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West Chester University

Higher Education Policy and Student Affairs

THESIS



The Higher Education Experiences of International
Students: Rethinking Orientation with a Participatory
Action Research (PAR) Perspective

Matheeha Tunnesa Majeeth

May 2020

The Higher Education Experiences of International Students: Rethinking Orientation with a
Participatory Action Research (PAR) Perspective

Presented to the Faculty of the
Department of Educational Foundations & Policy Studies
West Chester University
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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of
Master of Science

By
Matheeha Tunnesa Majeeth

May 2020

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Abstract

The U.S.A. has the world's largest international student population (Institute of International Education, 2019). While there is some research on the stressors and the impact those stressors have on the educational experiences of international students, there is very little research on the common practices around orientation, and its efficiency. The traditional format of new student orientation, an event that happens for a day or two upon the arrival of the new international students, fails to address the needs of those students as well as it could. Rather, orientation should be presented as a gradual, progressive process that both the university and the international students undergo throughout a given semester. To this end, I propose a Three-Phase Orientation Process model that will follow the principles of Participatory Action Research, and hence emphasize on student involvement throughout the orientation process, of both the student and the university. This is an important topic to consider especially because of three main reasons. First, given the decline in international student enrolment in the U.S.A. over the past couple of years, universities focusing more on internationalization of the campus, creating global citizens, and facilitating a more positive adjustment and educational experience for international students. Second, when individuals are choosing to spend their time, money and energy, while sacrificing a lot more, to go to a university in a country far from theirs, it is an obligation of the university to reflect the commitment. The final reason is that it is important for the university and the stakeholders to reflect on the purpose of education, and its power that stretches beyond borders.

Keywords: International Students; Critical Action Research; Participatory Action Research; Orientation; Internationalization.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 1
Non-Resident Indian (NRI) in Saudi Arabia 1
Undergraduate Experiences Back in India..... 3
Non-Resident Alien in the U.S.A. 6
Introduction to My Thematic Concern 9
 True meaning of Internationalization..... 11
 Overview of my Thesis..... 12
Chapter 2 13
Thematic Concern..... 13
Conceptual Framework..... 15
Definition of Terms 16
ACPA/NASPA Professional Competencies 17
Chapter 3 19
My Philosophy of Education 19
 Internationalization using PAR..... 20
Bridging my Philosophy to my Programmatic Intervention..... 21
 Engaging in Education as a Practice of Freedom 21
 Being their True-Self and Transforming the Society..... 22
 Building on these Ideologies..... 23
Historical Context..... 24
 History of Student Affairs..... 25
Broad History of International Students in the U.S.A. 28
 Importance of Building Connections to Understand 28
 20th Century and Before 29
 Turn of the 21st Century 30
 Analysis of this History 32
Current Literature on My Thematic Concern 34
 Why do International Students come to the U.S.A.? 34
 Factors that Influence my Thematic Concern and Thesis..... 35
 Need for Redefining Orientation Services 42
 Additional Factors that Influence My Thematic Concern 43
My Internships and Graduate Assistantship Experience 44
Introduction to Chapter 4..... 45
Chapter 4 46
Brief Introduction to the Three-Phase Orientation Process Model..... 46
Current Common Practices 48
 Orientation programs 49
 Analysis of the Data Found..... 50
Participatory Action Research Could be the Solution 52
Influence of Student Development Theories 52
Purpose of my Intervention..... 53
Program Goals 53
Program Objectives..... 54
Program Learning Outcomes 54

International Student Ambassadors Learning Objectives.....	55
New International Student Learning Objectives.....	56
Educational Practices Employed in my Intervention.....	57
Target Audience.....	58
Program Proposal.....	58
The Three-Phase Orientation Process Model.....	59
Program Overview	59
Pilot Year – Fall Semester	60
Pilot Year – Spring Semester	60
Pilot Year – First Advisory Board Meeting.....	61
Pilot Year – University Orientation Process Begins.....	61
Phase 1 - International Student Ambassador (ISA) program.....	62
Phase 2 – Orientation Process.....	63
Phase 3 – Assessment and Evaluation	66
Funding	66
Marketing Strategies and Recruitment	67
Timeline.....	68
Implementation Issues and Concerns	69
Overview of Chapter 5.....	71
Chapter 5	72
Characteristics of Effective Leadership.....	73
Dependence on Student Self-Efficacy	74
Important Factors in Relation to Leadership	74
Ethnocentrism	75
Prejudice	76
Cross-Cultural Leadership Style.....	77
Leadership in my Programmatic Intervention	78
Assessment and Evaluation	78
Collecting the Data	79
Determining Success.....	81
Limitations and Scope for Improvement	81
Looking Ahead	82
Conclusion	83
References.....	86
Appendix A.....	90
Appendix B.....	92
Appendix C.....	95
Appendix D.....	96
Appendix E.....	98

Chapter 1

In this chapter, I will introduce myself to the reader. I will focus on the multiple events throughout my life, that led to me gaining the identity of an outsider, or an alien, because of my ethnicity and acculturation during my stay in different countries. I discuss my undergraduate experience as an engineering student in India, as it plays a very important role in my decision to change my field of study. I will then describe the events that helped me recognize my passion in working in the field of Student Affairs and higher education that led me to international study in the U.S.A. Finally, I will give a short introduction to my thematic concern and its significance in the current higher education systems.

Non-Resident Indian (NRI) in Saudi Arabia

I was just a few months old when I got the tag of being a Non-Resident Indian (NRI). I was born in India but before I was even one year old, I flew to Saudi Arabia with my parents and my elder sister. Before I could realize it, I was in middle school. Since my mom taught psychology in the same school as mine, every move of mine felt watched. From my grades to my co-curricular activities, I always felt that I had to give my best or else I would disappoint my mother, both as my mother and as my teacher. But I liked that and considered it as eustress. It drove me to be a highly involved student and I tried really hard to excel in everything I set my mind to. My mother was a very confident woman who has her doctoral degree in psychology and over twenty years of teaching experience. Back when she was in college, not many women around her circle were reaching the heights she aimed for. Her life always inspired me to be a critical thinker and an influencer who can make a positive difference in this world.

One of the ways I channelized my eagerness to make a difference was by joining the Toastmasters Club- Youth Leadership Program to become a good public speaker. I never really had stage fright so all I needed was to fine tune my skills to give effective speeches and to learn to be an influential leader. I also took part in school debate competitions and ended up being selected to come to the U.S.A. for the Global Young Leaders Conference in the summer of 2011. This would be my first time travelling to the U.S.A. and also the first time without my family, but I was not scared. I was excited to be the first in my family to get selected for such an amazing opportunity and I wanted to make maximum use of it. After a lot of planning and advising from family and friends, I travelled to the U.S.A. on my own and participated in the life changing conference. I made friends with individuals from all over the world with whom, a decade later, I am still in touch. I learned a lot about working with diverse communities, becoming an effective leader, and building meaningful relationships.

I came back home after spending a month in Washington, D.C., New York and Los Angeles. I was excited to share my experiences with my family, friends, and literally everyone I could. However, I was advised by my family to be quiet and humble about it. Not many Muslim girls of my age from my community in India get an opportunity like this, nor do they receive so much encouragement and support from their family, especially before marriage. Every Indian woman would, at some point in her life, have heard the statement, "Follow your dreams and travel wherever you want... but after marriage, and with your spouse!" Hence, they instructed me to not share too much about this trip with anyone other than immediate family in order to avoid evil eyes or jealousy. I was heartbroken but did as I was told. At the same time, I thought the advice made sense and that it was for my own good.

Starting that day until today, as I am typing this very sentence, it feels very uncomfortable and extremely difficult for me to talk about myself and my story. This is not a unique individual trait that only I have. It is common amongst many individuals who grew up in collective community cultures to have been trained to demonstrate their humility by keeping their success stories a secret.

Undergraduate Experiences Back in India

After I finished my schooling in Saudi Arabia, I knew I would have to go back to India for my bachelor's degree. I was back in my own country but once again felt like an outsider as I had never been in India for more than a few months out of the year. I ended up doing my bachelor's in Electronics and Communication Engineering in a small, private institute of higher education. Established in 1984, the university was located in the state of Tamil Nadu. It had an average of 1,450 students enrolling in both their undergraduate and graduate programs each year. Having studied in an all-girls school in Saudi Arabia from kindergarten through 12th grade, the thought of studying in a co-ed university was the most stressful part for me, amongst many other stressors. I had to learn how to behave and navigate the environment by observing in order to understand the norms and in order to blend in, as I could not expect a formal orientation to a university in my own home country. I felt slightly embarrassed not knowing what was assumed to be common sense or common knowledge in my own country that I am a "citizen" of. In many situations I had to suppress who I was, my first instinctive reactions, and what I believed in, in order to fit in. Afraid to ask for help in order to not come off as someone who does not even know simple survival tactics, approaching any unknown individual was a stressful process.

During my second year of study, the university underwent a lot of administrative changes. This made it even more difficult for me as I had just managed to slowly make alliances. Changes ranged from changing the name of the university after the death of the founder, to changing the hostel catering system from employing independent chefs to signing a contract with a commercial catering company. These changes were not easy for anyone. Staff, for whom the university was home and their job, had to leave everything they had. This made an impact and caused many of us to stand against such sudden and drastic changes. Students like myself, who raised our voices when we saw something we did not like or found hard to accept, were invited to a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis meeting with the Chairman, Vice Chancellor, the faculty, staff, and student representatives. Our voices were heard, and some changes were made accordingly, with periodic feedback.

As I entered into my fourth semester, my mental health started to deteriorate as I was diagnosed with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), which is a hormonal disorder common among women of reproductive age. I used my academic and cocurricular success to mask my personal struggle within myself. I was fortunately able to separate my academics from my emotional side. I was going through a lot of medical and psychological struggles that I tried to hide and forget about by distracting myself with academics. Frequent visits to the hospital, medicines, restricted diet, and not being able to attend classes properly, shook my confidence level. I began to feel like a burden to those around me. I stopped asking for help no matter how badly I wanted it. I felt like I did not deserve anything anyone did for me, especially my parents spending so much money on my education and now to pay my medical bills. As I mentioned, no one took my mental health issues seriously as I was doing well in my

academics. I stopped participating in extra-curricular activities, but it was understood by those around me as me focusing on my academics.

One day in my sixth semester, I decided to end it all. I thought it would not make a difference in anyone's life if I was gone forever and that it would actually be one problem lesser for many. But of course, and for good, I failed. Coming out of this situation, I felt worse. I expected my parents to hate me for doing this and those around me to be ashamed of what I perceived to be my cowardice. After all the success and achievements, I banked during high school, I let my non-life-threatening medical problems get the best of me. To my surprise, my parents were not angry at me. They spoke to me, took the time and effort to understand me, and discussed ways that would help me out. An entire year of depression and thinking of myself as worthless disappeared after that conversation with my parents! All I needed was to vent my thoughts and feelings, but no one told me that was something I could do and benefit from. No one in my university, where I spent every minute of the day for months straight, seemed like a person I could talk to or who would be able to help me out. This was the first time I felt that the system needed to be changed. Academic success might not always mean that the student is doing fine. The university campus, where the students spend the majority of their time, must be a place where they feel comfortable and supported.

Catastrophe Opens New Passions

During my final year, I was happy that I had good friends. I was finally able to see my family's support that always existed, and I was slowly rebuilding myself to be a strong, confident woman. Right then, there was a flood that struck the part of the state I was in. It was a huge natural disaster that washed away homes, agricultural fields, and property, and killed hundreds of people. It was also very close to our semester exam dates. Without proper

electricity or food, stuck in whatever shelter was available, and stressing over the property and lives we lost, students from a number of universities from around the state demanded the exams to be postponed. Unfortunately, since education is a highly competitive business in a country like India, the university administrators were reluctant to postpone it by too much time, for fear of falling behind the progress of other colleges in places around the state and other parts of the country. This infuriated the entire student population of all the colleges in the state.

Apart from doing voluntary flood relief and rescue services, students were also protesting for the exams to be cancelled or postponed until we could resume a normal routine. This was my first insight into student protests and physically experiencing the power of students. It was at this very moment that I decided I wanted to make a difference in higher education. I discovered that this is where my passion lies, and this is the field I want to pursue. After some backlash because of such a drastic change in my field of study, with my parent's motivation, and support from my sister and her family, I decided to pursue my master's in student affairs. I searched for relevant programs in many different universities around the world as Student Affairs is not a well-established field in India. Student Affairs in India is tightly bound to student conduct. This is where it begins and ends, with a focus on infractions and discipline of the student body. Beyond this, not much effort is made to ensure students' wholistic development or mental health.

Non-Resident Alien in the U.S.A.

The first step I took to pursue my dreams of transforming the higher education system I knew and grew up in, was to apply to a Higher Education and Student Affairs program in a medium size, public university in Pennsylvania. It was the perfect program for me with

courses that would equip me with the knowledge and skills I need to put my philosophy of education into practice. However, joining this University also meant that another non-resident identity would be added to my various identities. It meant that I would become a “non-resident alien”, as this is the term that the U.S.A. uses to signify foreign nationals residing in their country. This also meant that I would learn once again, to adjust into a life and norms within a different country, and that I will have to find my way through the systems and culture.

Since the first day that I arrived to the U.S., whenever someone asks me where I am “really” from, there is a moment of silence where I smile and look anywhere but at the person asking me the question, before I respond. Being the outsider is second nature to my identity from the time that I was only a few months old. I hold Saudi Arabia and the twenty plus years I spent there close to my heart, but I could never say that I am from there. This is mainly because I was never on the track to get a Saudi citizenship status. It is also because I grew up in a predominantly Indian neighborhood, and went to an Indian school, I never got the opportunity to interact with many Saudi nationals and learn their culture and customs directly from them. Though I was born in India and am on paper an Indian citizen, I am often seen and treated as an outsider, and rightfully so, as I never was in the Indian land for more than a couple of months a year until I went there to do my bachelor’s degree. This has always kept me exploring my place on this earth. The moment of silence before I respond is me taking my time to assess the consequences of my answer as it varies from situation to situation. In certain environments I cannot say I am from India, and in others I cannot say I am from Saudi Arabia without expecting some sort of judgement, discrimination, or biased

treatment. Hence, I have to be calculated and smart even when I am answering such a simple question.

A bigger struggle as a non-resident alien in the U.S.A. under a student visa is that, there are a lot of restrictions and direct influence of federal rules and regulations that bypass or have a lot of power over other educational laws that generally apply to all other students in the U.S.A.. In a public University like mine, there are various offices that provide informed services that aim to serve international students like myself. However, they have limited resources to cater to this everchanging, highly diverse population. From my University's new international student orientation, to other support services provided on campus, I identified a lot of gaps. These gaps resulted in me and most international students face more than a few challenges that could have been avoided. From mental health to academics, I faced a lot of challenges resulting from what could be broadly put under the term, "culture shock". What culture shock looks like for every student is different from each other.

