualitative data gathered from the interviews and focus groups was recorded, transcribed, and then studied, searching for ideas, concepts and observations that emerged, and notes were made of emergent themes in the margins of the transcripts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Creswell's (2013) progression from raw material to themes was followed. This process involved reading the text, segmenting the information within those texts, and then assigning a code to those segments. The segments were then reduced in number, combining redundant or overlapping themes and finally that smaller number of segments was combined into a group of broader themes (Creswell, 2013). As the data

was viewed over all three institutions, what became of most interest were those themes that seemed to be consistent and shared in common (Patton, 2015).

Findings

There were 29 online surveys (Addendum H) completed by the international students at the three institutions. These students represented 21 different countries (Figure 6) on six different continents. Approximately 80% of the responding students had lived in the U.S. for two years or less, and the same percentage had lived in the U.S. residence halls for two semesters or less.

Country Represented in Survey	Number of Participants
Brazil	2
Czech Republic	2
France	2
Japan	2
Kenya	2
Nigeria	2
United Kingdom	2
Argentina	1
Australia	1
Burundai	1
Columbia	1
Ecuador	1
Germany	1
Guatamala	1
Haiti	1
Mexico	1
Netherlands	1
New Zealand	1
Saudia Arabia	1
South Korea	1
United Arab Emirates	1
Zambia	1

Figure 4. List of countries represented by International students participating in the online survey. This figure shows all of the home countries represented by international students who took part in the online survey portion of this research project.

Overall, the international students surveyed for two of the institutions, MSSU and OCC, overwhelmingly felt living in the residence hall was a positive experience (92.9% and 100% respectively), while 42.9% of international students surveyed at Crowder College felt living in the residence hall was a positive experience.

Although the data did reveal several ways in which residence hall leaders positively impacted their cross-cultural experience (as shown below), there were a few areas that suggested that the leaders where less helpful. For example, RDs seemed to have little success in terms of helping international students to feel as if they fit in to the campus culture (only 33% of respondents agreeing that RDs assisted in this area) and in terms of communicating a personal interest to international students (only 28% of respondents agreeing that RDs had demonstrated personal interest). Likewise, only 24% of respondents felt RAs helped them to make friends on campus and the same number felt that RAs had helped them to better understand U.S. culture.

Several themes emerged from the international focus groups, as well as from the residence hall leader focus groups, as presented in Table 1. These themes indicate several areas in which residence hall leaders foster or impede the cross-cultural adaptation of international students through communication activities and the residence hall environment.

Leaders are a Communicate Information About the Students' New Environment

The findings indicate that residence hall leaders play an important role in providing helpful information to international students as they are transitioning to a new environment. This was one of the most frequently mentioned themes ($n = 8$) among the

international students as well as the residence hall leaders (*n* = 7) from all three

institutions. As international students attempt to gain insight into the institutional

environment as well as the people they will be interacting within the residence halls and

on campus, residence hall leaders became, for many of them, a convenient and valuable

source of information. The proximity of the residence hall leaders, and the students'

perceptions of them as potentially knowledgeable about how the residence hall and other

components of the campus work can provide the international student with useful

Table 1

Emergent Themes from Focus Group Sessions with International Students and Residence

Hall Leaders from all Three Institutions

Theme	Number of International Students (n= 13)	Number of Residence Hall Leaders (n = 20)
Leaders social event/social integration facilitators	9	14
Leaders providing useful information	8	7
Leaders impact as personal encourager/supporter	9	3
Leaders as influencers of residence hall environment	5	11
Leaders as problem solvers/advocate	5	4
Timidity/Shyness of internationals	4	5
Safety/Welcoming Atmosphere of Residence Hall	12	5
Coolness/Distance of Domestics (MSSU/OCC only)	6	2

information, helping them to adapt. Louise a freshman from France typified other

students' responses when she said "Like when I would see her [an RA] in the corridor she

was always willing to help me out with answers to my questions about how things are done at the school or in the dorm."

The information the students mentioned as helpful was broad and varied. Ahmad, a junior from the Middle East, spoke about the specific welcoming impact that an informational meeting with the RD had on him. He noted the assistance the RD provided to a group of international students in locating and providing technical information that allowed international students to participate in online gaming. He felt that the residence hall leaders taking the time to share this information "was a really nice way of just, you know, making us feel comfortable there in the residence hall." RA Maya talked about showing international students how the campus operated, noting "and they had so many questions about how they would get their meals, like 'I just walk in?' And like, just taking the time to actually sit and explain like stuff that seems so like simple and done to us is like so crazy off the wall for them because they've just never had anything like it" The practical life information that residence hall leaders shared often extended beyond the scope of residence hall life. Ian, a veteran resident director serving at OCC noted "one part of it is just helping with the very practical and especially for the ones that would come from a less technological culture. Just getting used to using phones, cell phones, and bank accounts and the whole bureaucracy of living in an American city."

Food (*n*=10) and transportation (*n*=9) were two important issues raised by international students participating in the focus groups and recognized by a small number of the RAs. One of the survey questions asked international students how well adjusted they felt related to eating American food. Of those responding, 20% indicated they had not adjusted at all. Only 15% indicated they had completely adjusted. Many (*n*=6) of the

international students participating in the focus groups revealed that information from RAs in particular was helpful in mitigating this difficulty in adjusting by making the international students aware of campus and local community options. For example, Ryuichi, a junior from Japan reflected on when he was a new student at MSSU and his RA provided him with information about community food options. He spoke of the frustration of not being familiar with food options as a student in a new environment. He noted that new international students are often unaware of options. "But they also don't know that there is like Uber and stuff like Grub, Grub Hub and stuff like that." For him, and others in the international student focus groups, such information made available through the residence hall leader was helpful in adapting to a new community.

Similar to the challenges that lack of access to food options created for students' cross-cultural adaptation, transportation was also frequently mentioned ($n = 9$) as a challenging issue. Participants indicated that a large segment of international students do not have personal access to a vehicle. Khadja, a junior from Burundi, said "As an international student, I still don't have a car. I've lived here for like almost three years now." She notes that having help from the RA especially in the early days of residency, before other connections are formed, was very vital. A few of the residence hall leaders have sensed this need as well as the impact that helping to provide transportation can have on the cross-cultural adaptation of the students. When asked about possible resources that would benefit residence hall leader's efforts toward helping international students in their adaptation process, Crowder College RD Marie suggested. "One of the resources that could be helpful is to provide, like, like transportation like a van or

something that we could you, know, maybe once a week, you know, hey let's take them to Walmart."

Leaders Provide International Students with Insight into Their New Culture

A few of the international students ($n = 6$) participating in the focus groups discussed a perceived disinterest or a lack of warmth in the personal interactions of domestic students and faculty. The sense of disinterest by domestic students confused some of the participants, with a couple of them expressing that it led to feelings of isolation or stress, as evidenced by the comments from Alejandra, from Mexico when she says "I don't fit, like I don't know what you're talking about. Like, there's this three people and they're talking to each other and I'm there but I'm not there, because I don't know what you are talking about." Jean, a freshman from Haiti, spoke of how he was confused by the seemingly conflicting conduct of his roommate. His roommate requested for him to not say much to him in the morning, while they were waking up, but then this roommate would at times greet him occasionally when he was getting started in his day. Jean said that his roommate had asked him to "Don't tell him 'Hello', don't say 'What's up?' but you know, when I start to apply his recommendations and when I would start on my way by wake up in the morning and he ask me 'how are you doing?' and I felt so embarrassed to, to not answer him." Opportunities arise in the residence hall for leaders to provide insight into confusing or unfamiliar behavior and actions of domestic students.

