

ABSTRACT

Homesickness Among International College Students: The Impact of Social Embeddedness and Connection to Home

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The number of students choosing to attend a university outside of their home country is continually growing. Although studying abroad may be an exciting transition for international students, with cultural relocation comes elevated psychological distress. Such distress occurs due to cultural variations, which may increase levels of homesickness among international students. As such, this study aims to investigate two major factors influencing homesickness among international students: social embeddedness and connection to home. This study provides an introduction including background information on homesickness and its negative effects. Secondary research outlines the psychological impact of greater connectedness to home, and low levels of social embeddedness experienced by international students. These findings developed a survey and analysis of measurable scales of connection to home, social embeddedness, and homesickness. The final conclusion indicates that there is an inverse relationship between homesickness and social embeddedness. Meaning, as students become more acculturated to their host country, their level of homesickness decreases. Additionally, connection to home is positively correlated with levels of homesickness. From this study, health care professionals and homesickness prevention programs are given relevant findings, encouraging them to focus more of their services on providing social support for international college students that will alleviate the emotional toll that homesickness may bring.

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HOMESICKNESS AMONG INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE STUDENTS: THE
IMPACT OF SOCIAL EMBEDDEDNESS AND CONNECTION TO HOME

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HOMESICKNESS AMONG INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE STUDENTS: THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL EMBEDDEDNESS AND CONNECTION TO HOME

Introduction

Over four percent of all students attending colleges in the U.S. are made up of international students, a proportion that will continue to grow in the coming years (Haynie, 2014). According to the 2014 Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange, a total of 886,052 international students were enrolled at U.S. colleges and universities in the 2013–14 academic year, a number that continues to increase by 8 to 9 percent on an annual basis (Witherell, 2004). Although studying abroad may be an exciting transition for international students, with any cultural relocation comes elevated psychological distress (Field, 2010). Such distress occurs due to cultural variations, which may increase levels of homesickness among international college students (Adjusting).

One way international college students cope with homesickness is by staying connected with family and friends in their home country (Ho, 2010). While research shows that maintaining connection with friends and family helps international students decrease feelings of homesickness (Homesickness), many argue that technology takes away their ability to interact and build relationships with people in their host country (Ho, 2010). Thus, this study will explore to what extent social embeddedness and connection to home impact the level of homesickness experienced by international college students (See Appendix A).

Homesickness can be defined as “the distress or impairment caused by an actual or anticipated separation from home” (Thurber, 2012). Homesickness tends to negatively affect international students’ academic standings, as well as their emotional and physical health (Fisher, 1989). When entering a new culture, international students are faced with high pressure to succeed in a new environment, while having to tackle increased academic workload, the stress of living independently, the difficulty of adjusting to cultural and personality differences as well as language constraints, and being away from friends and family. Such acculturative stress can contribute to sleeping and eating problems, headaches, and low energy (Kegel, 2009). Further, as much as 34 percent of international students decide to drop out of their first year in college (Ed, 2011). This is particularly true because they were “over confident in their abilities, under-prepared to manage change, or hold unrealistic expectations about college,” which only increased their level of homesickness (Ed, 2011). In addition, many researchers have linked homesickness with increased levels of depression, especially among African, Latin American, and Asian international students studying in the U.S. (Kegel, 2009). One major research on homesickness has shown the existence of a strong connection between homesickness and depression even after taking into account factors such as English fluency, gender, and home region (Constantine et al., 2004). Extreme consequences of depression driven by homesickness among college students include clinically significant symptoms (Ho, D. 2010) such as those involving suicides (“Promoting,” 2004).

It is for these reasons that understanding factors that impact homesickness would be beneficial to improving and helping the well-being of international college students. Moreover, by gaining more knowledge on the impact of homesickness, preventative ways could be drawn to alleviate negative consequences of homesickness, and diminish homesickness among international college students altogether.

Hypotheses

After conducting personal interviews with international college students and finding much research on the consequences and potential determinants of homesickness, two hypotheses are drawn in this study (see Appendix A). The first is based on the relationship between connection to home and homesickness. A positive relationship seems to surface between high connection to home and high level of homesickness. Therefore, hypothesis 1 argues that “higher frequency and intensity of contacting home are positively correlated with significant levels of homesickness among international college students.”

The second hypothesis focuses on the relationship between an international student’s level of acculturation, as well as their level of homesickness. Based on found research, there is an inverse relationship between social embeddedness and level of homesickness. Therefore, hypothesis 2 argues that “higher connection to home produces a strong negative correlation to students’ social embeddedness in their host country, which subsequently increases levels of homesickness among international students.”

These hypotheses focus on three variables: two independent variables and one dependent variable. The dependent variable measures level of homesickness; whereas, the independent variables are comprised of social embeddedness and connection to home. The extent to which the two independent variables explain the dependent variable is evaluated to find out whether the two hypotheses could be supported.

Methodology

A series of informal personal interviews with international college students were conducted to identify major factors that impact their level of homesickness while attending Baylor University (see Appendix B). Due to the sensitive nature of the answers each international student provided and to their individual consent, all data collected from the personal interviews are kept strictly confidential from this study. However, from each interview, it was clear that there were two major factors that influence each interviewee's level of homesickness: social embeddedness and connection to home. Literature research was conducted to affirm and strengthen these findings, which have become the basis of the hypotheses to be measured in this study.

