

ABSTRACT

The Influence of Academic, Social, and Deeper Life Interactions on the Psychological Sense of Community of International Students in the United States

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More than one million international college students studied in the United States in 2019. International students contributed \$41 billion and sponsored 458,290 jobs to the U.S. economy during the 2018-2019 academic year. But despite their substantial contribution to the economy, many international students disclose lower levels of social satisfaction, sense of respect on campus, and sense of belonging. The purpose of this study is to explore psychometric values that bring personhood to international students. Using quantitative multiple regression, this study explores the influence of academic, social, and deeper life interactions between international students and their peers, faculty, and staff on their psychological sense of community. The results of the study are that deeper life interactions between international students and peers, academic interactions between international students and faculty and staff and social interactions between international students and faculty or staff influence the psychological sense of community of international students.

The Influence of Academic, Social, and Deeper Life Interactions on the Psychological Sense of
Community of International Students in the United States

by

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DEDICATION

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CHAPTER ONE

The Influence of Academic, Social, and Deeper Life Interactions on the Psychological Sense of Community of International Students

Introduction

More than one million international college students studied in the United States in 2019 (Open Doors Report, 2019). According to the report, this number represents an increase from 2018 and accounts for 5.5% of the total number of enrolled students in U.S. higher education. International students contributed \$41 billion and sponsored 458,290 jobs to the U.S. economy during the 2018-2019 academic year (National Association of Foreign Student Advisers (NAFSA), n.d.). But despite the increase in enrollment of international students and their substantial contribution to the economy, many international students disclose lower levels of social satisfaction, a sense of respect on campus, and a sense of belonging (Van Horne et al., 2018; Glass et al., 2013; Fischer, 2012). The lower satisfaction stems from issues in cultural adaptation, social integration, financial security, and academic integration (Van Horne et al., 2018; Bhochhibhoya et al., 2017). These challenges have the potential to decrease enrollment numbers of international students (Ammigan et al., 2018).

To better understand the challenges facing international students, I studied the literature and identified four limitations in the literature that need to be addressed. The first is that the current literature on international students primarily reflects the cultural transitioning challenges that international students encounter, and this scholarship is

mostly from a deficit standpoint (Shu et al., 2020; Shu et al., 2017; Kwon, 2009; Olaniran, 1996). In other words, the scholarship tends to focus on what international students lack rather than examine how international students succeed. Second, although there is a plethora of research on psychometric measurements of success on domestic students (Sriram et al., 2020; Schreiner, 2010), there is a dearth of research on similar psychometric measurements of success in international students outside of sense of belonging (Garcia et al., 2019; Glass et al., 2015). Third, despite a recent increase in studies on student engagement, student satisfaction, and academic success of international students (Bjork et al., 2020; Korobova et al., 2015; Grayson 2008a), there is limited research that highlights the personhood of international students with variables such as sense of belonging, thriving, and psychological sense of community. Finally, there is a gap in quantitative, multi-institutional studies specifically consisting of international students.

The purpose of the current study is to investigate international student success using psychological metrics that bring personhood to international students. This study seeks to add to the existing literature by investigating the factors that contribute to a psychological sense of community among international students from a multi-institutional approach.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review/Theoretical Framework

Scholars found that international student success is influenced by a variety of factors, including cultural transitioning, social, academic, and socio-academic integration, campus involvement, and influence of the exosystem. A review of the literature unearths how these different elements foster success.

Cultural Transitioning

The bulk of research on international students covers the cultural transitioning and acculturation process that the students have to navigate when they start their college journey in the U.S. (Yao, 2015; Korobova, 2012; Smith et al., 2011; Lee, 2010). These studies show that language, cultural, and social barriers can drastically alter and hinder an international student's college experience. These barriers can cause feelings of culture shock, homesickness, isolation, embarrassment, revulsion, and depression (Szabo et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2015). International students juggle the burden of adapting to both an unfamiliar academic setting and a new cultural setting, and these adaptations require behavior and attitude adjustments to live successfully in the new environment. (Mesidor & Sly, 2016). To support these students, institutions have implemented bridging

programs, peer friendship programs, and enhanced orientations that focus on cultural transitioning (Tolman, 2017; Smith et al., 2014).