On the other hand, the challenges I was facing were not just because I was an international student. It was also because I was an international graduate student. I walked up and down multiple offices searching for solutions to my problems. I could, if at all, get the guidance I was looking for only if I went to meet professionals on campus in person and very rarely on their office webpages or FAQ's section. This was mainly because the population of international students was very small and their problems unique. Ranging from food, to winter boots, to filing my taxes, everything was new, and I needed guidance. Since I was privileged to have had opportunities to explore my identities, work on my public speaking skills, visit the U.S.A. once before actually coming here to do my masters and also because my parents are both well educated, I was able to identify my problems and articulate them to

the right people. But that is not always the case for international students. This led to me changing my thesis topic at the end of my first semester from “The Challenges and Identity Crises Resulting from Intersectional Identities of Graduate Students in their Para-Professional Roles and Vice-Versa”, to the higher education experiences of international students in the U.S.A. and the need for rethinking orientation as a process and not an event.

Introduction to My Thematic Concern

The U.S.A. has the world’s largest international student population. With a total population of students pursuing higher education that numbers more than 1 million, international students make up nearly 5% of this mass (InternationalStudent.com, n.d). For an international student, whose first insight into the U.S.A. is the very university campus they join, the difficulties they face on and around campus differ when compared to those that domestic students face and manage. International students bring a diversity of perspectives, financially support the health of academic institutions through tuition, play a major role in developing global and cultural competencies in the university community, are highly resourceful to research universities seeking to build their international research/knowledge capacity, can build international scholarly networks, are pedagogically beneficial, can help shatter stereotypes and open otherwise “taboo” discussions.

Unfortunately, these international students often suffer from many significant stresses. This includes culture shock, homesickness, loss of social support, housing, transportation, discrimination, language barriers, loneliness, depression, anxiety, and academic adjustments among other stressors. For example, in a study done in 2016 on the stress factors experienced by international students while attending a South Texas University, participants were asked which stress factors affected their academic performance. The results

were ranked as follows: transportation (74.2%); financial challenges (65.2%); loneliness (50%); accommodations (50%); culture shock (50%), language barrier (50%); academic support (30.3%); other (7.6) (Oyeniya et al., 2016). All these types of stress combined, serve as a serious concern for international students. They can directly or indirectly affect the well-being of their entire stay in the U.S.A. It is therefore the duty of the university to provide them the support services, skills and knowledge when it is most needed, and to involve them in the conversation around programming and support services provided for them.

Adequate orientation and administrative support for international students are key factors in successful transitions. In that matter, student affairs staff play a pivotal role in the success and functioning of a given university campus and its programs. They are trained to focus on the holistic development of each and every student, and they create programs to ensure retention, growth, development, and success. When it comes to supporting the international student segment of the larger university population, there is room for improvement in the current practices. In particular, Orientation practices. International students are given (Helen & Sawyer, 2016):

Excessive amounts of information much too early in their sojourn. Despite the provision of numerous pamphlets and promotional material during Orientation... (one often finds students who say) “Oh, I didn’t even know that was available”...

Information (must) be scattered throughout the year to familiarize students with availability and appropriate use of services. (p. 672)

This thesis will help identify how orientation in particular can positively influence the recent trends in the stressors international students are facing, by critically analyzing the common practices, in terms of international student orientation and support services provided

in a variety of colleges in the U.S.A. It emphasizes the fundamental importance of making sure that students understand the information they were given, noting that even the meaning of “orientation” may not always be obvious. Rather than overloading students with information in their first few weeks, it might be more useful to provide that information later in the semester when they need it the most. Furthermore, frequent exposure to the availability of supports is needed, given the intricacies of their transition experience. This cannot be done without implementing Participatory Action Research as it requires constant feedback from the students to understand what they need and when they need it. Therefore, the Three-Phase Orientation Process model has students involved in various capacities throughout their academic journey. This ensures that their voices are heard and provides them with the knowledge and skills to navigate through the campus and country’s culture.

True meaning of Internationalization

Internationalization means more than just enrolling a large number of international students or sending a large number of students on study abroad trips. It also refers to the efforts that should be made by the university to create a campus environment where comprehensive learning cultivates global competence and encourages world engagement amongst students, faculty, staff, and community. There is a need to deconstruct the current disproportionate commitment to educational and social interactions that are highly based on Western civilization and norms, to truly internationalize the campus. Hence, in the context of my thematic concern, internationalization includes orientation where both the university and the incoming students mutually educate each other. This will change the university’s ideological perspective that all international students integrate at a predictable pace that is known to them.

Overview of my Thesis

There are four remaining chapters in this thesis. Chapter 2 introduces some key terminology and the ACPA/NASPA competencies that are closely related to my thematic concern. Chapter 3 focuses on my philosophy of education and higher education institutions, the historical context of my thematic concern, a detailed literature review, and a brief reflection on my higher education work experience as a Graduate Assistant (GA). In Chapter 4, I address the current best practices around student orientation, my program goals, objectives, and learning outcomes. I then list the student development theories and their influence on my intervention. Next, I address the educational practices employed in my intervention, the target audience, funding, marketing strategies and recruitment, followed by the timeline of the program and the anticipated implementation issues and concerns. I then move on to Chapter 5, where I focus on the implementation of my intervention and conclusion of this thesis. In Chapter 5, I focus on the characteristics of effective leadership and leadership in my programmatic intervention followed by assessment and evaluation, limitations, and conclusion of my thesis. I end this thesis document with a few statements on what I intend to do in the near future with the topics discussed in this document, and my program proposal.

Chapter 2

In this chapter, I begin by stating my thematic concern and present the conceptual framework that guides my research, which is grounded in Critical Action Research (CAR). I then address the student development theories that inform my thematic concern. Later in this chapter, I list some key terms and definitions related to the topic at hand. Finally, I give a short introduction to my intervention and list the ACPA/NASPA competencies that one needs to learn, understand and practice to actualize my intervention.

Thematic Concern

As established in Chapter 1, the sheer number of international students studying in the U.S.A. makes it important for higher education institutions to invest in research, assessment, and evaluation of the higher education experiences of international students. This is important to ensure proper alignment of the needs and expectations of the students, and the services provided for them. For an international student, whose first insight into the U.S.A. is the very university campus they join, the difficulties they face, on campus and around, differ when compared to a domestic student. Two of the most important things that all international students expect from their higher education institutions are- understanding of their struggles, and support from their educators, staff members and administrators, mainly during the first few months of college life (McLachlan & Justice, 2009). While students need to have their stories and experiences heard by the administration in order to receive the unique services they need from the university, very rarely, if at all, do we see an international student ask, let alone demand for more than what they receive (Andrade, 2006).

On the other hand, the pre-conceptualized notion developed by the university that it knows what new incoming international students need in order to navigate the U.S.A. higher

education system is becoming less beneficial. For example, in a study on the international orientation practices in 200 different universities in the U.S.A., one school administrator described that her school offered very few predeparture supports and was not familiar with evidence-based support practices (Madden-Dent et al., 2019). This is mainly because of the changing needs and expectations of the international students, and the inability of the offices to keep up due to lack of time, funding, etc. (Madden-Dent et al., 2019).

Even if most of the umbrella terms for the stressors international students face has remained the same, new stressors have popped up, and the intensities of the old ones have changed. For example, English language skills may always be a significant source of stress for international student because of the effect they can have on the social and academic performance of a student. However, in recent years, one can find housing and transportation, finding an on-campus or off-campus job, and the influence of social media, higher up on this list. This combined with the changing learning styles of the recent generations in comparison with a traditional adult learner can add more diversity to the already complex international student population (Seemiller & Grace, 2017)

The purpose of this study is to emphasize the need for adopting Participatory Action Research methodology to get to know, review, and analyze the trends in the challenges faced by international students and the services provided for them in higher education institutions in the U.S.A. . I will do this by proposing an alternate way of planning and programming orientation that involves both the university, and the international students simultaneously, and will be treated as a gradual process instead of an event. This is detailed further in Chapter 4 below. This will aim to be a sustainable solution as it applies PAR, and orientation will not be as overwhelming for them as it is now in many universities.

Conceptual Framework

This work is grounded in Critical Action Research (CAR). In order to understand CAR, we must first understand what action research is. Action research is said to have originated in the 1950s in the works of Kurt Lewin (Bradbury-Huang, 2010). Though CAR has been one of the most popular frameworks amongst transformative researchers, in the recent years it is receiving growing interest in the fields of education, social work, international development, healthcare, etc. Bradbury-Huang (2010) defines action research as:

An orientation to knowledge creation that arises in a context of practice and requires researchers to work with practitioners. Unlike conventional social science, its purpose is not primarily or solely to understand social arrangements, but also to effect desired change as a path to generating knowledge and empowering stakeholders. (p. 93)

Critical action research therefore “rejects the notion of an objective, value-free approach to knowledge generation in favor of an explicitly political, socially engaged, and democratic practice” (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003, p. 13). This informs my thesis in two main ways. Firstly, this framework redistributes power and leadership to the participants, in my case international students, and empowers them to be resourceful and valued members of the research. Secondly, CAR does not primarily aim to end the research process with a report or published work. Authors Brydon-Miller, M., Greenwood, D., and Maguire, P. (2003) explain that “fundamental to action research is the idea that the social world can only be understood by trying to change it” (p. 15). Bringing about change is considered a part of the research. I am choosing CAR as I believe in community research ethics and the power of relationships

formed with a vision to bring about a positive change in the society we live in and are creating.

Definition of Terms

Defining important terms is essential to ensure that a common understanding of key concepts and terminology is shared between myself as the author, and you as the reader of this thesis, particularly if the term is unusual or not widely known. Below is a list of terms that are important to my study and their definitions as I have understood and used them in this document.

Acculturation	The most widely used definition of acculturation is "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups" (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936, pp. 149-152).
Collectivistic Cultures	In collectivistic cultures, people are considered "good" if they are generous, helpful, dependable, and attentive to the needs of others (Cherry, K., 2020). In my thesis, I use this term to justify the lack of individualistic behavior among most international students.
Ethnicity	A group membership based on common history, kinship, and shared culture (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007). There can be varying definitions of ethnicity, and it is oftentimes conflated with race, as least in a U.S.A. context (Johnston-Guerrero, 2018).
F-1 visa	A non-immigrant visa issued to international students to pursue education in the U.S.A. This includes study at a university or college, high school, private elementary school, seminary, conservatory, or other academic programs such as language training programs (United States Department of State, 2016).
Individualistic Cultures	"In individualistic cultures, people are considered "good" if they are strong, self-reliant, assertive, and independent" (Cherry, K., 2020). In my thesis, I use this term to address the individualistic behaviors that are the norm in the U.S.A.
International student	"An individual with a non-U.S.A. educational and cultural background who came to the United States for the purpose

	of getting an education and entered the country on a student visa.” (Tincu, 2008, p. 7).
Internationalization	Includes “policies and practices undertaken by academic systems and institutions—and even individuals—to cope with the global academic environment” (Knight & Altbach, 2007, p. 290).
Resident Alien	Applies to non-U.S.A. citizens currently residing in the U.S.A. Mostly used for tax purposes (United States Department of Homeland Security, 2018).
Sojourner	Brein and David (1971) defined the term sojourner: “The term sojourner includes different types of travelers such as international students, trainees, technical assistants, tourists, businessmen, military personnel, missionaries, and professors” (p. 215).
Whole Student	The term “whole student” addresses their intellect, spirit, and personality. Student development based on this approach aims to provide students with the assistance for attaining long-term success in all areas of their life.
Culture Shock	Oberg (1960) defined culture shock as an “occupational disease” which causes anxiety because of the foreign ways of manners and expressions that are different than the cultural signs provided in the previous environment (p. 177). Recently, this term is often replaced with the term “acculturative stress” to better articulate the impact of the cultural differences on international students.
OPT	Optional Practical Training (OPT) is temporary employment that is directly related to an F-1 student’s major area of study. Eligible students can apply to receive up to 12 months of OPT employment authorization before completing their academic studies (pre-completion) and/or after completing their academic studies (post-completion). (www.uscis.gov, 2016)
Duty of Care	“The responsibility of a person or organization to take all reasonable measures necessary to prevent activities that could result in harm to other individuals and/or their property” (legaldictionary.net, 2017)

ACPA/NASPA Professional Competencies

Listed in this section are three ACPA/NASPA professional competencies that are closely related to my thematic concern. Below, I list each competency and briefly explore

how it applies to the topic of international student orientation programming. These are also the competencies that those involved in my intervention, especially those in the leadership roles need to focus on.

The first ACPA/NASPA professional competency that relates to my thematic concern is Advising and Supporting (A/S). This competency addresses the knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to providing advising and support to individuals and groups through direction, feedback, critique, referral, and guidance (ACPA/NASPA, 2015). The second relevant competency is Assessment, Evaluation, and Research (AER). This competency requires one to utilize AER processes and their results to inform practice, and to shape the political and ethical climate surrounding AER processes (ACPA/NASPA, 2015). The last ACPA/NASPA professional competency is Social Justice and Inclusion (SJI). Student affairs educators may incorporate social justice and inclusion competencies into their practice by seeking to meet the needs of all groups, equitably distributing resources, raising social consciousness, and repairing past and current harms on campus communities (ACPA/NASPA, 2015). Developing these three competencies will provide student affairs professionals with the tools and skillset to serve international students efficiently. It will also help them become better leaders and advocates for international students on campus, especially during the internationalization process of the university and the offices.

Chapter 3

I begin this chapter by stating my philosophy of education, and how it has influenced my research and programmatic intervention. In order to address the historical context of my thematic concern, I then provide a short overview of the history of European Higher Education Institutions, as they have heavily influenced the history of Higher Education Institutions in the U.S.A. I then address the history of student affairs, followed by a broad history of international students in the U.S.A., and factors that impacted their educational experiences. I analyze this history and build connections between them to better understand the influence it has till today.

The next section of this chapter is the Literature Review. I begin this section by addressing some of the literature that exists in relation to my thematic concern. From my thematic concern, 2 of the major factors I have then discussed in this section, backed up by peer-reviewed articles and research studies are: 1) On-campus educational experiences of international students, and 2) their Integration and Cultural Integrity. I conclude this chapter by addressing how my internship and graduate assistantship have given me real life experience and understanding of these factors, and explain how that experience has impacted the design and structure of my programmatic intervention.

My Philosophy of Education

The three pillars of my philosophy of education are: 1) lived experiences are a form of knowledge, and hence testimonials are one of the most organic way of gaining that knowledge, 2) education and educational institutions must support individuals to develop as a whole person, and open up doors for them by empowering them, and finally 3) the educational experience of international students should be a two way stream between them

and the university, through which true internationalization can be achieved, and the stakeholders will emerge into being global citizens.

