UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND AUSTRALIA

AN EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS OF SOCIOCULTURAL ADJUSTMENT AMONG FOUR MAJOR COHORTS AT A THAI UNIVERSITY

A Thesis submitted by

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Abstract

This series of inter-related studies, conducted at Mahidol University International College, intended to gain further insight into the international student adjustment experiences among four ethnic groups; Japanese, Korean, African American and Burmese in Thai higher education. The identification and description of positive and negative student sociocultural adjustment to international programs in Thailand has direct implications for program design, curriculum development, participant recruitment, marketing and ultimately to the assessment of student needs and goals. To that end, this research was informed by a pilot study which was designed with the intent of identifying which adjustment issues are of primary impact and which groups of international students experience the greatest adjustment demands. This was necessary as there are approximately four hundred international students attending MUIC each academic year from over fifty countries of origin. The pilot study employed Ward Sociocultural Adjustment Scale and confirmed the previous research which claimed that Western (White) students report the least adjustment barriers during the adjustment process. This led to the selection of the four ethnicities for further investigation using qualitative measures. In-depth interviews were conducted with sixty participants (fifteen from each ethnic group) to gain further insight into their adjustment experiences in Thailand. The data from these interviews was then analyzed and five themes emerged in the positive experience category for all of the ethnic groups involved in the research. However, the themes which emerged regarding the adjustment barriers were not uniformly agreed upon. The participants reported that their ethnic background was a major factor in their adjustment experiences in Thailand. Each group of participants reported different experiences of racialized or ethnically based interactions with the host nationals.

Given the insufficient accumulation of knowledge on the stages of adjustment or the range of factors involved in student sociocultural adjustment to international higher education within the Thai context, the primary purpose of this series of studies is to explore areas of higher education where scarce information is available. The choice of ethnicity as a primary area of exploration in relation to international student sociocultural adjustment experience is intended to avoid the homogenization of all international student experiences. Ethnicity and one's ethnic identity was chosen, as opposed to race or nationality, as ethnic identity is a multidimensional concept which is based on an individual's identification with a group's

behavior, history, culture, belief system and tradition with little importance being placed on national identity or country of birth. As previous research on international students tended to homogenize the American, European or Asian identity, this series of studies eschews such an approach and relies on each of the ethnic groups to share their perceptions of the international higher education system in Thailand.

To that aim, the research questions for this series of studies were:

1) How did international higher education in Thailand develop and evolve into the primarily Thai student centered yet expensive and elitist educational segment it is today?

2) How are the international visiting students from the four selected ethnicities adjusting to this system and perceiving their experiences in the new environment?

This series of studies makes an original contribution to knowledge in adjustment research by providing a thorough analysis of the experiences of ethnic group's adjustment to Thailand. The results of this investigative analysis of the causes of student adjustment issues can be further utilized in areas within the host country, will benefit multiple stakeholders including students, international relations departments and university programs recruiting international students as well as in orientation sessions prior to student departure from their home country. Additionally, the process of eliminating or decreasing stressors should create a more positive learning and travel experience for inbound students.

Certification of Thesis

This Thesis is entirely the work of Douglas Rhein except where otherwise acknowledged, with the sole authorship of the papers presented as a Thesis by Publication undertaken by the Student. The work is original and has not previously been submitted for any other award, except where acknowledged.

Dr Sang-Soon Park

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Statement of Contribution

The following articles in this thesis were completed solely by the author:

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List of articles not included in entirety in the thesis which were used as the basis for the introduction and summary of the papers above:

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List of Abbreviations

AAS	African American Students
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AUN	ASEAN University Network
CRT	Critical Race Theory
DEDU	Doctorate of Education
HBC	Historically Black College
HE	Higher Education
HREC	Human Research Ethics Committees
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IIE	International Institute of Education
ISDP	International Students Degree Program
MU	Mahidol University
MUIC	Mahidol University International College
NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council
PISA	Program for International Assessment
SES	Socioeconomic Status
SCAS	Sociocultural Adaptation Scale
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
QS	Quacquarelli Symonds

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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

This research presents the results of empirical assessments of the international study abroad experience from the perspective of four foreign ethnic groups of students in Thailand. This research was conducted at Mahidol University International College (MUIC) in Nakhon Pathom, Thailand. It is expected that the findings reported in this presentation of inter-related studies will have significant implications for international higher education programs in Thailand and for recruitment agencies or exchange student related businesses which facilitate the study abroad process in Thailand. An additional implication of this research is the need to revise institutional orientation programs which introduce sociocultural stressors and potential coping mechanisms. International relations departments would benefit from producing comprehensive international student orientation, pre-departure media packs and post arrival counseling coordination. In that regard, this research provides descriptive explanations of the problems from this limited and yet growing segment of students in Thailand.

The presentation of the results of this series of studies follows the PhD by publication approach in its showcasing of five papers centered on the topic of international higher education programs in Thailand. Paper One discusses the development of international education in Thailand and outlines the development of English language based English systems within Thailand. This chapter outlines the 150 year-long attempt by the Thai authorities to be perceived as a nation of development, which was to be achieved through emulation of Western models and standards. This was previously achieved by Thai students enrolling in Western universities; however, recently there has been a new trend of international programs opening throughout Asia and Thailand in particular. This has led to an increase in the number of students from abroad enrolling in Thai higher education programs and visiting temporarily in short term exchange and visiting student programs. Paper One sets the foundation for the need to further explore these students' experiences during their study abroad in Thailand. Paper Two provides a detailed literature review of the adjustment paradigm and explains the need to include ethnicity as a measure of study, particularly in the Thai context. Papers Three, Four and Five provide a detailed description of the sociocultural adjustment experiences of the four ethnicities included in this series of studies. The remaining section of this study is a conceptual discussion of the ethnicities

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adjustment experiences, a summary, limitations section and description of the need for further research on international student adjustment within Asia.

1.2.   Background

Globalization and the internationalisation of higher education has led to an increase in the number of students who travel abroad for unique education opportunities. Worldwide, the number of students who have migrated abroad to continue their studies has more than doubled between 2000 and 2014 from 2.1 million to over 5 million (OECD, 2016). In 2015-2016, 427,313 undergraduates were pursuing degrees abroad, which accounts for a 7.1% year-on-year increase (IIE, 2016a). Historically, the importance of the youth and student market has largely been ignored because of the assumption of its low market value; however, recognition of this segment and its importance has been steadily developing worldwide. The growth of international programs in Thailand is a testament to the importance of this group and there are many reasons for this change in educational provisioning. Foremost, there is a relationship between university revenues and the recruitment of international students. International students, unlike immigrants, tend to have a higher socioeconomic status and most (81%) rely on their families back home to be the primary supplier of tuition costs (IIE, 2016b). Traditionally, Europe, Australia and the United States have received the most interest from these international students; however Thailand continues to experience an increase in international student enrollment (OHEC, 2011)

International students require special attention and universities are making changes to accommodate the influx of students from outside the host country. As the global economy begins to shift from West to East and international student numbers increase in Asia, universities in Thailand are competing to develop this lucrative market. As the target market changes, the variety and organization of services offered to these international students changes. This process of institutional adaptation is referred to as the internationalisation of education. There is a particular need for Thai universities to adjust to students choosing to study in Thai higher education (HE) as Thai international programs offer visiting students an environment and culture which is far different from that to which most students are accustomed. Thus, adjustment is not seamless; students coming to Thailand are immediately confronted with social, cultural and pedagogical differences in terms of linguistic patterns, culturally entrenched social and educational hierarchies which are difficult for international

students to adapt to, dietary changes as well as domestic issues such as adaptation to cohabitation with host nationals and easily accessible transportation. All of these changes are potentially stressful and can negatively impact the sociocultural adjustment process.

Much of the preceding research in cross-cultural studies primarily analysed culture as the cause of maladjustment (Kirkman et al. 2006; Tsui, Nifadkar & Ou, 2007). However, emerging research has begun to call into question this cultural stability paradigm (Adams, 2005; Taras & Steele, 2010) and, as Erez and Gati (2004) point out, the traditionally conceived unilateral causal approach may well be redefined as bidirectional. Therefore, students are not the only group which should adapt; educators and their corresponding institutions of higher learning need to adapt to students from the traditional stereotyped Asian student role as passive to an interactive and participant based paradigm of learning with which many international students are familiar. These adjustment challenges create anxiety and stress among both teachers and students, but they are not insurmountable. Some students respond well to the stress and develop the appropriate coping mechanisms necessary to adapt while others do not. The experiences, stressors and coping mechanisms involved in this sociocultural adjustment process are explored in this research.

1.3. Rationale

International higher education in Thailand is experiencing a population decline and the number of open seats in classrooms continues to increase. For much of the twentieth century Thai higher education was focused on the quantitative aspect of educational provisioning (Rhein, 2016a). However, due to an aging population, Thailand is experiencing a decline in fertility rates. This decline is commonly seen as nations become more developed. While the enrolment ratio of students in Thai higher education is on the rise, the total number of annual enrollments has fallen due to changes in the population growth rates of school aged children. For instance, the Bureau of International Cooperation Strategy, an office within the Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC) reported that in 2013 there were 2,298,000 students enrolled in higher education institutions whereas in 2015 enrollment had dropped to 2,025,000 (OHEC, 2016). This is a decline of 273,000 seats or a 12% drop from the 2013 numbers. This gradual decline will have an impact on budgets and course offerings. It is foreseeable that enrollment statistics will continue to decline as population growth rates continue to decline.

The majority of tertiary students in Thailand attend Thai programs (OHEC, 2016) which are more affordable and often more prestigious. Given the expense associated with international programs, stakeholders are often left to consider the tradeoffs of studying abroad, investing in the emulously pricey international programs or attending Thai language degree programs. As annual enrollments continue to decrease many students will find it easier to gain access to these once competitive and prestigious programs, thus decreasing enrollment within the international colleges. A potential solution to the current demographic challenge can be found in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) economic and educational mission.

International programs in ASEAN would benefit from greater cooperation and mutual trust. Allowing students a choice of compatible international tertiary education with curriculums, grades and academic qualifications which are recognized regionally would facilitate greater inbound student flows and bolster cross border educational opportunities, both in terms of research and study opportunities. The promotion of student mobility within ASEAN would lead to greater cultural exchanges and regional harmonization. As the comparability and compatibility of education grew, the global student flows would follow thus creating a regional space for higher education. To complete this task greater collaboration is necessary among ASEAN organizations such as the ASEAN University Network (AUN), the ASEAN Secretariat and SEAMEO.

There are many dimensions in enhancing the internationalisation of an institution, but international student recruitment and retention is a fundamental aspect of the internationalisation process. Given the decline in Thai population growth rates, it is necessary for Thai international higher education to recruit more international students as either exchange or full time students. Thus, it is critical that institutions understand what factors are involved in student perception of and reaction to Thailand including student stress, anxiety, adjustment to social, cultural and academic settings and their overall impression of life in the host country. While many students are conceptually aware of culture shock very few have been briefed on adjustment. The analysis of adjustment and the factors which constitute international adjustment and adaptation can be divided into two areas; psychological (emotion) and sociocultural (behavioural) (Ward and Kennedy, 1999). The focus of this current work aims at identifying specific stressors which impeded sociocultural adjustment or negatively influenced their interactions with the host community while studying in Thailand.

A large body of research and anecdotal evidence from international students and sojourners supports the view that adjustment to a foreign country can be problematic and potentially impact psychological and emotional wellbeing. This series of studies adopts a sociocultural adjustment approach model of inquiry so as to explore the international student adjustment issues. This method was chosen based on current study abroad trends in Thailand which are most commonly short term experiences (usually one term or semester) and enrolment in multicultural international settings within the Thai context. While there are many challenges facing Thai higher education, internationalisation and the recruitment and retention of international students is essential if Thai international programs are to continue attracting visiting and exchange students (see Rhein, 2017). This series of studies further facilitates a much warranted discussion on the relationship between sojourner culture and ethnic identity and the host culture's perception of and reaction to that culture and ethnic identity. A further rationale for the study of sociocultural adjustment to short term study abroad is that contemporary student sojourners are not in-country for an extended time period which would allow for adaptation or acculturation models of inquiry.

This series of studies responds to the gap in available academic literature in respect to the study abroad experiences of various ethnic groups within an Asian setting. The focus of this inquiry is on furthering contemporary understanding of the complexities of international student's adjustment experiences in Thailand, rather than the promotion or continuation of sequential or stage based models of adjustment. The findings in this series of studies are intended to provide a source for critical reflection on the variables which impact adjustment and the role of sojourners ethnicity and identity in relation to the perceptions of those ethnicities and identities within the host country. Conducting an inquiry which necessitates critical reflection requires the researcher acknowledge the importance of adopting a social constructivist position which emphasizes the historical and ethnic relationships among the visiting students and the host nationals as most beneficial to understanding the contemporary international student adjustment paradigm in the Thai context. International relations, student affairs departments, study abroad coordinators and facilitators, university faculty and staff will all benefit from research which informs of the experiences and perceptions of the international students in this college. The results can be of further assistance in the creation of more inclusive international study abroad experiences for the ethnicities which participated in this

research.

1.4. Scope

International student relevance to higher education is increasing due to their ability to contribute economically through often exorbitant tuitions rates at many schools, their ability to enrich the cultural diversity of the classroom and campus, their contribution to a university's ranking based on current Times Higher Education and QS metrics which value international students and faculty and their ability to assist in the development of intercultural competence for all involved. However, many international students struggle with their pursuit of an international degree (Ozturgut & Murphy, 2009). The majority of research involving international students is conducted in Western nations. Yet, given the rapid expansion of internationalisation in Thai higher education, it has become important to gain further insight into the adjustment demands faced by various groups of students enrolling in Thai international programs. The primarily purpose of this research is to explore an area of education where limited knowledge exists, namely, four ethnicity groups international adjustment to Thai higher education. There remains insufficient attention to the full array of factors involved in international student sociocultural adjustment to schools in Asia but this exploratory analysis does lend to further understanding of specific stressors Japanese, Korean, African American and Burmese students face in Thai programs. In particular, this research fills the gap regarding the lack of available data addressing international student adjustment in Southeast Asia.

Much of the research on international student adjustment is conducted in Western contexts resulting in a gap of available academic literature in respect to the study abroad experiences of various ethnic groups within an Asian setting. As will be discussed further in this series of studies, the role of ethnicity greatly contributes to the perceptions of international students and is often implemented as the rationale for perceived prejudice and ethnocentricity. Therefore, this series of studies sought to elucidate the influence of ethnicity in regard sociocultural adjustment experiences in Thailand among sixty students from four ethnicities representing Asia and America.

1.5. Research Aims

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The purpose of this inquiry is to gain further knowledge of the short term international student adjustment experiences in Thai international higher education. Within the sojourner adjustment paradigm more broadly, the early work of of Lysgaard (1955), Oberg's (1960) and Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) emphasized stage based models of adjustment. These studies led to decades of research which focussed on the adaptation, acculturation and adjustment paradigm as is described in Chapter 3 which details the conceptual development of the studies presented herein. Perhaps the most famous of these models is the U-curve model which describes the initial honeymoon phase, the crisis phase, the recovery phase and finally the adjustment phase. Models such as these and the many variations which emphasized a u-curve theme have been in use for over fifty years and are used in multiple settings including cross-cultural training. The creation of these unifying models and working hypothesis which generalize the sojourners experience and allow for the classification of this experience based on time abroad is both convenient and practical. However, these models of sequential adjustment are often not supported by further research. Colleen Ward, who wrote the Sociocultural Adjustment Scale which described a similar U-curve subsequently observed "The U-curve has been on trial for now for almost 40 years, and the time is long overdue to render a verdict. Despite its popular and intuitive appeal, the U-curve model of sojourner adjustment should be rejected." (Ward et al, 1998, p. 290). Given the unreliability of the U-curve models of adjustment, alternative approaches to adjustment are necessary to understand the sojourner experience.

As such, the selection of ethnicity as a point of embarkation from the universalistic models of adjustment was chosen so as to compare the experiences of international students within the Thai international higher education context. To that aim, the research questions for this series of studies were:

1) How did international higher education in Thailand develop and evolve into the primarily Thai student centered yet expensive and elitist educational segment it is today?

2) How are the international visiting students from the four selected ethnicities adjusting to this system and perceiving their new environment?

Improving the educational environment at the host institution and decreasing cross-cultural educational adjustment issues will benefit multiple stakeholders including students, administrators, international relations departments and recruitment agencies. This series of studies can assist in pre-departure training and orientation sessions to assist in international

student adjustment as visiting student resiliency will increase if they can prepare for the stressors they may face while studying within the Thai context.

1.6. Introduction to International Education

History has shown that man has made near constant effort to travel the world in search of new cultures which offer economic advantages, scientific advancements, religious philosophies and an overall improvement in the quality of life. As Brickman (1965) observed, studying abroad is as old as written history. Traditionally, very few individuals had the ability to travel such great distances and yet for those who did there was potential for immense reward. As humanity progressed through various stages of development both literacy and numeracy gradually became more important. With each passing century movement across great distances became both easier and more commonplace which made cross-cultural contact far more prevalent.   The gradual breakdown of the time space barrier which began with the printing press and has rapidly accelerated the process of globalization has also impacted international education systems due to the developments in transportation systems and communication tools.

Formalization of education involving the establishment of schools or specific areas designated for educational purposes has existed for thousands of years. For much of this time education was international in nature. Students often traveled great distances to learn with the masters of art, war, logic, science, math and religion. Today, China is the largest exporter of students for international education and the United States is the largest receiver of international students (IIE, 2016b), but this has not always been the case. Larbi (1990) explains that there have been international students traveling to foreign lands, such as India, for as long as two thousand years. These students were taking advantage of the opportunities provided to them if they were willing to take the often perilous journey to these educational institutions of antiquity.

Within the educational paradigm this process is often conceptualized as the globalization or internationalisation of education and the different meanings of these processes have become important themes in higher education research (Enders, 2004; van der Wende, 2001). While much of the research on internationalisation focuses on established programs primarily in English speaking nations, many developing countries host a significant number of

international students. These countries seek to attract foreign students to improve the quality and cultural composition of the student body, to gain prestige, and to earn income. Thus, globalization has become a powerful force with profound effects on the internationalisation of higher education throughout the world.

The multifaceted processes and dimensions of internationalisation in higher education are 'integrating an international dimension into the purpose, goals, functions and delivery of higher education' (Knight, 2007, p. 134). One of the key elements of internationalisation is cross-border education, which refers to student, faculty, institutional, and program mobility (Daniel, Kanwar, & Uvalíc-Trumbíc, 2009). Knight (1999) argues that "globalization can be thought of as the catalyst while internationalisation is the response, albeit a response in a proactive way" (p. 14). She later defined internationalisation as the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education (Knight, 2003).

1.7. International Education in Thailand

It is important to note that from inception, Thai higher education has borrowed directly from international models in both spirit and nature. While Thailand takes pride in the claim that it was never colonized by the West (Fry, 2002), the foundations and practices of Thai higher education can be traced to Europe and the United States. It is argued that countries borrow from other national education systems to learn from best practice (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004), however the Thai culture of borrowing while maintaining claims to 'Thainess' is an important aspect of the unique nature of the Thai higher education system.   A comprehensive description of the development of Thai higher education in Chapter 2 is intended to allow for a more thorough conceptual development and greater insight regarding the contemporary sociocultural adjustment issues as experienced by the international students. Therefore, this analysis of the setting of this research project, the international Thai higher education system, will begin with a chronological exploration of the developments in Thai higher education from the nineteenth century to modern concerns with an emphasis on the international foundation of such developments. This contextual foundation is crucial to the development of a perspicuous interpretation of the experiences international students in Thailand encounter during their tenure abroad.

The majority of international students who come to Thailand stay in the country for between 14-16 weeks, thus they have very little knowledge of the history or culture of Thailand, particularly compared to their knowledge of Europe or North America, and they do not speak the local language. In more longitudinal studies such as Byram and Feng's (2006) book, which tracked international students over an academic year or during a four-year degree, models of adaptation and acculturation are more commonly implemented. However, it is necessary to approach their experience from an adjustment paradigm, as four months is too limited a time range to measure this continuum from the adaptation perspective as adaptation is often based on years abroad as opposed to months (Berry, 2006).

The 20th century was the century of massification of education and allowed for tremendous social and intellectual development. This was also the period when the rise of English language education became a focal point within the Thai system. The growth of international programs and the pursuit of internationalisation have led to a massive increase in foreign students and teachers within the Thai higher education system. This influx of foreign ideas, ethnicities and faces often challenges the concept of Thainess and creates challenges for students and faculty. The need to balance the pace of internationalisation with the retention of local values and concepts of the Thai identity is problematic for many. The international programs in Thai higher education pose a challenge to traditional Thai culture and yet that is what is needed if the country is going to successfully reconcile the desire for the past with the ambition for the future. As informal ambassadors of their home countries and their ethnicities visiting international students at MUIC are often the first to experience this process and are thus the first group to experience the host's approaches to, perception of and treatment of various international students.

1.8. Thesis Organization

This thesis is comprised of six chapters. The organization was chosen to facilitate the gradual immersion into the subject area, international student adjustment to Thai higher education in the Thai context, in a logical and coherent sequence. The organization is as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter introduces the research rationale, scope, aims, the justification to conduct this

research and a brief introduction to international education in general and international education in Thailand more specifically.

Chapter 2: Background and History

This chapter provides a thorough description, from the chronological perspective, of the development of international higher education programs in Thailand. The inclusion of this article is intended to provide a detailed background on a topic which is largely unexplored in the literature on international programs and higher education systems.

Paper One: Rhein D. (2016). Westernisation and the Thai higher education system: past and present. *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 48(*3*), 261-274.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

This chapter focuses on the literature contributing to the development of adjustment research and the gradual transition from sequential universalistic models of adjustment to less universal approaches which emphasize specific characteristics of the sojourner in relation to the host country environment. This chapter provides a detailed justification for the inclusion of ethnicity as a specific focal point of this research.

Paper Two: Rhein, D. (2018). International Students in Asia: Shifting From Universal Models to an Ethnicity Matters Approach, manuscript was accepted for publication pending revision in the *Journal of Research in International Education.* The revised manuscript was submitted in May 2018.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter describes the reason for the chosen qualitative paradigm, the setting and the role of the pilot study in the inclusion of ethnicity and sociocultural adjustment as the focal area for this thesis and the process of data gathering and analysis.

Chapter 5: Results

This chapter contains three articles which address the scope, aims and justification for this research. Each article in this chapter analyses one or more ethnic identities and their experiences in the Thai international program and thus contributes to the advancement of our

understanding of the role of ethnicity in the sociocultural adjustment process in Thailand.

5.1   Paper Three

Rhein, D. (2018). Sociocultural adjustment and coping strategies of Korean and Japanese students in a Thai international college. *International Journal of Asia Pacific Studies*, 14(*1*), 57-78.

5.2   Paper Four

Rhein, D. (2018). African American student sociocultural adjustment to Thai international higher education. *Globalisation, Societies and Education,* 11*(2),* 1-14.

5.3.   Paper Five

Rhein, D. (2016). Burmese sociocultural adjustment to Thai international programs: An analysis of the impact of historical revisionism. *Educational Research for Policy and Practice*, 15(3), 189-208.

Chapter 6: Findings

This chapter is an analytical summary of the data presented in chapter 5 with an emphasis on the importance of ethnicity and culture in sociocultural adjustment experiences of international students within the Thai context.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Discussion

This chapter summarizes the results of the series of studies and the contributions to adjustment research within the Thai context. Limitations and recommendations for future studies are provided to facilitate future empirical inquiry.

1.9. Conclusion

In conclusion, the growth of international higher education in Asia and Thailand in particular necessitate a greater degree of awareness of the sociocultural adjustment experiences of visiting and exchange students within this context. Previous research on international students abroad has revealed that this group requires special attention in regard to academic support, service provisioning and social adjustment assistance. As the number of international students recruited from Thai schools continues to decline it is necessary to recruit from abroad and this

requires internationalisation and the recruitment and retention of international students. Therefore, the focus of this empirical inquiry furthers the current conceptualization of the complexities of experiences which international students encounter during their time in Thailand. As opposed to much of the research on this phenomenon, this study eschews the sequential or stage based models of adjustment and instead focuses on the role of ethnicity as it relates to the sociocultural adjustment experiences of international students in Thailand.

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Chapter 2 Westernisation and the Thai higher education system: past and present

2.1. Introduction

This chapter is the first publication of this research which provides an account of the historical development of international higher education within the Thai context. The purpose of this research is to articulate the concept of international education from the Thai perspective as well as the notion of borrowing from best practice abroad while also retaining Thainess. This chapter discusses the events which led to the internationalisation of Thai higher education following Western models and, in response to RQ1 of the study, outlines the evolution of traditional international educational provisioning to the modern paradigm within Thailand. Concepts such as modernization and the transition from elite based international education provided abroad to mass based international education provided internally are discussed. Further exploration of the delicate and often problematic notion of balancing the potential impacts of internationalisation and Westernization on culture and society while also maintaining claims to distinctively Thai characteristics which should be maintained are included as a prelude to the outcomes presented later in this research where it is argued that this delicate balance of the traditional Thainess with aspects of globalization and modernity influence many of the international students sociocultural adjustment struggles.

Westernisation and the Thai higher education system: past and present

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ABSTRACT

This historical study of higher education in Thailand argues that from the onset, it has been based on international models in scope and nature. The impact of colonisation across South and East Asia created the pressures necessary for Thailand to establish higher education programmes. From the nineteenth-century formation of palace schools to the rapid growth of international higher education programmes today, the system is designed to assist Thailand in the development process through educational, social and economic modernisation while maintaining and recreating concepts of Thainess. Whereas in the nineteenth century the goal was to facilitate Thai independence from imperialist intentions, today, the goal is to participate within an economy dominated by globalisation trends and massive expansion. A chronological description of the international nature of Thai higher education begins with the initial formation of higher education institutions in the mid-nineteenth century and concludes with the changes taking place in 2015.

2.2. Introduction

The purpose of this article is to describe the evolution of Thai higher education and to describe how from the inception, Thai higher education has borrowed directly from international models in both spirit and nature. The research employs a document based historical analysis of higher education in Thailand. A wide array of primary source materials are used including academic journals from international and Thai scholars, gov- ernment reports and books. Thailand was chosen as the case in point as Thai higher edu- cation has undergone dramatic changes throughout the evolution of its development in the nineteenth century to today.

Formalisation of education involving the establishment of schools or specific areas designated for educational purposes has existed for thousands of years. Larbi (1990) explains that there have been international students travelling to foreign lands, such as India, for as long as two-thousand years. This process is often conceptualised as the globalisation or internationalisation of education and the different meanings of these processes have become important themes in higher education research (Van Der Wende 2001, Enders 2004). The multifaceted processes and components of internationalisation

in higher education are 'integrating an international dimension into the purpose, goals, functions and delivery of higher education' (Knight 2007, p. 134). One of the key elements of

internationalisation is cross-border education, which refers to 'student, faculty, institutional, and program mobility' (Daniel *et al*. 2009). Knight (1999) argues that 'globalization can be thought of as the catalyst while internationalisation is the response, albeit a response in a proactive way' (p. 14). Knight later defined internationalisation as the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education (Knight 2003).

It is evident that countries borrow from other national education systems to learn from best practice (Steiner-Khamsi 2004); however, this research outlines the historical events which highlight the Thai culture of borrowing while maintaining claims to 'Thainess' and the unique nature of the Thai higher education system. While Thailand takes pride in the claim that it was never colonised by the West (Fry 2002), the foundations of Thai higher education can be traced to Europe and the USA.

The traditional historical representation of the development of Thai education is based on a procedural phenomenon focusing on national modernisation and broader national reform whereby the national education system began developing the primary level which was followed by secondary and lastly, the development of higher education (Wyatt 1969). However, this article illustrates how international higher education in Thai- land began as a tool for the elites and in the late-nineteenth century developed into trans- national education only to become available locally in the twentieth century. Therefore, this article will begin with a chronological exploration of the developments from the nine- teenth century to modern concerns with an emphasis on the international foundation of such developments.

2.3. History and development of international education in Thailand

The origins of international education in Thailand can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century and the colonial pressures which influenced Thailand at that time. The historical factors which shaped this change were both political and economic. It is important to consider the success that Britain had in colonising nations in South East Asia and forcing other nations into trade agreements. The British Empire reached its apogee in the nineteenth century and continued its expansion via the pursuit of new markets. As the British continued to press from both the west (following the colonisation of Burma from 1824 to 1948) and the south (British Malaya) and the French to the east (Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos), Thailand (Siam at the time) was in a rather precarious position. To keep both the British and the French at bay, attempts were made to promote the economic, educational, social and cultural sovereignty through the modern- isation of the Thai state elite, specifically the aristocracy. It was this colonial pressure which led the Thai leadership at the time, Rama 4 King Mongkut (1851−1868), to reposi- tion the nation as a civilised land unsuitable for colonisation. The Thai pursuit to be per- ceived as civilised in the minds of the colonising forces had thus begun.

Up until this time, international education in Thailand was mainly considered to be language training through religious groups such as English and American missionaries. Watson (1980) argues that Rama 4 supported the Western missionaries' educational activities with the exception of conformity to Christianity. It was argued that upholding

Bhuddist values was of primary importance to the state. This represents the first of many instances when Westernisation and maintaining Thainess impacted the education system. Many readers may be familiar with the famous book Anna and the King, which is based on this era in Thai history. Anna Leonowens (born in the British colony India) began teaching the royal court in Thailand in 1862. Following her dismissal from this position, Leonowens wrote two controversial books on her experiences in Thailand and these later became the basis for the famous Rodgers and Hammerstein play 'The King and I' which was followed by two Hollywood films in 1956 and 1999. Her books and the subsequent plays are examples of what Said (1978) labelled as Orientalism which often combines typically colonial conceptions of modernity with patronising interpret- ations of the East and often racist characterisations of the people. Both films were banned in Thailand.

As the colonial powers continued to squeeze Thailand, there was a royal transition and in 1868, Rama 5 King Chulalongkorn ascended the throne. Under the leadership of King Chulalongkorn, Thailand began a rapid social modernisation process which included the refashioning of the Thai education system. An integral aspect of education at this time was the development of a national identity and a sense of national individuation which was seen as essential to the development of a market economy (Wyatt 1969). The role of edu- cation at this time was no longer merely political, as it incorporated economic and social needs through the creation of a common culture among the Thais. The importance of edu- cation was further reinforced by the systems' creation of culture while also producing social elite beyond the monarchy which could disseminate and perpetuate this new social order. Therefore, then as is now, education was key to social and economic advance- ment. It is clear that the internationalisation process had begun with a clear focus on creat- ing a new intercultural approach to education in Thailand.

2.4. Late-nineteenth and twentieth century

The history of Thai education, particularly international education, during the late-nine- teenth and early twentieth century, can be understood within the history of the building of a nation-state. The consolidation of power under the absolute monarch King Chulalong- korn was justified by the need to avoid colonisation through the promotion of a civilised populace. According to Peleggi (2002), the King saw purpose and reason in sending the royal princes abroad for education, primarily to England. The higher education system was reserved for the administrative and military elites, often nobility, while the primary system was modelled on Bhuddist temple-based education models where Thai language, civilised behaviour, speech and the history of the unification of Thailand were of primary importance (Wyatt 1969). As the rise of the nation-state and colonial influences assisted in the further development of international education within Bangkok, King Chu- lalongkorn, a former student of Leonowens, established various government schools to train members of his extended family and other leading families in Thailand to assist in national administrative issues. These programmes were established at the end of the nine- teenth century and taught English and various other subjects in English to the future mili- tary and social leaders of Thailand. Some examples of these schools include Suankulap, Suan Anand (which later became Suanthalai) and the New School. King Chulalongkorn sought to modernise the Thai state through the establishment of Anglo-vernacular

programmes, which could compete with the Christian missionary schools that were aggressively Christianising members of the nobility and extended members of the royal family. While King Chulalongkorn had at least 77 children, it was one of his sons Rama VI King Vajiravudh who ascended the throne in 1910 following the death of his father. King Vajiravudh, like many of the sons of Chulalongkorn, was taught English at a young age and went on to complete his studies in Europe. King Vajiravudh continued with educational expansion from 1909 to 1921. The number of schools increased from 131 to 4,026, the number of teachers from 712 to 6,903, and the number of students from 14,174 to 241,508 (Watson 1980).

In 1917, the first university, Chulalongkorn University, founded by King Rama VI, emphasised the humanities, law and economics, which formed the core of the curriculum, designed with the intention to produce dedicated and efficient civil servants selected from the elite families of that era (Wyatt 1969). The university was based on French and German models (Watson 1980) designed to train the elites to work within the bureaucracy and the development of the nation internally (Baker and Phongpaichit 2009). Further- more, the consolidation and improvement of public higher education were an important strategy employed to serve the royal project of strengthening and expanding the nation- state (Mounier and Tangchuang 2010). The nations' first university clearly intended to enhance the capability of the children within the aristocracy and nobility and contribute to the development of various departments and ministries which would represent Thai- land on the global stage. Many of these children were taught English at a young age and were later sent to Europe thus offering further substantiation of the international spirit of higher education for the elite.

