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ACADEMIC & CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF INTERNATIONAL
STUDENTS AT A HISPANIC SERVING INSTITUTION OF
HIGHER EDUCATION

A Dissertation

by

SAMANTHA LOPEZ

Submitted to the Graduate College of
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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STUDENTS AT A HISPANIC SERVING INSTITUTION OF
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May 2021

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ABSTRACT

Lopez, Samantha, Academic & Cultural Perceptions and Experiences of International Students at a Hispanic Serving Institution of Higher Education. Doctor of Education (Ed.D.), May 2021, 149 pages, 41 tables, 26 figures, and 54 references.

International student enrollment in U.S. higher education institutions is steadily increasing. In 2018/2019, more than one million international students were pursuing their higher education in the U.S.

This study aims to discover and provide research and evidence of academic and cultural perceptions and on-campus experiences of the international students with their campus life, academics, and student services at a Hispanic Serving Institution of Higher Education in South Texas.

This research study was designed as a mixed-method with quantitative and qualitative analysis to describe the philosophical assumptions and inquiry method. The quantitative research study was designed as an online survey, which included several areas of student interest in higher education: U.S. international student demographics, student experiences, students' services experiences, campus life, and academics. The survey included 50 questions and was distributed to 737 international undergraduates, and graduate students enrolled in the Spring 2019 semester. The final response rate of the total international student population of 737 was 36.91% (N=272).

In addition, a qualitative research study was conducted with in-depth interviews with eight international students who were selected as an arbitrary sampling of students actively involved with on-campus cultural student events and programs. The sample for the structured interviews was arbitrary representation of the four major geographical regions: Africa, Asia, Europe, and America. The qualitative section of the study was used to analyze the student's interview transcripts to better understand the educational meanings of time of their experiences as international students by using the method of *carrere* by William Frederick Pinar. This method was used to study the relationships between their academic knowledge and their life history in the form of self-understanding and social reconstruction (Pinar, 2004, p. 45).

The study results will be shared with other campus administrators to better understand their needs and significant support areas.

This study has several implications for international educators. It will provide testimony to better understand this specific student population's perspectives on choosing the United States as a leading destination to study abroad. Both instruments can be replicated at other universities interested in understanding their experiences and challenges while pursuing their higher education studies in the U.S.

DEDICATION

This dissertation, “the project of my life,” is an entire piece of work given by God during the most challenging times of my life (2013-2020). The beginning of my doctoral studies would not have been possible without the perfect plans of God.

“She is clothed with strength and dignity, and she laughs without fear of the future” (Proverbs 31:25). It was a biblical verse that God gave me at the beginning of my doctoral program and sustained me during these challenging but transformational processes.

I firmly believe that He entrusted me with this project as He had a better and more meaningful future for me.

This dissertation is mainly dedicated to my children Carlos Alberto and Alejandro Amaro to show them that anything they want to accomplish in life is possible with hard work, dedication, and perseverance. Thank you both for your love and patience during these challenging years. Your love, care, and trust allowed me to continue with this journey and accomplish this significant goal in my life!

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I would not have completed this project without my family's support (Carlos, Carlitos, and Alejandro), my parents (Luis and Letty Lopez), and many other friends who were always there for me. I am very grateful for all of you, who helped and strongly encouraged me to obtain my educational and professional goals. I must also recognize my Pastor Arturo Guevara for always guiding me with the word of God and for all the members of the church Casa de Mi Padre, who kept me in their prayers. Moreover, I would express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Alla Paroiatnikova, former Executive Director at the Office of Global Engagement and longtime friend, for inspiring me and making me believe that I could accomplish a project of this magnitude. Also, Dr. Peter Gawenda, our former doctoral program director who encouraged me to join this academic journey and provided invaluable guidance and support throughout this journey.

Furthermore, the International Admissions staff that supported this project and helped me collect this valuable data. Moreover, I would like to acknowledge my dissertation chair, Dr. Ming-Tsan Lu, for his strong motivation and dedication to my project. For his long hours of mentoring sessions and encouraging words. Also, Dr. Irma Jones for talking to me almost every day and empowering me to continue to work hard in my dissertation, no matter the circumstances. As well, Dr. Bobette Morgan, for all her support during my most difficult and challenging time of the whole doctoral program, my first semester. Moreover, to Dr. Espinosa-Dulanto for giving me a true inspiration for this

project's cultural and international taste.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“International educational exchange is the most significant current project designed to continue the process of humanizing mankind to the point, we would hope, that men can learn to live in peace--eventually even to cooperate in constructive activities rather than compete in a mindless contest of mutual destruction. We must try to expand the boundaries of human wisdom, empathy and perception; and there is no way of doing that except through education.” -

J. Williams Fulbright

For the first time in history, the number of international students in the U.S reached a million in the 2016/2017 academic year. (Figure 1). According to Altbach (2004), “many of these high-growth countries cannot educate everyone at home and are sending an increasing number of students overseas to study” (p. 20). International students are arriving at U.S. campuses with high expectations that their needs will be served. According to the Institute of International Education, the most recent number of international students pursuing a higher education program in the U.S. for the year 2018/2019 was 1,078,822, with a 3.4% increase from the previous year.

Students’ experiences play essential cultural and academic roles in most U.S. colleges and universities. Domestic students have access to cultural programs, appropriate physical environments, organizational structures, and student services that higher education institutions provide. Similarly, Schulte and Choudaha (2014) indicated that international students also need a campus community to welcome and provide them with adequate student support services. Domestic students experience adaptation problems at their higher education institutions with their life and on-campus experiences. These same problems are even greater and pose a more significant challenge for international students who adapt to a new culture,

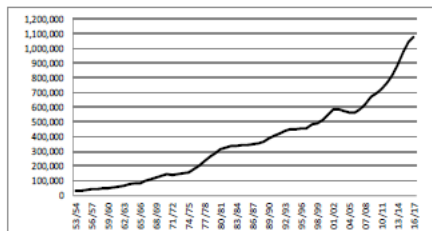
probably a new language, and possibly a new academic literacy. Being employed for many years at a Hispanic-serving higher education institution located in the Rio Grande Valley that also serves international students, I have been witness to the struggles a number of these students undergo, especially in their first academic year.

Figure 1

Open Doors 2016/2017 International Student Trends

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT TRENDS

In 2016/17, the number of international students in the U.S. increased by 3.4% to 1,078,822 students.



	Total int'l students	% change	U.S. higher education total*	% int'l
2005/06	564,766	-0.1	17,487,000	3.2
2006/07	582,984	3.2	17,672,000	3.3
2007/08	623,805	7.0	18,248,000	3.4
2008/09	671,616	7.7	19,103,000	3.5
2009/10	690,923	2.9	20,428,000	3.4
2010/11	723,277	4.7	20,550,000	3.5
2011/12	764,495	5.7	20,625,000	3.7
2012/13	819,644	7.2	21,253,000	3.9
2013/14	886,052	8.1	21,216,000	4.2
2014/15	974,926	10.0	20,300,000	4.8
2015/16	1,043,839	7.1	20,264,000	5.2
2016/17	1,078,822	3.4	20,185,000	5.3

*Data from the National Center of Education Statistics

Source: Institute of International Education, Open Door 2016/2017 report.

Purpose of the study

The study has been designed to learn more about the cultural and academic perceptions of 737 international students from a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) located at the tip of South Texas with a current enrollment of 27,569 students in the academic year 2016/2017. Out of the total population, 89% are of Hispanic origin. Similarly, the U.S. Census Bureau, as of January 1, 2017, the Rio Grande Valley reported an estimated population of 1,370,474,

which has a unique culture, with 90 percent of the population being Hispanic. This institution of higher education proudly serves this region with campuses in Brownsville and Edinburg, along with learning centers and teaching facilities in McAllen, Rio Grande City, Harlingen, and South Padre Island.

International students are far away from their countries, and they are exposed to a new educational system, culture, and possibly a new language(s). Therefore, the need for additional resources for this unique population is crucial.

The main purpose of the study is:

1. To identify the international student population's cultural and academic perceptions concerning their campus experiences at this Hispanic Serving Institution.
2. To study the interrelationships between the international student's transformational process to better understand the educational meanings of time of their experiences in the past, present, and future using the *currere* method.
3. To determine whether international students find adequate resources on campus at this HIS concerning the facilities and main campus services.
4. To determine whether international students are facing any academic, social, or cultural challenges.

Research Question

Data was collected to answer the main research question and some additional sub-questions to accomplish the research purpose.

Main Research Question (MRQ):

What are the international students' academic and cultural perceptions at this Hispanic Serving Institution to their campus experiences?

Sub-Research Questions (SRQ):

SRQ1. What are the inner workings that international students experience from their past with their current academic experiences and their impact in their near future?

SRQ2. Do international students feel that the institution provides adequate social, educational, and student support services?

Significance of the Study

According to the Institute of International Education report (Opendoors, 2018), 1,094,792 international students were studying at U.S. colleges and universities during the academic year 2017-2018. Therefore, this study is significant as this unique student population continues to increase every year. Another significant point, Texas is one of the top three states that host most of these international students as it is considered one of the three most preferred locations in the U.S. to live and pursue their education. Furthermore, international students contributed over \$42.4 billion to the U.S economy in 2018 and supported more than 450,000 jobs in the same year (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2018). In addition, the Association of International Educators (NAFSA) indicated in their 2017 Economic Benefits Analysis report that District 15 in Texas showed the 783-international student enrollment contributed \$19.1 million towards supporting 278 full-time jobs. District

15 includes the following counties: Brooks, Duval, Jim Hogg, Karnes, and Live Oak, along with parts of Guadalupe, Hidalgo, and Wilson) These numbers represent the HSI where this research study was conducted.

Moreover, NAFSA explains that for every seven international students enrolled, three U.S. jobs are created due to the fact that this benefits the economy through higher education enrollment, use of transportation, retail purchases, food consumption, living accommodations, use of telecommunications, and health insurance services. The number of international students coming to the U.S. represents an immeasurable cultural and diversity value and economic value. Despite their contributions to the campus, community, and society in general, international students may experience adjustment strains unique to them. These crucial facts provide a strong motivation to explore the international student population's academic and cultural experiences at a Hispanic Serving Institution.

Research Methodology

This research has been designed as a single institutional study at a Hispanic Serving Institution. This university was selected because I am a current graduate student, and I serve the international student population at this institution in a professional capacity. Furthermore, I have been serving this unique student population since 2001. The international student population at this HSI is not large. Still, it is significant as this is a new university and has much potential for increasing its international student population.

The research methodology for this study is both qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative section involved semi-structured interviews with a sample group of strongly involved international students on campus and cultural events. The quantitative section of this research included an online survey for statistical data collection of enrolled

international students in the Spring and Summer 2019 semesters. The survey data was strategically from the international office at this HSI. The qualitative and quantitative surveys were collected as a graduate student and not as an International Student Services Office administrator.

Definition of Key Terminology

For this research study, the following terms were utilized:

International Student(s) is “a student who moves to another country (the host country) to pursue tertiary or higher education i.e., college or university” (Shapiro, Farrelly, & Tomas, 2014, p. 2). *Hispanic* is one of Spanish speaking origin, mostly Mexican descent.

Hispanic Serving Institution is a non-profit degree-granting institution of higher learning with more than 25% of the full time equivalent undergraduate student population of Latino descent and a low-income student population (Calderon Galdeano & Santiago, 2014).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Institutions of higher education must understand in depth the cultural and academic perceptions and experiences of the increasing international student population in the U.S. There are more than one million international students in the U.S., contributing with an immeasurable mix of cultures, customs, and languages that enormously enrich our country and also supporting the U.S. economy in the area of Higher Education with more than 40 billion per year. (Opendoors, 2018). Therefore, colleges and universities need to learn more about the perceptions, challenges, and needs of serving the international student population to successfully retain them and see them accomplishing their educational and professional goals.

The Method of *Currere*

Since the early 1970s, educators have endeavored to understand curriculum as autobiographical and biographical text. The method of *currere* involves an investigation of the nature of the individual experience of the public: of artifacts, actors, operations, of the educational journey or pilgrimage.” (Pinar, 1975, p. 400). Therefore, this method provided a strategy for students to study the relationships between their academic knowledge and their life history in the form of self-understanding and social reconstruction (Pinar, 2004, p. 45). The word curriculum in Latin is referred to as “*currere*”, meaning to run the course. According to Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman (1995), *currere* is “a method used in which students of curriculum could sketch the relationships among school knowledge, life history, and intellectual development in ways that might function self- transformatively” (p. 515).

The *currere* method was used in this research study to share the inner workings and the dynamics of the international student's transformational changes in education. This method was used to qualitatively analyze the student's interview transcripts to better understand the educational meanings of time during their experiences as international students at this Hispanic Serving Institution.

Pinar (1994) formulated the *currere* method in four steps or moments: regressive, progressive, analytical, and synthetical. In the regressive step, the individual can look back and describe their past experiences. The progressive step can be used for the individual to postulate and imagine possible experiences in the future. The analytical step describes the individual's current educational experiences from the past and the present to formulate the interrelationships of both. Lastly, in the synthetical stage, the individual can extract its present existential meaning and the gained experiences from all the previous steps. These steps "depict both temporal and reflective movements of autobiographical study of the educational experience" (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 520). Therefore, the individual can use the last step to visualize and analyze the whole journey and construct the meaning of "running the course."

By its definition, research is about the interest in the person's experience of life (Arthaud- Day, et al., 2005). Exploring curriculum as autobiographical and biographical texts, "the lived experience" will better understand our international students' past and current educational experiences to share the stories of their transformational environments at this HSI.

Dimensions of National Culture

Geert Hofstede, a Dutch social psychologist, is considered a leading researcher on culture (Søndergaard, 1994; Kirkman et al., 2006). His original research of cultural dimensions involved a study of IBM employees from more than 40 countries from all over the world. Mainly, Hofstede's extensive research focused on how values in the workplace are

influenced by culture; however, his research has been used worldwide in academic and professional management settings. In this research study, it is essential to mention the manifestation of national cultural characters in international education. The work of Hofstede will help us to better understand the relationship between culture and values by providing a deeper understanding of the dynamic of the international students' perceptions of their academic curriculum. Initially, Hofstede distinguished four dimensions of national culture in his original study: Power Distance, Individualism/Collectivism, Masculinity/Femininity, and Uncertainty Avoidance. Later, he identified a fifth and finally a sixth dimension: long-term orientation and indulgence (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede et al., 2010b).

According to Hofstede (1997), culture is defined as the collective programming of the mind that separates the members of one group or category of individuals. Also, he explained how inequalities in societies affect their social and educational opportunities. In his research, he also explained how children attend school for more than twenty years during their life, and this is where they develop their mental programming with culture and the values in education.

According to Hofstede (2010), "the sources of one's mental programs lie within social environments in which one grew up and collected one's life experiences" (p. 5). Therefore, most mental programming is acquired by individuals in their early years, where individuals are more susceptible to learning and assimilating the environment into which they are surrounded.

Also, Hofstede implied how the additional values that the individual will obtain would be filtered according to what they value and honor within their culture. The work of Hofstede is being used to show the connections of national cultures' four dimensions with the international student backgrounds, experiences, and educational relationships in the literature review. More interestingly, this research connects Hofstede's (1997) national cultures with

Pinar's *currere* method (2004). In particular, the regressive step of the *currere* method talks about the individual being able to look back and describe their past experiences. Pinar (2004) assumed that one's past affects the present educational perceptions and practices. So, these two points are directly connected to the culture where the individual was brought up and describe it in the form of educational experience with learning outcomes that influenced the individual.

Moreover, Hofstede (2010) explained how mental programming is directly related to the social and cultural environment in which the person was raised and collected their life experiences. Most importantly, he argued how education is directly linked with the student's future professional occupation. Therefore, we can connect with Pinar's progressive step in which the individual postulates and imagines experiences in the future. This step allows the individual to use a self-conscious conceptualization through time.

Moreover, the Analytical step of *currere* allows the researcher to formulate a connection with the individual current education experiences from the past and the present to formulate the interrelationships of both.

Power Distance

Hofstede defined power distance as "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (p. 61). Also, Hofstede (1997) argued that "different value patterns in the cultures from which the teacher and the students have come are one source of the problem. These cultural differences often affect the relationships between teacher and students, among students, and between teacher and parents" (p. 393). An example of power distance in higher education is how international students cope with the power of authority

in the classroom. In Asian societies, teaching is treated with reverence, especially in China. In Asian cultures, if a student asks a question to the professor in class, this can be seen as disrespectful. International students coming from these cultures may experience a cultural shock in the classroom when they are exposed to this difference in authority. In fact, faculty members in the U.S. promote an open dialogue with their students to express their interests, opinions, and ideas. This academic practice's primary purpose is to motivate the students and make them feel that their opinion matters.

Similarly, Kim (2002) compared the concept of participating or speaking under the American and Asian pedagogical educational practices, respectively. His research study concluded that students' beliefs about the value of class participation were the opposite. In the American educational system, the author also found out how students are expected to participate in class and express their unique ideas to demonstrate their understanding of the learning materials and engage in the classroom.

Similarly, Kragh & Bislev (2005) agreed on the experience of students having studied abroad or faculty on an academic exchange identified significant differences in teaching and learning styles between countries. They also explained how there is strong evidence of attitudes from faculty authority, student participation in the classroom, and approaches to learning at higher education institutions across nations. Moreover, Hofstede (1997) expressed that "teaching and learning are culturally conditioned, and apparently similar behaviors may have different deep meanings" (p. 262). In fact, Price (1991) and Young (1990) found in their studies that international students were hesitant to participate in the classroom because they were afraid of mispronouncing a word or making a mistake that would make them look awkward. Therefore, academic competence, cultural values, and English proficiency are three

main factors that may affect how international students cope with the U.S. educational system with power distance.

Collectivism vs. Individualism

Hofstede (1997), explained how we might live in cultures that are collectivist or better defined as the “power of the group” (p.60). He explained how individuals belong to their first group (family) when they are born. Moreover, he described how, in most collectivistic families, the “group” consists of immediate family members, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and housemates. Most of the people in the world live in collectivistic societies. However, there is a small proportion of people in our world who live in individualistic cultures. According to Hofstede (1997), people who are born in individualistic families tend to be part of a small nucleus. In fact, these individuals learn to think of themselves as “I.” Furthermore, Hofstede (1997), defined individualistic societies as “in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him or herself and his or her immediate family” (p. 91).

In effect, the United States of America is considered to be an individualistic country. However, an interesting element is that this Higher Education institution is located in the south of Texas, and 90 percent of Hispanics populate this area. The Hispanic culture is considered to have strong collectivistic values. Therefore, this creates an interesting mixture of the individualistic and collectivistic cultures at this higher education institution. This combination of cultures plays a significant role in international student behaviors while adapting to their new academic and cultural environment in this area. Later in the quantitative section of the study, I will connect the survey results to the perspectives of the international student population of this HSI located in this unique area of the Rio Grande Valley, in the border area in between the U.S.

and Mexico.

Uncertainty Avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance is another of the four dimensions in Hofstede's national cultures. This dimension is about individuals dealing with tolerance in society for uncertainty and ambiguity. International students may feel this through the cultural shock experience when arriving in a new country. They will be expected to acquire specific cultural values to engage in their new social interactions (Zhou et al., 2008). According to Furnham and Bochner (as cited in Redmond, 2000), they identified cultural differences as one of the main factors attributed to culture shock. Besides the uncertainty that these international students may experience upon arrival, they also may experience ambiguity with maintaining their student visa status while pursuing their studies in this country. Domestic students can be enrolled part-time or full-time while pursuing their studies in a U.S. university. Meanwhile, as per the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) immigration regulations, international undergraduate and graduate students must be enrolled full time for the spring and fall semester; summer sessions are optional. Although there are a few exemptions, international students cannot just drop a class and lower their full-time enrollment like any domestic student. Moreover, international students are required by the Student Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) to maintain a good academic standing to continue with their educational program in the U.S. Aside from the cultural uncertainty this unique student population may experience; they are also concerned with being able to interact with their new professors, classmates and new friends. Eventually, the ambiguity decreases as they move from one semester to another, and they learn how to manage and cope with their "not so new" academic, social, and cultural life. However, the uncertainty is always there as their student visa status is dependent on so many other factors.

Femininity vs. Masculinity

In Hofstede's (1997) Masculinity versus Femininity cultural dimension, he defined a masculine society where emotional gender roles were clear, assertive, though, and focused on material success. In contrast, women were to be more modest, tender, and concerned with life quality. Furthermore, he defined a feminine society where both gender roles overlap, and they both are humble, kind, and concerned with the quality of life. In comparison, he found that students from masculine countries would try to excel as much as possible; an example of this would be American students. Similarly, Hofstede explained how strongly masculine countries such as Japan and Germany had some cases where students were failing in school had been opting for suicidal acts. Hofstede also expressed a noticeable difference in classroom behavior in masculine societies where the students try to make themselves visible and openly competitive with their classmates. On the other hand, students from feminine countries are not very concerned with excelling in school; they prefer to obtain an average or passing grade. Also, excelling student behaviors in class can be seen as unnecessary and even ridiculous in feminine countries. Besides, in his research studies, Hofstede found that men and women in feminine countries often followed the same academic curriculum. Although, in a masculine country like the U.S., it is evident there is an underrepresentation of women pursuing Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) careers than males. Xu (2008), found in his research study how women with stronger turnover intentions were highly correlated with disappointment about the research support, free expression of ideas, and the low advancement opportunities in their professional careers. Faculty members must understand the different cultural dimensions of higher education institutions. By doing this, faculty can adjust and better understand the diverse student populations they serve in their classrooms. Currently, the International Office at this HSI

serves international students from more than 65 countries. Different cultures may adapt easiest to the U.S. curriculum and educational expectations if they are culturally similar. However, the results of this research study may find the connections and correlations of their cultural competence in their higher education setting.

Even though Hofstede's Cultural Dimension theory was created in the 1980s, his theory serves as a base for this research. It later connects with the results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis. Hofstede's data was collected between 1967 and 1973 from more than 70 countries. His theory has been partly replicated and extended his IBM study on different international populations and by many different scholars.

There is no doubt that Hofstede's theory was one of the first ones that explained the differences between cultures with quantifiable data. However, we must also understand that, 50 years later, globalization's impact in the workplace and education imposes not such strict cultural dimensions. Globalization is complex, and it brings numerous definitions and theories. According to Venezia (2004), borders are no longer constrained. Therefore, this mobility allows individuals to have more freedom in differences or similarities of national cultures in the professional and education fields, among many others.

Internationalization of the Curriculum

While there has been a significant increase in international students coming to America, it is also equally important to know if U.S. universities are well equipped to serve them accordingly. Therefore, the curriculum's internationalization is a relevant component of the changing landscape of higher education in the United States. According to Knight (2015), the definition of internationalization at the institutional levels is "the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of

postsecondary education” (p. 2). Campus internationalization seeks to cultivate a campus culture that embodies global diversity and its interconnectivity with all other resources and university areas.

This curricular trend is important due to the increased number of international students in the U.S. According to the Institute of International Education (IIE) report (Opendoors, 2017), 1,078,822 international students studied at U.S. colleges and universities during the academic year 2016-2017. Meanwhile, Texas is one of the top three states that host most of these international students. The one million international students studying at U.S. higher education institutions have been not only the result of robust recruitment strategies from public and private universities across the nation. Higher Education in the U.S. is widely regarded as a success story (Brewer et al., 2001). Therefore, many international students apply to U.S. institutions every year to pursue their studies as these are recognized for their value and reputation worldwide within the higher education market.

According to Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007), he explained how there has been a “tectonic shake-up of the abyssal global lines” (p. 54). He argues how these lines are moving again globally. Moreover, the author explained as an ecology of knowledge how postabyssal thinking is premised with the idea of an epistemological diversity of the world and recognizing the plurality of knowledge. Also, Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007), mentioned how there are diverse forms of knowledge of the matter, society, life, and spirit. International students not only bring their diverse and rich culture, but they also contribute significantly to the U.S. economy, which increases the prestige of higher education institutions.

For instance, Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2012) questioned in his article “whether the

university could successfully reinvent itself as a center of knowledge in a globalizing society with many other centers” (p. 2). He also explained how the Bologna Process in the European Union had a decisive and crucial decision that impacted the curriculum by recognizing that universities should form full human beings and full citizens. Furthermore, he stated how the European Union decided to provide generous funding to public universities to invest in the future of European ideas. As a result, Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2012) concluded how the Bologna Process grew exponentially in the European university system’s internationalization.

This research study will examine whether the internationalization of the curriculum and pedagogy can provide a more inclusive learning environment for the international student population at a U.S. higher education institution in the deep south of Texas. International students arrive in the U.S. with diverse and rich cultural backgrounds, languages, and different learning styles. However, international students may not be familiar with the U.S. traditional curriculum and pedagogy upon their arrival. Students arrive with some academic expectations, but it is until they are immersed in the classroom when they experience the curriculum dynamics and have a better perspective of what is expected of them academically, socially, and culturally.

Furthermore, Marginson (2006) explained how higher education is now positioned in an open environment where national borders are continuously crossed with diverse populations. Therefore, these higher education institutions must value the diversity within their learning and teaching dynamics of this student population. Similarly, Marchesani and Adams (1992), stated that a transformed curriculum honors the multiple “experiences and perspectives of the traditionally marginalized people” (p. 15). The benefits of the curriculum’s internationalization would be to respect and recognize diverse classroom environments by the different cross-cultural values and learning styles. As a result, international students will have an easier transition to the U.S. higher

education system. This will also allow the domestic students to start exploring and understanding the world through the lenses of a diverse and culturally rich student population.