I believe that education is not only a right, but a passport to human development that opens doors and expands opportunities and freedoms. At the same time, the standard curriculums designed to uphold the existing state of affairs will mostly yield an education in which knowledge is controlled by the orders of leaders, who know their funding and survival is in danger if they do not ensure that their teachers teach to the tests (Kincheloe, 2008)). Educational institutions should therefore be places where “banking education, through which knowledge is mechanically accumulated” should be avoided, and “critical education, in which the learner becomes an active participant in the approach of knowledge in relation to lived experiences” is practiced (Morrow & Torres, 2002).

Internationalization using PAR

According to Dewey (1957), “All social institutions have a meaning, a purpose... to set free and to develop the capacities of human individuals without respect to race, sex, class or economic status”. When it comes to serving a highly diverse population of international students who have lived very different lives, it is a huge challenge for the educational institution to be that social institution as Dewey mentioned. But this is possible if Participatory Action Research is put into practice.

Despite the generally accepted view on the importance of cultural diversity and the internationalization of Higher Education Institutions in the U.S.A., or the overall drive in this regard, Hawawini (2011) has recently criticized these efforts. He declared the ambition of transforming the U.S.A. Higher Education Institutions into global Higher education institutions as bleak, due to existential historical and organizational barriers. He proposed

alternative internationalization models for the U.S.A. Higher education institutions in which the institutions develop mission statements with a goal to learn from the world rather than teach the world, import-export models aimed at transforming curricula, create faculty and student exchange programs, and develop research and academic partnerships across national borders (Hawawini, 2011). Keeping this in mind, my programmatic intervention aims to achieve this goal by emphasizing on the need for incorporation of Participatory Action Research into every step of serving and analyzing the international student educational experience.

Bridging my Philosophy to my Programmatic Intervention

It is important to open our eyes to the fact that the people around us have very different and unique perspectives on life and living. This is mainly because of their own unique identities and lived experiences in this world. For those serving international students, acknowledging this can help them open to the world's possibilities. It can support them in understanding the students better, and to see the highly diverse nature of international students as a natural phenomenon.

Keeping my philosophy of education in mind, my thesis and programmatic intervention are based on two main ideologies: 1) engaging in education as a practice of freedom, and on 2) universities being one of the very few physical spaces where every individual should be able to be their true self, explore their potential and form alliances to transform the society.

Engaging in Education as a Practice of Freedom

Engaging in education as a practice of freedom played a very important role in my educational experience, as well as my research, as a result of reading the works of bell

hooks's, *Teaching to Transgress: Educational as a Practice of Freedom* (1994). She describes how her university began to “feel more like a prison, a place of punishment and confinement rather than a place of promise and possibility” (p.4), through her real-life experiences.

Reading her work helped me realize how universities could be a space where pedagogical practices can be interrogated, where the knowledge offered to students could empower them to be better scholars, to live more fully in the world beyond academics (p.6). It also made me think about how it was crucial for students to be active participants, not a passive consumer of their educational experience.

Being their True-Self and Transforming the Society

The ideology of universities being one of the very few physical spaces where every individual should be able to be their true self, explore their potential and form alliances to transform the society became an influential factor in my research, mainly from lived experiences. What helped me better articulate this, were Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), bell hook's *Teaching to Transgress: Educational as a Practice of Freedom* (1994), and a couple of other relevant student development theories. Throughout his book, Freire contrasts oppression and liberation, and identifies the key tool for achieving this liberation, as education. According to Freire (1970), “to speak a true word is to transform the world” (p. 60), “to exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it” (p. 61) and “for dialogue to be genuine and possible there must be love, faith, hope, humanity and trust (p.64).

According to bell hooks (1994), universities have become places where “obedience to authority is reinforced, and knowledge is about information only, and very often has no relation to how one lived and behaved” (p. 3). Inspired by the works of Paulo Freire, who

understood that learning could be liberatory, bell hooks (1994), talks about educational institutions as:

The place of ecstasy—pleasure and danger. To be changed by ideas was pure pleasure. But to learn ideas that ran counter to values and beliefs learned at home was to place oneself at risk, to enter the danger zone. Home was the place where I was forced to conform to someone else's image of who and what I should be. School was the place where I could forget that self and, through ideas, reinvent myself. (p. 3)

Building on these Ideologies

Together, the above-mentioned ideologies help me put into practice my philosophy of education by helping me recognize, understand, practice and plan in a more thoughtful way. By learning about these perspectives and ideologies, my thought process took turns in directions I had never gone before. They helped me recognize my own identities, privilege, oppression faced, and my bias, especially as I am doing my research. Recognizing this helped me understand why I think the way I think, and how I know what I know. I believe that this understanding is important for a researcher, as the result might end up excluding and disregarding the experiences of many people, if this unconscious bias is not recognized. They have encouraged me to be more radical, challenging, empowering, supportive, and revolutionary in the way I engage in my own practice.

At the end of my thesis, I have proposed a Three-Phase Orientation Process model in which, the structure and priorities of the different sections of the program are influenced by my philosophy of education. They also played a major role in making Participatory Action Research a common practice that is practiced year-round. This meant, recognizing that each group of students are different, and that strategies must constantly be changed, invented and

reconceptualized to accommodate the changing needs of the international students. This program model, when implemented, will aim to be a sustainable practice of efficiently serving a highly diverse, ever-changing international student population, that attempts to put into practice my philosophy of education by negating the factors that stand in the way of an international student and their goals.

Historical Context

In this section, I first summarize the history of higher education and student affairs in the U.S.A. This is followed by an overview of the history and the educational experiences of international students in the U.S.A. I will then analyze this history and build connections to address the influence it has on the educational experiences of international students even today, and how it might significantly affect the future as well.

Understanding the History of Higher Education and Student Affairs in the U.S.A.

Understanding the history of higher education and student affairs first is essential for those who are working towards transforming the current systems. Throughout history we see that the system of higher education “has successfully resisted, co-opted, or absorbed – eventually changing but with the glacial majesty benefitting a vulnerable structure” (Cohen & Kisker, 2010, p. 1). Transformative thinkers and practitioners are, more than often, forced to be satisfied with small victories like a new course requirement, small modification in student recruitment process, etc. The system is highly vulnerable to external forces and thus the university cannot be seen as an isolated entity. What shall be taught? Who shall learn it? Who shall pay? Each of these questions, and more like these, have been debated since the very beginning of higher education institutions in the U.S.A., and is grounded in the history of the institution. Hence, today’s problems are closely related to yesterday’s practices.

History of Student Affairs

The roots of the student affairs profession reach all the way back to the colonial era and the earliest years of American higher education. Colonial colleges were often poorly staffed and hence faculty served as live-in teachers and supervised the students not just in classrooms but also in the dormitories and dining halls (Hinchliffe & Wong, 2012, p. 1). The faculty developed rules and regulations that governed students' behavior, conduct and even dress. By the mid-1800s, the academic nature at American colleges and universities had changed radically, influenced by European universities (Hinchliffe & Wong, 2012, p. 1). European universities, at this point in history, viewed the faculty's exclusive responsibility to be the training of the intellect.

As the faculty became subject experts, they neither had the time nor the interest in governing student discipline. It was also during this time that students saw the opportunity and began to gradually rebel under the strict discipline, as they were not satisfied with the conventional programs of study. They developed an interest in extracurricular activities to educate the whole student: intellect, spirit, and body. Literary societies, fraternal organizations, campus publications, sports teams, debate clubs, and student clubs emerged as informal but integral aspects of college and university life (Hinchliffe & Wong, 2012, p. 1). By the turn of the twentieth century, students participated in their own governance, creating student governments, drafting honor codes, and adjudicating allegations of rule violations (Hinchliffe & Wong, 2012, p. 2).

Student-Centered Practice.

The publication of the Student Personnel Point of View, issued in 1937 by the American Council of Education, emphasized the education of the whole student, and insisted

that attention must be paid to the individual needs of each student. It was after this publication that the core values of the student affairs profession gained widespread recognition and acceptance in the U.S.A. higher education. The relationship between students and colleges and universities changed to move away from the concept of *in loco parentis*. Students were granted the right to due process and viewed the relationship between students, colleges and universities as largely contractual in nature, and student activism proliferated on campuses (Hinchliffe & Wong, 2012, p. 3). Crises erupted at many universities that resulted in student deaths, injuries, and property damage. As pressures in the campus environments increased, student affairs professionals were tasked with greater roles in conflict resolution, communication, and social justice.

ACPA.

In the 1960s and 1970s, student affairs professionals and the professional associations included student development theories as the cornerstone of the curriculum (Hinchliffe & Wong, 2012, p. 3). The marriage of professional practice and theory received profound attention in the student affairs field with the release of the American College Personnel Association (ACPA)'s 1972 report, *Student Development in Tomorrow's Higher Education: A Return to the Academy* (Hinchliffe & Wong, 2012, p. 4). The report argued that student affairs professionals could not have a significant impact on students' intellectual, psychosocial, or emotional growth without first understanding the motivations, abilities, and environments which drive, create, and define students (Hinchliffe & Wong, 2012, p. 4).

Diversity and its Implications.

The following decades challenged student affairs professionals on a new definition of a student, as the diversity of students increased in every respect. Student affairs professionals

and scholars noted that each diverse group of students brought new needs and interests, and many student development theories were revised with new research specific to the growth of each group (Hinchliffe & Wong, 2012, p. 5). A strong understanding of diversity and its implications for student affairs practice became an essential competency for student affairs professionals.

In the 1990s and 2000s, globalization of higher education greatly affected the student affairs profession (Hinchliffe & Wong, 2012, p. 6). Student affairs professionals in North America began to integrate international perspectives into their work. Over the following years, there have been significant numbers of scholarly work and practice focusing on understanding student affairs as a profession to support the academic mission of colleges and universities, and to foster the development of the student intellectually, psychosocially, and emotionally (Hinchliffe & Wong, 2012, p. 6).

Today, the education of the whole student remains the core focus of student affairs, but student affairs professionals are challenged to think about educating the student differently.

How do student affairs professionals create a meaningful sense of community for students in a virtual classroom? What should intellectual, psychosocial, and emotional development look like for adult students? Does identity development progress differently for minority students than for white students? (Hinchliffe & Wong, 2012, p. 6)

These are only a few of the questions that pose a significant challenge to the theory and practice in student affairs.

Along with these questions, the role of student affairs in student activism is also being debated right now. In relation to my thematic concern, the challenges faced by student affairs professionals in supporting international students in U.S.A. in recent days may include:

- The role of student affairs when there is conflict between the host country, and the country of origin of the students,
- The role of student affairs professionals when federal laws directly affect the international students' educational experience in negative ways, overpowering the higher education laws that are supposed to protect them,
- The role of student affairs in negating the racial discrimination faced by international students, etc.

Therefore, there is a need to better understand the challenges faced by international students, and to formulate what can be done to better support the students.

Broad History of International Students in the U.S.A.

This section of the chapter begins with emphasizing the need for building connections between events in history in order to understand the present. This is followed by an overview of the history of international students in the U.S.A., an analysis of the events mentioned in this history by bridging those events and, addressing the heavy influence of federal laws and policy changes on the educational experiences of international students.

Importance of Building Connections to Understand

Very often, events are isolated and looked at with an individualistic perspective rather than a result of so many other factors, and the starting point of many. When looking into the history of the U.S.A., and situating my thematic concern within it, my method is closely aligned with the perspective of history, as that of John Dewey. In his book, *Democracy and*

education: An introduction to the philosophy of education (1916), John Dewey says that the meaning and importance of an event depends on where we place it in history, and the connections we make between it and the rest of history within which it is placed. If we fail to make the connections between historical events and the current world we live in, two separate worlds are built up (John Dewey, 1916). Recognizing that knowledge of the past is the key to understanding the present, I have, in the following sections of this chapter, looked into major events that affected international students in the U.S.A. and their educational experience.

20th Century and Before

For the past few decades, multiple sources (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2017; Institute of International Education, n.d.) indicate that, the number of students who have entered into the U.S.A. for higher education from China, has always been higher than any other country. This is not a mere coincidence. Born in 1828, Yung Wing became the first known International Student in known history, who was also from China, to graduate from a North American university- Yale College, in 1854 (Chu, T. K., & Qian, N., 2002). Inspired by, and determined to share his experience at Yale with other Chinese students, Yung organized what came to be known as the Chinese Educational Mission, which included 120 young Chinese students, to study in the New England region of the U.S.A., beginning in 1872 (Chu, T. K., & Qian, N., 2002). By the early 1930's, more than 8,000 international students enrolled in U.S.A. Higher Education Institutions. China ranked first, with 1,443 of those 8,000 students being from China.

Federal Programs Encouraging International Education.

In 1945, Senator J. William Fulbright introduced a bill, the Fulbright U.S.A. Student Program in the U.S.A. Congress. This bill called for the use of surplus war property from the end of World War 2, to fund the “promotion of international good will through the exchange of students in the fields of education, culture, and science” (www.fulbrightonline.org, n.d.). The Fulbright U.S.A. Student Program till date, is the largest U.S.A. exchange program offering Study Abroad opportunities for students and young professionals to undertake international graduate study, advanced research, university teaching, and primary and secondary school teaching worldwide (Institute of International Education, n.d.).

In the 1960’s, John F. Kennedy asked the Kennedy Foundation to pay the airfare of 250 Kenyan scholars, including Barack Obama Sr. It was also during this time that the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), expanded overseas scholarship programs. By 1979, Iran as one of the OPEC nations, had 50,000 students in the U.S.A., out of 260,000 international students.

Turn of the 21st Century

International students on a university campus are a precious resource and need to be protected, and their relationship fostered. Unfortunately, there is evidence that suggests that the opposite may be occurring. The policies instituted by the government and legal venues after the events of September 11, 2001, raised questions about the future direction of American relationships with foreign students, scientists, and faculty. Post-9/11 immigration policies created a physically and administratively restrictive, and politically and socially inhospitable effect on the U.S.A. (Witt, 2008). This built unfavorable attitudes toward the U.S.A. and created the groundwork for a shift in international student mobility. International

students faced obstacles such as fear of intolerance, harsh immigration vetting procedures, and visa delay or denial. Clearly, this type of added complication to studying in the U.S.A. was not appealing to prospective students.

Obama Administration vs Trump Administration

While Former President Barack Obama was in the office, the White House announced that the Department of Homeland Security would propose changes to “expand and extend the use” of the STEM Optional Practical Training (OPT) program, which provides temporary work authorization to international students for 12 to 29 months post-graduation (Redden & Stratford, 2014). During the Obama administration, the U.S.A. saw new foreign enrollment grow every single year (Redden & Stratford, 2014).