Despite the opportunities, only a handful of the international students ($n=5$) communicated that residential leaders actually helped them through either resolving an issue with a domestic student or provided insight into the domestic students' actions. Some of the RAs ($n=4$) also recognized this opportunity to assist international students.

For example, Emily, a MSSU RA, gave voice to this role, having personally experienced it, "…if I have an international student whose roommate is doing something that's really, really normal in our culture, but is like really, really difficult for the international student to understand or be comfortable with, then it's like my job to advocate for that [international] student and have that, like, facilitate that conversation and make sure that like everyone can be on the same page." Charles, OCC RA articulates the same idea when he says "Even things like humor, like how we joke, they just don't understand. Like, I've had to teach like people in a group setting. They're like 'What? Like, I don't understand what you're talking about.' And it's like, 'Oh, that was sarcasm', and trying to explain to them, like, just the things in our culture that they might not understand at all."

Personal Conversations by Leaders Provided a Sense of Acceptance and Belonging

In addition to serving as a source of information for international students, residence hall leaders frequently have meaningful personal conversations that help international students adapt to their new home away from home. The personal interest and conversations that emerge were mentioned by several international students ($n = 9$) as helping them to feel accepted, valued and/or included as a part of the residence hall community. Nia, a junior from Nigeria said "It did give a bit of comfort to know that there are people that will understand you. That you can actually talk with comfort without having to change." Anisa, a Kenyan freshman, confirmed the power of even brief personal conversations with her RA adding her advice for residence hall leaders in "taking time, maybe, just having a conversation with me. Like 'How my day is going,' or something like that." Little conversations that centered on what was important to the

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international student (e.g., their home country, their family, their ethnicity, their interests, etc.) expressed value and help them to feel, as Jean said "noticed in this huge amount of people that can make them feel at home."

Ian said "And I spend a lot of time laughing and also listening. Listening to struggles, listening to relationship things and taking them seriously and looking for ways to grow in those or to make them better if there are problems." Louise felt that such a demonstration of interest by a residence hall leader was significant in helping her "feel as if she was among a family of sorts." MSSU RA Emily pointed to the importance of seizing those key early days to form relationships with international students. "I was just really, really intentional on my first interactions with especially international students because that first one really sets the tone for what they can expect from you."

International Student Timidity a Potential Obstacle to Effective Communication

One of the communication challenges that was highlighted by a few of the international students (n=4) and residence hall leaders (n=5) had to do with personal shyness, or timidity. Augusto, a freshman from Guatemala said "I don't feel able to like speak to them and be like, hey, like, I need help you know. And sometimes we need someone to come to us and be like, hey, like [is] there anything you need?" The international students felt that sometimes the residence hall leaders were too quick to accept an "everything's fine" type of answer. Khadji confirmed this when she said, "It just means that when somebody asks you a question, you wait for the answer. So, yeah, that's what I would say, probably, ask the question. Be there there for them and wait for them to respond and not just assume that, I guess, they were okay." Approachability is important to RAs, as Charles voiced a sentiment that other residence hall leaders likewise

communicated when he said "And then on top of that, being a role model for the guys on the floor, so that they can come talk to you if they are going through something or if they have some question about anything in life, or anything having to do with school." The residence hall leaders want to be approachable, but sometimes the personal timidity of the international student prevents them from approaching the leaders, so it would seem to be important for those leaders to proactively reach out to the students.

Coordinated Activities Create Opportunities for Social Interaction

Findings from this study suggest that residence hall leaders help student's cross-cultural adaptation processes when they coordinate activities designed to connect residential international students to domestic students, building a sense of friendship and support. A majority (58.6%) of the international students surveyed acknowledged that they had been invited by an RA to join in social activity with American students, with 60% of those students indicating that they felt "well adjusted" or "completely adjusted" when it came to attending events on campus. International students who participated in the focus groups spoke of the value of the residence hall leaders in both facilitating the activities themselves and inviting participation in such activities. Ahmad reinforced this idea when he said "I keep saying events, and events, events, but, like, they really, really, really help out."

As mentioned earlier, a number of international student participants in the focus groups spoke of a perceived "coolness" or distance emanating from domestic students ($n = 6$), which made it somewhat more problematic to form social connections between international students and domestic students. Louise from France put it bluntly, when she said "I don't think American students seem interested in getting to know international

students." Likewise, Ahmad gives voice to this when he says, "And the Americans within that environment, there's a complex thing where like they already have their established social circles, you know." He continues, "It's very much the case where like you, if, if I wanted to be friends with an American, I would have to like initiate. I would have to make the first move."

However, the findings of this study suggest that residence hall activities designed to facilitate social interaction and integration were viewed positively by international students (*n*=9). For example, Ahmad again says, "Its, it's the one time where like neither party has to initiate. You're both there for one purpose, and just through natural course of events, you know, you will find other people. They really, really help. It really helps you get more friends and get a better experience." His fellow international student Nia concurred when she said "And so those on-campus activities that we do in Residence Life have a really big effect for the international students who don't have a way to get off campus."

The study indicated that activities which give consideration to interests of the international students can contribute to their sense of belonging and acceptance in the community (*n*=4). Augusto typified this when he said "I don't get included like with basketball, because of course I'm not a basketball player." He went on to make a suggestion that rather than just heading out to a pizza place or a hamburger shop, "Let's do a, you know, like what if we go to a Guatemalan restaurant all together?" This study findings indicated that residence hall leaders may want to avoid doing exclusively activities particularly popular with domestic students but should also give thought to what might be of interest to international students. Eliot, an RA from OCC, sought to find

activities that would not necessarily put international students at a disadvantage. Octavia, RA from Crowder College, supports this approach, saying "We try to make sure that it's [the activity] very, know well rounded. Something that some, you know, everyone enjoys. Like a lot of the international guys they like to play video games."

Leaders Help International Students to Feel Welcome and Accepted

The vast majority of participating residence hall leaders (*n*=14) from all three institutions, when asked, identified one of the primary purposes of their role as to provide comfort and safety for the residents. Angela, RA from Crowder College typifies this view when she said "I think the safety of the residents and the comfort of making sure that they're comfortable would be one of the main things and making sure they are okay." The international students also noted the role that residence hall leaders made in helping them to feel comfortable in the residence hall. The role of Resident Assistants in particular was highlighted, as overall 65.5% of the 29 international students who responded to the survey question, affirmed that Resident Assistants had helped them to feel more comfortable in the residence hall. When asked if there was any time they felt unsafe or unwelcome in the residence hall, none of the international students in the focus groups felt there was.

Summary of Findings

The findings of this study indicated that overall, students in two of the three institutions felt very strongly that their experience in the residence halls was positive. The primary ways that residence hall leaders can assist in international students' cross-cultural adaptation focus on communication and activities. The study indicated that residence hall leaders can serve as a convenient and useful source of information for

international students, aiding them in their familiarity with their new environment. This familiarity helps the students adapt by providing information about how the residence hall and campus departments function as well as insight into the behavior and experiences the student observes while interacting with domestic students. Additionally, personal conversations between residence hall leaders and international students can provide the student with a sense of belonging and acceptance. A final significant role that residence hall leaders play in the cross-cultural adaptation of international students is to provide opportunities and remove barriers for initiating interaction with domestic students. These opportunities help to create cross-cultural support networks. Finally, the study found that residence hall leaders can help to create an environment that is accepting and welcoming to international students, which helps support their cross-cultural adaptation through bolstering their sense of belonging, safety and acceptance.