Culture Capital

Most conceptualizations of culture capital within the sociological applications in education focus on the high status of cultural participation. According to Bourdieu (1973), the educational system is defined as “the groups of institutional or routine mechanisms by means of which is operated...the conservation of culture inherited from the past by the transmission from generation to generation of accumulated information to dissociate the function of cultural reproduction” (p. 174). The theory of Pierre Bourdieu of culture capital can be used to analyze the international student population in a higher education setting with the non-economic resources that enable social mobility, knowledge, skills, and economic capital.

Pierre Bourdieu (1986) defined culture capital in three forms: in the embodied state, in the state of cultural goods, and the institutionalized state. The author referred to the form of the embodied state about what an individual knows and is able to do, “the long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body”. As to the form of the cultural goods, he referred to this as the material objects an individual can obtain “such as books, pictures, paintings, instruments, or machines”. This form can be appropriated symbolically with material and economic capital an individual can obtain. Last, the institutionalized state form refers to the academic credentials and qualifications that an individual can acquire and create a “certificate of cultural competence which confers on its holder a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value with respect to power” (p. 248).

According to Bourdieu (1986), the theory of culture capital argues that an individual’s ability and opportunity are primarily determined by their parents’ cultural capital and time invested. Besides, Bourdieu argued how “the initial accumulation of cultural capital, the

precondition for the fast, easy accumulation of every kind of useful cultural capital, starts at the outset, without delay, without wasted time, only for the offspring of families endowed with strong cultural capital” (p. 246). It is essential to mention that international students’ families have instilled in their children the acquisition of cultural capital at a very early age. Many international students have shared how their parents started saving funds since they were little for their future study abroad college opportunity. Other students are also influenced by their relatives who have studied abroad and have served as examples for the other family members.

Similarly, Louie (2005) explained that the expected students’ perceptions in higher education are already influenced by their existing understandings and epistemologies. Parents make significant financial efforts to send their children to study in a foreign country to obtain a high-quality education. According to the IIE, international students’ primary funding source comes from personal and family funds (Opendoors, 2017). In figures, this would be 67% of the 39.4 billion dollars that international students contributed to the U.S. economy in the academic year 2016- 2017 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2017).

Similarly, DiMaggio (1982) argued how family background from the head of the household occupation could make an important difference in their future children’s education. With this said, we can conclude that international students may already arrive in the U.S. with their own inherited cultural capital. As a result of this inheritance, international students may have the ability to acquire additional forms of culture capital in a foreign country. An example of this can be adapting to the new U.S. culture, learning a new language, and accumulating cultural goods through their temporary on-campus employment and later in their chosen profession. This new form of culture capital acquisition may not be an easy process. This new form of culture capital acquisition by international students could be a beautiful transformational process.

Similarly, Mezirow (1991) emphasized that the feelings of disorientation a person may experience are excellent opportunities for individuals to reflect on unquestioned assimilated beliefs. These feelings and student experiences can become new opportunities for a transformative learning process with the international student population arriving at U.S. higher education institutions.

Transformative Learning Theory

Students' experiences play essential cultural and academic roles in most U.S. colleges and universities. To better describe these experiences and the process of transformation of international students, the theoretical framework of Jack Mezirow's transformative learning theory in academic literacies will be used.

Mezirow (1990) explained that to make sense of an experience, we need to interpret it. Once the experience is interpreted, the meaning is constructed. Therefore, this is a key part of the learning experience. Mezirow (1990) defined learning as a process of a new or revised interpretation of a particular experience's meaning, leading to a new understanding, a better appreciation, and a definable action. Also, Mezirow (1990) explained how the lived experience strengthens, extends, and refines our structures of meaning by reinforcing our expectations about how things are "supposed to be" (p. 4). At this point, individuals connect to their lived experiences as international students and the lessons learned of this transformational journey. It is also crucial to examine and understand international students' transformational processes and how they gradually changed while pursuing their studies in the United States. For this reason, the transformative learning theory of Mezirow (1991) was applied in this study as analytical lenses to interpret the transformational experiences of the international students by completing an online survey and in-depth structured interviews as part of a focus group. Mezirow's

transformative learning theory helps to conceptualize the student's changes in the educational, social, and personal experiences.

Most international students arrive with fear and uncertainty regarding their new educational experience in the U.S. As part of the international office at this HSI, we have noticed the international student transformation process to their adaptation after their first year of college. In most cases, after their first college semester, students look more oriented and have more of a clear idea of where they are going and how they will accomplish it. Additionally, they are also more culturally adapted and have understood more about the U.S. higher education system's expectations and its academic system. Describing this particular student population's transformational experiences while being immersed in a foreign country will be valuable to other students, faculty, and campus administrators. These transformational experiences can be shared with prospective international students and current professors in higher education institutions as part of their cultural competence development. Also, these experiences could help other university administrators to understand the unique challenges of international students better.

In conclusion, students' experiences play significant cultural and academic roles in most U.S. colleges and universities. This study will discover and learn more about academic and cultural perceptions and on-campus experiences international students' engagement with campus life, academics, and student services. Therefore, all these theories and curricular trends in curriculum/pedagogy are relevant in discussing its benefits and challenges.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Design

The qualitative study was designed as a mixed-method design with quantitative and qualitative explanatory research findings. According to Creswell (2013), a mixed-method design “provides a better understanding of a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative data by itself” (p.22). The quantitative research study was designed as an online survey, which included several areas of student interest in higher education: U.S. international student demographics, student experiences, students’ services experiences, campus life, and academics. The survey included 50 questions and was distributed to 737 international undergraduates, and graduate students enrolled in the Spring and Summer of 2019 semesters at a Hispanic Serving Institution located in the South of Texas.

A qualitative research study with in-depth interviews was also conducted with eight international students selected as arbitrary sampling. They were actively involved with on-campus cultural student events and programs within the international office at this HSI. The structured interview sample was an arbitrary representation of the four major geographical regions: Africa, Asia, Europe, and America. Originally, I wanted to include all the seven continents but this institution did not have any international students enrolled from Antarctica and there were only two students from Australia. The qualitative section of the study was used to analyze the student’s interview transcripts to better understand the educational meanings of time of their experiences as international students by using the method of *currere*. This method was

utilized to study the relationships between their academic knowledge and their life history in self-understanding and social reconstruction (Pinar, 2004).

Respondents

Building on the research design, the selected participants for this research were 737 undergraduate and graduate international students enrolled at this Hispanic Serving Institution. Out of the 737 selected students, eight students opted to participate in the qualitative research study. The eight participants were selected as an arbitrary sampling with the main indicative as being heavily involved with the international office at this HSI. All participating students met the requirement of being at least 18 years or older. A permission letter was sent to the Associate Vice President of the Office of Global Engagement to conduct the study with the enrolled student population from the semesters mentioned above. The international office's Associate Director sent my email directly to all enrolled international students at all campus sites to collect the data. Student consent was added to the email with the survey link included. Once the student clicked on the link to access the online survey, they permitted to obtain their demographic information and their responses to the included questions. All this information was also explained in the body of the email where the survey link was included. Since this research study involved human subjects, it required me to submit the appropriate approval from the institution's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure the protection of the human and ethical rights of the individuals involved in this project (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The survey emails were sent to the students directly by the international office personnel at this HSI so that all the data was anonymously gathered. Also, no question in the online survey had any identifiable key of information. Furthermore, the international office personnel sent the additional invitation to the students to participate in the qualitative in-depth interviews with all the questions unrelated to

their identity. Therefore, both sections of this research study were utterly anonymous to maintain the participant's confidentiality.

Setting

This research study took place at a Hispanic Serving Institution located along the border of South Texas with a total of 29,113 students, and a 3% international student enrollment ratio. As of the spring semester of 2019, there were 737 international students enrolled from 63 different countries.

In 2017, the Rio Grande Valley, which covers the area of deep South Texas from McAllen to Brownsville, had approximately 1,370,474 residents, with 90% with a Hispanic background (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). The Rio Grande Valley has a unique culture since located next to the border with Mexico and has a significant impact on the customs, the ethnic homogeneity, and the language.

Research Positionality

This research study is relevant to both my personal life and professional career. Years ago, I began my educational career as well as a part-time employment position at the same institute of higher education. Due to the geographical location, the fact that my family resides in this area, and it is where I call home this university remains to be a very special place for me personally, as well as professionally. As a woman of Mexican heritage, I began my scholastic career studying here feeling like an international student, even though I was not. My parents are from the Mexican border city, Matamoros, Tamaulipas, which is a sister city of Brownsville, Texas. I was born in the United States, yet I grew up and attended school from Kindergarten to 12th grade and graduated from a high school in that same Mexican border city. Although, one might think, starting a higher educational degree in Brownsville, which sits just across the Río

Grande River from Matamoros, would not be that intimidating, well think again. Enrolling and attending a higher educational institution in the U.S. meant I had to learn how to navigate a whole new educational system, acquire a new language, and meet the demands and challenges of studying at the university level. It took time to adjust to my new educational and social environment. However, three years before my own experience, my sister had been in the same position, so she instantly became my mentor and confidant, who helped me survive for which I will forever be grateful. Even though English was not my first language, I was determined to succeed in college. Four years later, I graduated with my bachelor's degree in Business Administration from this same university. Since I had been a student worker, while pursuing my studies, I had acquired some professional experience in higher education, and before my graduation, I learned about a full-time position within the university that served international faculty and exchange students. Without hesitation, I applied, and weeks later, I was hired for this position. Since then, I have been serving international faculty, plus exchange and international students. Serving in this population has allowed me to learn more about other cultures, languages, and customs. Even more importantly, I have learned about other individual's cultural challenges, language barriers, academic expectations, and much more.

Instruments

The first instrument used in this study was an online survey, including 50 questions. The questionnaire was divided into four sections: U.S. demographics of international students, international student experiences, cultural and academic experiences in the U.S. The online survey included a mixture of Likert scale (1-5), multiple-choice questions, and open-ended questions designed to elicit more comprehensive written responses. The questionnaire's primary purpose was to obtain demographic data from the international student population at this

institution to identify and better understand their student experience and their cultural and academic perspectives. The online survey took approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete, and the student responses were submitted electronically via Qualtrics, a research software. IBM Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 26.0 software was used for the data calculation analysis and interpretation of the quantitative section of the study. Statistical tests mainly performed in the quantitative research section were frequencies, descriptive, *t*-test, and Pearson correlation statistical analysis. (See Appendix G for survey instrument).

Balnaves & Caputi (2001) explained that correlation is the quantitative method concerned with the degree and direction of the relation between two variables. This quantitative method revealed the magnitude of the relationship between variables and correlations between gender, country of citizenship, major geographical regions, cultural and academic perspectives concerning their campus experiences in a Hispanic Serving Institution.

The second instrument used in this research study was semi-structured in-depth interviews with eight international students selected as arbitrary sampling. The international office sent an email to a good number of highly involved students within this department's events and programs. The international office supports all prospective and current international students in admissions, orientation, immigration advisement, on-campus employment, and also connects them with numerous institutions' resources. In addition to these services, this department conducts cultural events to help all enrolled international students to easily integrate and adjust to their new academic, cultural, and campus life activities.

According to Marshall & Rossman (2011), conveying an attitude that the individual's views are valuable and important to the study is a very prominent aspect of this process. Although, this may be seen as problematic due to the students feeling somewhat intimidated

to share their cultural experiences, challenges, and academic matters. Their voices will be beneficial to making adequate adjustment to the services and resources that they need.

Similarly, Marshall & Rossman (2011), explained that interviews might have some limitations; however, building trust with the participants is vital. For these reasons, students fully understood the purpose of the study was to gather more information on their experiences as international students to better understand their perspectives, needs, and challenges in different aspects of their academic, social, and cultural experiences within this institution.

Procedure

Quantitative

An email explaining the purpose of the online survey and requesting student participation was sent to all international students enrolled in the Spring and Summer 2019 semesters at this HSI. Also, an email reminder was sent to them several times to remind those students who had not responded and wished to participate. The email explained the purpose of the survey was for academic research and the study will explore the cultural and educational perceptions of international students' experiences.

This research study did not provide any type of compensation to the participating students and this was clearly stated in the email. Also, included in the email, there was a statement that explained that by clicking the link the student agreed to their participation in the survey. The online survey did not have any potential physical, psychological, social, economic, legal nor legal risks to the students. The direct benefits for the participants in this research study was that the information gathered will help to better serve the student international population at this HSI located in the south of Texas.

Additionally, the data collected has been secured and stored in an iCloud platform with a

strong password to protect the participants' anonymous data.

The quantitative data research study was conducted via an online survey, which included 50 questions. The software used to create the online survey was Qualtrics, which allowed the participants to access it through a web link directly. The targeted participants included the enrolled international students, including any visa type that enables them to study in the U.S. as defined by the U.S. government (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services). All student participants were 18 years or older. A total of 325 responses from 29 countries were collected from the surveyed population. However, once the file was downloaded, some of the responses were not complete or incomplete. Therefore, it was decided only to include responses who had more than 75% of the completion rate. Out of the 325 responses, only 272 respondents answered most of the survey questions, and the 53 incomplete entries were disregarded. Consequently, a total of 272 (83.69%) responses were complete and usable. The final response rate out the total international student population 737 was 36.91%.

Qualitative

A qualitative research study was conducted to provide a more comprehensive understanding of international students' academic & cultural perceptions and experiences at an HSI of Higher Education. For instance, Gray (2001) argued that "experience is expressed and articulated by language," Therefore, this expression is accomplished by telling our story and or presenting ourselves within a particular social and historical context. Thus, listening and learning from the student's background, "we are putting into play a repertoire of knowledge's, positions, discourses, and codes through which the individual articulates or expresses their own experience" (p. 653). Moreover, Marshall & Rossman (as cited in Gray, 2003) also explained that "one of the characteristics of cultural studies is understanding the culture as constitutive and

constituted by the ‘lived experience’ as the material, social, and symbolic practices of everyday life”. This qualitative analysis is focused on the individual lived experience as a phenomenological approach. According to Marshall & Rossman (as cited in Patton, 2002), a phenomenological approach seeks to explore, describe, and analyze the meaning of individual lived experience “how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others” (p.19). The authors also mentioned how the philosophy of the phenomenology approach involves in-depth interviews with individuals who have lived the experience of the phenomenon of interest. That is how Gray (2001), also explained how the ‘lived experience’ was based upon knowledge and the literal experience. The author also defined ‘experience’ as “the ground for engagement with and the manifestation of the moments of ‘unification’ where the elements are somehow brought together” (p. 734).

Therefore, in-depth interviews were conducted with eight international students to obtain their thoughts, experiences, and perceptions as the primary data. The in-depth interviews were conducted using the *currere* method. This method provided a strategy to illustrate better the relationships between academic knowledge and their life history in the form of self-understanding and social reconstruction (Pinar, 2004, p. 45). The *currere* method, formulated by William Pinar (1994), consisted of four steps or moments: regressive, progressive, analytical, and synthetical. The in-depth interviews were designed with questions directly related to the four stages of the *currere* methodology. Out of the 737 international students enrolled from 63 different countries, several students were contacted by the international office to seek voluntary participation for this qualitative research. The contacted students had the common characteristic of being highly involved with the international office events, programs, and staff. Ten students were contacted out of the total international student population, and eight responded, accepting

the invitation to participate. A staff member of the international office sent me via electronic mail the students' contact information who had agreed to participate, so I reached out to them. The participating students were asked to meet with me on campus at this HHS, a more convenient venue for both.

In order to have the interview data captured more effectively, I took handwritten notes during the interview with key highlights. Also, I asked each participant for their permission to record the interviews. The interviews' recording facilitated me to focus more on the questions and observe the respondents. Aside from the recording and the handwritten notes, I also used observational research as an auxiliary method to corroborate research findings. The interviews lasted between 30 to 45 minutes, and I chose a private place to create a suitable environment for the interaction with the respondents with no interruption. By highlighting the student's experiences, I provided a narrative to humanize this research study, which through their voices provided unique insights about their experiences. In order to protect the confidentiality of these students, I used pseudonyms. After I had already conducted the interviews, I was able to go back and contact four of the participants who chose their pseudonyms. I picked their pseudonyms for the other four participants according to where they were born and raised with the most common names within their culture.

Data Collection & Analysis

Quantitative

The 272 responses were a representation of 29 countries out of the 63 countries from the total international student population at this HSI. The top five student populations with a significant number of respondents were from Mexico with 63.9% (N=173), Bangladesh 8.5% (N=23), India 5.9% (N=16); Nigeria 3.7% (N=10), and Nepal 1.8% (N=5). A list of the

participant's country is listed in the following table.

Table # 1

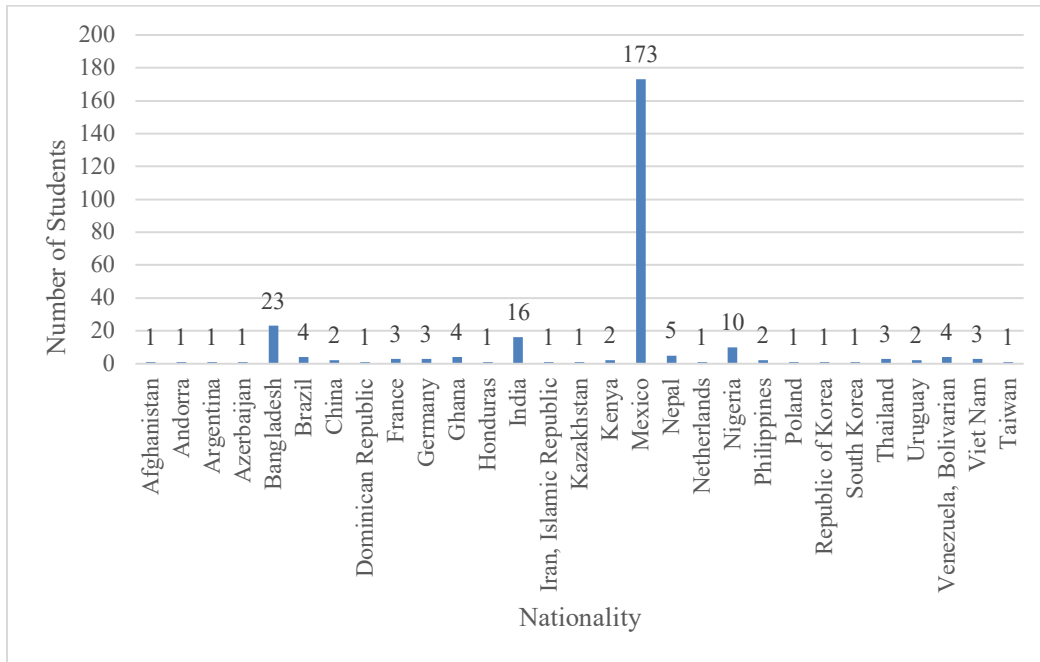
List of Countries

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
Valid	Afghanistan	1	.4	.4	.4
	Andorra	1	.4	.4	.7
	Argentina	1	.4	.4	1.1
	Azerbaijan	1	.4	.4	1.5
	Bangladesh	23	8.5	8.5	9.9
	Brazil	4	1.5	1.5	11.4
	China	2	.7	.7	12.1
	Dominican Republic	1	.4	.4	12.5
	France	3	1.1	1.1	13.6
	Germany	3	1.1	1.1	14.7
	Ghana	4	1.5	1.5	16.2
	Honduras	1	.4	.4	16.5
	India	16	5.9	5.9	22.4
	Iran, Islamic Republic of...	1	.4	.4	22.8
	Kazakhstan	1	.4	.4	23.2
	Kenya	2	.7	.7	23.9
	Mexico	173	63.6	63.6	87.5
	Nepal	5	1.8	1.8	89.3
	Netherlands	1	.4	.4	89.7
	Nigeria	10	3.7	3.7	93.4
	Philippines	2	.7	.7	94.1
	Poland	1	.4	.4	94.5
	Republic of Korea	1	.4	.4	94.9
	South Korea	1	.4	.4	95.2
	Thailand	3	1.1	1.1	96.3
	Uruguay	2	.7	.7	97.1
	Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic of...	4	1.5	1.5	98.5
	Viet Nam	3	1.1	1.1	99.6
	Taiwan	1	.4	.4	100.0
	Total	272	100.0	100.0	

* The Total Sample Population was the population of international students whom the researcher could reach from student enrollment data provided by the International Office at this HSI in the Spring and Summer semesters of 2019.

Figure 2

International Student Demographics



As shown in *table 2* below, 51.8% were male students (N=141), while 47.8% were female (N=130). Only one student identified as “other gender” with no answer in specific accounting for a (.4%) response rate.

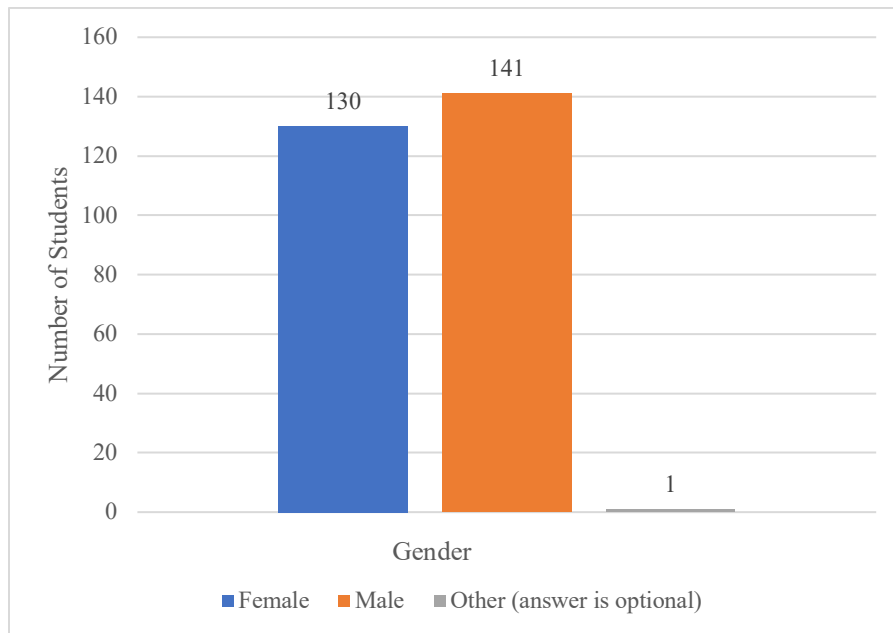
Table #2

Student Gender

	Number	Percent
Female	130	47.8
Male	141	51.8
Other (answer is optional)	1	0.4
Total	272	100.0

Figure 3

International Student Gender Classification



Out of all the student responses, 233 students were undergraduate with the following classifications: Sophomore with 47.1% (N=128), Junior 18.8% (N=51), Senior 12.5% (N=34), and Freshman with a 7.4% (N=20). On the other hand, there were 39 respondents from the graduate student classification with a 9.2% (N= 25) at the doctorate level and a 5.1% (N=14) at the Master's level.