Once Trump became president, he proposed travel bans and more restrictive policies on international entry to the U.S.A. (Fischer, 2018). The travel ban made it more difficult for universities to recruit international graduate students and faculty. It is important to note that Trump’s travel ban actually exempted graduate students (Fischer, 2018). This meant that international grad students could still apply to school in the U.S.A., but they may experience challenges once they get here due to growing xenophobia in the U.S.A. This opinion is still a popular one.

As referenced earlier, STEM OPT was extended to a three-year stay under the Obama administration. When Trump became president, he wanted to shorten the stay of those legal students in the U.S.A. to 12 months post-graduation (Merrick, 2018). The Trump administration has also introduced new, enhanced visa questionnaires for certain applicants and has introduced a controversial new policy making it easier for international students to accrue what's known as "unlawful presence" in the U.S.A., a determination that can subject

them to future three or 10-year bars on re-entry (Redden, 2018). These different approaches and policy changes have had varying effects on the world of international graduate and undergraduate education. This kind of approach has lowered the number of international students that come to study in America for the first time in a while. Countries such as Canada and Australia are reaping the benefits of Trump's "America first" policies, with a greater number of international students choosing to go there for their higher education (Fischer, 2016).

Analysis of this History

The story of Yung Wing, and the events that occurred during his time is important, as even today China has managed to remain the country of origin for the greatest number of international students in the U.S.A. He is also an example of how investing on the satisfaction of international students will consequently make them excellent ambassadors of American culture when they return to their home countries. This is an important step in enhancing the image of the U.S.A. overseas. Multiple anti-immigration practices in the U.S.A. against Chinese students during Yung Wing's time are similar to what we saw, decades later, when Trump described Chinese students in the U.S.A. as spies and entertained a proposal to stop awarding student visas to Chinese nationals. This is a clear proof of how international political disputes have, in history and in the present, directly affected international students.

However, international students do not get the opportunity to demand for, or protest against being harmed directly by those political disputes. This might be mainly because of the strict rules that they have to follow to be able to legally stay in the U.S.A., and also because it is extremely dangerous, given the lack of protection they get from the existing

educational laws and policies. Throughout my research, I could not find any higher education institution in the U.S.A. that has specific higher education policies in place for international students, that is not a direct or indirect reference to a federal law. Therefore, the government plays a very important and directly influential role in the life of an international student in the U.S.A. This sounds like the story of the past for many in the U.S.A., given the deep history of student activism in the country, but that is not the case for international students.

Even today, international students are heavily influenced by the political climate not just of the U.S.A. but also of their home country, as well as the relationship between the two nations. This is clearly visible in multiple periods in history, especially when we look at the Post-9/11 immigration policies, the travel-ban issues, growing xenophobia, enhanced visa questionnaires for certain applicants, new policies making it easier for international students to fall under the "unlawful presence" category, and currently the discrimination some international students are facing as an aftermath of the 2020 global pandemic that has uniquely affected international students. From discrimination against international students, to them being seen as a source of money first, the government plays a role in legitimizing such behavior by enacting policies that target individuals based on their country of origin, consequently, normalizing the ostracism process.

History, as we have seen in this chapter, very often repeats a version of itself, and historical events from the past cannot be seen as isolated events as many of them affect us in the present and will affect us in the future. We must also keep in mind that every day is a history in the making. It can be molded to be the best for the current world by learning and making connections with the past, but also by having a vision and exercising sustainable, inclusive, and flexible practices that we can hope will positively affect the future.

Current Literature on My Thematic Concern

A review of current literature will help illustrate how my research fits in the big picture of the existing literature about the international student experience, and their role in the services provided for them. I will first address the reason for why international students come to the U.S.A., and the literature around their educational experiences, focusing on the four important factors that influence my thematic concern, and hence my thesis. This is important as it will help us get into the right mindset to understand this section of my thesis. I will then address need for redefining orientation services, followed by listing some other factors that influence my thematic concern, that I could not research on enough to include them in this thesis. Finally, I will reflect upon my experience as a graduate assistant in relation to my thematic concern and how it has helped me identify areas of improvement, both in the higher education system and myself.

Why do International Students come to the U.S.A.?

As we have seen earlier in this chapter, for the past couple of decades, the ideas of diversity and internationalization of education have been promoted by the colleges and universities in the U.S.A. Hence, the country became a popular destination for international students, where they primarily increase the cultural diversity (Rose-Redwood, 2010). Rivzi (2011) argued that education, skills, and conventions of the West are acknowledged by international students as valued norms and they are willing to adopt them. Therefore, it can be understood why international students choose the U.S.A. as a destination for their education.

Factors that Influence my Thematic Concern and Thesis

Although the teaching and learning practices provided in the U.S.A. are globally disseminated as norms, there is not a standard timeline for the time it takes the student to fit in the U.S.A. higher education system. In such a situation, one cannot help but question to what extent do the institutions of higher education address the needs of international students to help them better adapt. In the following sections, I will discuss the four major factors that influence my thematic concern, namely: Social and Cultural Aspects of Learning, Sojourner Adjustment, Integration and Cultural Integrity, and the fact that Guidance and Help Matters.

Social and Cultural Aspects of Learning.

International students come to the U.S.A. from a variety of different cultural backgrounds, and they are faced with new experiences with both academic and social practices. As Pai and Adler (2001) indicated, culture can be defined as “that pattern of knowledge, skills, behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs, as well as material artifacts, produced by a human society and transmitted from one generation to another” (p. 22). Culture shapes people’s thinking, interpretations, beliefs, and behaviors, since culture causes people to internalize some standards and sets of values (Pai & Adler, 2001). Hence, it is important to acknowledge that international students who come from different cultures can have different mindsets, expectations, and behaviors.

Although the educational systems of many countries have been shaped by Western-inspired and standardized practices as a consequence of globalization, those new standards are subject to the interpretation of local teachers and administrators, as they may clash with national or local traditions (Anderson-Levitt, 2003). Thus, even though the new practices may be adopted by educational institutions around the world, they are still interpreted

through the various cultures. As a result, most international students still come from different educational paradigms, despite the reforms in the teaching and learning in their own countries. For instance, Brooks (2011) asserted that, “whereas only a quarter of Americans were afraid of saying wrong things when they were in a social situation, this number went up to 65 percent for Japanese individuals”. In such a case, it could be hard for the student to express their ideas in discussions, while domestic students lack this constraint.

Nieto and Booth (2010) gave another example of how culture could impact student learning by indicating that, some instructors may assume that an international student in their class is simply lazy or unwilling to participate in discussions, while they may come from a culture that emphasizes interpersonal harmony rather than competition. As emphasized by Greenfield et al. (2006), a student who comes from a collectivist society may wait for directions to follow instead of asking questions, may need to fit into the surrounding culture rather than feeling comfortable standing out, or may be more passive than a student from an individualistic society, like the majority in the U.S.A..

Learning is a social and cultural construct that cannot be narrowed down to an academic process only. As individuals learn in certain social contexts and then internalize the way they learn, it can be argued that international students come with cognitive constructs and learning habits from their previous environment. From the point of view of social learning theory, McLeod and Wainwright (2009) argued that individuals bring their own perspectives about the relationship between their behaviors and the results of their actions to their new social and cultural environments. Their perceptions and assumptions of the new situation will be affected by their past. In such a case, it may be difficult for international students to decide how to behave and make sense of what is going on in a new environment.

Understanding that each student's experience is unique, and that student participation can be highly dependent on their cultural beliefs, it is often difficult to get a complete understanding of the experiences of international students. Therefore, as recommended in my programmatic intervention, orientation process must also be about providing students with opportunities to develop their leadership and communication skills. It is equally important to encourage participation throughout their journey in order to establish trust, and not just in events and surveys that follow.

Sojourner Adjustment

An important factor in adapting is identified as the Sojourner Adjustment. Brein and David (1971) defined the term sojourner: "The term sojourner includes different types of travelers such as international students, trainees, technical assistants, tourists, businessmen, military personnel, missionaries, and professors" (p. 215). When looking at this identity of an international student, some of the important questions that need to be asked are (Berry, 1997):

What happens to individuals, who have developed in one cultural context, when they attempt to live in a new cultural context? If culture is such a powerful shaper of behavior, do individuals continue to act in the new setting as they did in the previous one, do they change their behavioral repertoire to be more appropriate in the new setting, or is there some complex pattern of community and change in how people go about their lives in the new society? (p. 6)

The adjustment process of international students is not a straightforward one, as it is related to many factors. These factors may involve stress, social support, English proficiency, length of residence and self-efficacy (Zhang & Goodson, 2011). Brown and Holloway (2008)

suggested that feelings of stress, anxiety, depression, and loneliness dominated the positive aspects of the sojourners' experiences, especially in the initial stage of their residence.

International students may need time to show their full potential because of such problems. International students' adjustment process evolves over time as they experience life in their new environment. Winkelman (1994) suggested that international students experience four phases of culture shock: (a) The honeymoon or tourist phase, when the sojourner is fascinated by the culture; (b) The crisis phase, when the sojourner experiences serious emotional, academic or social problems; (c) The adjustment or reorientation phase when the sojourner tries to figure out how to adjust to the new culture; (d) And finally, the adaptation, resolution or acculturation phase when the sojourner is able to resolve problems and manage the adaptation to the new culture. Although these phases may be experienced differently by each student, one can realize how complicated the adjustment process of a sojourner may be from these stages of culture shock. Therefore, it is crucial to provide orientation related support and guidance when the students need them, and not simply upon their arrival.

Integration and Cultural Integrity.

Although the transitional issues international students identify with are similar to those required for domestic students to be successful, such as balancing academic, employment, and social demands, negotiating a new environment, and gaining confidence, certain factors unique to international students compound the difficulty of adjusting to the university environment, specifically lack of English proficiency, different technological realm, and coming from a different culture. International students encounter various cultural practices in their host country that required them to modify their thinking and accept

behaviors that are very different, and sometimes even considered inappropriate in their home countries. Difficulties with English, even for those who come from an educational system in which English was emphasized, is an aspect of the second language environment that is challenging and requires behavioral change.

There are multiple development theories in relation to their experiences as a college student. My research is backed up by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), Jean Phinney's three stage Model of Ethnic Identity Development (1995), and King and Baxter Magolda's Model of Intercultural Maturity (2005), Schlossberg's Transition Theory (2002) and U–Curve Adjustment Theory (1960). For the purpose of this thesis, I will be looking at two of them this section, namely Schlossberg's Transition Theory (2002) and U–Curve Adjustment Theory (1960).

Schlossberg's Transition Theory.

Schlossberg's Transition Theory has been revisited several times in her works, but I am focusing on the book, *Getting the Most Out of College*, 2nd Edition written by Arthur W. Chickering, and of course Nancy K. Schlossberg, for the definition of transition. In this book, Chickering and Schlossberg (2002) explain transition as an event that creates a disruption of roles, routine, and relationships for the individual experiencing the transition. Those in transition experience a major life disturbance that makes it necessary for them to make tremendous amount of adaptation. As long as the individual sees their experience as a transition, this theory applies. While it would not be in good form to tell a student that they are in transition, since that is up to them and their relative meaning making, it does provide a great language and internal reflective process for a professional to work with each student. For an international student, the process of transition is the major cause of most of the

stressors they face and hence understanding them by using such theories to inform practice is very important.

U– Curve Adjustment Theory.

The U– Curve Adjustment Theory (1960) was first introduced by a Norwegian sociologist Sverre Lysgaard in 1955, and it has been developed by other scholars during the following decades (e.g. Oberg, 1960; Chang, 1973). According to this model, Oberg (1960) identified four stages of the international sojourn: (1) the honeymoon stage where the sojourner is enthusiastic about being in a new place, (2) the crisis where the cultural difference lead to culture shock, (3) the recovery where the sojourner gradually learns how to better function in the new culture, and (4) the adjustment where the sojourn is comfortable and functioning well in the new culture. This theory is useful for identifying and reporting psychological and sociocultural elements in the sojourner’s life. It provides a more comprehensive description of the adjustment process by representing the intercultural adaptation, along with the emotional rollercoaster the they go through.

Though these theories are quite robust and serve as guiding points to better understand the challenges a student might face in their educational experience, it is not so linear in the case of international students. Dominant theories of student development contend that integration, not cultural preservation is necessary for student success. However, many international students might not want to change their cultural practice and beliefs. Therefore, in my programmatic intervention, students are provided a good balance of opportunities for both integration, as well as for practicing and developing their cultural integrity in a mutually educative manner between them and the university community.

Guidance and Help Matter

As international students come to the U.S.A. to attain their goals and dreams, they feel pressure to meet academic expectations, which may lead them to experience depression caused by self-criticism (Poyrazli et al., 2002). In such cases, the role of social networks and faculty guidance can be vital for international students' well-being. One study by Tseng and Newton (2002), focused on student well-being, provided significant findings pointed to having a successful academic life, being able to make future plans, and feelings of satisfaction and happiness regarding student life abroad as predictors of student well-being. Despite the complexity of international students' life abroad, they may not be aware of the need for help and try to deal with everything alone. For instance, international students may think that getting help from counseling services is culturally inappropriate and may resist seeking help because of their negative perceptions (Chen, & Lewis, 2011).

Another important aspect of international students is the relationship between them and their advisors. Advisor support can positively impact international students' feelings of belonging to their new academic environment (Curtin, Stewart, & Ostrove, 2013). Research indicates that some international students may feel that they were not receiving adequate feedback or advice, and they feel isolated, bullied, insulted, or unwelcome by their advisors (Rice et al., 2009). In another study, the sources of conflicts in the student-advisor relationship were a "lack of objectivity, lack of time, and different expectations with regard to international students' responsibilities" (Adrian-Taylor et al., 2007, p. 108). Hence, faculty members, advisors, and international students may encounter some challenges in their relationships. Therefore, creating a mutually beneficial educative experience grounded in the students being valued, and their voices being heard, is essential.

Need for Redefining Orientation Services

By the year 2025, more than 8 million students are projected to be studying outside their home country (Chow et al., 2009), contributing to campus diversification (Sahin, 2008; Ward, 2001), and providing significant economic contributions (Lyman & Rogers, 1994; NAFSA, 2018). While international students enrich the U.S.A. higher education, they add to the increasingly complex matrix of intercultural interactions on campus and the need for unique support services to ensure matriculation, engagement, and success (Cho & Yu, 2015; Glass, et al., 2014). To ensure that international students become familiar with the U.S.A. campus policies, culture, communication styles, and laws so that they can safely integrate into the U.S.A. campus and community networks, higher education institutions need to initiate new strategies that better address relocation and integration needs during pre-departure and post-arrival adjustment stages (Madden-Dent, 2014).