Discussion

One of the most substantial findings in this study is the role that residence hall leadership, especially resident assistants, play in serving as a source of helpful information for international students, as they cross-culturally adapt to a new environment. By providing information the students lack, residence hall leaders help ease stress and frustration the international students experience as they socially integrate and cross-cultural adapt to the residence hall and campus. By having access to and sharing useful information, residence hall leaders are in a position to help counter international student lack of familiarity with the new environment, which has been indicated to hinder social integration for international students (Chong & Razek, 2014). Additionally, opportunities exist for residence hall leaders to provide insight into the social norms and

behaviors of domestic students. This insight can be helpful to international students in comprehending domestic student actions and communications. This insight can reduce instances of frustration and tension as well as help avoid unnecessary barriers to forming social connections with domestic students. International students who experience positive relationships with domestic students, have less acculturative stress (Sullivan & Kastabeck, 2015) and these relationships aid in the cross-cultural adaptation of the international students (Jackson, 2013).

When residence hall leaders take the time to engage in personal conversations that communicate acceptance, value and interest in the student, it promotes a sense of belonging. Cultivating a feeling of belonging is an important component to helping international students develop a sense of community within the residence hall (Schreiner, 2013), and help mitigate feelings of loneliness and isolation. Feelings of separation, loneliness, a sense of powerlessness or inferiority can create a feeling within international students that they do not belong (Gautum et al., 2016; Sanhu & Asrabdi, 1998). Residence hall leaders, through their personal interaction can encourage acceptance, inclusion and friendship, helping to build strong ties within the community of the residence hall and positively impacting the cross-cultural adaptation of some of those students (Karamehic-Muratovic, Cheah, & Matsuo, 2017). Students also affirmed that the efforts of residence hall leaders to "push past" the initial polite responses to queries and to dig a little deeper into how the international student is doing in their cross-cultural experience will communicate interest and value.

Another important finding of this study was that residence hall activities organized, coordinated and carried out by residence hall leaders helped to facilitate

meaningful relational connections between international students and other residential and campus students. Frequent and consistent communication between international students and domestic students has been demonstrated to be beneficial to the cross-cultural adaptation process (Church, 1982), and social support networks are a significant factor in cross-cultural adaptation (Baba & Hosada, 2017; Andrade, 2005). Residential life activities carried out by the resident hall leaders serve as a vehicle through which these important communication and network interactions are encouraged and facilitated. International students can have difficulty making social connections with other students (Glass, Buus & Braskamp, 2013), and when residence hall leaders host residence community activities that remove barriers for such social connections, it helps international students to form those connections. Such activities make it easier for interaction to emerge naturally, avoiding the necessity for international or domestic students to be the catalyst for the connection. Because they are organized by residence hall leaders, it relieves the burden on international students to proactively create opportunities to interact or communicate with domestic students. Such social interactions with domestic students have been indicated to improve the chance of successful cross-cultural adaptation (Ward & Kennedy, 1993; Kim 2001).

An indication emerged during the conversations with international students that suggested that leadership philosophy influences the ability of the residence hall leaders to help international students adapt through conveying a sense of personal interest, support and belonging. Ozark Christian College and Crowder College both articulate and generally practice a leadership approach that is best described as Servant Leadership (Greenleaf, 1977). This leadership approach gives a priority to meeting the needs of the

employees (students). Missouri Southern State University follows a transactional leadership approach, which emphasizes order and structure (Northouse, 2016). Interestingly, when international students spoke about the impact residence hall leaders had in helping them to feel welcome, included and supported, they pointed to resident assistants who practiced actions aligning with a servant leadership philosophy. When RA's were consistently transactional in their interactions, students were less likely to identify the interactions as conveying support or encouraging a sense of belonging. The residence hall leaders at OCC appeared to operate in accordance with the Servant Leadership approach the school operated. Ironically, both MSSU and Crowder residence hall leaders seemed to operate counter to their institution's overall leadership approach. Although MSSU structure supports a more transactional approach, the residence hall leaders operate more in alignment with Servant Leadership principles. The opposite is true for Crowder. Because the research questions guiding this study did not focus on the impact of residence hall leadership style on international student's cross-cultural adaptation, further research would need to be done to validate the indication regarding leadership style suggested in this present study.

Implications for Practice

Institutions of higher learning have the potential, through effective utilization of residence hall leaders, to alleviate hindrances and facilitate cross-cultural adaptation among international students. This current study suggests that institutions of higher learning could help international students cross-culturally adapt by providing residence hall leaders with information about residence hall life and operation, as well as campus and community information. A combination of knowledge base and a capacity to share

that information are both important. Training residence hall leaders on how to find information and how to recognize opportunities to provide that information to international students would also be valuable. Institutions may want to facilitate an effort early on in the semester when RAs specifically can spend time with internationals to build relationships through providing information and demonstrating personal interest, thus establishing a positive and trusting relationship from the very beginning.

Cross-cultural competency training for residence hall leaders would be a fruitful investment for all institutions, as indicated by the input of the participants of the focus groups of this study. Many of the residence hall leaders spoke of the value that training could provide for strategically facilitating conversations with internationals. Training addressing how to recognize one's own cultural distinctiveness, how to converse with students who come from different cultures, as well as how to plan activities within the residence halls that take into consideration cultural distinctiveness would have benefit.

Strategically planning events to build social interaction and integration while giving consideration to activities that put everyone, as much as possible, at the same level of advantage would help international students to engage socially. By creating opportunities for natural interactions which do not depend on either the international student or the domestic student to be proactive, the burden and risks of making the first steps toward social engagement are minimized.

Limitations and Future Studies

This study is qualitative in nature, seeking to understand the lived experiences of the participants. Because those experiences are unique to the individual, even for those at the same or similar settings, it is difficult to draw generalized conclusions. In an effort to

mitigate this limitation, the study broadened the input of experiences by involving students from three different institutions.

Although the study did include three institutions of higher learning, those institutions are located within thirty miles of each other in the U.S. Midwest, which represents a geographical limitation on the study. This, again, makes it difficult to draw generalized conclusions about all institutions of higher learning.

Qualitative studies recognize the researcher as a vital instrument in the investigative process. "Both the readers of case studies and the authors themselves need to be aware of biases that can affect the final product" (Merriam, 1988, p. 34). In this present study, I served as the primary researcher and I also serve at one of the participating sites as an RD. This reality meant that I had to be conscientious about how my own experiences as an RD might color the way I asked questions, interpreted responses and drew conclusions (Creswell, 2016; Shenton, 2004; Birks, Chapman & Francis, 2007). Several measures where incorporated in the study to help minimize potential bias, including having colleagues and non-participating international students preview questions, involving multiple sites and triangulating the data between those sites, as well as utilizing member checking of results. Additionally, guidance was sought from one of my professors, who has experience as an international student and educator.

Because of governmental and community restrictions in place to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews and focus groups had to be conducted utilizing phone and internet communication resources such as ZOOM. Operating in these venues created challenges to receiving the full experience of observation and communication, especially regarding non-verbal cues such as gestures and facial expressions of

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participants. In order to alleviate this, additional research and training was pursued to prepare myself for conducting effective interviews in an online environment.