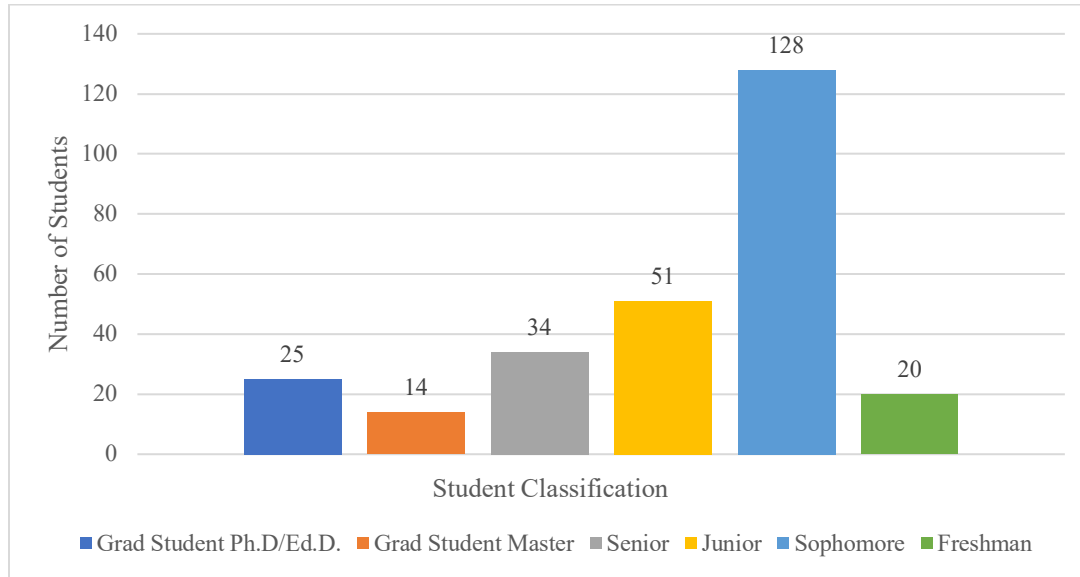
Table #3

International Student Classification

	Number	Percent
Grad Student Ph.D./Ed.D.	25	9.2
Grad Student Master	14	5.1
Senior	34	12.5
Junior	51	18.8
Sophomore	128	47.1
Freshman	20	7.4
Total	272	100

Figure 4

International Student Classification



In total, 85.7% (N=233) of the responses were from undergraduate and 14.3% (N=39) from graduate students. The age range from the student participants was from 18 to 54 years old. The majority of the respondents ranged in the ages between 20 to 29 years old with 69%

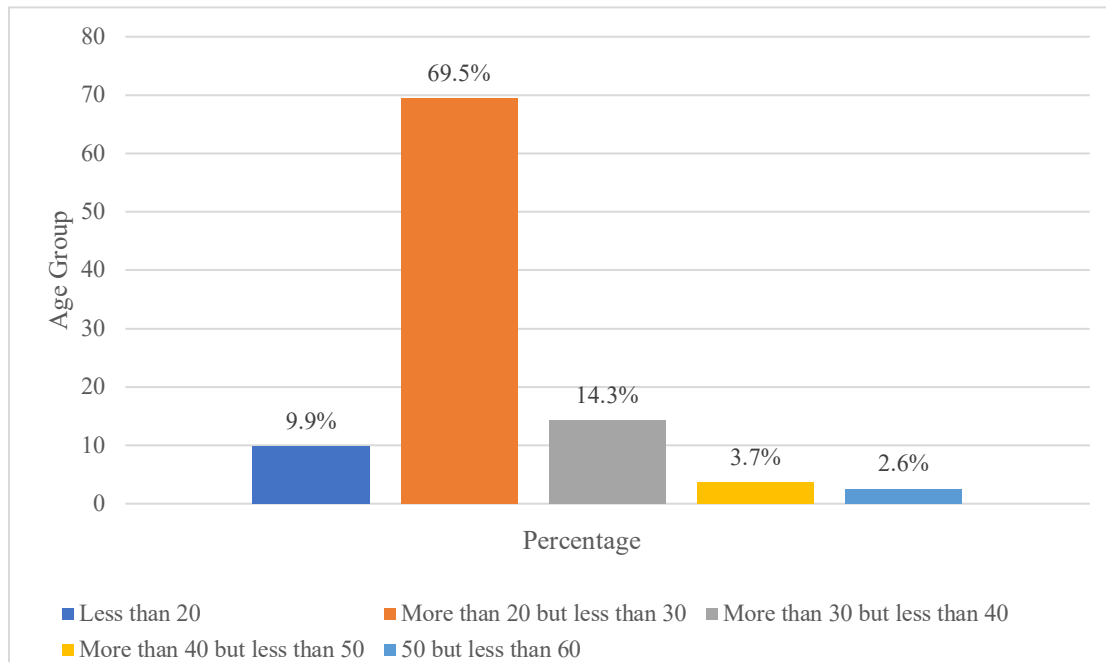
Table #4

Age of Student Respondents

Age Group	Percent
Less than 20	9.9
More than 20 but less than 30	69.5
More than 30 but less than 40	14.3
More than 40 but less than 50	3.7
50 but less than 60	2.6
Total	100.0

Figure 5

International Student Age Groups



Furthermore, the survey included how many languages the students spoke: 1,2,3,4, or more than 5. Moreover, this question indicated to students to write them in the order of fluency. The following *table 5* depicts the results of the responses. There 555 responses within 19 languages. Language 1 (primary) shows the top 5 languages spoken by international students with 87% (N=237) is Spanish as a primary language with 66% (N=156). Language 2 (secondary) shows the top five languages with 89% (N=243) is English as their most second language spoken. Language 3 shows the top five languages with a 21% (N=58) is French as their third most language spoken. Lastly, Language 4, shows the top five languages with a 6 % (N=17) is German as their fifth most language spoken.

Table #5*Languages Spoken by International Students*

Language 1		Language 2		Language 3		Language 4	
Spanish	156	English	200	French	23	German	3
English	57	Spanish	26	Hindi	17	Bengali	2
Bengali	16	Hindi	8	Spanish	7	Japanese	2
Nepali	4	Bengali	5	English	7	Bhojpuri	2
French	4	Yoruba	4	Italian	4	Dutch	1
						Guarati	1
						Italian	1
						Malayalam	1
						Mandarin	1
						Portuguese	1
						Tamil	1
						Turkish	1
						Urdu	1
Total	237		243		58		17

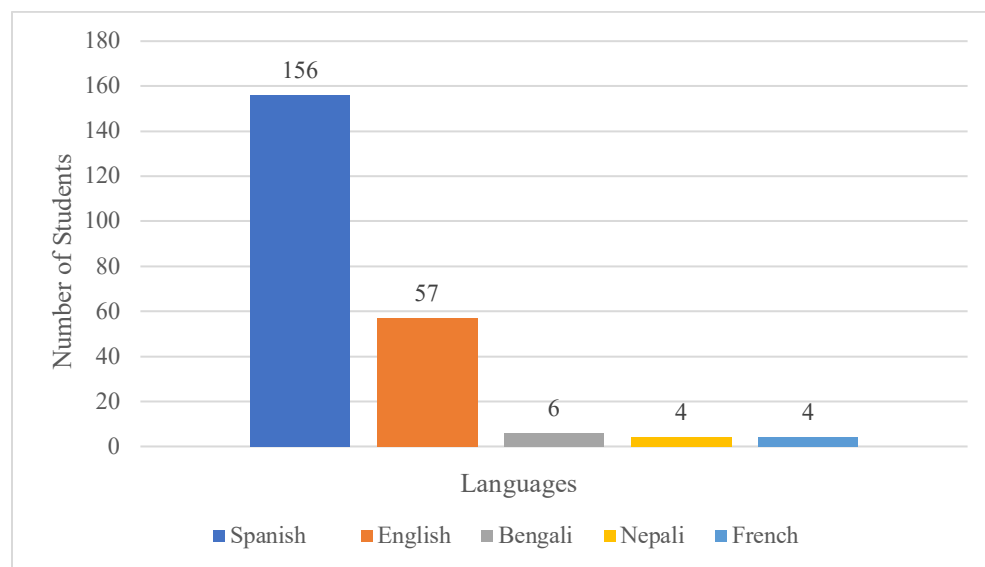
Figure 6*First Student Language*

Figure 7

Second Student Language

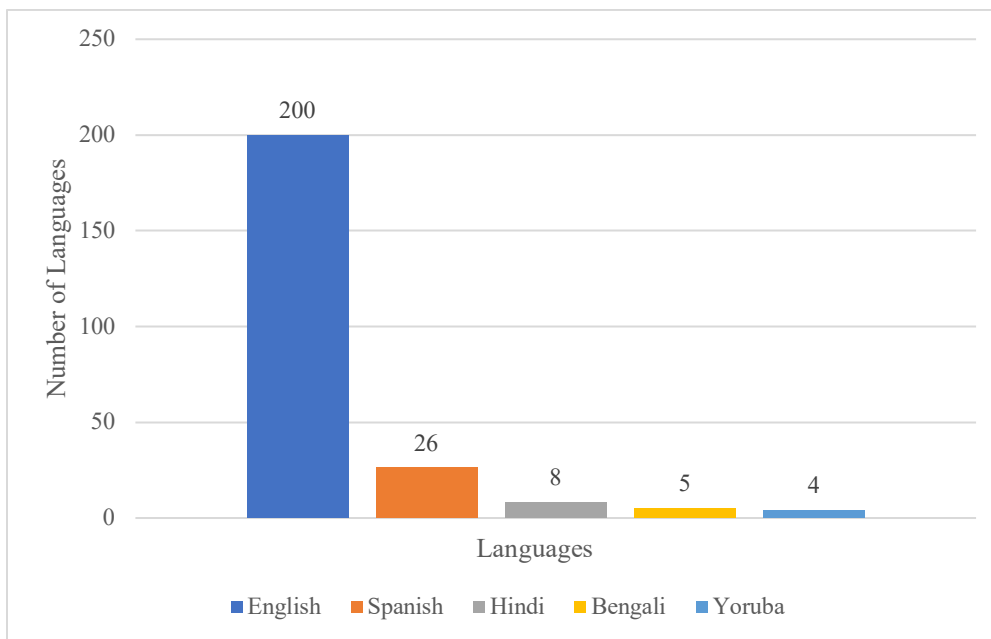


Figure 8

Third Student Language

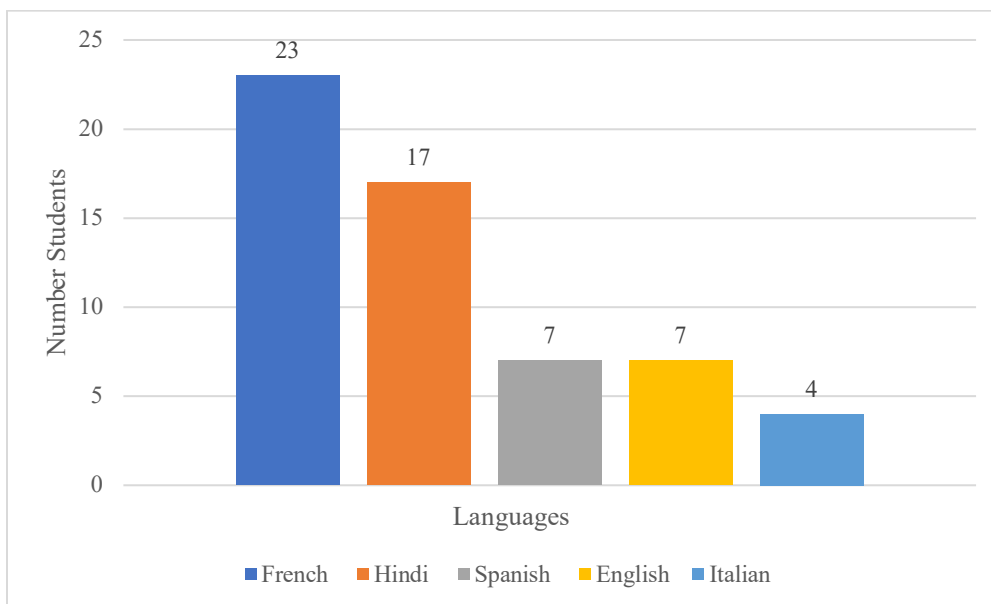
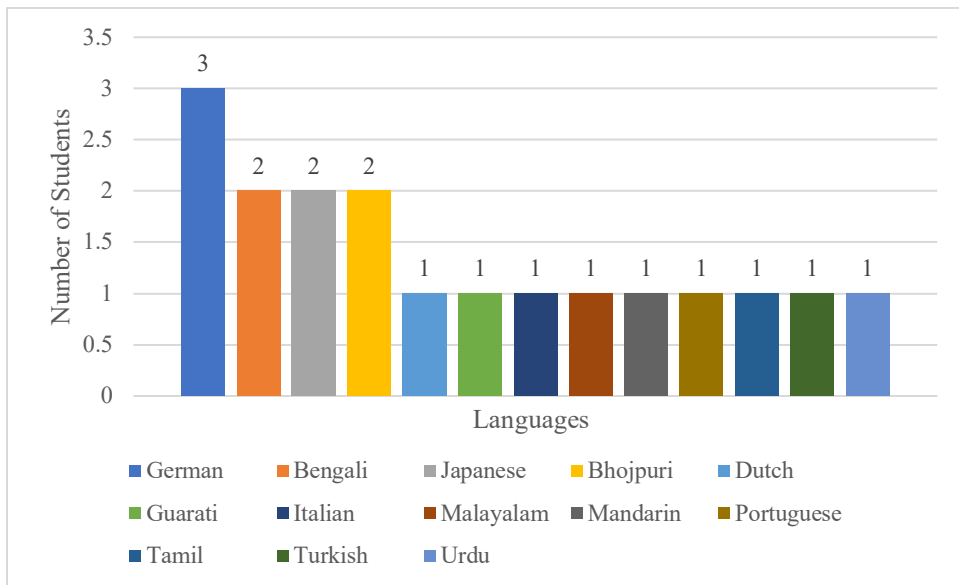


Figure 9

Fourth Student Language



All responses indicated a mean of 2.35 with a standard deviation of .654 ranging from minimum 1 language to 5 spoken, including a median of 2.0. The *table 6* also shows that 94% of the student population is bilingual, with the most languages spoken as English and Spanish.

Out of the 272 respondents, 228 students reported their GPA as this was an optional answer. The mean GPA for female and male students was 3.5 out of a 4.0 scale. Sixty-eight percent (N=186) of the students responded Edinburg was their main campus where they took most of their classes versus a 25% (N=67) at Brownsville, and a 7% (N=18) as taking classes at both with combined classes.

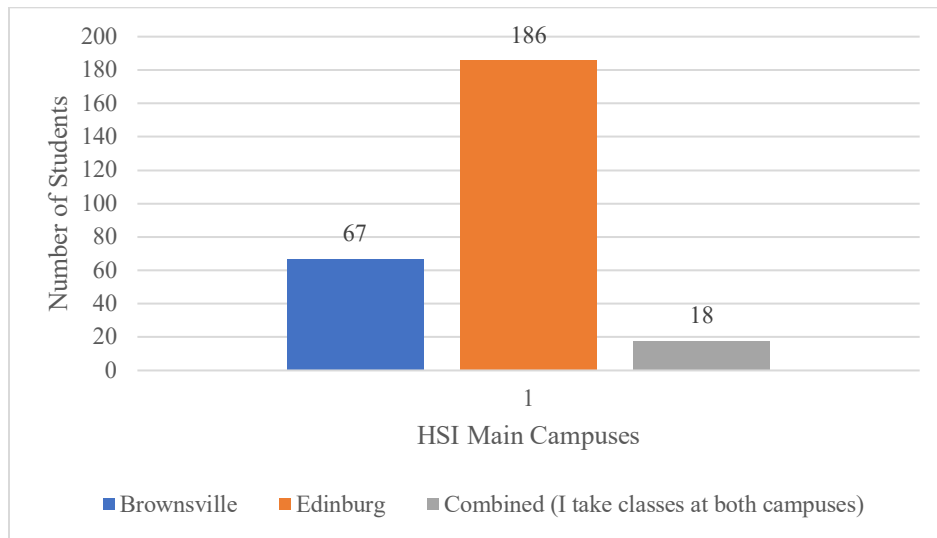
Table #6

International Student Main Campus

	Campus	Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Brownsville	67	24.7
	Edinburg	186	68.6
	Combined (I take classes at both campuses)	18	6.6
	Total	271	100.0
Total		272	

Figure 10

International Student Main Campus



This is a significant percentage to prove how important it is for campus administrators to educate the campus community and provide the necessary services they may need to have a smoother acculturation process.

Out of the 29 countries represented in the student survey, there was a total representation of 4 continents: 10% with (N=3) countries from Africa, 24% with (N=7) countries from America, 48% with (N=14) countries from Asia, and a 17% with a (N=5) countries from Europe.

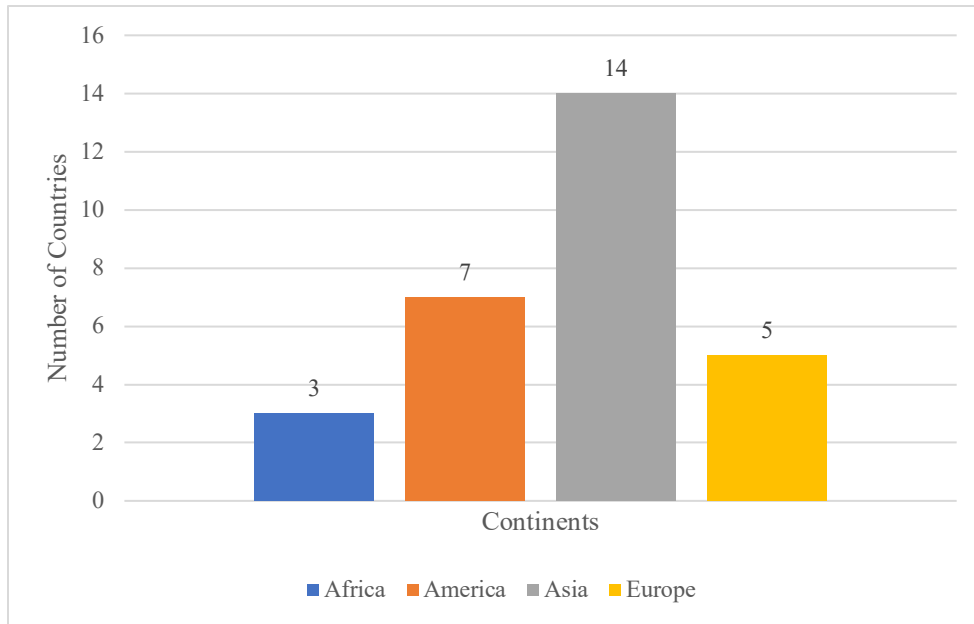
Table #7

Continent Representation by Student Sample

Continent	Count of Countries	Percentage
Africa	3	10
America	7	24
Asia	14	48
Europe	5	17
Total	29	100

Figure 11

Number of Countries by Continent



Qualitative

The following *table 8* provides information of the student demographics of the qualitative in-depth interviews.

Table #8

Student Demographics for Qualitative In-Depth Interviews by Continent

Student (pseudonym)	Country	Continent
Elham	Iran	Asia
Dip	India	Asia
Xiomara	Honduras	Central America
Juan Miguel	Mexico	North America
Aaro	Nigeria	Africa
John	Ghana	Africa
Rebeca	Netherlands	Europe
Jonas	Germany	Europe

Figure 12

Map of Asia

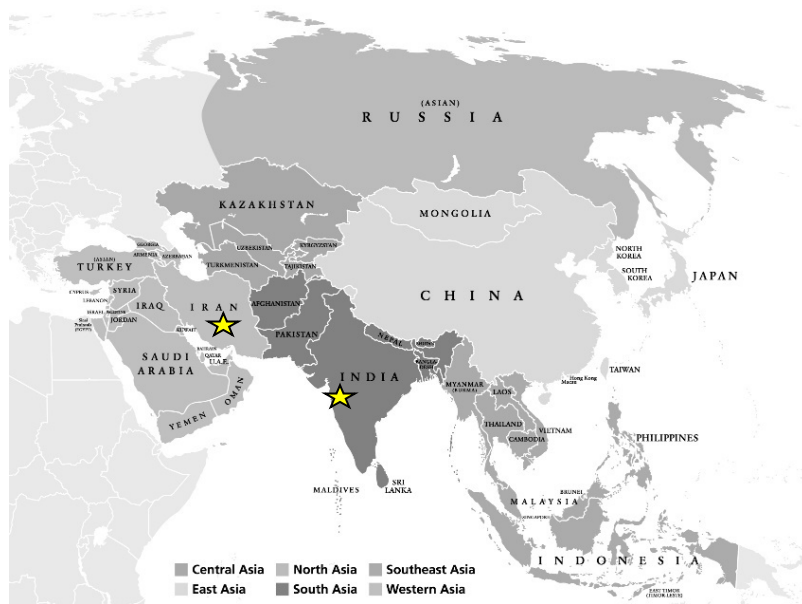


Figure 13

Map of America



Figure 14

Map of Africa



Figure 15

Map of Europe



Narrative 1. Elham

I was very touched by Elham's story during our interview. Elham seemed somewhat shy at the beginning of our interview. However, once she started sharing her educational experiences, she proved to be more confident and focused on her present and upcoming academic goals. Elham was born and raised in Iran, and she was the oldest sibling of three. She mentioned how thankful she was to her parents for supporting her educational goals to pursue a Ph.D. in the United States. Her field of study is Physics with a concentration in condensed-matter. When going back to her past academic experiences that were more meaningful, she was inspired to study Physics while pursuing her middle studies in Iran. She described her science and math teachers to be very supportive and helpful. She also remembered how her professors would offer extra tutoring in the morning before school started; she was thrilled by her educators' dedication and commitment. After this experience, she was hooked on Science. Years later, she graduated with her Master's degree in Physics in Iran. However, she had already had in mind coming to the United States to pursue her doctoral program even before she graduated. She considers the U.S. as a top-leading country in Physics and condensed-matter research. Eventually, she was supported by her parents and came to the U.S. to continue her studies in Physics. Her first semesters were not that easy as she would struggle with missing her family; she felt very far away from them while studying abroad. Elham found herself in another country with a different language and a culture very different from hers. Despite this, she continued to overcome these challenges and persisted with her educational goals. She always had in mind how hard her parents had worked for this to accomplish her educational goals. Even though this study abroad experience has not been easy for her, she hopes to inspire other women to study Science and show them that it can be done. She is aware that not many females pursue their careers in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) field. She expressed how she wants to encourage other women to study in STEM and contribute to this outstanding field. At the end of our interview, she was able to connect all the *currere* steps. She feels very satisfied with her learning experience at this HSI, and she acknowledged how much she has been learning in the research area of her field. Elham was able to see the big picture of her educational experience and is expectant of what is coming. After completing her Ph.D. in the U.S., she sees herself completing a post-doctoral program.

Narrative 2. Dip

I remember very well my meeting with Dip because our interview was so dynamic that the time flew. Dip is pursuing a Ph.D. in Business Administration with a concentration in Marketing. He is already in the last phases of his dissertation and he is a very mature international student. Dip was born and raised in India, where he received a Bachelor of Commerce in Accountancy. In remembering his educational experiences from the past, he remembered exploring books at the library back in India and how he felt strongly attracted by American authors. Phillip Kotler was one of his favorite authors. As he would read this material, he developed a strong interest in studying Marketing. Another critical factor that Dip considered when selecting his study abroad destination, was the quality in education. He was very aware of the great educational opportunities in the United States, as it is recognized worldwide for its great flexibility, quality, and accessibility. Therefore, he began the journey of finding a university that would help him obtain his Master's in Business Administration with a major in Marketing in the U.S. He came to an American university and graduated with his MBA successfully. He vividly remembered how a Marketing professor encouraged him to continue his education and obtain a Ph.D. Ever since then, he was inspired to continue his educational journey. Later, he was admitted to the Ph.D. program at this Higher Education Institution located in South Texas. He has been a student at this university for over five years and expressed his satisfaction with his current educational experience. He attributed this success to his determination, perseverance, and discipline he has had throughout this transformational journey. He also gave credit for his success to the services he has been provided at this HSI. He felt that the programs offered at this institution are flexible and meet international and domestic students' needs.

Dip was able to connect his previous and current educational experiences that will lead him to his upcoming professional plans. He sees himself working in academia, teaching and inspiring students about the exciting and influential marketing field.

Narrative 3. Xiomara

I was very impressed with Xiomara's determination about her educational goals. She is an international student from Honduras who came to the United States in middle school. She did not arrive here on her plans; she accompanied her family as her father was pursuing a doctorate in

the states as an international student. Xiomara came from a private school in Honduras, and she considered herself bilingual. However, when she started her education in the U.S., she realized how much support she needed in this area. Even though it was not easy, her dedication to her academic endeavors resulted in her success. When questioning her about past educational experiences, she remembered very well one of her middle school teachers who was from New York state. This teacher specifically chose to come to the Rio Grande Valley to obtain some teaching experience at this unique area. Xiomara felt very supported by this English teacher and her strong support with her studies. She shared how this teacher would offer to meet with her one hour before class started to help her get to the level she needed to succeed. In less than a year, Xiomara felt very confident in English and was very motivated to continue her education. After successfully graduating from high school, she enrolled at this HSI to pursue her Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) at the young age of sixteen. She followed her parents' example, as both ended up obtaining a degree from the U.S. Also, she shared how satisfied she feels with her classes and the level of education she is obtaining at this higher education institution. She feels a strong support from her parents, family, and friends. In addition, she understands how her educational experiences have not happened in a random sequence of events, but rather have been intentional. She acknowledged how hard her parents and she have worked for their education in this country. Xiomara has already exceeded her professor's expectations at an early age and has been presenting at conferences of medical symposiums. She can see the big picture of her educational course, and once she graduates from her BSN, she would like to continue with her master's degree. She sees herself working at the MD Anderson Cancer Center in the near future, doing medical research.

Narrative 4. Juan Miguel

I felt genuinely connected with Juan Miguel's shared educational experiences as I studied and lived in Mexico for quite some years. Juan Miguel has fond memories of his past experiences, especially in elementary school. Juan Miguel was touched by two powerful events with two of his teachers. He vividly remembered his brilliant first-grade teacher using different pedagogical methods to connect the letters, words, sounds, and graphic representations when teaching them how to read. He was captivated by her techniques and teaching strategies. On the contrary, his Physical Education teacher told him repeatedly how bad he was in sports. Juan

Miguel was emotionally affected by his words, and these thoughts remained for many years. He shared the strong influence that educators have in the lives of students. Teachers are there to help with the formation of the student's character based on trust and respect. Despite these challenges, Juan Miguel continued with his education. Later, he graduated with a Bachelor's in Accounting and a Master's in Business Administration in Marketing from universities in his home country. Juan Miguel was greatly influenced by his uncle, who came to the U.S. to study. Also, he was strongly shaped by American culture throughout the media and entertainment. He clearly remembered watching American cartoons, movies, or tv shows that would air on the Mexican cable and were translated to Spanish. *The Nanny*, *the Fresh Prince of Bellaire*, and *Saved by the Bell* were some of his favorite American TV shows. Even though he was not exposed to the language, he was to the culture. Before Juan Miguel decided to look for a doctoral program abroad, he had already participated in an internship program in the U.S. with a very renowned company. After some years, Juan Miguel started looking for a university in the United States to pursue his Doctoral Program in Education. A very close friend recommended this HSI in South Texas, and after a few months, he was on board. Juan Miguel has been a very successful doctoral student at this institution, and he feels very satisfied with this transformational journey. Overall, he can see the big picture of his past, current, and upcoming educational experiences. He sees himself in a post-doctoral program and eventually moving entirely to academia.