If international students' challenges are unaddressed, poor integration experiences often stifle academic pursuits (Weng, et al., 2010), and have been found to negatively impact international students' sociocultural adjustment (Ward & Kennedy, 1994), health and psychological well-being, (Shadowen et al., 2019; Yoon et al., 2008), first-year academic experience (Freeman & Li, 2019), communication (Shah, 1991), and persistence (Gardner, 2007).

Most U.S.A. colleges and universities provide international students with integration training only immediately after they arrive in the U.S.A., and only in a traditional orientation format (Madden-Dent et al., 2018). Additionally, the services that institutions provide are often underdeveloped, inconsistent, optional (Hser, 2005), or not available at all (Madden-Dent et al., 2018). Universities can better address integration issues by identifying and

aligning gaps between the international students' expectations and their actual experiences (Kegel, 2009). Therefore, orientation must be a process that the university offices also undergo, in order to understand what the students' needs are and providing them with the guidance, especially when they need it most.

Timing Matters

In a research study conducted in 2019 titled, "An Inventory of International Student Services at 200 U.S.A. Universities and Colleges: Descriptive Data of Pre-Departure and Post-Arrival Support", the authors identified various patterns in the services offered for the international students. One of the patterns found was that there is an imbalance of when international student support services are offered. The majority of international student support services offered at the 200 surveyed U.S.A. institutions were provided during initial arrival and post-arrival stages (e.g., new international student orientation). Only a few schools provided information and resources related to U.S.A classroom and campus rules, traditions, expectations, personal safety practices, linguistic support, health and wellness resources, cultural competency preparation, and social-emotional development (Madden-Dent et al., 2019). Many administrators expressed having no awareness to predeparture or post-arrival international student support service options. For example, one school administrator described that her school offered very few predeparture supports and was not familiar with evidence-based support practices (Madden-Dent et al., 2019).

Additional Factors that Influence My Thematic Concern

There are a number of factors that inform my thesis, four of which I have discussed earlier in this chapter. In this section, I will simply list some other factors that influence my thematic concern, but I didn't have the time and resources to research on them enough, to

include them in my thesis: a) institution type – public, private, research, b) unfair housing procedure c) hierarchy between professors and students, d) stereotyping, e) type of population – level of degree, visa type, age, marital status, etc.. f) intersectionality, g) religious observances, h) food, i) discrimination and racism, j) difference in social and cultural norms k) being included just for diversity points, etc. Though these are all important factors that influence the educational experiences of international students, all these factors must also be of importance when orientation related programming is planned. Therefore, they needed to be mentioned in this thesis, even though I have not elaborated on them.

My Internships and Graduate Assistantship Experience

During my course of study, I worked in three different offices in my own University campus: Multicultural Center, Office for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and Center for International Programs. I chose to work in these offices as they all serve the under-represented student population in my University, which is a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). Working in these offices was challenging and taught me a lot about being a Student Affairs professional. They serve student populations who have a lot of struggle, oppression and discrimination written in their history, but also is a part of their present. It is the duty of every student affairs professional to put some effort in educating themselves on the educational experience and struggles of these students in order to support them accordingly.

Working with international students was an eye opener. Being an international student myself, I initially found myself not putting enough effort to understand the different countries and cultures the students came from as I already shared their main identity of being an international student. Working in the office and serving a large number of extremely diverse students was challenging and encouraged me to do my homework and put extra effort

to educate myself. I taught myself to remember my experiences as an international student to be more understanding while talking to an international student and put it aside and be more empathetic when necessary, to truly listen to what they are saying. This requires a lot of learning, and unlearning existing knowledge, which I believe is important for those working with such a diverse population of students.

Introduction to Chapter 4

In the following chapter I address the current best practices around student orientation. I will state the program goals, objectives, and learning outcomes of my programmatic intervention. I list the student development theories and their influence on my intervention. Next, I address the educational practices employed in my intervention, the target audience, funding, marketing strategies and recruitment, followed by the timeline of the program and the anticipated implementation issues and concerns.

Chapter 4

In this chapter, I introduce my programmatic intervention, the Three-Phase Orientation Process model. I discuss the current practices around orientation. I then give a short note on why I decided to do a Critical Action Research, and why I am suggesting the incorporation of Participatory Action Research, in my intervention. After this discussion, I give an overview of the purpose, program goals, objectives, learning outcomes and the learning objectives for the students involved in my intervention. I also list the student development theories that have influenced my intervention, followed by the educational practices that will be employed, informed by those theories.

In the next section, I will introduce my programmatic intervention, the Three-Phase Orientation Process model, starting with the target audience of this intervention and then a short note on the program proposal. This introduction to my programmatic intervention is followed by the program overview in which I will explain the details of the pilot year and the three phases of the program. Towards the end of this chapter, I will address the funding, marketing strategies, timeline and the foreseeable challenges in the implementation of this program.

Brief Introduction to the Three-Phase Orientation Process Model

As institutions of higher education are looking for ways to increase international student enrollment in the U.S.A., institutions face challenges in adequately supporting international students. This support and guidance are especially important for international students. International students have unique integration needs beyond those of their domestic peers. Additional support services can help them navigate through the diverse and unfamiliar interactions, language, customs, campus policies, academic expectations, and U.S.A. laws.

One way to address these needs is to provide effective pre-departure and post-arrival international student support services that help manage first-year challenges while establishing a sense of belonging and value in the students' new community. There is a need for research on when the services are provided within various integration stages.

Most colleges and universities in the U.S.A. provide international students with integration training only immediately after they arrive in the U.S.A. and mostly in an orientation format (Madden-Dent, 2014). Orientation is meant to serve as the transition cushion between past and future learning experiences (Titley, 1985). The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) asserts the following as the overall objective of university orientation programs (CAS, 1986):

The mission of student orientation must be to provide for continuing services and assistance that will: - aid new students in their transition to the institution; expose new students to the broad educational opportunities of the institution; and - integrate new students into the life of the institution. (p. 97)

Facilitating the adjustment process has been articulated as a primary goal of orientation programs.

These goals are often not reached when it comes to international student orientation, primarily because of information overload in a very short period of time. The traditional format is not ideal for international students because of the fact that they have a lot to orient themselves to. As discussed earlier, apart from the challenges that are unique to international students, there are other factors that are challenging for any college student, but differently affect international students mainly because of varied levels of English proficiency, cultural differences and the power federal laws have over their education experience.

My programmatic intervention aims to redefine orientation for international students from being an event where they are loaded with all the information that the offices assume they will be needing, to a gradual process that spans throughout their first year in the U.S.A. Informed by the changing expectations and trends in the challenges faced by the international students, the intervention encourages orientation of the university offices that serve the international students to also be an integral part of the orientation process and internationalization. These two goals will be achieved in a Three-Phase Orientation Process model that will span throughout the academic year and will have enough flexibility to accommodate the changing needs and expectations of the students.

Current Common Practices

In the *Journal of International Students*, a research done by Tara Madden-Dent, Dawn Wood and Katerina Roskina (2019), consolidated the orientation efforts and international student support services offered in 200 higher educational institutions in the U.S.A. The universities were examined using a three-step data collection protocol (Madden-Dent et al., 2019):

The first included an internet search of the institution's website to identify services listed on the International Student Support Survey Index. The second data collection approach was a phone call to the institution's office responsible for international students as a way to confirm the website findings were accurate. The third data collection approach was an email confirmation of data findings to the Director or Assistant Director of the office responsible for international students (p. 997)

Informed and inspired by their research and findings, I did my own research on the orientation efforts of five different higher education institutions in the U.S.A. In the

following sections, I will analyze the data and resources I found from the websites of those institutions, categorized according to the institution types.

Orientation programs

Upon continuing to investigate international student integration support services provided by universities and colleges in U.S.A., I looked at the websites of five different higher education institutions in the U.S.A. Two mid-sized public, one large public, one small private not-for-profit and one large private not-for-profit higher education institution. Few of the prominent practices in their orientation efforts were:

- One of the mid-sized, public universities defined the word “Orientation” on their website according to what they believed it to be. They had resources detailing tips and tricks to navigate the American culture, had international spouses and families meetup opportunities, an international film series, U.S.A. Immigration updates webinar, multiple events sorted under the categories- Workshop, Coffee, Excursion, Movie, Talk, Sports event, etc.. The only drawback found was that, all their services focused on providing guidance and resources beginning after the student’s arrival and nothing for pre-arrival could be found on their page.
- The large, private, non-profit institution that I chose, had a significant amount of pre-arrival information, reminders and resources for June, July and August. They also had pre-departure orientation programs in South Korea, China and India, as they host maximum number of students from those countries. They provided a handbook in which they list where their international students live in the state, the percentage of students that live in each of those locations, things they need and also locations where to get them, mobile phone providers and stores near campus.

- The large, public institution provided temporary housing for international students arriving early and for those who could not secure accommodation pre-arrival. They provided a detailed list of things to bring from home, advised students to leave copies of all their important documents with a family member or friend. However, they had very little programs for international students. Their website was not user friendly which made it less attractive to a perspective international student. Their website also had a lot of reading material, and no online handbook could be found.

Analysis of the Data Found

All these common practices and patterns together serve as clear evidence for the gaps that exist between the expectations of the students and the services provided for them, and how the type of institution affects it. Pre-arrival, 70% of the institutions provided online reading material, while only 12% provided online orientation, and only 6.5% provided interactive integration preparation in the form of a class (Madden-Dent et al., 2019). Providing online reading material is important. However, understanding that the population has drastically varying English language proficiency amongst its members, more interactive means of providing them with that orientation information is necessary.

On arrival, international student orientation was provided by 56% of the institutions and not by all of them (Madden-Dent et al., 2019). This might be because, not all universities follow the traditional orientation format and instead have their own ways. It can also be because international students attend the general new student orientation to the university where the international office is one of the many offices to come and speak about the services provided by them.

It was also found that 59% offered general housing, while only 13% offered international housing, and 46% offered off-campus housing assistance (Madden-Dent et al., 2019). International students cannot enter the U.S.A. any earlier than thirty days before the program start date (Department of Homeland Security, n.d.). This takes away the option of coming to the country ahead of time to look for housing when there is relatively less demand for it. Therefore, their chances of getting on-campus housing is very low if they are not exclusively provided international housing, which was found to be provided by just 13% (Madden-Dent et al., 2019). The off-campus housing assistance offered is often in the form of pamphlets containing the information of the available housing options off campus and their contact information. The international students are then expected to figure things out on their own and contact the office if they have any questions. But as we know, many international students do not prefer asking questions more than a couple of times as it can be considered rude in to do so in their cultures (Andrade, 2006).

In addition to these stressors, international students also face psychological stressors that include isolation and discrimination (Arthur, 1997). Many of the adjustment factors, as discussed above, may contribute to psychological stressors such as anxiety and depression, and may also impact international students' relationships and supports for coping (Martin et al., 2018). However, psychological and emotional support for international students was found to be provided by only 10% of the institutions (Madden-Dent et al., 2019)! This lack of adequate service, combined with international students seeking counseling services to be less likely when compared to other college student groups (Brownson et al., 2014), makes it an issue that demands immediate attention.

Participatory Action Research Could be the Solution

While using Critical Action Research (CAR) methodology to do my research, I am proposing the incorporation of Participatory Action Research into orientation efforts because of two major reasons. First, it focuses on research whose purpose is to enable action through a reflective cycle. The resultant action is followed by a cycle of research and reflection. Second, Participatory Action Research pays careful attention to power relationships, and advocating for power to be deliberately shared between the researcher and the researched. The researched communities are not treated as objects and instead become partners in the whole research process (Baum et al., 2006).

When working with international students, it is essential for the staff to possess that international member identity and/ or have a combination of significant experience working with international students. They should constantly research and update their knowledge on the current trends in the expectations and the services provided for the international students. They must understand the need and the significance of using Participatory Action Research to inform their practice, which will be further discussed in Chapter five.

Influence of Student Development Theories

As mentioned in Chapter three, there are multiple development theories in relation to a student's experience as a college student. My research and intervention is informed by many student development theories including: Schlossberg's Transition Theory (2002), U–Curve Adjustment Theory (1960), Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), Jean Phinney's three stage Model of Ethnic Identity Development (1995), and King and Baxter Magolda's Model of Intercultural Maturity (2005). In Chapter 3, I have addressed two of the theories, namely, Schlossberg's Transition Theory (2002) and U–Curve Adjustment Theory (1960).

Informed by these theories, I critically analyzed the educational experiences of international students in order to:

- Understand the unique ways in which they are challenged by the factors that are otherwise commonly known to be challenging for any student,
- Identify the trends in the various stressors that they face,
- Argue why the traditional orientation format is not effective for international students,
- Organize and structure my intervention and also the roles of the members involved.

Purpose of my Intervention

Although a large number of higher education institutions have started to invest in internationalization of the campus, the definitions and the practices vary, depending on various factors. There is a need for universities to improve their orientation efforts by working on better ways to support students orient to the host campus and country, while also to orient themselves to what the students' expectation and needs are. My programmatic intervention is a Three-Phase Orientation Process model that provides opportunities for both these orientations to occur as a gradual process. It also includes Participatory Action Research to increase student involvement, examine community and societal issues, foster change for the common good, and truly internationalize the campus.

Program Goals

The main goal of my programmatic intervention is to redesign orientation for international students. Though commonly believed to be flawed, the driving factor for most of the services and programming provided for international students is the ideology that, all

(international) students integrate at a predictable pace. Hence, my programmatic intervention aims:

- to deconstruct the disproportionate commitment to educational and social interactions that are highly based on western norms,
- establish a sustainable way for universities to understand the higher education experiences of international students,
- to adopt a Participatory Action Research methodology in the research done with the international students, and
- to redefine orientation as a gradual process and not an event that both the university and the students undergo.

Program Objectives

The primary program objectives of the Three-Phase Orientation Process model are:

1. Change the current understanding of orientation from an event to a process, that not just the students undergo, but also the university.
2. Employ more efficient and sustainable methods for supporting the students through their integration process to the campus and the country.
3. Provide the students multiple avenues to be ambassadors of their own country and culture.
4. Increase engagement and sense of belonging on college campus.

Program Learning Outcomes

Since the Three-Phase Orientation Process model practices the Participatory Action Research framework, students are involved in all three phases, but in varied capacities. In phase one, which is the formation of the International Student Ambassador (ISA) team, the

students play the role of being ambassadors of their country and culture. In phase two, which is the beginning of the Orientation Process, students will be categorized based on two of the dominant identities they hold: International Student Ambassadors (ISAs) and new international students. In phase three, which is the Assessment and Evaluation phase, ISAs are involved as members of the Advisory Board.