Future studies could include other geographical regions, especially less rural, more urban settings. Also, the impact of differing styles of residence hall leadership would be of interest. A qualitative study pursuing more deeply the causes behind domestic students perceived aloofness would be a fascinating and potentially helpful study. Further study into the impact of the philosophy guiding residence hall leadership purpose and mission might also yield helpful fruit.

Conclusion

The contributions of international students to U.S. institutions is varied and significant. U.S. higher education institutions can benefit by understanding how to utilize residence hall interactions effectively. This qualitative study has revealed that residence hall leaders can assist international students in their cross-cultural adaptation, through communicating useful information about the new culture they are adapting to as well as communicating a personal interest and support. Additionally, through activities that build cross-cultural relationships residence hall leaders help foster support networks that assist students in their adaptation. Residence hall leaders also can help to provide a safe, supportive and inclusive environment for international students within the residence halls.

SECTION SIX: SCHOLARLY PRACTITIONER REFLECTION

In this final section, a personal reflection based on the dissertation is presented. The reflection is shaped by two questions. The first question is how this dissertation has influenced my practice as an educational leader. This was a rigorous, methodical journey that repeatedly required me to examine my own philosophies and practices. It forced both deep introspection and a willingness to broaden the potential influences on my thinking. The second question addressed in this reflection involves considering how the dissertation process has influenced me as a scholar. The process of narrowly determining a research question, developing a research strategy, collecting data, analyzing that data, and articulating the findings and implications has itself been an educational journey. Both of these questions are worthy of consideration. I am confident that I am a different educator and scholar than I was when I first started in the ELPA program over three years ago, and that is a good thing.

Influence on my Practice as an Educational Leader

First, I think it is important to recognize that the findings and implications of this study have helped to develop within me an ability to identify and explore solutions to an important problem of practice in residence halls, namely helping international students adapt to their new home. The field-based opportunities provided by this dissertation process gave me opportunities to analyze a problem of practice and to use multiple lenses/frames to develop meaningful solutions. For this reason, the journey has been extremely relevant and influential to me personally (Vermeulen, 2007).

In the broader sense of serving as an educational leader, there are three areas of influence I would like to address. Each of the three are somewhat interrelated. First, this dissertation journey provided me the opportunity to demonstrate and improve

collaboration and communication skills in working with diverse people. Next, the dissertation process required me to develop gatherings that were conducive to dynamic and interactive dialogue. The final impact addressed in this reflection is the reinforcement of my conviction that the ultimate outcome of my research and education should foster change on some practical level (Kochhar-Bryant, 2016).

Collaboration and Engagement of Others

If there is one truth that has been hammered into my educational philosophy throughout my doctoral journey it is that learning is a social event (Gill, 2010; Merriam & Bierema, 2014). This dissertation reinforced that concept and provided opportunity for developing and exercising the practical application of this philosophy. Though this dissertation is an individual research project, it involved many individuals in coordinating schedules, finding resources, identifying potential participants, helping to check formatting and grammar, learning how to ask questions, and a myriad of other avenues. All the interactions with diverse individuals helped move me further down the road in my understanding and learning and communication. "Leaders cannot succeed on their own; even the most outwardly confident executives need support and advice. Without strong relationships to provide perspective, it is very easy to lose your way" (George, Sims, McLean & Mayer, 2007, p. 136). The reality is that in pursuing personal and shared objectives, we must learn how to engage other people in that pursuit.

Working closely with teams in the learning environment of the cohort created opportunities for me to see the theory of collaboration embodied in action. This proved to be helpful in engaging people to become involved in the research essential for this dissertation. Though this dissertation can be said to be the result of my mind and hands,

it would be a gross oversight to fail to recognize that many others helped to bring it to a successful conclusion. The interaction of the international students as well as the residence hall leaders was a beautiful example of Lencioni's (2002) assertion that teams interacting with trust and openness will most likely avoid the wasteful and time-consuming activity of trying to manage group behaviors and interactions. The commitment and shared experiences they held in common made it much easier for them to dialogue and interact in a productive manner. "No individual achievement can equal the pleasure of leading a group of people to achieve a worthy goal" (George, et al., 2007, p. 138). Leadership is most effective when it involves a community of individuals whose shared knowledge and expertise is complementary (Datnow & Park, 2014).

I was also encouraged throughout this dissertation process to be willing to listen attentively and maintain an openness to discovery of insight, even from unexpected sources. There were several times I would find an article that I had hopes would contribute to my research, but in the end would find little that seemed helpful. However, I soon realized that even in those cases, the reference section would often become a treasure of articles and authors that I had not discovered before. Those resources opened new avenues of knowledge. It came not from what they had written, however, but from the resources they identified as helpful. This dissertation has helped me to be on guard against the presumption of value that an individual or a group of individuals might be able to bring to a project or process. If I take the time to dig a little deeper, to listen more carefully, I may find that some people have ways to contribute to the educational journey that might not initially be obvious.

Encourage Broad and Diverse Input

When I first became a part of the Springfield Cohort, I did not possess the work and educational background that a majority of the other members possessed. The language used in many of the conversations and discussions in class was unfamiliar to me. There were barriers that I had to overcome to be able to engage and interact with this new community (Brufee, 1999). Listening to the international students who participated in this study talk of the barriers to feeling part of the residence hall community was invaluable in strengthening my commitment to find practical ways as an educator to help these students find ways to fit in. The challenging words the international students shared in the focus groups have a powerful capacity to reinforce, modify or destroy my (and hopefully others) assumptions and ideas (Cueva, 2010). Koffman and Senge (1993) suggested that personal transformation is the only real avenue toward learning, and a safe place for such transformation is within a learning community. Interacting with study participants and articulating their lived experiences has transformed me and enriched my professional knowledge and practice to advocate for their plight.

I recall a conversation during summer session about the value of creating an environment of openness and the sharing of differing perspectives. One of the readings we were assigned made this statement, "Leaders are best positioned to develop openness when they value and understand its potential benefits" (Preskill & Brookfield, 2009, p. 25). This dissertation demonstrated clearly to me the ability genuinely open dialogue has on the comprehension of participants and observers, as well as the synergistic generation of ideas and new levels of thinking.

Educating for Change

A final impact that the dissertation has had is to reinforce the idea that the purpose of my research needs to lead to some positive change. Impacting change, for the betterment of others, is a noble end. In addition to casting vision, building consensus, and empowering people to lead and act, Kotter (2013) indicates that producing change is a mark of an effective leader. An educational leader that is transformational is a change agent (Kochhar-Bryant, 2016). I believe that the information contained within this dissertation can produce change. It already has, in my practice as an educational leader. There were moments during this process where I intentionally created space to reflect on my educational experiences and identity in relation to others and I wrestled with inequities in the educational process. These times of reflection prompted me to take steps in both communication and action to help awaken consciousness of wicked problems and address issues of equity, ethics and social justice.

Even this final impact is connected to the first one I identified, as effective learning that fosters change requires collaboration (Tichnor-Wagner, Harrison, & Cohen-Vogel, 2016; Carpenter-Hubin & Sullivan, 2018; Hallinger, 2010).