Integration

The literature on integration of international students and students is mainly rooted in Tinto's model of retention and Astin's theory of involvement. Tinto's (1993) model highlights academic and social integration. Recently socio-academic integration has taken root in the literature as well (Deil-Amen, 2011).

Social Integration

The major social findings in the literature about international students relate to social isolation, loneliness, and homesickness (Zhou, 2014; Rose-Redwood et al., 2013; Garies, 2012). Studies show that international students have lower levels of social involvement and satisfaction on campus and that these students struggle to make friends and adapt to the new social environment (Van Horne et al., 2018; Redden, 2015; Glass et al., 2013; Fischer, 2012). Some studies stipulate that lower social interactions have significant bearings on students' sense of belonging and acculturative stress (Garcia et al., 2019; Sullivan et al., 2015).

Academic Integration

The importance of academic integration to college students' satisfaction is well documented (Webber et al., 2013; Arambewala et al., 2009; Astin, 1993). There is a considerable amount of research that indicates that academic integration is important to international students' cultural transitioning and satisfaction (Van Horne et al., 2018;

Zhou et al., 2016; Mamiseishvili, 2012). For example, Webber et al. (2013) argued that student interactions with faculty are pivotal in predicting the satisfaction of students. In a qualitative study, Glass et al., (2015), discovered that interactions between professors and international students contributed to their sense of belonging in three ways; international students felt included, helped them develop personal ways of knowing and, influenced their career plans.

Socio-academic Interactions

Socio-academic interactions reference the in-class and out-of-class interactions that are not entirely academic or social between students and faculty, staff, or their peers (Deil-Amen, 2011). Emerging research on international students is calling for a socio-academic approach to students' satisfaction, transitioning, meaning-making, and psychosocial metrics (Glass et al., 2015; Marginson, 2013). A study by Garcia et al. (2019) found that socio-academic interactions were “instrumental for sense of belonging for international students” (p. 475). Similar to socio-academic interactions, Sriram and McLevain (2016) proposed a deeper life interactions model that consists of interactions that are neither academic nor social. According to Sriram and McLevain (2016), deeper life interactions center around the big questions in life and meaning-making that center on how students make sense of reality. I did not find any research however that considered interactions on deeper life interactions with international students.

Campus Involvement

Drawing upon the components of social, academic, and socio-academic interactions, involvement is defined as, “... the investment of physical and psychological

energy in various objects. The objects may be highly generalized (the student experience) or highly specific (preparing for a chemistry examination)” (Astin, 1984, p. 519).

Involvement and engagement facilitate personal, cognitive, and psychosocial development in college students (Astin, 1984; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Kuh et al., 2011). Some studies have compared the engagement between international students and American students as a measure of satisfaction. These studies show that the limited number of international students who get involved benefit as much from involvement as their domestic counterparts (Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2018; Korobova et al., 2015; Zhao et al., 2005). International student involvement and engagement is still an understudied part of the international student experience. But overall, the existing research on international student involvement takes a deficit approach, which emphasizes what international students lack. In her book *International Student Engagement in Higher Education*, Kettle (2017) called for a move from this deficit model to a more constructive approach.

Influence of the Exosystem

The influence of racial and political tensions on international students’ satisfaction and psychosocial metrics are important and are emblematic of the effects of the environment on students. Bronfenbrenner (1977), in his ecological model, argued that the environment is influential in the development and growth of children and adolescents. Bronfenbrenner (1977) classified the environment into five sub-environments: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. The exosystem refers to “other specific social structures, both formal and informal, that do not themselves contain the developing person but impinge upon or encompass the immediate

settings in which that person is found, and thereby influenced” (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 515). A current example of the exosystem would be the racial climate of the U.S. and the immigration policies placed on international students.