Upon returning to Thailand in the 1920s, many of the internationally educated nobility carried with them concepts of Western culture such as democracy, meritocracy, civil service, universal law and scholasticism. Some of the returning students also carried resentment regarding the clear lack of all of the above. It was their international edu- cational background which contributed to the end of the absolute monarchy in 1932. Pridi Banomyong who was educated at the Sorbonne and was a leading architect of the 1932 coup which ended 150 years of absolute monarchy in Thailand established Thamma- sat University (Translation − the University of Ethics and Politics) in 1934 with the goal of furthering the Thai understanding of the rule of law and democracy. Thammasat embo- died elements of both the English (Watson 1980) and French university system (Osatharom 1990). The role of nobility such as Pridi is further evidence of the impact of international education on the history of Thailand. His promotion of universal values, civil liberties, meritocracy and the abandonment of elitist militaristic regimes or position through ascription have yet to be realised in Thailand today but continue to be a focal point in liberal arts programmes throughout the nation.

Following the end of the Second World War, international education in Thailand began a new stage of development. European standards and global leadership began to take a back seat to American goals and the fight against communist expansion (Wyatt 2003). Between the 1850s and 1950s, the role of education was largely centred on fending off the colonial powers through Westernisation/modernisation and civilisation-based models, the needs of the state and administrative issues. Yet, for most Thais, higher edu- cation was still a one-tier system with limited access for the non-elite. However, in the 1950s, there was an increase in the international programmes available and a gradual

transition to incorporate concepts such as international citizenship and international knowledge within the local education system.

2.5. Rapid growth of international programmes

Thai higher education was designed and initiated based largely on Western influences initially caused by imperialism and the threat of colonisation from the British and the French. While the threat of direct colonial subjugation may have subsided, the influence of Western forces persisted in Thai higher education. Following the Second World War, the threat of communism was spreading throughout South East Asia and Thailand quickly sided with the Western nations in support of capitalism. This decision allowed Thailand to experience a rapid increase in foreign investment and economic growth, thus increasing the necessity of internationalisation. Due to increased trade, investments and the necessary labour requirements, the Thai bureaucracy was faced with many challenges to meet the demands of the international business and political community (Pasuk and Baker 1998). By the 1980s, a gradual deregulation of public universities was introduced via the implementation of two strategies: self-reliance and self-regulation. To maximise potential income sources, the Thai public universities were given the opportunity to open 'special' or 'full-fee' programmes during the sixth plan (1987–1991) (Ministry of University Affairs 1992, p. 197). Within this plan, international schools began to flourish as they could rely solely on the tuition fees from students. International tuition fees are dramatically more than tuition fees in a Thai programme which depend on government subsidies to keep tuition affordable for the masses. The first 15-year plan on higher education in Thailand (1990–2004) was introduced with all the necessary buzzwords of the era including 'internationalisation' 'economic competitiveness' and 'international-level competence' (Ministry of University Affairs 1991). It was thought that this process of internationalisation would be the impetus of Thailand's rapid ascent as a leading industrialised nation (Amornwich and Wichit 1997) and in the 1990s, Thailand did see extraordinary economic growth which acted to buttress calls for further internationalisation (Jansen 1997). During this period of economic growth, higher education and more specifically international programmes experienced a rapid boom. While there was some concern regarding the standard of education provided, it was believed that this internationalisation process would increase academic standards and offer even greater economic returns. Given the economic benefits of this internationalisation process, the government did little to modernise the political, social and legal development within Thailand (Chai-Anan 2001). Thailand was celebrating great economic growth, prosperity, decreased social unrest and rapid quantitative increases in educational enrolment.

2.6. The crisis – internationalisation and self-sufficiency

Throughout the twentieth century, Thailand transitioned from an absolute monarchy to a series of military dictatorships and occasionally with democratic governance. Regardless of the political situation, Thailand did experience particularly impressive economic development. However, the accelerated economic growth did not last and in 1997, Thailand began to feel the pressures of uncontrolled lending, a real estate bubble, crony capitalism and the detrimental effects of panic among investors and creditors. In June 1997, the government

floated the Baht and Thailand entered a new period of uncertainty. Thailand saw the economic problems as caused by outsiders, specifically the International Monetary Fund, unethical foreign investors and currency manipulators. Foreign meddling was blamed for the economic collapse and those in power quickly started to back away from the buzz words so commonly espoused just a few years earlier. While higher education enrolment increased, so too did the number of international programmes (Mounier and Tang- chuang 2010) and yet, the Thai government began the process of temporarily backing away from the internationalisation process. Lao (2015) persuasively argues,

Culturally, since its inception, Western models and concepts have been used as the standards of 'excellence' or 'civilization'. In Thailand, modernization has been an equivalent of Westernization. The quest for modernity, to be more Westernized, and to become more civilized, has always been the major reason for policy formation and implementation in Thailand. (p. 39)

The eighth higher education development plan (1997–2001) began to focus on both regionalisation and internationalisation. The ninth plan (2002–2006) clearly demonstrated a focus of the state's agenda on local wisdom. It demonstrated an attempt by the state to mix the 'market' concept with local values (Ministry of University Affairs 2002, p. 16). At this stage, Thai higher education took on a decidedly ambivalent nature as Thai society faced a dilemma between two diverging directions: 'seeking a balance of autonomy and dependency, of idealism and pragmatism, and of economic competitiveness and cultural self-reliance' (Witte 2000, p. 242). When Thai educators discuss internationalisation, there is a sense of necessity to keep up with the trends and to stay modern and yet, there is also an undercurrent of fear and anxiety regarding the unintended impact and possible erosion of the much-cherished Thai culture. As Watson (1989) argued, Thai leaders have always 'used, adapted and modified foreign ideas' (p. 64) and yet, national pride and cultural maintenance are paramount to the Thai identity. There have long been calls for balancing the forces of internationalisation with localisation and the need to protect the local from the pressures of the international. Falk (1992) had predicted such concerns and claimed 'this coincides with the nature of internationalization, which might either increase the nation's prosperity and security or increase the vulnerability of a state to economic and political forces beyond its control' (p. 35). Current internationalisation efforts illustrate the government's attempt to find a 'middle way' in which internationalisation can contribute to the Thai higher education system. Therefore, the next section of this article will discuss international programmes in Thailand today.

2.7. International mobility and programmes in Thailand today

Enrolment in higher education in Asia has witnessed dramatic growth over the last 15 years. This is largely explained by the result of primary and secondary school participation rates, increasing demand by the society and economy for specialised human resources and labour demands, and the perceived importance of advanced education in subsequent life opportunities (e.g. ADB 2011, World Bank 2012). Over the last 15 years, private higher education has been the fastest-growing sector of higher education. A result of the government promotion of private providers in higher education and the fairly consistent growth of private higher education institutions has meant that the overall growth of higher eduation is more pronounced in Asia (Levy 2010).

The global financial crisis which began in 2008 has had an impact on Thailand's higher education sector via increased unemployment among graduates, a reduction in funding for higher education, and a downward trend in student loans. The crisis has led to an inward-looking solution and strengthened the country's resistance to the Western paradigm (UNESCO 2012). Accordingly, the goal of localisation has continued in the second long-range higher education plan (2008–2022) and currently serves as an alterna- tive national development strategy and a political discourse for responding to the increased tensions of today's world (Commission in Higher Education 2008).

However, international programmes in Thai higher education continue to set tuition fees often at five times the rate of a Thai programme which is assisted by state funds. This has led to a sudden increase in the availability of international programmes for those who can afford this pricey alternative to a college education. This trend of full-fee programmes continues to date. As international programmes compete for market share, Thailand has experienced the introduction of twining programmes such as the highly suc- cessful Sasin programme at Chulalongkorn University, which is in partnership with Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management and the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

Chulalongkorn has also introduced joint degree programmes such as the undergraduate degree in psychology which requires students to spend two years in Thailand completing their general education requirements and the subsequent two years in Australia. Many other international programmes have entered the market including Stamford International University, Webster International University, St. Theresa International College, St. John's University and Raffles International College. The cost of such programmes is far beyond the reach of middle-class Thai families.

2.8. Push–pull factors

McMahon (1992) and Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) suggested that the flow of international students was the result of a combination of 'push and pull' factors. On the one hand, push factors operate within the source country and initiate the students' decision to undertake international study: on the other hand, pull factors operate within a host country to make that country relatively attractive to international students (Mazzarol and Soutar 2002). The dual pressures of globalisation and educational liberalisation have allowed for more cross-border educational opportunities. These pressures have also contributed to the rapid development of new programmes and more competition among providers. Altbach and Knight (2007) claimed that currently, 'international higher education initiatives exist in almost every country especially the large English-speaking [developed] nations' (p. 294). The increasing spread, significance and role of international higher education (HE) 'as a new powerhouse and engine' of economies wishing to stay competitive in the global economy are fueled by the large numbers of students − domestic as well as those willing to travel across international borders − to expand their horizons and opportunities beyond the local context (Stiasny and Gore 2012, p. xv).

Within the present educational milieu, international education is on the rise with more Thais going abroad each year, more Thai students choosing to study in international programmes within Thailand as well as more foreign students coming to study in inter- national programmes in Thailand. Some students who choose to study abroad may have a record of academic success in their homeland and are recruited or receive scholar- ships to study abroad (Thomas and Althen 1989). Other reasons why students choose to study in international programmes within the Thai context may be the belief that this international exposure will lead to the enhancement of a more global outlook and perhaps increase job opportunities (NCES 2005). UNESCO (2006) reported that students leave their countries to study abroad for several reasons, including: the experience of studying and living abroad as preparation for an increasingly globalised world; lack of access to tertiary education in their countries of origin; or the opportunity for better quality education than that offered in their home countries. Research by Van Hoof and Verbeeten (2005) found that students who participated in student exchange programmes between January 2001 and May 2003, both in the USA and other parts of the world reported the three most important reasons for studying abroad as: (1) 'it is/was a good opportunity to live in another culture'; (2) 'it is/was a good opportunity to travel'; and (3) 'I liked the country my exchange programme was located in'.

The influence of family has been extensively reported as a key push factor which impacts the choices of international education (Lawley 1993, Smart and Ang 1993, AEIF 1997, Duan 1997, Jolley 1997, Mazzarol and Soutar 2002). It should be noted, however, that two aspects of family influence, programme recommendation and financial support, are most commonly cited. The second important variable is socio-economic status (SES). Most studies (e.g. Manski and Wise 1983, Carpenter and Fleishman 1987, Stage and Hossler 1989) placed family SES under the heading family financial status, types of family and parental education. The international programmes within Thai col- leges serve mainly Thai students. While the number of students from abroad is increasing, students accounted for between about 85% and 98% of the total enrolment in Thai inter- national programmes (Pad 2005). According to the Office of the Higher Education Com- mission (2011) in 2010, the percentage of international students from abroad increased 5.7% from 2009; yet, more than half are from Asia (mainly China, Laos and Myanmar). Historically and presently, international education, whether in Thailand or abroad, is reserved for the wealthy.

2.9. Pull factors

The great pull for Thai students within international higher education in Thailand is the availability of English language tuition. The demand for strong English skills begins at a young age and continues throughout the education process and on to the employment recruitment process. As such, Thai companies are actively recruiting applicants with the strongest English competency. The recent prioritisation of English competency can be explained by the country's inferior 'position in the international system' and its conse-

quent need to embrace the world's official academic and business language (see Ehara 1992, p. 272, Hook and Weiner 1992, p. 1, Horie 2002). As foreign direct investment continues and Thailand prepares for the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), both private and public companies are competing for access to fresh graduates with strong English language skills.

A second factor which pulls Thais into international programmes at home is the afford- able access to an English-based curriculum often taught by native English speakers at a heavily discounted cost when compared to programmes in Australia, America, England

and Canada. For those parents who do not have the means to send their children abroad for a four-year degree, international schools within Thailand can fulfil many of their educational needs. It must be understood that most international schools in Thailand are at least triple but often five times the cost of a Thai language programme but this is still a fraction of the total cost of sending the Thai student to an English-speaking nation for   a four-year programme.

A third pull factor for Thai students to enter international programmes is the social advantages which are often more important than the actual knowledge attained from completing a degree. Social status and having the right connections are a necessity within the Thai context. Job acquisition is often based on social connections and promotion based on ascription is the norm. Another pull factor is the irony of cultural supremacy. Within Thai culture, there exists a duality of attraction to Western thought, language and civilisation which is diametrically opposed by a repulsion of many Western value systems. While many Thais may feel both politically and economically inferior to the West, there is   also a spiritual, moral and cultural superiority. This West versus non-West dichotomy becomes problematic within a culture with 'admiration and aspiration to assimilate Western culture, values and lifestyle' (Lao 2015, p. 7).

To date, the developed countries have been the main financial beneficiaries, as they control the franchises of their exported academic programmes, act as 'international accreditors or quality guarantors, or [as] controlling partners in "twinning" arrangement', often with middle-income countries in Asia and Latin America that look to them to fulfil their domestic demand for quality international HE that they cannot provide (Altbach and Knight 2007, p. 294). The multitude of factors which contributes to student mobility all lead to one conclusion, an increase in the numbers which corresponds to the increase   in economic considerations (Knight 2004). As ASEAN integration and the AEC are introduced, Asia is expected to experience further growth of international programmes and student mobility.

2.10. International programmes in Thailand today

In Thailand, international student mobility continues to increase in all levels of higher education. This is clearly the case as several private and public organisations are actively competing for and promoting international educational services. According to the Office of the Education Council, at the tertiary level, a total of 844 international programmes were offered in 2007 by 53 higher education institutions: 30 public universities and 23 private universities (Office of the Education Council 2004–2008). In 2003, there were approximately 4100 foreign students in Thai higher education; however, by 2009, that number had grown to over 19,000 foreign students studying in public (11,177) and private (7875) higher education institution under the supervision of the Office of Higher Education Commission (2010). The majority of foreign students came from Asia, particularly China. As international student mobility increased, so too did the inter- national programmes. The significant increase in the programmes, from 14 in 1984, to 981 in 2010, both Thai public and private higher education institutions offered a total of 981 international programmes at undergraduate and graduate levels, that is, 342 undergraduate programmes, 614 graduate programmes and 25 other degree programmes. The pro- grammes are divided into 699 in public universities and 282 in private universities

(Office of the Higher Education Commission 2011, p 12). The number of international programmes continues to increase to accommodate the needs of both Thai and foreign students. Overall, the flow of students grew rapidly over the past decade and continues to show little sign of decreasing considering the ASEAN plans in the decades ahead. As Vincent-Lancrin (2008) argues,

globalization, increased migration flows of all types, the strategies followed by institutions of higher learning and policies of developing countries are combining to create a more competitive, homogeneous and globalized arena of higher education, which, in turn, makes for continuing student mobility. (p. 122)

The rise of international higher education in Thailand gained momentum with the economic booms of the

1980s when the Thai phrase 'go inter' became common. To go inter is not only to study English or attend an international school, this phrase also implies that one is embracing international trends be they fashion, music, arts or culture. A Thai who is seen to have successfully adopted many Western cultural attributes and language skills has a corresponding increase in social status among peers (Pasuk and Baker 1998). This gradual Westernisation of the Thai students reflects similar trends in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Thai history when royal elites and civil servants were sent abroad to receive a Western education only to return home and be given key positions in military and government ministries. Both then and now, those who have received a Western education are often fast tracked through the bureaucracy and gain pos- itions of power at a much faster rate than those who were educated within the Thai-speak- ing system. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's study in 2004 summarised this phenomenon claiming that English language education provides status, positional advantages and perhaps superior quality to students from South East Asia (OECD 2004).

2.11. Future issues

Thai higher education has been through many changes since inception. From the nineteenth-century formation of palace schools to the rapid growth of international higher education programmes today, the system has been designed and adapted to assist Thai- land in the development process through a borrowing from other nations. Whereas in the nineteenth century the goal may have been to facilitate Thai independence from imperialist intentions, within the twenty-first century, the goal is to participate within an economy dominated by globalisation trends and massive expansion. This section of the article will explore some the uncertainties regarding further internationalisation within the Thai context.

Balancing Westernisation with Localisation and the potential decline of Thainess: one potentially problematic issue with the continued expansion of international programmes in the Thai context is that the students who graduate from international programmes are often not representative of Thai cultural expectations. As Winichaikul (2000) argued, since the age of colonisation, Thais have been attempting to become 'siwilai' – a Thai word meaning civilised – through the emulation of Western models. Western education systems and Thai education systems have different values and students whom graduate from Thai international programmes often have problems readjusting to a primarily

Thai environment which promotes patronage, social hierarchy, social status derived through ascription and high power distance (Rhein 2013). Since the economic collapse of 1997, the promotion of Thainess has become commonplace, as many fear that Thailand is losing all that it means to be Thai. Thus, from the corporate view, these students are outliers, whereas from the sociocultural view, these students are outcasts. The concern of maintaining Thainess is further confounded by the internationalisation of the curriculum, which may have an adverse impact on local knowledge. The Thai higher education system has always borrowed from foreign systems in terms of curriculum, course design and more recently, total quality assurance frameworks and key performance indicators for faculty and administration; yet, there is also a claim to Thai uniqueness and exceptionalism.

Quality assurance: the ability for Thailand to compete internationally is hinged on its ability to produce an educated workforce capable of interacting in the global community. In this regard, Thai higher education has failed to educate its graduates to a proper stan- dard. It is unfortunate that a number of university graduates are not sufficiently competent in their area of expertise even after graduation. There are also concerns regarding the abundance of social science graduates and the dearth of graduates with engineering, technology and professional skills (Weesakul and Associates 2004). The current QA frame- works demand time and energy from already underpaid and overworked faculty, many of whom resent such demands being placed on them (Lao 2015).

2.12. Conclusion

The rise of nationalism and the nation-state in the nineteenth century was the impetus for the establishment of higher education in Thailand. The goal of higher education in Thai- land during the nineteenth century was primarily to maintain independence from the colonial pressures while providing opportunities to the aristocracy. Later, the emergence of the Third World from colonialism during the twentieth century allowed

for further development of higher education following the American, British or European models. Throughout this process of borrowing from the West, Thailand has attempted to maintain a balance between Westernisation and Thainess. The European models of higher edu- cation were followed prior to the Second World War, whereas the American model became dominant following in the second half of the twentieth century. This docu- ment-based historical analysis outlines the development of higher education with an emphasis on the gradual development of international higher education with the continu- ation of various themes, namely the nature of international education as a defence against colonial pursuits through the establishment of a nation-state, the importance of social and economic status within Thai society in regard to access to various levels of education, the impact of the economic collapse in the late-twentieth century and the current issues facing academics. The importance of English as a second language and the continuing impact of globalisation will further accelerate the expansion of international programmes within Thai higher education and thus the culture of borrowing. As Watson (1989) argued, 'the Thai have shown themselves to be cultural borrowers par excellence' (p. 64) and this process continues to date with internationalisation and the rapid implementation of ASEAN-based initiatives.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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Chapter 3 International Students in Thailand: Shifting From Universalistic Models to an Ethnicity Matters Approach

Following the historical development of Thai higher education and the introduction of English based degree programs as discussed in chapter 2, this chapter outlines the theoretical framework adopted for papers 3-5. This chapter has been accepted for publication pending revisions in March 2018 to the Journal of Research in International Education. The revisions were submitted in May, 2018. This chapter provides a critical account of the theoretical underpinnings and models in cultural adjustment from a longitudinal perspective. The purpose of this article is to provide a structured account of the need to transition from universalistic models of sociocultural adjustment, which are based on stages of adjustment, to an ethnicity centered approach which considers the sojourner's ethnicity, culture and historical factors in relation to the host community's perception of the ethnicity, culture and shared history. This is the foundation chapter for the results sections of this series of articles and thus serves as the literature review for sociocultural adjustment paradigms. It is argued that in order to adequately explore the sociocultural adjustment experiences of international students in short term study abroad programs within the Thai context, the interrelationship of sojourner ethnicity and host perceptions of said ethnicity are critical to the adjustment outcomes.

Chapter 3 Paper Two

International Students in Thailand: Shifting From Universalistic Models to an Ethnicity Matters Approach

Abstract:

Historically, much of the research on acculturation and adjustment was conducted on migrant and refugee populations. The start of the twenty first century has seen a surprising surge in a new immigrant class, mobile students, and their characteristics differing from the social, political and economic refugees of the twentieth century. This article provides an overview of the literature related to the salient features of acculturation, adaptation and adjustment models as applied to international students and the stressors they most frequently encounter. It recommends that future research transitions from universalistic mode-based inquiry to more nuanced approaches which emphasizes an individual's characteristics from country of origin or perceived ethnic identity. A social constructivist position which emphasizes the historical and ethnic relationships among the visiting students and the host nationals is most beneficial to understanding the contemporary international student adjustment paradigm.

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3.1. Introduction

The academic community is currently witnessing a massive upheaval in international student enrollment. Globally, the number of students who migrated abroad to continue their studies has increased dramatically. In 1995, there were 1.3 million students enrolled in overseas study programs (OECD, 2009). By the year 2000 it had risen to 2.1 million and quickly increased to 3.0 million in 2007 and then to over 5 million in 2015 (OECD, 2016). By 2025, study abroad numbers could reach an estimated 8 million (Altbach, 2013). This is important to Asian nations because they have traditionally been exporters of internationally mobile students. These countries will see growing numbers of Asian students entering study abroad programs in Asia. The Global Education Digest, a branch of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) observed that Asian international students enrolled in international study in Asia increased from 36% in 1999 to 42% in 2007 (De Wit, 2015). As student mobility continues to grow year on year, further development of research approaches to international student adjustment is essential to improve the study experience, the provisioning of pre-departure training, arrival orientation sessions and the development of host institution services.

The first objective of this article is to clarify the terms necessary to conceptualize the current study abroad experience for most of the students who travel to Asia in general and Thailand in particular. The terms *adjustment, acculturation* and *adaptation* are often used interchangeably in academic research resulting in possible confusion and ambiguity. This clarification of terms is followed by a discussion of the development of stage based or sequential models of overseas adjustment. The latter half of this article is a review of the literature on the elements which impact the adjustment process and asserts that academic research of this phenomenon should place greater emphasis on the identification of specific stressors. These include student ethnicity and country of origin in comparison to country of study, which impede proper international student adjustment or negatively influence the abroad experience. Rather than focus on one theoretical framework or approach, this article draws on concepts from the fields of education, psychology and sociology. This is not intended to test the reliability of adjustment models but instead to expand on the conceptual approaches to international student adjustment research through the analysis of the impact of the international students' self-identified ethnicity. The concept of identity is as complex as the study abroad experience. To clarify the role of ethnicity in international student adjustment, the first section of this article will necessarily define the terms used within this conceptual framework.

3.2. Acculturation, Adaptation and Adjustment: on one understanding

Due to common misunderstandings and differing use of 'acculturation', 'adaptation' and 'adjustment', further refinement of terms is necessary. 'Acculturation' is defined as "the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members" (Berry, 2005, p. 698). This cross-cultural contact involves many life changes for the sojourner and when there is a negative impact referred to as 'acculturative stress' (Berry, 2006). 'Acculturation' is more broadly conceived of as an individual's method of learning about and adapting to the new cultural norms and the degree to which people maintain their heritage and culture during this process (Kohatsu, 2005). The desired outcomes of stable acculturation are psychological and sociocultural adaptations. Acculturation occurs over time and impacts both the host culture and on the psychological level, the individual who is acculturating. Acculturation models developed by Arends-Toth and van de Vijver (2006) include predictor variables such as the society of origin, individual characteristics, length of stay and social support. Due to the decrease of the duration of study abroad experiences, acculturation should not be the focus of academic inquiry as most international studies are no longer sufficient enough in length to adequately acculturate or to adopt Thai cultural norms.

Adaptation generally carries implications of biological or evolutionary studies which lends to group survival which is not the intent of this discussion. Adaptation, from the international student adjustment research perspective, is the long-term struggle to survive in the environment. Berry, who claimed adaptation was the long-term goal of sojourners, defined adaptation as "the relatively stable changes that take place in an individual or group in response to external demands" (Berry, 2006, p. 52). Ward and associates further distinguished the two types of adaptation; psychological and sociocultural (Ward & Kennedy, 1992, 1993a). The psychological adaptation refers to the affective responses to the new setting and one's emotional responses to interaction with host nationals which impacts one's sense of self and self-esteem (Ward et al., 2001), whereas sociocultural adaptation is the "ability to acquire and perform culturally appropriate social skills and behavioral competence to fit in the host culture (Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006, p. 423). Cross-cultural adaptation is the process of moving to an unfamiliar socio-cultural setting and trying to create and maintain a stable relationship with the people in that environment (Kim, 2001). This implies a long-term experience which includes the struggle to maintain the identity of the culture of origin and the culture of the host nation. The failure to establish or maintain the behavioral, social and relationship criteria as outlined above is theorized to contribute to the onset of culture shock. Sociocultural adaptation refers to the behavioral responses to the new environment, our ability to manage daily life and

function competently in an intercultural setting. Importantly, both Ward et al. (2001) and Berry (2006) included cultural and social identity as predictor variables to sociocultural adaptation. The term adaptation, while often used in empirical investigations of international students, is not propagated in this article as it is a diachronic proposition which traces development over time and is thus not ideal for the investigation of short term study abroad.

Both adaptation and acculturation researchers have explored multiple aspects of the study abroad, yet adjustment is a more apt term to the research on short-term international study. Ward (1996) argued that adjustment is best understood in terms of stress and coping frameworks while adaptation is best understood within the framework of socials skills and culture learning. While sociocultural adjustment is typically conceptualized as following a standardized curve (Ward and Kennedy, 1999), there is limited consensus on the stages of adjustment and there is no unified model of cultural adjustment. Adjustment is a process of coping with changes rather than a result or an isolated event. The problematic nature of adjustment is demonstrated by the substantial body of literature available regarding this phenomenon. The process of adjustment has been the topic of interest in various fields in the social sciences including education, psychology, sociology, anthropology and counselling studies. In much of the research, the authors use the terms 'adjustment', 'acculturation' and 'adaptation' synonymously. It is important to note that these are processes which individuals cope with. Culture shock is a negative state one finds oneself in which is the result of failure to acculturate, adapt or adjust.

An adjustment is a response to change. Cross-cultural adjustment is a complex and repetitive, sometimes circular process which requires travellers to overcome the stressors of their new environment and solve the problems which arise as a result of the unfamiliar; whereas, adaptation is the process of "learning to live with change and difference, in this instance, a changed environment, different people, different norms and different customs" (Steele, 2008. p.34). Psychological adjustment refers to the "psychological and emotional well-being, which can be measured by assessing self-reported psychological symptoms and perceived distress" (Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006, p. 423). Adaptation is considered to involve many levels of behavior which include personal development, relationships with the host and, importantly, adjustment. Contemporary approaches continue to distinguish the psychological and sociocultural aspects of this process.

Adjustment in this context refers to the reduction of stress or satisfaction in one's environment. It does not denote happiness or acceptance of the environment. In reality, one can adjust in

many circumstances and yet not find happiness. Adjustment is the short-term pursuit of fitting in or making small changes to affective, behavioral and cognitive patterns to accommodate for the new setting. This article argues that the exploration of adjustment as opposed to adaptation is increasingly important to the study of international student experiences in Asia, particularly when research models incorporate the reduced duration of the average study abroad experience in the region. In order to understand the current need to place further prominence on student identity and ethnicity approaches to adjustment research, it is necessary to analyze previous methodological considerations of the sojourner experience which underscore the current exigency to shift from positivism to social constructivism.

3.3. The Emergence of Models of Adjustment

Historically, research regarding international mobility often emphasized the formation of models to conceptualize the stages of sojourner adjustment from the Western, or more specifically, North American perspective. This is exemplified by the first group of models in cross-cultural adjustment research which was based on the concept of culture shock. In 1951, Cora DuBois coined the phrase 'culture shock' (DuBois, 1951). While many articles on cross-cultural adjustment give credit to Oberg, DuBois first used the term in reference to the experience of anthropologists in the field. In 1954, Oberg used this phrase to describe the stages of adjustment all sojourners experience when residing in a new culture. Shortly thereafter, two cross-cultural adjustment researchers produced models of adjustment which had an impact on this field of research for decades. Lysgaard (1955) is initially responsible for the emergence of cross-cultural models of adjustment. In 1955, he described three stages of adjustment, namely stage 1 the initial phase, stage 2 the crisis phase which he said was between 6-18 months in country and stage 3 the adjustment phase. Yet, Oberg received the lion's share of the recognition for both borrowing the term 'culture shock' and for creating the 4 stage model.

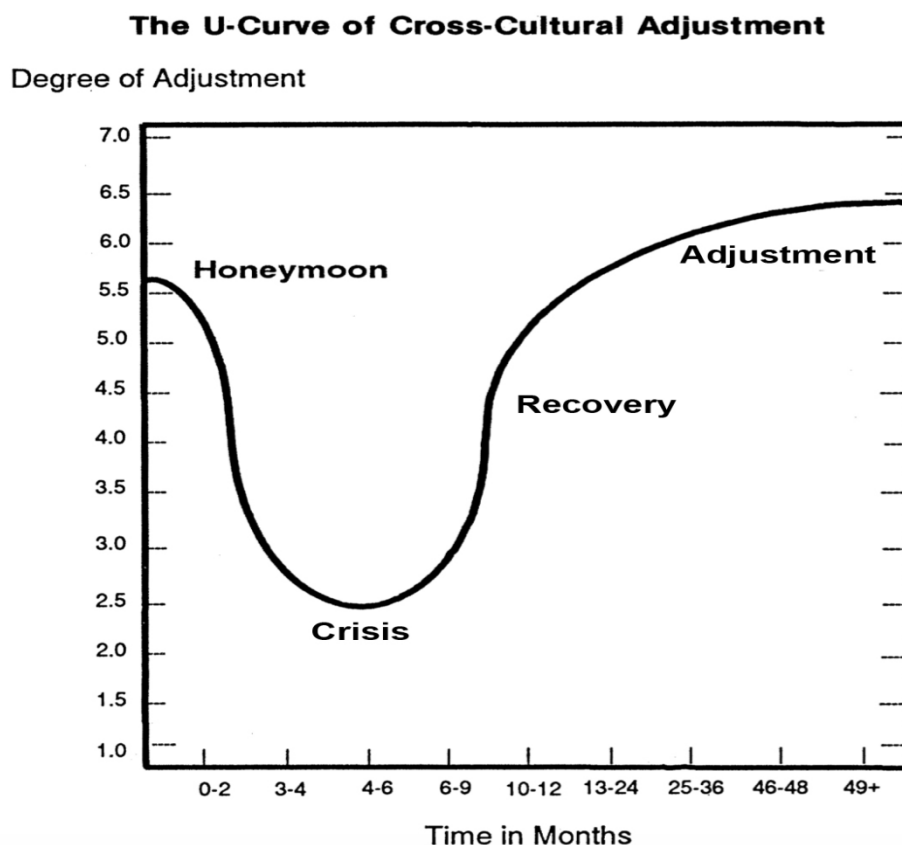**The U-Curve of Cross-Cultural Adjustment**

Degree of Adjustment

Figure 1. Stages of cross-cultural adjustment as described by Oberg (1960) taken from Black and Mendenhall (1990).

The work of Oberg quickly expanded the concept of the phrase 'culture shock' from anthropology to be included in psychology and cross-cultural studies. His conceptualization and description of culture shock as a medical condition with signs and symptoms was befitting of the medical model of the era (Oberg, 1960). Oberg's model was designed to account for the emotional experiences which many sojourners experience and thus, by design, it was intended to be predictive. The strength of Oberg's model lies in the intuitive nature of this conceptualization of the adaptation process. The model explains the emotional adaptation that travellers can easily relate to and allows the traveller to recall experiences of great cultural variance and describe the visceral reaction to the experienced 'shock'.

However, not all sojourners go through these stages sequentially, and even Oberg went on in further research to list characteristics of culture shock which were associated with the failure to adjust (Oberg, 1960). An additional criticism is the lack of any comprehensive explanation regarding the adaptation process and the justification for each stage. The acceptance of Oberg's model was based on its' simplicity and generalized applicability across multiple settings, yet it doesn't allow for rich, detailed or unique experiences which travellers encounter

that are not within this four stage model. Some of these sojourners also do not go through these stages in order, many do not go through all four stages, and many never experience a crisis and some never adjust (Adler, 1975). Human behavior is too complex and unpredictable to articulate in a universalistic four step model.