Narrative 5. Aaro

The educational experiences shared by Aaro significantly moved me. He is an international student from Nigeria pursuing a Bachelor's in Science Nursing. Aaro shared some of his past educational experiences back in Nigeria, when he was a private student at a Christian school. He remembered his past educational experience by being marked by two significant events. The school he attended was very strict with its curriculum, and they were very academically oriented. He was very proud of this; however, he regrets that he could not be involved in sports as a small child. He recalled getting away and playing tennis or soccer with his friends. However, if his parents found him, he would be punished for this. He never lost interest in sports, however, the punishment for being caught was not worth it. Nevertheless, he remembered his very committed and engaged teachers back in Nigeria. Aaro wanted to go to medical school back in his country, but he was aware that this is a challenging field, and he ended up choosing the field of

biochemistry. Aaro was influenced by his uncle as he was studying at this HSI in South Texas. His uncle kept on motivating him to come and pursue his medical degree here. However, Aaro realized that it was too late for him to start from the beginning. Aaro was very proud of Nigeria's educational system, but he knew that there was better quality in the higher education system in the U.S. Eventually, he decided to come to the U.S., followed his aunt's steps, and decided to pursue his nursing degree. He has been the recipient of some scholarships that helped to finance his studies. However, most of his tuition charges have been covered by his parents. Aaro has had a very successful educational experience at this HSI. He is satisfied with his professors as well as the services and resources that are provided to students. He realized how hard he has worked for his education, and he is proud of this transformational process. Aaro sees himself as completing his BSN program and passing his exams to become a registered nurse in the near future. He looks forward to his uncle and aunt to attend his graduation ceremony as they are his closest family members in the U.S.

Narrative 6. John

I remember John being so quiet and attentive for our interview. John is an international student from Ghana, pursuing a master's degree in Information Technology. John recalls his past educational experiences as challenging yet beneficial in the end. He explained the Ghanaian educational system and how they have a major test before being admitted into High School. This comprehensive exam covers the different subjects that students took in previous years. He remembered taking around ten subjects in a week, two each day, and two hours and a half was allowed for each test. He recalled this week as very stressful and challenging. However, he understood that this system allowed him to be fast and dynamic with the knowledge he had already acquired through his previous education. He felt that even though a difficult experience, he was able to see the advantages later in life. Once students pass this exam, Ghanaian students are accepted to attend High School, where they have to choose a field of study such as Music, Art, Language, and several others. Therefore, the Ghanaian's student curriculum is designed for each field of education. As he reflects on the past and looks at the present, he feels that this educational system has helped him tremendously in getting acquainted with the academic system in the United States. Once John graduated from High School, he started searching for educational options outside his home country. He had already known friends and family that

chose the U.S. as their study abroad destination. They encouraged him to come to the U.S., a country with many opportunities and a high standard of education. John has been a successful student at this HSI, and he acknowledged his experience as being very positive. He understands that his previous experiences have helped him to get where he is now. His final goal is graduating with his master's degree and obtain a job in his field of study. Shortly, he sees himself as having his own business providing services in the field of Information Technology. Also, he has been thinking as well about joining a doctoral program in the coming future.

Narrative 7. Rebeca

Rebeca is a very optimistic and enthusiastic international student from Curaçao. Curaçao is an island located in the Southern Caribbean Sea; however, because of a constitutional change, it became a constituent country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 2010. When Rebecca shared her past educational experiences, she mentioned some of the main differences in the educational system to the U.S. All schools in Curaçao use Dutch as the primary language of instruction. She remembered how she struggled with her last year of high school, and she ended up repeating the year. Rebecca was mainly struggling with her English class; she recalled it as her most challenging class. Despite her struggles, she realized that it was better to retake the year to learn more and adequately dominate the language. She shared that even though this was a very stressful experience, eventually, it helped her decide to pursue her higher education studies in the U.S. Before coming to the U.S., she also had in mind going to the Netherlands and pursue her studies. She had many family members who could have supported her. Afterward, she put this critical decision in prayer; she ended up moving to the U.S. Rebecca also had an aunt living in South Texas for more than twenty years. She shared how her aunt has been a great supporter of her education. Rebecca has been effectively pursuing her Master's in Counseling and Guidance at this HSI. Working on campus and serving students have helped her to see their struggles and needs. Rebecca considers her educational experience at this HSI as successful. She has felt very supported by her professors and the student resources she has been given at this university.

Moreover, she feels very proud of her hard work and feels accomplished. Also, she shared how much she has grown in her last year of her bachelor's program and feels very satisfied. She is a self-motivated student and can see how hard she has worked for the great things coming ahead. As a strong woman of faith, she attributes all her accomplishments to God and feels very

blessed for this. Rebecca has excellent plans after she graduates from graduate school. She wants to obtain her license as a professional counselor and possibly return to academia to pursue her doctoral degree in the near future.

Narrative 8. Jonas

I vividly remember Jonas arriving at our meeting very nervous and not knowing what to expect from our interview. He has an exciting story as he was born and raised in Germany and lived and studied in Sweden. For some reason, Jonas struggled with his studies back in Germany. He does not know if it was the school he attended, the teachers, or he just was a late learner. Jona's parents ended up divorcing, and after this stressful event, Jonas decided to move to Sweden with his father to start a new chapter. Jonas's primary language is German, and he knew a little bit of English back then. However, he had to learn Swedish to succeed in school and his new life in Sweden. Jonas shared how his educational experience in Sweden was more pleasant than in Germany. He even felt more confident with continuing with his educational plans for college. He had been advised by some family and friends to study abroad if he had the opportunity. Jonas was undecided between studying in London or the United States. He learned that the Swedish government was awarding scholarships for students to study abroad. Soon, he decided to pursue a Bachelor's in Business Administration with a concentration in Management in the U.S. He considered the U.S. as a country with a strong educational system and a robust economy worldwide. Jonas first studied at a school in California and two years later, he transferred to this HSI in South Texas. I vividly remember his arrival when he came to the international office directly from the airport and presented himself carrying all his luggage and had no idea where he was going to stay. Know after settled into his life in the Rio Grande Valley and learning how to navigate college, he has only one and a half years to complete his bachelor's degree. Even though he is still not done, he already feels accomplished. Jonas has been doing good in college, and this means a tremendous success for him. He shared that years ago no one would have believed that he could pursue a higher education degree. Gradually, he has been proving to himself and others that his hard work and commitment to his educational goals are becoming a reality. Jonas is excited about the completion of his business program soon. He now sees the big picture; what he called "the big race". His plans after graduation are to join the workforce and apply his management skills learned in his career.

All the students were able to successfully use the *currere* method with the questions provided in the interviews. These eight international student narratives are full of rich educational experiences interconnected with their past, present, and their coming future. Their stories portray the hardships, challenges, and successes which international students face that higher education administrators may not be fully aware of. They all share tales of inspiration and motivation to other students to work hard and accomplish their educational goals no matter the circumstances.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Overall, this study applied a mixed-methods approach to answer a central question regarding international student experiences, satisfaction, and adjustment after entering this HSI. The first section of this chapter reveals the qualitative findings, while the second section reports the quantitative results.

The quantitative results are sorted into three groupings. First, results are reported with univariate data related to an overview of the central research question (e.g., measures of adjustment, perceptions of general campus life, work, facilities, academics, and the like). A second section opens a series of independent group t-tests and reports statistically significant findings from independent variables selected to compare potential differences among the dependent variables selected for analysis. The selection of variables was based on likely predisposition to influence, existing literature, and findings from the first overall section above. Since some variables were not appropriate for t-tests, the remaining interval level variables were submitted to Pearson r correlational analysis, the data from which are organized into the third section of the quantitative results.

Methods of Data Analysis

In terms of the qualitative data analysis of the study the following demographic information were collected from the in-depth interviews.

These included: Country of birth, Major, Age, Gender, and Student Classification.

Table #9

<i>Student Demographics for Qualitative In-Depth Interviews</i>					
Student	Country	Major	Age	Gender	Student Classification
Elham	Iran	Physics	30	Female	Graduate - Master
Dip	India	Marketing	36	Male	Graduate - Ed.D.
Xiomara	Honduras	Nursing	19	Female	Undergraduate
Juan Miguel	Mexico	Curriculum & Instruction	41	Male	Graduate - Ed.D.
Aaro	Nigeria	Nursing	25	Male	Graduate - Master
John	Ghana	Computer Systems	27	Male	Graduate - Master
Rebeca	Netherlands	Counseling	24	Female	Undergraduate
Jonas	Germany	Business Management	28	Male	Undergraduate

The qualitative analysis below was extracted from the face-to-face interviews noted and transcribed. The analysis was performed by coding and breaking down the four stages of the *currere* method with the students from the different continents. Students from the same continent were placed next to each other on a table to try to find patterns. The four stages of the *currere* method were expanded into the main variables to identify the commonalities to obtain the axial coding. For the selective coding, the + (plus) and the – (minus) signs were used to describe either a positive or negative answer or experience towards each stage and its main content. The data analysis used was retrieved from the data analysis in action research by Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker (2013).

Qualitative Results

Biographically, 62.5% of the respondents were male, and 37.5% female. The interviewees' sample was the same number of students per continent: 2 students from Africa, two from Asia, two from America, and two from Europe. Concerning the student classification, 62.5% were graduate students, either pursuing a master's or a doctorate. In comparison, 37.5% of the participants were undergraduate students.

The first step in the *currere* method is the Regressive Step or Moment. In this step, the individual can look back and describe their past experiences. Every student has their own story with their educational experiences that can provide data for an autobiographical reflection using the framework of *currere*. To illustrate this step better, students were asked to use their thoughts from a past and personal educational experience. Therefore, the participants were encouraged to remember a particular educational experience from their past that was most significant. This specific moment was used to create data, which served as the foundational material for self-reflection (Pinar, 2004, p. 55). The author assumed that one's past affects the present educational perceptions and practices. According to Pinar (2004), the regressive step was described as a "discursive practice of truth telling... to oneself".

The set of questions and sub-questions for the regressive step during the interview were as followed:

1. Can you please share a particular educational experience from your past?

Try to remember a story from your past that has had an impact on your present in regard to your education. In this section, try to remember an experience related to school, your education, or experiences with teachers that inspired you or discouraged you. Try to use and remember any other school-related artifacts in relation to an educational experience in the past.

e.g., describe your educational experience from the past

e.g., describe any learning outcomes

e.g., describe any other school-related artifacts to an educational experience in the past that has had an important influence in your life.

In this section, all participants were able to use the regressive step and look back at their past educational experiences. At the same time, 100% of the respondents also identified this past

moment as a positive reflection. Interestingly, out of the 100% of the participants, 50% of the students were motivated by a professor who strongly cared for and guided them during their schooling. This extra time and effort received from their mentors positively impacted the students to continue their education and achieve their educational goals. The following students' quotes illustrate the importance of a role model in education and the positive impact it can have on them:

“In middle school in Iran, I had very good teachers related to the subject of science and mathematics. So basically, my interest in mathematics and science begun since my middle school. I can clearly remember one of my Mathematics teachers from level one to level two; she was very helpful and very supportive. Even sometimes in the morning before school began, she offered extra time for my education: she would ask some of us to come because she wants to teach us more. So, my first inspiration to science began in middle school with my Mathematics teachers”. – Elham.

Another student recalled how a professor from his graduate studies sparked his interest in pursuing his doctoral studies in Marketing: “A few years back and during my master's studies, I was working for a professor, a Marketing professor, who encouraged me to do a Doctoral program in Marketing, and that is what I'm doing currently”. – Dip.

“The good thing was that when I started to read in first grade, the teacher really made us connect with the way we were reading. Instead of us just trying to link the wording with the image, she was using the wording, the image, and the sound. That is one of the best ways that I have been exposed to a new concept because we were taken by the hand to construct the mental image with something that we only knew sounds because we did not know how to read”. – Juan Miguel.

With respect to the negative reflections, 3 out of 8 students were able to identify some negative aspects from their past reflection aside from the positive ones. Interestingly, 2 out of these three students had a negative reflection related to sports in their past educational experience:

“I can say that my past experiences regarding education are pretty good, they were pretty good, especially in elementary. From my elementary school I remembered two things: one good thing and one bad thing that really marked me or had an echo in my life since the very beginning of my education....My teacher and I was only six years old, and I think it was the first or the second time we went out to class in the field, and he said that I was bad for sports....And that idea was stuck with me, until, I can say that after that, I was super afraid of participating in sports... I mean, something that was not bad, but it was a learning experience, and it was important to me. Educators should be very careful to what they say to students”. – Juan Miguel.

Another male international student shared a negative reflection from the past that had a negative impact on his educational experience: “Back in my country, they were very academically oriented. But they were not very sports-oriented, and that is one thing I sort of regret. I did not have that background... I generally liked soccer and basketball. But back then, they would punish us for playing soccer because we were supposed to be studying”. – Aaro.

Most of the students used this step to explain more details of their educational system in their country. Therefore, I went ahead and asked the respondents how similar their educational system in comparison with the U.S. was. Only two students responded that their educational system was similar to the U.S., and the rest expressed many differences.

“In America you go to elementary, middle school, and then if you don’t have to do anything you go straight to high school. But in Ghana, you do have to study and take a major test before being admitted into high school.” – John.

“Anything that is that is not going towards academic careers is not important, and sports were seen as kind of a distraction. – Aaro.

“In Curaçao they have different level of high school and it’s so different here in the US. So, during my high school education, it was hard as they have like different levels.” – Rebecca.

“I was enrolled in public school back in Germany. It is a bit different; you can do different kind of schools; we have two systems.” – Jonas.

“Based on my understanding, I found out the undergraduate and bachelor’s degree in physics in my country is more focused in the subfields and education in the physics major. But here in the United States, the graduate programs are more focused on research. Also, culturally, my country is very different from here. Actually, I found the people to be very different from my country but actually they are very supportive. – Elham.

According to Godwin (2009), U.S. institutions tend to lack experience in the impact of the cultural differences in their academic studies especially with respect to international students’ academic background. He also explained how the U.S. higher education system teaches and promotes students at an early age to ask questions and participate in the classroom; however, 80% of the international student respondents came predominantly from lecture-based academic traditions, where the professors have minimal interaction with the students and the instructors are a figure of respect and authority. Therefore, U.S. higher education institutions must learn more about these expectations and challenges that international students face semester after semester and how faculty can be more sensitive to the students’ academic,

personal, and cultural needs.

The second step of the *currere* method is the Progressive or Moment. This step provides an opportunity to postulate and imagine. In this step, the individual is encouraged to postulate and image possible experiences in the future. The progressive moment offers an opportunity to think about the future. Pinar (1975, p.1) described this method as “the self-conscious conceptualization of the temporal, and from another perspective, it is the viewing of what is conceptualized through time”.

The set of questions and sub-questions used for the progressive step in the interview were as followed:

2. Where do you see yourself in the near future based on your current educational experience and background?

e.g., imagine yourself in the near future based on your current educational experience and background.

e.g., where do you see yourself working for?

e.g., where is this educational experience leading you to?

e.g., how has your college experience prepared you for your professional career?

e.g., where or what would it be your ideal job? In your country? *In the United States? *In another country other than U.S. and yours? *with an authorized employment visa.

For the progressive step, 100% of the student respondents could postulate and imagine moments into their future. Besides, they saw themselves working in the future in their respective careers. Some interesting reflections about their ideal job or their next step after graduation were as followed:

"Having my own business". – John.

"I do imagine myself working here in the US, in the Rio Grande Valley actually". – Aaro.

"I plan to teach in a University after I complete my program in Marketing and probably will try to utilize all the experiences that I had, both my academic and professional work experiences". – Dip.

"For at least four or five years, I will be a Ph.D. student. And after that my plan is to continue research as a post-doctoral student in a university. Then after my desired is working in the environment of academia". – Elham.

"I see myself as that nurse that I want to be in the near future and also doing research at my favorite place. MD. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, TX.". "Or the other thing I see, is doing a postdoc or something". – Xiomara.

"After I graduate here, I would like to get my professional license in counseling, my LPC". – Rebeca.

"I do not see myself obtaining a master's after I finish my bachelor's. After this, I would like to go directly into the professional field of Human Resources". – Jonas.

The University Business (2019) discusses the U.S. National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA)'s 2019 report on student employment suggested to higher education institutions to create on-campus employment opportunities. The report indicated that these on-campus employment opportunities create hiring systems that reflect students' employment expectations from future professional opportunities. International students are positively impacted by this opportunity. One of the opportunities is the Curricular Practical Training, better known as CPT. This opportunity allows them to engage in an internship

where they can learn and apply their academic and professional skills.

In addition, all international students are offered the benefit of applying for the Optional Practical Training (OPT) while remaining in good F-1 status. This U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services program designation allows international students to temporarily live and work in the United States after graduation. Students can apply for this program 90 days before their graduation date or 60 days after. This program typically allows international students whose field of study was in the STEM fields up to 36 months of employment. For all non-STEM graduates, the OPT program allows 12 months of work. This program's primary purpose is to enable students to practice their knowledge, abilities, and skills in a professional field related to their major. According to the Institute of International Education, in 2018/2019, 223,085 international students participated in the OPT program. The numerical representation of OPT participation against the total number of students in the U.S. accounted for 20% of the entire international student population in the U.S of 1,095,299 for the year 2018/2019. Furthermore, after completing the OPT, international students may have the option of searching for a professional sponsorship opportunity on a different visa classification, returning to their country, or pursuing a higher educational level of studies under the F-1 visa program and remaining in the U.S. These opportunities provide the international students to postulate and imagine meeting and exceeding their academic and professional goals.

Another significant response from the progressive step was that 100% of the students interviewed saw themselves working in the United States after completing their educational program. Some of them mentioned other options as to working in other countries or their own. However, their first response was to work in the United States right after graduation.

The OPT program is a major motivation for students to pursue a degree in the United States. Therefore, most of the international students who graduate and are eligible for this opportunity, decide to stay and put into practice the skills and talents learned during their post-secondary studies in the U.S. Some interesting reflections concerning their professional plans include:

“So, I do have plans as far as OPT, working, going for a graduate program because that is not negotiable as I said before. – Aaro.

Some other students also talked about the possibility of working in another country or their own country, but this choice was after responding to stay in the U.S. first and try to find a job.

“Basically, I am certain that I can find a job in the Human Resources field in any country. So, if I cannot stay here, I am not too sad. I can go anywhere”. – Jonas.

“In the future, I see myself here in the U.S. Also, I want to go back to Curaçao don’t get me wrong. It is just that Curaçao is small island so many people are already working in that area”. – Rebeca.

“Regarding the job, I mean as a professor I will try to get a job in the U.S., and I would keep an eye on job positions which are outside the US”. – Dip.

“Mainly the United States, I mean I would love to go back to my country also”. – Juan Miguel.

Another predominant factor found in this step is that 80% of the students saw themselves in the near future pursuing a higher academic level.

“Also, I would like to get my Doctoral degree”. – Rebeca.

“Doctoral program, that is, I have been thinking about it. Doctoral is in the back of my mind. So in the near future probably.” – John.

Furthermore, 100% of the students felt successful and accomplished in their academic studies, which are significant factors to postulate and imagine their possible experiences in the near future. Some of the students’ responses about how they felt with student success to their academic experience are as followed:

"With the current educational experience, I am satisfied, because here I need to be more experienced in research." – Elham.

“In summary, I believe that these educational experiences will lead to being an Assistant Professor in Marketing, primarily in a U.S. Higher Education Institution”. – Dip.

“I have been very successful because my parents believed in me and made the effort for me to come”. – Xiomara.

The third step of the *currere* method, better known as Analytical Step or Moment, allows the individual to formulate a connection. In this step, the individuals are encouraged to describe their current educational experiences from their past and present to formulate the interrelationship of both.

The set of questions and sub-questions used in the analytical step with the interviewees were as followed:

3. Why did you decide to pursue an academic degree in the United States?
e.g., provide evidence of your main decision to pursue your studies abroad.
4. What motivated you to come to the United States and study in a country other than yours? e.g., describe specific reasons that motivated you to study abroad.

e.g., describe specific education and professional goals.

5. What is the connection or interrelation of your current educational experience to your past ones? e.g., describe why you are here.

e.g., describe what circumstances brought you here.

All the participants were able to formulate a connection with their current educational experiences to their past and articulate a connection. One of the first questions that I asked the students was to share their main motivation for coming to the United States and pursuing their education. Some of the students' responses to this question were as followed:

"Number one reason is that in a way the higher education system is very flexible, and also the system here is affordable because the U.S. universities give out different kinds of scholarships in the form of assistantships and also part-time jobs on campus available." – Dip.

"So, I moved here because my dad came to the U.S. to pursue his Ph.D. So already having that notion of my parents setting an example to like to go out of Honduras and pursuing a degree in the U.S. Both of my parents studied here too." – Xiomara.

"My uncle was selected to work outside of Mexico for UNAM in one of these modules they have around the world. I was inspired by his experiences from abroad. So, I wanted to follow that path". – Juan Gabriel.

"Motivation, I guess can say, seeing how hard my father works to provide like for us and pushed us to move forward and for us to be better". – Rebeca.

"I was able to get a scholarship from the Sweden government, and I am here". – Jonas.

“I am very thankful to my mother and father. Because they supported me to come to a country that is very far from them, basically on the other side of the world”. – Elham.

The research revealed that 62.5% of the subjects had a strong indicator of motivation or influence from the motivation of a family member who was already in the U.S. either studying or working. Also, the fact that they had their family support and the necessary funding to pursue their studies in the U.S. meant that they were able to pursue and achieve their goals. Similarly, the Institute of International Education in their Open Doors report 2018/2019 reported that 58.6% student funding comes from personal and family support.

Moreover, 37.5 % of the respondents were motivated to come to the U.S. to pursue their academic goals since the American higher education reputation is highly recognized worldwide.

"I chose to come to the U.S. to school because I believe that it is the biggest economy, so Business Management you really have something, you can say you didn't drop to some insignificant country. It's really, if you make it here, you can make it anywhere. "– Jonas.

"The major reason why I picked United States, because it is a leading country in the Physics field and research in condensed-matter." – Elham.

Similarly, Altbach (2004), argued that students choose the United States as their leading destination to pursue their higher education studies, as is generally seen as the world's best academic system. Also, he explained how some students feel that earning a degree from a foreign university adds more prestige to the academic profile (p. 21).

The last step of the *currere* method, better known as the Synthetical Step, is where the individual can extract its present existential meaning and the gained experiences from all the previous steps. This last step allows the student to have a deeper and richer understanding of

the relations between their past academic experiences, future possible experiences, their present, and the interrelationships of all moments. The set of questions and sub-questions used for the analytical step with the interviews were as followed:

6. What is the meaning of your present educational setting?

e.g., describe how student success is defined in your personal experience. e.g., describe how satisfied are you with your current educational experience.

7. How do you integrate with the three other forms into a comprehensive whole that includes the physical self.

e.g. – describe the whole picture making an interrelationship with your past, present, and future educational experiences, or moments?

e.g. – Describe yourself as a whole in relation to the other forms.

8. Have I made the right decisions of my present from my past and future educational experiences?

e.g. – describe your student satisfaction in relation to academics.

e.g. – describe examples of how your past, and present decisions will take you into the direction you want to go.

The study revealed that 100% of the participants successfully extracted its current existential meaning and the gained experiences from all the previous steps. Moreover, all students identified all the interrelationships as positive. Only 37.5% of the respondents, aside from the positive ones, also had negative interrelationships from the previous steps. However, the students shared that these negative moments were also helpful in the process of becoming who they are now. Overall, all the students were satisfied with their current educational

experience in the United States. Some of the students' responses concerning student satisfaction were as followed:

"Some of the key factors to my student success it has been with some of the services with the university or the organization is adjustable or understandable to accommodate to the needs of the students" – Dip.

"I'm currently working to get that research to publish with my professor. So, it's been really like a good academic experience, and I feel like it's been quite successful giving that I'm only, I just turned 19, and I already have all those things." – Xiomara.

"How satisfied I am with my current educational experience? I am very satisfied, very, very, satisfied. My current program has been transformational in hundred percent. My program has helped me to know myself better, to understand myself better, to analyze myself better, to constructively self-criticize, and to improve myself. " – Juan Miguel.

"So far, I considered this educational experience as successful. Just by seeing how much I have accomplished so far. How I've grown so much from my last semester to this one." – Rebeca.

In addition, all participating students could "see the whole picture" in connection with their past, present, and future experiences. Some students shared the following:

"I can say that I am seeing the full picture of my educational experience. I am satisfied with the picture so far, but I need more". – Elham.

"I now see the whole picture and how is it linked to my parents plans to come to the U.S. and for me and them to obtain a degree from here". – Xiomara.

"I am seeing the whole picture right now. Am I going in the right direction? Yes, I am". – Juan Miguel.

"I can see my future, and I do not have any doubt that I will be able to accomplish it. I am self-motivated, and I see how I work hard for everything that is in front of me". – Rebeca.

"I am seeing a picture of my educational career now. And if it does not work out, you at least get something else out of it". – Jonas.

The last interview question posed to the students to describe examples of how their past and present decisions will take them into the direction they wanted to go.