Influence on me as a Scholar

There are numerous important influences the process of completing this dissertation has had on me as a scholar. I could speak of how the process of developing a methodical, well thought out plan for conducting the study has improved my research and learning on other subjects. I could also address the opportunity to hone critical thinking skills provided by this dissertation. However, I would like to focus on three specific areas the dissertation process has influenced me as a scholar. The first has to do with learning

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to communicate in a clear and concise manner. That may seem an odd thing to classify as an influential impact that changed how I operate as a scholar, but it really has been significant for me. This is in tandem with the feedback I received from my dissertation advisor, who always stressed clear communication, presenting ideas in an orderly manner, and expressing myself smoothly and precisely. The second impact I would like to address is the way this process has taught me to slow down and reflect in my learning. The final impact has to do with the way in which this dissertation process has forced me to look inward and to be transparent and authentic in dealing with my philosophies, beliefs and biases.

Importance of Clear and Concise Communication

A clear and concise sentence can be a powerfully influential means of communication. This may not seem initially to be a profound impact to others. For me, however, the dissertation, in conjunction with the myriad of papers written and articles read during my doctoral studies, helped me to understand the effectiveness of a well-constructed, brief sentence. This is not to say that I have mastered this truth. I am a continuous work-in-progress. Whether it involves writing emails to students or presenting findings and implications, I have realized the value of being frugal with words. This was particularly important in crafting survey instruments, interview and focus group questions for participants from a culture other than the United States and whose first language is not English. This required me to not just think about what I wanted to ask, but to also consider how the person hearing the question might perceive it (Birks, Chapman & Francis, 2007). This is a great process for thinking through communication in an educational environment. It forced me to think about word choices, sentence structure

and the avoidance of unnecessary verbosity. I have come to appreciate the power of cultural competence in communication.

An additional thought that is connected to communication is the importance of staying on focus (Grant & Pollock, 2011). During the dissertation proposal hearing it was a painful, yet clarifying process to cut away the broad and generalized statements and find the core of a single focused question. It is incredibly easy in the process of researching a topic to discover new aspects or ideas connected to a research topic that can seem very appealing to consider. However, just as "eliminating redundancy, wordiness, jargon, evasiveness, overuse of the passive voice, circumlocution, and clumsy prose" (APA, 2010, p. 67) helps one to say only what needs to be said, remaining focused on the topic or question being addressed helps to prevent a study from becoming bloated and less effective.

Take Time to Reflect

A transformative realization that the dissertation process has provided for me is the recognition of the value of self-reflection. This process has cultivated a habit within me of reflective inquiry. Gill (2010) suggested that to create a learning culture, a leader would need to integrate the practice of reflective inquiry into their teams work processes. "Action is critical, but the action we need can spring only from a reflective territory that includes not only cognition but body, emotions and spirit as well" (Koffman & Senge, 1993, p. 7). There were a number of times that I had to wait for someone else to complete an action. My research came to a standstill as I waited for contact lists, feedback on questionnaires, review of documents or drafts of the dissertation. In these periods of "downtime," I would take time to reflect on what had been done, the information that had

been gathered thus far, or reread articles at a deeper and reflective pace. These periods of slowdown helped me to activate a critical and deeper understanding of the readings, the connection to my dissertation and its influence on my practice. It has been a hard practice to consistently apply. Despite this difficulty, it has truly been transformative for me. Koffman & Senge (1993) spoke of the impatient quest for progress, which can lead to superficial changes, often at the expense of deeper issues. This can easily be the case in research as well. The slow, steady pace of such a large research project helped to challenge my assumptions, forced me to undergo a self-assessment and self-accountability, and reinforced within me the value of taking time for reflection.

Knowing Myself

The process of this dissertation forced me to perform genuine self-introspection. Serving as a residence hall leader and seeking to study how residence hall leaders can impact international students' cross-cultural adaptation meant that there was potential for preconceived ideas and biases to influence the study. This reality forced me to examine and identify ways this might happen. This self-introspection was helpful to me as a scholar and a leader. I recalled a quote from one of the authors we read in the coursework. "The journey to authentic leadership begins with understanding the story of your life. Your life story provides the context for your experiences, and through it, you can find the inspiration to make an impact on the world." (George, Sims, McClean and Mayer, p. 132). The dissertation process has been helpful for me to recognize how my background, culture, relationships, and life experiences all need to be considered when teaching and learning. It is not that bias insurmountably prevents understanding or

learning, but an awareness of these biases can help me as a scholar to take measures to protect the integrity of my teaching and learning.

One of the benefits of understanding myself better is that I can choose to move in directions that stretch me. For most of my doctoral journey, as I would look ahead to the dissertation process, the idea of doing a qualitative study was near anathema to me. Most of my background in education was in business leadership, with a strong emphasis in accounting. I tend to gravitate towards numbers and definitive calculations. The thought of attempting to analyze and understand the dynamic feedback from a variety of individuals seemed unsettling to me. As I started this qualitative study, like so many before me, I did not really know where I might land (Bansal & Corely, 2012). As a scholar, however, I learned that I must be ready to go where the question leads, in order to find answers that will make a difference (Vermeulen, 2007). This process forced me to initiate interactions that my introverted nature resisted. It required me to take risks, practice humility, as I relied on others to teach me how to ask questions so they could be clear and elicit the input I was seeking.

Conclusion

This dissertation has been influential on my practice as an educational leader. It has encouraged and allowed me to practice the critical engagement of other people toward a common educational objective. I have come to value the broad range impact of individuals from different backgrounds and experiences, as well as the necessity of fostering an environment that encourages dialogue and interaction with truly diverse ideas. By providing opportunities to develop such interaction in focus groups especially, I have sharpened my skills in this area. This dissertation, with the focus on a compelling

research question, has also encouraged me to identify specific change as an outcome to my educational efforts.

With respect to the process of the dissertation, I have experienced the benefits that come from taking time for reflection. Although I find myself inadvertently writing long, convoluted sentences, this dissertation process has challenged me to say only what needs to be said. Additionally, the process of this dissertation research has created a sensitivity toward being mindful of the bias that my own experience can bring to my understanding in an educational setting.

These significant impacts will continue to shape my practice as an educational leader and my journey as a scholar. I am grateful for the content of the dissertation, but equally grateful for the benefits that have emerged from the process.

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Appendix A

Online Survey Items for International Students

1. How long have you lived in the United States (U.S.)?
   o < a year
   o 1 – 2 Years
   o 3 – 5 Years
   o > 6 Years

2. How long have you lived in the residence hall in your current college?
   o < a semester
   o 1 – 2 semesters
   o 3 – 5 semesters
   o > 6 semesters

3. What is your gender?
   o Female
   o Male
   o Other _____

4. What is the highest educational degree you completed in your home country?
   o Senior High
   o Two Year College
   o Bachelor's
   o Master's
   o PhD
   o Other _____

5. In your home country, did you live in a residence hall?
   o Yes
   o No

6. What country did you live in before coming to the U.S.?

7. Which of the following best describes how frequently you talk (more than a general greeting) with a Resident Assistant.
   o Never
   o Once a month
   o 2 – 3 times a month
   o Once a week
   o 2 or more times a week

*The next five questions concern your interactions with residence hall **Residence Assistants.** Please mark the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.*

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
8. A resident assistant has helped me make friends on campus.
   - o Strongly disagree
   - o Disagree
   - o Somewhat disagree
   - o Neither agree or disagree
   - o Somewhat agree
   - o Agree
   - o Strongly agree