Soon after the development of the U-curve, researchers Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) proposed a W-curve model which includes a final stage when travellers return home. The W-curve model followed the multi-stage theory of adjustment as proposed by Oberg and Lysgaard. This marked the onset of theoretical stage-based models focussing on repatriation adjustment. The W-curve model is an extension of the previous models in that it repeats the U-curve during the repatriation process, thus, this re-acculturation, by duplicating the U, becomes a W.
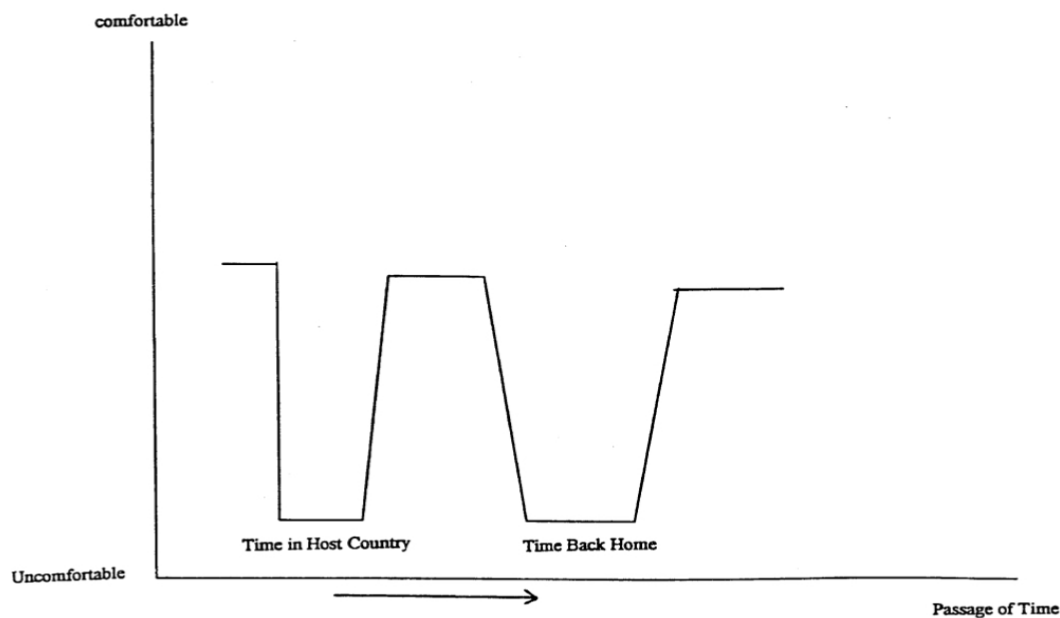

Figure 2. Stages of cross-cultural adjustment and repatriation as described by Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) taken from Onwumechilia et al., (2003).

Following in the sequence based models of cultural adjustment; Adler (1975) suggested a 5-stage process; contact; disintegration; reintegration; autonomy and independence. It differed from Gullahorn and Gullahorn in that the final stage outlines the establishment of a multicultural identity whereby sojourners find comfort in their homeland as well as in the new culture they are experiencing. Essentially, this approach views the adaptation sequence as a learning process. Rather than ascending or descending along the slope of adjustment or shock, Adler envisioned a learning-curve of adjustment. The inclusion of stage 5, independence, is an acknowledgement of an almost existential state where one has transcended any one specific

culture. Adler's work is also noteworthy in that while most of the previous work on acculturation was characterized by the negative aspects of culture shock, it outlines the beneficial outcomes of expatriate experiences abroad which include self-development, personal growth, and development of cross-cultural awareness, development of empathy and the breakdown of the insular mentality of blind cultural adherence and conformity. Adler's inclusion of personal growth and identity formation led to the work of a second group of researchers (discussed later in this article) who often viewed cross-cultural adaptation as a learning process.

Alternatives to the U-curve, W-curve or Adler's 5-stage sequential models of adjustment are exemplified by the research of Berry and associates (Berry et al. 1989) who proposed the concept of psychological acculturation as two dimensional: maintenance of original culture and maintenance of relationships with new groups. Berry further divided these dimensional responses and identified four acculturative strategies: integration, separation, assimilation, and marginalization. Those who implement an integration-based strategy value both maintenance of original culture as well as maintenance of intergroup relationships. Travellers who apply a separatist position choose to value cultural maintenance but not intergroup relationships. Those who value intergroup relations but are somewhat undaunted with cultural maintenance experience assimilation and those who do not value cultural maintenance or intergroup relations are seen as marginalized. The researchers involved in adjustment studies identified other factors involved and analyzed macrosociopolitical indicators, yet Berry's complex categorical or multidimensional model of acculturation gradually redefined views of this process and explored individual personality traits influence on cultural adjustment. This conceptualization allowed individuals multiple cultural affiliations with the host culture without necessarily limiting or reducing any identification with their culture of origin (Swagler & Jome, 2005).

Table 1 Berry's Acculturation Attitudes (Berry et al., 1989)

Acculturation attitudes		Is it considered to be of value to maintain cultural identity and characteristics?	
		Yes	No
Is it considered to be of value to maintain relationships with other groups?	Yes	Integrated	Assimilated
	No	Separated	Marginalized

A criticism of Berry's work is that it does not go far enough to explain the variations of acculturative stress regarding differences in ethnicity, context and individual variables on participants within the model. It is these individual differences which make adjustment a subjective phenomenon, particularly when international student duration of study-abroad experiences has decreased from years to a semester or two.

A second group of researchers led by the work of Ward and Searle (1990) explored the specific elements of culture on business travellers and others who chose to live abroad as opposed to soldiers, refugees or victims of forced migration. Searle and Ward posited that sociocultural adaptation was the natural outcome of acculturation. Later, Ward and Kennedy grounded much of their early work on acculturation with the understanding that it is the "psychological and behavioral changes that an individual experiences as a result of sustained contact with members of other cultural groups" (Ward & Kennedy, 1994, p. 330). They approached sociocultural adaptation from the perspective that it is best measured by how one performs daily tasks in the new host culture (Searle & Ward, 1990). They separated the psychological element of adjustment as the satisfaction in the new culture and ability to deal with stress, whereas the sociocultural adjustment refers to fitting in or learning the social rules of the host culture (Ward, Bochner & Furnham 2001). Sociocultural and psychological adjustment to cross-cultural transition is varied and can have a profound influence on experiences abroad regardless of the travellers' role as an employee, student or refugee. While psychological adjustment is far more complicated as there are many variables which influence an individuals' adjustment, sociocultural adjustment can be measured by how individuals live and function within the daily events in a new culture (Searle & Ward, 1990). In accordance, through a series of studies, Ward and Kennedy created the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale which

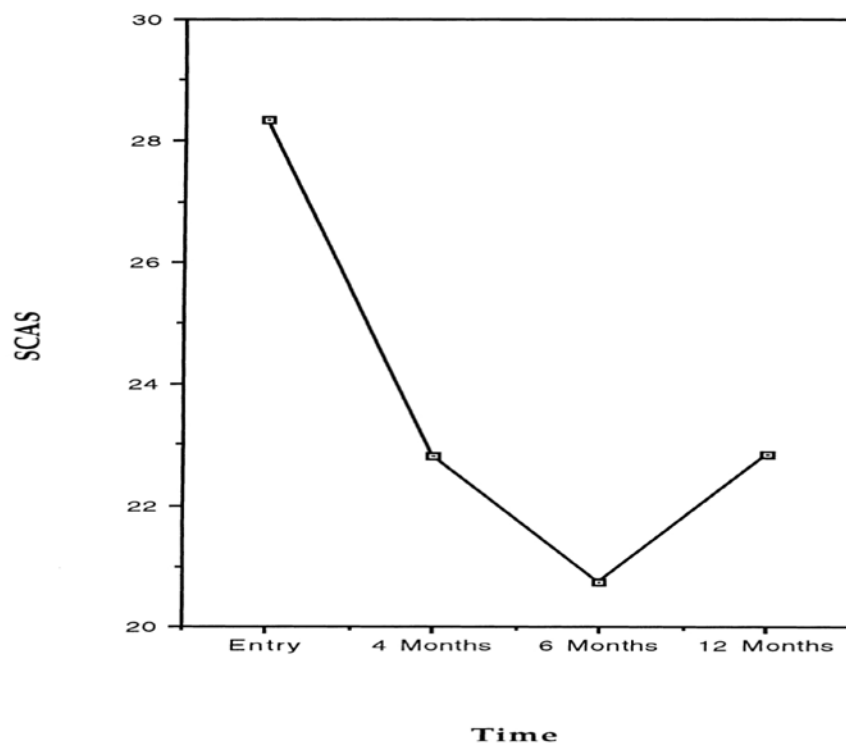measured the sequence of adaptation as well as measured specific variables which impacted this process.

Figure 3. Sociocultural Adjustment Scale as described by Searle & Ward (1990).

Much of the research in the decades that followed was based on the models as proposed by the researchers described above. Work by Torbion (1994) and Mohamed (1997) continued to explore adjustment as a series of stages as did the Townsend and Wan (2007) research on international student adaptation which supported the U-curve model. However, just a year later (Brown & Holloway, 2008) implemented similar ethnographic research models and found that the U-curve model of adjustment did not adequately describe the experience of the participants; instead, negative psychological factors were seen to be more influential and emphasis was placed on nervousness, anxiety, stress, uncertainty, and a feeling of being adrift. Other sequential models of adjustment have been explored (for example, see Ward et. al. (1998) reverse J-curve model) yet these universalistic approaches focus on how one group of people reacts to an environment as opposed to how individuals relate to one another and are thus not ideal for the study of international student adjustment which is a distinctly sociocultural process.

The general assumptions about the acceptance and gradual implementation of sequential models was that patterns of adjustment were universally fixed based on duration of exposure and were further supported by research. However, scepticism remained and criticism

continued based on the variations in these models, the affective, behavior and cognitive demands of the psychology of acculturation and the reductionist nature of the concept of universalistic stages of adjustment. These models have often lacked important issues within cross-cultural adjustment such as the absence of culture shock or the role of student ethnicity and cultural background. In some investigations no culture shock was reported (Lundstedt, 1963) and in another only "general irritation" was documented during the adjustment process (Torbion, 1982, p.62). Despite this criticism, the curve model of cultural adjustment is still in use today (see Ahmad, et al., 2015; An & Chiang, 2015 for a recent example), and while few researchers have claimed an absolute static adjustment-based curve, it continues to dominate the investigation of the international student adjustment phenomenon. Thus the concept of cross-cultural adjustment continues to remain problematic. The curve models of adjustment lack comprehensive applicability, particularly to the student abroad experience of students within the Asian university context who are enrolled in short study-abroad programs and rarely spend more than six months abroad.   While many students may attend Western universities for full degree programs (four years), the vast majority of visiting students in Thailand, in particular, are only in country for one semester.

3.4. International Student Sociocultural Adjustment

In regard to international students adjustment issues, Furnham and Bochner (1982) examined the four types of problems most commonly faced among this cohort and created a classification system which separated two sets of difficulties exclusive to international students: 1) difficulties common to cross-cultural travellers such as language issues, homesickness and loneliness and 2) problems associated with their role as the cultural ambassadors of their homeland. The other types of complications that are faced by all young people are the issues common among adolescent development such as identity formation versus role confusion and academic struggles which are evidenced by teens globally. This process of identity formation can become more complex if it takes places in a foreign culture where one is faced with additional challenges associated with the adjustment process.   Their work concluded that "the implication is that although it may be strange and possibly difficult, sojourning makes a person more adaptable, flexible and insightful" (Furnham & Bochner, 1982, p. 47).

Sociocultural adjustment is often characterised by the degree of comfort and familiarity an individual has within the host culture (Black, 1988) and can be broadly separated into two categories. The first category includes the intrinsic factors individual characteristics (micro) and the second category includes the external factors (macro), the degree of difference in the

new environment or organization (Lee, 2007). Both the micro and the macro factors impact students' experience and adjustment in the host country. Vital to this process is the motivation or goal oriented behavior pattern to overcome the obstacle. The obstacles in the Thai context can be climate, language, socialization, loneliness, cultural norms or the ability to form friendships with the hosts.

The sociocultural aspect is based on the behavioral responses required to adapt to the new environment such as ordering food, accessing finances and managing the public transportation system (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999). As discussed, there has been a tendency in the previous conceptualization of cross-cultural adjustment research to establish a universalistic process or sequence model of adjustment. However, this preference to approach complex psychological phenomena with an emphasis on universality has eliminated some of the subjective aspects of the adjustment phenomenon. A fundamental aspect of this subjectivity is a sojourners sense of ethnic identity. The analysis of Wilson (2011) of the role of ethnicity concludes that students' sense of ethnicity can have a negative impact on US students. This research found that students from Asia and African had more difficulty adjusting than students from Europe. The use of ethnicity as a variable of adjustment is important as the relationship between an individual's unique characteristics, ethnic identity and the host culture will have an impact on the adjustment process.

An important aspect of the student abroad experience within the Asian context is language which can play a role in international student adjustment. English is an important element for consideration, particularly for international students in Asia where international programs use English as the lingua prima. Yet most of the students enrolled in these programs speak English as a second language. This includes the majority of international students in Thailand who do not speak the local dialect and are proficient in English. Fritz et al. (2008) analyzed different groups of international students in North America and addressed which stressors affected each group as well as the linguistic and financial influences on the groups. European students were compared to Asian students regarding academic, acculturative and linguistic challenges. As with other research examples, Asians reported more problems with language whereas Europeans experienced more problems in regard to homesickness. Asian students also scored significantly higher in anxiety measures. Asian students were less likely to seek help for their adjustment troubles, but there was no significant difference in Asian and European students regarding overall adjustment. Most research on this area of international students conducted in Western universities concludes that Asians and other minorities experience more stress upon their arrival to the host country (Berry & Sam, 1997). However, the over-generalization of the

'Asian' is also problematic. While many Asian nations share similarities in culture such a high degree of collectivism and high power distance, Asia is not a homogenous continent; there are dramatic differences in culture, history, religion, language, climate, food and ethnicity. The same observation can be made for the visiting European students who are often characterized as one specific entity. This homogenization of students from a variety of cultures, histories, religions, languages, climates, culinary backgrounds and ethnicities is problematic. In Asian adjustment research paradigms, this homogenization of international students lends to unreliable and inaccurate research outcomes which is partially due to the overgeneralization of participants from Asia as sharing the same experiences.

Ethnicity and language proficiency are not the only variables which impact international student adjustment. Given the lack of familiarity to the new environment, international students have a greater need for support than do the local student populace (Andrade, 2006). Several studies examined the role social support (Chirkov et al., 2008; Jung et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2004; Sumer et al., 2008; Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002) and self-efficacy (e.g., Li & Gasser, 2005) as crucial factors in international students' adjustment research. Research not implementing models or stages such as studies by Pantelidou and Craig (2006) concluded that social support is highly correlated with adjustment as is gender. Further analysis of international student retention reveals that men are more likely than women to experience a positive sociocultural adjustment, as are the extroverted (Fritz, Chin, & DeMarinis, 2008; Pantelidou & Craig, 2006). Women also scored higher in culture shock and distress than men. This outcome was seen again in Rosenthal, Russell & Thomson (2007) who claimed that adjustment was influenced by many factors such as self-esteem, age, gender and previous international exposure. Greater emphasis on individual identity and ethnicity and the impact of these variables on the adjustment experience in Asia would clarify the stressors each group faces and allow higher education programs to develop pre-departure training and perhaps address their own implicit biases and prejudices from a more knowledgeable perspective.

The development of a robust connection to the host country culture and the relationships with host nationals is important as international students typically experience more psychological distress than local students. Burns (1991) demonstrated that international students experienced more sociocultural adjustment problems than local students in his study of business majors in Australia. Given that Asian cultures are typically collectivist, studies in the West have often concluded that Asian students have experienced more difficulty making friends when compared to Europeans (Triandis, 1999). According to the research done by Williams et al. (2008) on university students in the United States, the most commonly identified concern was

anxiety, followed by stress and depression. Much of the research on international student adjustment has supported the work of Furnham and Bochner (1982) who discussed the problematic nature of loneliness (Robertson, Jones & Thomas, 2000) while studying abroad and the importance of international students interactions with the host community (Trice, 2003). These studies were done in Australia, the EU, the United States and Canada. Other research suggests that international students who display a strong connection with the host country also display less stress and experience more positive effects of studying abroad (Russell et al., 2010). International students are often not satisfied with the multicultural relationships they develop while abroad (Choi, 1997), and many of these students acknowledged the need for local assistance for their sociocultural adjustment (Nesdale & Todd, 1997). For example, Zhang and Brunton (2007) reported that 55% of the Chinese international students in New Zealand were not satisfied with their opportunities to create relationships with the host community. Those students who have difficulties adjusting to the host culture can develop psychological issues associated with loneliness, isolation and sociocultural dissatisfaction (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 2000) as well as educational struggles such as failing coursework or the inability to develop proper language skills necessary to continue in that learning environment.

Further, the development of friendships with host nationals is often problematic due to culture distance and ethnic misunderstandings. Previous research on international student sociocultural adjustment and culture distance emphasized the positive influence of socializing with host nationals (Swami et al., 2010). Socialization can also be distressing and may impact academic achievement (Greenland & Brown, 2005). This impact on the academic aspects of studying abroad can similarly impact sociocultural adjustment (Chataway & Berry, 1989). As international students were seen to benefit from the development and maintenance of social as well as academic relationships, further research has led to the exploration of academic cultural differences (Ward et al., 2001).

The perceived cultural distance between the host culture and the student's home culture has been associated with problematic sociocultural adjustment issues. The larger the perceived differences in culture, the greater the likelihood of adjustment difficulties (Ward & Kennedy, 1993). In Asia, there is a history of ethnic rivalry and conflict which may impact the experience of certain ethnic groups within specific nations; Thailand and Burma or Japan and Korea are examples of nations which share historical, cultural and well known rivalries. While this problematic adjustment may be due to perceived discrimination, it runs opposite to theories of 'cultural fit' (Searle and Ward, 1990). This is important as it establishes the

existence of sub-group discrimination among international students. Therefore, it is important to analyze the adjustment demands placed on international students in Asian programs as it may lead to a more stable and positive experience for students, assist international programs in student retention and lend to a more positive learning experience.

Attending to sociocultural adjustment issues in international students may have implications for several related issues of concern to host institutions, for example, a recent study (Rujipak & Limprasert, 2016) on the sociocultural adjustment of international students in Thailand included the aforementioned sociocultural adjustment scale and the psychological adjustment scale. The authors concluded that there was a positive correlation between these two measures as well as a correlation between adjustment and academic performance, mental health, interpersonal relationships and satisfaction with their life in Thailand. There was no relationship between sociocultural adjustment and gender, no relationship regarding adjustment and length of stay which conflicts with previous research (Trice, 2003), and indicates time in country as an important aspect of adjustment. Rujipak & Limprasert (2016) did report that sociocultural adjustment level varied across different countries. They concluded that the country of origin was statistically significant in that international students from Western countries more frequently reported positive sociocultural adjustment than those from Asian countries. They further concluded that the role of cultural fit or culture distance as previous discussed was not supported. Thus, even though many Asian nations have cultural similarities, this does not have a positive impact on the adjustment experiences of the visiting students. The authors attributed the Western students' ability to adjust to pre-departure training and their ability to prepare to face the cultural differences prior to departure. Finally, the authors concluded that sociocultural adjustment was influenced by the students living environment, academic environment and physical health.

3.5. Summary of Adjustment Research

The study of cultural adjustment has its' roots in anthropology, the colonial system and the need to properly understand and prepare for sociocultural adjustment (Somekh & Lewin, 2005). In the 1950s there was more focus on the psychological issues associated with living abroad and the adjustment problems experienced by students (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001) and in corporate contexts (Black & Mendenhall, 1991). Much of the work done in this period focused on the detrimental effects of exposure to a new culture i.e. models of culture shock as developed by Oberg, Lysgaard and Gullahorn and Gullahorn which described a trajectory of experiences and predicted problematic cultural experiences. This was in line with the medical model of the same period. These models of adjustment have achieved an iconic

status among cross-cultural researchers as they provided a theoretical framework yet were not supported by empirical research. Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001) provided an in-depth review of the U-curve model which supported Ward's earlier claim "The U-curve has been on trial for now for almost 40 years, and the time is long overdue to render a verdict. Despite its popular and intuitive appeal, the U-curve model of sojourner adjustment should be rejected" (Ward et al., 1998, p. 290).

The second wave of international research reflected larger shifts in cognitive paradigms away from the positivist medical model towards an interpretivist approach which included analysis of culture learning and developing coping skills. This period also reflected changes in psychological theory which incorporated the ABC Triad (affect, behavior and cognition) of cultural adjustment (Zhou et al. 2008). This new perspective saw individuals gradually adjusting to and learning about a culture as opposed to being subjected to the rules of the culture and experiencing culture shock. In this model, adjustment is proactive and responsive as opposed to reactive or passive. This culture learning model led to training and preparing individuals prior to departure abroad. While its' origins may lie in social psychology, culture learning frameworks primarily focus on the behavioral aspects of intercultural communication, socialization, and adjustment.

It was within this culture learning model that many of the variables in the Ward and Kennedy Sociocultural Adjustment Scale were studied in further detail. The effects of culture distance (Ward & Kennedy, 1993) and language competence (Furnham, 1993), friendship networks (Bochner, McLeod & Lin, 1977), cultural distance (Ward & Kennedy, 1993) and cultural identity (Ward & Searle, 1991b) are of particular interest to the study of international student adjustment and exemplify variable analysis and validity in adjustment research. Contemporary research on international student adjustment has concluded that only a small portion of individuals found the overall experience to be disadvantageous (Rosenthal et al., 2008). As international study in Asia becomes increasingly common, more parties (such as universities, international relations administrators and recruitment agencies) will necessarily become interested and find value in this area of research.

This article has discussed the approaches to international student adjustment which have gradually transitioned from the medical model to the psychological adjustment approach. This transition in approaches represents a change in adjustment research from a reactive subjugation to a process of actively learning to live in a new culture (Rosenthal, Russell, & Thomson, 2007). Many of the differences in patterns of student adjustment are attributed to recognisable

characteristics of the sojourners. Three areas of importance to this attribution are the sojourners race, ethnicity and culture of origin. Therefore, the impact of ethnicity and culture on the sociocultural adjustment of students can now be addressed.

3.6. Race, Ethnicity and Culture

Racial and ethnic identity has an impact on the adjustment experiences of international students. Previous research on Asian Americans and Asia international college students revealed that identity status had deleterious impacts on well-being (Mossakowski, 2003; Wong & Halgin, 2006). Different races and ethnicities are subjected to different types of judgements, prejudices and biases depending on the specific ethnicity and the society were learning takes place.

Thus far this discussion has traced the development of cross-cultural adjustment theory, however, during the 1970s and 1980s, along with the gradual rising popularity of cognitive psychology, another theoretical approach to study cross-cultural contact was introduced; social identity theories. It was theorized that during cross-cultural contact and overseas experiences, travellers began to perceive of themselves in a different context and this new concept of self and identity created anxiety (Zhou et al., 2008). Identity is critical to the essential motivation of belonging (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Both humanistic and psychosocial research have long emphasized the importance of the human motivation to belong to a group, therefore, one's identity, whether it be an ethnic, social or racial sense of belonging performs a valuable and necessary psychological and social function.

Social identity theory as conceptualized by Tajfel (1981) includes two major facets. The first is the social category and resulting social comparisons which impact self-esteem, in-group favouritism and out-group derogation (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This facet of social identity can act as a buffer and possibly ameliorate the psychological impact of racism and increase their sense of wellbeing (Yip, Gee & Takeuchi, 2008). The second feature of social identity theory relates to the impact of cross-cultural transition and cultural variety in regard to a sojourner's sense of self, group membership and perception (Brown et al., 1992). The transition from an individualistic culture to a collectivist culture or from a culture of high power distance to low power distance can be confusing and result in both anxiety and the inability to adjust.

The terms race, ethnicity and culture are often used as categorical concepts to frame social science and medical research. The differentiation of these terms is necessary although problematic as race and ethnicity have no widely accepted definitions. Some studies use race

and ethnicity interchangeably as a single variable labelling such as 'race or ethnicity' or 'race and ethnicity' and 'race/ethnicity' (Lin & Kelsey, 2000, p.22). There are concerns when these labels are not defined or interpreted separately such as the possibility that these terms are not accurate classifications of race or ethnicity or that the participants were not labelled with an objective measurement used to guide the classification. This is particularly problematic as most definitions of race include biological or genetic characteristics which are inaccurate. Some studies have used self-report data for the classification of race and ethnicity which is potentially problematic to findings as evidence shows that an individuals' perception of their own race is not static (Hahn et al., 1996). An additional concern with the use of such terms is the possibility of inaccurately attributing the ethnic or race differences as the primary reason for the failure to adjustment to a new environment. Research which emphasizes the impact of race can fail to recognize the other possible causes of maladjustment such as culture, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, language and historical differences.

3.7. Race

During the eighteenth and nineteenth century race and concepts of pseudo biological classification systems became commonplace. Specific phenotypes became indicators of the civilised and the barbaric. It was argued that these racially superior men have a duty to their fellow man. Kipling's poem "White Man's Burden" exemplifies this perceived obligation of the West (Europeans and Americans) to civilize the South and the East. In the early 20th century, race was used to explain the behavior of different groups of people around the world. The blending of race (biology), ethnicity and culture in previous research has led to some dubious and immoral acts. The work of eugenics theorists clearly demonstrates as such. Use of the word racism is also varying in meaning and acceptance. The words race and racism vary based on the user's background and their societies' use of these terms. In Germany the word race is a social taboo. In France using the word 'race' implies the speaker harbours prejudicial feelings about that group. In the United States the word is commonly accepted and used in academic discourse, such as Critical Race Theory. However given the sensitivity of using such words and the plethora of connotations and stigmatizations surrounded its use, finding meaning can be elusive.

Memmi (1992) argued racism was the "generalized and absolute evaluation of real or fictitious differences that is advantageous to the accuser and detrimental to his or her victim" (p. 103). Memmi's definition is too broad in the sense that these differences can be of any kind and are not limited to somatotype or physical appearance. The focal point is securing the advantage. Using this definition one could argue that religion is race. Thus, following Memmi's definition,

the understood meaning and use of the word is lost.   Essed (1991) claimed "racism must be understood as ideology, structure and process in which inequalities inherent in the wider social structure are related, in a deterministic way, to biological and cultural factors attributed to those who are seen as a different 'race or ethnic group'"(p.43). While these biological and cultural factors which contribute to difference may be fictitious, the act of attributing meaning creates the significant differentiating characteristics among users. However, in many societies the act of racism is not coherent or systematic and is often portrayed as the repetition of prejudicial clichés and illogical arguments.

Race and ethnicity are often used as variables in education research, yet these categories are often not defined or the definitions and uses of these terms are lacking in uniformity. Race is often used synonymously with ethnicity or culture, yet, although erroneous, race often has more biological connotations. Ethnicity and culture tend to come more from social theorists and, as such, carry more social and political undertones.   Thus, many participants in research are placed into racial or ethnic categories based on an arbitrary construct. A common source of confusion in previous research on race was to derive biological conclusions when either ethnicity or culture was used as variables. Biology does not determine culture or ethnicity (McKenzie & Crowcroft, 1994). Race is a social construction, not a genetic or biological concept. When used in reference to different types of people it has nothing to do with biology (Jacquard, 1996). From the functional perspective, concepts of race have been used as an ideological tool to legitimize the oppression and exploitation of people. Yet race carried no specific somatic criteria to justify such oppression.

Race has far more social and historical significance than biological influence. Zuckerman (1990) found that the racial groups are more similar than they are different and the genetic differences between members of a particular nation (84% variance) are greater than the genetic differences among the racial groups (10% variance). Race, as a biological or social construct, is ill defined, invalid and in need of further academic criticism. Although ill defined, race continues to be used as a social construct based on specific physical indicators which are assumed to be racial characteristics. These characteristics vary at different points in history and in different cultures. Yet genetics confirms the non-existence of racial groupings based on biological characteristics.   Using race as a variable in academic research on international students is inherently problematic as it is a concept without biological or social merit. Yet when one experiences a perceived slight or racially biased mistreatment, this can call further attention to the individual's racial identity (Hornsey, 2008). As an individual identifies with a specific set of characteristics which signify that group, then that individual becomes more

sensitive to speech and behavior which isolates or targets those characteristics. These experiences act as a reinforcement of one's racial identity. In such situations, the stronger the racial identity, the more likely one is to report racial discrimination (Sellers & Shelton, 2003). This strong identification with a group which has experienced racism is also correlated with psychological distress among students from Southeast Asia (Noh et al., 1999). Throughout three centuries and multiple characterizations and classifications of race, none have stood the test of time. Nevertheless some people continue to make fallacious assumptions about an individuals' temperament based on physical features such as the quantity of melanin one's body produces. Greater academic attention should be given to concepts of ethnicity and culture which one identifies with.

3.8. The Case for Ethnicity

Given that the biological contribution of group differences is minimal in comparison to the social and cultural, the concept of ethnicity, while also problematic, is less so than race. Ethnicity is also, broadly, associated with race and culture. At the turn of the 20th century the term was used to describe those people who were not European Christians and thus any large group which was considered barbaric, uncivilized, and impolite, or feral. Its origins carry connotations of territories and histories in an attempt to make culture and social institutions congruent (Gellner, 1983). In the literature available from the 1950s and 1960s the term ethnicity was based on the minority groups in a society. This was calculated numerically and cultural minorities were termed 'ethnic'. Prior to this, some groups of anthropologists and sociologists refused to use the word 'ethnic' due to possible implications of nonconformity. This is no longer the case. While the term is still problematic from an operational perspective, it no longer carries the same anachronistic connotations.

Erickson's (1968) exploration of the psychosocial stages of development helped further the discussion of ego identity and ethnicity whereby Erickson argued that individuals explore their environments and seek novel experiences to learn about who and what they are and often accept the identity which was discovered during this exploration process. Phinney, Cantu and Kurtz (1997) described ethnicity as a self-identification of belonging to a group as well as a social construct which involves the behaviors, attitudes, beliefs of that particular social group. Sheets (1999) posited that the development of ethnic identity was found when individuals share common features of identification which are distinctive from other groups. In all of these approaches, the creation, identification and internalization of an ethnic identity is a social psychological endeavor which can impact the study-abroad experience. When one finds

oneself to be an ethnic minority the opportunity to reflect on one's own ethnicity and differences between that ethnicity and the host's ethnicity presents itself. It is through this comparison with others that ethnic identity is formed. In this sense, ethnic identity is a multidimensional concept which is based on an individual's identification with a group's behavior, history, culture, belief system and tradition (Lee, 2005) with little importance being placed on national identity or country of birth.

The human need to classify, categorize and otherwise organize our environment and community is exemplified by the acronym in ethnicity studies 'VREG' which stands for *visibly recognized ethnicity groups*. The mind conceptualizes new information, assimilates and accommodates this new information into pre-existing schemas. Ethnic identity is often determined by an individual based on their development, parental and societal influences, their culture and their sense of belonging to that particular group of people. While race is often determined by visual cues, ethnicity is determined by an individual based on their socialization, environment and experiences in life. A core distinguishing feature of ethnicity is that it often refers to groups of people who associate themselves with a particular unifying nationality, culture and language (Betancourt & Lopez, 1993). While the foundation of the word also finds its roots in ancient Greece, ethnicity has a much stronger relationship to the nation, group or language which one affiliates with. In this sense, ethnicity is experienced as our ascribed identity. Once an individual has an identity linked to an 'us' and a 'them', solidarity among intragroup members grows, a network of social relationships among the 'us' grows and social bonds reinforce the perceived identity. This often results in exclusion, alienation and the creation of boundaries (either physical or metaphysical) to separate 'us' and 'them'. Often when groups begin the social comparisons implicit stereotyped assumptions are created and then disseminated. The result is often one of subjugation, alienation or intentional/unintentional micro-aggressions.

The characteristics which one uses to define ones ethnicity are not fixed and are not based on biology or observable phenotype characteristics. The choice of the term 'ethnic group' or 'ethnicity' while problematic due to the connotations mentioned above is more practical than the use of 'Asian' as a construct which appears in some literature on student sociocultural adjustment. The use of Asian as a variable for adjustment research becomes problematic in the sense that it carries near monolithic connotations of a homogenized and pan-ethnic group which must be parsed throughout the literature, thus rendering the results overgeneralized.

While ethnicity is difficult to measure, it is not historically fixed and is often based on the individuals' perception of themselves which is equally fluid. Ethnicity is a clear indicator of the group an individual identifies with. Given that much of the international student adjustment research is conducted among college students, a group experimenting with and often searching for identity and the resulting meaning of that identity, ethnicity can be chosen as an operating variable so as to elucidate the participants' impressions of their adjustment experience from a more intimately personalized and thus inherently nuanced perspective. It is precisely because ethnicity is based on individual perceptions of belongingness that it should be implemented in adjustment research. Essentially, due to the inherent fluidity of ethnicity, this self-identification of ethnicity is appropriate in the context of international student adjustment. Erickson's (1968) research on identity formation discusses how environment influences the development of identity. Given that students' sense of identity is often not fully developed during college (Arnett, 2000), the university environment can have an impact on the development of identity and sense of ethnic identity, particularly in prejudicial or racialized environments. The selection of ethnicity as an important dimension will provide for a more complete and accurate understanding of the dynamics which influence students sociocultural adjustment. Within this context, international higher education in Thailand, the ethnic identity of participants, as ethnic minorities, deserves greater attention. Exploration of the role of ethnicity can lend to the understanding of group specific and group-general processes and contribute to greater understanding of the experience. Yet these terms can cloud the field of adjustment research with ambiguity as to the specific groups of people we are describing or attributing specific attitude, behavior or cognition sets to. It is the position in this article that the concept of ethnicity is best suited to function as the main focal area for intergroup comparison of the psychological phenomenon of sociocultural adjustment with in the Asian, and more specifically, Thai setting.