Racial Tensions

Although not as prominent in the literature, the ascendancy of racial and political tensions on campuses and in the U.S. is becoming a key part of the influencing factors on international students. Bjork et al. (2020) stated, “A reality that has been rarely highlighted in research on international education [is] the cogent influence that sociopolitical context can exert on all aspects of life for sojourning students” (p. 563). International students interacting with peers have a combination of nationality, race, and ethnicity influencing their relationships. For example, international students rarely engage in pertinent conversations surrounding politics for fear they might say something wrong, even though their unique global experiences might enrich the conversation (Bjork et al., 2020). And studies revealed that international students who encounter racial or ethnic discrimination report lower satisfaction with their college experiences (Lee, 2010; Lee & Rice, 2007; Perrucci & Hu, 1995).

Nationalism

Nationalism has led to changing U.S. immigration policies that have created confusion about international visa requirements and work permits specify the particular new barriers or rules]. (Zhang, 2018; Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2017). One effect of recent immigration policies is the decrease in international applications and enrollment (Fischer, 2017). According to a study by Zhang (2018), both students and

academic advisors are challenged by the shifting regulations and policies governing international students.

CHAPTER THREE

Conceptual Framework

My conceptual framework, called the International Student Psychological Sense of Community Framework, combines elements from previous work on psychological sense of community (Schreiner, 2010; Sarason, 1974), Tinto's (1993) retention model, Astin's (1993) involvement model, Hurtado and Carter's (1997) Latino sense of belonging model, and Sriram et al.'s (2020) academic, social, and deeper life interactions framework. This framework connects social interactions, academic interactions, and deeper life interactions of international students with their peers, faculty, and staff to their psychological sense of community. The International Student Psychological Sense of Community Framework uses components of these foundational models while accounting for their gaps in measuring the psychological sense of community in international students.

Psychological Sense of Community

Student success is predicted and measured with academic factors like GPA, retention, and time to degree. These academic indicators alone are not representative of higher levels of satisfaction or thriving of international students. Some important non-academic indicators of student success and satisfaction are sense of belonging, a psychological sense of community, and thriving. Thriving is defined as being “fully engaged intellectually, socially, and emotionally in the college experience” (Schreiner,

2010, p. 4). The most significant predictor of thriving is psychological sense of community (Schreiner, 2017; Schreiner et al., 2013, 2012).

Sarason (1974) defines psychological sense of community as “the perception of similarity to others, an acknowledged interdependence with others, a willingness to maintain this interdependence by giving to or doing for others what one expects from them, the feeling that one is a part of a larger dependable and stable structure” (p. 157). Psychological sense of community has a direct influence on the success and well-being of students (Sarason, 1974; Schreiner, 2010).

Astin and Tinto’s Models

Astin’s I-E-O model is among the first college success or outcome models. In this model, Astin (1993) asserts that student inputs, which include their background, demographics, and previous experiences, interact with the environment to produce outcomes such as the development of knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and characteristics. Tinto’s (1993) model of retention argues for the use of communities of learning to socially and academically integrate students, in the context of an institutional commitment to retain them, while accounting for students’ backgrounds.

Hurtado and Carter’s Models

Hurtado and Carter (1997) propounded that for students who have been historically marginalized in higher education, integration meant something else. This is because Tinto’s (1993) model argues for separation from their backgrounds in order to integrate into the college community. They found that external involvements and

engagements that connected Latino students them with their home culture were beneficial to their comfortability in the college environment. Instead, Carter and Hurtado (1997) offer an alternative in their study of sense of belonging in Latino college students that emphasizes interactions rather than integration.

For this reason, I will be using interactions in theoretical and conceptual frameworks in makings sense of the international student experience.

Sriram et al's Academic, Social, and Deeper Life Interactions Model

Sriram et al.'s (2020) academic, social, and deeper life interactions model, designed to study the psychological sense of community of students, is a critique of and addition to Tinto's (1993) retention model. Sriram et al. (2020) argue that the bifurcation of interactions between students and faculty, staff, and peers into academic and social interactions is insufficient. They assert that students have interactions concerning meaning and purpose with faculty, staff members, and peers, and they use deeper life interactions as a latent variable to measure and distinguish these interactions of meaning and purpose. Sriram et al. (2020) found that the combination of academic, social, and deeper life interactions with faculty, staff and peers has a large influence upon the psychological sense of community of college students.