9. A resident assistant has helped me to understand American culture.
   - o Strongly disagree
   - o Disagree
   - o Somewhat disagree
   - o Neither agree or disagree
   - o Somewhat agree
   - o Agree
   - o Strongly agree

10. Talking with a resident assistant has helped me feel comfortable to talk with other Americans.
    - o Strongly disagree
    - o Disagree
    - o Somewhat disagree
    - o Neither agree or disagree
    - o Somewhat agree
    - o Agree
    - o Strongly agree

11. A resident assistant has invited me to join in social activity with other Americans.
    - o Strongly disagree
    - o Disagree
    - o Somewhat disagree
    - o Neither agree or disagree
    - o Somewhat agree
    - o Agree
    - o Strongly agree

12. A resident assistant has helped me to feel more comfortable in the residence hall.
    - o Strongly disagree
    - o Disagree
    - o Somewhat disagree

- o Neither agree or disagree
- o Somewhat agree
- o Agree
- o Strongly agree

The next two questions concern your interactions with residence hall **Residence Directors.** *Please mark the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.*

13. My Resident Director has helped me to fit in the university culture.
    - o Strongly disagree
    - o Disagree
    - o Somewhat disagree
    - o Neither agree or disagree
    - o Somewhat agree
    - o Agree
    - o Strongly agree

14. My Resident Director has taken interest to know me personally.
    - o Strongly disagree
    - o Disagree
    - o Somewhat disagree
    - o Neither agree or disagree
    - o Somewhat agree
    - o Agree
    - o Strongly agree

The next three questions concern your interactions with **the residence hall community** *in general*. *Please mark the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.*

15. The residence hall community is supportive of different cultures.
    - o Strongly disagree
    - o Disagree
    - o Somewhat disagree
    - o Neither agree or disagree
    - o Somewhat agree
    - o Agree
    - o Strongly agree

16. Students in the residence hall expect me to act like an American.
    - o Strongly disagree
    - o Disagree
    - o Somewhat disagree
    - o Neither agree or disagree

- o Somewhat agree
- o Agree
- o Strongly agree

17. Living in the residence hall is a positive experience.
- o Strongly disagree
- o Disagree
- o Somewhat disagree
- o Neither agree or disagree
- o Somewhat agree
- o Agree
- o Strongly agree

For the following 11 questions, please mark how well adjusted you feel to the following situations:

18. Finding my way around campus.
- o Not adjusted at all
- o Somewhat adjusted
- o Well adjusted
- o Completely adjusted

19. Completing my school assignments.
- o Not adjusted at all
- o Somewhat adjusted
- o Well adjusted
- o Completely adjusted

20. Eating food in America.
- o Not adjusted at all
- o Somewhat adjusted
- o Well adjusted
- o Completely adjusted

21. Feeling comfortable where I live.
- o Not adjusted at all
- o Somewhat adjusted
- o Well adjusted
- o Completely adjusted

22. Socializing with other international students.
- o Not adjusted at all
- o Somewhat adjusted
- o Well adjusted
- o Completely adjusted

23. Finding ways to relax outside school activities.
    o Not adjusted at all
    o Somewhat adjusted
    o Well adjusted
    o Completely adjusted

24. Interacting with faculty and staff.
    o Not adjusted at all
    o Somewhat adjusted
    o Well adjusted
    o Completely adjusted

25. Socializing with American students.
    o Not adjusted at all
    o Somewhat adjusted
    o Well adjusted
    o Completely adjusted

26. Attending social events on campus.
    o Not adjusted at all
    o Somewhat adjusted
    o Well adjusted
    o Completely adjusted

27. Handling unexpected situations that arise when interacting with American students.
    o Not adjusted at all
    o Somewhat adjusted
    o Well adjusted
    o Completely adjusted

28. Feeling comfortable being away from home.
    o Not adjusted at all
    o Somewhat adjusted
    o Well adjusted
    o Completely adjusted

Appendix B

Face to Face Semi-Structured Interview Protocol – Residence Directors

Greeting

    Thank you for participating
    Read Informed Consent Statement

1. First name, how long you have served as an RA and give your consent.

Opening Questions

2. RA's have a number of different responsibilities, but if you were to describe what you perceive to be the primary role of an RA in the residence hall, what would that be?

Transition Questions

3. How Frequently would you say that you have a conversation (more than just a greeting) with international students in your residence hall? 1 a month, 2-3 times a month 1 time a week more than 1 time a week

Key Questions

4. Is there anything about your role as an RD that you found to be significant in helping international students navigate the adaptation process to this new culture?
5. Describe any specific intentional activities you have engaged in as an RA you to help international students to feel accepted and included in the dorm community.
6. How do you intentionally show personal interest in the international students within your residence hall.
7. Do you believe that RA's can influence the culture of the Residence Hall, and how have you sought to influence the culture with respect to international students specifically?
8. In what ways have you assisted international students in the residence hall in forming friendships with domestic students?
9. In what ways have you sought to help international students in understanding and interacting with U.S. culture?
10. Have you participated in any training as an RA that was at least in part specifically focused on helping international students adapt to the dorm life?
11. What do you believe is the most effective action you have taken to help international students specifically adapt to life in the residence hall?
12. In what ways have you sought to help international students to connect with campus social groups, or social groups within the dorm?

13. What challenges have you experienced in your efforts to help international students to adapt to the dorm community?
14. Are there any resources that you believe would help RA's as they seek to help international students feel more at home in the dorms?
15. Do you have any closing thoughts about how we as RA's might be able to better assist international students in their adaptation to campus life?

<u>Closing</u>

Thank you for participating

Reminder of confidentiality, potential follow up & completion of the survey

Appendix C

Focus Group Interview Protocol – International Students

<u>Greeting</u>

Thank you for participating
Read Informed Consent Statement

1. First name, how long you have lived in the dorms and give your consent.

<u>Opening Questions</u>

2. What is your favorite thing about living in the residence halls?
3. What was the most challenging/difficult thing for you to adjust to living in the dorms?

<u>Transition Questions</u>

4. How Frequently would you say that you have a conversation (more than just a greeting) with your RA? 1 a month, 2-3 times a mo 1 time a wk more than 1 time a week

<u>Key Questions</u>

5. Would you say that your RA shown that he/she is personally interested in you?
    a. In what ways did he or she show interest? (what did the do or say)
6. Have conversations you had with your RA had any impact on the level of comfort you have in talking with other Americans?
    a. If yes: In what ways did it impact it?
7. Do you feel as if you are connected to the residence hall community?
    a. Please share any specific action or conversation that your RA or RD took that helped you feel accepted in the residence hall.
8. How has living in the residence hall affected your understanding of the American Culture?
9. Has the residence hall leader demonstrated an interest in your home culture?
    a. If yes: follow up: Please describe an instance where the he or she demonstrated interested in your home culture.
    b. What about the residence hall community as a whole, is there an instance you could describe that for you demonstrated that the residence hall community was interested in your home culture?
10. Have you ever felt unsafe or unwelcome in the residence hall?
    a. If it is not too uncomfortable, please describe the instance

11. Would you say that your residence hall leader had an impact on your feeling more comfortable talking to other Americans outside of the dorm?
    a. Describe ways living in the residence halls helped you to feel more comfortable or confident in talking to other Americans.
12. Have you ever felt pressure in the residence hall to act more American?
    a. Describe.
13. If you could recommend to RA's how they might help other international students adapt to dorm life, what would that be?
14. Has your RA helped to handle a problem or conflict you were involved in?
    a. Do you feel they understood your position.
    b. Did that interaction strengthen your relationship with either the residence hall leader or another student?
15. Describe any instance where your RA helped you to deal with homesickness/loneliness?
16. Describe any instance where you felt like an outsider in the residence hall.
17. What advice would you give to your RA to help them help other international students feel more confident in their conversations with Americans?
18. Is there anything the RD could do to help the residence hall seem more welcoming to international students?
19. Is there any issue concerning the residence hall leader impacting your adaptation to this new culture that we have not asked about?