3.9. Culture

Culture plays a significant role in human behavior both at the individual level and at the national level. This fact has been recognized by scholars as far back as Hippocrates (Dona, 1991). Yet, for all its history, the definition of culture still preoccupies cross-cultural psychology, sociology and many other areas of scholarly research. This is often because researchers who study culture fail to identify specific culture related variables which predict behavior. Yet culture, race and ethnicity are often used to explain some psychological phenomena. Given the problematic nature of using terms such as race and ethnicity in research, culture became an alternative. This is particularly useful as race does not explain behavior and ethnicity does not explain appearance or behavior.

There are many ways in which the word 'culture' is used. Some of the most common uses include:

      Descriptive: focusing on types of activities and behaviors associated with a

          group

      Historical: refers to heritage and tradition associated with a group of people

      Normative: rules and norms associated with a group of people

      Psychological: focus on learning, problem solving and behavior

      Structural: focus on societal and organizational elements of culture

      Genetic: refers to origins of culture

Zapf (1991) proposed that culture "can be understood as a network of shared meanings that are taken for granted as reality by those interacting within the network" (p.105). The 'shared meanings' are the byproduct of the enculturation process which creates models for behavior. People behave in certain predicable patterns based on the agents of socialization within the culture they live in. These agents, be they religion, media, family education systems or government shape the understanding of the people within that territory. Over time, patterns of thought, behavior, perception and basic ways of knowing and doing become normalized. This is not a complete picture of culture though. There has long been confusion regarding the definition of culture (Triandis et al., 1980). The argument that culture is taken for granted is problematic in that modern social theory acknowledges the agents of enculturation and since the onset of globalization there has been regular public outcry regarding the erosion of culture, the influence of Western culture and the impact of social media on traditional culture. Culture is created, taught in schools, reinforced in our social practices and workplace and normed by laws and practices which become the standard of thought and behavior within the very domain which was responsible for its creation. From this perspective, individuals do not take culture for granted.

Pollock (2008) provided a definition along these lines which stated that culture is the pattern of behavior in an organization which describes the conduct of everyday life. Through this definition we can conceptualize culture as patterns of practices or norms which describe human behavior and interpretations of behavior. Pollock's definition of culture meets the criteria for a corporate culture, organizational culture and perhaps familial culture. Several studies which have used Western generated theories in non-Western settings have not succeeded in replicating the findings in the context of cross national cultures.   Hofstede theorized that these cultural differences could be broken down into dimensions which would

help to predict behavior patterns among these groups. Further analysis of Hofstede's work will be discussed in the subsequent section.

Culture can also be seen as our schema for social behavior and interpretation. In this sense culture provides us with a cognitive schema. As we develop in our community we learn to assimilate and accommodate new situations into our schema and we adapt. As we learn and use culture it also becomes part of us and influences our habits and our cognitions. In this sense culture is difficult to comprehend as it is both within us and outside of our reflective awareness. The cross-cultural contact which is essential to any international student experience creates a collision of phenomenologies among the existing Thai student and the visiting students. Culture is a construct but it constructs us and we construct it. While many people from a shared culture interpret the meanings of symbols or certain behaviors similarly, this is not the sole indicator of culture. A statue, flag, greeting or clothing style are elements of culture, but the behavioral aspect of culture is of primary interest in this study.

Used as variables, race, ethnicity and culture can lend to the understanding of group specific and group-general processes and contribute to greater knowledge. Yet these terms, when used as variables also cloud the study with ambiguity as to the specific groups of people we are describing or attributing specific behavior sets to. It is the position in this research that the concept of ethnicity is best suited to function as the main variable for intergroup comparison of the psychological phenomenon of sociocultural adjustment within the Thai context.

3.10. Identity and Adjustment

A review of the literature reveals that the Asian international students encounter problems with adjusting to Western cultural norms and teaching styles, yet the scholarly literature available on the process of Asian students and African American students adjustment to the international student experience in Asia has not been addressed in sufficient detail. Social context and international student ethnicity are important variables in the adjustment experiences. Different ethnicities receive varying treatment depending on the culture and the history of the host nation with that group of people. An individual's identity is dynamic by nature yet two characteristics or aspects of our identity are our nationality and our ethnicity. While not all people identify themselves by their ethnicity, adolescence and early adulthood are an important time for identity formation, particularly for students of an ethnic minority group (Phinney & Ong, 2007). Individuals are often conceptualized and defined by others based on characteristics such as race, gender, language use, nationality and background. In much of the

academic literature on the topic this can be seen in the participants' demographics sections (Gargano, 2012). Given the problems currently facing Thai international higher education (Rhein, 2017) and that internationalisation and globalization are two of the most important topics in educational administration, methods to recruit and maintain international students in these programs is of great value. Therefore, the inclusion of ethnic identity should be examined in relation to the participant's sociocultural adjustment to Thailand.

3.11. Conclusion

During the 20th century researchers in the field of international education and student adjustment saw the rise of cultural shock theory to the gradual development of multiple stage based theories. From the U-curve model in 1960 to the W-curve in 1963 to the work of Adler in 1975, the conceptualization of cross-cultural adjustment was based on models which predicted a typical trajectory sojourners would encounter. While the concept of culture shock continues to be a conceptual and explanatory reality of the experiences of many international students, these models of adjustment have not proven to be as accurate when subjected to empirical testing and research. The approaches to international student adjustment have gradually transitioned from the medical model to the psychological adaptation approach which is more comprehensive and assumes acculturation is a process which gradually occurs over time as opposed to a shocking state a traveler suddenly finds oneself in. It analyzes the process of actively learning to live in a culture as opposed to reactive subjugation. Early work by Bandura (1977) introduced social learning theory and Hofstede's (1984) work on culture distance began the studies of cultural novelty and adjustment where the greater the difference of culture between the country of origin and the host country, the more difficulty adjustment becomes (Black & Mendenhall, 1991). The dissimilarity of social behavior deemed appropriate at home and in the host country is further support for the degree to which international students experience sociocultural adjustment anxiety which can become an impediment to proper adjustment. However, there is still no single theory which synthesizes relevant research on student adjustment processes. Therefore, educational institutions and researchers within this area would benefit if the research were to proceed to identify the influence of specific variables on individual's adjustment and actively address them when possible.

Much of the research on international student adjustment between 1996 and 2005 occurred in English speaking universities in the United States, Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and New Zealand (Andrade, 2006). Knowledge and information regarding the variables which impact adjustment to international education in Asia and Thailand in particular is limited yet

teachers and service support staff within higher education institutions need to understand what factors are involved in international student perception of and reaction to Thailand including student stress, anxiety, adjustment and their overall impression. Given the current scholarship available regarding the international student adjustment phenomena, it is imperative that alternative methodological frameworks consider the complexity of ethnicity and the resulting adjustment experience. The previous attempts at reaching conclusive findings regarding the process of adjustment, the unique causal or correlational relationships have proven to be problematic. Attempts should be made to avoid the promulgation of one size fits all policies and practices affecting these students. The curve models of adjustment lack support and have been dismissed by many of the leading scholars in adjustment research. These models do not reflect the reality of the sojourner experience and are limited in applicability particularly in regard to short-term study experiences in Asia. Therefore, this article suggests a model which focuses on the impact of the international students' ethnic identity, cultural background, social expectations of appropriate behavior and the interaction with host nationals which results in the overall adjustment experience and perceptions of the host society and culture.

There remains insufficient attention to the full array of factors involved in international student adjustment to schools in Asia. Therefore, the primarily purpose of this article is to explore an area of education where limited knowledge exists, namely, international students sociocultural adjustment to Thailand. As most international students spend between 3-4 months in Thailand, research should seek to understand the high degree of variability among these ethnically diverse international student groups. Given the wide range of international students Thailand recruits and careful to avoid the homogenization of all international student experiences and adjustment outcomes, further research would benefit from the inclusion of ethnic identity as a measure of consideration. Improving educational environments for international students and decreasing cross-cultural educational adjustment issues will benefit multiple stakeholders including students, international relations departments and university programs recruiting international students. An investigative analysis of student sociocultural adjustment experience can be utilized in many areas within the host country as well as in orientation sessions prior to student departure from their home country. Additionally, the process of eliminating or decreasing stressors should create a more positive learning and travel experience for international students within this context.

3.12. References

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Chapter 4 Methodology

4.1. Introduction

In general, the academic, emotional and social difficulties of international students were previously explored through quantitative research methods (Misra, Crist, & Burant, 2003). Historically, cross-cultural psychology research has shown interest in establishing universal principles which govern the relationship between culture and individual psychology (Ashworth, 2003, Karasz & Singelis, 2009). This is evidenced by academic attempts to establish comprehensive stages of adjustment irrespective of ethnicity and host nation attributes. This series of studies seeks to determine the specific impediments to sociocultural adjustment from the perspective of the selected participant ethnic groups. Qualitative measurements of affect, behavior and cognition are necessary and important in cross-cultural research, but to gain an understanding of the motives, drives or goals of such behavior is equally important for developing better programs and, in the end, better educational experiences for our international students. Interviews, both semi-structured and unstructured, with students are common in educational research and thus became the integral component of this series of studies.

A principal aspect of sociocultural adjustment is the subjective nature of this phenomenon. Subjectivity is an important focus of qualitative inquiry as participants can provide valuable insights into the factors which influenced adjustment. A variety of stressors ranging from discrimination, cultural norms, finances, culture shock, adjustment, accommodations, isolation, social support have been explored in the Western educational context (Bradley, 2000; Lee & Rice, 2007; Leong & Chou, 1996; Msengi, 2007). The qualitative studies regarding international student adjustment that have emerged are elaborating and clarifying the themes highlighted by the quantitative procedures. Concepts such as student discrimination (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007), alienation (Major, 2005), emotional problems (McLachlan & Justine, 2009), a lack of usage of counseling services particularly by Asian international students (Bradley, 2000) and adjustment to new teaching styles (Edgeworth & Eiseman, 2007) have been explored using qualitative research designs. These studies were primarily done in Western nations using primarily Asian students as participants. Other ethnographic studies (Brown, 2008) identified language as an impediment to adjustment. Research using qualitative methods has also shown that these stressors can negatively influence student learning and overall experience in the host culture. As international student adjustment is experienced differently, depending on the individual and their background, the utilization of a qualitative design aimed at investigating certain individual differences should lend credibility

to the outcomes of this project through description and direct quotes from the affected group.

Research in psychology has experienced three waves which can be briefly summarized follows; the first wave was characterized by quantitative approaches and methodologies and borrowed much from its' roots in biology and physics. This was the traditional science or positivist period (Johnson et al. 2005). The second wave criticized the positivists and began to stress the importance of the subjective human experience. This wave relied on qualitative research and explored epistemology (subjective), ontology (relative), axiology (ethical), methodological (dialectic and hermeneutic) and the rhetorical (use of informality in presentation of concepts and ideas) (Lincoln & Guba, 2005). During this period both quantitative and qualitative coexisted as rival siblings battling for the attention of the scientific community. This 'either or' approach to research laid the ground work for the marriage of the third wave which was known for its' mixed methods approach (Johnson et al. 2005, Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Essentially the first two waves stressed the mono-method approach. Cambell and Fiske (1959) coined the term 'multiple operationalism'. This integration of more than one research method called many issues into question as were the operational definitions of variables such as emotions or the existence of specific personality traits.

It is within these chosen research methods that the researcher can begin an introspective analysis of the chosen research question and the very nature of research itself. Qualitative research is based on anti-positivistic assumptions or constructivism whereas quantitative approaches are based on positivistic assumptions (Befring, 2002) and that some critical realism is also imbedded (Cook & Cambell, 1979). The positivist believes knowledge can be observed; it therefore exists and is verifiable. It is stable and can be tested as can be seen in physics or medical models. The interpretivist (constructivist) sees knowledge as dependent on human perception and therefore dependent on subjective influences such as culture, social influences, history, education and religion. Knowledge is constructed by the mind which is subjective. The interpretivist assumes multiple realities or perceptions of which create the human understanding of knowledge and consequently, the world. Thus, this is essentially an epistemological debate where the two houses are the positivist supported by natural sciences and the interpretivist supported in part by the social sciences. Both houses accept that knowledge is based on observation therefore a cornerstone of this debate is the possibility of objective observation.

The interpretive paradigm defines knowledge much differently as individual interpretation of observed stimuli is by definition subjective. All observations rely on sensory perception and

subjective interpretation of stimuli therefore we see that both quantitative and qualitative approaches partially rely on human interpretation of sensory data which is essentially, much to the dismay of the empiricist, flawed. Our perceptions are not accurate pictures of the reality. This is the critical realist position (Lund, 2005). The understanding of qualitative and quantitative research methods in psychology and education being two completely different paradigms is then equally flawed as any quantitative analysis is reliant on critical realism as well.

This critical realism relies on representationalism which would support an interpretation of human sensory perception as accurate and not simply a product of the central nervous system. This means that the interpretations of events, the observation of reality and all that is considered to be real are in fact real and not a subjective interpretation of stimuli. This, however, is not accurate. Sensory perception is not infallible. It is inherently subjective. The human mind has a tendency to make mistakes through the use of past experiences to interpret events, through cognitive biases, through misattribution, through discrepancies in memory, heuristics and so on. Hence the term interpretive or constructive is necessary to define conclusions drawn from data collected qualitatively. In this research, the perceptions and subsequent descriptions of the intent or opinions of the hosts in response to certain events as described by the Burmese, African Americans, Japanese and Koreans are much different, yet the details of the event are similar. A specific stimulus, such as eye contact, is interpreted by some groups as an invitation to socialize and to other groups as a sign of aggression. It is the interpretation of the social stimuli which gives meaning. The stimuli itself exists in a vacuum if without observation and interpretation.

The interpretivist approach, which this series of studies supports, argues that knowledge is socially constructed and sociocultural adjustment norms will vary greatly. Therefore, social science research cannot be completely objective. If the positivists were to test a social theory, such as the influence of Burmese ethnicity among international student sociocultural adjustment in Japan, the United States and Thailand, the development of a valid and generalizable result would be problematic. Adjustment to New York is inherently different than adjustment to Nagasaki and Nakhon Ratchasima. The location and the ethnicity are two important variables which impact adjustment.

Qualitative measurements of behaviour are necessary and important in cross-cultural research, but gaining an understanding of the motives, drives or goals of such behaviour is equally important for developing better programs and, in the end, better educational experiences for

our students. Interviews, both structured and unstructured, with students are common in educational research and are an integral component of adjustment research in educational settings. The position of these studies accepts that knowledge is socially constructed and social norms vary greatly. Global solutions to problems such as student anxiety and adjustment are unrealistic as there are far too many variables which would alter the positivist research model and thus skew any results rendering the project unreliable. Unlike the positivist approach to student adjustment, the aim should be to find local solutions and strategies to combat local sources of student stress and anxiety.

The context of any academic inquiry is important to the framework and theoretical development of the research model. In this case, the sociocultural adjustment experiences of four ethnicities to the Thai international higher education, the context is essential to the experiences of the affected groups. The student's identification with their particular ethnic group and the relationship of that group to Thailand has consequences for adjustment.

4.2. Setting of the Series of Studies

This research was conducted at MUIC which is based in Salaya on the main campus of Mahidol University. Mahidol University is named after the father of the much beloved King Bhumibol who reigned from 1946-2016. Prince Mahidol was fascinated by medicine and used this location as a distribution site for medicine to the local communities. The term 'sala' in Thai means pavilion and the word 'ya' means medicine. Hence, the campus is based on the medicine pavilion concept whereby people from all around could come to receive healthcare. Thus, this is commonly referred to as the Salaya campus. This area is held in high esteem due to its history of social service and medical care provisioning. Given that the campus was officially established in 1982, prior to the economic boom in Thailand, a sizeable plot of land was allocated to the establishment of multiple faculties and colleges.   The main campus is over 520 acres (210 hectares) and is designed as a green campus with special attention given to showcase the tropical scenery and natural beauty. The size of the campus allows for multiple gardens, sports facilities, swimming pools, and long walkways through green areas. This, when compared to many of the schools our international students arrived from, is far more country than city. According to the Times Higher Education ranking system, in 2016 Mahidol University (MU) was ranked number one in Thailand and ranked ninetieth in Asia. In 2017 there were 28,996 full time students enrolled in undergraduate, graduate and doctoral degree programs. There are currently over 2,773 academic staff on campus.

MUIC, initially called International Students Degree Program (ISDP), is a college within the MU system and was established in 1986 as the first international college at a public university in Thailand. In 1996 ISDP was officially renamed Mahidol University International College. MUIC currently offers 19 undergraduate majors and 22 minors in the Arts, Sciences and Management and has two master's degree programs. There are currently 3,400 students and 132 full-time faculty and approximately 400 visiting and exchange students annually. 94% of these students enrolled for one trimester (a 12 week trimester) and spend an average of 14-16 weeks in-country. 2% of these students enrolled for 2 trimesters and 4 % enrolled for 3 trimesters.

Of the nearly 400 visiting and exchange students, 21% enrolled though established exchange agreements and 79% enrolled directly with MUIC. This 79% pay their tuition fees directly to MUIC. The setting of this series of studies is the location where international students came into contact with host nationals most frequently. The classes, clubs, societies and other related events mentioned in this series of studies occurred on campus. The international student accommodations are all within five kilometers of the campus.

A current challenge facing the international education system in Thailand is the demographic changes and the resulting decline in local Thai student enrollment. This has led to greater competition in the international education market. Many universities, both public and private, continue to open international programs. Due to this increase in programs, high school students have more choices and by extension, international students from abroad also have more options when pursuing a short term study abroad program in Thailand. Essentially, the Thai higher education market is getting smaller each year and many international programs are looking to the visiting and exchange students to offset the decline in students which resulted from the competitive market, the declining population and the continued low birth rates in urban areas of the country. This series of studies seeks to explore the sociocultural adjustment demands experienced by four groups of students at an international college in Nakhon Pathom, Thailand. Adjustment to MUIC can be particularly problematic as the campus is thirty kilometers outside of Bangkok and in a Thai suburban community setting. In essence this creates two environments of adaptation- organizational and cultural (Fan & Wanous, 2008).

In Thailand, international student mobility continues to increase in all levels of higher education. This is clearly the case as several private and public organizations are actively competing for and promoting international educational services. In 2003, there were approximately 4,100 foreign students in Thai higher education however, by 2009, that number

had grown to over 19,000 foreign students studying in public (11,177) and private (7,875) higher education institution under the supervision of the Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC, 2011). The majority of foreign students came from Asia and stayed in country for less than a year (OHEC, 2011). As international student mobility increased so too did the international programs. In 1984, there were only 14 international programs in the Thai HE system. That number gradually grew to 53 programs in 2007 (30 public universities and 23 private universities) (Office of the Education Council, 2004-2008) and then in 2010 to 981 international programs at undergraduate and graduate levels, that is, 342 undergraduate programs, 614 graduate programs, and 25 other degree programs. The programs are divided into 699 in public universities and 282 in private universities (OHEC, 2011). The number of international programs continues to increase to accommodate the needs of both Thai and foreign students. Overall, the flow of students grew rapidly over the past decade and continues to show little sign of decreasing considering the ASEAN plans in the decades ahead. As Vincent-Lancrin (2008) argues "globalization, increased migration flows of all types, the strategies followed by institutions of higher learning and policies of developing countries are combining to create a more competitive, homogeneous and globalized arena of higher education, which, in turn, makes for continuing student mobility" (p. 122).

While the number of students from abroad is increasing, local students still accounted for between about 85% and 98% of the total enrollment in Thai international programs (Pad, 2005). This creates an environment of primarily Thai students attending classes in English and participating in other events on campus with a large number of foreign students who are here for a short study abroad experience, do not speak Thai and are often unfamiliar with the culture and customs. Therefore, the rationale of this research is to gain further knowledge of the short term international student adjustment experiences in Thai international higher education. This series of studies facilitates a much warranted discussion on the relationship between sojourner culture and ethnic identity and the host culture's perception of and reaction to that culture and ethnic identity. A further rationale for the study of sociocultural adjustment to short term study abroad is that contemporary student sojourners are not in-country for an extended time period which would allow for adaptation or acculturation models of inquiry.

It is also important to understand why so many Thai students prefer to enroll in international programs when they are more expensive and more competitive than the state schools. The great pull for Thai students within international higher education in Thailand is the availability of English language tuition. The demand for strong English skills begins at a young age and

continues throughout the education process and on to the employment recruitment process. As such, Thai companies are actively recruiting applicants with the strongest English competency. The recent prioritization of English competency can be explained by the country's inferior "position in the international system" and its consequent need to embrace the world's official academic and business language (see Ehara, 1992, p. 272; Hook & Weiner, 1992, p. 1; Horie, 2002). As foreign direct investment continues, both private and public companies are competing for access to fresh graduates with strong language skills. Indeed, many graduates from Thai international programs expect much higher salaries as a result of their English language ability. A second factor which pulls Thais into international programs at home is the access to an English based curriculum often taught by native English speakers at a heavily discounted cost when compared to programs in Australia, America, England and Canada. For those parents which do not have the means to send their children abroad for a 4 year degree, international schools within Thailand can fulfill many of their educational needs. It must be understood that most international schools in Thailand are at least triple but often five times the cost of a Thai language program but this is still a fraction of the total cost of sending the Thai student to an English speaking nation for a four year program.

An additional pull factor for Thai students to enter international programs in their homeland is the social advantages which are often more important than the actual knowledge attained from completing a degree. Social status and having the right connections is a necessity within the Thai context. Job acquisition is often based on social connections and promotion based on ascription is the norm. Another pull factor is the irony of cultural supremacy. Within Thai culture there exists a duality of attraction to Western thought, language and civilization which is diametrically opposed by a repulsion of many Western value systems (Takayama & Apple, 2008). While many Thais may feel both politically and economically inferior to the West there is also a spiritual, moral and cultural superiority present within the education system. This West vs. non-West dichotomy becomes problematic within a culture with "admiration and aspiration to assimilate Western culture, values and lifestyle" (Lao, 2015, p. 7). A Thai who is seen to have successfully adopted many Western cultural attributes and language skills has a corresponding increase in social status among peers (Pasuk & Baker, 1998). This gradual Westernization of the Thai students reflects similar trends in 19th and early 20th century Thai history when royal elites and civil servants were sent abroad to receive a Western education only to return home and be given key positions in military and government ministries. Both then and now, those who have received a Western education are often fast tracked through the bureaucracy and gain positions of power at a much faster rate than those who were educated within the Thai speaking system. The Organization for Economic

Cooperation and Development's study in 2004 summarized this phenomenon claiming that English language education provides status, positional advantages and perhaps superior quality to students from SE Asia (OECD, 2004).

4.3. Privileged Observer

Reflexivity is an important aspect of qualitative research paradigms, particularly when the researcher is working independently. As previously discussed in Chapter 2, in Thailand to be developed is to be Western and to be Western is to be modern. As described throughout Chapter 2, the historical development of Thailand, of particular relevance to this series of studies is the academic development which was based on the avoidance of colonization through the display of development through emulation of Western practices. Western imperialism in Thailand privileged the West over the East and this has a distinct impact on how non-White minorities are treated in Thailand and thus at MUIC. As a White, American native English speaking male lecturer in the Social Science Division at the college where the data were collected, this researcher is obligated to acknowledge the importance of this position in the choice of international student adjustment as the topic and the choice of Asian and African American students as the participants. It is because of the male White privilege afforded that the selection of Caucasian participants was avoided. To illustrate, in 2010 this researcher was teaching an introduction to psychopathology course which was often ethnically diverse in terms of student enrollment. On many occasions, the international students enrolled in the course would, against the advice of their instructor, self-diagnose and then make an appointment with this researcher to discuss these issues. This led to the gradual illumination of an area of immigrant experiences in Thailand which this researcher had not been aware of. In one particularly impressionable case, an African American women who was concerned with the development of multiple physical ailments and the possible development of hypochondriasis described her humiliation when, during the previous weekend, she visited a Thai hospital and the nurses weighed her seven or eight times and took photographs while laughing because this student was as the nurses repeated often throughout the day "so big and black". The African American woman recalled how the nurses called friends from other departments who came over to pose for a group photo after forming a semicircle with the African American student in the center and the nurses laughed throughout the day at how big she was. This student was so shocked, humiliated and angry that she was considering filing a complaint with the University for recommending such a hospital to the international students.

This was not the only incident when this researcher listened to the experiences of international

students who described cruel, demeaning and often racialized or ethnicized experiences with the Thai hosts. Between 2010 and 2014 there was a steady stream of international students who made appointments to seek advice and counseling regarding their experiences involving being "othered" in Thailand and many of these students were simply confused as the treatment they were experiencing was never discussed and was in direct opposition to everything they had been told about how kind, accepting and gracious the Thais are as hosts. As one Burmese student said when she explained that a taxi driver had asked her to exit the vehicle on a main street "This wasn't in the brochure".

This researchers' subjectivity as a migrant from the United States to Thailand has had a direct influence on the contextualization of minority experiences and perceptions in Thailand. In this case, the researcher was both an insider and an outsider in that while the researcher's identity as a member of faculty was established, it was clear that both the participants and the researcher were outsiders in the Thai community and thus, within this context, establishing rapport and mediating this power distance was relatively unproblematic. In this sense, the researcher was not acting merely as a mediator but also as an instrument of the research. The work of Stuart Hall, Edward Said and others has led to this researcher's ambition to conduct a culturally and ethnically relevant inquiry as an 'outsider looking in'. This was done by the adoption of a reflexive stance which was intended to identify and prevent potential bias and the potential for self-projection (Medico & Santiago-Delefosse, 2014). Throughout the interviews this researcher continued to remind the participants that no one is an a position of expertise regarding the experiences of these ethnic groups except the groups themselves yet it must also be acknowledged that neither is anyone approaching these interviews being "tabula rasa," as all participants had some understanding of discrimination, prejudice and a sense of their own ethnic identity.

4.4. Initial Pilot Study

In October, 2011 a pilot study was conducted to determine the ethnicities of greatest concern among the international student population at MUIC. This was necessary as after interviewing the International Relations office and the college counselor for international students; it was revealed that White male students were more likely to experience healthy sociocultural adjustment, as were the extroverted. Furthermore, it was observed by the college counselor that Western students experience healthier adjustment than their Southeast Asian counterparts regardless of gender. While this may be due to perceived discrimination, it runs opposite to theories of 'cultural fit' (Searle & Ward, 1990). This is important as it will establish the

existence of sub-group discrimination among international students. Therefore, the pilot study was designed with the intent of identifying which adjustment issues are of primary impact and which groups of international students experience the greatest adjustment demands. This was necessary as there are approximately four hundred international students attending MUIC each academic year from over fifty countries of origin.

Subjects ranged in age from 17-30 and most were non-married unemployed students. Collecting the first set of data began in November 2011. The initial method used for the pilot study was a quantitative analysis of adjustment based on Ward and Kennedy's Sociocultural Adjustment Scale (SCAS) (see Appendix E). This survey uses a 5 point Likert scale and was slightly adapted for use in Thailand. The original development of the sociocultural adaptation scale came from Furnham and Bochner (1982) and was modified for many travelers samples and has proven reliable and valid (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Kennedy, 1993b). This version contains 30 items scored (from 1 corresponding to no difficulty and 5 corresponding to extreme difficulty) and two open ended questions based on rewarding/stressful experiences in Thailand.

International students were given the questionnaire regardless of their region of origin, ethnicity, age, gender, or native language. The essential qualifying variables were that the participants be enrolled as an international student at MUIC, be a non-native Thai speaker, and who intended to return to their homeland following the completion of their semester abroad. The surveys were disseminated to the international students during week eight of a twelve week semester. Another factor regarding the choice of this time was to conform to previous research which concluded that 'the greatest difficulties are experienced at the earliest stages of cross-cultural transition" (Ward & Kennedy, 1996, p.661). The intention was to ensure that all participants had been in country for at least two months and decrease any impact of academic stressors on overall consideration of sociocultural adjustment. All subjects were handed a survey distributed by fellow international students and asked to return the surveys to either the initial contact or to the Social Science mailbox of this researcher. Participation in the research was anonymous, voluntary and subjects were asked to return the survey within one week. In total, one hundred and ten surveys were completed and returned to the researcher

This initial inquiry into sociocultural adaptation was done using descriptive statistics. The results indicated three interesting areas of potential inquiry. The first area was in regard to gender. This pilot study revealed that there was no significant degree of sociocultural adjustment variances between men and women regardless of ethnicity or length of stay.

Secondly, the average international student reported that they were only attending one semester at the college. Lastly, that the minority groups of international students, namely, African Americans and Asians experienced the most difficult adjustment process. Upon consultation with the international relations department at the college, it was determined that the most common Asian international students attending the college were from Burma, S. Korea and Japan. Thus the future participants for the in-depth interviews were determined.

4.5. Participants and Selection

In total, there were sixty participants in this series of studies or fifteen from each of the ethnic groups which are under investigation. Each of the participants from the four ethnicities chosen for this research was required to meet three criteria: (1) are Japanese, Korean, Burmese or African Americans currently studying at MUIC, and (2) do not speak Thai fluently, and (3) enrolled as visiting or exchange students in Thailand for one trimester or approximately 14-16 weeks in country which is the most common length of time for visiting students in Thailand and at MUIC in particular. Fifteen Japanese, Korean Burmese and African American international students volunteered after being contacted by the researcher at the international student orientation seminar at the beginning of each academic semester. The Burmese participant's contacted one another following the initial interviews and the establishment of rapport which led to a snowball sampling (Jacobsen & Landau, 2003) effect. The Burmese participants were particularly concerned regarding assurances of anonymity and confidentiality for reasons which will become clear in the results section. Given the rather problematic nature of Burmese adjustment, this section of the research also included interviews with ten Thai students as well. The Thai students chosen for this research met three criteria: (1) Thais who went to primary and secondary school in Thai language programs in Thailand (2) define their ethnic background and personal identification with Thailand and (3) are currently studying in an international program in Thailand.

Following the distribution of a potential participant form at each of the college's international student orientation seminars, an email was sent to the students who had expressed interest in this series of studies see (Appendix B). This series of studies is based on the four groups of international student experiences in a short (3.5 month or 1 semester) program in Thailand. While longitudinal studies of the international student experience often focus on the acculturation and adaptation processes of sojourners, this series of studies is best suited to the investigation of adjustment and coping as the average duration of international student study abroad experiences has gradually decreased over the last 50 years (IIE, 2002). The average

study abroad experience in Thailand is now less than one academic year with many participants only studying abroad for between 12 weeks or between 1-2 quarters. This decrease is not unique to Thailand. In 2009 only 5% of American students studied abroad for a full year (Goodman, 2009) yet just a few years later that length of time abroad decreased yet again. The Institute of International Education revealed that 97% of American study abroad length was between 8 weeks and one semester (IIE, 2016). As the duration of study abroad experiences continues to decline the reliance on sequential adjustment scales is no longer suitable within the Thai context.

4.6. Semi-Structured Interviews

This is an exploratory case study using a qualitative inquiry model to investigate the sociocultural adjustment process of sixty international students in Thailand. One on one semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants. A critical component of the selection of interviews as the method of inquiry was the necessity to find the details which would allow the research to parse through the data and distinguish ethnically relevant sociocultural adjustment stressors. This researcher conducted all of the interviews, transcribed the data and performed the analysis of all interviews. In this sense, the researcher is the primary data instrument.

These interviews were semi-structured in that the researcher asked a standard set of questions (see Appendix A) in order, but used prompts and follow up questions as appropriate and based on the respondents' comments. A semi-structured approach was chosen to maximize participant authenticity. Creating an open discussion assisted in developing genuine or unadulterated descriptions of their adjustment process. The questions were open ended and designed to allow the interviewees to speak freely regarding their experiences and opinions of the adjustment process. The subjective responses to questions lent to the development of a conceptual scaffold adding authenticity to future research.

The selection of in depth interviews and case study is based on the goal of understanding the lived experiences of these international students in Thailand. This exploratory qualitative method was implemented to lend detailed, rich, and in-depth reports of the rewarding and challenging experiences students faced in Thailand. The questions served as a interview guide for structure as opposed to a sequential checklist. This approach allowed for open, spontaneous and detailed dialogue. Consistent with Erlandson et al. (1993) each interview and was audio recorded. An interview approach was chosen as concepts of sociocultural anxiety;

social adjustment and comfort in one's environment mainly reside in the consciousness of the individual. The participants are individuals who are experiencing the phenomenon (life in Thailand) and who can articulate their experiences.