Gaps in the Models

Astin's (1993) model is insufficient because it only considers the college environment and does not account for the effects of the exosystem on student outcomes. Tinto's (1993) model does a better job of specifying the roles that institutions play in creating avenues for social and academic integration to retain students, especially

students from low socio-economic backgrounds and students of color. However, retention as an academic indicator of student success is a low standard for international students. Moreover, Tinto's (1993) model does not account for the cultural transition process of international students that plays a major role in students' ability to become engaged or involved.

Figure 1.1 below visually displays the conceptual framework for this study. This model hypothesizes that irrespective of the demographics of international students at the start of college, the academic interactions, social interactions, deeper life interactions, and international transitioning interactions between international students and peers, faculty, and staff influence their psychological sense of community. In this framework, deeper life interactions include interactions of meaning and purpose and international transitioning interactions consist of exosystem issues relevant to international students such as cultural transitioning, campus involvement and education, and U.S. racial tensions and immigration policies.

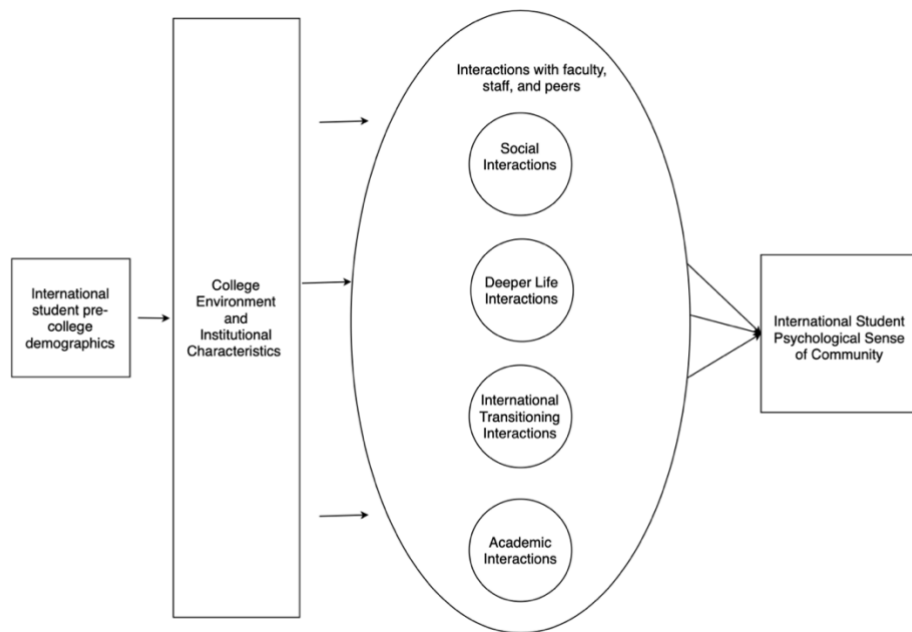


Figure 1.1. International Student Psychological Sense of Community Framework

The primary purpose of this research is to add to the literature on higher-level psychosocial metrics of international students. This study seeks further knowledge about how colleges and universities can better serve international students so they can benefit from studying in the U.S. while also contributing to U.S. colleges, their local cities, and the U.S. as a whole. To this end, this study asks the following: To what extent do academic interactions, social interactions, deeper life interactions, and international transitioning interactions with faculty, staff, and peers influence the psychological sense of community of international students?

CHAPTER FOUR

Methodology

Data Collection

Undergraduate and graduate international students on F-1 visas, from a myriad of colleges and universities were invited to complete an online survey that measured their various interactions with their peers, faculty, staff. Over 2500 students were invited to fill the survey and 576 students filled the survey for a response rate of less than 23 percent. The incentive for filling out the survey included the opportunity to be entered into a raffle to win a \$50 Visa gift card. The survey instrument consisted of Sriram et al.'s (2020) *Academic, Social, and Deeper Life Interactions Instrument*, and three newly developed scales measuring the international transition interactions with peers, the international transition interactions with faculty or staff, the psychological sense of community of international students. The 43-item survey utilized a 6-point Likert scale, from 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly disagree.