Some of the students' answers were as followed:

"So, if I am satisfied up to now, but I will be more satisfied and enjoy this journey education when I can become more productive as I am today. I have some knowledge from my country and from this institution in the U.S., but I want to be more productive in my field of study. So, if I reach to that level, I will be more satisfied, and I hope that I can get it at this level when I finish the Ph.D. level in the United States, which is my ultimate educational goal". – Elham.

"Because a couple of experiences that I have had here, I would not have had them back home. A couple of people I met here; I would not have met back home. A couple of character growth, would not have had back home. So really it is really challenging, there are times when I wake up, and it is not the same as back home, you can easily just go out, and you have people you can talk to, speak your language to, and they could understand you; you do not have to remind yourself that you are somewhere different. So, there is that feeling of loneliness every once in a while. But regardless, I still feel that the advantages are more. I feel that the experiences I have had here, personally for me, the growth and the friendships, the opportunities, the opportunities to learn, everything is giving a source of a

better perspective than that feeling of loneliness that is occasional. I think it is different for everybody, but for me, it is one of the best decisions I have ever made”. – Jonas.

These eight students' excerpts presented numerous insights about their identity and experiences as international students. They also provided me with opportunities to get to know them better and learn from their challenges, valuable experiences, and future aspirations.

In conclusion, all the interviews were a complete success since all the students were able to use the *currere* method as they were guided through the four steps while sharing their educational experiences. Furthermore, in all the interviews, I was able to bring respect and show sensitiveness to each of their unique perspectives, challenges, and goals. I also had to be very patient in providing them with plenty of time to reflect and share their valuable experiences. As Marshall & Rossman (2011) stated, “the most important aspects of the interview approach are conveying the attitude that the participants' views are valuable and useful” (p.145). Additionally, as I would meet each student, I would make sure I did not stereotype them based on their culture and background. Instead, I was opened to hear an extraordinary story from international students who had the courage to share their inspirational and transformational stories. Each students' interview allowed me to be more open to cultural diversity and value it more.

This qualitative data brings an opportunity to Higher Education Institutions' administrators to value and refocus attention to the services they provide based on international students' unique experiences. In addition, this qualitative study provides valuable information and an opportunity to learn and adjust our thoughts and behaviors towards other cultures. International student experiences should be an essential topic when

shaping the future of higher education.

The following tables below show the coding and sub-codings used in the qualitative research analysis by each step of the *currere* method.

Table #10

Summary for Themes, Sub-Themes, and Categories in Interview Results

Themes, Sub-Themes	Africa		Asia		America		Europe	
Question 1 - Regressive Step Nodes	Ghana	Nigeria	India	Iran	Honduras	Mexico	Curaçao	Sweden
Was the person able to utilize the regressive step and look back at their past experiences in their educational area?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Positive Educational Experience	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Negative Educational Experience	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	YES
Educational System similar to U.S. previous to college	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO

Table # 11

Summary for Themes, Sub-Themes, and Categories in Interview Results

Themes, Sub-Themes	Africa			Asia	America			Europe
Question 2 - Progressive Step Nodes	Ghana	Nigeria	India	Iran	Honduras	Mexico	Curacao	Sweden
Was the person able to utilize the progressive step postulate and imagine possible experiences in the future.	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Do they see working in the near future?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
What would be your ideal job?	"Having my own business"	"Working here in the US, in the Rio Grande Valley actually"	"I plan to teach in a University after I complete my program in Marketing"	"For at least four or five years, I will be a PhD student. And after that my plan is to continue research as a post-doctoral student in a university. Then after my desired working in t academia"	"YES - I see myself as that nurse and doing research at my favorite place. MD. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, TX."	"Or the other thing I see is doing a postdoc or something"	"After I graduate here, from UTRGV, I will like to get my license professional counselor, my LPC."	"After this, I would like to go directly into the professional field of HR"
Do they see in the near future studying a higher academic level?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO
Do they see themselves successful and accomplished?	YES	YES - Yes, I would say I am quite satisfied with my educational experience"	YES - In Summary, I believe that these educational experiences will lead to be an Assistant Professor in Marketing primarily in a U.S. Higher Education Institution.	YES - "With the current educational experience, I am satisfied, because here I need to be more experienced in research."	YES - "I have been very successful because my parents believed in me and made the effort for me to come."	YES	YES - "So far, I considered this educational experience as successful."	"I have already been here in the U.S. pursuing my bachelor's degree and for me that is success because nobody ever believe that I could make it anywhere or at all."
Do they see themselves working in the U.S.?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Do they see themselves working back to their home country?	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES
Do they see themselves working in another country other than US and their country?	NO	N/A	YES - "Regarding the job, I mean as a professor I'll try to get a job in the US and also I would keep an eye on job positions which are outside the US."	N/A	N/A	YES	YES - "In the future, I see myself here in the U.S. Also, I want to go back to Curacao don't get me wrong."	YES
Has your college experience prepare you for your professional career?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

Table #12

Summary for Themes, Sub-Themes, and Categories in Interview Results

Themes, Sub-Themes
**Question 3 - Analytical Step
Nodes**

Was the person able to utilize the analytical and formulate a connection with his/her current educational experiences from the past and the present to formulate interrelationships?

Why were you motivated of studying in the U.S.

	Africa		Asia		America		Europe	
	Ghana	Nigeria	India	Iran	Honduras	Mexico	Curacao	Sweden
"I was influenced by other family members that had been here in the U.S. before and told me about the opportunities."	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
"Generally speaking, I would say that coming into the US was actually honest one of the best decisions I made."								
"Number one reason is that in a way the higher education system is very flexible and also the system here is affordable because the US universities give out different kinds of scholarships in the form of assistantships and also part time jobs on campus available."								
"I am very thankful of my mother and father. Because they supported me to come to a country that is very far from them, basically in the other side of the world."								
"So I moved here because my dad came to the U.S. to pursue his Ph.D. So already having that notion of my parents setting an example to like go out of Honduras and pursuing a degree in the U.S. Both of them, studied here too."								
"my uncle was selected to work outside of Mexico for UNAM in one of these modules they have around the world. He came and he spoke about that, and he spoke two languages and all that. I was inspired by first the stories abroad or out of the city and then the stories abroad."								
"Motivation, I guess can say, seeing how hard my father works to provide like for us, and pushed us to move forward and for us to be better."								
"I was able to get a scholarship from the Sweden government and I am here!"								

Why did you choose studying a career in the U.S.?

"More infrastructure in the U.S Higher Ed System" "More opportunities with many universities in the nation"	"And then my uncle, who was also schooling here at this university in south Texas, motivated me to come here. "	"Cutting edge research, lots of opportunities, accessibility, flexibility, and the language"	"The major reason why I picked United States, because it is a leading country in physics field and also in research in condensed-matter."	"So I moved here because my dad came to the U.S. to pursue his Ph.D."	"One colleague who was a former student of UTB, talked to me about UTB back in the day. And they had the program I was actually looking for, which was higher education teaching. So that's how I got to the border."	"My dad also encouraged me also to come here, because it was better for me and he offered helping me with the financials" "Also, I had an aunt who has been living here in the Valley for more than twenty years, who highly encourage me to come here."	"I chose to come to the U.S. to school because I believe that it is the biggest economy, so Business Management you really have something, you can say you didn't drop to some insignificant country. It's really, if you make it here, you can make it anywhere. "
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Table # 13
Summary for Themes, Sub-Themes, and Categories in Interview Results

Themes, Sub-Themes	Africa		Asia		America		Europe	
Question 4 – Synthetical Step Nodes	Ghana	Nigeria	India	Iran	Honduras	Mexico	Curacao	Sweden
Were the interrelationships positive?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Were the interrelationships negative?	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES
Was the student satisfied with his/her educational experience in the U.S.?	YES	YES	YES - "Some of the key factors to my student success it has been with some of the services with the university or the organization is adjustable or understandable to accommodate to the needs of the students".	YES - "With the current educational experience, I am satisfied, because here I need to be more experienced in research."	YES - "I'm currently working to get that research publish with my professor. So it's been really like a good academic experience and I feel like it's been quiet successful giving that I'm only, I just turned 19 and I already have all those things."	YES - "How satisfied I am with my current educational experience? I am very satisfied, very, very, satisfied."	YES - "So far, I considered this educational experience as successful. Just by seeing how much I have accomplished so far. How I've grown so much from my last semester to this one."	YES - "On the other hand, I am seeing the whole picture. And I am very happy and it is exciting. Its little bit like, what's that show called? The big race? But is really slow, you are not rushing to get somewhere. You really have time and can enjoy it too."
Was the student able to see the whole picture?	YES - Being in the United States from past to present, I do have gained an enormous knowledge and learned a lot of things that I didn't know and I have open into different knowledge to learn more and get more knowledge. So I do see my student experience successful.	YES - "Plans for summer is to go and get some volunteer experience, finish my BSN next year, start working with OPT, maybe at a hospital, go to my grad program."	YES - "I am seeing the full picture; but there's still some work to be done, some steps to be finished before finishing the whole picture."	YES - "I can say that I am seeing the full picture of my educational experience, I am satisfied with the picture so far but I need more."	YES - "I know see the whole picture and how is it linked to the U.S. and for me and them to obtain a degree from here."	YES - "I am seeing the whole picture right now. Am I going in the right direction? Yes, I am."	YES - "I can see my future and I don't have any doubt that I will be able to accomplish it. I'm self-motivated and I see how I work hard for everything that is in front of me."	YES - "I am seeing the picture of my educational career now. And if it doesn't work out, you at least get something else out of it."
Will your past, and present decisions will take you into the direction you want to go?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

Methods of Data Analysis

The survey data was analyzed with SPSS. Univariate results applied mean, median, frequencies, along with skewness and kurtosis results presented in the post-hoc findings. The comparisons for interval data were analyzed using t-tests for independent groups and Pearson r. A post-hoc analysis applied Cronbach's alpha to explore internal scale reliability.

Quantitative Results: Univariate Overview of Student Experiences

Question Q10 asked respondents to rate the perception of the university facilities. The results revealed a profile of 23.6% (N=64) perceived the university facilities as Excellent, 48% (N=130) Very Good, 22.1% (N=60) as Good, 5.2% (N=14) as Fair, and 1.1% (N=3) as Poor once international students arrived on campus. Also, question Q11 inquired students how they felt about the university's facilities to meet their expectations. Results indicated Very Likely 28% (N=76), Likely 52% (N=141), Neutral 14.8% (N=40), Unlikely 4.4% (N=12), and Extremely Unlikely .07% (N=2).

In question Q15, 51.9% (N=136) of the international student population agreed that the international student office was Extremely Supportive followed by Supportive 37% (N=97), Neutral 9.5% (N=25), Not Supportive 1.1% (N=3), and Extremely not Supportive .04% (N=1) during their student experience at this HSI.

Q16 asked the students if they attended the cultural events organized by the International Office. The results indicated that 63.7% (N=167) of the students participated in these events, while 36.3% (N=95) did not.

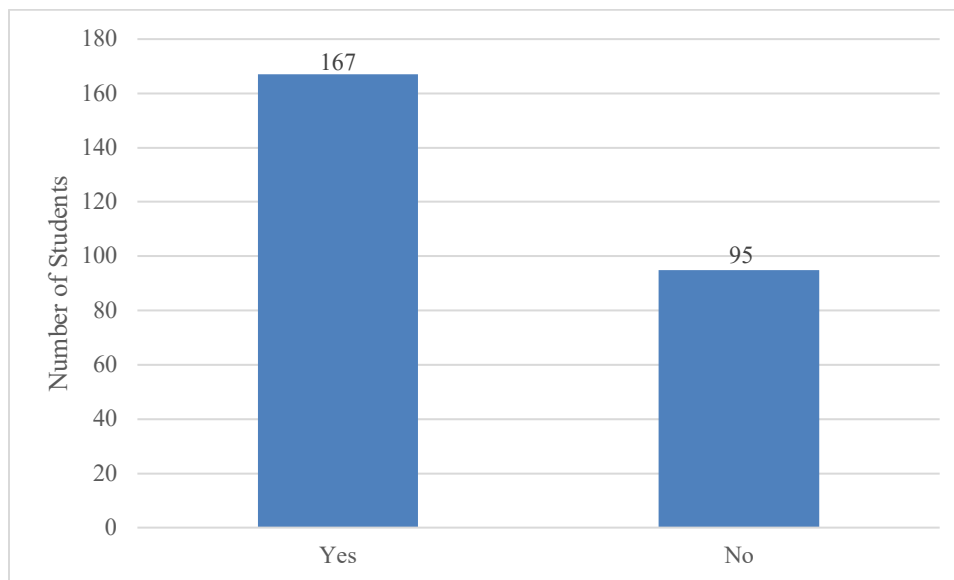
Table #14

International Students Attending Cultural Events On-Campus

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	167	63.7
	No	95	36.3
	Total	262	100.0
Total		272	

Figure 16

International Students Attending Cultural Events On-Campus



Question Q17 asked the respondents to rate the quality of events organized by the international office. The results indicated that the students rated them as Excellent 38.2%(N=100), Very Good 25.2% (N=74), and Good 30.5% (N=80).

Question Q18 asked the respondents to rate the following offices' services: Academic Advising, University Central, Student Rights and Responsibilities, Career Services, and the International Office. The results indicated that Academic Advising was rated by the international students as Excellent 24.4% (N=64), Very Good 27.1% (N=71), Good 31.7% (N=83), Fair 10.3% (N=27), and Poor 6.5% (N=17). University Central was rated as Excellent 22.1% (N=58),

Very Good 30.2% (N=79), Good 38.2% (N=99), Fair 6.5% (N=17), and Poor 3.4% (N=9).

Student Right and Responsibilities was rated as Excellent 21.8% (N=57), Very Good 26% (N=68), Good 40.8% (N=107), Fair 10.3% (N=27), and Poor 1.1% (N=3). Career Services was rated as Excellent 19.5% (N=51), Very Good 29.8% (N=78), Good 38.2% (N=100), Fair 11.1% (N=29), and Poor 1.5% (N=4). International Office was rated as Excellent 45.4% (N=119), Very Good 34.7% (N=91), Good 14.5% (N=38), Fair 5.3% (N=14), and Poor 0% (N=0).

As an aggregate result, when we added the Excellent and Very Good ratings, the results revealed a profile of services ratings of the International Office with 80.1% (N=210), U-Central 52.3% (N=137), Academic Advising 51.5% (N=135), Career Services 49.3% (N=129), and Student Rights and Responsibilities with a 47.8% (N=125).

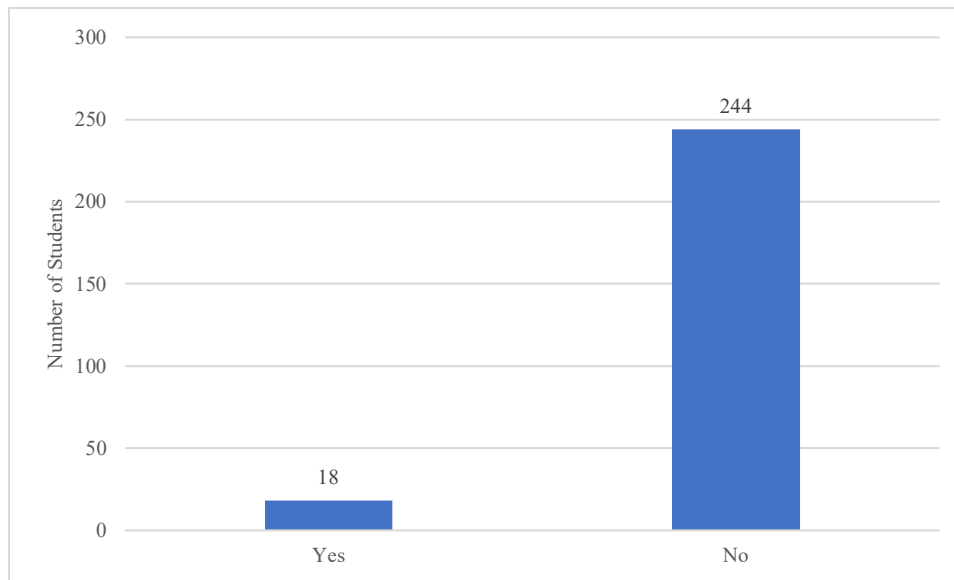
The majority of the international student responses indicated that they live out of campus, accounting for 93.1% (N=244). However, only 6.9% (N=18) indicated that they live in the university campus residence. Although the N-size is low, those who rated the reasons as Likely or Extremely Likely why they prefer to live on campus are as followed: Convenience (94.4%), Close to Campus and Facilities (83.3%), Safety and Security (61.1%), Academic Success (61.1%), and College Experience (55.6%).

Table #15
International Students living on/off-campus student residences

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Yes	18	6.9
No	244	93.1
Total	262	100.0

Figure 17

International Students living on/off-campus student residences

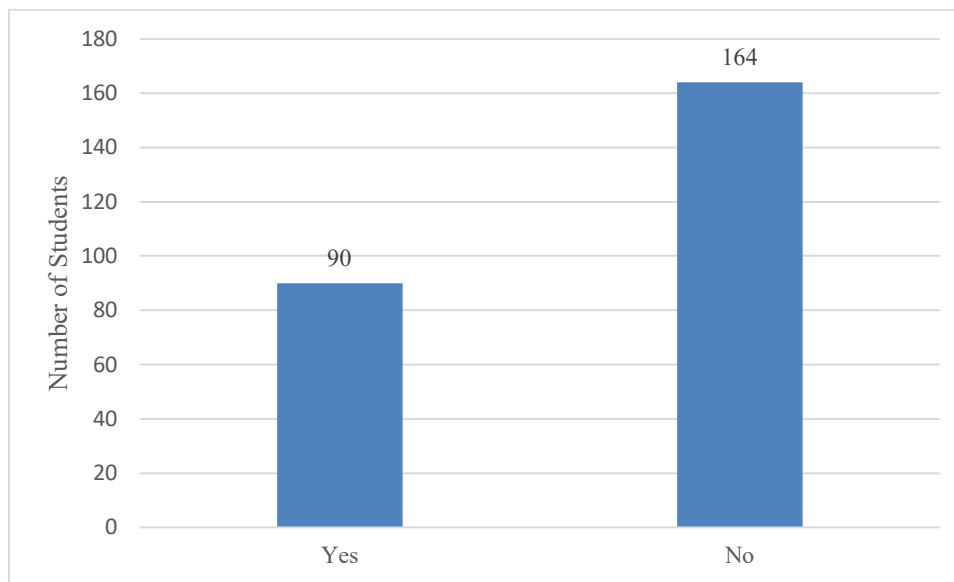


Institutions of Higher Education Institutions allow international students to work on campus on a part-time basis as per U.S. Citizenship Immigration Services regulations. At this HSI, 62.6% (N=164) of the international student respondents indicated that they work on-campus. In comparison, 37.4% (N=98) indicated that they do not. In rating the value of working on campus, the ratings were as followed: Excellent 44.7% (N=117), Very Good 27.5% (N=72), Good 22.1% (N=58), Fair 3.1% (N=8), and Poor 2.7% (N=7).

In the online survey, students indicated that only 35.4% (N= 90) of the student sample population participated in an on-campus student organization. On the other hand, 60.3 % (N=164) showed that they were not members of any of them. For those that did not belong to a student organization, the reasons they reported were as followed: I do not have enough time 32% (N=87), I have not found one that is in my interest 22.4% (N=61), I do not want to commit to one 6.3% (N=17), I do not have the personality 4.4% (N=12).

Table #16*International Student Member(s) of a student organization*

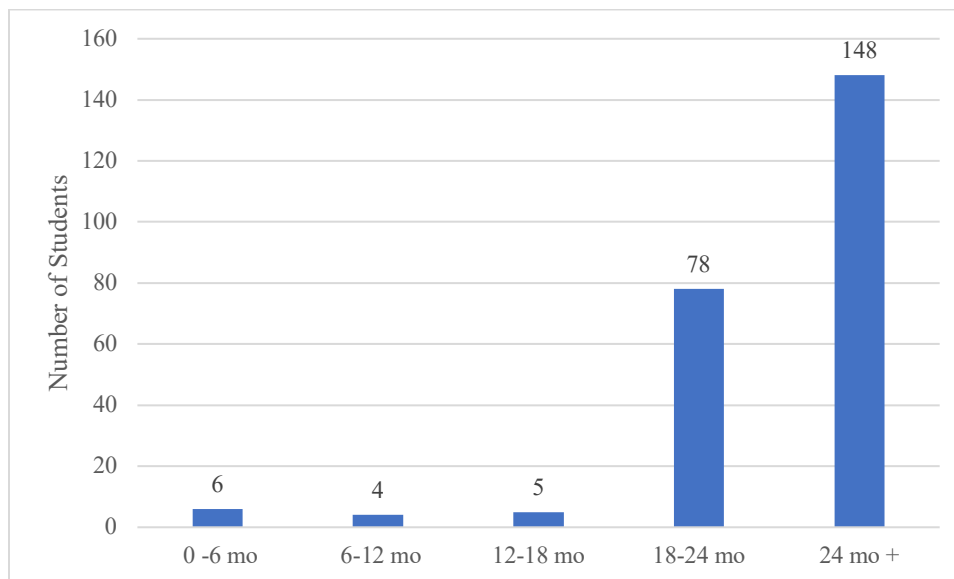
	Frequency	Valid Percent
Yes - If yes, indicate which one(s).	90	35.4
No	164	64.6
Total	254	100.0
Total	272	

Figure 18*International Student Member(s) of a student organization*

Furthermore, 32.4% (N=78) percent of the students at this Hispanic Serving Institution indicated it took them between 18-24 months to adjust to their new social, cultural, and academic environment. An additional 61.4% (N=148) indicated that it took them more than two years. Therefore, adding together both percentages mentioned above, revealed that 93.8% (N=226) of the international student population at this HSI took them at least 18 months to 24 months or longer to culturally adjust to their new social, cultural, and academic environment.

Table #17*Time for International Students to Culturally Adjust*

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Less than 6 months	6	2.5
From 6-12 months	4	1.7
From 12-18 months	5	2.1
From 18-24 months	78	32.4
more than 24 months	148	61.4
Total	241	100.0
Total	272	

Figure 19*Time for International Students to Culturally Adjust*

Several questions asked respondents for perceptions of not only their home culture but perceptions of the campus culture. 74.3% (N=179) of international students disclosed themselves coming from a collectivistic cultural background. In contrast, 25.7% (N=62) came from an individualistic culture. Furthermore, 58.9% (N=142) international students defined the culture of the Rio Grande Valley as being Collectivistic. In contrast, 41.1%(N=99) considered this culture as being Individualistic. In addition, 32.8% (N=79) of international

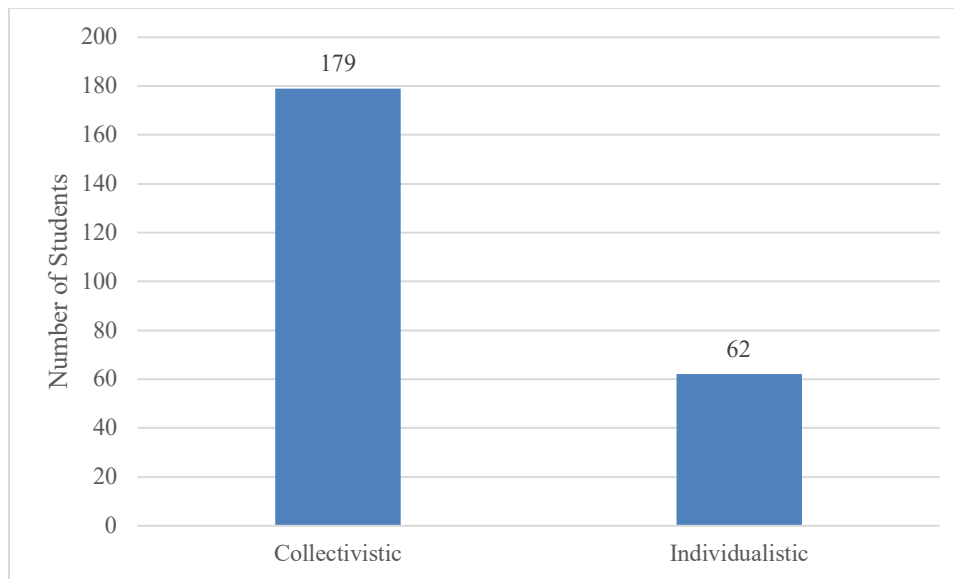
students perceived a difference in the cultural environment between the Brownsville and Edinburg campus. At the same time, 16.6% (N=40) felt no difference. Moreover, 50.6% (N=122) of the international students answered these questions as not applicable.

Table #18
International Student Cultural Background

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Collectivistic (is a society that emphasizes on the needs and the goals of the group)	179	74.3
Individualistic (is a society or a culture that emphasizes on the individual needs versus the group)	62	25.7
Total	272	100.0

Figure 20

International Student Cultural Background



The Hofstede's (1997) Masculine versus Feminine cultural dimension revealed a 78% (N=188) of students who defined themselves as Feminine by being humble, kind, and concerned with the quality of life. In contrast, 22% (N=53) of international students considered themselves Masculine by being more clear, assertive, tough, and focused on material success.