Interview methods are best in situations where a more detailed understanding of a process or experience is needed to determine the exact nature of the issue under investigation.   Semi structured explorative questions were used to identify specific issues influencing the adjustment process of international students. This aspect of inquiry emphasized unique attributes which contributed to the sociocultural adjustment process of the international students under investigation. Questions were intended to explore participants friendships, perceptions of resilience, the ability to cope with and recover from stress and convert it into a positive experience (Jackson et al., 2007; Richardson, 2002) and students perceptions of adjustment as a result of characteristics (Hunter & Chandler, 1999), internal processes (Tebes et al., 2004) or an innate motivation towards adjustment and growth (Waite & Richardson, 2004). These semi-structured in-depth interviews assisted in understanding the personal experiences of the international students and lent to the creation of a narrative. Rather than exploring the causes of change, this series of studies seeks to understand the student adjustment phenomena from the students' perspective. The interviews were conducted in English. The use of English for interviews is ideal as English is the lingua prima of international schools in Asia and all of the participants had passed a standardized test (IELTS, TOEFL) or are native English speakers. MUIC has English language proficiency requirements which are similar to most English speaking countries (6.5 IELTS and 550 or 79 on the new TOEFL). Interviews lasted approximately 30-45 minutes.

4.7. Data Instrument

A qualitative case study design was chosen to elucidate the details of the participants' experiences in Thailand. The questionnaire in this series of studies study was adapted from Steele (2008) and her work on Chinese international students in Singapore. Due to the limited sample size involved in the study (60 participants), the original questionnaire was customized to Thailand. This adaptation allowed for the development of a semi-structured open-ended interview with each participant. The initial questions were framed in an open-ended non-directive style to establish amity with the participants. Particular emphasis was placed on the challenges the participants discussed through more probing inquiry. All participants were asked about their experiences and responses to their new milieu.

Each interview included the first ten items in a question format. For example, for item number one the participants were asked "Will you please describe your impression of this program and of Thailand?" Follow-up questions were included when participants responded with multiple items in one dialogue. For example, if a participant responded to item one with a statement which included aspects of cultural differences or their living arrangements, then a (or a series) of follow-up questions were asked to get a more detailed and clear picture of the experience being described. There were many interviews which when one item was in question, the response included aspects of multiple items which created a conversational atmosphere to the data gathering process and further lent to the establishment of rapport with the participants.

4.8. Data Analysis and Interpretation

As standard practice, each interview was digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed (Erlandson et al. 1993). During each of the interviews notes were taken in regard to various topics and statements which formed themes. Prior to the commencement of coding, the researcher listened to all of the recordings and began reflecting on the themes which emerged from each of the ethnicities. The coding focused on different themes as discussed by the respondents and information available in academic literature on sociocultural adjustment. Following an inductive approach of natural inquiry and analysis, themes emerged and each was identified, labeled and categorized. Thematic identification and coding provided a rich description of the naturalistic data. Each interview transcript was read multiple times and the initial analytical notes were made in the left margin of each page. The right margin was used to identify emerging themes and key concepts or phrases which captured the spirit of the adjustment experience. Specific attention was given to common or overlapping themes. This thematic data analysis was intended to identify frequency, specificity and emotionality of participant responses (Krueger & Casey, 2009). As more themes evolved it became necessary to combine major themes with subordinate themes. This process led to a unitization analysis which required that each of the participants responses was broken down into one or more themes. The unitization strategy employed in this research involved identification of units of meaning as opposed to assigned units as predicated on by the questions asked by the investigator. In the end, some units were two sentences and some units were a full paragraph. To assist in the accuracy of thematic identification qualitative data analysis software, ATLAS was used to code, sort and categorize textual data. Concepts were categorized using axial coding. Through an iterative process of coding and thematic identification, the number of codes was decreased to reduce the overall complexity of the coding scheme. Eventually leading to multiple primary and secondary themes based on the different ethnicities

experiences in Thailand. Each of these themes is addressed in the results section to follow.

4.9. The Ethics and Politics of the Research

The primary ethical concern was ensuring participant anonymity, confidentiality and protecting their psychological well-being and dignity. A basic principle of research ethics is the protection of the participants through maintaining anonymity and confidentiality (Aita & Richer 2005). Francis (2008) stated "confidentiality is about expectations of control over what happens to information about a person" (p. 52); whereas, "privacy is invaded, and confidentiality is breached; violations of privacy are invasions, and violations of confidentiality are breaches" (p. 53). As such, all participants have been given a pseudonym to further protect their identity. The pseudonyms were chosen based on a list of the twenty most popular names from the relevant ethnic group in the late 1990s. Some respondents had critical comments regarding their homeland or their impressions of Thailand and they may be concerned that these negative comments, when made public, may have negative consequences (Coombes, Danaher & Danaher, 2004). All data collected for this research is stored on a 32 bit encrypted password protected storage device to decrease the likelihood of jeopardizing the participants' rights to anonymity and confidentiality.

To ensure that all participants were aware of their role in this research an informed consent document was read to each participant prior to the onset of the interview (see Appendix B, C and D for a review of the Ethics Approval documentation and relevant letters of invitation). According to Lansimies-Antikainen et al. (2010), informed consent can be defined as the process by which each subject of a study must be informed about the "aims, methods, sources of funding, any possible conflicts of interest, institutional affiliations of the researcher, the anticipated benefits and potential risks of the study and any discomfort it may entail" (p. 56). Therefore, at the start of the recorded interviews participants listened to a summary of the research aims and goals and were provided with the opportunity to withdraw at their discretion (either in writing or spoken form) or verbally consent and the interviews proceeded.

A conceivable psychological or social risk is inherent in any research involving participants. The interviews involved discussions of participant's perceptions of Thailand, the host nationals and educational comparisons which may result in participants becoming critical of their experiences in Thailand or experiences in their homeland. This became apparent in regard to specific ethnicities experiences with discrimination and racism while in Thailand. However, within any discussion which involves personal decision making or airing of one's perceptions,

there is psychological risk. This risk was offset by the potential gains in knowledge and understanding regarding the ethnicities experiences.

Psychological risks withstanding, there is also a limited risk of participants being labelled as 'academic' or possibly some other negative term associated with scholarly interests and involvement in research. Within any participant research there is a possibility that those students may face some negative social evaluation by less academic or intellectually minded students who have become aware of the participants involvement. This may cause some psychological discomfort. No social or psychological harm caused by reflection and social engagement is intended, however, to minimize any potential risks a positive environment of opinion sharing and reciprocity was created by the assuring a supportive interviewing environment where participants were regularly given positive verbal and nonverbal feedback by the researcher.

Lastly, many of the participant are from a background where English is not their primary language. Therefore, an effort was made to use standard English and avoid use of slang, idioms or other complex terms.

4.10. Expected Outcomes

It is expected that this exploratory qualitative method will lend detailed, rich, and in-depth reports of the rewarding and challenging experiences international students faced in Thailand. This approach will also allow for the identification of specific stressors which, if possible, can be removed thus creating a more positive experience for future students. This exploratory series of studies further seeks to complement previous findings from studies involving migrants as well as to explore specific strategies students implemented to overcome adjustment problems in Thailand. By collecting and collating interview data, this ethnographic method, studying international student culture through observation and interpretation, may capture multiple realities dependent on the individuals' perspectives (Wint & Frank, 2006). This knowledge has potentially three core benefits. To begin, the first step in correcting any problem is identification. This research is designed for that purpose. Secondly, this knowledge of international student stressors can be used to prepare future international students for potentially stressful or anxiety inducing experiences and thus give them the tools to begin to plan their resistance strategies and coping mechanisms. Lastly, much of the findings from each of the ethnicities in this research will be published in academic journals and shared with the educational community thus contributing to scholarship and our

understanding of international student adjustment.

4.11. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research transitioned from the initial quantitative approach with the pilot study to the qualitative perspective with the interviews conducted. The subject nature of the sociocultural adjustment phenomenon lends to qualitative in-depth interviews which aimed to provide the rich details from the perspective of the selected participant ethnic groups. These interviews and the initial pilot study were conducted at MUIC which is, as described in this chapter, the pre-eminent international college in Thailand and part of Mahidol University which is consistently ranked as the best university in Thailand. The use of semi-structured interviews further allowed for participants to expand on relevant areas of their sociocultural adjustment experience and created an environment of openness and spontaneity within the dialogues between researcher and participant. Following the interviews the analysis and interpretation led to the thematic identification of data and the subsequent publications as described in the next chapter.

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Chapter 5 Results of the 4 Cohorts

5.1. Introduction

Following the introduction to international Thai higher education in Chapter 2 and the theoretical framework in Chapter 3, this chapter presents the results of the inquiry as outlined in Chapter 4. This chapter is composed of three articles which summarize the results of the research and contribute to answering RQ2 of this study. While this research project involves four ethnic groups in the attempt to adequately explore the experiences of each cohort, the editors and publishers of related journals on international students requested that the Japanese and Korean cohort be compared in the publication as these groups have been the subject of greater academic inquiry in the past. As such, there is one article which summarizes the results of this research which combines the Japanese and Korean international student sociocultural student adjustment experiences. Given the publisher word limitations and editor's requests to limit the historical context, a small section introducing the Japanese and Korean presence in Thailand has been added to provide a more detailed description of the role of each group within Thailand. This was not necessary for the two remaining cohorts in this series of studies. As such, the other two publications each present the analysis of one ethnic group; one article on African American international student sociocultural adjustment and the final article focuses on Burmese international student sociocultural adjustment.

5.2. Background on Japanese International Students in Thailand

Among the four ethnicities in this series of studies, the Japanese reported similar negative issues related to their sociocultural adjustment. There was agreement among the Japanese participants that adjustment to Thailand was more difficult than they had originally expected. Participants also agreed that some adjustment issues were inevitably problematic such as local language and weather conditions. However, five common themes related to adjustment demands emerged from participants- i) language issues, ii) living and studying in a multicultural setting iii) social and safety issues, iv) making friends and v) adjusting to the Thai approach to time.

The history of Japanese and Thai relations dates back to the 14th century yet the economic and cultural trade began in 1606. At this time, the Japanese emperor, Tokugawa Iemitsu (the third shogun of the Tokugawa dynasty) implemented a policy banning all Catholics from Japan. Although the Chinese and Siamese (via Ayutthaya) continued trading with Japan, among the Europeans, only the Dutch were allowed to continue engaging in trade. The Japanese Catholics were accepted into Siam as refugees and contributed to the establishment of trade in

Ayutthaya. This was important as the Dutch had established a major trading hub in Ayutthaya which resulted in increased contact among the Japanese and the Siamese. As the trade with the Japanese grew so did their influence. The Japanese tradesmen fought alongside the Siamese against enemies in the South and the Burmese in the West.

During the Meiji Restoration the Japanese modernization and ability to avoid colonization was a source of inspiration to the Siamese King Chulalongkorn. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century the Japanese continued to arrive in Siam and work in trade and government agencies. All of the pleasantries eventually came to an end when in 1941, during the dictatorship of Field Marshall Pibunsongkharm, Japan invaded Thailand. Interestingly, even with the occupation of Thailand and the Japanese invasion of much of the Asia-Pacific, many Thais still supported the Japanese. The relationship between these two nations was perceived by most Thais as one of colonization or occupation; it was accepted as a by-product of World War Two. A famous novel from the era is based on the love between a Japanese soldier and his Thai girlfriend. This novel has been made into a film and at least ten versions have been released since the original.

Following the war trade was renewed and Thailand began to benefit from the continued growth of the Japanese economy. The young King of Thailand established strong bonds with the Emperor of Japan and both nations began marching forward. Today Japan is Thailand's second largest importer and the third largest exporter. The economic ties which were established years ago continue and the Japanese businessmen continue to live and trade in Thailand. This continuity in the Thai Japanese relationship has translated into a positive perception of the Japanese. The Japanese are seen as the wealthy big brother to Thailand and the Japanese students are respected for their shared cultural attributes such as collectivism, conflict avoidance, high context communication and the strong social value of face saving measures. However, recently the number of Japanese students in Thailand has begun to decline. Japanese student enrolment in international programs in Thai higher education decreased by 9% from 403 in 2008 to 369 in 2012 (OHEC, 2012).

In more recent years, since the Abe Cabinet's introduction of the economic revitalization plans, Japanese universities have been establishing direct links with Thai universities. Currently MUIC has an agreement with Kyushu University which has rented office space for administration and has agreed to send Japanese students to MUIC on an annual basis. This is part of Abe's plans to increase the internationalisation measures and improve the students' capacity to interact from a global perspective. Given the probability that MUIC will accept

Japanese international students for many years to come, it was important to gain a better understanding of the stressors involved with their adjustment experience.

The participants in this series of studies did contribute to the academic prestige, financial revenue and cultural exchange for the host universities involved. Many students said they would recommend this to friends and would look back with fond memories regarding their experiences here. As previously detailed, the purpose of this exploratory series of studies is to gain further knowledge of sociocultural adjustment issues among international students in Thailand and compare this to current adjustment theory from the field of adult education and to the field of international student recruitment in order to determine which factors students identified as impacting adjustment within this context. The results described within this chapter are a product of the analysis as described in the methodology section. It is important to note that there are both positive and negative aspects of the adjustment experience and, in many cases the participants interpreted particular adjustment stimuli such as an event in both positive and negative terms. There are frequent references to ambivalent stressors such as the Thai culture which was both praised and criticized.

5.3. Background on Korean International Students in Thailand

The Korean involvement in Thailand and Thai history is less established and almost unknown to many Thais. While the Japanese presence here is ubiquitous, the Korean entry to Thailand is relatively recent. That being said, Korea shares some cultural similarities with Thailand such as collectivism, high power distance, and elements of Confucianism, yet there are distinct differences between Korean culture and other Asian nation's culture (Kim, et al., 2001). Therefore, it is important to analyze the adjustment demands placed on Korean international students in Thailand as it may lead to a more stable and positive experience for students, assist international programs in student retention and lend to a more positive learning experience. Overall, Korean international students reported more difficulties adjusting than Japanese students and as international education expands it is important to explore this adjustment phenomenon within the Thai context. Most of the literature available on Korean international student adjustment has been conducted on international students who enter a Western English speaking academic setting such as Australia, England or the United States. The Korean cohort is an important contribution to the International student body at MUIC and their numbers continue to rise. For example, S. Korean student enrolment in international programs in Thai higher education increased over 30% from 340 students to 493 students between 2008 and 2012.

SOCIOCULTURAL ADJUSTMENT AND COPING STRATEGIES OF KOREAN AND JAPANESE STUDENTS IN A THAI INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE

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*   ABSTRACT

This study is devoted to understanding the adjustment issues Japanese and Korean international students face in Thai international higher education. An exploratory study of 15 visiting Korean college students and 15 visiting Japanese college students in Thai international programs was conducted using qualitative methods. A series of 30 face-to-face in-depth interviews regarding the participants' sociocultural adjustment to their host community was conducted in 2015–2016. Participants responded to open-ended questions regarding their adjustment experiences and perceptions of the host culture. The interview data was thematically coded into several categories. Participants' experiences were diverse and ranged from very subtle forms of discrimination and stereotyping to sexual harassment. The most frequently reported impediments to sociocultural adjustment included Thai language issues, excessive undesirable attention from the host community, academic adjustment, and difficulty establishing friendships with the host nationals. The most commonly reported coping strategies reported were the use of social support networks and social isolation from the host community. Implications for international relations departments and international programs within a Thai context are discussed.

Keywords: International education, Thailand, higher education, culture, ethnicity

5.4. INTRODUCTION

As a result of the recent growth in globalisation and the internationalisation of higher education, cross border student mobility has increased dramatically (Altbach and Knight 2007). Therefore, international higher education campuses and classrooms are rapidly becoming more ethnically diverse (Bass and Bass 2008) and researchers are taking notice. International students have become the focus of growing interest among educational researchers (Seeber et al. 2016). However, this was not always the case. Historically, the importance of the youth and student market was largely ignored because of the assumption of its low market value. However, the modern sentiment favours youth and student travellers with more research into students' habits (Richards and Wilson 2003). The first World Tourism Organisation conference on youth tourism, which took place in November 1991, was one of the first to internationally emphasise this market segment (Richards and Wilson 2003). Additionally, the World Youth Student and Education (WYSE) Travel Confederation was established in 2006 when the International Student Travel Confederation and the Federation of International Youth Travel Organizations (FIYTO) joined forces. The development of global organisations supporting the growth of the youth and student market exhibits the significance of the segment (WYSE 2006). More recently, as a result of changes in the global economy, many university students seek overseas study possibilities in hopes of improving their opportunities, skills and capabilities (Yusoff 2011).

For many years Thai higher education has been attempting to increase the number of international students (Rujiprak 2016). As the number of international students in Thailand has increased, this has led to Thailand becoming a regional international education hub (Cochrane 2014). In 2009, almost 3.7 million tertiary students enrolled outside their country of citizenship, representing an increase of more than 6 percent on the previous year (OHEC 2011). South Korean student enrolment in international programs in Thai higher education increased over 30 percent from 340 students to 493 students between 2008 and 2012; whereas Japanese student enrolment decreased by 9 percent from 403 in 2008 to 369 in 2012 (OHEC 2012). The increasing numbers of students studying outside of their home country (Rizvi 2011) has led to a growing expectation that many higher education institutions, whether in Western nations or in Southeast Asia, will continue to have a rising number and proportion of inbound international students. That said, there is a distinct lack of information available regarding the sociocultural adjustment

demands experienced by Asian students studying within other Asian international programs.

International student relevance to higher education is increasing due to their ability to contribute economically through often exorbitant tuitions rates at many schools, their ability to enrich the cultural diversity of the classroom and campus, and their ability to assist in the development of intercultural competence for all involved. However, many international students struggle with their pursuit of an international degree (Ozturgut and Murphy 2009). The majority of research involving Asian international students is conducted in Western nations. However, given the rapid expansion of internationalisation in Thai higher education, it has become important to gain further insight into the adjustment demands faced by various groups of students enrolling in Thai international programs. Therefore, this article intends to fill the gap in available literature through the articulation of an exploratory analysis of Korean and Japanese international student sociocultural adjustment to Thai international programs. This analysis begins with a description of international education in Thailand and discusses the adjustment demands Korean and Japanese international students encounter. The final section examines the specific comments of 15 Korean students' and 15 Japanese students who reported on their experiences while studying in international college programs in Thailand.

5.5.   DIMENSIONS OF ADJUSTMENT

Defining important terms such as "adjustment" has proven difficult although adaptation, acculturation and adjustment have all been used to describe the same process (Ward and Searle 1991). Ward (1996) argued that adjustment is best understood in terms of stress and coping frameworks while adaptation is best understood within the framework of socials skills and culture learning. Adjustment is a complex process of overcoming obstacles, responding to the host culture and problem solving. While sociocultural adaptation typically follows a standardised learning curve (Ward and Kennedy 1999), there is limited consensus on the stages of adjustment and there is yet no clear model of cultural adjustment. Early works (Lysgaard 1955; Oberg 1960) describe   a U-shaped curve model of adjustment featuring four stages, honeymoon, crisis, recovery and adjustment. Researchers such as Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) proposed a W-curve model which includes the final stage when travellers return home and Brown (1980) followed the multi-stage theory   of adjustment. Adler (1975) also suggested a five-stage process: contact,

disintegration, reintegration, autonomy and independence. Further work by Torbiorn (1994); Mohamed (1997), continue to explore adjustment as a series of stages. In 2007, Townsend and Wan supported the U-curve model. However, more recent research (Brown and Holloway 2008) implemented ethnographic research models and found that the U-curve model of adjustment was not followed by the sample, instead negative psychological factors were seen to be more influential and emphasis was placed on nervousness, anxiety, stress, uncertainty, feeling adrift and weather at the beginning of their stay.

An alternative to the curve or sequential models of adjustment is exemplified by the research of Berry and associates (Berry et al. 1989) who proposed the concept of psychological acculturation as two dimensional; maintenance of original culture and maintenance of relationships with new groups and further divided these dimensional responses and identified four acculturative strategies: integration, separation, assimilation, and marginalisation. This conceptualisation of adjustment allowed individuals multiple cultural affiliations with the host culture without necessarily limiting or reducing any identification with their culture of origin (Swagler and Jome 2005). A criticism of Berry's work is that it does not go far enough to explain the variations of acculturative impact in regard to differences in ethnicity, context and individual variables on participants within his model. It is these individual differences which make adjustment a subjective phenomenon. This led to further exploration of social identity theory which explored individual perception of self and personal identity (Tajfel and Turner 1979; Phinney 1990) in comparison to host nation attitudes of self and personal identity. Following the research of Berry and associates, Searle and Ward's research began to explore those travellers who voluntarily visited new cultures and investigated the elements of culture shock (Searle and Ward 1990). They argued that sociocultural adjustment is the natural outcome of acculturation; while psychological adjustment is far more complicated as there are many variables which influence an individuals' adjustment, whereas sociocultural adjustment can be measured in terms of how individuals perform in daily tasks in a new culture. The subjective nature of adjustment is an essential area of inquiry as the relationship between individual psychology and the host culture will have an impact on the adjustment process. The work of Bhatia (2011) has called on the use of narrative psychology to understand the process of adjustment through the analysis of the subjective self and an individuals' sense of identity construction to understand how one conceptualises the experiences of cross cultural transition.

5.6.   SOCIOCULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

Sociocultural adjustment is often viewed as the degree of comfort and familiarity an individual has within the host culture (Black 1988). Sociocultural adjustment can be broadly classified into two categories; intrinsic factors such as individual characteristics and external factors such as the degree of difference in the new environment or organisation. There is a large body of work which has examined the factors associated with international student adjustment (Brisset et al. 2010; Chirkov et al. 2008). Fritz et al. (2008) analysed different groups of international students in North America and addressed which stressors affected each group as well as the linguistic and financial influences on the groups. Ward (2004) explored the importance of host language skills and "the quality and quantity of intercultural interactions" (190). As with many other research examples, Asians reported more problems with language whereas Europeans experienced more problems in regard to homesickness. Further studies by Pantelidou and Craig (2006) concluded that social support is highly correlated with adjustment as is gender. An analysis of international student retention reveals that men are more likely to experience sociocultural adjustment, as are the extroverted (Fritz et al. 2008; Pantelidou and Craig 2006). Rosenthal et al. (2007) claimed that adjustment was influenced by many factors not related to country of origin such as self-esteem, age, gender (women scored higher in shock and distress compared to men) and previous international exposure. The results of Wang (2009) also demonstrated that female international students experienced more difficulty adapting than men and displayed less resilience than the male participants. Previous research on sociocultural adjustment emphasized the positive influence of socialising with host nationals (Swami et al., 2010); however, there is also evidence that this socialisation can be distressing and may impact academic achievement (Greenland and Brown 2005). Research using qualitative methods explored adjustment issues related to loneliness (Sawir et al. 2008), discrimination (Poyrazli and Garhame 2007), feelings of alienation (Major 2005) emotional adjustment problems (Ang and Liamputtong 2008), academic setting (Townsend and Poh 2008) and language (Trice 2003). Several studies indicated that social support (Chirkov et al. 2008; Jung et al. 2007; Lee et al. 2004; Sumer et al. 2008; Toyokawa and Toyokawa 2002) and self-efficacy (e.g., Li and Gasser 2005) are crucial factors in international students' adjustment. Previous studies have also confirmed many international university students are not satisfied with their multicultural relationships (Choi 1997) and expressed the need for local assistance with sociocultural adjustment (Nesdale and Todd 1997). These studies were done

in Australia, Europe, the United States and Canada. Regrettably, less attention has been paid to these issues in Thailand.

5.7.　JAPANESE AND KOREAN CULTURAL INFLUENCES IN THAILAND

Korea and Japan share some cultural similarities with Thailand such as collectivism, an interdependent self-construal, conflict avoidance, high power distance, and elements of Confucianism (Kim 2001). While there is a tendency to approach these student samples from a cultural proximity perspective, there are distinct differences between these cultures and other Asian nation's cultures. Although the Japanese invasion and subsequent occupation of Korea from 1910–1945 did result in great political and social conflict, much of the shared history of these nations is just as unknown to the Thais as the Thai participation in the Korean War in the early 1950s. However, this article does not set out to detail the distinctions in national culture among these nations. The purpose of this inquiry is to determine what, if any, differences exist among the adjustment issues encountered among Japanese and Korean international students.

A particularly interesting phenomenon to explore within this context is the impact of the "Korean Wave" and the resulting perceptions of Koreans while in a Thai community. "*Hallyu*," or the Korean wave, began in China in the late 1990s (Jang 2012) with a long list of Korean television series, movies, songs and various other Korean media which shifted the Thai public attention from American and Japanese media which was prevailing to Korean media (Visser 2002). Prior to this, Japanese media, particularly manga and anime, largely dominated the Thai market (Tidarat 2002). This wave of Korean programs quickly began to dictate television airtime in Taiwan, Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia and Thailand throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s due to the higher quality and lower costs when compared to Hollywood and Tokyo. By the early 2000s, K-pop outsold J-pop. The Korean film and music stars quickly became household names in Asia and began to influence fashion, cosmetics, and cosmetic surgery spending (Kim 2009). Popular Japanese video games were quickly replaced with the Korean game *Ragnarok* in 2001 (Thamdee 2007) and the intensity of all things Korean was further buttressed by the co-hosting of the World Cup in 2002. In 2005 a television series entitled *Dae Jang Geum* arrived in Thailand and was an immediate hit. Thailand's Channel 5 television reported a 184 percent profit increase following the release of the Korean drama (Amnatcharoenrit 2006). It was at this time that Chulalongkorn

University, the oldest and most prestigious university in Thailand, began a Korean language program for their students. Since then the Korean wave has only grown.

In 2012 the Korean musician Psy released "Gangnam Style" which became the first YouTube video to reach 1 billion views. Both the song and the dance movements associated with the video were imitated by many Asian political leaders and have influenced global pop culture. While both Japanese and Korean media have a history of popularity in Thailand, current trends favour the modelling of all things Korean. The Korean wave changed the Thai perceptions of Korea and led to a boom of Korean fashion outlets, restaurants, language schools, cosmetics and all Korean products.

Much of the literature available on Japanese and Korean international student adjustment has been conducted on international students who enter Western English speaking academic settings such as Australia, England or the United States. Additionally, there is a smaller body of research which focuses on Asian international students relocating to an Asian academic setting. As such it is important to identify the sociocultural adjustment issues these students face in Thai international higher education programs.

5.8.   METHODOLOGY

A qualitative case study design was chosen to elucidate the details of the participants' experiences in Thailand. The questionnaire in this study was adapted from Ward and Kennedy's Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (SCAS) (Ward and Kennedy 1999). Due to the limited sample size involved in the study (30 participants), the original 29 SCAS item list with a five-point Likert response scale was customized into a qualitative study by transforming each item into an open question form. This adaptation allowed for the development of a semi-structured open-ended interview with each participant. The initial questions were framed in an open-ended non-directive style to establish rapport with the participants. Particular emphasis was placed on the challenges the participants discussed through more probing inquiry. All participants were asked about their experiences and responses to their new milieu. One on one semi-structured interviews were conducted in English with the participants. English is the language of instruction and assessment at international programs in Thailand and all international students are required to pass either TOEFL IBT equal to or greater than 69 or an IELTS score equal to or greater than 6 prior to admission. The interviews lasted approximately 30–45 minutes.

5.9.   PARTICPANT SELECTION

Participants who were eligible for interviews met two criteria: (1) are Korean/ Japanese nationals studying at Thai international colleges; and (2) do not speak Thai. Fifteen Korean and 15 Japanese international students volunteered after being contacted by the researcher at the international student orientation seminar at the beginning of each academic semester. Following participants' contact with the researcher, all were informed of the purpose, scope and the time commitment required of them. Participation in the study was purely voluntary. All participants were reminded of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. One week after each interview, the participants were given a transcript and the option to remove, edit or add to their comments. This purposive selection process ensured both convenience and representativeness (Linclon and Guba 1985). All of the applicants were visiting students aged 18–23 years old studying in social sciences and business courses in Thai international programs.

5.10. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Thematic identification and coding provided a rich description of the naturalistic data. As standard practice, each interview was audio recorded on then transcribed (Erlandson et al. 1993). Each interview transcript was read multiple times and the initial analytical notes were made in the left margin of each page. The right margin was used to idenitfy emerging themes and key concepts or phrases which captured the spirit of the adjustment experience. Specific attention was given to common or overlapping themes. This thematic data analysis was intended to identify frequency, specificity and emotionality of participant responses (Krueger and Casey 2009). As more themes evolved it became necessary to combine major themes with subordinate themes. All of the themes for each interview were compared to the transcripts from other interviews to create a consolidated master theme group.

5.11. RESULTS

There was agreement among most participants that adjustment to Thailand was not as difficult as they had originally expected. Participants also agreed that some adjusment issues were inevitably problematic such as weather conditions. However, four common themes related to adjustment demands

emerged from participants: i) language issues, ii) academics iii) social issues, and iv) making friends. In the section below, each of these issues is discussed with direct quotes from the participants.

LANGUAGE ISSUES

It is important to note that Thailand is a unique environment for international students. Most students arrive from overseas as non-Thai speakers as well as being non-native English speakers. This means that most international students speak at least three languages a day (i.e., their mother tongue (Korean or Japanese), English while in class and Thai while in society). This adjustment demand was the most common issue among participants. While the Korean and Japanese students arrived with the necessary level of English, they had little to no understanding of the Thai language which often created a barrier in social situations. As the majority of the student population is Thai, the Thai language is most commonly used outside of the classroom. During other on campus activities such as clubs, sports and eating Thai is the most common language heard on and off campus.

A third-year male Korean student commented:

Honestly, if you are not a Thai, it is really difficult to join any groups. Even in school where clubs are compulsory, it's hard for foreigners to fit in because the majority of the students are Thai and they're speaking only in Thai. They know we are weak in speaking and listening in Thai but they keep speaking in Thai. I have tried going to clubs but I stopped because they all spoke in Thai. I still don't understand why they invite the foreign students and then do everything in Thai. Why do they ask us to join and then speak in a language we can't understand?

A second-year female Japanese student further remarked:

Yes, language is a big problem for me. I have to switch to English at school, Thai in the canteen and then I get home and I can relax and go back to Japanese. It's confusing and tiring.

The issue of Thai language was perhaps most problematic when used in the classroom. This was a frequent source of frustration among the participants. For example, one Korean student expressed his disappointment:

If you ask if I'm happy with my life in Thailand and living away from home, I would probably say yes, but I don't think I am pleased with my life in university and having to take classes with Thai students. I am not saying I don't like them, but I feel uncomfortable working in classes with Thais. Even the teachers are Thais and some lecturers speak a lot of Thai in class, often asking and answering questions in Thai.

While in the classroom English is supposed to be the lingua prima in international programs, once the students leave the classroom Thai becomes the language of survival. This is particularly problematic for day to day purchases and excursions. For example, one third year male Korean student stated the following:

The security guards, accounting and other university staff in the international relations department cannot speak English or Korean so when I need help or if I get lost on campus it takes hours to find my way back. The signs are in Thai, the menus are in Thai and even the taxi drivers really only understand Thai. So, I'm learning Thai now so I can survive.

Many of the respondents' comments on the difficulty of language in the Thai setting were similar as previously reported in Trice (2003) as well as the resulting feelings of alienation (Major 2005). The lack of participation in clubs with host nationals limits opportunities for the development of social support (Toyokawa and Toyokawa 2002). Therefore, participants chose to cope with this aspect of linguistic isolation through the development of relationships with other international students who either spoke their native language or conversed in English.

ACADEMICS

Participants were asked to reflect on the impact of the university environment and how the classrooms or academic situation influenced their overall sociocultural adjustment.

One Korean student summarised the most common response among the participants:

Even though this is an international college, it feels Thai. It has a lot of Thai influence, like the uniform and the culture and the teachers. I thought it would be less Thai and more international or Western. It's not bad but it takes a while to adjust to.

Many of the respondents commented on the similarity of academic cultures and the need to show deference to the teachers. This cultural similarity (Swami et al. 2010) may have acted as a buffer from some of the stressors which impact participants from *Western* nations who are not as familiar with Confucian principles and appropriate classroom etiquette from the Thai perspective. International higher education in Thailand is different than programs in *Western* nations. The Thai system includes mandatory uniforms, class attendance, participation in clubs and other activities. Many students do not ask questions as a sign of respect for their teachers and public disagreement is strongly discouraged. A Korean student made the following observation:

The education system in Thailand is very similar with Korea's education system. Both countries' education is based on memorising what is in the textbook instead of discussion or activities. This makes it easy for Korean students to focus on their studies in Thailand. Korean students also easily understand the hierarchy between teachers and students and older students and younger students. I can socialise with the other Korean exchange students more because I don't have to worry about school.

The course load and requirements were not considered a stressor among the students interviewed but many commented on their discomfort with academic group work. A Japanese student complained:

We are all part of a group project but not everyone is working the same. Sometimes I think they are taking advantage but I can't say anything and in the end we all get one grade even though someone did nothing. It's not fair but we have to accept this. In Japan we don't do it like this.

SOCIAL ISSUES

Since the Korean wave hit Thailand in early 2000s, Korean media has been very popular (Ubonrat and Shin 2007). This has influenced the experience of Korean international students in Thailand. Many of the female respondents commented on feelings of discrimination as discussed in Poyrazi and Garhame (2007). The Korean wave clearly had an impact on the host nationals' treatment of the visiting Korean students, particularly the female students. A fourth-year Korean female student expressed her disappointment when she said:

It is an everyday life of experiencing staring, stalking, being called "Korean" and being looked at as a Korean, not a friend. The biggest issue is when I am eating or doing a presentation and someone takes my picture. I know it's going into social media and it's going to be a gossip. I really don't like that students here gossip about Koreans so much. I'm not famous, why are they taking my picture?