Additionally, the survey included questions on traditional demographic information: classification, gender, race, major, and home/native country. The survey was administered through international student offices and the snowballing method, where we used our student networks to advertise the survey. There are 64 different schools represented in the responses. Although 576 students filled out the survey, only 392 responses were used for the principal component analysis and reliability analysis. The others had too many missing items to include in the analysis. Below are the participant

and demographic information. The number of respondents was 392 students for a response rate of less than 15.7 percent. Table 1.1 below provides demographic information on the survey respondents.

Table 1.1: Means, Standard Deviations, and Coding for Variables and Percentages

Variables	n	%
Pre-College Demographics		
Male	174	44%
Female	218	56%
College demographics		
First-year	55	14%
Sophomore	61	16%
Junior	44	11%
Senior	59	15%
Graduate Student	172	44%
School Classification		
Public	125	32%
Private	254	65%
Missing	13	3%
Academic Major Area		
Sciences	117	30%
Engineering	43	11%
Business	55	14%
Arts	18	5%
Social Sciences	56	14%
Humanities	30	8%
Dual or Triple Major	23	6%
Other	50	13%
Continent of origin		
Africa	64	16%
Asia	196	50%
Europe	47	12%
North America (Canada)	11	3%
South America	41	10%
Australia	6	2%
Prefer not to Indicate/Missing	27	7%

Data Analysis

I conducted data analysis using the SPSS 26 software. Principal components analysis was conducted on 43 items to develop latent variables that would be used in the multiple regression analysis. The principal components analysis measured the validity of the instrument and allowed comparison between the conceptual and statistical variables. I measured validity through eigenvalues, a rotated component matrix, communalities, and an orthogonal rotation. The communalities ranged from .502 on the lowest variable to .878 on the highest variable. Factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were maintained, resulting in 7 remaining factors. Next, I removed the items with factor loadings below 0.40. Based on the scree plot and the rotated component matrix, I ultimately confirmed 6 latent variables.

The principal component analysis loaded both deeper life interactions and international transition interactions with peers together. This indicated that there was no meaningful difference between the initial two latent variables. Items measuring academic interactions with faculty and academic interactions with staff were also loaded together onto one factor. Additionally, deeper life interactions with faculty and staff and international transition interactions with faculty and staff also loaded together to one factor. Items measuring social interactions with faculty/staff and social interactions time with faculty and staff loaded onto one factor. The fifth variable was academic interactions with peers, and the sixth was psychological sense of community. I named the six latent variables as deeper life interactions with peers, deeper life interactions with faculty or staff, academic interactions with faculty and staff, academic interactions with peers, social interactions with faculty or staff, and psychological sense of community. The

Cronbach's alpha of each of the latent variables indicated excellent internal reliability with values ranging from 0.820 to 0.938. Table 2.1 displays the rotated component matrix with relevant items and loadings. Mean scores of the variables were as follows: deeper life interactions with peers (4.05), deeper life interactions with faculty/staff (3.89), academic interactions with faculty/staff (5.04), academic interactions with peers (5.06), social interactions with faculty/staff (4.90), and psychological sense of community (4.60)

CHAPTER FIVE

Results

Limitations

There were limitations in this study that should frame the interpretation of the results. One limitation is that the data collection occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic altered the usual ways that all higher education students interacted with their peers, faculty, and staff. There were limitations with meeting in person and some informal interactions may have been affected. This pandemic possibly had implications in how students responded to the survey. Second, these findings represent self-perceptions and self-reports. Rather than measuring the number of interactions international students had with peers, faculty, or staff, these scales measure satisfaction with these interactions. Although the scales were valid and reliable, they still contain a small amount of error in their measurement. A third limitation involves the sample used for this study. Although the sample was relatively large ($n = 392$) and included students from multiple campuses, larger studies with more participants are needed to verify the findings of this study.