In evaluating the extent to which students are socially embedded in their host country and connected to their home country, data were gathered through an online survey. Participants of the online survey consisted of 79 students (see Appendix C). Each participant was asked to fill out their demography information (see Appendix D). Forty-five percent of these were full time students—freshmen

(6.3%), sophomore (6.3%), junior (16.5%), and senior (44.3%), and the remaining included transferred students (11.4%), student exchange (16.5%), Masters (2.5%), PhD (2.5%), and Truett seminary students (1.3%). The majority of participants are currently attending Baylor University, while others attend University of Toronto, Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, and various universities across the U.S., including Cornell University and University of Texas at Austin. There were a total of 19 or 24.1% males and 44 or 55.7% females (16 participants did not fully complete the survey). Participants represent four ethnic groups from 22 different countries. Of these, 6.3% participants were African, 49.4% participants were Asian, 11.4% participants were European, 1.3% participants were North American, and 11.4% participants were South American.

Procedure

Qualtrics (survey software) was used to collect the data, where participants completed an online survey that included the Sense of Belonging Instrument (Hagerty, 1995), the Connection to Home Scale (which was self-prepared), and the Utrecht Homesickness scale (Stroebe, 2002). The online survey was distributed via personal email, text message, and social media (i.e. Facebook Messenger). Other methods of distribution include mass emails sent to classes from various professors as well as global organizations across the Baylor campus. Highest response rates were received through word of mouth. No compensation or incentive was given in the distribution of the online survey.

Measures

Social Embeddedness/Acculturation Scale

To measure the extent to which international students are socially embedded in the host country where they attend university, the Sense of Belonging Instrument was used (see Appendix E). The Sense of Belonging Instrument is a scale originally developed by Hagerty and Patusky (1995) to be utilized as a scale that can psychometrically evaluate an individual's sense of belonging (Hagerty, 1995). The scale evaluates two independent scales, the SOBI-A and SOBI-P. SOBI-A contains 14 questions that aim to discover the motivation behind an individual's search for a sense of belonging (National, 1995). In contrast, SOBI-P contains questions that assess to what extent an individual feels fitted or acculturated in their new environment. Originally, Hagerty and Patusky (1995) established SOBI-P such that it caters to the feelings and experiences of three of its intended audiences: community college students, patients in treatment for major depression, and Roman Catholic nuns (National, 1995). For this research, only questions of SOBI-P that were intended for community college students were used and distributed to survey participants. Questions in this category include statements that indicate a state of belonging, such as "I would describe myself as a misfit in most social situations in college" and "I feel uncomfortable because my background and experiences are so different from those who are usually around me in college." Each question has been adapted from its original version such that it is rated based on a five-point Likert scale, going from a score of 1 ("Strongly Agree") to a score of 5 ("Strongly

Disagree”). A score of 1 or 2 indicates that the international student is less or not at all socially embedded in their host country (low levels of acculturation); whereas, a score of 4 or 5 indicates that the international student is highly socially embedded in their host country (moderate to high levels of acculturation). Hagerty and Patusky (1995) have provided support for the construct validity of the Sense of Belonging Instrument by assessing it in correlation to measures of loneliness and social support (Klingensmith, 2010). The adapted SOBI-P scale used in this research has shown a Cronbach’s alpha score of .781 (see Appendix F).

Connection to Home Scale

In evaluating international students’ level of connection to home, a scale that measures how frequent and intense international students contact friends and family in their home country, as well as their feelings and beliefs toward contacting home was created (see Appendix G). The scale consists of seven questions; the first four questions ask for students’ frequency and intensity level of contacting home. To measure how frequent students contact their family and friends, the following question was asked: “How often do you contact friends and family in your home country?” The answer was represented by a seven-point Likert scale going from a score of 1 (“Never”) to a score of 7 (“Daily”). A score of 1 or 2 indicates that the international student is less or not at all connected to friends and family in their home country (low levels of connection to home); whereas, a score of 6 to 7 indicates that the international student is highly

connected with their friends and family (high levels of connection to home). Students who scored 3 to 5 indicate only moderate levels of connection to home.

In contrast, the duration of time taken to contact home was used to measure the intensity level students hold when staying connected with their family and friends. In this case, intensity defines both the intentionality and quality of conversations and connections that students have when contacting friends and family in their home country. The following question was used to measure such intensity of connection to home: “When contacting your friends and family in your home country, how much time do you spend communicating with them?” A six-point Likert scale was used to represent students’ intensity level, starting from a score of 1 (“I do not spend time connecting home”) up to a score of 6 (“I stay connected throughout the day”). A score 4 or higher shows that the student is more connected to their home (moderate to high level of connection to home); whereas, a score of 3 or below shows that the student spend less time connecting with friends and family in their home country (low level of connection to home).

The remaining questions in the Connection to Home scale are comprised of a five-point Likert scale that goes from 1 (“Strongly Disagree”) to 5 (“Strongly Agree”). These questions ask international students to indicate the extent to which they regard contacting friends and family in their home countries. In other words, students’ feelings and beliefs regarding staying connected with their friends and family were evaluated in this scale. For example, students were provided a rating from 1 to 5 to answer the following statement: “Contacting my friends and family

back home is something very important to me.” A score or rating of 1 or 2 indicates that the student has low levels of connection to home, versus a score of 5 or 6 indicates high levels of connection to home. After testing the Connection to Home scale, a Cronbach’s alpha score of .745 was acquired (see Appendix H).

Homesickness Scale

In measuring the level of homesickness among international students, the Utrecht homesickness scale was used (see Appendix I). The Utrecht homesickness scale was originally formed by Stroebe et al. (2002) to study the level of homesickness that exists among students experiencing two European cultures, the UK and the Netherlands. According to pilot studies on the Utrecht homesickness scale, five main factors can be identified to determine an individual’s level of homesickness: missing family, missing friends, loneliness, difficulty adjusting, and contemplations of home (Klingensmith, 2010). Each of these factors is composed of four questions, equaling a total of 20 questions to determine level of homesickness. All questions are worded in the form of a statement such as “Missing your parents” and “Feeling missed by your family” to represent feelings of missing family members. With each of the 20 questions, participants were asked to provide a rating that will indicate to what extent they have experienced such feelings in the last four weeks. This rating has been modified from its original five-point Likert scale to a four-point Likert scale (1 = Always, 2 = Very Often, 3 = Occasionally, 4 = Never) for the purpose of providing more clarity to survey participants. A score of 1 or 2 indicates a lower

level of homesickness, whereas a score of 3 or 4 indicates a higher level of homesickness. The Homesickness scale has been proven to construct validity after it has been correlated with measures such as depression and adjustment to college life (Stroebe et al., 2007). The Cronbach's alpha for the homesickness scale in this research is .838 (see Appendix J).