Many respondents commented on the status of Koreans in Thailand today. For example, a Korean female student commented:

People just see me and know I'm Korean so they want to be friends with me. Maybe they think they will have higher status if they hang out with Koreans, I don't know but it doesn't feel genuine. Basically, the only reason they want to be seen with me is I look Korean. It's obvious and pretty shallow.

Many of the female Korean respondents complained of excessive attention from the host nationals. This was particularly distressing when the host nationals took photographs with their cell phones and created chat rooms to discuss the visiting students' appearance. While many of the participants explained that they thought this was due to the Korean wave, it was no less distressing. One student illustrated this potentially humiliating experience:

Once, I was working in a group of five. My group members were at the library first. When I got there, I saw two girls looking at my photo on their phones and talking about it. When they saw me they were shocked but pretended they were doing something else. I later heard that someone set up a chat room about me and my friends. There were many situations like this.

Another Korean female student made a similar observation:

As a Korean woman, I get a lot of unwanted attention. I think it's because I have white skin and Korean fashion. I'm usually fine on campus but most Korean women don't walk around off campus or, if we need to, then we hang out in packs and try to do our grocery shopping together and come back together. It feels safer in groups.

The Koreans in this study chose to travel in groups as a coping mechanism to avoid the unwanted attention. The Korean participants did not report a sense of danger or possible violence, their avoidance of host nationals was based on an avoidance of social bullying and a need for a sense of emotional security. On the other hand, the Japanese perception of socialising with the host culture was equally problematic but for different reasons. The primary concerns regarding socialisation reported by the female Japanese students was safety and other issues related to vigilance. A female Japanese student said:

Maybe because I've heard many stories about crime especially sexual crimes in Thailand, from my university in Japan, the office staff had an orientation for the students coming to S. Asian countries, about those crimes and how to be careful. They told us to take care of ourselves because it's very dangerous here. I don't want to think badly about Thais but I feel I have to be aware all the time.

Similar to the Korean females reports of safety issues off campus, the Japanese females also commented on regularly being stared at and receiving unwanted attention from local men. One Japanese female commented:

There are many places where I feel uncomfortable. At school, it's fine but not off campus. I feel much safer in Japan. I feel very safe inside the university but once I go out it's kind of shady and if I walk alone or take a taxi alone I feel very uncomfortable and sometimes in markets I grab my bag in front of me so nobody can steal it. It's not everywhere but I'm always cautious when I go off campus.

The issues regarding the safety of socialising off campus were a concern only to the female respondents which supports previous research regarding the gender and sociocultural adjustment (Fritz et al. 2008; Pantelidou and Craig 2006). Female participants consistently reported more distress than the men, particularly regarding the intensity of unwanted attention they received. Both the Japanese and the Korean men said they felt comfortable walking   at night and did not worry about crime in Thailand. Additionally, during the interviews many of the Japanese and Korean men made a similar observation regarding the potential dangers for women going out alone or those who are not accompanied by their male counterparts.

FRIENDSHIP

Many of the participants discussed the lack of genuine friendships with host nationals. The respondents often said that they spent much more time with international students than locals. The Japanese formed their own group and the Korean formed their own group and both groups had limited friendships with the host community. When asked to explain, both the Koreans and the Japanese commented that the Thais act much differently in class and outside of class. Many of the respondents said that while the Thais were very polite and conservative in class, as soon as they left campus their behaviour changed dramatically. One male Japanese student commented:

In class they're quiet but it's kind of interesting to see them acting really differently because they spend so much time on social media. They always take pictures of themselves. When I go out with Thai students, they spend hours just taking photos or looking at Facebook. They take a hundred pictures of themselves and then share it. I sometimes feel bored because they just keep taking pictures of themselves but I know they have another side too, so I want to see that side, not the selfie side.

A Korean woman shared her opinions on developing relationships with the host nationals as:

It's difficult to have a true friendship here. Many people just want Korean friends but then when we hang out everything is in Thai and all they do is take selfies with me and post it on Facebook. I feel   like I'm being used, so I just hang out with the other Koreans or the international students. It's shallow and I think people are trying to promote themselves in a fake way. I think I have to accept that it's a selfie culture.

5.12. DISCUSSION

Administrators and faculty hope that the influx of international students results in the addition of varying perspectives and ethos which enhance classroom experiences, allow for the development of a more intercultural understanding of and appreciation for diversity and the ability to embrace people from all over the world. The participants in this study did contribute to the academic prestige, financial revenue and cultural exchange for the host universities involved. Both the Korean and Japanese international students in this study

had generally positive comments about their experiences in Thai international programs. Many students said they would recommend this to friends and would look back with fond memories regarding their experiences here.

The first and most prominent adjustment barrier which emerged was language. International colleges in Thailand utilise English as the language of the assessment, admissions and classroom discussions. This study revealed that both Korean and Japanese students are often in situations where Thai became the language of communication during activities and this placed these students at a disadvantage socially. The use of Thai language as a fundamental element of adjustment is an issue for administrative bodies as marketing Thai international programs and events based on the use of English can be viewed as problematic and perhaps disingenuous. It has been argued (Swagler and Ellis 2003) that a failure to understand language often means there is a failure to understand the culture as well. Previous research on the importance of host language ability involving Japanese and Korean participants conducted in the United States reached similar conclusions (Cox and Yamaguchi 2010; Huang and Rinaldo 2009; Lee and Carrasquillo 2006). This may indeed be the case of Korean and Japanese students in Thailand and their comments regarding the selfie culture. Perhaps if the visiting students had more Thai language skills and could socialise with the hosts more comfortably, then there would have been more conversations and less selfies and social media focused experiences for all involved.

The academic aspect of studying in Thai international programs was not particularly distressing as most participants agreed that adjustment was generally smooth with a few minor exceptions such as the uniform policy. The similarity in scholastic culture and background made academic adjustment fairly easy for the students with the other exception of group projects. Within this context, both groups of students complained of free riders and the lack of equitable participation among all members of the group. Most of the Korean and Japanese students chose to befriend others of the same nationality or other international students. This is not a positive aspect of the research as interacting with the host culture and participating in social events can have a positive impact of sociocultural adjustment (Searle and Ward 1990). Regarding social adjustment, one of the surprising issues which impacted the experiences of particularly Korean females in Thailand was the Korean Wave. Many of the respondents complained of discrimination, sexism, stereotyping and various other forms of prejudice. The findings in this study support previous research on the negative impact of discrimination (Poyrazli and Garhame 2007), social alienation (Major 2005) and the resulting emotional adjustment problems (Ang

and Liamputtong 2008), as well as perceived prejudice. This theme emerged particularly strongly among female participants who engaged in social avoidance defense strategies and group travel precautions to prevent further unwanted attention. Previous research has concluded that social support is an important variable in regard to international adjustment (Baba and Hosoda 2014, Ward et al. 2001; Yusoff and Chelliah 2010). Therefore, if Korean and Japanese international students develop or receive more social support from the host community it is probable that they will experience improved sociocultural adjustment.

Previous work (Ataca and Berry 2002) found that humiliating events which can trigger psychological issues and have a negative impact sociocultural adjustment. As evidenced from this research, the Korean students' response was often to avoid interaction with the host nationals. Even when the stereotypes were positive, the Korean students felt it was depersonalising and socially alienating. Goldsmith and Baxter (1996) reported that gossip was the most common form of daily talk among college students. Gossip serves an important social function albeit sometimes harmful to the recipients. In this research, the Korean international students considered gossip as a form of in- direct aggression. Previous studies (McAndrew 2008) have shown the negative impact of gossip. In contrast to previous research which posits that gossip can facilitate social interaction among international students and is related to sociocultural adjustment (Yeh and Inose 2003), this research found that gossip had a negative impact as it was perceived as discrimination and thus decreased social interaction between the host and the Korean students. In conclusion, while the participants did adjust to academic life in Thailand they did not adjust to their host culture well. Most respondents chose to avoid interaction with their hosts outside of the classroom and created an international bubble filled with English, Korean or Japanese and other international students to facilitate their overall adjustment and maintenance of in-group social support.

5.13. CONCLUSION

There has been a considerable increase in the number of international students in Asian programs. The increasing diversity of international students in Thailand classes is also a global phenomenon (Bass and Bas 2008; Hames 2007). Using qualitative methods, this study aimed to address the paucity of research regarding Asian international students in programs in Thailand. As noted earlier, the increase in students studying abroad (Rizvi 2011) has

created the likelihood that many tertiary education institutions, particularly in Asia will experience a rising number and proportion of inbound international students. This is evidenced in the Thai Office of Higher Education (OHEC 2012) which stated that S. Korean student enrolment in international programs in Thai higher education increased over 30 percent between 2008 and 2012. This study of Korean and Japanese international students has, in a small but substantive manner, filled the gap in international educational adjustment within the Thai context. Further elucidation of the other visiting students' sociocultural adjustment based on nationality, ethnicity or other defining characteristics is critical to understanding and improving the quality of experiences students have when visiting Thailand. It is therefore important to address the ways in which tertiary institutions facilitate the transition of such students within the host institution. Research suggests that a number of ways that have been demonstrated can enhance the induction of international students in the host institution, such as improving the teaching strategies and quality of education, expanding the offering of specific courses and overall availability of programs, providing a greater ratio of international faculty and supporting staff, and enhancing international partnerships, but student and employee retention is also an integral component of this process (Stohl 2007; Ramachandra 2011). If international programs in Thailand wish to retain this important student's segment then more attention should be given to the factors which hinder their sociocultural adjustment.

NOTES

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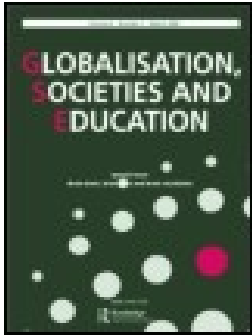
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5.2 Introduction to African American Student Sociocultural Adjustment

As seen from the paper in section 5.1 which summarised the results of the research on the first two ethnic groups based on the Korean and Japanese international students in Thailand, the historical and contemporary factors associated with each cohort did have an impact on the students perceptions of the hosts and their overall sociocultural adjustment experience. Section 5.2 continues the exploration of ethnicity and adjustment as outlined in the conceptual framework and methodology to contribute to answering RQ2 of the study. This section of the research presents the results of the African American students. In much of the previous research on adjustment, American students or Asian students were often homogenised into one cohort without consideration for the tremendous variation within the Asian or American population. The failure of much of the previous research to account for ethnicity as an impediment to adjustment is problematic. It is evident from this paper on African American adjustment that the students perceptions of their own ethnic identity was an adjustment barrier as they were more likely to interpret certain social interactions as rooted within an ethnic or racial discrimination paradigm. This is an important result as the number of African American students who choose to study abroad continues to increase and the setting of this study, MUIC, continues to recruit from historically black colleges and American programs with a high percentage of African American students. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that there will be more African Americans studying within this program in the foreseeable future. The perceived impact of ethnicity and adjustment discussed in this chapter lends greater support to the RQ2 of this research.

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to detail an exploratory study involving African American student experiences in a Thai international programme. This study employed a qualitative case study to explore the adjustment process of African American international students in Thailand. The participants included 15 African American students who were selected through a snowball sampling technique in 2014–2016. The data were collected through semi-structured one on one interviews and analysed through content analysis. The participants reported adjustment difficulties related to their sense of isolation in Thailand, the excessive attention received from their hosts, the appropriate response to said attention, Thai culture and adjustment to academic differences. An analysis of the source of stress, anxiety and conflict among the participants is intended to provide insight into international recruitment practices and facilitating more progressive pre-departure orientation sessions among impending international students.

Introduction

As a result of globalisation and rapid changes in the twenty-first century, American universities have been asked to provide students with greater international knowledge, skills and perspectives (Obst, Bhandari, and Witherill 2007). Carter (1991) argued that without cultural diversity within inter- national programmes, a programmes' ability to nurture cultural understanding cannot be developed. The greater the diversity of international students backgrounds, the greater the opportunity to develop a culturally nuanced understanding and awareness. Additionally, many American universities rely on study abroad experiences and internationalisation efforts to prepare their students for a globalised employment environment (Stearns 2009). Therefore, it is not only the colleges which benefit from this increase in international student enrolment.

Participation in international education and study abroad programmes is one indicator of the substantial growth in the importance of intercultural communication skills, and international under- standing (Friedman 2005). The students who participate in study abroad programmes achieve greater intercultural proficiency (Cubillos and Ilvento 2012). Research has also documented improvement in intercultural competency and foreign language development (Anderson 2005; Black and Duhon 2006; Savicki 2008). Further research has identified reasons why both students and administrators recognise the cognitive, affective and interpersonal benefits of study abroad experiences (Langley and Breese 2005; McKeown 2009). Many other benefits of study abroad experiences have been explored such as the development of intercultural competency, foreign language acquisition

and improvement of global employment prospects (Anderson et al. 2006; Comp 2000; Dwyer 2004; Moffatt 2002). These benefits have led to an increase in the number of Americans who choose to study abroad (NAFSA 2016). Overall, the advantages of study abroad programmes, from both the schools' perspective as well as the students' perspective, are well established.

As the number of international students increased in the early twenty-first century so, too, did the number of ethnicities and nationalities participating in study abroad programmes (OHEC 2011). The typical international student from the United States is White, middle or upper class, and majoring in business, humanities or social sciences (Picard, Bernardino, and Ehigiator 2009). While it is true that there is a positive correlation in the enrolment numbers of African American students (hereafter AAS) in American higher education and the number of AAS participating in study abroad programmes (Stallman et al. 2010), AAS continue to be underrepresented in study abroad programmes (Acquaye and Crewe 2012; Sweeney 2013). This article describes the adjustment experi- ences of a group of AAS in Thailand.

Models of cultural adjustment

Traditionally, studies investigating international student adjustment sought to clarify how one group of students adjustment to life abroad. Adjusting to a new educational environment is not easy. Defining important terms such as 'adjustment' has proven difficult although adaptation, acculturation and adjustment have all been used to describe the same process (Ward and Searle 1991). Ward (1996) argued that adjustment is best understood in terms of stress and coping frameworks

while adaptation is best understood within the framework of socials skills and cultural learning. It is this stress and coping facet of the sojourner's experience which is the focus of this article. While most models of sociocultural adaptation typically follow a standardised curve (Ward and Kennedy 1999), there is limited consensus on the stages of adjustment and there is yet no clear model of cultural adjustment. Early works (Lysgaard 1955; Oberg 1960) describe a U-shaped curve model of adjustment featuring four stages, honeymoon, crisis, recovery and adjustment. Researchers such as Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) proposed a W-curve model which includes the final stage when travellers return home and Brown (1980) followed the multi-stage theory of adjustment. Adler (1975) also suggested a five-stage process: contact; disintegration; reintegration; autonomy and independence. Further work by Torbiorn (1994) and Mohamed (1997) continue to explore adjustment as a series of stages. As recently as 2007, Townsend and Wan published research on international student adjustment which supported the U-curve model. However, more recent research (Brown and Holloway 2008) implemented similar ethnographic research models and found that the U-curve model of adjustment was not followed by the sample, instead negative psychological factors were seen to be more influential and emphasis was placed on nervousness, anxiety, stress, uncertainty and feeling adrift.

   The general assumptions about these models were that patterns of adjustment were fixed based on time and were further supported by research. The typical adjustment process often took years studies were necessarily longitudinal. However, scepticism remained and criticism by Ward, Bocher, and Furnham (2001) continued based on the variations in

these models, the simplistic nature of the psychology of adjustment and the reductionist nature of the approach. Despite this criticism, the curve model of cultural adjustment is still in use today. Thus, the concept of cross-cultural adjustment continues to remain problematic. Typical models of adjustment are not acceptable for this study given that the African American students in Thailand do not spend enough time in country to implement a model-based approach and because the aforementioned models of cultural adjustment have often failed to take race into account.

The problematic notion of homogenising the international student experience is based on the fail- ure of these models to account for specific ethnic, racial and cultural values which impede the adjust- ment process. Given the problems currently facing Thai international higher education and that internationalisation and globalisation are two of the most important topics in educational administration, methods to recruit and maintain international students in these programmes is of great value. The majority of research on American student sociocultural adjustment abroad has taken race for granted in assuming that being White was representative of the dynamic heterogeneous American experience. Thus, being White was not having a race.

Social context and international student ethnicity are important variables in the adjustment experiences. The treatment certain ethnic groups often depends on the culture and the history of the host nation with that group of people. While not all people identify themselves by their ethnicity, adolescence and early adulthood are an important time for identity formation, particularly for stu- dents of an ethnic minority group (Phinney and Ong 2007). While identity is dynamic by nature, two

characteristics or aspects of our identity are our nationality and our ethnicity. Individuals are often conceptualised and defined by others based on characteristics such as race, gender, language use, nationality and background. In much of the academic literature on the topic, this can be seen in the participants' demographics sections (Gargano 2012). Therefore, avoiding the use of race as a construct for measurement in this study, the inclusion of nationality and ethnic identity are the variables which will be examined in relation to the participant's sociocultural adjustment to Thailand.

African American students abroad

According to the Institute of International Education (2015) between 2003/2004 and 2013/2014, there has been a nearly 63% increase in Americans studying abroad. During this period, the vast majority of students from the United States who travelled abroad were White (83.7% in 2003 to 74.3% in 2013). The percentage of AAS abroad increased from 3.4% in 2003 to 5.6% in 2013. Europe is the largest host region, followed by Latin American/Caribbean and the third largest host region was Asia which garnered 11.9% of the American students travelling abroad. Thailand was not in the top 25 destination nations. The only Asian nations within the top 25 were China (5), Japan (10) and S. Korea (21). However, these percentages do not show great increases in minority students from the United States participating in international education. There are many studies which explore the lack of AAS engagement in study abroad programmes. Brux and Ngoboka (2002) found that many students were not aware of international study

opportunities. Burkart, Hexter, and Thompson (2001) and Tsantir (2005) explored the attitudes of family regarding studies abroad. Many studies focused on the financial concerns involved with international studies (Comp 2007; Kasravi 2009; Rhodes and Hong 2005). Lastly, Jackson (2005) claims that American media and historical exclusion from study abroad programmes has created a lack of interest among AAS.

When research on AAS abroad has taken place it often involves heritage programmes (see Day-Vines, Barker, and Exum (1998); Neff (2001); Morgan, Mwegelo, and Thuner (2002)). Talburt and Stewart (1999) argued that having an AAS participate in a study abroad programme with White American students facilitated the White Americans understanding and awareness of racism and allowed them to develop an appreciation for how it feels to be a minority or an outsider. Other research has shown that study abroad experiences can have a positive impact on an individual's sense of racial or ethnic identity (Jackson et al. 1996; Landau and Moore 2001; Ng 2003). Sutton and Rubin (2004) revealed that AAS students were 30% more likely to graduate within four years when compared to AAS who did not go abroad. In another study by Redden (2010), the percentage of students who graduated within four years was 18% higher among AAS who participated. Other benefits for AAS who chose to participate in study abroad programmes include negotiating and navigating intercultural differences and developing adaptation skills (Jackson 2005). The intent of this article is to investigate the sociocultural adjustment experiences of a group of AAS students in Thailand to determine if the participants perceived any prejudice based on their ethnic identity.

Colorism in Asia

Much of the research on race, racism and discrimination principally focus on black–white relations. Yet race, racism and discrimination are typically a social psychological phenomenon and as such, can be found where social groupings, and the related meanings of these social groups, have an impact on affect, behaviour and cognition. This is true of Asia, in general, and Thailand in particular, where fair skin is not merely a signifier race as much as it indicates social class and one's position in the Thai social hierarchy. The agrarian history of Thailand necessitated that most Thais worked outdoors and thus, given the climate, had darker skin. With the influx of trade and modernisation, more people began to be employed in offices, yet the majority continued with outdoor manual labour. The desire to have fair skin is as much a social marker of privilege as it is a sign of beauty. As van Esterik (2000) commented on Thai concepts of skin 'light, bright skin is coveted by both rural and urban women, partly as proof that they were exempted from work in the sun' (154). The desire for pale skin is not unique to Thailand. Washington (1990) explored 'Brown racism' or the Chinese contempt for dar- ker-skinned peoples. Sautman (1997) argued that according to contemporary Chinese nationalism, there is a global racial hierarchy with Chinese and Caucasian Westerners on top and Africans on the bottom. Webb (2015) argues 'The narrative of Asians as simply victims or spectators on the global landscape of race begins to erode, when we combine this mental map with how the more exclusionary societies unevenly treat light skinned and dark skinned foreigners' (15).

In Thailand, Caucasians are referred to as *farang* which is also

associated with concepts of pro- gress, wealth and modernity (Wilson 2004). Observers of Thailand have noted the existence of xenophobia (Rhein 2016), racism (Persuad 2005) and, like much of Asia, the Thai concept of beauty is focused on the fairness of skin (Haritaworn 2009). While Jackson (2005) discussed the benefits of developing a more comprehensive understanding of African Americans than that which is often portrayed in a poor light in the mass media, this has yet to occur in Thailand. Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory can be applied to the Thai perception of race as most have adopted their preconceptions of Whites and Blacks through observation in media. The Thai attitudes of race are imbedded in films, dramas and advertising. Mass media in Thailand have continued to disseminate messages which misrepresent groups of people based on the colour of the skin. To exemplify this 'White is superior' phenomenon one need only to look at cosmetic enhancements. Thailand has developed a standard of beauty based on the fairness of complexion as evidenced by the use of skin whitening products and treatments. The use of skin whitening products among the youth has been reported at nearly 84% (Peltzer, Pengpid, and James 2016). The Thai media has been criticised for fanning the flames of discrimination and racial bias for unfair characterisations of people of colour. For example, in early 2016 a skin cream from Seoul Secret's called 'Snowz' released an advertisement entitled 'White makes you win' which created a public debate on the issue of skin colour and racist messages imbedded in marketing campaigns. The 'White makes you win' campaign was so heavily criticised that some called for legislation to ban skin whitening advertisements (Slutskiy and Hamilton 2017). Another example of racism in advertising can be found in the Dunkin'

Donuts advertisement which featured the use of blackface to draw public attention to the new charcoal donut. For a detailed account of racism in Thai adver- tising see James Farrell's article in Asian Correspondent (2015) entitled 'In Thailand black is "ugly": Racist, or just misguided?'.

Advertising is not the only culprit. The dramatic increase in communications technologies and, in particular, social media in Asia has helped spread the conception of white beauty and empowerment (Hunter 2011). Thus, although Thailand was never officially recognised as a colonised state, the colonial ideology of racial capital has taken root. Similar to most of South East Asia, Thailand is 'situated in a transnational racialized economy of representation that associated beauty, success modernity and progress with whiteness' (Aizura 2009, 303). The Thai media have long upheld this negative discourse and have often targeted darker-skinned individuals as uneducated, poor and violent. Thai media is not alone in this depiction of behavioural distinctions as determined by ethnicity. Global media tends to portray dark-skinned people as aggressive, dirty and unpleasant (Hall 1995; Russell, Wilson, and Hall 1992). In Thailand, to be fair skinned is to be modern and socially mobile. Fair skin is symbolic of youth, health, wealth and desirability.

Methodology

This article is based on student experiences in a short (3.5 month or 1 semester) programme in Thai- land. Given that only 5% of American students study abroad for a full year (Goodman 2009), it is problematic to study a group of AAS who are in Thailand for 1–2 year periods. This is

an exploratory case study using a qualitative inquiry to explore the adjustment process of African American inter- national students in Thailand. This approach was chosen as concepts of ethnic or racial identity; social adjustment and comfort in ones' environment mainly reside in the consciousness of the individual. The selection of semi-structured in-depth interviews and case study is based on the goal of understanding the lived experiences of AAS in Thailand. This exploratory qualitative method was implemented to lend detailed, rich and in-depth reports of the rewarding and challenging experiences students faced in Thailand. All interviews were conducted in English by a native English speaking American. Consistent with Erlandson et al. (1993) each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and was audio recorded. The interview data were then transcribed verbatim and synthesised into categories using inductive content analysis (Bogdan and Biklen 2007). The coding focused on themes discussed as by the respondents and information available in academic literature on socio-cultural adjustment. As these themes emerged, each was identified, labelled and categorised. Specific attention was given to defining codes clearly and exclusively to avoid overlapping themes. This process led to a unitisation analysis which required that each of the participant's responses was broken down into one or more themes. The unitisation strategy employed in this research involved identi- fication of units of meaning as opposed to assigned units as predicated on by the questions asked by the investigator. In the end, some units were two sentences and some units were a full page of text. To assist in the accuracy of thematic identification Atlas qualitative data analysis software was used to code, sort and categorize textual data. Concepts were categorised using axial

coding. Through an iterative process of coding and thematic identification, the number of codes was decreased to reduce the overall complexity of the coding scheme. Eventually leading to three primary themes and six secondary themes discussed below.

Particpants

The 15 participants were selected through snowball sampling, also known as chain sampling (Patton 2001). All participants were native English speaking African American students staying in Thailand for between 14 and 16 weeks which is the most common length of stay for American students in study abroad programmes (Institute of International Education, 2015). All of the participants were aged between 18 and 22, from the Midwest, North-East and South of the United States. The locations of the participants were based on the sampling procedure and not intended to differentiate between the responses from these geographical areas and the Western areas of the USA. In addition, all participants were enrolled in an integrated model-based programme which assisted the students with enrolment in courses with host nationals, allocating housing, arranging student visas, access to medical care if needed, cultural activities and language courses (Tyner 2013). All of the participants in this study choose to enrol in the same international college in Thailand during their third or fourth year of studies for one complete semester. Many of the international colleges in Thailand have partnership agreements with multiple universities in the United States and all of the credits earned in Thailand can be transferred back to their American programme upon the students return to the United States.

Findings

After collecting and collating the data three distinct themes emerged which encapsulate the significant issues which the AAS within this study. These issues are (1) a sense of uniqueness (2) adjusting and responding to the excessive attention received (3) cultural and academic adjustment. Each of these themes is addressed independently below.

A sense of ethnic isolation

All of the participants originated from urban areas of the United States and many of the participants reported that this was their first international experience. The participants' perception of being socially unique given their ethnicity was the most commonly discussed adjustment demand. Anthony, a 19-year-old male student from the New York majoring in computer sciences articulated this sense of being exceptional:

I'm not used to being the only black man in my classes or in restaurants. So, even after a few months, this still feels a bit weird and different, I've been to the suburbs in the US with all the white kids but there has always been black people around me, not here though.

This was the most oft-repeated observation of adjustment experiences in this study. Nearly all of the respondents reported this sense of being the only AAS in their courses. Malik, a 20-year-old male student from Ohio majoring in marketing said:

Even though I'm the only African American in the room, the Thais are very friendly. They will approach you and start conversations. They

want to know about where you are from and what you are doing here. It's a bit weird always being the only African American man, but I'm ok with it now.

Thailand has seen visitors from all over the world for many years, yet most are from other areas of Asia, Europe and North America. This is reflected in this sense of ethnic isolation. The respondents clearly acknowledged their minority status and the infrequent encounters with other AAS in classes. A result of this was their choice to socialise together and travels together when possible. This is the primary cause of the second adjustment demand; ethnicised attention.

Ethnicised attention

The sense of ethnic isolation is compounded by the excessive attention the AAS received in public or social situations. In the social context, this excessive attention was far more common and often a source of discussion among the participants. All of the participants in this study commented on   the intensity and frequency of social attention received. Elon, a 22-year-old male from Illinois majoring in computer sciences illustrates:

I was walking in the mall and this little kid started jumping around and saying something which I assume was 'Hey Mommy there's a black guy' and I felt like a celebrity or something because this kid was so happy to see a black person up close. I've never experienced that.

Brianna, a 21-year-old senior from New Jersey

Thais see Caucasians all the time, it's normal for them to interact with

white tourists from Europe or wherever but there's not as many Africans here so when they see blacks there is a different response. Now I'm used to it and I know that Thais will come up to you if you're black and they're going to be curious about you.

Kayla, a 22-year-old female from Georgia commented:

Random people will come up to us in public, like at the mall or a temple and ask to take pictures with us. It's kind of cool, and I don't think that would ever happen back home.

While much of the attention was perceived in a positive light, there were situations when the respondents were reminded of similar behaviours in the United States that were done for different reasons. Robert, a 21-year-old male from Illinois majoring in biology reported:

As an African American male you have to get used to people staring here. They watch me in malls, restaurants and when I'm in a grocery store they look in my cart and want to know what I'm buying. It's not bad, but they always look at what I'm buying.

Eye contact and staring was a common social adjustment demand among the participants, when the female participants' comments were extracted from the male comments a particularly relevant theme

emerged; touching. Many of the female respondents expressed shock at the frequency of unknown host nationals approaching the participants and touching them, particularly touching their hair. Aisha, a 22-year-old female from Massachusetts majoring in international business described her experience with the phenomenon:

They like to touch our hair. Thais are really sensitive and they don't want to offend, but they want to know. Thai people really go out of their way to make sure they are not offending anyone so I don't think they mean any- thing when they ask to touch my hair but still, it's not what I'm used to.

While the Thais always sought consent prior to touching or taking pictures this was a consistent comment from the participants. This semi-celebrity status was appreciated by some and a source of frustration and anger by others who saw this touching as othering. While the participants recognised that the attention was due to fact that they were an ethnic rarity in Thailand, it was apparent that the appropriate reaction to this was not agreed upon. Another student, Destiney, a 21-year-old girl from Georgia commented:

Every time I go out in Bangkok or to some tourist place somebody comes up and touches my hair or takes a picture of me. There has never been a social event here where I didn't get a lot of attention from Thais. At first I didn't mind, but over time it started to get annoying. It's also the staring and pointing that really bothers me. I don't know how to interpret it. Some of my black friends feel offended by it, but I don't feel offended. So when I see them getting offended I start thinking if I should be offended too. I don't know.

There was a consistent discussion regarding the appropriate response to the micro-aggressions that AAS experienced. Many of these micro-aggressions were accompanied by photo taking sessions. This exotification of the other was often perceived as dehumanising and created reactions among some participants. The frequency of these

events was enough so that some of the students refused. One student, 21-year-old Hannah, commented:

Some of my black friends refuse pictures from strangers now and they do not let their hair being touched by Thais. I think my experience here is unique compared to the white Americans. Just because of the pictures and the attention that African Americans get which Caucasians don't get.

Responding to attention

The appropriate response to social attention received was a source of conflict among participants during their holidays and weekend events off campus. Many of the respondents said that intragroup conflict and discussion based on this, the excessive attention and regular physical contact, had become commonplace. Many of the participants said that Thais are just reacting to the appearance of AAS and it was important to act as ethnic ambassadors if they were to have any positive impact on the host nationals' perceptions of African Americans. The student debate, as reported in the inter- views, was based on whether the students should implement a cultural relativism approach or if the students should come to the conclusions that Thai society was essentially racist and react as one would if they experienced the same situation in the United States. Kamari, a 21-year-old female from Maryland majoring in social sciences described the following experience:

One time, a Thai person was staring at my friend and my friend shouted 'what are you looking at?' And we could see the Thai was shocked so

that kicked off a big discussion about how we should react in these situations. There are not a lot of black people here so I don't see the staring as negative or racist. I just see it as curiosity, so I don't take it as negative, and if we yell at them then we are leaving a bad impression and confirming their beliefs that black people are bad. That's the one point we argue about all the time: not everyone has the same notions of black people and staring in New York or DC is different from staring in Thailand.

The appropriate reaction to the attention was a contentious issue among all of the respondents. While there was no agreement on the ideal response, many of the participants took an ambivalent position on the issue reporting that the AAS had repeated discussions regarding the appropriate response and while during some interactions they all agreed that the attention was racially motivated

and unacceptable in the United States, they also felt it was important to recognise that Thailand is not America and it is important to try to differentiate their experiences within the two contexts. This was a cause of conflict among the participants as when one student reacted in a manner which was considered inappropriate, the others would chastise the student for making the group look aggressive or unapproachable. In these situations, the participants identified themselves by their ethnicity and were now in a position to explore how they wanted future interactions with the host nationals to be conducted. This issue, the appropriate response, was reportedly questioned and debated during many weekend trips upcountry and nights in Bangkok's restaurants. While some clearly identified the interactions with the hosts as

perceived discrimination based solely on their ethnic identity, others saw this social attention as harmless curiosity from a group of people in an undeveloped society with no history of racially based segregation or discrimination. To illustrate, Jayla, a 21- year-old female from Indiana commented:

We react differently to these situations, and we disagree about what the best response is. The people here are generally lovely, but I've had some experiences that were not great. The White exchange students have a different experience than the Black students. Our mentality is different in terms of how we interpret our experiences. Black people are sensitive to a lot of things in America that just aren't issues here. We tend to look into things and sometimes see discrimination where White people don't. That happens here too, but it's harder to put it into context.