Multiple Regression Results

To answer my question on the influence of academic, social, and deeper life interactions between international students and their peers, faculty, and staff on psychological sense of community, I ran a standard multiple regression. The independent or predictor variables were deeper life interactions with peers, academic interactions with

faculty and staff, deeper life interactions with faculty/staff, academic interactions with peers, and social interactions with faculty/staff. As displayed in Table 3.1 below, the findings indicated that the comprehensive model significantly predicted the psychological sense of community of international students ($R^2 = 0.445$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 3.1: Regression Analysis Summary for Academic, Social and Deeper Life Interactions with Faculty, Staff and Students Predicting Psychological Sense of Community of International. Students in the United States

Variable	B	SE B	95% CI	β	t	p
Deeper Life Interactions with Faculty or Staff	0.005	0.067	[-0.137, 0.128]	-0.004	-0.067	0.947
Deeper Life Interactions with Peers***	0.303	0.072	[0.162, .444]	0.280	4.225	0.000
Academic Interactions with Faculty and Staff**	0.238	0.077	[0.086, 0.390]	0.184	3.071	0.002
Academic Interactions with Peers	0.106	0.066	[-0.023, 0.235]	0.089	1.621	0.106
Social Interactions with Faculty or Staff***	0.343	0.072	[0.202, 0.484]	0.265	4.769	0.000

Note: $R^2 = .445$ (N= 392), $p < 0.001$ * $p < 0.5$ ** $p < 0.05$ *** $p < 0.001$

This means that the model accounts for 44.5% of the variance in the psychological sense of community of international students, which is a large effect size. The model specifies that 3 of the 5 predictor variables significantly influence the psychological sense of community in international students. In descending order of magnitude of influence, these predictor variables are deeper life interactions with peers, social interactions with faculty or staff, and academic interactions with faculty and staff. All three predictor variables had large effect sizes, with beta weights ranging from .184 to .280. The predictors that were not statistically significant predictors of psychological sense of community in international students were deeper life interactions with faculty and staff and academic interactions with peers

CHAPTER SIX

Discussion

The purpose of this study is to contribute to empirical research on international students by predicting the factors that influenced their psychological sense of community through an academic, social, and deeper life interactions framework with faculty, staff, and peers. The results indicate that taken together, deeper life interactions with peers, academic interactions with faculty or staff, and social interactions with faculty or staff significantly influence the psychological sense of community of international students with a large effect size. Individually, each of these three variables also had a large effect size based on standardized regression coefficients (beta weights). These findings also suggest that deeper life interactions with faculty or staff and academic interactions with peers do not make a difference in the psychological sense of community of international students. These findings have ramifications for theory, current practice, and future research.

Deeper Life Interactions with Peers

The results of this study highlight the influence of deeper life interactions with peers on the psychological sense of community of international students. This finding is consistent with research on the significance of friends and friendships in the transitioning experience of international students (Belford, 2017). Based on these results, an increase

of one standard deviation in deeper life interactions with peers would create an increase of .28 standard deviations in the psychological sense of community of international students. It is interesting to note that the items originally intended to capture the international transitioning interactions of students coalesced with the deeper life interactions items. This finding provides evidence that deeper life interactions here include issues relating to transitioning for international students. This discovery makes sense considering that Sriram and McLevain (2016) define deeper life interactions “as those that occur around life’s big questions and meaning-making. Such meaning-making involves awareness of how one composes reality and ongoing dialogue toward truth and acting in ways that are satisfying and just” (p. 605). These results indicate that for international students, a big part of composing their reality is the transitioning issues they navigate during their stay in the U.S.

The results have potential intervention implications concerning deeper life interactions with students. For example, international student orientation leaders can be trained to navigate questions surrounding race, finances, political climate, and immigration and also to create environments where international students feel comfortable and safe engaging in such conversations with them. It would be useful to extend the current findings by examining the difference in how much influence deeper life interactions have on the psychological sense of community between U.S. peers and international peers. Another potential intervention involves peer mentoring programs associated with most international student services offices. The results offer compelling evidence for why these programs are needed to help foster meaningful interactions among students that go beyond academic and social interactions. Conversations based on

cultural transitioning issues, effects of immigration policies, and personal aspirations could be introduced into these programs in non-threatening ways.

Another ramification of the results of deeper life interactions with peers for research and practice is reclaiming the language used in deficit models. As discussed earlier, topics on immigration, cultural transitioning, finances, and race are usually the focus of research on deficit models concerning international students. By using a deeper life interactions model, these topics are repurposed from deficiency models to instruments that foster psychological wellbeing and a sense of community.