Results

The following are descriptive statistics to illustrate the data of participants' scores on the Social Embeddedness/Acculturation Scale, the Connection to Home Scale, and the Homesickness Scale. All means and standard deviations of the independent and dependent variables measured in the current study are shown in Appendix K. Participants scored above the mid-point of the 5-point Likert scale for each of the scales used: students reported having moderate to low levels of connections to home ($\bar{x} = 23.76$, $SD = 4.79$), moderate to high levels of social embeddedness ($\bar{x} = 25.42$, $SD = 5.30$), and moderate levels of homesickness ($\bar{x} = 41.73$, $SD = 7.67$).

A wide range of items were used to measure students' social embeddedness in their host country (see Appendix F). Out of the 79 participants, the majority of the total international students regard themselves as socially fit among native peers ($\bar{x} = 3.42$, $SD = 1.13$); also the majority, do not associate themselves as a social misfit in their host country ($\bar{x} = 3.69$, $SD = 1.06$); generally participants feel highly accepted by their native peers ($\bar{x} = 1.94$, $SD = .768$); most scored above the 5-point Likert scale in assessing whether they are uncomfortable

in social situations due to their background ($\bar{x} = 3.77$, $SD = 1.09$); most scored at the midpoint of the 5-point Likert scale in judging the quality of friendships they acquire in their host country ($\bar{x} = 3.18$, $SD = 1.07$); the majority of students do not feel “left out” of social situations and activities in their colleges ($\bar{x} = 3.54$, $SD = 1.03$); and more students recognize that they are valued in their friendships with native peers ($\bar{x} = 3.75$, $SD = 1.03$).

In measuring the students’ level of connection to home (see Appendix H), it is shown that participants spend a great amount of time connecting with friends and family in terms of frequency ($\bar{x} = 5.66$, $SD = 1.53$) and intensity ($\bar{x} = 3.67$, $SD = 1.53$); the majority of participants scored around the midpoint of the 5-point Likert scale in measuring the importance of contacting home ($\bar{x} = 4.46$, $SD = .765$); above the midpoint in assessing whether students can spend one day without contacting friends and family ($\bar{x} = 2.58$, $SD = 1.14$); below midpoint in assessing stronger feelings of connection with more frequent contact to home ($\bar{x} = 3.89$, $SD = .939$); and around the midpoint in assessing whether students feel the need to regularly update friends and family with experiences in the host country ($\bar{x} = 3.49$, $SD = 1.11$).

Participants ranked their level of homesickness based on a 4-point Likert scale (see Appendix J). A greater number of students scored at the midpoint and above the midpoint on the homesickness scale. Participants missing parents reported midpoint to below midpoint of the 4-point scale ($\bar{x} = 2.52$, $SD = .859$); scores of midpoint to above midpoint in the report for missing family ($\bar{x} = 2.59$, $SD = .835$); scores at the midpoint for students missing home ($\bar{x} = 2.46$, SD

= .930); scores of below midpoint for feeling missed by family ($\bar{x} = 2.76$, SD = .856); scores of midpoint and below midpoint for students feeling lonely ($\bar{x} = 2.02$, SD = .729); scores of above midpoint for students feeling unloved in host country ($\bar{x} = 1.60$, SD = .708); similar scores were reported for students feeling isolated ($\bar{x} = 1.63$, SD = .679), students feeling uprooted in host country ($\bar{x} = 1.65$, SD = .626), students longing for acquaintances ($\bar{x} = 1.97$, SD = .761), and students searching for familiar faces in host country ($\bar{x} = 1.87$, SD = .684). Students who describe themselves as missing people to trust in their host country scored below midpoint on the 5-point scale ($\bar{x} = 2.63$, SD = .989); missing friends in home country ($\bar{x} = 2.68$, SD = .839); finding it difficult to adjust to new environment in their host country ($\bar{x} = 1.92$, SD = .679). In contrast, students scored above midpoint on the 5-point scale in assessing their level of comfort in host country ($\bar{x} = 2.05$, SD = .607), feelings of being lost ($\bar{x} = 2.05$, SD = .682), and level of difficulty to accustom to new cultures ($\bar{x} = 1.78$, SD = .771). Lastly, in terms of looking towards past situations that can only be found in students' home country, the majority of students score above the midpoint of the 5-point scale in reporting their perspective that old situations are better than new or current situations ($\bar{x} = 1.86$, SD = .839), feelings of regret of recent decisions ($\bar{x} = 1.67$, SD = .741), constant thoughts of family and friends in home country ($\bar{x} = 1.90$, SD = .712), and thoughts of the past associated with students' home country ($\bar{x} = 2.11$, SD = .825).

Hypothesis 1: *Higher frequency and intensity of contacting home are positively correlated with significant levels of homesickness among international students.*

The first hypothesis in this study measured how an individual who invests more time and effort to contacting their family and friends in their home country will consequently feel more homesick in their host country (see Appendix A). As indicated by this study, this hypothesis was fully supported. The Pearson's Correlation score between homesickness and contact to home is .296 (see Appendix L). This correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). In addition, the significant (2-tailed) value is 0.019, which indicates that there is a statistically significant correlation between frequency and intensity of contact with home and high levels of homesickness. This shows that the strong correlation between the two variables supports hypothesis 1.