For the ISAs, this program provides them with the tools and the leadership skills to be effective leaders, a platform to express their opinions, perspectives, and concerns, and increase their sense of belonging by including them in the decision making process when it comes to programs and events for international students. For the new international students, interactions with other students who share similar identities as them in the program, may reduce feelings of isolation and build confidence in their interpersonal relationship development skills. Orientation will not be as stressful and overwhelming to the students as it will now be a gradual process that spans throughout their first academic year.

International Student Ambassadors Learning Objectives

1. As a result of participating in the Three-Phase Orientation Process, the International Student Ambassadors will be able to:
2. Identify the differences between the higher education experiences of American students and students from other ethnicities or nationalities.
3. Demonstrate intercultural competence, particularly their ability to interpret cultural and ethnical differences.
4. Use their leadership and mentorship skills in interactions with international peers.
5. Critique the plans and programs of the office to better serve the international students.

While this program targets the adjustment needs of international students, it is an opportunity for international students to “increase their knowledge and appreciation of foreign cultures, customs, and languages” (Abe et al., 1997) by being an International Student Ambassador. The program also provides them opportunities to learn leadership and communication skills, while providing awareness of university resources and fostering individual connections and relationships with the new international students. Being involved as valuable members of the advisory board encourages them to think critically and voice their concerns when they come across an idea or a practice that needs to be changed.

New International Student Learning Objectives

As a result of participating in phase two and three of the Three-Phase Orientation Process, the new international students will be able to:

1. Find at least one member in the university community who will support them throughout their first academic year.
2. Describe and utilize on-campus resources available to support their learning.
3. Express their understanding of American culture and norms, and how their experiences have affected it.

Orientation programs serve as a foundation for college success. In many instances, orientation programs create a lasting impression for new students. Orientation must aim to answer questions before they are asked, and to provide solutions before problems occur. By planning appropriately and using all campus resources, orientation should relieve anxieties and prepare the new students for success. This program mainly aims at redefining the traditional format of orientation and the assumption that it is only for the students to learn from. To achieve this aim, the university must also be ready to adapt its own practices and be

more feedback driven. Hence, this program is designed for both the new international students and the university to go through the orientation process together and support each other to ultimately benefit from the entire process in a positive way for both.

Educational Practices Employed in my Intervention

There are many learning and teaching theories that educators use in designing the curriculum and their daily practice. It is however very rarely incorporated in the planning and designing of programs and services that are targeting student involvement and success. Two of the theories that inform my programmatic intervention are andragogy and pragmatism. Knowles et al. (2005) defined andragogy as the art and science of helping adults learn. A andragogical approach places more emphasis on what the learner is doing. One can include the learners' experiences and knowledge by involving them whenever possible, and building upon what they already know and what interests them. Learners can also learn from their peers' knowledge and experiences.

Pragmatism on the other hand is based on John Dewey's (1913) belief that formal schooling is falling short of its potential. He emphasized facilitating learning through promoting various activities rather than by using a traditional teacher-focused method. He believed that learners learned more from guided experiences than from authoritarian instruction. The theory of pragmatism places the learner as the focus rather than the teacher. Dewey argued that learning is life, not just preparation for life. "Using different delivery approaches, combined with practical activities, will help reach the different learning preferences of the individuals you are teaching" (Reis, 2014).

Keeping these approaches in mind, I have designed my programmatic intervention to include and engage students throughout the planning, programming, assessment and

evaluation process of the Three-Phase Orientation Process model. Students will be given the tools to critically analyze their educational experience. They will then be influencing the way programs and events are designed, in order to make those programs address the needs and expectations of the students. Finally, they will also get the opportunity to be involved in the assessment and evaluation of the program, and hence can make an argument to keep what worked, and change what did not as they are the ultimate stakeholders and their voice is what matters the most.

Target Audience

International students are extremely diverse in terms of their country of origin, visa status, level of degree, program, English proficiency, age, gender, cultural background, marital status, religious beliefs, socio-economic level, technological advancement, etc. Having one common orientation format for all of them will be beneficial for some, and completely miss the target for others. It is impossible to plan unique orientation programs for each of these identities as one cannot accurately assume all the identities each student holds. In the Three-Phase Orientation Process model, first year incoming international students, and returning international students who are willing to serve as ISAs are the target audience. To have the most effective structure, when appropriate, their country of origin, level of degree, age and their English proficiency will be the primary factors that will be taken into account to assess fair participation and planning.

Program Proposal

International students are an ever changing, highly diverse population. Their needs and expectations change very frequently. Serving them efficiently can become complex if they are not included in every step of the process. On one hand, students need the

university's support and guidance to navigate through a new country, campus and culture. On the other hand, the university needs the student's perspective and support in order to understand what the students need, and to identify the stressors and their effects on the student's educational experience. Incorporation of the Participatory Action Research methodology helps the university achieve the goal of having a seat for the students at the table, and for a mutually educational and beneficial experience to occur.

The Three-Phase Orientation Process Model

My programmatic intervention consists of three phases that span for the duration of an entire academic year. This Three-Phase Orientation Process model will practice Participatory Action Research throughout, and hence will include students in every stage of each phase.

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
← Participatory Action Research (PAR) →		
International Student Ambassadors (ISAs)	Orientation Process	Assessment and Evaluation
Eligibility	Pre-Arrival	Biweekly ISA meetings
Selection Process	On-Arrival	Monthly Advisory Board Meeting
Orientation and Training	Post-Arrival	Surveys
Duties and Responsibilities		Open Forum

Program Overview

As seen in the previous section and my programmatic intervention consists of three phases that spans over the duration of an entire academic year. The first year of its execution would be a pilot year. The second academic year would be the year when the program would be implemented in full, with most if not all of its working components. In the following sections, I will give a brief overview on the components of this Three-Phase Orientation Process model.

Pilot Year – Fall Semester

During this pilot year, the office would spend majority of the first few weeks, starting in the Fall semester, getting to know their international student population that are currently on campus through surveys and open forums. The questions asked in the survey will be a combination of Multiple-Choice Questions and open-ended questions. It can also serve as the first version of the questionnaire that will be used for surveying the new international students, in the assessment and evaluation phase. The open forum will be an opportunity for students who are not familiar with an open forum setup to come and understand what it is, and its purpose.

All the international office staff members will be present in this first open forum. At the end of this open forum is when students will be informed about the International Student Ambassador (ISA) program, and the details about it. If the university already has a program similar to the International Student Ambassador (ISA) program, all the ISAs will be present in this open forum where they will be sharing the new details about the program and its benefits. All eligible international students will be then contacted via email giving them more details about the program and asked to apply to become an International Student Ambassador (ISA) if interested.

Pilot Year – Spring Semester

In the Spring semester, the interviews for the ISAs will be done during the first few weeks if the university does not already have a similar program. It is not mandatory, but it is preferable to have at least one student from every country that the university represents as an ISA. The ISAs will then go through an orientation and training process which will be further discussed in the following section. After completing their orientation and training process,

they will be put in touch with utmost five international students each depending on their: Country of origin, Major or area of study, Housing status, Age and Social interests. The ISAs will meet with their assigned peers on a biweekly basis to talk about their experiences being an international student in the host university. The ISAs will be given a list of guiding questions for each of the biweekly meetings, which they can add to, depending on the nature of their assigned students.

Pilot Year – First Advisory Board Meeting

At the end of the academic year, with at least a month to spare before summer, all the relevant information shared by the new students will be consolidated by the ISAs and will be shared during the first advisory board meeting. The ISAs will also be given the opportunity to make suggestions and recommendations to the advisory board on what they think and believe needs to be changed and how. With this information, the advisory board will move into the summer where they will plan the programs and events accordingly for the next academic year. They will also use this information to inform the pre-arrival orientation materials, and the questionnaire that will be sent out to the new international students at least 45 days before they can arrive in the U.S.A. A sample of the pre-arrival questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

Pilot Year – University Orientation Process Begins

All the knowledge gained from the pilot year, including the responses from the pre-arrival questionnaire will be used to inform the planning of the orientation process. This is when the university begins its own orientation process. The international office will also use this information gained to match the ISAs with new incoming international students and to re-orient the ISAs before the beginning of the Fall semester.

Phase 1 - International Student Ambassador (ISA) program

The International Student Ambassador (ISA) program is a significantly large program within this Three-Phase Orientation Process model. Understanding the need for including students in the conversation throughout the orientation process starting from the very beginning, it is the first phase of this model.

Mission

The mission of the International Student Ambassador (ISA) program is to utilize diverse international student ambassadors to serve as advocates for international students at the host university. Ambassadors will represent distinct regions of the world as well as the broader international student body of the campus. The International Student Ambassador (ISA) program will be run by the international office and provide safe spaces to discuss topics such as culture shock, intercultural conflict and social perceptions, etc.

Ambassadors will draw upon their culture-specific knowledge, international student experiences, and leadership/intercultural communications skills, to assist incoming international students with a successful transition and acclimation to living in the U.S.A. and campus life of the University. Ambassadors are also delegates and advocates working alongside their international peers, as well as faculty and staff, to ensure that the international student voice is considered in efforts to improve the student's educational experience.

The eligibility criteria, application process, responsibilities and the benefits of being an International Student Ambassador (ISA) can be found in Appendix B.

End of Year Recognition

Towards the end of the academic year, the international office along with offices that might have partnered with the international office in executing this program will host an

event that is celebratory of the efforts of the ISAs. This celebration will offer students a final opportunity to formally interact with each other and share the impact of the program on their educational experience. The ISAs will be given a memento and a stole in recognition of their service and dedication to the program and hence the internationalization of the campus. The recognition event also acts as a platform to share some of the successes of the program with the university community and will aim to encourage more offices to partner with the international office in the program.

Phase 2 – Orientation Process

The Orientation Process is the second phase of this model. This phase is the heart of the Three-Phase Orientation Process model. It is here that we mainly redefine orientation from its traditional format of being an event to a process that both the university and the new incoming international students undergo. The orientation process has three stages: pre-arrival, on-arrival and post-arrival orientation stages.

Pre-Arrival Orientation Stage

This stage consists of three major parts. The first is the selection, orientation and training of the ISAs as explained earlier. The second is the questionnaire that will be sent out to the international students. The results of that questionnaire will provide relevant information about the new, incoming international students. That information will be used by the university and the staff of the international office to orient themselves according to the nature, needs and expectations of the incoming new international students. The final part of this stage is meeting with the ISAs in order to plan the on-arrival orientation stage with the newly acquired information about the incoming new students and their expectations. This information will also be used for the following purposes: assigning students to each ISA,

sharing their relevant information with the ISAs, if the new international student chooses to be a part of the program, information about their assigned International Student Ambassador (ISA) will be shared with them, and finalizing the programs and events for the semester.

On-Arrival Orientation Stage

This stage consists of multiple moving parts. Some of which include international students and scholar's check-in, airport pickup service, move-in assistance, banking and cell phone assistance, driver's license assistance, etc. Some of the most important parts of this stage are:

International Student Welcome Day/ Orientation Day 1. This is a mandatory event that all the new international students and the ISAs must participate in. On this day, students will be welcomed to the campus with an international breakfast where they will meet their peers, and if they chose to be a part of the program, they would also meet their assigned ISAs. They will then sit in an interactive session detailing their Visa and Immigration rules and regulations. The students will then be given a quick overview of the offices and the services provided by the University. They will then join their ISAs to walk around the university Offices and Opportunities Fair put together by the respective offices. To keep track of the tables the students stopped by, they will be asked to check in by scanning a QR code that will be on display on each table. This will provide the international office some information on the expectations and interests of the students, and also what the students have not explored enough.

The students will then be given a campus tour by the ISAs. During this campus tour, the students will be given access to a virtual map of the campus on which they can mark the locations that is of importance to them, for example, where their classes are, the library, the

student recreation center, the international office, etc.. The day will end with the students receiving their ID cards and a welcome packet.

Welcome Packet. At the end of the International Student Welcome Day / Orientation Day 1, new international students will be given a welcome packet. This packet will have the following information:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. International Office Staff Information | 8. How to make sure they Maintain their Visa Status |
| 2. Campus Map with room for personalization | 9. If, When and How they should file their Taxes |
| 3. Local Attractions | 10. Banking |
| 4. List of Important Documents | 11. Phone |
| 5. On Campus and Off Campus Housing Options, Details and Rates | 12. Tutoring and Language Training |
| 6. Transportation and Bus Routes | 13. Academic Advising |
| 7. Health Insurance | 14. Employment/Graduate Assistantships |
| | 15. Important Contact |

Post-Arrival Orientation Stage

This stage consists of all the programs and events that are designed for the benefit of international students. This includes cultural events or activities, field trips, city tours, workshops, conferences, etc. A list of the programs and events would have been finalized in the first Advisory Board meeting of the semester that happens before the beginning of the academic year. It is a list finalized after using the information consolidated about student expectations and needs from the pre-arrival questionnaire. Throughout the semester, the

programs and events can be slightly modified, or events can be added whenever needed, to fit in the pressing needs of the international students. Since there will be some level of student involvement in every stage of the program, there will be a constant flow of information about the stressors, challenges, expectations and also practices that are working to make informed decisions in all matters that will affect the students.

Phase 3 – Assessment and Evaluation

At this stage, there needs to be maximum student involvement. However, this is the stage where many universities do not include the students much because of various reasons including lack of time, confidentiality, lack of funds, etc. Since data for assessment and evaluation is collected periodically throughout the academic year, the assessment and evaluation done at the end of each semester can be more efficient. There is less of a time constraint and the students present at the table during this phase would have been involved in the process from day one. This structure makes it a smoother process that will be more satisfactory to the students. This phase will be explained further in Chapter 5.

Funding

There are four ways of securing the funds required to run this program. The first one is the fee that international students pay along with their other fees. A portion of this amount may be used to assist the operating costs of the program. A percentage of that fee could even go towards the events hosted by the ISAs in the program, as it will be guided by the international office and will technically fall under international student services. Another way to fund this program could be by partnering between the international office and the campus multicultural affairs office, student leadership offices, diversity, equity and inclusion office, and any other offices that serve this population of students.

The third way to get the funding for this program is by setting up Internationalization Seed Grants. The aim of the Internationalization Seed Grant will be to provide grants that improve the range of international partnerships at the university, and foster meaningful, collaborative global engagement. Program proposals will be reviewed by the Advisory Board and the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion office.

The final way to fund this program can be through corporate donations. The major difference between individual donors and corporate donors is that there is something to be gained on both ends. In return for a donation the higher education institution should be offering the company something that they value as well. This helps build a mutually beneficial relationship that is more likely to continue over time. A common goal is to boost the public image, and thereby attract more customers for corporates, and more students for universities. However, we must do some in-depth research before reaching out to any company or corporation. What are their goals? Are they passionate about any specific causes? Are there any relevant events that might make certain initiatives more interesting to them? Adequate time and effort must be put into this research before approaching them, as investing in international students is both highly beneficial as well as extremely complicated.