<u>Closing</u>

Thank you for participating

Reminder of confidentiality, potential follow up & completion of the survey

Appendix D

Focus Group Interview Protocol – Resident Assistants

<u>Greeting</u>

     Thank you for participating
     Read Informed Consent Statement

1. First name, how long you have served as an RA and give your consent.

<u>Opening Questions</u>

2. RA's have a number of different responsibilities, but if you were to describe what you perceive to be the primary role of an RA in the residence hall, what would that be?

<u>Transition Questions</u>

3. How Frequently would you say that you have a conversation (more than just a greeting) with international students in your residence hall? 1 a month, 2-3 times a month 1 time a week more than 1 time a week

<u>Key Questions</u>

4. Is there anything about your role as an RA that you found to be significant in helping international students navigate the adaptation process to this new culture?
5. Describe any specific intentional activities you have engaged in as an RA you to help international students to feel accepted and included in the dorm community.
6. How do you intentionally show personal interest in the international students within your residence hall.
7. Do you believe that RA's can influence the culture of the Residence Hall, and how have you sought to influence the culture with respect to international students specifically?
8. In what ways have you assisted international students in the residence hall in forming friendships with domestic students?
9. In what ways have you sought to help international students in understanding and interacting with U.S. culture?
10. Have you participated in any training as an RA that was at least in part specifically focused on helping international students adapt to the dorm life?
11. What do you believe is the most effective action you have taken to help international students specifically adapt to life in the residence hall?
12. In what ways have you sought to help international students to connect with campus social groups, or social groups within the dorm?

13. What challenges have you experienced in your efforts to help international students to adapt to the dorm community?
14. Are there any resources that you believe would help RA's as they seek to help international students feel more at home in the dorms?
15. Do you have any closing thoughts about how we as RA's might be able to better assist international students in their adaptation to campus life?

Closing

Thank you for participating

Reminder of confidentiality, potential follow up & completion of the survey

Informed Consent Document - Survey

Please consider this information carefully before deciding whether to participate in this research.

Research Study Name: The Impact of Residence Hall Leaders in the Cultural Adaptation of International Students.

Purpose of the Study: This survey is part of a dissertation study evaluating the experience of international students attending an institution of higher learning in the U.S. Midwest.

Participation and Withdrawal: Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty.

Time Requirement: The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Risks: No risks are anticipated.

Benefits: You will receive no direct benefit for participating, but, in addition to contributing to the dissertation itself, the information provided will give useful feedback to MSSU/Crowder/OCC leadership as they attempt to establish programs and policies to assist international students in their academic goals.

Confidentiality: Your participation in this survey, including your responses will collect no personal information.

Participation and Withdrawal: Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time.

To Contact the Researchers: If you have questions or concerns about this research, please contact Gregg Murdock(Murdock.Gregg@occ.edu). You may also contact the faculty members supervising this work: Dr. Kennedy Ongaga, 417-836-6516, kennedyongaga@missouristate.edu.

The nature and purpose of this research have been sufficiently explained, and I agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time without incurring any penalty.

O   I agree to participate in this online survey.

O   I do not agree to participate in this online survey and wish to exit.

Appendix F

Informed Consent Script – Interview

Please consider this information carefully before deciding whether to participate in this research.

Research Study Name: The Impact of Residence Hall Leaders in the Cultural Adaptation of International Students.

Purpose of the Study: This focus group is part of a dissertation evaluating the experience of international students attending three institutions of higher learning in the U.S. Midwest. Data will also be provided to the three institutions participating in the study, to inform potential policy and training of residence hall leadership.

Your Participation: If you decide to volunteer, you will participate in a focus group, providing information useful to gauging your experience as an international student attending MSSU/Crowder/OCC.

Time Requirement: The focus group will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes.

Audio Recording of Focus Group: Audio recording of the focus group will take place to ensure accuracy of statements. Once verified transcripts have been prepared, the audio files will be destroyed.

Risks: No risks are anticipated.

Benefits: You will receive no direct benefit for participating, but, in addition to contributing to the dissertation itself, the information provided will give useful feedback to MSSU leadership as they attempt to establish programs and policies to assist international students in their academic goals.

Confidentiality: Your responses to the focus group will be kept confidential. At no time will your actual identity be revealed. With your written permission below, excerpts from the focus group may be included in the dissertation for partial completion of a doctoral course, as well as published in an academic journal, and may also be shared with MSSU leadership responsible for caring for our international students. However, no individual identifying information will be included in any reporting.

Participation and Withdrawal: Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. You may withdraw by informing the researcher that you no longer wish to participate (no questions will be asked).

To Contact the Researchers: If you have questions or concerns about this research, please contact Gregg Murdock(Murdock.Gregg@occ.edu). You may also contact the

faculty members supervising this work: Dr. Kennedy Ongaga, 417-836-6516, kennedyongaga@missouristate.edu.

The nature and purpose of this research have been sufficiently explained, and I agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time without incurring any penalty.

_____

Your Signature   Date

Appendix G

Informed Consent Script – Focus Group

Please consider this information carefully before deciding whether to participate in this research.

Research Study Name: The Impact of Residence Hall Leaders in the Cultural Adaptation of International Students.

Purpose of the Study: This focus group is part of a dissertation evaluating the experience of international students attending three institutions of higher learning in the U.S. Midwest. Data will also be provided to the three institutions participating in the study, to inform potential policy and training of residence hall leadership.

Your Participation: If you decide to volunteer, you will participate in a focus group, providing information useful to gauging your experience as an international student attending MSSU/Crowder/OCC.

Time Requirement: The focus group will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes.

Audio Recording of Focus Group: Audio recording of the focus group will take place to ensure accuracy of statements. Once verified transcripts have been prepared, the audio files will be destroyed.

Risks: No risks are anticipated.

Benefits: You will receive no direct benefit for participating, but, in addition to contributing to the dissertation itself, the information provided will give useful feedback to MSSU leadership as they attempt to establish programs and policies to assist international students in their academic goals.

Confidentiality: Your responses to the focus group will be kept confidential. At no time will your actual identity be revealed. With your written permission below, excerpts from the focus group may be included in the dissertation for partial completion of a doctoral course, as well as published in an academic journal, and may also be shared with MSSU leadership responsible for caring for our international students. However, no individual identifying information will be included in any reporting.

Participation and Withdrawal: Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. You may withdraw by informing the researcher that you no longer wish to participate (no questions will be asked).

To Contact the Researchers: If you have questions or concerns about this research, please contact Gregg Murdock(Murdock.Gregg@occ.edu). You may also contact the

faculty members supervising this work: Dr. Kennedy Ongaga, 417-836-6516, kennedyongaga@missouristate.edu.

The nature and purpose of this research have been sufficiently explained, and I agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time without incurring any penalty.