Furthermore, students were asked how tolerant they felt in a social environment of uncertainty and ambiguity. The responses were as followed: Extremely Intolerant 21.6% (N=52), Very Intolerant 5.8% (N=14), Somewhat Tolerant 38.6% (N=93), Tolerant 33.2% (N=80), and Extremely Tolerant .08% (N=2). Likewise, students were asked how culturally competent they considered themselves. The responses were as followed: Extremely Competent 30.3% (N=73), Very Competent 36.9% (N=89), Competent 30.7% (N=74), and Somewhat Competent 2.1% (N=5).

When the international students indicated how difficult it was for them to adjust to their new academic environment (testing, teaching methods, homework, and class environment) at this HSI, ratings were: Very Difficult 3.5% (N=8), Difficult 22 % (N=50), Neutral 34.8% (N=79), Easy 23.3% (N=53), and Very Easy 16.3% (N=37).

International students indicated what they had acquired the most in their experience at this HSI with the following factors: Learning more about the U.S. Culture, Learning a New Language (English), Learning a New Language (Spanish), Accumulation of goods or material items, and Learning more about the Hispanic culture. As an aggregate result, when we added the Extremely Likely and Likely ratings, the results revealed a profile of Learning more about the U.S. Culture 42% (N=164), Learning a New Language (English) 30.7% (N=155), Accumulation of goods or material items 28.6% (N=102), Learning more about the Hispanic Culture 27.4% (N=115), and Learning a New Language (Spanish) 13.3% (N=65).

International students also indicated they experienced difficulties in understanding the lectures with their first through their fifth semester. The results revealed the following ratings of Extremely Likely and Likely: First Semester 32.6% (N=74), Second Semester 39.7% (N=90), Third Semester 49.8% (N=113), Fourth Semester 12.4% (N=28), and Fifth Semester 9.7 (N=22).

Additionally, the respondents shared academic difficulties with the following factors: General Language Skills, Professor's Accent, Technical Terminology, and Class Environment. The results revealed the following ratings of Extremely Likely and Likely: Professor's Accent 47.2% (N=106), Technical Terminology 33% (N=74), General Language Skills 29.6% (N=67), Class Environment 22.4% (N=50).

Moreover, the student respondents indicated the factors that affected them when dealing with their academic courses were the following classifications: Too much Reading, Too Many Quizzes, Too much Writing, Too much class participation, and Too many Assignment in Teams. The results revealed the following ratings of Extremely Likely and Likely: Too much Reading 43.6% (N=99), Too Many Quizzes 34.9% (N=79), Too much Writing 33.9% (N=77), Too many Assignment in Teams 31.7% (N=72), and Too much class participation 29.1% (N=66).

Also, students indicated how likely they would seek help on campus regarding their academic adjustment. The results revealed the following ratings of Extremely Likely and Likely with a 40.3% (N= 91).

Lastly, the respondents rated their international student experience at this HSI. The results revealed a 96% satisfaction rate of the aggregate values of Good, Very Good, and Excellent.

Results from t-tests

A series of analyses utilized with selected variables that appeared likely contributors to the perceptions of students' cultural, social, and academic experiences. This section applied Independent group t-tests to compare differences. The selected list of dependent variables for the study included: Q10, Q11, Q15, Q17, Q24, Q28, Q29, Q30, Q31, Q39, Q41.1.2.3.4.5, Q40, Q44, Q50, which fundamental sort into three categories: (1) socio-cultural student engagement

and attitudes, (2) time of social and academic adjustment, and (3) cultural and academic adjustment. The independent variables are: Q2, Q12, Q16, Q19, Q23, Q32, Q34, Q36.

Gender. When gender (Q2) was analyzed for significant differences with the set of dependent variables associated with international student outcomes, three significant t-tests were found. First, females were significantly different from males regarding attitudes toward university facilities (Q11), (females = 4.13, males = 3.93, $t = -2.04$, $df = 268$, $p = .042$). Second, females were significantly more positive in attitude toward international office support (Q15) than males (females = 1.74, males = 1.50, $t = -2.59$, $df = 259$, $p = .010$). Third, males indicated experiencing higher academic difficulties in their third semester. The other t-tests for the list of dependent variables were not significant. Third, males were more likely than females to understand lectures (Q41.1) in the first semester (males = 2.50, females = 2.40, $t = -2.11$, $df = 225$, $p = .036$). The t-Tests of gender by the other dependent variables were not significant (Q10, Q17, Q24, Q28, Q29, Q30, Q31, Q39, Q41.2.3.4.5, Q40, Q44, Q50).

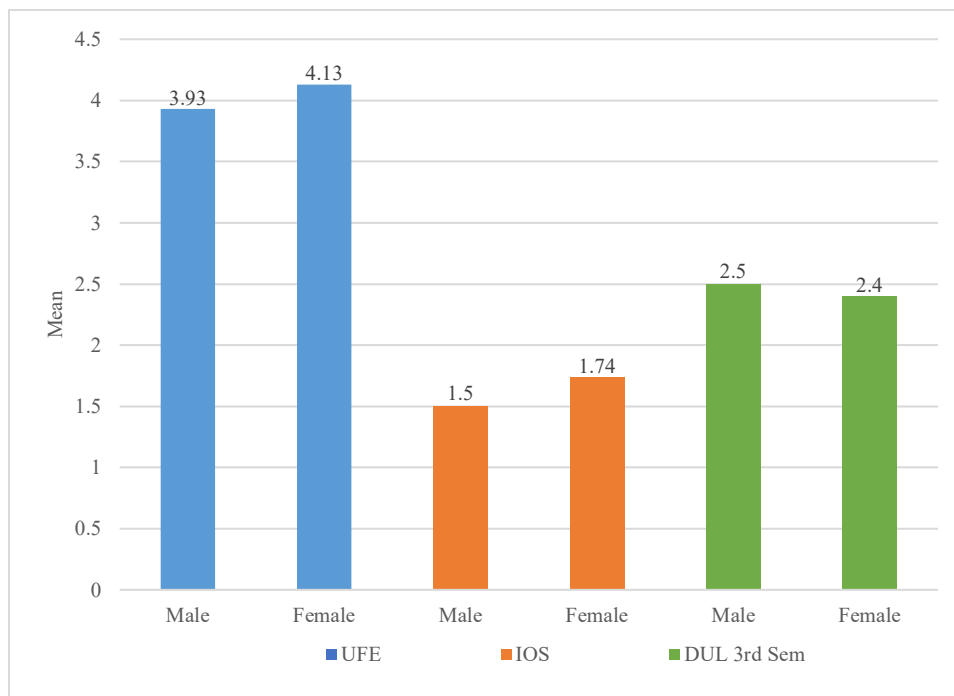
Table #19

T-Test of selected independent variables by relevant adjustment variables

Independent Variable	Dependent	Means	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Gender: Male	University facilities expectation's	3.93			
Female		4.13	-2.041	268	0.042
Male	International Office Supportiveness	1.50			
Female		1.74	-5.280	259	0.010
Male	Difficulties in understanding the lectures - Third Semester	2.50	-2.114	225	0.036
Female		2.40			

Figure 21

t-Test of Gender by relevant adjustment variables



Main Campus. When the students were questioned to identify their main campus (Q12) either from Brownsville or Edinburg, the following significant results were found: First, students from the Edinburg campus rated the quality of events (Q17) organized from the International Office significantly higher than the students from Brownsville (Edinburg = 2.12, Brownsville = 1.88, $t = -1.91$, $df = 245$, $p = .056$). Second, international students who were actively employed on-campus were asked to rate how valuable was the experience of working part-time on-campus (Q24) while studying. Again, the students from Edinburg rated their experience significantly higher than the students from Brownsville (Brownsville = 1.68, Edinburg = 2.03, $t = -2.347$, $df = 245$, $p = .020$). Third, respondents were asked to rate their overall international student experience (Q50) at this HSI. The students from Edinburg rated their experience significantly higher than the ones in Brownsville (Brownsville = 1.73, Edinburg = 2.04, $t = -2.433$, $df = 211$, $p = .016$). The t-tests of the main campus by the other dependent variables were not significant (Q10, Q11, Q15,

Q28, Q29, Q30, Q31, Q39, Q41.1.2.3.4.5, Q40, Q44).

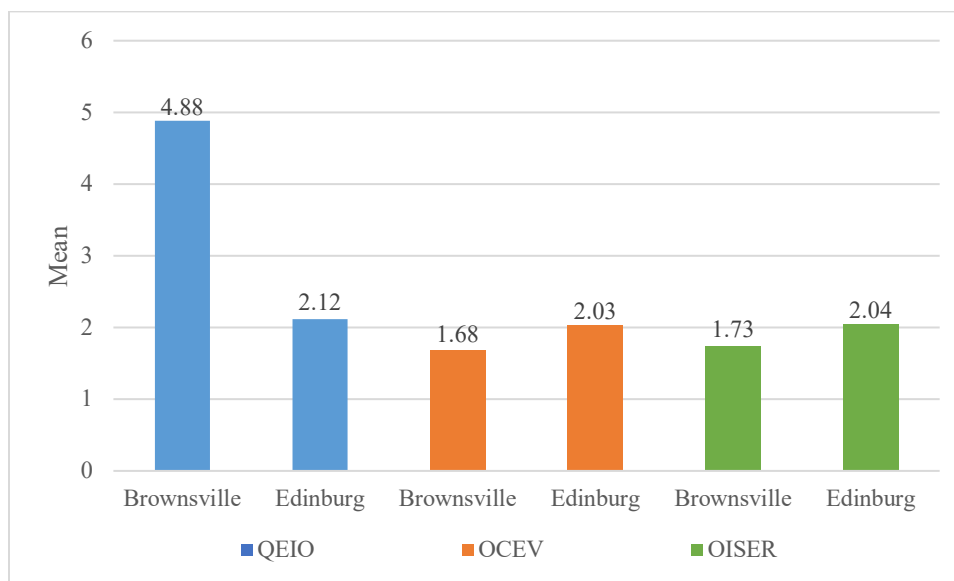
Table #20

T-Test of selected independent variables by relevant adjustment variables

Independent Variable	Dependent	Means	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
Campus: Brownsville	Quality of the events organized by the International Office	4.88	-1.960	245	0.056
Edinburg		2.12			
Brownsville	On-campus employment value	1.68	-2.347	245	0.020
Edinburg		2.03			
Brownsville	Overall International Student Experience Rating	1.73	-2.186	211	0.015
Edinburg		2.04			

Figure 22

t-Test of Campus by relevant adjustment variables



Cultural Events Attendance. Furthermore, students were asked to indicate if they attended the cultural events (Q16) organized by the International Office (i.e., Coffee & Donuts, Lunar New Year, International Education Week, Thanksgiving Luncheon, others). First, students who did not attend cultural events were significantly higher than the ones who did in rating the quality of events (Q17) organized by this office (No, I do not attend = 2.47, Yes, I attend = 1.80, $t = -6.66$,

$df = 260, p = .001$). The t-tests of cultural event attendance by the other dependent variables were not significant (Q10, Q11, Q15, Q24, Q28, Q29, Q30, Q31, Q39, Q41.1.2.3.4.5, Q40, Q44, Q50).

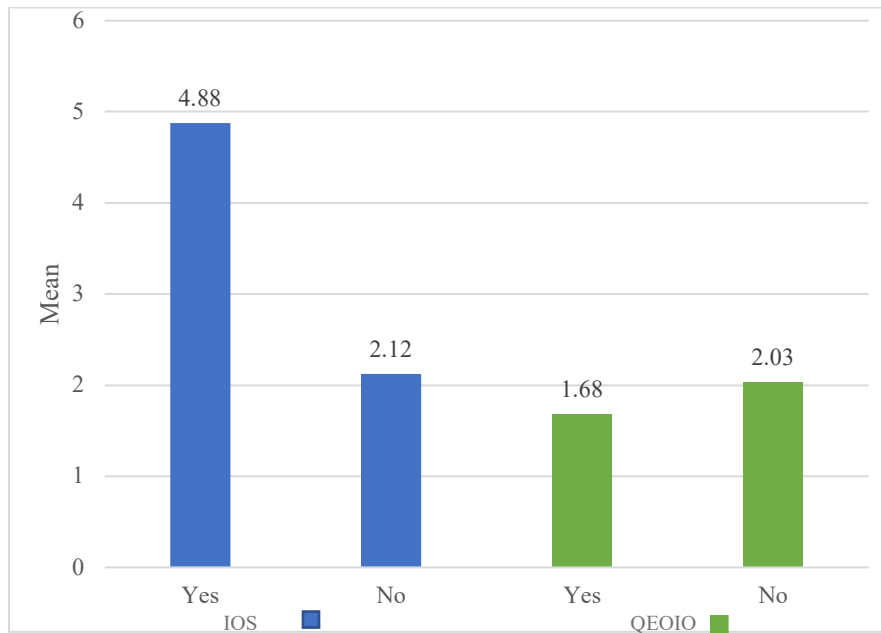
Table #21

T-Test of selected independent variables by relevant adjustment variables

Independent Variable	Dependent	Means	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
Cultural Event Attendance:	Yes	1.55	-1.840	260	0.059
	No	1.74			
	Yes	1.80	-6.661	260	0.001
	No	2.47			

Figure 23

t-Test of Cultural Event Attendance by relevant adjustment variables



Live on/off-campus. Furthermore, we asked the students if they lived (Q19) or not at the campus residence. Interestingly, the students who lived on campus had a better experience of

working and studying on campus (Q24), (No, I do not live on campus 1.89, = Yes, I live on campus = 2.39, $t = 2.027$, $df = 260$, $p = .044$). The t-tests of live on/off campus by the other dependent variables were not significant (Q10, Q11, Q15, Q17, Q28, Q29, Q30, Q31, Q39, Q41.1.2.3.4.5, Q40, Q44, Q50).

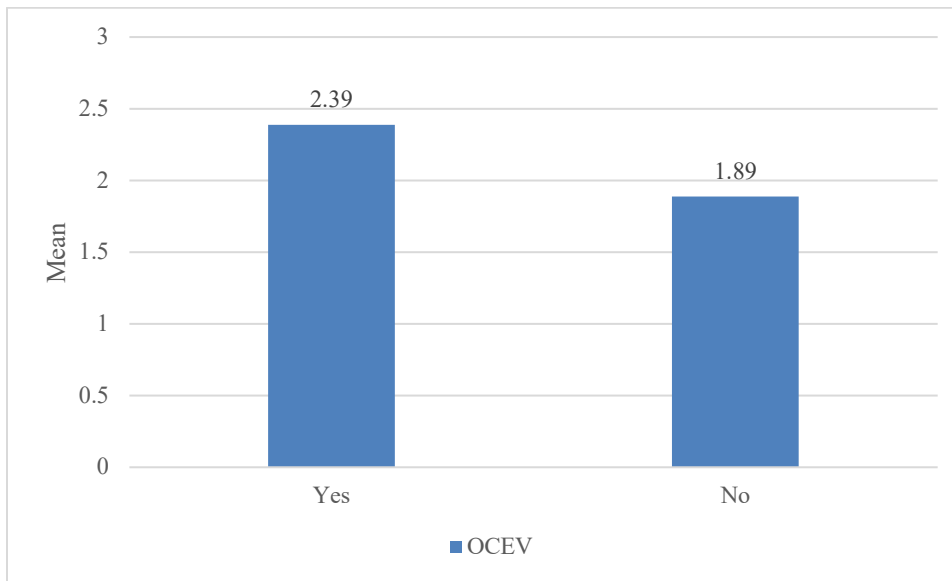
Table #22

T-Test of selected independent variables by relevant adjustment variables

Independent Variable		Dependent	Means	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Live On-Campus Residence:	Yes	On-Campus Employment Value	2.39	2.027	260	0.044
	No		1.89			

Figure 24

t-Test of Live on Campus Residence Value by relevant adjustment variables



Work on campus. First, students who were employed on campus (Q23) had a significant difference to their first impression (Q10) of the campus when they arrived (No, I do not work on campus = 1.92, Yes, I work on campus = 2.21, $t = 2.726$, $df = 260$, $p = .007$). Second, students

who did not work on campus had a significant difference in valuing the experience of working and studying (Q24) at the same time (Yes, I work on campus = 1.50, No, I do not work on campus = 2.62, $t = -10.125$, $df = 260$, $p = .001$). Third, students who work on campus felt significantly more culturally competent (Q30) than the ones who were not employed (No, I do not work on campus = 2.62, Yes, I work on campus = 1.50, $t = 1.924$, $df = 239$, $p = .056$). Fourth, students who did work on campus had a significant difference in seeking help on campus for an academic adjustment (Q44), (No, I do not work on campus = 2.91, Yes, I work on campus = 2.59, $t = -2.032$, $df = 224$, $p = .043$). The t-Tests of work on/off-campus by the other dependent variables were not significant (Q11, Q15, Q17, Q28, Q29, Q31, Q39, Q41.1.2.3.4.5, Q40, Q50).

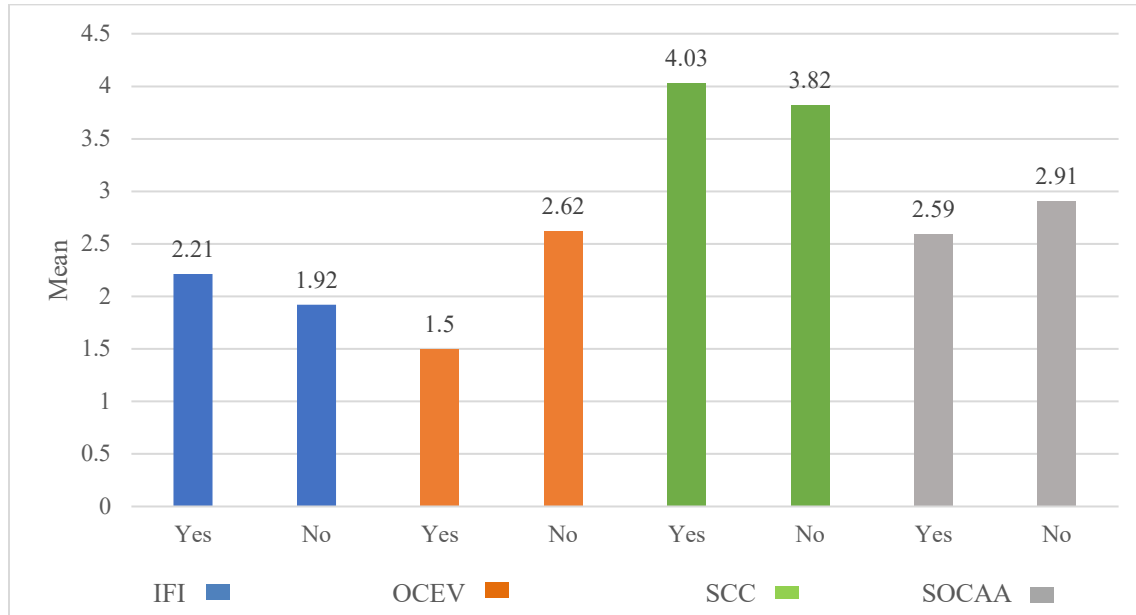
Table #23

T-Test of selected independent variables by relevant adjustment variables

Independent Variable		Dependent	Means	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
On-Campus Employment	Yes	University's first impression	2.21	2.726	260	0.007
	No		1.92			
	Yes	On-Campus Employment Value	1.50			
	No		2.62	-10.125	260	0.001
	Yes	Student Cultural Competency	4.03	1.924	239	0.056
	No		3.82			
	Yes	Seek Help On-Campus for Academic Adjustment	2.59			
	No		2.91	-2.032	224	0.043

Figure 25

T-Test of On-Campus Employment by relevant adjustment variables



Collectivistic vs. Individualistic Culture. When analyzing Hofstede's cultural dimension on Collectivistic versus Individualistic (Q32), students whose cultural background was collectivistic were significantly higher to ask for on-campus help for their social and cultural adjustment (Q29), (Collectivistic = 2.47, Individualistic = 2.11, $t = 1.985$, $df = 239$, $p = .048$). The t-Tests of collectivism vs. individualism by the other dependent variables were not significant (Q10, Q11, Q15, Q17, Q24, Q28, Q30, Q31, Q39, Q41.1.2.3.4.5, Q40, Q44, Q50).

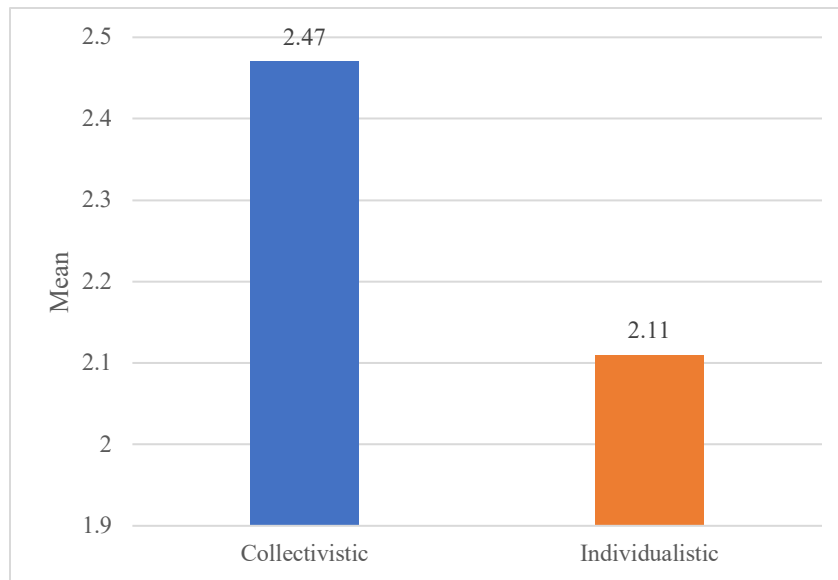
Table #24

T-Test of selected independent variables by relevant adjustment variables

Independent Variable		Dependent	Means	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
Students' Cultural Background	Collectivistic	Seek Help On-Campus for Social/Cultural Adjustment	2.47	1.985	239	0.048
	Individualistic		2.11			

Figure 26

t-Test of Student's Cultural Background by relevant adjustment variables



Feminine vs. Masculine Culture. When analyzing Hofstede's cultural dimension on Feminine vs. Masculine culture (Q34), students from a Feminine culture experienced significantly more difficulties understanding the lectures in their third semester than those from a masculine culture (41.3), (Feminine = 2.53, Masculine = 2.23, $t = -2.093$, $df = 225$, $p = .037$). On the other hand, students who came from a Masculine culture were significantly higher to experience fewer difficulties understanding the lectures in their fourth semester (Q4.4) (Masculine = 3.83, Feminine = 3.52, $t = 1.96$, $df = 225$, $p = .050$). The t-Tests of Feminine vs. Masculine Culture by the other dependent variables were not significant (Q10, Q11, Q15, Q17, Q24, Q28, Q29, Q30, Q31, Q39, Q41.1.2.5, Q40, Q44, Q50).

Table #25

T-Test of selected independent variables by relevant adjustment variables

Independent Variable		Dependent	Means	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
Masculine Vs. Feminine Hofstede's Cultural Dimension	Masculine	On-Campus Employment Value	2.23			
	Feminine		2.53	-2.093	255	0.037
	Masculine	Overall International	3.83	1.969	225	0.050
	Feminine	Student Experience	3.52			

Cultural Difference between Brownsville and Edinburg Campus. There were no significant cultural differences between the two campuses, and the list of the dependent variables used in the study (Q10, Q11, Q15, Q17, Q24, Q28, Q29, Q30, Q31, Q39, Q41.1.2.5, Q40, Q44, Q50).

Correlation Associated with International Student Experiences

This section of the study analyzes the pairs of interval-level variables that are expected to be statistically associated with the international student experiences. Those variables potentially correlated with measures were: Q3, Q4, Q5, Q7, Q10, Q11, Q15, Q17, Q24, Q28, Q29, Q30, Q31, Q39, Q40, Q44, Q50.

Age (Q2) was significantly correlated with student classification (Q4), $r(271) = .560, p = .001$, first impression of the campus when they arrived (Q10), $r(268) = -.121, p = .046$, students asked for help on campus for social and cultural adjustment (Q29), $r(238) = .128, p = .047$, and how difficult was for the students to adjust to their new academic environment (Q40), $r(224) = -.146, p = .028$. The only negative correlation was age by adjustment to the academic environment. All the other correlations with age were not significant.

Table #26*Pearson Correlations with Age*

		First impression of this HSI	Help on campus for social/cultural adjustment	Difficult to adjust to the new academic environment
Age	Pearson Correlation	-.121*	.128*	.146*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.046	0.047	0.028
	df(n-2)	268	238	224

Student Classification (Q4) was significantly negatively correlated with how supportive (Q15) the international office was for students during their international experience at this HSI, $r(260) = -.138, p = .025$. This finding indicates the higher the student classification, the less supportive they perceived the International Office.

Table #27*Pearson Correlations with Student Classification*

		Supportiveness of International Office
Student classification	Pearson Correlation	-.138*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.025
	df(n-2)	260

How many languages the international students (Q5) speak at this HSI was positively correlated to their first impression (Q10) of the campus when they arrived. The more languages the students spoke, the more impressed they were on their arrival to campus $r(269) = .120, p = .048$.

Table #28*Pearson Correlations with Student Languages Spoken*

		First impression of this HSI
Languages spoken	Pearson Correlation	.120*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.048
	df(n-2)	269

Grade Point Average (Q7) was significantly related to the value of the experience of working on campus while studying. The higher the GPA, the more valuable of an experience the students had of being a student and an employee (Q24) at the same time, $r(258) = .148, p = .016$.