Depending upon various factors including the type of the university, percentage of international students, needs and expectations of the students, etc. the budget for the program may vary. An example of what the budget could look like can be found in Appendix C.

Marketing Strategies and Recruitment

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, students will be initially contacted to apply to become ISAs first in the Pilot Year - Open Forum. A follow-up email will be sent to all international students who are eligible to apply. In terms of sharing information about the

International Student Ambassador (ISA) program and various programs and events planned throughout the academic year with the international students, they will be receiving the information via email, on various social media platforms including Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. They will also be able to get information about any of the programs or events if they stop by the international office, campus multicultural affairs office, student leadership offices, diversity, equity and inclusion office and any other offices that serve this population of students.

Another main source of information will be the International Student Ambassadors. Students can contact their assigned ISA, or any other International Student Ambassador (ISA) involved in the program to get the information about any program or event. Since it is one of the assigned duties of the International Student Ambassador (ISA) to be that resource for the international students, they will be equipped with adequate knowledge to provide the students with the answers. There will also be other means of getting the word to reach the students, for example, flyers, signposts, announcements in events co-hosted by the office with other offices in the campus, etc.

Timeline

Since this program includes a pilot year and the year that follows, it can be considered as a two-year program for the first-time implementation. The Pilot year would begin in the Fall semester. The Fall semester would mainly be used to understand the existing international student population in the campus and identifying the students who are interested in becoming ISAs. The following Spring semester would be used to interview interested international students who want to become ISAs, and train them throughout the semester. They will also get their first exposure to be an Advisory Board member where they will

contribute to the planning of programs and events for the following academic year. A detailed timeline for the Pilot year can be found in Appendix D. Though called the pilot year, it will only include Phase 1 in its entirety and some parts of Phase 2 and 3, as the International Student Ambassador (ISA) program is a very important Phase of this model and requires enough time and resources to implement it. If the university already has a version of an International Student Ambassador (ISA) program, the pilot year could be shortened and hence could be just for a semester.

The following year is when the program will be implemented with all the practices to redefine orientation. Phase 1, 2 and 3 will be implemented in its entirety. A detailed timeline for the academic year that follows the pilot year can be found in Appendix E.

Implementation Issues and Concerns

With every program there will definitely be foreseeable and unforeseeable challenges faced during implementation. Some of the foreseeable issues with this program are:

1. The percentage of international students being significantly less, which makes it difficult to have an International Student Ambassador (ISA) for every country represented by the student population of the university.
2. The number of ISAs for certain countries can be much bigger than other countries. This can make programs and events organized by the ISAs of those countries headed by many leaders while the others are headed by a single person or a smaller group of ISAs.
3. If the international student population is very small in comparison with the rest of the student population on campus, the Three-Phase model might seem too extensive to implement in its entirety.

4. It cannot be guaranteed that at least one student from every country will be interested in becoming an ISA.
5. Since students are involved in every phase of this model, it can be challenging to coordinate meetings and assess their performance periodically.

All of the above-mentioned concerns can be handled by investing enough time and resources into understanding the students, providing them with the tools and skills necessary to participate in this program. It also requires the international office to be transparent and effectively communicate the importance of this Three-phase Orientation Process model, and their commitment to it. Since it is difficult for international students to make commitments to anything that is not going to directly contribute to their academic success, they must be able to see the need for the implementation of this model and how it can benefit them. Only then will they even consider applying.

If the university is struggling to find ambassadors for certain countries, they can first try approaching the students from that particular country asking them to consider applying. If that does not work, they can check if there is any other International Student Ambassador (ISA) with a student load lesser than five and ask them if they would be willing to add another member to their group. If they agree, they will be given adequate time and resources to learn about the country and will be put in touch with the student(s) before the others. If the office is not able to find an International Student Ambassador (ISA) for a student, the student worker of the office, or another staff or faculty member from that students' country will be appointed as their ISA.

Overview of Chapter 5

This chapter explored the purpose, objectives, program proposal and implementation of the Three-Phase Orientation Process Model. It was designed to address the need for student involvement in the planning, execution, assessment and evaluation of programs and services for international students. It also addresses the lack of opportunities for students to be ambassadors of their own country and culture and provides students with the tools necessary to become an effective leader and advocate for what they believe is necessary. In Chapter 5, we will examine the program further by looking into how assessment and evaluation would be for this program. We will also discuss the type of leadership that will be most effective for this program, the limitation of this intervention and end with a conclusion.

Chapter 5

Turbulence, conflict, change, surprise and challenge are all words that describe today's world. They evoke a number of emotions ranging from fear and anxiety, to excitement, enthusiasm, and hope. Clearly, the problems and challenges that we face today require a new kind of leadership. To cope effectively and creatively with the emerging national and world trends, leaders not only need to possess new knowledge and skills, but also have to display a high level of emotional wisdom and cross-cultural awareness.

Leadership in the 21st century is influenced by many factors including globalization, political change in the world, and technology (Padilla, 2012). These processes have shifted the concept of leadership, emphasizing distributed leadership (Pearce & Conger, 2003), resulting in a less individualistic and a more relational focus (Fletcher, 2004). These recent models of leadership can be regarded as post-heroic. The way that leadership is described in these models has a stronger resemblance to “feminine” leadership, with higher emphasis on transformational aspects, such as communication and distribution (Snaebjornsson et al., 2015).

Higher education plays a major part in shaping the quality of leadership in modern American society. An important leadership development challenge for higher education is to empower students, by helping them develop the special talents and attitudes that will enable them to become effective social change agents. However, colleges and universities are not only responsible for educating each new generation of leaders, but are also responsible for setting the curriculum standards and training the personnel who will educate the students.

Students will find it difficult to lead until they have experienced effective leadership as part of their education. They are not likely to commit to making changes in society unless

the institutions, in which they have been trained, display a similar commitment. If the next generation of leaders should be engaged and committed to leading for the common good, then the institutions must be engaged in the work of the society and the community, modeling effective leadership and problem solving skills, demonstrating how to accomplish change for the common good. This requires institutions of higher education to set their own house in order, if they expect to produce students who will improve society.

Characteristics of Effective Leadership

There are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are people who have tried to define it (Stogdill, 1974). It is much like the words, democracy, love, and peace. Although each of us intuitively know what we mean by such words, the words can have different meanings for different people (Northouse, 2019). Despite the multitude of ways in which leadership has been conceptualized, Northouse (2019) identified the following components as central to the phenomenon: (a) leadership is a process, (b) leadership involves influence, (c) leadership occurs in groups, and (d) leadership involves common goals.

According to me, the most important characteristic of effective leadership is that leadership is a process. Leadership can be seen as a process in which the situation can influence which leadership behavior or style is most effective (Ayman, 2004). It is a complex and dynamic relationship built over time between leader and follower, and between leader and the group of followers who depend on each other to attain a mutually desired goal. It is important to note that a follower is not a passive player in the leadership process. Edwin Hollander, after many years of studying leadership, suggested that the follower is the most critical factor in any leadership event (Hollander, 1964).

In the context of a university and my thematic concern, the followers are the international students, and it is after all, they who define the needs that the leaders, staff and faculty of the university must fulfill. It is the student's expectations and needs that determine what a leader must do in order to be effective. This means that the strength of the student's self-concept is linked to the leadership process. High self-esteem individuals tend to have a strong sense of self-efficacy, that is, a generalized belief they can be successful in difficult situations. Therefore, they tend to be strongly motivated to perform and persist in the face of adversity.

Dependence on Student Self-Efficacy

The high-self-esteem students tend to be responsive to participative styles of leadership. Low-self-esteem individuals, who doubt their competence and worthiness and their ability to succeed in difficult situations, function better with supportive forms of leadership. This helps them deal with the stress, frustration, and anxiety that often emerge with difficult tasks. In the case of international students, they have varied level of self-esteem depending upon the cultural differences in their beliefs, norms and values. For example, Asian students are commonly reported to have lower self-esteem when compared to other ethnicities, especially students from Europe (Kim et al., 2008). Therefore, cross-cultural awareness is the most important leadership quality to be an effective leader in the context of international programs.

Important Factors in Relation to Leadership

Globalization has created a need to understand how cultural differences affect leadership performance. It has created the need for leaders to become competent in cross-cultural awareness and practice. Ting-Toomey (1999) said that global leaders need to be

skilled in creating transcultural visions. They need to develop communication competencies that will enable them to articulate and implement their vision in a diverse workplace. Two concepts that are closely related to culture and leadership: ethnocentrism and prejudice. Both of these concepts can have impacts on how leaders influence others.

Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism is like a perceptual window through which people from one culture make subjective or critical evaluations of people from another culture (Porter & Samovar, 1997). For example, some Americans think that the democratic principles of the U.S.A. are superior to the political beliefs of other cultures; they often fail to understand the complexities of other cultures. Ethnocentrism accounts for our tendency to think our own cultural values and ways of doing things are right and natural (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997).

Ethnocentrism can be a major obstacle to effective leadership because it prevents people from fully understanding or respecting the viewpoints of others. For example, if one person's culture values individual achievement, it may be difficult for that person to understand another person whose culture emphasizes. Similarly, if one person believes strongly in respecting authority, that person may find it difficult to understand someone who challenges authority or does not easily defer to authority figures. The more ethnocentric we are, the less open or tolerant we are of other people's cultural traditions or practices.

Having said that, a skilled leader cannot avoid issues related to ethnocentrism. Even though one might recognize their own ethnocentrism, a leader also needs to understand, and to a degree tolerate the ethnocentrism of others. In reality, it is a balancing act for leaders. On the one hand, they need to promote and be confident in their own ways of doing things; on the other hand, they need to be sensitive to the legitimacy of the ways of other cultures.

Skilled leaders are able to negotiate the fine line between trying to overcome ethnocentrism and knowing when to remain grounded in their own cultural values.

Prejudice

Prejudice is a largely fixed attitude, belief, or emotion held by an individual about another individual or group that is based on faulty or unsubstantiated data. It refers to judgments about others based on previous decisions or experiences. Prejudice involves inflexible generalizations that are resistant to change or evidence to the contrary (Ponterotto & Pedersen, 1993). Prejudice often is thought of in the context of, but it also applies in areas such as gender, age, sexual orientation, and other independent contexts.

As with ethnocentrism, we all hold prejudices to some degree. Sometimes our prejudices allow us to keep our partially fixed attitudes undisturbed and constant. Sometimes prejudice can reduce our anxiety because it gives us a familiar way to structure our observations of others. One of the main problems with prejudice is that it is self-oriented rather than other-oriented. It helps us to achieve balance for ourselves at the expense of others. Moreover, attitudes of prejudice inhibit understanding by creating a screen that filters and limits our ability to see multiple aspects and qualities of other people. Prejudice often shows itself in crude or demeaning comments that people make about others. Both ethnocentrism and prejudice interfere with our ability to understand and appreciate the human experience of others.

In addition to fighting their own prejudice, leaders also face the challenge of dealing with the prejudice of followers. These prejudices can be toward the leader or the leader's culture. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for the leader to face followers who represent several culturally different groups, and these groups have their own prejudices toward each

other. A skilled leader needs to find ways to negotiate with followers from various cultural backgrounds.

An effective leader for the Three Phase Orientation Process model must therefore be aware of their own ethnocentrism and prejudices. They must also be accepting of the fact that ethnocentrism and prejudices may be held by the students as well as the members of partnering offices and be equipped with the knowledge and skills to tackle tough situations that arises in this context. They must exhibit a high level of cross-cultural awareness. Therefore, the leadership style I think would fit perfectly for this program is a Cross-Cultural Leadership Style. This will be discussed further in the following sections.

Cross-Cultural Leadership Style

Leadership, as we have established earlier, does not have a set definition that is universally applicable. Culture, on the other hand, could be defined as a way of life, customs, and script of a group of people (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988). Therefore, both leadership and culture are by their nature broad topics with an infinite number of potential definitions. This makes it difficult to find a leadership style for a group of people, international students in our case, who are very culturally diverse. Culture plays a major role in the educational experiences of the international students and those who are leading them must have good cross-cultural leadership competencies.

Adler and Bartholomew (1992) contended that cross-cultural leaders need to develop five cross-cultural competencies: First, leaders need to understand business, political, and cultural environments worldwide. Second, they need to learn the perspectives, tastes, trends, and technologies of many other cultures. Third, they need to be able to work simultaneously with people from many cultures. Fourth, leaders must be able to adapt to living in and

communicating with other cultures. Fifth, they need to learn to relate to people from other cultures from a position of equality rather than cultural superiority (Adler & Bartholomew, 1992, p. 53).

Leadership in my Programmatic Intervention

A leader exercising cross-cultural leadership in my programmatic intervention will exhibit the four following characteristics. First, the leader will have strong knowledge of the world events and how it influences the students on their campus. They intentionally attempt to be constantly up to date with perspectives of the international students and the trends in the challenges that they are facing throughout their course of study. Second, they will be well informed on the technologies of many other cultures and understand how important it is to communicate with the students using the technology they are familiar with. Third, they will be able to work simultaneously with people from many cultures, without assuming a one-size-fits-all attitude for any group of students. They can do this by getting to know the groups of students and their expectations, before planning programs for multiple groups of students together. They must be able to adapt their practices to accommodate the other cultures and their norms. Fourth, as the leader for a highly diverse population of international students, they will be aware of the commonly practiced leadership styles in different countries, and modify their approach, if and when needed. This requires a lot of experience in serving this population, willingness to be vulnerable and flexible when needed, and do adequate and frequent research along with the students to be well informed.

Assessment and Evaluation

Good leadership relies on continuous improvement through assessment and evaluation based on feedback. Assessment keeps everyone involved in the program

accountable for what they aim to do for their part in the programs. Assessment and evaluation of the development and implementation of the Three-Phase Orientation Process model is in fact the final phase of the model. It is included as a phase in the model itself as I understand how important it is for the success of the program, but also because it is a part of the process where I want the students to be involved. Assessment and Evaluation is the phase where the university can truly orient itself to better understand and serve the students with the help of the process itself and the results.

Collecting the Data

In the Three-Phase Orientation Process Model, since data for assessment and evaluation is collected periodically throughout the academic year, the assessment and evaluation done at the end of each semester can be more efficient. There is lesser of a time constraint, and the students present at the table during this phase would have been involved in the process from day one. This makes it a smoother process that will be more satisfactory to the students.

Data is collected from different sources using three different methods. First, using surveys to measure the level of satisfaction amongst the international students, as well as assess the success of the program learning outcomes. This survey is sent out towards the end of every month to all the international students and will be a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative analysis of their experiences. This data will be consolidated and evaluated at the end of the semester to recognize the trends in experiences of international students and also in evaluation of the effectiveness of the structure of this program.