The purpose of this study was to investigate international students' level of connection to home, both in terms of intensity and frequency, and its relationship to levels of homesickness. Consistent with my hypothesis, high intensity and frequency of contact to home was shown to have significant correlation with homesickness. This theory, which suggests that high connection to home would produce an equally high feeling of homesickness, was based on the assumption that the more time and effort students spend communicating and interacting with family and friends in their home country, the more they will build a strong sense of longing to be with their friends and family. In addition, knowing more of what is happening in their home country will only increase their fear of missing out, thus attaching them more with their friends and family rather than

being present in their host country. Thus, based on found secondary research, there is high possibility of the occurrence of such phenomena. Additionally, further research is needed to fully understand the extent of the relationship between the two variables. Nevertheless, this finding demonstrates the reasoning behind the changes to international students' level of homesickness in response to their level of connection to home.

Hypothesis 2: Higher connection to home produces a strong negative correlation to students' social embeddedness in their host country, which subsequently increases levels of homesickness among international students.

Hypothesis 2 focused its measurements on how students who have dedicated a majority of their time and effort to communicating and interacting with friends and family in their home country have done so at the expense of isolating themselves from their host social environment (see Appendix A). Consequently, those students develop higher feelings of homesickness as a result of being less socially connected to their college native peers. This hypothesis was partially supported based on the current results, which indicates that there is an inverse relationship between connection to home and social embeddedness (see Appendix L). Meaning, international students who are more connected with friends and family in their home country become less acculturated in their host country. At the same time, international students who contact their friends and family less become more acculturated in their host country. However, results showed that higher connections to home only moderately result in lower levels of

social embeddedness. Although connection to home and social embeddedness are inversely related, there is limited to negligible negative relationship between the two variables. This is evident based on its Pearson correlation of $-.143$ (see Appendix L). In addition, its probability or significance (2-tailed) level is $.256$, which is greater than $.05$. Therefore, there is not enough evidence to show that a significant correlation exists between connection to home and social embeddedness. In other words, the amount of time (intensity) and consistency (frequency) that an international student places on contacting their home does not strongly influence or determine how acculturated they are in their new environment. The same applies to the opposite relationship: how acculturated an international student is in the social environment they are presented with in their host country does not impact their levels of connection to home. Thus, it can be said that the first part of hypothesis 2, which states that higher connection to home produces a strong negative correlation to students' social embeddedness in their host country, was not supported in this study.

Contrariwise, the second part of hypothesis 2, which states that as students become less socially embeddedness among their native peers and in their host country, they subsequently increase their levels of homesickness, was fully supported in this study. This is shown by the Pearson's Correlation score between homesickness and level of social embeddedness (acculturation) of $-.462$ (see Appendix L). This points out that there is a strong negative relationship between level of acculturation and homesickness. This correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). In addition, the significant (2-tailed) value is zero, which indicates

that there is a statistically significant correlation between levels of acculturation and high levels of homesickness. In other words, there is strong evidence that as international college students acculturate more into their new environment, they embody less signs and feelings of homesickness.

The purpose of hypothesis 2 was to explore the extent to which international students have acculturated or embedded themselves into the social environment in their host country, and its relationship to levels of homesickness. This hypothesis was supported in the study. The reasoning behind the prediction made was based on the assumption that the more attached students become with their family and friends in their home country, the less attached and acculturated they will be to the new culture and social interactions they are presented with in their host country. Thus, as students further isolate their time and efforts from building close relationships with native peers, two things will result: 1) they will acquire less understanding of the new culture and customs of their host country, and 2) they will lose a sense of belonging in their host country due to lack of interaction and relationship-building. In effect, these result in higher levels of homesickness for said students.

In assessing which of the two measured variables best explain the variation in the level of homesickness experienced by international college students, a regression analysis was conducted (see Appendix M). In this study, two independent variables were identified: level of social embeddedness (acculturation) and level of connection to home, in terms of intensity and frequency. Conversely, the dependent variable was level of homesickness. This

study found that the R-Squared was .274, which indicated that 27.4% of the variation in the dependent variable (level of homesickness) was explained by the independent variables (connection to home and social embeddedness). This means when an international student experiences homesickness, 27.4% of their homesickness level can be explained by how embedded they are to their social environment and how connected they are to their home country. The correlational nature of this relationship does not suggest the direction of the causal flow between the independent and dependent variables. In addition, there is still the remaining 72.6% that contains other determinants that explain students' level of homesickness. However, it can be said that both level of acculturation and home connectedness significantly explain and impact level of homesickness among international college students.

Further analysis was conducted to compare the magnitude of the coefficients of each independent variable and examine which of the two variables produce greater effect on the dependent variable (see Appendix M). The standardized coefficients of the two independent variables are as follows: Beta of connection to home (B) = .249 (where $t = 2.249$ and $p = .028$) and Beta of acculturation level (B) = -.435 (where $t = -3.931$ and $p = \text{zero}$). Based on these standardized coefficients, it can be seen that level of acculturation or social embeddedness has greater explanatory power in describing levels of homesickness among international students, as compared with intensity and frequency of connection to home. Using an alpha of 0.05, the t-statistics, and their associated 2-tailed p-values, it can be indicated that the coefficient for level of

social embeddedness ($B = -.670$) is significantly different from zero because its p-value (<0.001) is less than 0.05. Further, the coefficient for level of connection to home ($B = .408$) is also significantly different from zero because its p-value (.028) is also less than the measured alpha of 0.05. From this, it can be incurred that out of the 27.4% of the variation in international students' homesickness level, the majority of such percentage can be explained more strongly by their level of acculturation as compared to their level of connection to home.