Many of the participants commented on the difference in the White student's social experiences. This experience is interesting as some of the respondents were clearly concerned that Thais would judge the AAS as a whole or their race based on how these few individuals react. Overall there was no agreement among the participants regarding this contentious issue of the correct response to unwanted or undesirable social attention. All of the respondents discussed this aspect of their experi- ence in Thailand and many reported it to be the issue which required the most adjustment.

Academic and cultural adjustment

There are many aspects of Thai culture which influenced the experiences of participants. Issues such as conflict avoidance and collectivism were

often discussed in the interviews but far more common was the positive aspects of life in Thailand. The most common point addressed regarding cultural adjustment was a consistent reference to Thai kindness and safety. To illustrate, Caleb, a 21-year- old male majoring in business from Florida student said:

The Thais are really nice and I like them. They treat me like family which is great. I feel safe here. I feel fine on campus.

Another female student, 22-year-old Alexis from Pennsylvania, said:

I think the Thai smile is genuine. Even when they are shying away from me, I think the smile is genuine. They're just not sure what to do.

When asked to describe some of the specific cultural differences which required adjustment, Deion, a 21-year-old business student from New York reported the following:

There's less conflicts here. Thais are very laid back. They don't have a schedule. Their schedule, I mean I wouldn't say they don't have a schedule but it's not like 'that' schedule. Everything happens when they want it to happen. I can take that back, and use it in my life because America is crazy and chaotic. The fact that they're all so nice is different. I mean, they're very nice. They're very welcoming, and the culture would be the main thing I'll take back. It's a great culture.

Overall, the participants reported being very comfortable with the hosts in one on one situations. All of the participants commented on their sense of safety and the kindness of the Thais they encoun- tered socially. However, adjustment to the Thai academic culture was more problematic. There were two common observations regarding academic

adjustment within the Thai context. The first adjust- ment barrier was to the style of assessment in Thai higher education. The second adjustment barrier

was related to the behaviour of students in the international programme. As many of the students commented, assessment in the American education system is far more frequent than in Thailand. It is common in Thai higher education to have two assessments during a course i.e., the midterm and the final examinations. However, the American system often involves far more opportunities for students to perform and receive feedback from their instructors. Regarding this area of adjustment, one of the most common complaints was illustrated by Kimani, a 22-year-old psychology stu- dent from Michigan who had made the following comment:

The testing system is different. Classes here have 1-2 exams whereas in the US its' common to have 4-5 tests so you know how you're doing.

Robert, a 22-year-old male computer science student from New Jersey also commented on this aspect of Thai education:

I think studying here is harder in that here we only have a midterm and final. Back home we have 4-5 exams. Here you have to know a lot of information at one time and if you don't know how the teacher asks questions or writes exams then it's really difficult.

When asked about the major differences between classes in the USA and classes in Thailand, Elon, a 20-year-old male business student from Boston observed:

You are not using your critical thinking skills at all. So basically you're

just sitting there and being talked to. No one asks you to think here, we don't have debates … .you're not questioning anything. You are just told the theory and you have to remember it for the exam. That's it, no critical thinking is needed.

Lastly, many of the participants commented on developing close relationships with other AAS and socialising almost exclusively with other American students regardless of race. These close bonds were further cemented by weekend trips around the region. Many of the respondents dis- cussed how difficult it was to integrate into to the host community due to a lack of language proficiency and the inability to find culturally common ground. While the university did provide multiple opportunities to engage with the host nationals, most respondents found sharing their free time with other North Americans to be easier and less stressful. This can be interpreted as a coping mechanism to reduce the stress associated with the perceived sense of receiving an excessive amount of social attention and the feelings of being the only AAS in the room. The 'sameness' of culture and language proved all to alluring and provided the AAS with a reference point or sense of sociocultural and lin- guistic normalcy.

Discussion

This study aims to clarify some of the adjustment demands AAS face in Thailand such as coping with the touching of the hair, taking photographs, excessive attention and a sense ethnicity-based unique-ness. Given the sense of uniqueness and the difficulty of establishing

friendships with hosts, it is understandable that the AAS in this study chose to socialise together, travel together and continued to spend their free time together regardless of their position on the contentious issue of the correct response to the excessive attention. As discussed in Brondolo et al. (2009), the use of social support was a common response to combat the feelings of social isolation and racism. However, feelings of disempowerment (Broman, Mavadatt, and Hsu 2000), social withdrawal and maladaptive coping (Endler and Parker 1990) or violence (Baker, Varma, and Tanaka 2001) were not mentioned by the participants. An interesting aspect of this is that while in public the AAS received a great deal of attention but it was this attention that also created a sense of isolation. This may be explained by a pseudo parasocial relationship dynamic whereby the AAS realises that in the many short- term social interactions with the Thai hosts, the role of the student is merely to pose for a photo   or to allow their hair to be touched. Once this brief social encounter is over, another host national approaches the AAS with a similar request. Given sufficient repetition of such social encounters, it stands to reason that the affected study group would feel more comfortable socialising with those from a similar background which allowed for deeper social engagement.

The vast majority of responses in this study were overwhelmingly positive, yet given the study's focus on sociocultural adjustment, the comments during the interviews tended to focus on stressors in Thai society and the learning environment. The experience of being socially 'othered' was new to many of the respondents and most agreed that their experience was racialised in that they were given more attention in social situations than the other international students and that the appropriate

response to this attention was a source of conflict within the group of AA students. The students   in this study faced a dilemma regarding the appropriate response to the perceived racism and excessive attention in social situations. The resulting cognitive dissonance was caused by the conflicting nature of knowing one is being treated differently due to race and the understanding that the Thai view of race is both different from that of Americans. The experience provides a vehicle for individual transformation, enhanced social awareness and ethnic identity as it allowed for the exploration and discussion of what it means to be an AAS in Thailand and what were the best responses to the adjustment demands being experienced. Thus, the study abroad experience provides the students with additional frames of reference and alternatives to traditional interpretations of racist behaviours as experienced from the American perspective.

While some of the students interpreted socialising with the host nationals as stressful due to the assumptions of the hosts based on the participant's racial background, this did not create a significant barrier to adjustment. However, Thai culture is most generally characterised by the avoidance of conflict and the desire for social harmony which ameliorated negative aspects of many social situations and the overall impression of direct racism. These cultural attributes, when compounded with the idea that very few Thais believe themselves to be racist, create an environment where, as Leonardo (2009) observed 'we live in a condition where racism thrives in the absence of racists' (267). As previously discussed, in Thailand, skin colour is often associated with class hegemony and socio-economic status yet the AAS, in this study, clearly do not fit within this traditional   Thai archetype of

people of colour and thus challenge perceptions of dominance and societal privilege.

Perhaps it is due to the reasons stated above that the overriding barrier reported was the consistently perceived sense of receiving excessive social attention. As previously stated, Western theorists within international education are often unfamiliar with the details and types of xenophobia and perceived racism within a non-western context. Perceived racism and discrimination have been linked with psychological distress (Williams, Neighbors, and Jackson 2003), which is supported by conceptual models of race-related stress (Harrell 2000). Carter (2007) completed a review of the literature using samples from the USA which supports this conclusion. Evans (2009) expanded on the documentation of successful African American women who studied abroad. For a meta-analytic review of the psychological influence of prejudice and discrimination, refer to Pieterse et al. (2012). Globally, the examination of adjustment experiences among AAS is sparse. However, it is understood that unpredictability is more likely to result in vulnerability while predictability often results in resiliency. Racial socialisation among African American parents is common in the United States whereby protective practices are implemented to help the ethnic minorities, particularly African Americans, function in within a society which is stratified by ethnicity and race (Phinney and Chavira 1995). This racial socialization, which includes preparation for racial bias, is integral as the United States has a well-documented history of group subordination, racial oppression and racial stratification (Ogbu 1988).

Given the results of this study, it would seem appropriate that AAS

who are planning to attend international programmes in Thailand would benefit from a pre-departure orientation session which allows for preparation and consideration of the environment and the potential for stress inducing social experiences. The participants' experiences in Thailand required them to cope with racial bias and to anticipate social interactions with the host nationals as likely to involve racialised or ethnicised experiences. While it is understood that many African Americans are socialised to racial and ethnic bias within the American context, little is done to prepare these student for the racialised experiences they are likely to encounter in Asia. Pre-departure cultural orientation training and preparation courses which emphasise the likelihood of encountering racial bias would facilitate the development of requisite coping skills and lend to a more positive international study experience. To further this goal, Thai international programmes would benefit from the promotion of appropriate cultural socialisation messages and campaigns which include messages about perceived prejudice and discrimination from international students' perspectives.

The reduction in time spent abroad by American students has decreased the viability of the adjustment models approach to international student research. The continued increase in AAS studying abroad requires greater attention and a potential area of exploration can be found in Critical Race Theory {hereafter: CRT}. CRT is known as a type of oppositional scholarship which can 'uncover racial inequality and legal injustice' (Taylor 2006, 72). CRT often explores the exposure to White values and experiences as normal, demonstrates exposure to racism as normal and promotes the documentation of the experiences of people of colour (Smith and Stovall 2008; Taylor 2006). One of the

most cited claims of CRT scholars is that 'racism is normal' (Gambrell 2016, 102). This is not intended as approval or acceptance of racism rather that racism is neither a rare nor recent phenomena. It is widely acknowledged that race is a social construct yet it must also be acknowledged that race is significant (Crenshaw 2009). Future research involving race and ethnicity in Asia could lend much to the discussion through clarification and analysis of the experiences of the oppressed groups from the perspective of the oppressed. Such analysis will allow for the further scrutiny of the current understanding of the African American study abroad experience.

Conclusion

Previous research on international student adjustment has often failed to recognise the impact of ethnicity or race, particularly in Asian settings. As universities continue the internationalisation of programmes and campuses (Knight 2004), more visiting students are going to have contact with individuals from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. This article has attempted to elucidate the experiences of a group of AAS in an international programme in Thailand. While Thailand, like many societies today, continues to practice civil, legal and social exclusion based on arguments of cultural uniqueness, the respondents' sense of social exclusion was balanced with a reportedly intense sense of kindness and hospitality. This perception of the duality of the Thai interactions with AAS was paramount to the overall sociocultural adjustment. However, it is clear that, from the participants' perspective, race did impact their sociocultural adjustment. Pre-

departure orientation and bias preparation courses are suggested as one method to assist in the reduction of ethnicity-based adjustment demands. This study has several limitations. The limited sample size and snowball sampling affects the generalisability of the findings in this study. Further, this study was conducted in Bangkok, which is not representative to Thailand as a whole or to the rest of Asia for that matter. Further research on the academic and sociocultural adjustment within an Asian setting should recognise that there is no one size fits all model to cross-cultural adjustment and that the ethnic, racial or cultural background of the individual does impact the perceptions of and adjustment to the host community. As such, further exploration of AAS adjustment to various Asian nations would lend to further discussion and under- standing of this phenomenon.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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5.3 Introduction to Burmese Student Sociocultural Adjustment

As discussed in section 5.1 (Japanese and Korean sociocultural adjustment) and section 5.2 (African American sociocultural adjustment), this section continues to build on the role of ethnicity in international student adjustment. This article brings the study of ethnicity and adjustment to one of Thailand's closest neighbors and a member of ASEAN, the Burmese. The use of the ethnic Burmese as a cohort in this research exemplifies the importance of the impact of ethnicity on adjustment. The Burmese share many similarities to the Thais in terms of social issues, culture, religion, climate, food and history making this a potentially ideal example of the cultural fit model which explains that sociocultural similarity eases the adjustment process. However, this is not the case. The Burmese in this study reported the most negative experiences with the hosts and many of the students claimed direct prejudice and discrimination. These prejudicial feelings towards certain ethnicities are effectively ingrained in the minds of many people and contribute to the student's sociocultural adjustment experiences. Therefore, this paper entails the experiences of the final ethnic group in this series of studies and is used to answer RQ2. The Burmese students also represent perhaps the most dramatic account of their ethnicized experiences.

CrossMark

Burmese sociocultural adjustment to Thai international programs: an analysis of the impact of historical revisionism

Douglas Rhein[1]

Abstract This research explores the perception and experiences of 15 Burmese international students temporarily studying at two international colleges in suburban Bangkok, Thailand and compares their impressions of and reaction to history with 10 Thai students studying at the same international colleges. This ethnographic exploration of Burmese sociocultural adjustment to Thai international programs aims to clarify the historical causes of the present day tension through in-depth interviews of the affected student groups. An historical analysis of causation and the student response is necessary to understand the relationship between these neighboring countries.

Keywords International education · Thailand · Burmese · Discrimination

1 Background

The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a political and economic organization comprising 10 participant countries. It was founded in 1967 by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. It was later joined by Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, and still later by Myanmar. The rationale for the creation of this regional body was based largely on the impact of decolonization in South East Asia and the subsequent socioeconomic turbulence which rippled throughout the region (Ganeson 1996). The main aims of ASEAN are to accelerate economic growth and sociocultural development. One of the ways ASEAN intends to complete its mission is through the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). As one of the three pillars of ASEAN, the AEC is designed to implement economic integration initiatives and create a single market across ASEAN nations. However, this integration plan is the recipient of much doubt and criticism. Currently in Thailand, there are many issues involving the victimization of nationals from ASEAN partners. For instance, Thailand has made repeated international headlines for their management of the ethnic Rakhine laborers and the Rohingya boat people. The dubious treatment and the subsequent conviction of two Burmese migrants on a resort island has drawn international attention. The forced labor of Burmese on Thai fishing vessels and the human trafficking of Burmese and Bangladeshis in Southern provinces was well documented throughout 2015. The Thai treatment of immigrants, particularly refugees, has degenerated to such an extent that the United States State Department has downgraded Thailand to tier 3 in its' Trafficking of Persons Report 2014 for failing to meet the basic minimum standards to fight human trafficking, placing Thai- land on par with North Korea, Syria, and Iran, which is not the ideal position for an up and coming ASEAN leader. Without question, underprivileged laborers and migrants are not the only

segment of Burmese living in Thailand, there is also a growing international student population which has largely gone unnoticed. The AEC will, among other goals, relax regulations regarding visa issuance among member states allowing teachers and students access to Thailand more easily. The AEC will also develop a national qualification framework for student credit transfer within ASEAN thus providing the platform for educational liberalization. Thus, there is a reasonable expectation that the number of Burmese choosing to study in Thai schools will increase. The paucity of documentation regarding Burmese international students' adjustment to and perception of Thailand was the impetus of this study.

1   International student adjustment

International students provide great benefits for the Thai international education programs. These international students lend to the diversity of student populations, add diverse perspectives to classroom discussions, increase the schools' visibility and prominence in the community, and inject the much-needed international student tuition fees into coffers. However, international students also face more adjustment demands than their domestic counterparts (Kilinc and Granello 2003). The adjustment to a new environment is not merely academic in nature. International students encounter great challenges of adjusting to social, cultural, emotional, and academic differences while living and studying in the host environment. While many of these stressors can be considered eustress such as the transition to a new environment and the efforts associated with socializing within a new milieu, academic literature on the topic (Fritz et al. 2008; Ramsay et al. 2006; Brown   and Holloway 2008; Rosenthal et al. 2007; Townsend and Wan 2007; Fan and Wanous 2008) explores the distressing

elements of international education. There are many sociocultural challenges that international students face: language barriers (Berger 2008); minority status (Zambrana and Morant 2009); perceived discrimination (Duru and Poyrazli 2011); maladaptive schemas (Rhein and Sukawatana 2015); and a plethora of concerns such as lonliness, finances, homesickness, and alienation (Constantine et al. 2004; Poyrazli et al. 2004; Poyrazli and Lopez 2007; Yeh and Inose 2003). Previous research suggests that adaptation is facilitated when international students are immersed in the host country's cultural norms and social interactions (Rajapaksa and Dundes 2002), and that sociocultural adaptations are facilitated by social support (Misra et al. 2003). Therefore, to a certain degree, international students' sociocultural adjustment is reliant upon the perceptions of their hosts, treatment of the students, and their ability to socialize or integrate into the host culture.

2   Why the Burmese?

There are specific reasons to study the Burmese international student adjustment in Thailand. First, although Burmese students have some of the similar characteristics and adjustment barriers as other commonly recruited students from SE Asia, such as language problems and discrimination, they also differ greatly from other international students in terms of having come from a country which invaded and successfully sacked the host nations' capital city on two occasions. Second, Burma suffered greatly during the military juntas of Ne Win from 1962 to 1988 and the subsequent military dictatorships from the late 1980s until today. The lack of economic opportunity and often abject treatment of Muslim Burmese and ethnic minorities or those opposed to the political system led to a decaying socioeconomic system. The growing subjugation of these minorities was the impetus for the massive ethnic diaspora

from Burmese territory to Thailand. Unfortunately, this migration of the often uneducated and economically disadvantaged served to reinforce the negative Thai stereotypes and treatment of the Burmese. Lastly, many former political and ethnic refugees who were granted asylum in western nations, particularly the United States, later became naturalized American citizens and are returning to Asia as international students to reconnect with their cultural roots. These students have often adopted English as their primary language and can no longer continue studies in Asian language programs.

3 Manufacturing of the Thai identity and the Burmese as enemy

It is important to recognize that a nationally disseminated extremist history curriculum can fuel hatred and accelerate ethnic conflict (Bush and Saltarelli 2000; Davies 2004). Within the Thai–Burmese historiography from the Thai perspective, these two neighboring countries have constantly been at war with each other. Thai history began projecting the archetypal aggressive Burmese as the particularly contemptuous enemy of the Thai state and thus the people mainly in the early twentieth century. The construction of the biography of the Thai nation state required heroes valiantly struggling against a national adversary—Burma, specifically, the battle of Ayutthaya in 1767. There had been an earlier attack on Ayutthaya in 1569 but in Thai literature the 1767 war is portrayed much differently. According to Thai historical accounts, the intention of the previous attacks was to expand the Burmese kingdom; the 1569 attack was, according to King Chulalongkorn's younger brother Prince Damrong in his book *Our Wars with the Burmese* (*Thai rop Phama*) published in 1917, perceived as an attempt to reduce Siam to a vassalage state while the war of 1767 was about

looting and taking war prisoners. In the 1767 war, the Burmese, facing a Chinese invasion in their own land, chose to quickly sack the Siamese capital Ayutthaya and plunder all goods of value, destroy Buddhist images, scriptures, and scavenge any cultural items of value. In the book *History of the Kingdom of Siam* by Turpin (1908), the author analyzes missionary manuscripts which claimed the Burmese "burnt the soles of their feet in order to make them reveal where they had concealed their wealth, and raped their weeping daughters before their very eyes" (p.167). It was this battle in 1767 which created the foundation for Siam's long-term opprobrium of the Burmese by the political, and intellectual leadership which was forced from Ayutthaya. This event, as reiterated by the Thais, immediately threw Siam into complete chaos by causing material and economic deprivations and dividing the population into different sects who had to compete with each other for resources. Therefore, it was this attack which caused more damage than ever, both physically and spiritually (Chutinaranond 1991).

4   Burmese in Thai media

The defeat of Ayutthaya in 1767 created the platform for centuries of animosity and a fierce sense of Thai nationalism in the twentieth century. This historical event led to a systematic characterization of the Burmese as the enemies of all Siamese as well as the enemies of Buddhism which is an invariable element of modern Thai history. Throughout the twentieth century, countless plays, novels, poems, radio programs, and movies portrayed the Burmese as the enemy of the Thai. Chronicles produced in 1912 describe for the first time the Thai heroism, self-sacrifice, and ultimate unity in defending Thai villages against the Burmese attacks. It is important to note that these details can be found in no other historical sources prior to 1912 (Sunait and Than 1995). In 1917, Prince Damrong published the classic "*Thai rop*

Phama" which is still the most influential historical document to popularize the Burmese as the enemies of the Siamese. Similarly, there were many books (see Wichitmatra's *Lak Thai* (1928)) in the Thai education system which perpetuated this concept of the Burmese as the enemy of the state. These novels helped structure the Thai identity through group differentiation. The state-controlled media acted as a propaganda tool which articulated a clear boundary of the "us-versus-them" paradigm of Thai–Burmese relations and helped to create the national narrative of Thai moral worth and spiritual superiority. The overthrow of the absolute monarch King Rama 7th in 1932 soon led to the dictatorship of Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsonggram and further re-appropriation of historical events. Field Marchall Plaek Phibunsonggram, who studied in France in the 1920s and was a member of the People's Party which engineered the overthrow of the absolute monarch, greatly admired the European dictators of his time, particularly Hitler and Mussolini (Reynolds 2004).

The end of the absolute monarchy signaled the necessity for a refashioning of the concept of the Thai nation state. A key architect in the nation building component from 1933 was Luang Wichit, (Wichit Wathakan), the head of the Fine Arts Department and later the head of the Ministry of Education. Both departments were instrumental in maintaining the bellicose Burmese myth via the creation of stories, films, plays, and textbooks. The play "*The Blood of Thai Soldiers*" is such an example. The work of Wichit was essential for uniting the Thai race for nationalistic purposes. Field Marshall Plaek Phibunsonggram was successful in rousing the Thai patriotism and in 1939 managed to change the name from Siam to Thailand (*Tai* or *Thai* means free) and created a new flag and national anthem. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, school books, songs, and plays continued to focus on stories of the new "historical" events involving common Thais defending their villages against Burmese attacks.

Following World War 2 and the democratic election of Prime Minister Pridi in 1946, Thais were allowed just a brief glimpse of democracy before the military once again overthrew the democratically elected government and quickly replaced Pridi with the well-established dictator Plaek Phibunsonggram. While Thailand was once again recreating itself under the dictatorship of Plaek Phibunsonggram, Burma was also undergoing some internal changes which led to the Burmese independence from England and heralded the establishment of a diplomatic relationship with Thailand in 1948. This was followed by the formation of ASEAN but even then, these two nations still encountered disputes, conflicts, and confrontations. As discussed above, the fall of Ayutthaya had a dramatic impact on Thai–Burmese relations. Thailand criticized and branded Burma a failure for being unable to avoid colonization. This prejudice was projected to boost self-esteem as Thai people could envision themselves as superior for their ability to avoid colonization. Even today, the myth of Thai exceptionalism is exemplified by the often-touted claims of freedom from colonization. The meaning of 'Thai-ness' and the subsequent claims of exceptionalism and uniqueness have recently become a mantra of sorts and to many these terms are synonymous (i.e., to be Thai is to be unique).

Regardless of historical accuracy, many famous Thai films such as *Bang Rachan, Suriyothai* and*King Naresuan* contain plot themes with national heroes who save the nation from the Burmese. In the 1990s a series of television docu-dramas was produced (including "*PrasriSuriyothai*" and "Nine Wars") in Thailand. Each of these violent displays of the Thai perspective of history was further reinforcement of the Thai notions of their war dominated history with Burma (Chongkittavorn 2001). More recently, the animation film Khan Kluay (a.k.a. the Blue Elephant) depicts the story of a young elephant which is captured by the Burmese and

eventually becomes the war elephant of King Naruesuan only to defeat the larger, darker skinned, fiery eyed Burmese elephant. The success of this film later led to a video game and soon to be released Khan Kluay2 which one can only assume will be another tail of a great battle between the Thai and Burmese. In summary, these stories act as a gross oversimplification of events thus becoming agents of Thai propaganda which lay the groundwork for an intentional manufacturing of a cradle to the grave adversary of jingoistic proportions. To summarize, the negative perception of the Burmese is not a mere coincidence. The most respected Thai scholar of Thai–Burmese relations, Dr. Sunait Chutintaranond (1992) states:

Prejudicial feelings towards the Burmese are widely and effectively ingrained in the minds of the Thai people through the channels of oral tradition, historical literature, textbooks, plays, music and movies, especially during and after the nation-building period, the time when the idea of nationality came to be emphasized. It is first introduced to children as they are socialized, and thereafter it is repeated either formally by leaders of the society or informally by word of mouth or through public media. Thus, on the psychological level it is impossible to prevent a prejudiced view of the Burmese as an historically hostile state when certain beliefs exist within the social heritage and are then perpetuated by the leaders through the means of the mass media and the educational system (p. 99).

5   The irony of the Burmese as enemy of the Thai

The media, as a tool of nation building in Thailand, has not merely allowed but clearly perpetuated this re-appropriation and manipulation of history for political reasons. The myth of Thai superiority endures as a result of such media. While

it has been established that part of the Thai identity is defined by threats from outsiders, the irony is to be found in selecting Burma as the enemy at a time when Burma was no longer a threat. In the mid-nineteenth century, Great Britain and France began moving in to Siam from all directions eventually seizing 176,000 square miles (457,600 km^2) of territory by 1904 (Wyatt 1984). Following the British colonization of Malaysia to the south, Burma to the west, and the French colonization of Laos and Cambodia to the east, it seems the clear enemy looming over and indeed, annexing Thai territory, was the colonial powers. However, these European colonial oppressors were largely ignored in the nationalistic rhetoric of the twentieth century; instead, the architects of national identity continued to focus on the great heroes which emerged from the wars with the Burmese two centuries earlier. This intentional displacement allowed for the creation of a national enemy which posed no threat to security and assisted Thailand in avoiding becoming a full colony of the European powers through the avoidance of internal   social   conflict   while also preserving the dignity of the Thai elite. Indeed, throughout the twentieth century, the angry gaze of Thai nationalism was firmly fixed on the toothless tiger which Burma had become.

6   Modern paradigm

Despite bearing the load of historical tension, the relationship between Thailand and Burma at present has transformed to quite an extent. In fact, many business groups in Thailand see Burma as a new market that they can take advantage of and therefore, Thailand is now one of the biggest contributors to Burma's development. Although the old

wounds have not fully healed, some Thai people now sympathize with the Burmese due to the political and social situations in the country. Burma has faced religious and ethnic wars, political problems, and troubles with human rights. As Thai people view themselves as more civilized and developed compared to the Burmese, the sense of insecurity instilled in the Thai has gently diminished. This Thai sense of superiority also means that many Thais feel that they no longer are justified or need to use Burma as a scapegoat (Chongkittavorn 2001). While this may be a positive development in the relationship between the two countries, this also implies the developmental gap between the two countries is very wide. Indeed, the income gap has worsened the refugee issues on the border between these two states. Thailand has been a destination for many Burmese refugees for the last three decades. These refugees are often portrayed as threats to personal safety, social order, and public health by the Thai media. The Burmese refugees are often portrayed as trouble makers and a burden to the Thai (Sunpuwan and Niyomsilpa 2012). Insensitive comments regarding the state of refugee camps and the impact of these refugees on the Thai environment from media and politicians are also quite common. To sum up, an historically manufactured schism of these culturally and socially similar neighbors has created an indelible impact on the common perception between the peoples of Thailand and Burma.

7   Goals of this study

The purpose of is this study is to explore the sociocultural adjustment issues Burmese students face in Thai international programs. The author predicts that the international students who identify themselves as Burmese in Thailand have experiences with outright discrimination and prejudice within the host community and education environment which

adversely impacts their sociocultural adjustment. This prediction is based on past research which confirms the significant relationship between perceived discrimination, social support and psychological adjustment (McCormack 1998; Poyrazli and Lopez 2007; Bektas et al. 2009; Duru and Poyrazli 2007, 2011). The perceived discrimination may hinder perceptions of social connectedness in the host country which will negatively impact sociocultural adjustment (Lee and Robbins 1998; Lee 2003; Yeh and Inose 2003).

8   Methodology—qualitative research design

In general, the academic, emotional, and social difficulties of international students were previously explored through quantitative research methods (Misra et al. 2003). Historically, cross-cultural psychology research has shown interest in establishing universal principles which govern the relationship between culture and psychology (Ashworth 2003; Karasz and Singelis 2009). However, an integral aspect of sociocultural adjustment is the subjective nature of this phenomenon. Subjectivity is an important focus of qualitative inquiry as participants may provide valuable insights into the factors which influenced adjustment. A variety of stressors ranging from discrimination, cultural norms, finances, culture shock, adjustment, accommodations, isolation, and social support have been explored in the western educational context (Bradley 2000; Lee and Rice 2007; Leong and Chou 1996; Msengi 2007). The qualitative studies regarding international student adjustment that have emerged are elaborating and clarifying the themes highlighted by the quantitative procedures. Concepts such as student discrimination (Poyrazli and Grahame 2007), alienation (Major 2005), emotional problems (McLachlan and Justice 2009), a lack of usage of coun- seling services

(Bradley 2000), and teaching styles (Edgeworth and Eiseman 2007) have been explored using qualitative research designs. These studies were primarily done in western nations using primarily Asian students as participants. Other ethnographic studies (Brown 2008) identified language as an impediment to adjustment. Research using qualitative methods has also shown that these stressors can negatively influence student learning and overall experience in the host culture. As international student adjustment is experienced differently depending on the individual and their background, the utilization of a qualitative design aimed at investigating certain individual differences should lend credibility to the outcomes of this project through direct quotes from the affected group.

9   Student interviews

A total of 15 Burmese students and 10 Thai students were interviewed over an eight-month period in 2015. An interview approach was chosen as concepts of social anxiety, social adjustment, and comfort in one's environment mainly reside in the consciousness of the individual. The participants are individuals who are experiencing the phenomenon (academic life in Thailand) and who can articulate their experiences. This research aims to describe the "meaning of the lived experience for several individuals concerning a particular phenomenon" (Creswell 1998, p. 51) and compare how individuals perceived their adjustment within this context. The Thai students were asked questions regarding their educational background in relation to the history with Burma and Thai history in general as well as their experiences with Burmese students who had enrolled in international programs in Thai- land. Qualitative methods are the best in situations where a more detailed understanding of a process or experience is needed to determine the exact nature

of the issue under investigation. It is expected that this exploratory qualitative method will lend detailed, rich, and in-depth reports of the rewarding and challenging experiences Burmese students face in Thailand. This approach will also allow for further identification of specific stressors which, if possible, can be removed thus creating a more positive experience for future students. Semi-structured explorative questions were used to identify specific issues influencing the adjustment process of international students. This aspect of inquiry will emphasize unique attributes which contributed to the sociocultural adjustment process of Burmese international students. Questions are intended to explore participants friendships, perceptions of resilience, the abil- ity to cope with and recover from stress and convert it into a positive experience (Jackson et al. 2007; Richardson 2002), and students' perceptions of adjustment as a result of characteristics (Hunter and Chandler 1999) or internal processes (Tebes et al. 2004) or an innate motivation toward adjustment and growth (Waite and Richardson 2004). Qualitative measurements of behavior are necessary and important in cross-cultural research, but gaining an understanding of the motives, drives or goals of such behavior is equally important for developing better programs and, in the end, better educational experiences for our students. These semi-structured in-depth interviews can assist in understanding the personal experiences of the international students and lend to the creation of a narrative. Rather than exploring the causes of change, this study seeks to understand the student adjustment phenomena from the students' perspective. This exploratory study further seeks to complement previous findings from studies involving migrants as well as explore specific strategies students implemented to overcome adjustment problems in Thailand. By collecting and collating interview data, this ethnographic method, studying international student culture through observation and interpretation, may capture multiple realities

dependent on the individuals' perspectives (Wint and Frank 2006).

10   Participant selection

To be eligible to participate in this research, the Burmese students must meet four criteria:

(1) who have not previously stayed in Thailand for more than 6 months, (2) who define their background or personal identification with Burma, and (3) who are not fluent in Thai, and

(4) who are currently studying in an international program in Thailand. The Thai students chosen for this research must meet three criteria: (1) Thais who went to primary and secondary school in Thai language programs in Thailand, (2) who define their background and personal identification with Thailand, and (3) who are currently studying in an international program in Thailand. The selection criteria were based on diversity and were used to select students who are a mix of gender, age, ethnicity, and of Burmese nationality. Twelve international students were chosen through a process of snowball sampling (Jacobsen and Landau 2003). As a participant in the international student orientation seminar, this researcher briefed all incoming international students of this research verbally. Participation in the study was on a purely voluntary basis. Students were informed of the aims of the study, its importance, and the time commitment required of them. The participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. This selection process maximized convenience and representativeness (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

One-on-one semi-structured xx interviews were conducted with the participants. These interviews were semi-structured in that the researcher asked a standard set of questions   in order, but used prompts and follow-up questions as

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appropriate and based on the respondents' comments. A semi-structured approach was chosen to maximize participant authenticity. Creating an open discussion assisted in developing genuine or unadulterated descriptions of their adjustment process. These subjective responses to questions should lend to the development of a conceptual scaffold adding authenticity to future research. The interviews were conducted in English as all incoming students have passed an English proficiency examination prior to acceptance to these international programs. The use of English for interviews is ideal as English is the lingua prima of international schools in Asia, and all of the participants have passed a standardized test (IELTS, TOEFL) or are native English speakers of Burmese descent. Interviews lasted 20–30 min.

11 Data analysis and interpretation

Consistent with Erlandson et al. (1993), each interview was audio recorded and subsequently transcribed. Following an inductive approach of natural inquiry and analysis, themes emerged, and each was identified, labeled, and categorized. Specific attention will be paid to common or overlapping themes.