Second, is the reports make by the International Student Ambassadors after each bi-weekly meeting with their assigned students. These reports will be based on a number of

open-ended questions to serve as a qualitative analysis method. These reports are brought to the table by the international student ambassadors during the monthly advisory board meetings. It is also during these monthly meetings that the staff members of the international office bring the consolidated report of from the surveys sent at the end of each month. Both these reports are compared and critically analyzed to evaluate the success of the program and identify areas of improvement. Any discrepancy that arises from the comparison of the two reports is taken into consideration when formulating the questions for the next survey and bi-weekly meetings.

Finally, the third way of collecting data is from the open forums that are held at the end of every semester. This open forum is marketed to students from day one to emphasize its importance. During this open forum, all the staff members of the international office, the international student ambassadors, and all the international students of the campus will be present. The staff members will communicate the findings from the surveys and reports, that were consolidated throughout the semester. They will also discuss ways in which the office tried to resolve the issues identified and open the floor for discussion and suggestions on potential solutions that the office could have done or can do in the future. Students will also be given a chance to ask questions, provide feedback and pose concerns during this open forum either in-person or anonymously. The entire open forum will be observed by the international student ambassadors who will be taking notes and later come up with a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) list. This SWOT list will be the topic of discussion in the final Advisory Board meeting as it will give a wholistic idea of the entire program and its efficiency.

Determining Success

Success of this program can be determined in three ways. First, by analyzing the trends in the challenges faced by the students, and how satisfied the students are with the support they are receiving. If the program is offering services and programs that are benefitting the students when they need them, the trends will yield a growth curve closer to the ideal case in the Sanford's Challenge and Support Theory (1962). Second, the learning outcomes, listed in Chapter 4, for both the ISAs and the new international students is achieved. Finally, when there is an increase in the number of international students who want to be involved in the program in varied capacities. This may include, more number of students responding to surveys, choosing to want an International Student Ambassador (ISA) assigned to them, applying to become ISAs, showing up to the programs and events conducted under this program, and of course showing up to the open forum at the end of the semester. Student involvement is a choice in this program, and hence should not be taken for granted.

Limitations and Scope for Improvement

As with any thesis, my thesis has a few limitations. According to my knowledge, there are two main limitations in my thesis and programmatic intervention. The first limitation is that I began writing this thesis before the world was affected by the COVID-19 Corona virus. The uncertainty and anxiety that results from the effects it has had on the higher education systems, and the world as a whole, can make implementation of this program challenging. International student retention and enrollment rate might change drastically in the coming academic years. The stressors faced by the students can change and

new ones can emerge because of such a shift in the structure of education and higher education institutions all around the world.

The second limitation is the sub-populations of international students that I could not research enough with, in order to understand their educational experiences and incorporate them into the program model. This is mainly because of lack of time and resources. There are two main sub-population of international students I could not cover in this thesis. First, the international students who are already in the U.S.A. as dependents and did not necessarily come to the U.S.A. for higher education. Their educational experience, stressors faced, and involvement in the program can be very different from a traditional international student. Second, the international students with special needs. According to the United Nations, around 15% of the global population, or roughly 1 billion people, live with disabilities, making them the world's largest minority – a minority that of course includes many students (monitor.icef.com, 2014). According to the European Association for International Education (EAIE), such students can be reluctant to study abroad, worried that their particular support needs would not be met at a host institution (monitor.icef.com, 2014). Therefore, providing these students with the support and services they require is important to be included.

Looking Ahead

My thematic concern and programmatic intervention are important now as the current economic and social struggles are making higher education in the U.S.A. less attractive for many. As an international student who was able to have a mostly positive educational experience, while also becoming aware of the factors that have negatively influenced the lives and educational experiences of many international students, my first step towards creating change is this thesis. While working on this thesis, I was motivated to start a student

organization for international graduate students in my University to address their unique struggles. As a student organization, we were able to shine a light on many of the stressors international students are facing in my University. I have also presented parts of this thesis in the ACPA 2020 Convention in Nashville and received a good mixture of positive feedback and constructive criticism, which I have addressed in Chapters 4 and 5. My next step is to use this document to make the case and collaborate with the staff to implement my intervention, and bring about a change in the orientation efforts made in my University. I will also use the knowledge gained from doing this research to better inform my practices while serving students in the higher education institution I join as a staff member.

Conclusion

As mentioned in my first chapter, being the “other” or the “outsider” has been an identity of mine since I was a few months old. Moving from country to country, I always had to go through both personal and socio-cultural struggles to be able to find success. However, I am privileged to have a supportive, financially stable, educated family to back me up whenever I wanted to take a risk. This is not the case for many individuals. Studying in another country, especially the U.S.A. is a far-fetched dream for many. The sacrifices them and their families have to make for that dream to come true, makes it very difficult for them to even consider taking risks or even participating in extracurricular activities. Providing them with the opportunities to develop as a whole student, is the duty of the higher education institutions that these students have decided to go to, after factoring in all the sacrifices they have to make and the advantages of joining that particular institution.

These days, international students have many options for countries they can go to for their higher education. This is mainly because the education standards and student lifestyle

have been improved in countries like Australia and Canada. Added to this drawback for the U.S.A. is the fact that the federal laws and policies have a high level of influence on the international student educational experience, which has not been as welcoming as it used to be a few years back. In this case, it is crucial for Higher education institutions in the U.S.A. to invest the time and resources to revisit their practices and make the required adjustments to counteract the negative effects of these external forces.

International students are not money bags or diversity points to an institution. They should be seen as valuable resource and individuals who: are excellent ambassadors of American culture when they return to their home countries, are an important step in enhancing the image of the U.S.A. overseas, play a major role in developing global and cultural competencies in the university community, are highly resourceful to research universities seeking to build their international research/knowledge capacity, can build international scholarly networks, are a pedagogically beneficial, can help shatter stereotypes and open otherwise “taboo” discussions.

By implementing the Three-Phase Orientation Process Model, I aim to redefine orientation as a process that both the students and the university undergo. Along with this shift, this model aims to transform the educational experiences of international students in three main ways. First, the nature of the services provided for international students will be updated, ready to accommodate the effects of the global events that might affect the students on their campus, all while being a practice that involves Participatory Action Research to listen to the students and provide what they need and not what is assumed to be necessary for them. Second, international offices will have to put more effort on constantly educating themselves, and then the entire university community to truly move towards

internationalizing the campus. And finally, international students will be more aware of their rights and restrictions, stand together, and up against the oppressive or discriminating practices of their host institution, state or country, and will make use of the opportunities that arise from being an active participant of this model to demand for what they rightfully deserve.

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Appendix A

Sample Pre-Arrival Questionnaire

- Given Name
- Do you have an English name? If so, what is your English name?
- Country of Origin
- Have you ever traveled abroad? If so, can you list all the countries you have stayed in for more than a period of a week.
- Have you been to the U.S.A. before? If so, can you mention the purpose of your visit to the U.S.A.?
- Why do you want to study in the U.S.A.?
- What is one part of American culture that you are excited to experience?
- What is one part of your ethnic culture that you would like to share with Americans?
- What do you think you will miss the most about your home country?
- What do you like to do socially?
 - Eating out together/Food-focused (e.g. lunch, dinner, drink)
 - Hobbies activities (e.g. playing Guitar, sports, games)
 - Study-focused
 - Hanging out
 - Visiting tourist sites & special places
 - Parties
 - Shopping
 - Religious activities
 - Sleep over
 - Going to Cinema
 - Voluntary work

- Social activities organized by university
- Other: _____
- What ways would you like to get involved in our school?
- What websites do you tend to use the most?
 - Emails
 - Search Engines
 - News sites (local and international)
 - Facebook
 - Minihompy (Korean equivalent to Facebook)
 - Renren (Chinese equivalent to Facebook)
 - Twitter
 - Weibo (Chinese equivalent to Twitter)
 - Instagram
 - Snapchat
 - Skype
 - Zoom
 - QQ
 - OoVoo (similar to Skype)
 - Blogs
 - Commerce sites (e.g. eBay, Amazon)
 - Waybook
 - Media sharing sites (e.g. YouTube, Pinterest, Tumblr)
 - WhatsApp
 - WeChat
 - Academic Journals sites
 - Other: _____
- Do you have any dietary restrictions?
- Do you have any special needs that you would like to disclose? (Physical, Psychological, Learning, etc.) (OPTIONAL)

Appendix B

Sample International Student Ambassador (ISA) Recruitment Details

Eligibility

International students applying to become an International Student Ambassador (ISA) must:

- Be an international student enrolled at the university for at least one academic year prior to applying to become an ISA.
- Be international students, thus may not hold U.S.A. citizenship or permanent residency.
- Enjoy working in a diverse and team-oriented environment
- Have displayed some level of advocacy and leadership skills
- Have demonstrated efforts to integrate/ coordinate international students
- Have participated in some campus activities
- Have a strong academic record at the university with a minimum of 3.0 cumulative GPA

Application Process

The application process requires the student to fill out an application form, and submit their resume, two letters of reference and an essay critically analyzing their experiences as an international student and stating why they are applying for this position. Shortlisted candidates will be called for an in-person interview, scheduled by the international office staff. Selected students will then be contacted with the results via email within two weeks of attending their interview. The ISAs will then be invited for a set of orientation and training sessions.

Responsibilities

International Student Ambassador (ISA) responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Dedicate a minimum of five hours per week to the program and log them.
- Be involved throughout the orientation process and support the students transition into the university
- Be familiar with on-campus resources for international students
- Respond to emails within 72 hours
- Plan inclusive events, as a part of the orientation process for international students on campus, alongside the international office
- Support the international community by answering questions, advocating for the international students on campus
- Attend the orientation, re-orientation and other workshops designed to increasingly prepare the students to be better Ambassadors
- To meet with their assigned students on a biweekly basis and discuss their experiences and make a note of their concerns
- Participate in the monthly Advisory Board meeting
- Consolidate reports from their biweekly meetings with the new international students and share them in the monthly Advisory Board meetings

Benefits

The benefits of being an International Student Ambassador (ISA) include, but are not limited to:

- Receive a stipend of \$1000 per academic year (\$500/semester) paid bi-weekly

- Develop a long-lasting relationship with peers from around the world
- Improve cross-cultural communication skills
- Gain leadership experience and develop interpersonal communication skills.
- Advocate for what they believe in and for the concerns put forward by the international students
- Have a unique and impressive experience to add to your resume
- Enjoy the satisfaction of using your skills to help others

Appendix C

This version of the program budget and funding plan might go through a lot of edits when implemented. There are three main categories into which the expenses can be segregated are: Graduate Assistants in the international student services office, the International Student Ambassador (ISA) Program, and the International Orientation: Add-Ons..

Expenses	Description	Source	Cost per Semester
Graduate Assistants	Research, Webpage Redesign, Creating Reports, Communication with students, Coordinating ISA related activities	Graduate Assistantship Funds	\$2,600 per GA
International Student Ambassador (ISA) Program	Sweatshirts for the ISAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internationalization Seed Grant • Partnerships with other offices • Donations 	\$20 per ISA
	Stationery		\$100
	Food (3 Training Sessions per semester)		\$600
	Student Activities Allowance (2 activities per semester)		\$100 per ISA
	Token of Recognition		\$30 per ISA
	Stipend		\$250 per ISA
	Professional Development Funds per semester		Up to \$250 per ISA
International Orientation: Add-Ons to the current budget	Offices and Opportunities Fair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships with other offices • Donations 	\$2000
	Welcome Packet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internationalization Seed Grant • International Student Fee 	\$1000
	Campus Map Personalization – Labor and Materials		\$500

Appendix D

Sample Timeline for the Pilot Year

- September – October
 - Prepare and send out the first comprehensive Questionnaire
 - Consolidate the information received
- November – December
 - Host an Open Forum
 - Announce the International Student Ambassador (ISA) program
 - Provide information about the application process
 - Shortlist the applicants after deadline
 - Contact the shortlisted candidates to fix a date for in-person Interviews
- January – February
 - Conduct in-person interviews
 - Finalize the selected ISAs
 - Send an email to the selected ISAs providing them with the information for the Orientation and Training Process and dates
- March – April
 - International Student Ambassador (ISA) Orientation and Training
 - Conduct the Advisory board meetings
 - Create the Pre-arrival New International Student Questionnaire
 - Finalize a list of Programs and Events for the next academic year
- May – August
 - Send out Pre-Arrival information

- Send Pre-arrival New International Student Questionnaire via email
- Consolidate information received from the Questionnaire
- Assign ISAs to the new international students
- Share with the ISAs the relevant information about the new international students assigned to them and vice-versa
- Use the information received from the Questionnaire to make any modifications to the list of Programs and Events if necessary
- Conduct a re-orientation for the ISAs

Appendix E

Sample Timeline for the Academic Year Following the Pilot Year

- August
 - International students and scholar's check-in
 - Housing Assistance
 - International Student Welcome Day / Orientation Day 1

- September – October
 - Biweekly International Student Ambassador (ISA) meetings with the new international students
 - Monthly Advisory Board meetings
 - Programs and events focusing on Orientation and Improving Cross-Cultural Awareness

- November – December
 - Programs and events focusing on Orientation and Improving Cross-Cultural Awareness (continued)
 - Biweekly International Student Ambassador (ISA) meetings with the new international students (continued)
 - Monthly Advisory Board meetings (continued)
 - Host an Open Forum
 - Announce the International Student Ambassador (ISA) program
 - Provide information about the application process
 - Shortlist the applicants after deadline
 - Contact the shortlisted candidates to fix a date for in-person Interviews

- January – February
 - Programs and events focusing on Orientation and Improving Cross-Cultural Awareness (continued)
 - Biweekly International Student Ambassador (ISA) meetings with the new international students (continued)
 - Monthly Advisory Board meetings (continued)
 - Conduct in-person interviews for International Student Ambassador (ISA) program
 - Finalize the selected ISAs
 - Send an email to the selected ISAs providing them with the information for the Orientation and Training Process and dates.
- March – April
 - International Student Ambassador (ISA) Orientation and Training co-organized with the current ISAs
 - Programs and events focusing on Orientation and Improving Cross-Cultural Awareness (continued)
 - Biweekly International Student Ambassador (ISA) meetings with the new international students (continued)
 - Monthly Advisory Board meetings (continued)
 - Create the Pre-arrival New International Student Questionnaire
 - Finalize a list of Programs and Events for the next academic year
 - Host the End of Year Recognition event for the ISAs
- May – August

- Send Pre-arrival New International Student Questionnaire via email
- Consolidate information received from the Questionnaire
- Assessment and Evaluation
- Assign ISAs to the new international students
- Share with the ISAs the relevant information about the new international students assigned to them and vice-versa
- Use the information received from the Questionnaire to make any modifications to the list of Programs and Events if necessary
- Conduct a re-orientation for the ISAs