Based on these findings, the impact of social embeddedness and connection to home can be defined in an international students' level of homesickness. Simply put, hypothesis 1 gives evidence to the connection between level of home connectedness and level of homesickness. The supported argument made in hypothesis 1 shows that as connection to home increases, level of homesickness also increases as a result. Similarly, hypothesis 2 proves evidence to the relation between acculturation and level of homesickness. In other words, the argument made in hypothesis 2 was supported in that as level of social embeddedness increases, there is a decrease in level of homesickness. Between the two independent variables, however, it is shown that level of social embeddedness brings more impact to level of homesickness versus level of connection to home.

Limitations and Directions for Future Findings

The current research tested the intensity and frequency of connection to home, as well as level of social embeddedness or acculturation as factors that help

explain the impact on the level of homesickness experienced among international college students; however, several limitations can be deduced from this study. First, this study is based on a small sample of 79 participants. The sample was also chosen on a nonrandom basis.

In addition to gaining more participants, the sample of the present study consisted primarily of Asian students, which would have skewed the results to assessing one major ethnic group instead of the overall ethnic diversity among international students. This was done to reflect the distribution of ethnic groups among international students that are represented in most colleges, in which the majority of the international student population comes from Asia (O'Shaughnessy, 2009; Ruiz, 2014). With further research, it can be determined whether certain demographics produce varying levels or ways of connecting with friends and family (contact to home) and connecting with newly found relationships in their host country (social embeddedness). Thus, it may be possible that certain ethnic groups are impacted by homesickness differently than others. In this case, that impact to homesickness is primarily represented by students from Asian countries, most popularly from China (see Appendix C).

Further, the majority of students who responded to the survey fall under the junior-senior classification, which amounts to a total of 60.8% of the 45.6% full-time students who completed the study (see Appendix C). Consequently, this may have skewed the research findings since level of homesickness tends to fall as students become more adjusted and familiar to the environment and culture presented to them in college (Ishler, 2004).

Future studies should consider the following additional questions to include in their survey: “Are you currently in a relationship?” “Would you say your friend group shares the same culture as you?” and “What are all that you are involved in college (i.e. Greek life, church groups, academic or non-academic organizations)?” These questions can allow the researcher to better understand to what extent the student has been acculturated in their host country, as well as discover other predictors to homesickness that were not accounted for in this study.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study investigated to what extent social embeddedness and connection to home impact the level of homesickness experienced by international college students. The final findings of this study indicate that as students become more socially embedded and therefore acculturated in their host country, their level of homesickness decreases. Thus, this demonstrates that there is a significant negative correlation between levels of homesickness and social embeddedness. In terms of students’ connection to home, both frequency (the number of times students contact friends and family in their home country) and intensity (the duration of time students spend interacting and connecting with friends and family in their home country) were evaluated. In the end, results found that connection to home correlate with levels of homesickness in a significant and positive manner. In addition, connection to home has a negative relationship with levels of social embeddedness. Thus, higher connections to

home results in lower levels of social embeddedness, and therefore higher levels of homesickness. The findings of this study, however, strongly emphasize that levels of homesickness are negatively correlated with the extent to which international students are acculturated in their host country. While several limitations were listed, the current study still revealed ample understanding researching the factors that impact levels of homesickness among international college students.

Major results in this study showed evidence that social embeddedness positively correlates with higher sense of belonging in new situations and environments. Therefore, in finding ways to combat homesickness, there should be a prominent focus on building social support among international college students. Such actions, will not only improve the welfare of international college students (Yeh, 2003), but also slowly embolden them to live out a more balanced routine in terms of staying connected with friends and family in their home countries and exploring their new social surroundings. Thus, increasing social support may be the first step to reducing levels of homesickness among international college students.

On a large scale, this study provides relevant findings to health care professionals and homesickness prevention programs, encouraging them to direct more of their services on providing a healthy social atmosphere for international college students (Thurber, 2012). This can be done by creating team building experiences or by giving international students access to a student mentor who are of similar age and/or classification as them.

On a smaller scale, Baylor University, as well as other colleges and universities can effectively alleviate the emotional toll and negative effects that homesickness may bring by considering the creation of an environment that invites increased social interaction. This may be done by encouraging international students to take part in global student organizations, where they are introduced to new friendships with their native peers. This can also be accomplished by having a “big-little” relationship, such as those present in sororities and fraternities, pairing each international student with a local student who can serve as their “big” throughout their college years. With such informal peer-pairing program, international students can feel supported by their host country, thus reducing their level of stress and keeping them distracted from the absence of missed family members and friends. Additionally, similar programs have shown valuable in promoting interactions between international students and their native peers (Poyrazil et al., 2002; Abe et al., 1998). Although this option may not be easy to implement and require long-term planning, it would benefit both the international student and local peer since there would be a building of new friendships and an exchanging of learning about each other’s cultures.