Table #29

Pearson Correlations with Student GPA

		Value of working on- campus while studying
GPA	Pearson Correlation	.148*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.016
	df (n-2)	258

The first impression (Q10) of the campus when the international students first arrived was significantly correlated with five variables. First, the higher the students' impression when they first arrived on campus, the lower the university met the students' facilities expectations (Q11), $r(269) = -.462, p = .001$. Second, the higher the students' impression when they arrived, the higher the quality (Q17) of the International Office's events, $r(260) = .208, p = .001$. Third, the higher the students' impression when they arrived, the less they took to culturally adjust (Q28) to their new social environment $r(239) = -.161, p = 0.12$. Fourth, the higher the students' impression when they arrived (Q10), the more tolerant (Q31) they felt in a social environment of uncertainty and ambiguity $r(239) = .227, p = .001$. Last, the higher the impression these students had when they arrived, the higher they rated their overall international student experience (Q50) at this HSI, $r(225) = .518, p = .001$.

Table #30

Pearson Correlations with First impression of this HSI

		University facilities meet your expectation	Quality of events organized by the International Office	Culturally adjustment to their new social environment	Tolerance in a social environment of uncertainty and ambiguity	Overall international student experience
First impression of this HSI	Pearson Correlation	-.462**	.208**	-.161*	.227**	.518**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.001	0.012	0.000	0.000
	df (n-2)	269	260	239	239	225

University facilities meeting the student expectations (Q11) was significant correlated with the following six variables. First, the higher the university facilities met the students' expectations, the lower the supportiveness they felt from the International Office (Q15), $r(260) = -.195, p = .002$. Second, the higher the university facilities met the students' expectations, the lower the students rated the events (Q17) organized by the International Office, $r(260) = -.202, p = .001$. Third, the higher the university facilities met the students' expectations, the less valuable the experience of studying and working on campus (Q24) was for the students, $r(260) = -.156, p = .012$. Fourth, the higher the university facilities met the students' expectations, the longer students took to adjust (Q28) to their new social environment, $r(239) = .158, p = .014$. Fifth, the higher the university facilities met the students' expectations, the less tolerant (Q31) the students felt in a social environment of uncertainty and ambiguity, $r(239) = -.138, p = .032$. (Note: the researcher found a measurement error on Q31, thus potentially invalidating this correlation). Sixth, the higher the university facilities met the students' expectations, the lower they rated their overall international student experience (Q50), $r(225) = -.494, p = .001$.

Table #31

Pearson Correlations with University facilities meeting the students' expectations

		Supportiveness of the International Office	Quality of events organized by the International Office	Value of working on- campus while studying	Culturally adjustment to their new social environment	Tolerance in a social environment of uncertainty and ambiguity	Overall international student experience
University facilities meeting students' expectation	Pearson Correlation	-.195**	-.202**	-.156*	.158*	-.138*	-.494**
	Sig. (2- tailed)	0.002	0.001	0.012	0.014	0.032	0.000
	<i>df</i> (n-2)	260	260	260	239	239	225

Supportiveness of the International Office (Q15) question was significantly correlated with the following five variables. First, the more supportive the International Office was, the

higher the students rated the events organized by them, $r(260) = .416, p = .001$. Second, the more supportive the International Office was, the better the students valued the experience of studying and working on campus (Q24), $r(260) = .156, p = .011$. Third, the more supportive the International Office was, the less the students felt culturally competent (Q30), $r(239) = -.188, p = .003$. Fourth, the most supportive the International Office was, the less difficult the students struggled with their new academic environment, $r(225) = -.148, p = .026$. Fifth, the more supportive the International Office was, the better the students rated their overall international student experience at this HSI, $r(225) = .440, p = .001$.

Table #32

Pearson Correlations Supportiveness of the International Office

		Quality of events organized by the International Office	Value of working on- campus while studying	Cultural competence	Difficult to adjust to the new academic environment	Overall international student experience
Supportiveness of the International Office	Pearson Correlation	.416**	.156*	-.188**	-.148*	.440**
	Sig. (2- tailed)	0.000	0.011	0.003	0.026	0.000
	df (n-2)	260	260	239	225	225

The quality of the events organized by the International Office (Q17) question was significantly correlated with the following three variables. First, the higher the quality of the International Office events, the more valuable the experience of working and studying on campus (Q24) was for the students, $r(260) = .284, p = .001$. Second, the higher the quality of the International office's events, the more tolerant the students felt in a social environment of uncertainty and ambiguity, $r(239) = .160, p = .013$. Third, the higher the quality of the International office's events, the better the students rated their overall international student experience at this HSI, $r(225) = .437, p = .001$.

Table #33*Pearson Correlations of the Quality of the events organized by the International Office*

		Value of working on- campus while studying	Tolerance in a social environment of uncertainty and ambiguity	Overall international student experience
Quality of events organized by the International Office	Pearson Correlation	.284**	.160*	.437**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.013	0.000
	df (n-2)	260	239	225

The valuable experience of working and studying on-campus question (Q24) was significantly correlated with the following two variables. First, the more the students felt that studying and working on campus was a valuable experience, the less the students felt culturally competent, $r(239) = -.282, p = .001$. Second, the more the students felt that studying and working on campus was a valuable experience, the higher the students rated their overall international student experience at this HSI, $r(225) = .186, p = .005$.

Table #34*Pearson Correlations of the Value of working on-campus while studying*

		Cultural competence	Overall international student experience
Value of working on- campus while studying	Pearson Correlation	-.282**	.186**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.005
	df (n-2)	239	225

The quality of the international office's events for the students to culturally adjust to their new social environment (Q28) question was significantly correlated with the following four variables. First, the longer it took the international students to adjust to their new social environment, the more culturally competent (Q30) they considered themselves, $r(239) = .230, p = .001$. Second, the longer it took the international students to adjust to their new social environment, the more time it took them to adjust to their new academic environment (Q39), $r(225) = .466, p = .001$. Third, the more it took the international students to adjust to their new social environment, the less complicated it was for them to adjust to their new academic

environment (Q40), $r(225) = .225, p = .001$. Fourth, the more that it took the international students to adjust to their new social environment, the less likely students asked for help on campus for their academic adjustment (Q44), $r(224) = -.142, p = .033$.

Table #35

Pearson Correlations of the Length on their cultural adjustment to their new social environment

		Cultural Competence	Length of Adjustment to their new academic environment	Difficulty to adjust to their new academic environment	Seek help on-campus for academic adjustment
Cultural adjustment to their new social environment	Pearson Correlation	.230**	.466**	.225**	-.142*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.033
	df (n-2)	239	225	225	224

The student seeking help on campus for their social and cultural adjustment question (Q29) had two significant correlated variables. First, the more the students asked for help on campus for their social and cultural adjustment, the less culturally competent (Q30) they considered themselves, $r(239) = -.179, p = .005$. Second, the more the students asked for help on campus for their social and cultural adjustment, the more they asked for help on campus for their academic adjustment $r(224) = .364, p = .001$.

Table #36

Pearson Correlations of the Students seeking help on-campus for social/cultural adjustments

		Cultural Competence	Seek help on campus for academic adjustment
Help on campus for social/cultural adjustment	Pearson Correlation	-.179**	.364**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.005	0.000
	df (n-2)	239	224

How culturally competent the students considered themselves question (Q30) had four significant correlations. The more the students felt culturally competent, the less they felt intolerant in an environment of uncertainty and ambiguity (Q31), $r(239) = -.349, p = .001$ (Note: the researcher found a measurement error on Q31, thus potentially invalidating this correlation).

The more the students felt culturally competent, the more time it took them to adjust to their new academic environment (Q39), $r(225) = .155, p = .019$. The more the students felt culturally competent, the easier it took them to adjust to their new academic environment (Q40), $r(225) = .136, r = .040$. The more the students felt culturally competent, the lower they rated their overall international student experience (Q50), $r(225) = -.167, p = .012$.

Table #37

Pearson Correlations of the Students Cultural Competence

		Tolerance in a social environment of uncertainty and ambiguity	Length of Adjustment to your new academic environment	Difficult to adjust to the new academic environment	Overall international student experience
Cultural competence	Pearson Correlation	-.349**	.155*	.136*	-.167*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.019	0.040	0.012
	df(n-2)	239	225	225	225

How tolerant the students felt in an environment of uncertainty and ambiguity question (Q31) was significantly positively correlated with the overall international student experience rating (Q50), $r(225) = .223, p = .001$. The more tolerant the students felt in an ambiguous environment, the higher they rated their overall international student experience.

Table #38

Pearson Correlations of the Tolerance in a social environment of uncertainty and ambiguity

		Overall international student experience
Tolerance in a social environment of uncertainty and ambiguity	Pearson Correlation	.223**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001
	df(n-2)	225

How long it took the students to adjust to their new academic environment question (Q39) had two significantly correlated variables. The longer the students adjust to their new academic environment, the easier it took the students to adjust to their academic environment (Q40), $r(225) = .340, p = .001$. The longer the students took to adjust to their new academic

environment, the lower they rated their overall international student experience at this HSI (Q50), $r(225) = -.131, p = .048$.

Table #39

Pearson Correlations of the Length of Adjustment to their new academic environment

		Difficult to adjust to the new academic environment	Overall international student experience
Length of Adjustment to their new academic environment	Pearson Correlation	.340**	-.131*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.048
	df (n-2)	225	225

How difficult it took the students to adjust to their new academic environment question (Q39) the easier it took the students to adjust to their academic environment (Q40) $r(225) = -.153, p = .021$.

Table #40

Pearson Correlations of the level of Difficulty to adjust to their new academic environment

		Overall international student experience
Difficult to adjust to the new academic environment	Pearson Correlation	0.153
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.021
	df (n-2)	225

Post-Hoc Quantitative Findings

As a matter of procedure, the interval variables were tested for both skewness and kurtosis, which reveal distribution normality, which is an appropriate procedure in applying parametric statistics such as Pearson r and t-tests. Hair et al. (2010) argued that data are typically thought of as normal if skewness is between -2 to +2 and kurtosis is between -7 to +7. The only variable with a skewness coefficient 2.0 or greater included in parametric testing was Q28 which assessed the length of time to adjust socially and culturally (Skewness = - 2.39). All kurtosis coefficients were well within appropriate limits. Furthermore, the parametric testing procedures are also

considered powerful enough to overcome slight variations in normality, such as in Q28. That is, with a large sample size of more than 20, the researcher can still run parametric tests (Glen, 2021).

In addition, the research explored scale possibilities for student adjustment-related variables according to the literature and aligned with the results presented above. Various iterations of the procedure yielded an alpha of .795 for 4 items, well beyond the .70 Cronbach's alpha threshold for this statistic (*table 42*).

Table #41

Scale Reliability of Student Adjustment Using Cronbach's Alpha

Overall Cronbach's Alpha	.795
<u>Item</u>	<u>Alpha if Item Removed</u>
First impression of this HSI upon arrival	.772
Supportiveness of International Office at this HSI	.841
Rating of event quality by the International Office?	.635
Rating of this HSI Student Residence	.725

Summary of Quantitative Results

This section summarizes the significant patterns observed from the quantitative analyses.

Respondents revealed a series of positive attitudes in their campus experiences, such as attitude toward university facilities (71.1%) and International Office supportiveness (88.9%). Other campus offices were perceived more modestly, from 48% to 52%. Most of the international students do not live on campus (93.1%). However, among the remaining percentage who live on campus, their reasons rank as convenience, proximity, safety, academic success, and college experience.

Among the nearly (63%) who work on campus, they also rated such work positively (72.2%). For various reasons, only (35.4%) belong to a campus organization with the non-

belongers indicated insufficient time (32%), non-interest (22%), lack of commitment motivation (6%), and lack of personality for a group (4%), Length of socio-cultural adjustment showed some 94% required at least 18 months and longer. However, some (42%) indicated a desire to learn more about the U.S. culture as a major academic goal. Also, (23.5%) viewed academic adjustment as Difficult or Very Difficult, and just under (50%) of their stated adjustment was related to struggles in the third semester. Overall, academic struggles related to respondents indicating too much reading (44%) in their academic courses. Moreover, (40%) likelihood of seeking campus help with their academic adjustment. Despite difficulties, the respondents indicated a (96%) overall satisfaction level with their overall international student experience.

Three-fourths of the students described their home culture as collectivistic (one-fourth individualistic), with only (41%) viewing the RGV culture as collectivistic. Approximately one-third perceived cultural differences between the Brownsville and Edinburg campuses.

As a cultural perspective profile, (78%) regarded themselves as aligned more to Hofstede's feminine cultural style, (72%) felt tolerant when confronted with ambiguity, and (67%) viewed themselves as culturally competent.

The significant *t*-test comparisons and the correlations also reveal meaningful patterns. For example, females evaluated university facilities and international office supportiveness significantly higher than males, but males were significantly higher than females having difficulties understanding lectures. Another finding revealed that while Brownsville campus respondents were significantly higher than the Edinburg campus on attitude toward international event quality, the Edinburg respondents were significantly higher on valuing on-campus employment and their international student's overall rating experience. For some

reason, students who did not attend international office events had significantly more positive attitudes toward international office supportiveness than those who attended those events.

Students who lived on-campus were higher in their means of valuing on-campus employment. Compared with those who did not work on campus, the students who did work on campus had a higher first impression of the university facilities and a higher reported cultural competence. However, the students who did not work on-campus had a higher value of studying and working on-campus and showed a higher tendency to seek help for academic adjustment.

The student's cultural background variable revealed that international students from collectivistic cultures tend to seek help on-campus for their social and cultural adjustment. When respondents viewed the RGV culture as individualistic, they revealed more value toward on-campus employment and higher overall international student satisfaction. Students who considered the RGV's culture as collectivistic took longer to adjust to their new social and cultural adjustment. Also, students from Feminine cultures had a higher value on on-campus employment, but by contrast, students from Masculine cultures had a higher overall international student experience. Finally, respondents indicating a cultural difference between the two main campuses compared with those who did not perceive a cultural difference viewed the International Office as supportive.

Several significant correlations revealed important patterns. Age was significantly correlated with student classification, the campus's first impression, and the students' difficulty adjusting to their new academic environment. Some languages spoken were positively associated with campus first impressions, and GPA was positively correlated with valuing studying on-campus.

Respondent's International Office supportiveness attitude was positively correlated with rating the International Office events, less difficulty with the academic environment, and a positive rating of the overall international student experience, but negatively correlated with cultural competence.

The greater the student classification, the lower their attitudes of International Office supportiveness. The higher the students' impression when they first arrived on campus, the lower the university met the facilities students' expectations. When university facilities met their expectations, the greater the International Office supportiveness, and the lower the student ratings of International Office events. Higher university facility ratings were also linked significantly with lower value of working on campus and adjustment to new socio-cultural environment and lower tolerance toward uncertainty.

Positive attitudes toward International Office supportiveness were correlated with higher international event ratings, higher evaluations of studying and working on campus, and higher ratings of the overall student experience, but lower attitudes of cultural competence. By contrast, the higher the quality of the events organized by the International Office, the higher their tolerance to ambiguity.

Positive evaluations of working and studying on campus correlated significantly with lower cultural competence, but higher ratings resulted in their overall international student experience. The longer the time of adjustment was correlated with higher cultural competence, longer time of academic adjustment, less difficulty of adjustment, but less likely to ask for academic assistance on campus. Not surprisingly, students who were high on seeking help on campus for social adjustment reported significantly higher scores asking for academic adjustment assistance.

The greater the cultural competence, the less tolerance during ambiguity, the longer time for academic adjustment, the easier the adjustment, the lower their overall international student experience. The higher the tolerance during ambiguous environments, the higher the overall perception of their student experience.

The longer the time for academic adjustment, the easier and less difficult their academic adjustment, but the lower the rating of their overall international student experience.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study began with the researcher's key question in the desire to explore the nature of international students' experiences not only reviewing what they experienced, but also why. This research study's quantitative data was obtained through a Qualtrics survey written in English only. The average time to complete the survey was about 15-20 minutes. International students with less English proficiency may have taken more time to respond to the questions included in the online survey.

The qualitative data obtained for this study is dependent upon some subjective limitations. That is, since the data obtained is of a self-reporting nature based on an interview using the *currere* method, the accuracy of the analysis is dependent upon the educational meanings of the student's experiences and the relationship of their academic knowledge in relation to their memories, honesty, perspectives, self-understanding, and their expectations in their near future. After a results key findings summary, this chapter explains theoretically and practically results considering previous literature and the context with cultural adjustment and unique features of the universities involved. The results are summarized here and sorted for explanations.

Summary of Key Findings

The quantitative key findings result indicated positive perceptions of their campus experiences such as attitude toward university facilities, international office supportiveness, and

overall international student experience. Other campus offices were perceived more modestly.

Another finding was the low student population who lived on campus due to the convenience, safety, and being exposed to a closer college experience. However, the majority that did not live on-campus, expressed that it was more costly. A very low percentage of the international student population live on-campus residences. The other population indicated that they did not live on campus because it was more costly. Similarly, Poyrazly & Grahame (2007) argued that students who live on the campus premises are satisfied due to the proximity; however, the cost of the on-campus student residence is often more expensive than off-site accommodations (p. 34).

Also, a good number of the respondents worked on campus, and they rated this semi-professional experience as positive. For different reasons, a low percentage of the student respondents belong to a campus organization indicating insufficient time, non-interest, lack of commitment/motivation, and or lack of affinity to a group. International students tend to feel more pressure than regular students as they must be enrolled in a full academic load every semester and meet their student academic progress required by the institution. These are requirements that come with their temporary student visa provisions.

Additionally, the results indicated the majority of the international students required at least 18 to 24 months or even longer to adjust socio-culturally. My findings support Poyrazly & Grahame (2007) statement of how important it is for higher education institutions to continue to examine the adjustments and any social and institutional challenges the international students may be experiencing (p. 28). Due to the many differences, cultural, social, and academic factors, students' acculturation can take months or even years like this research study revealed.

This explains more in-depth why they may not be very motivated to belong to a student organization or obtain on-campus employment. Results revealed that their priority is to have academic success. Although a good number of students indicated that their main goal of this experience in the U.S. was to learn more about the U.S. culture, the respondents also indicated that some of them struggled with their academic expectations, and almost half of them indicated that they felt more of the academic pressure in their third semester. Most of their academic challenges were related to too much reading in their classes and struggling with their professor's accent. Despite these challenges, some students indicated that they asked for academic assistance on-campus. Correspondingly, Surdam and Collins (1984), stated that the cultural background where international students come from may represent a significant aspect of their adaption process

Concerning culture, most of the students came from a collectivistic culture and a few from an individualistic one. Likewise, Koydemir & Essau (as cited in Bochner, 1994; Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1994) explained how the Asian population is considered to be more collectivistic when compared with Westerners. One of the most related factors is how Asian individuals closely connect their needs and feelings with others. Similarly, (Han et al., 2015) explained how multiple studies have found that collectivism levels are very alike between Asia and Latin America. Simultaneously, the results of this quantitative research revealed that the highest percentages of countries were represented by Asia, followed by America. This is a positive result as in this region, most of the population comes from a collectivistic Mexican-American background. Equally, Villanueva (2014), stated "The Rio Grande Valley is a unique part of Texas that contains four counties along the US-Mexico border. These four counties are made up of around 1.2 million people where the Hispanic population is 90%." In addition, Villanueva (as

cited in Bordas, 2007, p. 45) defined the Hispanic culture as the “We culture . . . We cultures have a strong sense of belonging and sticking together”. Therefore, the Rio Grande Valley could be considered to have a collectivistic culture in a country that is mostly considered individualistic. However, less than half of the respondents indicated that they perceived the culture of the Rio Grande Valley as collectivistic. Interestingly, only one third of the student sample perceived a cultural difference between the two main campuses at this HSI. Lastly, one third of the students indicated that they considered themselves more aligned with Hofstede’s Feminine cultural style and closely two-thirds felt culturally competent, and the majority felt tolerant in an environment of ambiguity and uncertainty. Overall, the students indicated an excellent rating of their overall satisfaction with their international student experience at this HSI. Also, the students evaluated the International Office services with a satisfactory rate and being the highest one in comparison to U-Central, Academic Advising, Career Services, and Student Rights and Responsibilities.

The qualitative key findings reflected positive results as all of the students understood and used the *currere* method (Regressive, Progressive, Analytical, and Synthetical steps) to share their experiences and perceptions of running their academic course. Two students were from Asia, two from Central and North America, two from Africa, and two from Europe. The majority of the student respondents were male.

Within the Regressive step, all the students had a positive educational experience and few shared that they also had some negative ones. Also, only one fourth of the students shared that their educational system was similar to the one in the U.S.

Within the Progressive step, all of the students saw themselves working in the near future in an area related to their major. Furthermore, all of the students had plans to look for a

job in the U.S. at the end of the academic program and shared the possibility of finding a job back in their home country. The majority of the students saw themselves continuing with a higher academic program, only one of them did not. Positively, all of the students felt accomplished and successful with their academic experiences so far. Another positive result of this step is that all of the students felt that their academic experience has prepared them for their upcoming professional careers.

Within the Analytical step, only one third of the students were influenced to study in the U.S. due to a family member being already in the U.S., one fourth indicated that they were motivated due to their strong family support and only one of them shared that it was a personal decision. Also, two students were influenced to pursue their education as a result of the great scholarships offered and considered the U.S. as one of best countries to pursue an education with quality and prestige. Furthermore, the majority of the students choose their career in the U.S. as they considered it with the best infrastructure, cutting edge research, many opportunities, flexibility, and being in a country with a strong economy.

On the Synthetical step, all of the respondents shared that they have had positive interrelationships within their present existential meaning and the gained experiences from the prior steps. Only a few also have had some negative interrelationships as well as the positive ones. Additionally, all of the students felt satisfied with their educational experience in the U.S. and were able to see the whole picture related to their past, present, and near-future experiences. Lastly, all of the students shared that their past and present decisions will take them in the direction they want to go.

With the data obtained from this study, campus administrators and faculty members will have an opportunity to learn more about the cultural, academic, and student experiences of the

international population they serve.

However, student centered institutions of higher education can confront on these challenges if they truly understand this population and strive to better serve them. Lastly, this HSI can explore and benchmark on what other institutions of higher education are doing of the same caliber in terms of attempting to meet the needs of their international student population.

Theoretical Explanations and Higher Educational Administrative Observations

Articulating international students' experiences and perceptions at a HSI could help assist in identifying possible cultural theories being expressed in a range of different practices, identities, and positions. In fact, various theories may contribute to explaining international student attitudes, behaviors, and experiences identified from this study's key findings. The key findings regarding why students embrace or discard campus experiences, such as campus living or work, is related to predictable college-age developmental stage theories.

Using *currere* was the correct method to use for the qualitative section of this study. This method allowed the students to explore an ongoing project of their self-understanding by running the course of their academic journey. Also, I was able to connect Hofstede's research of how individuals develop their mental programming with culture and their education values in their years of education. According to Hofstede (2010), "the sources of one's mental programs lie within social environments in which one grew up and collected one's life experiences" (p. 5). In addition, Hofstede's theory of national cultures was perfectly connected with *currere* in the form of culture, educational experiences and the learning outcomes that shaped the individual by running the course. Hofstede's theory on collectivism was well connected with this higher education institution's location serving mostly Hispanics, a culture known to be collectivistic. Moreover, the Transformative Learning theory by Mezirow was well connected with the *currere*

method used in the qualitative section of this research study. The narratives were a clear example of each student's transformative process and the interpretation of their own educational experiences leading the new forms of understanding, expectations, and meanings.

Also, Maslow's theory (1943) could be aligned with this study and connecting the student motivation driven by the satisfaction of the scale of needs. An international student will have to climb up the pyramid to cover their basic, psychological, and self-fulfillment needs through their college experience in the U.S. as international students. This theory uses a holistic approach that could be applied through an effective and a meaningful educational experience.

Furthermore, Schlossberg's theory (2006) could also help understand how the students deal with the transitions in college. These transitions include anticipated, unanticipated, and non-events. Schlossberg identified four sets of factors that influence a person's ability to cope with a transition known as the 4 S's: situation, self, support, and strategies. This theory could help campus administrators support and establish appropriate strategies to guide the college transitions that students may experience in higher education.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was the size of the sample. Since the study sample was too small, it will be challenging to generalize the results of this research study nationwide. This study was only conducted with international undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in Spring and Summer 2019 semesters at this HSI. This study is also limited to the enrolled students' cultural, social, and academic perspectives at this HSI with the essential campus services; not all university student services were considered in the online student survey.

Moreover, some questions could have been worded differently and possibly reducing the number of questions. Another limitation was the utilization of the geographic region used in this

research study. This research investigation was conducted at a higher education institution located in the Rio Grande Valley, which serves mainly Hispanics. However, this study can be generalized if it is replicated in a similar institute of higher education serving mainly a Hispanic population and hosting a comparable number of international students.

Practical Implications, Applications, and Suggestions for Future Research

This study's research results will be shared with the unit head of the Global Engagement Office and the Director of International Office to illustrate the positive and negative results of this research study in order to better understand and serve their international student population.

For future research, educators may need to collect more data and gather more feedback on their student engagement, student support, campus services, and campus acculturation. An example of this could be to explore in-depth why it is taking the international student population 18 to 24 months or longer to adjust to their new socio-culturally environment.