_____

Your Signature   Date

Appendix H

Survey Data

Survey Data: Biographical

How Long Have You Lived in the U.S.?	< a year	1 -2 years	3 - 5 years	> 6 years	Total
	12	2		1	15
	1	4	3		8
	4	3			7
Accumulated Totals	**17**	**9**	**3**	**1**	**30**

How Long Have You Lived in the Residence Hall in your Current College?	< a semester	1 - 2 semesters	3 - 5 semesters	> 6 semesters	Total
	8	5	1		14
	1	4	3		8
		5	2		7
Accumulated Totals	**9**	**14**	**6**	**0**	**29**

What is Your Gender?	Female	Male			Total
	10	5			15
	3	5			8
	4	3			7
Accumulated Totals	**17**	**13**			**30**

What is the Highest Educational Degree you completed in your home Country?	Senior High	Two Year College	Bachelor's	Master's	PhD	Other	Total
	8	3	4				15
	5					3	8
	6	1					7
Accumulated Totals	**19**	**4**	**4**	**0**	**0**	**3**	**30**

In your home country did you live in a Residence Hall?	Yes	No			Total
	3	12			15
	1	7			8
	3	4			7
Accumulated Totals	**7**	**23**			**30**

What Country Did You Live In Before Coming to the U.S?	MSSU	OCC	Crowder	
Argentina	1			
Australia		1		
Brazil		1	1	
Burundai		1		
Columbia			1	
Czech Republic	2			
Ecuador	1			
France	2			
Germany		1		
Guatamala		1		
Haiti		1		
Japan	2			
Kenya	1		1	
Mexico		1		
Netherlands			1	
New Zealand		1		
Nigeria	3			
Saudia Arabia	1			
South Korea	1			
United Arab Emerates	1			
United Kingdom			2	
Zambia			1	Total Survey
	15	**8**	**7**	**30**

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Survey Data: RA, RD & Residence Hall Community

Which of the following best describes how frequently you talk (more than a general greeting) wit a Resident Assistant	Never	Once A Month	2-3 Times A Month	Once A Week	2 or More Times a Week	Total
	5	5	4		1	15
	1	3	1		3	8
		4	1	2		7
Accumulated Totals	**6**	**12**	**6**	**2**	**4**	**30**

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Resident Assistants

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
A Resident Assistant has helped me make friends on campus	2	5	1	2	3	1		14
		2		4	1	1		8
	1	2		3			1	7
Accumulated Totals	**3**	**9**	**1**	**9**	**4**	**2**	**1**	**29**
A Resident Assistant has helped me to understand the American culture	2	3	2	4	3			14
	1	2		3	1	1		8
	2	2		1	1		1	7
Accumulated Totals	**5**	**7**	**2**	**8**	**5**	**1**	**1**	**29**
Talking with a Resident Assistant has helped me feel comfortable to talk with other Americans	2	1	3	1	4	3		14
				4		3	1	8
	2			2	2		1	7
Accumulated Totals	**4**	**1**	**3**	**7**	**6**	**6**	**2**	**29**
A Resident Assistant has invited me to join in social activity with other Americans	3	4	2		3	2		14
						2	3	8
	1	1		1		3	1	7
Accumulated Totals	**4**	**5**	**2**	**1**	**5**	**8**	**4**	**29**
A Resident Assistant has helped me to feel more comfortable in the residence hall	1	1	1	2	3	5	1	14
			1		1	4	2	8
		2		2		2	1	7
Accumulated Totals	**1**	**3**	**2**	**4**	**4**	**11**	**4**	**29**

Resident Directors

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
My Residence Director has helped me to fit in the university culture	3	5	2	2	2			14
		1		2	3	1	1	8
	1	1		2	2		1	7
Accumulated Totals	**4**	**7**	**2**	**6**	**7**	**1**	**2**	**29**
My Residence Director has taken interest to know me personally	5	4	1	2	2			14
	1			2	3	1	1	8
	1	2		3			1	7
Accumulated Totals	**7**	**6**	**1**	**7**	**5**	**1**	**2**	**29**

Resident Hall Community

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
The Residence hall community is supportive of different cultures		2		1	5	5	1	14
		1		3		2	2	8
				3		4		7
Accumulated Totals	**0**	**3**	**0**	**7**	**5**	**11**	**3**	**29**
Students in the residence hall expect me to act like an American	2	4	2	3	2		1	14
		2	2	1	1	2		8
		3		2	1	1		7
Accumulated Totals	**2**	**9**	**4**	**6**	**4**	**3**	**1**	**29**
Living in the residence hall is a positive experience			1		3	5	5	14
					2	5	1	8
			1	3		1	2	7
Accumulated Totals	**0**	**0**	**2**	**3**	**5**	**11**	**8**	**29**

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Survey Data: Measure of Adjustment

How well adjusted you feel to the following situations:	Not Adjusted At All	Somewhat Adjusted	Well Adjusted	Completely Adjusted	Total
Finding My Way Around Campus		2	7	6	15
		3	5		8
		3	4		7
Accumulated Totals	**0**	**2**	**13**	**15**	**30**
Completing my school assignments successfully		2	5	8	15
		1	5	2	8
		1	4	2	7
Accumulated Totals	**0**	**4**	**14**	**12**	**30**
Eating food in America	2	2	9	1	14
	1	1	5	1	8
	3	1	1	2	7
Accumulated Totals	**6**	**4**	**15**	**4**	**29**
Feeling Comfortable where I live		2	8	5	15
		2	5	1	8
	1	1	1	4	7
Accumulated Totals	**1**	**5**	**14**	**10**	**30**
Socializing with other international students	1		4	10	15
		2	4	1	7
		2	2	3	7
Accumulated Totals	**1**	**4**	**10**	**14**	**29**
Finding ways to relax outside school acitivities	2	3	6	4	15
		2	5	1	8
	3		1	2	6
Accumulated Totals	**5**	**5**	**12**	**7**	**29**
Interacting with faculty and staff	1	4	4	6	15
		1	4	3	8
	1	3	2	1	7
Accumulated Totals	**2**	**8**	**10**	**10**	**30**
Socializing with American students		4	7	4	15
		3	3	2	8
	1	2	2	2	7
Accumulated Totals	**1**	**9**	**12**	**8**	**30**
Attending social events on campus	1	4	4	6	15
	1	3	2	2	8
		3	1	2	6
Accumulated Totals	**2**	**10**	**7**	**10**	**29**
Handling unexpected situations that arise when interacting with American students		3	8	3	14
		1	4	1	6
		2	2	2	6
Accumulated Totals	**0**	**6**	**14**	**6**	**26**
Feeling comfortable being away from home	1	4	3	7	15
		2	4	2	8
	1	1	3	2	7
Accumulated Totals	**2**	**7**	**10**	**11**	**30**

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VITA

Gregory Murdock served in the leadership of small Midwestern publishing house for over thirty years. He first served as Chief Financial Officer for a little over a decade, and then served as Chief Executive for approximately twenty-two years. While continuing to serve as a semi-retired leader for that organization, Gregory has begun to teach at a Midwestern Community College in the subject area of accounting and business. Additionally, Gregory and his wife SuSan have served for six years as Resident Directors for Williamson Residence Hall on the campus of Ozark Christian College.

Gregory's educational background includes both a Bachelor of Business Administration as well as a Master of Business Administration, majoring in accounting, from Pittsburg State University (Pittsburg, KS). A Master of Arts in New Testament degree from Johnson University was also earned by Gregory.