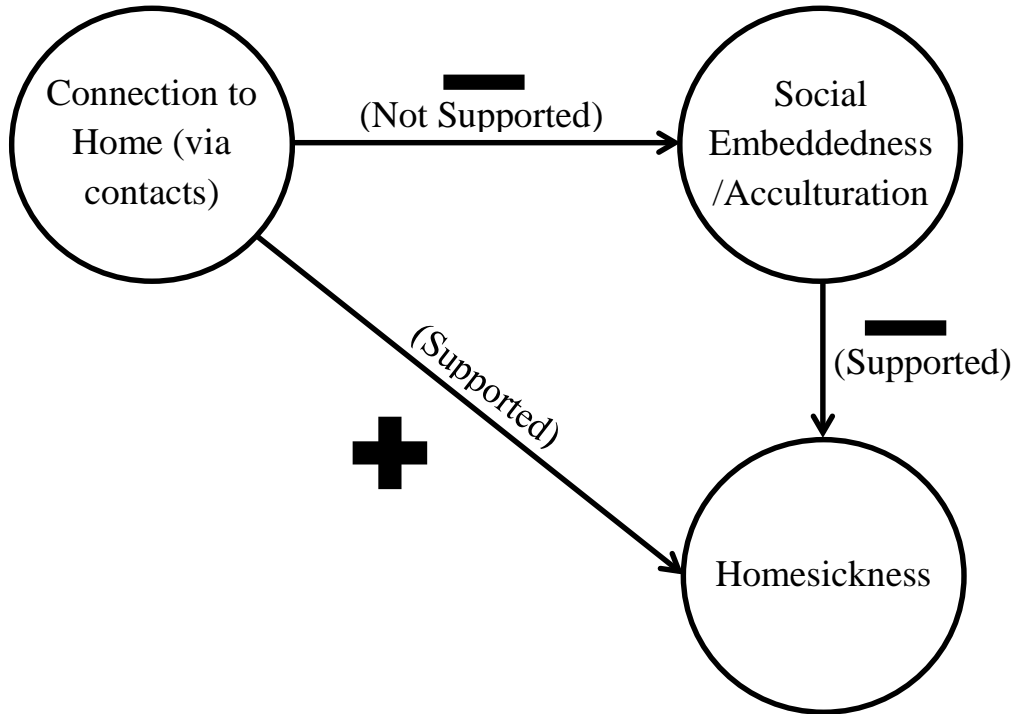
On an individual level, the fastest and most effective way to alleviate homesickness among international college students is by encouraging local students to introduce themselves to international students. As one research report suggests, “Close relationships with American students may predict better adjustment [for the international student]” (Furnham and Alibhai, 1985). Therefore, by fostering communication between international students and local

students, as well as interactions amongst international students, a healthy community for international students could be created. Such community could be further supported by providing skill-training workshops and cultural exchange groups for international students that are led by local students (Jacob and Greggo, 2001; Hayes and Lin, 1994). By educating local students of the importance of building interactions with international students, international students will have the opportunity to build lasting friendships with individuals in their host country. This would consequently help international students to become more acculturated in their new environment and thus reducing their level of homesickness.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Figure 1: *Hypothesized Structural Model of the Interaction Between Connection to Home, Social Embeddedness (Acculturation), and Level of Homesickness*



APPENDIX B

Personal Interview Questions

Connection to Home:

1. How many times do you phone home within one week?
2. What method do you use to contact or communicate with friends and family?
3. How necessary did you think it is to phone home?
4. Do you feel more connected to your family if you contact them (more) frequently?
5. How involved are you with using technology?
6. What do you do when you use your technology devices?
7. How many hours per day do you spend on your technology devices?
8. How many devices do you own?
9. Do you update your family regularly with what you're going through in the US?
10. What do you think is the best mobile application or technological device to use to contact your family and friends?

Social Life and Homesickness

1. Are you a part of Greek life?
2. Are you dating anyone?
3. Are you actively involved in an organization or activity (such as church)?
4. How often do you spend time with friends or go out per week?
5. Would you say you have really close friends at Baylor?
6. Do you think you've build friendships that can be continued after graduation?
7. How connected do you feel with friends you've made in the US?
8. Do you feel you can be yourself around friends you've made in the US?
 - If no, what do you think causes this?
9. Would you say there was a time when you felt homesick?
10. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the least homesick and 10 being the most homesick, how would you rate your level of homesickness?
11. What would you say were reasons you felt homesick?

Recommendations:

- a) What do you think can help you to decrease homesickness?
- b) What would you like to see be done by Baylor to decrease homesickness?

APPENDIX C

Table 1: *Sample Characteristics*

Statistics

		Gender	Age	EducationalLevel	Classification	EthnicGroup
N	Valid	79	79	79	79	79
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0

Gender

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	15	19.0	19.0	19.0
1	19	24.1	24.1	43.0
2	44	55.7	55.7	98.7
Gender	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	79	100.0	100.0	

EducationalLevel

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	15	19.0	19.0	19.0
1	36	45.6	45.6	64.6
2	9	11.4	11.4	75.9
3	13	16.5	16.5	92.4
4	2	2.5	2.5	94.9
5	2	2.5	2.5	97.5
6	1	1.3	1.3	98.7
Student Title	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	79	100.0	100.0	

Age

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	15	19.0	19.0	19.0
1	1	1.3	1.3	20.3
2	18	22.8	22.8	43.0
3	24	30.4	30.4	73.4
4	15	19.0	19.0	92.4
5	5	6.3	6.3	98.7
Age	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	79	100.0	100.0	

Classification

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	20	25.3	25.3	25.3
1	5	6.3	6.3	31.6
2	5	6.3	6.3	38.0
3	13	16.5	16.5	54.4
4	35	44.3	44.3	98.7
Classification	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	79	100.0	100.0	

EthnicGroup

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	15	19.0	19.0	19.0
1	5	6.3	6.3	25.3
2	39	49.4	49.4	74.7
3	9	11.4	11.4	86.1
4	1	1.3	1.3	87.3
5	9	11.4	11.4	98.7
Ethnic Group	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	79	100.0	100.0	

APPENDIX D

Survey: Demographics

1. Gender
 - 1 = Male
 - 2 = Female

2. Age
 - 1 = Less than 18
 - 2 = 18 – 20
 - 3 = 21 – 22
 - 4 = 23 – 25
 - 5 = 26 or older

3. Student Title
 - 1 = Full-Time Student
 - 2 = Transfer Student
 - 3 = Exchange Student
 - 4 = Masters Student
 - 5 = PhD Student
 - 6 = Truett Seminary Student

4. Classification
 - 1 = Freshmen
 - 2 = Sophomore
 - 3 = Junior
 - 4 = Senior

5. Ethnic Group
 - 1 = African
 - 2 = Asian
 - 3 = European
 - 4 = North American
 - 5 = South American

6. Home Country [Text Entry]

APPENDIX E

Survey: Social Embeddedness/Acculturation Scale

Taken from: Sense of Belonging-Psychological State, Home, College, and General Hagerty & Patusky (1995).