In summation of this point, interactions on topics relating to family, cultural transitioning issues, purpose, immigration policy, race, finances, aspirations, and belonging should not be considered taboo topics in interactions between international students and their peers, but rather opportunities to engage in meaningful ways that positively contribute to the psychological sense of community of international students.

Academic Interactions with Faculty and Staff

The importance of academic interactions in the transitioning and satisfaction of international students is readily emphasized in the literature on international students. Glass et al. (2015) found that interactions between faculty and international students that emphasize in-class contribution and intimate conversations before and after class contribute to the sense of belonging of international students. Based on the results of this study, academic interactions between international students and faculty or staff has the second largest effect on the psychological sense of community of international students. An increase of one standard deviation in academic interactions with faculty and staff

would create an increase of .184 standard deviations in the psychological sense of community of international students. These results echo previous research on the numerous benefits of academic interactions between faculty and international students.

A practical way for campuses to implement this finding involves creating spaces for faculty and staff to have one-on-one conversations with international students. Previous research focuses on academic interactions with faculty members, and there is little research on the role of academic interactions between staff and international students on the transitioning or satisfaction of international students. This study finds that international students do not necessarily distinguish between faculty and staff in their academic interactions.

Social Interactions with Faculty or Staff

Perhaps the most surprising finding is the influence of faculty and staff social interactions on the psychological sense of community of international students. Based on the results, an increase of one standard deviation in social interactions with faculty or staff would create an increase of .265 standard deviations in the psychological sense of community of international students. The significance of social interactions between students and faculty is not new in the literature. As far back as 1969, Chickering posited that an increase in both formal and informal interactions between faculty and students would result in an increase in sense of purpose for students. This study demonstrates that interactions as informal as exchanging greetings such as “hello” or asking “how are you” between faculty/staff and international students can help to foster a psychological sense of community for international students. Webber et al. (2013) observed that interacting with faculty is one of the predictors of overall satisfaction. The practical inference of this

finding is that faculty and staff members need to go out of their way to engage international students in pleasant interactions or light-hearted conversations or perhaps share a meal with these students. Sriram, Cheatle, et al. (2020) found a small link between social interactions with faculty/staff and psychological sense of community in domestic undergraduates. The results of this study, however, suggest that international students need these social interactions with faculty/staff more than domestic students to feel a part of the community. Faculty and staff interactions of a social nature are essential for international students (Garcia et al., 2019). Future research could examine how and why social interactions with faculty/staff are so important for international students.

Future Research

Much more research is needed before a full understanding of the dynamics of how deeper life interactions with international students influence their psychological sense of community. For example, Chavajay (2013) notes that international students are more likely to discern considerable socioemotional and instrumental support from the international community on campus than their domestic counterparts. In light of findings like this one, it would be interesting to explore whether international student interactions with other international students contribute more to their psychological sense of community than interactions with their American peers. If, as the present study suggests, academic interactions between staff and international students influence the psychological community of international students, then there is a need for research on what type of staff members can best play this role. For example, what is the difference between the influence of the interactions between international students and staff members that work on the academic side such as academic advisors and student success

center staff versus the interactions with student affairs professionals? An implication of this finding is to encourage professional staff to engage international students in academic conversations

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

The premise of this study was to fill a gap for multi-institutional research that explores higher-level psychometrics that brings personhood to international students. Psychological sense of community has been found to be the main contributor to thriving in diverse student groups, after controlling for other latent variables (Schreiner, 2017; Schreiner et al. 2012). This study sought to examine the influence of academic, social, and deeper life interactions on the psychological sense of community of international students. The findings indicate that the combination of these interactions between international students, their peers, staff, and faculty has a large effect on the psychological sense of community of international students. Specifically, deeper life interactions between international students and their peers, academic interactions between international students and faculty or staff, and social interactions between international students and faculty or staff strongly promote a psychological sense of community in international students.