More in-depth exploration can help campus administrators to find more about their specific challenges and implement services that can better the students' college experience abroad.

Therefore, it is essential for faculty, staff, and higher administrations to engage and design strategies to provide the needs of this unique population. Also, I recommend a campus-wide initiative to be more cross-cultural competent, knowledgeable, and adaptable when serving this particular student population. These findings invite stakeholders to continue learning on the topic of international student engagement to ensure their academic and social student success is met.

An implication for future research is to replicate this study with non-international students with modified questions that can be applied to both populations and analyze the results

to learn their needs and preferences better. Moreover, after this research study has been conducted, this online survey may become a part of the International Office and be used in future semesters to perform longitudinal studies every three consecutive years and analyze the results. Also, this study can be replicated as a mixed-method or conduct the study only with the qualitative section or quantitative.

Conclusion

Institutions of higher education must understand in-depth the cultural, social, and academic perceptions and experiences of the increasing international student population in the U.S. There are more than one million international students in the U.S., contributing not only more than 39.4 billion dollars to the U.S. economy but an immeasurable mix of cultures, customs, and languages that strongly enrich our country. Colleges and universities need to find out more about the perceptions, challenges, and needs of their serving international student population to successfully retain them and possibly continue pursuing a higher academic level in the United States.

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APPENDIX A

Appendix A

MEMORANDUM

TO: ASSOCIATE VP FOR GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT
FROM: SAMANTHA LOPEZ, GRADUATE STUDENT
SUBJECT: INTERNATIONAL STUDENT REQUEST OF INFORMATION
DATE: 03/7/2019

My name is Samantha Lopez; I am a graduate student pursuing a Doctoral degree in Curriculum and Instruction with a specialization of Higher Education Teaching. For my dissertation project, I will be conducting a qualitative and quantitative research study to learn more about their academic and cultural perspectives of the international students enrolled at this Hispanic Serving Institution.

Therefore, I would like to request two action items from your office to facilitate this project:

Assign a staff member from the International office to send the survey by email to all the undergraduate and graduate international students enrolled in the Spring 2019 and if needed the summer semester. This would be used for the quantitative section of my research study. The instrument is ready, and I will be requesting the assistance of an assigned staff member to send the survey link to all email address to protect the identity of the participants as this is project is anonymous.

Assign a staff member from the international office to select international students who are actively involved with on-campus cultural student events and send them an invitation to participate in the qualitative section of my research study. The sample for the structured interviews will be a representation of the four major geographical regions, i.e., Africa, Asia, Europe, and America. So preferably, if they can please provide me with two students from any country of each continent to be interviewed would be excellent., Once the students meet with me, they will not be asked to disclose their identity information.

I thank you for your support of this request and If you are interested, I will be more than glad to share the findings of the study on I have completed this research project.

If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (###) ###-#### or by email at samantha.lopez@...

APPENDIX B

Appendix B

Qualitative Research Consent Form

Serving Institution (email: Samantha.Lopez@.....edu).

This interview is being conducted by Samantha Lopez, Graduate Student at this Hispanic

The aim of this study is to discover and learn more about the perspectives of international students and their campus experiences as international students in a Hispanic Serving Institution. The survey will collect data in the following areas: student demographics, student experiences, students' services, campus life, and academics.

This interview will last no longer than one hour. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to move ahead quickly to complete this questionnaire.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. Choosing not to participate will not adversely affect your grade or standing in the class. You must be at least 18 years old to participate. If you are not 18 or older, please do not participate in this interview.

To facilitate the note-taking process, you are being requested to grant permission to audio your interview. Only researchers on this project will be privy to the tapes which will be destroyed after the research is completed. *All responses or this research study will be treated confidentially and stored on a secure server.* Any individually identifiable responses will be securely stored and will only be available to those directly involved in this study. De-identified data may be shared with other researchers in the future but will not contain information about your individual identity.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Protection (IRB). If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, or if you feel that your rights as a participant were not adequately met by the researcher, please contact the IRB at (956) ###-#### or irb@.....edu.

By signing below, you indicate that you are voluntarily agreeing to participate in this study and that the procedures involved have been described to your satisfaction. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this form for your own reference.

_____/_____/_____
Date

Participant's Signature

APPENDIX C

Appendix C

Introductory Protocol for Qualitative Interviews

Hello, my name is Samantha Lopez, and I am a graduate student pursuing a Doctoral degree in Education with a specialization in Curriculum and Instruction at this Hispanic Serving Institution.

I am working towards my dissertation and this qualitative research interview will be a part of it. You have been selected to be interviewed today because you have been identified as an international student who is actively involved with on-campus cultural events and with the International Office.

I want to personally thank you for accepting the invitation to participate in this qualitative research. The information you will be sharing, will be very valuable to my research project, international students in general and those who serve them in any capacity.

To facilitate our notetaking, I would like to request your permission to audio tape our interview today. I will be providing you with a release form for you to review and sign it if you agree. For your information, only researchers on this project will be privy to the tapes which will be destroyed after the recordings have been transcribed.

In addition, you must sign a form created to meet our human subject requirements. Basically, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm.

Thank you again for agreeing to participate.

Sincerely,

Samantha Lopez, ABD

APPENDIX D

Appendix D

Interview Protocol for Qualitative Research Analysis Interview Method

The interviews will be conducted on a one-to one by using the *currere* method by Pinar (1994) in four steps or moments: Regressive, Progressive, Analytical, and Synthetical.

Since the early 1970s, educators have endeavored to understand curriculum as autobiographical and biographical text.

The word curriculum in Latin is referred to as “*currere*”, meaning to run the course. According to Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman (1995) *currere* is a “a method by means of which students of curriculum could sketch the relations among school knowledge, life history, and intellectual development in ways that might function self-transformatively” (p. 515).

Using the method of *currere* in this qualitative research study, will provide a strategy for students to study the relationships between academic knowledge and their life history in the form of self-understanding and social reconstruction (Pinar, 2004, p. 45).

The *currere* method will be used in this research study to share the inner workings and the dynamics of my personal and the international student’s transformational changes in education. This study will be used to qualitatively analyze the student’s interview transcripts to better understand the educational meanings of time of their experiences as international students.

Participants:

The qualitative interviews will be performed with a sample of nine current international students from different continents. The sample for the structured interviews will be an arbitrary representation of the four major geographical world regions (Africa, Asia, Europe, and America) at this Hispanic Institution.

Student 1- Asia Gender – Nationality –	Student 2 - Asia Gender – Nationality -
Student 3- Europe Gender – Nationality –	Student 4- Europe Gender – Nationality –
Student 5 – America Gender – Nationality –	Student 6 – America Gender – Nationality –

Student 7 – Africa Gender – Nationality –	Student 8 – Africa Gender – Nationality –
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APPENDIX E

Appendix E

Qualitative Interview Questions

What is your gender?

What is your country of birth?

What is your nationality?

What is your classification?

What is your age?

“Regressive Step or Moment”- Remembering.

In the regressive step, the individual can look back and describe their past experiences. Every student has stories of their educational experiences that can provide the data for autobiographical reflection using the framework of *currere*. Your reflections on a personal educational experience models this framework as I illustrate each step. This first step, the “regressive step or moment” will encourage you to remember a particular education experience in the past. Remembering this moment in the past will help you to “create data” that will serve as the foundational material for self-reflection. Pinar (2004) assumed that one’s past affects present educational perceptions and practices. He described this regressive stage as a “discursive practice of truth telling ... to oneself” (Pinar, 2004, p. 55).

Can you please share a particular educational experience from your past?

Try to remember a story from your past that has had an impact in your present in regards to your education. In this question you can try to remember an experience related with school, your education, or experiences with teachers that inspired you or discouraged you. Try to use and remember any other school-related artifacts in relation to an educational experience in the past.

e.g. – describe your educational experience from the past

e.g. – describe any learning outcomes

e.g. – describe any other school-related artifacts in relation to an educational experience in the past that has had an important influence in your life.

“Progressive Step or Moment”- Postulate and Imagine. In the progressive step, the individual is encouraged to postulate and image possible experiences in the future.

The progressive moment offers an opportunity to think about the future. Pinar (1975, p.1) described this method as “the self-conscious conceptualization of the temporal, and from another perspective, it is the viewing of what is conceptualized through time.”

Where do you see yourself in the near future based on your current educational experience and background?

e.g. – imagine yourself in the near future based in your current educational experience and background.

e.g. – where do you see yourself working for?
e.g. – where is this educational experience leading you to?
e.g. – how has your college experience prepared you for your professional career?
e.g. – where or what would it be your ideal job? In your country? *In the United States?
*In another country other than U.S. and yours *with an authorized employment visa.

“Analytical Step or Moment”- Formulate the connection.

In the analytical step, the individual is encouraged to describe his or hers current educational experiences from the past and the present to formulate the interrelationships of both.

Why did you decide to pursue an academic degree in the United States?

e.g. – provide evidence of your main decision to pursue your studies abroad.

What motivated you to come to the United States and study in a country other than yours?

e.g. – describe specific reasons that motivated you to study abroad.

e.g. –describe specific education and professional goals.

What is the connection or interrelation of your current educational experience to your past ones?

e.g. – describe why you are here.

e.g. – describe what circumstances brought you here.

“Synthetical Step - Including all of the Moments.

In the synthetical step, the individual can extract its present existential meaning and the gained experiences from all of the prior steps. This last step will allow the student to have a deeper and richer understanding of the present. In this step, you will study the relations between your past academic experiences, your future possible experiences and the interrelationships.

What is the meaning of your present educational setting?

e.g. –describe how student success is defined in your personal experience.

e.g. –describe how satisfied are you with your current educational experience

How do you integrate with the three other forms into a comprehensive whole that includes the physical self?

e.g. – describe the whole picture making an interrelationship with your past, present, and future educational experiences, or moments?

e.g. – Describe yourself as a whole in relation to the other forms.

Have I made the right decisions of my present from my past and future educational experiences?

e.g. – describe your student satisfaction in relation to academics.

e.g. – describe examples of how your past, and present decisions will take you into the direction you want to go.

APPENDIX F

Appendix F

Qualitative Interviewer Notes

Interviewer: _____ Location: _____
_____ Date: _____ Length of Interview (in min): _____ Age: _____ Educational Level: _____
_____ Profession: _____ Family Status: _____

How did the interviewee appear to me?

Describe the atmosphere of the location?

Did the interviewee have a disposition to talk and share his/her experiences? Was the person motivated to participate in the interview?

Describe the gestures, eye contact, non-verbal, and any other signals.

How was the interaction during the interview? Was the person able to share difficult passages?

What are the three main points that the interviewee made?

APPENDIX G

Appendix G

Cultural & Academic Perspectives: An online survey on international students' experiences.

Start of Block: Student Online Consent

This survey is being conducted by Samantha Lopez (samantha.lopez@.....edu), a doctoral graduate student at this Hispanic serving institution. I am inviting you to participate in my research study that I am working towards my dissertation.

This research project has the main purpose to learn more about the academic and cultural perspectives of the international student population at this Hispanic serving institution in the Rio Grande Valley. This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) at this HSI.

This survey should take about 10-12 minutes to complete. Participation in this research is completely voluntary. You must be at least 18 years old to participate. If you are not 18 or older, please do not complete the survey.

All survey responses that we receive will be treated confidentially. However, given that the surveys can be completed from any computer (e.g., personal, work, school), we are unable to guarantee the security of the computer on which you choose to enter your responses. As a participant in our study, we want you to be aware that certain technologies exist that can be used to monitor or record data that you enter and/or websites that you visit.

Any individually identifiable responses will be securely stored and will only be available to those directly involved in this study. De-identified data may be shared with other researchers in the future, but will not contain information about your individual identity.

~~Your participation is very important as I am planning to share this information after the research project is completed to university officials. So please participate and make your voice be heard! Click on the "I agree" button to start the survey.~~

End of Block: Student Online Consent

Start of Block: Student Demographics

Q1 What is your country of birth?

▼ Afghanistan (1) ... Zimbabwe (1357)

Q2 What is your gender?

- ☐ Male (1)
- ☐ Female (2)
- ☐ Other (answer is optional) (3) _____

Q3 What is your age?

Q4 What is your student classification?

- ☐ Grad Student Ph.D./Ed.D. (1)
- ☐ Grad Student Master (2)
- ☐ Senior (3)
- ☐ Junior (4)
- ☐ Sophomore (5)
- ☐ Freshman (6)

Q5 How many languages do you speak?

- ☐ 1 (1)
- ☐ 2 (2)
- ☐ 3 (3)
- ☐ 4 (4)
- ☐ 5 + (6)

Q6 Please write the languages that you speak in the order of fluency. Ex: English, Spanish, French)

Q7 What is your current GPA (grade point average) ?

- ☐ Current, GPA - (1) _____
- ☐ I do not have a GPA yet; this is my first semester in college. (2)

End of Block: Student Demographics

Start of Block: Student Experiences

Q8 From 1 to 5, (1 being the least, 5 being the most), select from the following factors that influenced your decision to study in the U.S.?

	1 – Extremely unlikely (20)	2 – Unlikely (21)	3 – Neutral (16)	4 – Likely (19)	5 – Extremely likely (18)
Obtain a better quality education than your home country (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Develop global skills (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improve your English skills (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gain experience living and studying in another country/culture. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improve overall studies (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q9 How did you find out about this university?

- ☐ Internet (webpage, web add, etc.) (1)
 - ☐ Word of Mouth (heard from a colleague, spouse, friend, etc.) (2)
 - ☐ Printed add (poster, brochure, flyer, etc.) (3)
 - ☐ I am a legacy student from the Brownsville campus location (4)
 - ☐ I am a legacy student from the Edinburg campus location (5)
 - ☐ If other, (6) _____
-

Q10 What was your first impression of this university when you arrived?

- ☐ Excellent (1)
- ☐ Very Good (2)
- ☐ Good (3)
- ☐ Fair (4)
- ☐ Poor (5)

Q11 From 1 to 5, (1 being the least, 5 being the most) how does the university facilities meet your expectation?

- ☐ 1. Extremely unlikely (1)
- ☐ 2. Unlikely (2)
- ☐ 3. Neutral (3)
- ☐ 4. Likely (4)
- ☐ 5. Very likely (5)

Q12 What is your main campus?

- ☐ Brownsville (1)
 - ☐ Edinburg (2)
 - ☐ Combined (I take classes at both campuses) (3)
-

Display This Question:

If From 1 to 5, (1 being the least, 5 being the most) how does the university facilities meet your e... = 2.
Unlikely

Or From 1 to 5, (1 being the least, 5 being the most) how does the university facilities meet your e... = 3.
Neutral

Q13 If the university facilities do not meet your expectations? Please explain why?

Q14 From 1 to 5 (1 being the least, 5 being the most), what do you like more about the university?

	1 – Extremely unlikely (2)	2 – Unlikely (3)	3 – Neutral (4)	4 – Likely (5)	5 – Extremely likely (6)
Classrooms (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Buildings (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Administration Offices (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Green Areas (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student Union (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q15 How supportive has the International Office been during your experience as a student at this institution?

- ☐ Extremely supportive (1)
- ☐ Supportive (2)
- ☐ Neutral (4)
- ☐ Not supportive (6)
- ☐ Extremely not supportive (5)
-

Q16 Do you attend the cultural events organized by the International Office? Ex: Coffee & Donuts, New Lunar Year, International Education Week, Thanksgiving luncheon).

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Q17 How would you rate the quality of the events organized by the International Office?

- ☐ Excellent (2)
 - ☐ Very good (3)
 - ☐ Good (5)
 - ☐ Fair (6)
 - ☐ Poor (7)
-

Q18 From 1 to 5 (1 being the least, 5 being the most), please rate the services of the following offices on campus.

	1- Poor (1)	2- Fair (2)	3- Good (3)	4- Very good (4)	5- Excellent (5)
Academic Advising (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
U-Central (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student Rights & Responsibilities (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Career Services (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
International Office (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other: (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q19 Do you live on-campus at the student residence?

- ☐ Yes (1)
 - ☐ No (2)
-

Display This Question:

If Do you live on-campus at the student residence? = Yes

Q20 If you live on-campus, how do you rate the services at the student residence (Brownsville or Edinburg)?

- ☐ Excellent (2)
- ☐ Very good (5)
- ☐ Good (6)
- ☐ Fair (8)
- ☐ Poor (9)

Display This Question:

If Do you live on-campus at the student residence? = Yes

Q21 From 1 to 5, (1 being the least, 5 being the most), If you live on-campus, please explain your reason(s).

	1 – Extremely unlikely (1)	2 – Unlikely (2)	3 – Neutral (3)	4 – Likely (4)	5 – Extremely likely (5)
It is more convenient (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Safety and Security (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Academic Success (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To get the college experience (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More close to campus and its facilities (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Display This Question:

If Do you live on-campus at the student residence? = No

Q22 If you don't live on campus at the student residence, select the reason(s).

- ☐ It is expensive (1)
- ☐ I need more space (2)
- ☐ I will have more freedom (3)
- ☐ I live with my family (4)
- ☐ I want to be more independent and learn how to run my own house/apartment (5)
- ☐ Other (6) _____

Q23 Do you work on campus as an international student?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Q24 How valuable is the experience of working (on campus) while you are studying?

- ☐ Excellent (1)
- ☐ Very Good (2)
- ☐ Good (4)
- ☐ Fair (6)
- ☐ Poor (5)

Display This Question:

If How valuable is the experience of working (on campus) while you are studying? = Excellent

Or How valuable is the experience of working (on campus) while you are studying? = Very Good

Or How valuable is the experience of working (on campus) while you are studying? = Good

Q25 If on-campus employment is valuable for you, from 1-5 (1 being the least, 5 being the most) explain why.

	1 – Extremely unlikely (1)	2 – Unlikely (2)	3 – Neutral (3)	4 – Likely (4)	5 – Extremely likely (5)
on-campus employment is good for my financial status and well-being (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
on-campus employment is good for my professional experience in the near future (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
on campus experience is good for me to socially meet and engage other people (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
on campus employment is good for me to practice my English (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
other (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q26 Are you a member of a student organization at this institution?

- ☐ Yes - If yes, indicate which one(s). (11) _____
- ☐ No (12)

Display This Question:

If Are you a member of a student organization at this institution? = No

Q27 If you are not a member of a student organization from the following reasons please indicate what fits

your better.

- ☐ I don't have enough time (1)
- ☐ I have not found one that is in my interest (2)
- ☐ I don't want to commit to one (3)
- ☐ I don't have the personality (4)
- ☐ other - please explain (5) _____

End of Block: Student Experiences

Start of Block: Cultural Experiences

Q28 How long did it take you to culturally adjust to your new social environment?

- ☐ Less than 6 months (1)
- ☐ From 6-12 months (2)
- ☐ From 12-18 months (3)
- ☐ From 18-24 months (4)
- ☐ more than 24 months (5)

Q29 From 1 to 5, (1 being the least, 5 being the most), please indicate if you have asked help on campus for social/cultural adjustment?

- ☐ 1. Very unlikely (1)
- ☐ 2. Unlikely (2)
- ☐ 3. Neutral (3)
- ☐ 4. Likely (5)
- ☐ 5. Very likely (6)

Q30 How culturally competent do you consider yourself? (this is a trait that when a person is able to work,

interact with other people that are from different cultures and social backgrounds).

- ☐ Extremely competent (1)
- ☐ Very competent (2)
- ☐ Competent (3)
- ☐ Somewhat Incompetent (4)
- ☐ Extremely incompetent (5)

Q31 How tolerant do you feel in a social environment of uncertainty and ambiguity?

- ☐ Extremely tolerant (1)
- ☐ Very tolerant (2)
- ☐ Tolerant (3)
- ☐ Somewhat tolerant (4)
- ☐ Extremely intolerant (5)

Q32 Please indicate how your culture background is better defined from the following options?

- ☐ Collectivistic (is a society that emphasizes on the needs and the goals of the group) (1)
- ☐ Individualistic (is a society or a culture that emphasizes on the individual needs versus the group) (2)

Q33 How do you define the culture in the Rio Grande Valley?

- ☐ Collectivistic (1)
 - ☐ Individualistic (2)
-

Q34 Please choose the personality from A or B that best fits you (you can only choose one option).

- ☐ A. Clearly, assertive, tough, and focused on material success (1)
- ☐ B. Humble, kind, and concerned with the quality of life (2)

Q35 From 1 to 5, (1 being the least, 5 being the most) select the factor that you believe you have acquired the

most in your experience as an international student at this institution.

	1 – Extremely unlikely (1)	2 – Unlikely (2)	3 – Neutral (3)	4 – Likely (4)	5 – Extremely likely (5)
Learning more about the U.S. Culture (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learning a new language (English) (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learning a new language (Spanish) (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Accumulation of goods or material items (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learning more about the Hispanic culture (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q36 Do you feel a difference in the cultural environment from the Brownsville and Edinburg campuses?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)
- ☐ N/A (not applicable) (3)

Q37 Please describe each of the main campuses by using only one (1) word.

- ☐ Brownsville (1) _____
- ☐ Edinburg (2) _____

End of Block: Cultural Experiences

Start of Block: Academic Experiences

Q38 What is your major (field of study) of interest?

Q39 How long did it take you to adjust to your new academic environment?

- ☐ Less than 6 months (1)
- ☐ From 6-12 months (2)
- ☐ From 12-18 months (3)
- ☐ From 18-24 months (4)
- ☐ more than 24 months (5)

Q40 How difficult was for you to adjust to the new academic environment (testing, teaching, homework, class environment) as an international student at this institution?

- ☐ Very easy (2)
- ☐ Easy (4)
- ☐ Neutral (6)
- ☐ Difficult (7)
- ☐ Very difficult (5)

Q41 From 1 to 5, (1 being the least, 5 being the most), please indicate if you **experienced any difficulties in understanding the lectures (classes) in the following semesters.**

	1 – Very difficult (1)	2 – Difficult (2)	3 – Neutral (3)	4 – Easy (4)	5 – Very easy (5)
First Semester (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Second Semester (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Third Semester (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fourth Semester (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fifth Semester (14)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q42 From 1 to 5, (1 being the least, 5 being the most), please indicate if you have experienced some academic

difficulties.	1 – Extremely unlikely (1)	2 – Unlikely (2)	3 – Neutral (3)	4 – Likely (4)	5 – Extremely likely (5)
General language skills (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professor's accent (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technical terminology (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Class environment (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q43 From 1 to 5 (1 being the least, 5 being the most), please rate these factors when dealing with your academic courses.

	1 – Extremely unlikely (1)	2 – Unlikely (2)	3 – Neutral (3)	4 – Likely (4)	5 – Extremely likely (5)
Too much reading (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Too many quizzes/tests (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Too much writing (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Too much class participation (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Too many assignments in teams (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q44 From 1 to 5, (1 being the least, 5 being the most), how likely have you seek help on campus for academic

adjustment?

- ☐ 1. Extremely unlikely (2)
 - ☐ 2. Unlikely (3)
 - ☐ 3. Neutral (5)
 - ☐ 4. Likely (7)
 - ☐ 5. Extremely likely (8)
-

Q45 Have you taken online classes while pursuing your degree at this institution?

- ☐ Yes (1)
 - ☐ No (2)
-

Q46 Which modality do you feel more comfortable or enjoy the most academically?

▼ Online classes (1) ... Hybrid classes (4)

Q47 Would you consider the option of studying abroad for a semester or a mini term in the summer?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Q48

From 1 to 5 (1 being the least, 5 being the most), please indicate why would you like to participate in a

study abroad program?

	1- Strongly Disagree (1)	2 - Disagree (3)	3 - Neutral (4)	4 - Agree (7)	5- Strongly Agree (8)
Learn a new language (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Experience a new culture (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Study in a country that is connected to your heritage (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use the experience to advance in a current or future job (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visit exotic places (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q49 If you were to study abroad, what would be your preferred country to go to?

▼ Afghanistan (1) ... Zimbabwe (1357)

Q50 Based on your international student experience, how would you rate yours at this institution?

- ☐ Excellent (1)
- ☐ Very Good (2)
- ☐ Good (3)
- ☐ Fair (4)
- ☐ Poor (5)

End of Block: Academic Experiences

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Samantha Lopez earned a doctoral degree in Curriculum & Instruction with a Higher Education Specialization at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in May 2021. She was born in Brownsville, Texas, on February 25, 1979. Samantha earned a Bachelors Degree in Business Administration from the University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College in May of 2001. She also earned a Master in Business Administration from the University of Texas at Brownsville in May 2013. Samantha also had the opportunity to study abroad in France in 2011 at the Institut Supérieur du Commerce de Paris, a business school in Paris. Samantha has more than 20 years of extensive experience in higher education administration serving students, staff, and faculty. Samantha is a recipient of the “Outstanding Service Award to International Education” for her work in demonstrating outstanding performance of a sustained and serious nature of national impact based on her success in winning a Board of Alien Labor Certification Appeal (BALCA) case with the U.S. Department of Labor in 2011.

Her professional interests include international education, immigration regulations, and research about student services at higher education institutions.

Furthermore, Ms. Lopez is a current member of the Omicron Eta Chapter of Kappa Delta Pi (KDP) International Honor Society of Education, the National Association of International Educators (NAFSA), and the Association of International Recruitment Council (AIRC). Samantha Lopez defended her dissertation on April 22, 2021. She currently lives at 3341 Obsidian Dr., Brownsville, TX 78526, and her email address is samantha.lopez@utrgv.edu.