Instruction: Please click the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement below.

- 1 = Strongly Agree
- 2 = Agree
- 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4 = Disagree
- 5 = Strongly Disagree

Questions:

1. I am just not sure if I fit in with my college friends.
2. I would describe myself as a misfit in most social situations in college.
3. I generally feel that people accept me in college. [Reverse coded].
4. I am uncomfortable that my background and experiences are so different from those who are usually around me in college.
5. I could not call or see my college friends for days and it wouldn't matter to them.
6. I feel left out of things in college.
7. I am not valued by or important to college friends.

Reference:

“Developing a Measure of a Sense of Belonging,” by B.M.K Hagerty and K. Patusky, 1995, *Nursing Research*, 44, 9-13.

APPENDIX F

Table 3: *Correlation Matrix of Social Embeddedness (Acculturation)*

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	65	82.3
	Excluded ^a	14	17.7
	Total	79	100.0

- a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.781	.743	7

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
SE_NotFit	3.42	1.130	65
SE_Misfit	3.69	1.060	65
SE_Accepted	1.94	.768	65
SE_Uncomfortable	3.77	1.086	65
SE_CallFriends	3.18	1.074	65
SE_LeftOut	3.54	1.032	65
SE_NotValues	3.75	1.031	65

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
23.29	22.523	4.746	7

Inter-Item Correlation Matrix

	SE_NotFit	SE_Misfit	SE_Accepted	SE_Uncomfortable	SE_CallFriends	SE_LeftOut	SE_NotValues
SE_NotFit	1.000	.656	-.366	.436	.515	.676	.585
SE_Misfit	.656	1.000	-.388	.616	.312	.625	.545
SE_Accepted	-.366	-.388	1.000	-.205	-.138	-.214	-.394
SE_Uncomfortable	.436	.616	-.205	1.000	.265	.475	.478
SE_CallFriends	.515	.312	-.138	.265	1.000	.459	.564
SE_LeftOut	.676	.625	-.214	.475	.459	1.000	.626
SE_NotValues	.585	.545	-.394	.478	.564	.626	1.000

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Inter-Item Correlations	.292	-.394	.676	1.070	-1.714	.149	7

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
SE_NotFit	19.88	15.047	.707	.612	.708
SE_Misfit	19.60	15.775	.668	.617	.719
SE_Accepted	21.35	24.732	-.366	.259	.867
SE_Uncomfortable	19.52	16.441	.556	.417	.742
SE_CallFriends	20.11	16.754	.525	.401	.749
SE_LeftOut	19.75	15.438	.742	.588	.704
SE_NotValues	19.54	15.877	.679	.580	.717

APPENDIX G

Survey: Connection to Home Scale (Scale Recoded)

11. How often do you contact friends and family in your home country?

- 7 = Daily
- 6 = 2-3 Times a Week
- 5 = Once a Week
- 4 = 2-3 Times a Month
- 3 = Once a Month
- 2 = Less than Once a Month
- 1 = Never

12. When contacting your friends and family in your home country, how much time do you spend communicating with them?

- 6 = I stay connected throughout the day
- 5 = More than 2 hours
- 4 = 1 hour – 2 hours
- 3 = 30 minutes – 1 hour
- 2 = Less than 30 minutes
- 1 = I do not spend time connecting home

13. What method do you use to contact friends and family in your home country? (Check all that apply)

- 1 = Social media (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, Renren, Weibo)
- 2 = Mobile applications (i.e. WeChat, Line, KakaoTalk, WhatsApp)
- 3 = Video call (i.e. Skype, FaceTime)
- 4 = Direct phone call
- 5 = Text Message
- 6 = Other

Instruction:

Please click the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement below.

14. Contacting my friends and family back home is something very important to me.

- 5 = Strongly Agree
- 4 = Agree
- 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 1 = Strongly Disagree

15. I can't spend one day without contacting my friends and family back home.

- 5 = Strongly Agree
- 4 = Agree
- 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 1 = Strongly Disagree

16. I feel more connected to my friends and family if I contact them more frequently.

- 5 = Strongly Agree
- 4 = Agree
- 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 1 = Strongly Disagree

17. I feel the need to regularly update my friends and family with my experiences in the US.

- 5 = Strongly Agree
- 4 = Agree
- 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 1 = Strongly Disagree

APPENDIX H

Table 4: *Correlation Matrix of Connection to Home (Home Contact)*

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	67	84.8
	Excluded ^a	12	15.2
	Total	79	100.0

b. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.745	.772	6

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
ch_howoftenR	5.6567	1.53299	67
ch_howmuchtimeR	3.6716	1.53137	67
ch_importantR	4.4627	.76532	67
ch_cantspendonedayR	2.5821	1.14348	67
ch_moreconnectedR	3.8955	.93961	67
ch_needtoupdateR	3.4925	1.10609	67

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
23.7612	22.942	4.78979	6

Inter-Item Correlation Matrix

	ch_howoftenR	ch_howmuchtimeR	ch_importantR	ch_cantspen donedayR	ch_morec onnectedR	ch_needto updateR
ch_howoftenR	1.000	.448	.628	.306	.301	.298
ch_howmuchtimeR	.448	1.000	.338	.370	.134	.115
ch_importantR	.628	.338	1.000	.449	.426	.282
ch_cantspendonedayR	.306	.370	.449	1.000	.452	.441
ch_moreconnectedR	.301	.134	.426	.452	1.000	.429
ch_needtoupdateR	.298	.115	.282	.441	.429	1.000

Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Inter-Item Correlations	.361	.115	.628	.513	5.471	.017	6

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
ch_howoftenR	18.1045	14.065	.568	.481	.686
ch_howmuchtimeR	20.0896	15.628	.410	.282	.742
ch_importantR	19.2985	18.213	.634	.494	.693
ch_cantspendonedayR	21.1791	16.392	.566	.405	.687
ch_moreconnectedR	19.8657	18.330	.463	.326	.717
ch_needtoupdateR	20.2687	17.836	.416	.289	.726

APPENDIX I

Survey: Homesickness Scale (Scale Recoded)

Taken from: “Homesickness Among Students in Two Cultures: Antecedents and Consequences,” by M. Stroebe, T. Van Vliet, M. Hewstone and H. Willis, 2002, *British Journal of Psychology*, 93, 147-168.

Instruction: Please tell us how often in the past four weeks have you experienced each of the feelings or emotions listed below.

- 4 = Always
- 3 = Very Often
- 2 = Occasionally
- 1 = Never

1. Missing your parents.
2. Missing your family.
3. Missing home.
4. Feeling missed by your family.
5. Feeling lonely.
6. Feeling unloved.
7. Feeling isolated from the rest of the world.
8. Feeling uprooted.
9. Longing for acquaintances.
10. Searching for familiar faces.
11. Missing people whom you can trust and can talk with.
12. Missing your friends.
13. Finding it difficult adjusting to a new situation.
14. Feeling uncomfortable in a new situation.
15. Feeling lost in a new situation.
16. Having difficulties get using to new customs.
17. Having thoughts that an old situation was better than here and now.
18. Regretting the decision to leave an old situation.
19. Continuously having thoughts about home.
20. Repeatedly thinking of the past.

APPENDIX J

Table 5: *Correlation Matrix of Homesickness Level*

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	63	79.7
	Excluded ^a	16	20.3
	Total	79	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.838	.845	20

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
41.7302	58.813	7.66897	20

ANOVA with Cochran's Test

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Cochran's Q	Sig
Between	People	182.321	62	2.941	284.540	.000
Within	Between	174.777	19	9.199		
	Items	560.473	1178	.476		
	Residual	735.250	1197	.614		
Total	Total	917.571	1259	.729		

Grand Mean = 2.0865

Item Statistics of Appendix I (Homesickness Scale)

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
hs_missparentsR	2.5238	.85868	63
hs_missfamilyR	2.5873	.83540	63
hs_misshomeR	2.4603	.93023	63
hs_missedbyfamilyR	2.7619	.85599	63
hs_feellonelyR	2.0159	.72938	63
hs_feelunlovedR	1.6032	.70801	63
hs_feelisolatedR	1.6349	.67922	63
hs_feeluprootedR	1.6508	.62627	63
hs_acquaintancesR	1.9683	.76133	63
hs_searchfacesR	1.8730	.68373	63
hs_mistrustR	2.6349	.98867	63
hs_missfriendsR	2.6825	.83907	63
hs_difficultadjustR	1.9206	.67922	63
hs_uncomfortableR	2.0476	.60718	63
hs_fellostR	2.0476	.68223	63
hs_difficultaccustomR	1.7778	.77135	63
hs_oldisbetterR	1.8571	.83968	63
hs_regretR	1.6667	.74053	63
hs_thinkinghomeR	1.9048	.71198	63
hs_thinkingpastR	2.1111	.82523	63

APPENDIX K

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation for All Study Variables

Statistics

		HomeContact_Impact	Acculturation_Impact	HS_Scale
N	Valid	67	65	63
	Missing	12	14	16
Mean		23.7612	25.4154	41.7302
Std. Deviation		4.78979	5.30298	7.66897
Range		19.00	25.00	38.00

APPENDIX L

Table 6: *Correlation Matrix of All Study Variables*

```

CORRELATIONS
/VARIABLES=HomeContact_Impact Acculturation_Impact HS_Impact
/PRINT=TWOTAIL NOSIG
/STATISTICS DESCRIPTIVES
/MISSING=PAIRWISE.
    
```

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
HomeContact_Impact	23.7612	4.78979	67
Acculturation_Impact	25.4154	5.30298	65
HS_Impact	41.7302	7.66897	63

Correlations

		HomeContact _Impact	Acculturation _Impact	HS_Impact
HomeContact_Impact	Pearson Correlation	1	-.143	.296*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.256	.019
	N	67	65	63
Acculturation_Impact	Pearson Correlation	-.143	1	-.462**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.256		.000
	N	65	65	63
HS_Impact	Pearson Correlation	.296*	-.462**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.019	.000	
	N	63	63	63

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

APPENDIX M

Table 7: Regression Analysis of All Study Variables

Variables Entered/Removed^a

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Acculturation_Impact, HomeContact_Impact ^b	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: HS_Impact

b. All requested variables entered.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.524 ^a	.274	.250	6.64134

a. Predictors: (Constant), Acculturation_Impact, HomeContact_Impact

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	999.969	2	499.985	11.336	.000 ^b
	Residual	2646.443	60	44.107		
	Total	3646.413	62			

a. Dependent Variable: HS_Impact

b. Predictors: (Constant), Acculturation_Impact, HomeContact_Impact

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	49.226	6.541		7.526	.000
	HomeContact_Impact	.408	.181	.249	2.249	.028
	Acculturation_Impact	-.670	.170	-.435	-3.931	.000

a. Dependent Variable: HS_Impact

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