In his research, Schreiner (2010) points out that “Thriving college students not only are academically successful, they also experience a sense of community and a level of psychological well-being that contributes to their persistence to graduation allows them to gain maximum benefit from being in college” (p. 4). International students are worthy of a thriving college experience and I hope that this study ignites interactions on

college campuses that bring personhood to international students while checking off markers like persistence, sense of community, and psychological well-being

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

Table A1: Rotated Component Matrix, Principal Component Analysis

Table A1: Rotated Component Matrix, Principal Component Analysis		Component					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
Q8.3 - I have discussions with faculty or staff that cause me to examine or reflect on my own beliefs or values.	0.84						
Q8.4 - I have discussions with faculty or staff that cause me to examine or reflect on my role in society.	0.79						
Q8.1 - I feel very comfortable engaging in conversation with faculty or staff about life's big questions ¹	0.78						
Q8.2 - I feel very comfortable engaging in conversation with faculty or staff about what I should do with my life.	0.72						
Q9.5 - I feel very comfortable engaging in conversations with faculty or staff on racial issues.	0.64						
Q9.7 - I feel very comfortable discussing financial issues with faculty or staff.	0.63						
Q9.1 - I feel very comfortable engaging in conversations on US immigration policies with faculty or staff.	0.62						
Q9.6 - I feel very comfortable engaging in conversations with faculty or staff about my plans after graduation ²	0.61						
Q9.2 - I feel very comfortable talking to faculty or staff about my cultural transitioning issues.	0.60						
Q9.4 - I have conversations with faculty or staff on the importance of engaging in clubs or organizations on campus.	0.54						
Q6.2 - I feel very comfortable asking other students for personal advice.			0.80				
Q6.1 - I feel very comfortable engaging in conversation with other students about my family and/or personal life.			0.73				
Q6.3 - I feel very comfortable engaging in conversation with other students about what I should do with my life.			0.72				
Q7.7 - I feel very comfortable discussing financial issues with my peers.			0.68				
Q7.2 - I feel very comfortable talking to other students about my cultural transitioning issues.			0.68				
Q7.1 - I feel very comfortable engaging in conversations on US immigration policies with other students.			0.68				
Q7.5 - I feel very comfortable engaging in conversations with other students on racial issues.			0.61				
Q6.4 - If I was having a crisis, I know other students at my institution I can talk to.			0.59				
Q7.6 - I feel very comfortable engaging in conversations with other students about my plans after graduation ²			0.55				
Q7.4 - I have conversations with other students on the importance of engaging in clubs or organizations on campus.			0.49				
Q5.3 - If I was struggling academically, there are staff at my institution I can go to.				0.88			
Q5.2 - Staff at my institution help me to be academically successful.				0.88			
Q5.4 - When I have a question relating to academics ³ , there are staff members at my institution I can talk to.				0.86			
Q5.1 - There are staff members at my institution with whom I can have academic conversations.				0.82			
Q4.4 - When I have a question relating to academics ³ , there are faculty at my institution I can talk to.				0.66			
Q4.3 - If I was struggling academically, there are faculty at my institution I can go to.				0.65			
Q4.2 - Faculty at my institution help me to be academically successful.				0.61			
Q4.1 - There are faculty at my institution I can talk to about classes.				0.57			
Q3.4 - When I have a question relating to academics ³ I know students at my institution I can talk to.					0.78		
Q3.2 - There are other students at my institution I can talk to about classes.					0.76		
Q3.3 - Other students at my institution help me with my classes.					0.76		
Q3.1 - There are other students at my institution I can study with.					0.76		
Q2.1 - I would not hesitate to spend time with faculty or staff at my institution.						0.82	
Q2.1 - I would not hesitate to share a meal with faculty or staff at my institution.						0.78	
Q1.3 - I would feel very comfortable exchanging greetings ⁴ with faculty or staff at my institution.						0.67	
Q1.1 - There are faculty or staff with whom I can have a casual or light-hearted conversation.						0.57	
Q1.2 - I have positive or pleasant interactions with faculty or staff at my institution.						0.48	
Q10.2 - I really feel like I belong at this university.							0.81
Q10.1 - I feel very attached to this university.							0.80
Q10.3 - I really enjoy going to school here.							0.79

¹ (e.g., Who am I? Does God exist? What is the meaning of life? What is my purpose?)

² (job, internship, graduate school, home)

³ (course selection, resources, academic tips, etc.)

⁴ (hello, goodbye, how are you?)

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