12 The ethics and politics of the research

12.1 Anonymity and confidentiality

A basic principle of research ethics is the protection of the participants through maintaining anonymity and confidentiality (Aita and Richer 2005). Francis (2008) stated "confidentiality is about expectations of control over what happens to information about a person" (p. 52); whereas, "privacy is invaded, and confidentiality is breached; violations of privacy are invasions, and violations of

confidentiality are breaches" (p. 53). Some respondents had critical comments regarding their homeland or their impressions of Thailand, and they may be concerned that these negative comments, when made public, may have negative consequences (Coombes et al. 2004). All data collected for this research was stored on a 32 bit encrypted password protected storage device to decrease the likelihood of jeopardizing the participants' rights to anonymity and confidentiality.

13   Contributions to theoretical knowledge

The primarily purpose of this research is to explore an area of education where limited knowledge exists, namely, Burmese international students adjustment to Thailand. There remains insufficient attention to the full array of factors involved in international student adjustment to schools in Asia. Much of the existing research regarding sociocultural adjustment among international students has limitations. These studies primarily relied on international stu- dents adjusting to western education systems. For example, international students surveyed in western universities experience stress upon their arrival to the host country (Berry and Sam 1997) and have a greater need for support than do the local student populace (Andrade 2006).

In contrast, the current research addresses this issue by investigating Burmese student sociocultural adjustment to a Thai educational environment. In particular, this research fills the gap regarding the lack of available data addressing international student adjustment in Southeast Asia. The purpose is to create knowledge and assist the fields of psychology and education. Improving educational environments for international students and decreasing cross-cultural educational adjustment issues will benefit multiple stakeholders including stu- dents, international relations

departments and university programs recruiting international students. This research attempts to contribute to the growing area of knowledge on inter- national students adjustment research through the identification of possible stressors and adjustment theory as it pertains to the conflicting models as proposed by Lysgaard (1955), Oberg (1960), Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963), Adler (1975), Brown (1980), Torbiorn (1994), Mohamed (1997), and Ward (1996). An investigative analysis of the causes of student adjustment can be further utilized in areas within the host country as well as in orientation

sessions prior to student departure from their home country. In addition, the process of eliminating or decreasing stressors should create a more positive learning and travel experience for inbound students.

14   Results

Results indicate that the Burmese in this study face limited adjustment issues with the exception of socialization and ethnic discrimination. Many of the respondents began the interviews with complementary and generally positive remarks about their experience. The interviewees all expressed happiness with their overall experience and had found methods to adjust to the universities they were currently enrolled in. The overall impression was quite encouraging. When asked to describe their first impressions of Thailand or their schools, they often smiled and said everything was great. However, as the interviews progressed more interesting and detailed responses followed. For the purpose of clarity, the participants identified three main criticisms which negatively impacted sociocultural adjustment: socialization, academic environment, and

discrimination.

14.1 Adjustment issue #1—socialization

For many international students, the academic experience of studying in a foreign land is only one aspect of the experience, socializing with the host nationals is also an important facet of international education. In this regard, the interviewer asked the students to describe their most memorable experiences while in Thailand. The most common response was linked to a social experience which was often related to their Burmese background. For example:

I grew up here before at the refugee camp and I moved to the United States fifteen years ago. I grew up here when I was little but I love the smell. I think when I was child I was low on the social hierarchy. Now, that I am back in Thailand I am aware that everybody will ask you everything; what do I do; who you are and they even ask you about your salary. And they always, like I feel like, they always try to place you where you belong in relation to them which seems so really unfair to me. I don't know; I really don't know. I kind of feel overwhelmed by that. They always ask you who you are so they can compare using their Thai system so you can communicate but it's all about social position and who is high and who is low.

Another visiting female Burmese student from a western university responded:

I think I actually see more Thai culture at school. I mean my Thai friends ask me what my parents do and try to know if I have some money or something. I never think like that, and they always ask for my background. The students ask why I can speak English and what my home school is. I guess it is normal for Thais to do this, but I feel kind of like they see us as inferior or something. That's how I feel here, inferior.

This reference to power distance and social status was a common theme during the inter- views. Many respondents felt that they were regularly being evaluated, and their responses to the Thais questions determined their value as a friend. Another feature of the socialization process, understanding, and interpreting social nonverbal behavior from the host culture, was shown to illicit some confusion from the Burmese respondents. For example, the presentation of a positive public self is a prevalent aspect of Thai culture, and many comments regarding

the Thai smile were highlighted as aspects of both enjoyment and frustration. For example, on student commented:

I mean I love the people and they smile for all occasions but I think that their smile is just masking what they do. I just don't like it, the fake smile. I love Thailand, I just don't like their thinking I guess. Like how they think and how they try to place you in their hierarchy I guess, here, it's all about social status.

Another student commenting on the same issue stated:

I think that because of the friends I've made from my program so far that this is going to be awesome and I learned many life lessons just from classes, but I also like the fact that Thailand is called the 'Land of Smile' because everybody just smiles for no reason, they just smile in all situations. You face any kind of situation and the people will smile through it all. However, I know or I think sometimes they smile at me but they are thinking something which is not so good.

14.2   Adjustment issue #2—academic adjustment

All of the respondents were coming from foreign education systems and many had never studied within a Thai context. There are clear differences in terms of expectations of

teachers and students, power distance, the impact of collectivism and many other cultural variances which effect the international students' perceptions of the Thai classroom. One student commented:

Honestly, I want to recommend them (future students) to come just because of what Thailand has to offer. This is a cool place to visit but education wise; it makes me feels like my home college is Harvard for some reason.

There were frequent comments regarding the difference in academic rigor compared to universities in western nations. Many of the respondents discussed their ease of transition into the coursework aspect of studies. For example:

If you come here for the islands and partying then you will be in for a great time. They have great island parties here, but you shouldn't expect to be challenged in classes. Just accept that you are here to learn about the culture and have a good time.

Regarding the Burmese students need to balance academics

and travel, a student said: I'd just say focus on both traveling

and partying and then a little on school.

Another commonly discussed observation among participants regarding adjustment to the academic environment related to the behavior and expectations of Thais during classes. To illustrate this point, one student remarked:

Some of the Thai professors don't give you time to ask questions and they look frustrated when you raise your hand a lot. The Thai students don't talk in class but after the class is over they sometimes meet and talk about the class and the parts they are confused about. When I asked them why they didn't ask during class they told me it's not polite.

Another female said:

In classes, Thai students just sit around each other and they don't speak out a lot or say anything. It's kind of hard to assert yourself in a class with a group of Thais. It's not in their culture to have strong opinions. I see a lot of collectivism, so it's better not to talk in class.

The lack of classroom interaction was a common discussion point in the interviews. Many of the Burmese students came from international or western education systems which often expect students to participate in class. In addition, many of the respondents spoke of their desire for discussion or debate in the classroom, both of which are not strongly encouraged in the Thai education system. Many local students are taught to memorize the lecture notes and vocal dissension is not encouraged and could result in academic or social jeopardy. Within this learning environment direct disagreement with an instructor is not wise and commenting on or criticizing fellow students could be considered inappropriate and offensive to many. For example:

I like most of the classes which are taught by international instructors because we talk, but for classes conducted by many of the Thai teachers, there's less interaction and the students are just quiet. They don't ask anything and they speak Thai to each other in class and tell jokes in Thai. For us, we get left out of a lot of stuff. I get really frustrated with this because I want to know everything going on around me and I can't. Plus, I know I can't argue or debate here so what's the point of listening. I just have to remember the text.

Overall, the students reported that they enjoyed their experience studying within the Thai context. Their adjustment to the learning environment was a matter of adjustment to the culture of education in Thai international programs. For many students, there was less academic rigor. Therefore, many decided to socialize with other international

students and travel. There is a clear difference in the expectations of students' contribution to classes among the faculty in international programs.

14.3   Adjustment issue #3—discrimination

Every Burmese student interviewed in this research was asked if they thought their experiences in Thai higher education were similar to the other international students' experiences in Thailand. This question often led to the most interesting and most disturbing responses from the participants. For example, one female student reiterated this experience:

Most Thai students really make an effort to get to know us when we have an event and I like that, but one time I was talking to my friends about how some Thai people are still discriminating against Burmese people. So, for example, I had a Thai friend who doesn't see Burmese people as being equal and she said to me they (Burmese) are house maids or construction workers and laborers but should not be at the same universities. I expressed my opinion that we are intelligent and we are international students and such thoughts…well, she shouldn't have such thoughts. Then my friend told me that I was lucky that I have not yet been stabbed with a knife cause I'm a Burmese in Thailand. My other Burmese friends said they had similar experiences so we just remind each other and tell the new Burmese not to let everyone know you are Burmese and just be careful when Thai people know you're Burmese.

Among Burmese students, it is evident that this perceived discrimination is a common element of their experience. This has developed into a common meme among the Burmese international student social networking applications such as Line or Facebook. As disturbing as that sounds, this student was not alone in voicing her experiences with discrimination.

Many of the respondents in these interviews cited problems of racism while off campus. There is an obvious prejudice which the Burmese students are clearly aware of and it is not limited to just refugees and migrant workers. During interviews many of the students

discussed their experiences regarding unequal or disparaging treatment. For example, one female student reported:

There have been cases where my friend's parents tell them not to associate themselves with Burmese students. Apparently they think we are somehow diseased and some parents can't believe there are Burmese studying here.

Another student said:

A friend of mine was in a taxi and halfway through the driver asked where she is from because her Thai sounded different. When she told him she's from Burma, he made her get out of the taxi in the middle of the road. So, I don't say where I'm from. It's better that way.

Finding humor in the prejudicial perceptions of their host, one student said:

There is something that I find quite hilarious. In the grand palace, there is a sign that says 'beware of non-Thai pickpockets' So, if a Thai person steals my stuff it is okay? They are obviously implying that Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Burma are the source of crime. In this case I think it is so stupid that it's not even offensive, it's just funny.

Not all of the students were able to find this discrimination as humorous. Social rejection was also commonly discussed:

During my orientation here, my friend introduced me and another friend to her mom. We talked for a while but after she found out I'm Burmese, she completely stopped acknowledging me. It was like I wasn't even in the room.

While it must be pointed out that the views of these Thai are not representative of the views of Thais as a whole, this is also the most disparaging aspect of the Burmese students' experience at international programs in Thailand. The most common theme of all the interviews was the Thai student applying revised history often to justify blatantly racist ideologies. Some of these discriminatory comments are likely unintentional. For example:

Well, mostly Thais are surprised because I speak English well and I'm not a laborer. They don't know what to think about me. I don't look or talk like their idea of a Burmese so they're surprised. For most Thais, the idea of Burmese is dark skin, dirty, house worker or maid that isn't smart. So I often get complements from Thai students. They say "Wow you speak English and you're from Burma!" I get that a lot. It's a complement but not really.

An interesting note regarding these discriminatory practices is that the Burmese have a very different perspective on the historical nature of this conflict. When asked about their perception of their negative experiences, many of the respondents said it was understandable and that the Thai response is merely a product of the Thai education system. The history texts in Burma mention the battle of Ayutthaya as a brief conflict prior to the battles with the Chinese. The consistent response from the Burmese was one of surprise that this is an issue in Thailand. In fact, in school the Burmese students said that they study about the kings who led the battles and the land borders after each major war but do not explore the Thai battles in any depth. One student even offered a possible reason:

Thailand was never colonized and did not have to deal with many wars like Burma. So, for Thailand this war was a very big deal and the only way to direct their nationalistic outrage.

Another Burmese student responded:

I was taught in my history classes back home (Burma) that we had wars with Thailand but we were taught that we always won and we were a superior country or better fighters. Here it's the opposite. We are not considered superior at al. I'm not sure what the Thai version of history is but it's got to be pretty ethnocentric.

When asked about their educational background regarding Thai Burmese history, the Burmese students were surprisingly unaware of any disparaging opinion or perceptions among the Thais. Below is a summary of the typical responses from Burmese in regard to Thai Burmese history:

We mostly studied world history. We didn't really go into much detail about SE Asian history except for parts of World War 2. Before I came to Thailand, I heard from my Dad that Thais don't like Burmese because of a war but we didn't study about this. Now I hear a lot about it from Thai students.

Another student commented:

I was surprised when I knew that Thais look down on people from Myanmar. I have some Thai friends that tease me about being Burmese but I have to adjust to this.

One student said:

Thai people hate us because Burmese people attacked their capital once long ago.   In Thai history books, they tell people to hate the Burmese. This was not taught in Myanmar. We learned a little about their kings but nothing detailed. I really don't know why Thais focus on Burma so much, we never focused on Thailand.

The Burmese students were not taught the detailed history between these two nations. Many of the Burmese said they

were surprised by the Thai version of history. Overall, there was a tendency of the Burmese to simply accept the Thai views and try to adjust to the situation to the best of their ability. Many of the interviewees felt that this was normal and every country discriminates against their neighbors so there is nothing unusual about the Thai's negative perceptions of the Burmese.

15   Interviews with Thai students

Following the interview with the Burmese research, it became apparent that further exploration of this issue from a Thai perspective would lend valuable insight to this discussion. The Burmese historian, Dr. Ma Tin Win, has noted that the history textbooks in Burma rarely paid any attention to Thai Burmese relations (Tin 2002). In addition, the Thai historian Sunait also commented "there is almost no anti-Thai sentiment in Myanmar popular culture and Thailand is never mentioned as an enemy, which is a stark contrast to the heavy dose of anti- Myanmar sentiment in Thai textbook, films and media reports" (Asia Times Online 2001). Therefore, the second aspect of this research involved interviews with Thai international students. The goal was to explore their perceptions of the Burmese and to elicit the possible foundations of any preconceptions regarding the Burmese. Ten students who attended Thai high school programs were interviewed and asked to recall the focus of the history courses and what they had learned regarding South East Asian history and their views on Burmese issues. When asked to describe their perceptions of Burmese students in Thailand one Thai student responded:

I don't think we are still angry at Burma but we do feel superior. We are superior to our neighbors like Laos, Cambodia and Burma. At least that's what we learn. We were

never colonized but they were.

As previously discussed, Thais often place themselves in a position of cultural, spiritual, and political superiority when compared to neighboring countries. One particularly telling comment from a Thai student exemplified this:

Maybe now after the elections Burma will follow us and become westernized or modern.

Regarding the relationship between the perceptions of Burma and the media, a student commented

It's all from media. I have never seen anyone look down on Burmese except in films and television. In real life, we are all fine now. But if you watch television, it seems like the war never ended.

Another respondent claimed:

If you go on social media like Facebook you will see there are many Thai people that are still against the Burmese because of what they learned in history, they say things like "we will take revenge on you one day" but they never mention the times that we attacked them.

When asked if students felt the Burmese were victims of discrimination in Thailand, the students responded that this was common. While most of the respondents acknowledged the presence of discrimination, there was a sense of resignation to this aspect of Thai culture. One student summarized his feelings as such:

Thai people have negative feelings about the Burmese. Even if they say they like Burma they have some unconscious feelings about the wars. We all do. It's part of our history and culture now.

When asked about their education, specifically history courses, and the depictions of Burmese, the Thai students responded:

In my history class when I was young I learned that Burmese guys are all really fit, big guys, dangerous, masculine, tall, almost 2 meters tall. I know we were exposed to the negative side in many classes, not just history, but we learned about this in many classes such as Thai language classes, culture classes and social studies.

Another student responded:

I learned that during the Ayuthaya period we had to fight to control this region, we had 36 wars with Burma. They invaded us 24 times and we had to invade them 12 times to get stuff back. This was different from our other neighbors like Vietnam and China where our relationship was based on trade. I don't even know what I don't know about Malaysia, Laos or Cambodia (laughter) but I can tell you a lot about Burma.

Another student stated:

We studied Thai and Burmese history since primary school. My class was taught that Burma is our number one enemy. In total I guess we spent about 80 % of our history

courses on the Burmese. Every year we learned more details about Burma. We didn't really learn about our other neighbors like Vietnam or Laos except that they were colonized by the French but we didn't have that problem because of our Kings.

This preponderance of Burmese related issues in the Thai education process helped to bolster national unity. Whether historically accurate or not, the Thai students were aware that historical revisionism had an impact on their impressions of their neighbors. One student observed:

I think if we really learned about Thai history we would be angry at the French or English, but we don't get the real history so people only remember Burma. Maybe it's better

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that way.

Another student commented:

I think we should change the history books to tell the truth and not just focus on Burma. With the AEC coming, we should learn more about Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore too. Instead we just focus on Burma.

16 Discussion

Overall, Burmese students at Thai international schools adjusted quickly and with little difficulty to the coursework, weather, culinary, and housing differences when they settled in to their Thai host environment. The influence of perceived discrimination and direct prejudice are a hindrance to their overall adjustment to Thai international programs. The historical impact and continued repetition of negative stereotypes of the Burmese in Thai media may contribute to the Thai perception of the Burmese as dangerous or worthy of ill treatment. The comments from Thai students clearly illustrate the classroom and social emphasis on the wars with Burma and the consequences. The Burmese students in Thailand are susceptible to a form of discrimination which is based on their nation of origin and the resulting cultural differences—neo-racism (Lee and Rice 2007). Despite the many differences, Thailand and Burma are neighboring countries and do share a lot in common when it comes to culture and traditions. Thailand and Burma have a complex history and a dynamic relationship. These differences and similarities may impact the success of international student recruitment to Thai international schools and perhaps the overall success of projects associated with the AEC. It seems that the main cause of these differences lies in ignorance, historical revisionism, and the reluctance to develop critical thinking skills which may challenge centuries of propaganda.

17   Practical implications

These findings have significant implications for international higher education programs. The results show that while international programs in Thailand use English as the lingua prima, outside of the classroom, many local students continue to speak their native tongue which severely limits international student participation in activities and events. Allowing more English language based out-of-class interactions with international students from ASEAN members may increase levels of social connectedness and decrease discrimination and the resulting adjustment difficulties. Further, this research provides an opportunity for ASEAN educational synergy through making available the results and promoting a valuable and integral aspect of internationalisation of higher education in Thailand. Internationally, there is a need for progress in respect of sociocultural adjustment theory and international students in an Asian context. Developing more inclusive frameworks which assist ASEAN universities, particularly Thai universities, with developing international student adjustment awareness initiatives and promoting the special needs of international students within the ASEAN setting, is needed. The immediate implications of this research will impact international programs in Thailand where this researcher suggests improving institutional orientation programs and intervention practices such as creating more group activities with the host community and the international students as well as a "buddy system." International relations departments would benefit from producing comprehensive international student orientation, pre-departure media packs, and post-arrival counseling coordination. In this regard, this research provides descriptive explanations of the problems from this limited and yet growing segment of students.

18   Limitations

It is important to recognize that cross-cultural experiences are inherently subjective in nature. The perceptions or misperceptions of Burmese international students must not be applied to Thai society as a whole. Many readers may perceive the experiences of the Burmese as mere conjecture on the nature of Thai ethnocentrism. In addition, Burmese international students are likely to represent a rather high socioeconomic status when compared to the majority of students in Burma. As such, these students have transitioned from an environment of social dominance and privilege to the Thai environment which does not necessarily recognize their previously held social status. The interviews with the Burmese students were informative, yet several limitations diminish the generalizability of this research; for example, the lack of longitudinal data to confirm trends found in this exploratory interview process.

Adjustment to a new culture is a process which is dependent on time and individual traits. Individual personality traits were not assessed prior to coming to Thailand, and previous overseas experience was also not accounted for within this sociocultural adjustment assessment. This research is also limited by the inability to identify sub-group discrimination which is identified in interviews and in the open-ended questions, but has not been further explored in Thailand. Are the American, French, Lao, and Khmer subjected to similar treatment as the Burmese? This author suspects that students of western origin are given higher social status and prestige compared to students of other Southeast Asian nations. Although this is a case study, the sample size is small in comparison to the number of Burmese international students throughout Thailand. In addition, this sample represented Burmese international students from only two institutions of

higher education in the suburbs of Bangkok. Students from other provinces may report drastically different experiences. Lastly, it is also important to note that international students face problems regardless of the host nation. There is an abundance of research available on students of Asian descent and the host of problems they encounter as international students in various countries the world over.

19   Conclusion

This study is intended to contribute to the literature on international student adjustment, specifically Burmese, by identifying the variables associated with the negative perceptions of the host country in regard to the visiting Burmese students. The results are intriguing

as Burma is in the process of social and political liberalization and international student flow will continue to grow with the upcoming establishment of the ASEAN community. Historical revisionism and perpetual vilification of Burmese in Thai media in general, and in particular, Thai history texts have created an environment of discrimination and neo-racism which international programs and higher education professionals need to address.

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Chapter 6 Findings

6.1. Introduction

This series of studies adopts a sociocultural adjustment model of international student travel due to current study abroad trends in Thailand which are based on short term study abroad experiences (usually one term or semester) and enrolment in multicultural international settings within the Thai context. While there are many challenges facing Thai higher education, internationalization and the retention of international students has become essential if Thai schools are to continue attracting visiting and exchange students and competing for global ranking internationally. The long term recruitment and retention of these students is dependent upon their experiences while studying abroad and thus fundamental to the overall success of international higher education within the Thai context. To properly analyze the sociocultural adjustment experiences of international students it is important to consider the ethnic identity of the Thais and to understand how the Thai attitude towards a specific ethnic group can dramatically impact the treatment of students representing that ethnicity. While the academic environment is important to the adjustment of many international students, there are other aspects of the adjustment experience such as coping with stress, anxiety and social alienation which are also important (Melendez, 2009). For many Thai students from racially, ethnically and religiously homogenous backgrounds, their enrollment in an international college such as MUIC may represent the first exposure to a multicultural educational system. As such, this series of studies explores the role of culture and ethnicity in relation to the adjustment experience. A description of the impact of both culture and ethnicity on the sociocultural adjustment of each cohort in this series of studies is discussed in this chapter.

6.2. Japanese Students

While the Japanese students (as discussed in Rhein, 2018a) had many positive comments regarding their experiences in Thailand, there were some sociocultural

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adjustment issues which are of interest. The Japanese students reported 4 areas of adjustment as seen from the figure above will be analyzed in greater detail.
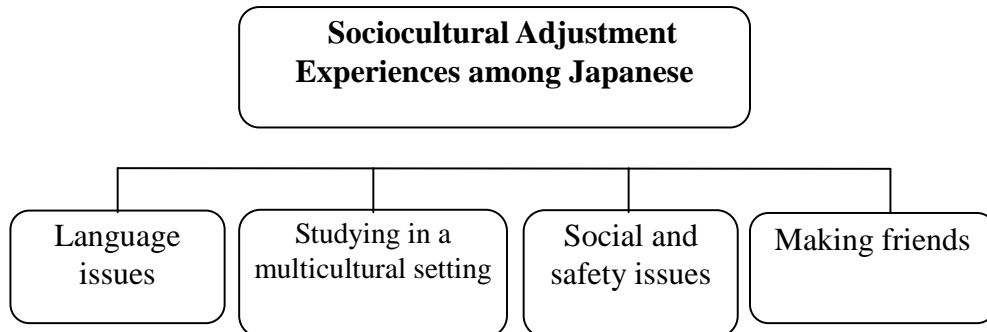

Figure 4. Japanese Sociocultural Adjustment

The influence of host country attitudes about each student group influences the overall adjustment of that group within the host country (McGarvey, Brugha, Conroy, Clarke and Byrne, 2015). The Japanese participants in this study had not anticipated the degree of Thai language needed to adjust to the academic community and off-campus life. The majority of the student population is Thai and on campus there are almost 30,000 Thai students, therefore, Thai is spoken at events and during activities outside of the classroom. In addition to the use of Thai, when compared to the American or Burmese students who often use English in their homeland, the Japanese students were not as adept at the expectations of English use both on and off campus. The use of Japanese in the dorms proved to be a method of relaxing and avoidance of these linguistically stressful situations. Japanese culture tends to be more collectivistic than Thailand and emphasizes the need for all members to participate in group projects and events, yet when involved in activities with the hosts they felt perhaps intentionally excluded as the hosts continually shifted to Thai and while at the dorms, most students preferred to use English. This adjustment demand was the most common issue among participants.

As was discussed in chapter 5, the participants had difficulty with the need for functional Thai language skills. This aspect of studying in Thai international programs is not discussed in the marketing materials or in pre-departure training. The international students all believed they would be entering an English environment. This is not the case. MUIC is a Thai environment where English is the language of instruction. The result of this language barrier is a lack of participation in clubs with host nationals. Given the lack of interaction with the Thai hosts, the Japanese, like most international students, relied on the international students for their socialization needs and often travelled within the international student bubble which limited interaction with the host community. Therefore, it is recommended that this host university make an effort to use English at events and activities when international students are involved. It is further recommended that a greater opportunity for interaction and socialisation with the host nationals be created to facilitate the adjustment of these students.

Studying in a multicultural setting was also problematic for many of the Japanese. The cultural differences regarding in-class participation was discussed among the Japanese students as many of the respondents were not familiar with the standard rote learning methods which are the norm in Thailand. Given the preference for power distance, collectivism and saving face it was assumed that these two nations would have similar classroom culture, yet the Japanese students were disappointed by the lack of participation by the Thai students whom prefer a passive learning culture and regularly avoiding asking questions in class or disagreeing with teaching staff or other students. Within the Thai educational culture, it is not polite to ask too many questions or to disagree with others publicly. The Thai system encourages memorization and avoidance of conflict or dissent among both the teachers and the students. Therefore, teachers enjoy a great degree of control over the class and this control is further reinforced by the power distance which places teachers at a much higher position than the students. This has a potentially negative impact on group projects where, in Thai culture, some students do the majority of the work and contribute greatly to the final outcome while others contribute very little if at all. Yet, when the project is prepared for submission to the teacher for assessment all of the

students report equal participation as is the custom within the Thai educational culture. Within the Thai system, those students whom contributed more are given more social face and respect on campus or within their academic field. Those who did not contribute are largely excused from the work and are allowed to receive the credit yet are not given the same degree of face within their social milieu. This was a source of frustration for the Japanese due to the cultural differences in regard to expectations of group work and the desire for greater collectivism in many aspects of both academic and social pursuits.

Many of the participants in this study discussed the adjustment demands from the social perspective, but unique to their responses was the Japanese cohort's concern for personal safety. The Japanese perception of socializing with the host culture was problematic but for different reasons than the Koreans, African Americans or the Burmese. The primary concerns regarding socialization reported by the female Japanese students was safety and other issues related to vigilance and avoidance of potentially dangerous situations as prescribed by their pre-departure orientation. The responses from students reflect their concern for their personal safety. Given the limited number of settings where the female Japanese students felt secure, the result was that the students tried to spend more time on campus, particularly close to MUIC where English was more likely to be used. A particularly common method of integrating or socializing with the local student population among international students is to join college activities and clubs. When asked to describe the organizations or groups they joined and whether these groups offered support or help adjusting to life/school in Thailand, the response was often negative. It is important to note that gender did play a role in this aspect of the sociocultural adjustment process, wherein female participants consistently reported more distress than the male respondents, particularly regarding the intensity of unwanted attention they received. The Japanese enjoy one of the safest societies in the world and violent crime is very rare in Japan particularly when compared to the crime rates in Thailand. This perception of the potential for theft or aggression with the host nationals was the result of outbound orientation session which emphasized this issue from their home program. In this sense, by preparing students for an experience abroad with particular

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attention on a potential for crime, this acts as a priming mechanism whereby in social situations the student has a much greater tendency to anticipate the potential for victimization and thus becomes more vigilant or avoidant of such situations. This confirmation bias influences many aspects of the study abroad experience and should be discussed among marketing and international recruitment or international affairs offices. There is an obvious need to protect students from potential dangers and to prepare them for the social or cultural conditions which they are likely to encounter, yet focusing on the probability of becoming a victim of a violent crime needs greater consideration and a more tactful method of conducting the departure training is recommended.

Making friends with the hosts nationals was an additional issue which impacted the sociocultural adjustment of the Japanese students. In Thailand, there is a stark contrast to the public and private behavior of students. This can be explained based on the tremendous social and cultural pressures placed on students. For example, if a student has an opinion which differs from that of the teacher, it is better in the Thai educational culture to keep that opinion to oneself and simply remember the teachers opinion on the issue for inclusion in the examination or essay for assessment. There is also a wide gap in the generational differences between most teachers and students. The teachers are generally much older and were educated prior to the advent of the internet when the Thai education often used only Thai based texts whereas the students in Thai international colleges today were raised with the internet and have had a lifetime of accessing information from all over the world. This has created a dramatically different interpretation of events, historical issues, politics and personal philosophies which the students are compelled to keep to themselves as their views are likely different from that of their teacher and thus should not be shared. This creates a sense of pressure among the Thai students who often behave one way on campus and have a completely different behavior pattern once the student leaves the campus and is in a private situation with friends. Privately, Thais spend a great deal of time on social media. A recent report on Thai media consumption concluded that 82% of the population is using the Internet, and spends approximately ten hours per day online (Phulsarikij , 2018), much of that time is spent on social media where the

average Thai student is cultivating an image of their ideal self. The pressure to conform to the cultural demands of the classroom and the family are not present among friends and this allows the Thai students to express themselves within a social media platform which their parents and teachers most likely do not access or rarely encounter in their comparatively technologically limited social lives. Unfortunately, this leads to an excessive amount of screen time and it is common to see a large group of students sitting at a table in silence texting messages to one another or taking photos of the menu they are all looking at. As the Japanese and Korean students discussed, this is not as socially acceptable in their cultures and while social media is commonplace the visiting students tend to eschew the 'selfie culture' they witnessed in Thailand. This aspect of the local student's avoidance of real life face to face conversations and active social interaction is a cultural predictor of a lack among adjustment of visiting students in this study and proved to be an isolating experience for the visiting students who then chose to socialize with other visiting or exchange students who preferred their style of social interaction.

6.3. Korean Students

The Korean students reported greater sociocultural adjustment problems than the Japanese students. As reported in chapter 5 (Rhein, 2018a), the female students experienced more problems in social situations than the Japanese and reported a greater degree of frustration with some aspects of their experiences in Thailand. Korea shares some cultural similarities with Thailand such as collectivism, high power distance, and elements of Confucianism, yet there are distinct differences between Korean culture and other Asian nation's cultures (Kim, 2001).

While there is a tendency to approach these student samples from a cultural proximity perspective and group the Japanese and Korean cohort together (see Park et al., 2003), there are distinct differences between these cultures and other Asian nation's cultures particularly when one considers that the influence of a host county's attitudes about each student group or ethnicity influences the adjustment process. Thus, the influence

of Korean culture in general and K-pop specifically creates different Thai reactions to the Koreans as compared to the Japanese.

Therefore, this section of the research will investigate the sociocultural adjustment demands Korean international students' encountered. There were four main areas of sociocultural adjustment demands which the Korean international students reported in the interviews; Thai language use, academic issues, social issues and friendships. Each of these is discussed below with particular attention given to the specific areas of adjustment which differed from the Japanese students as described above.

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            ┌─────────────────────────────┐
            │   Sociocultural Adjustment   │
            │   Experiences among Koreans  │
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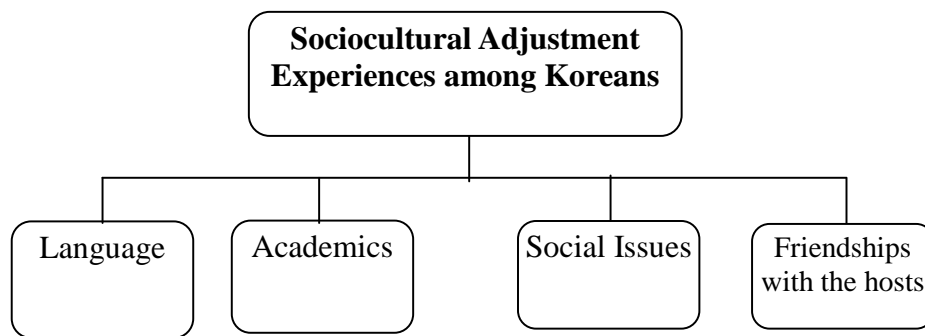
Figure 5. Korean Students Sociocultural Adjustment

The Korean students felt more comfortable with the use of English at the dorms and residences but reported more difficulty with the use of Thai at university events and club meetings. The use of Thai at events led the Koreans to avoid participation and opt for more socializing with other visiting or exchange students. The Korean students expected to enter an English only academic environment as well yet some reported disappointment and frustration with the use of Thai during some group work and classroom discussions. The Koreans socialized largely with other Koreans and visiting students and enjoyed their lives while in Thailand, yet the use of Thai in the classroom or on campus was a difficult aspect of their adjustment. Korea is a society of rules and when they are told that MUIC is an English speaking campus with activities in English, they expected this to be the case. Thailand, however, is a society of suggestions as opposed to rules. In Thailand, rules can be overlooked for the

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convenience of the majority based on an often informally assessed degree of consensus. As in meetings, group work or other projects, Thais allow for a fluid system of adherence to rules and often only do so when there is a person of greater power or social influence who holds certain expectations. This explains the use of Thai language in clubs, meetings and even in the classroom. If the majority of the students are Thai, the lecturer may consider it acceptable to provide explanations and examples in Thai to simplify the process for the majority of students, regardless of any rules or regulations in place. The use of Thai language in the classroom and at events is an adjustment barrier for the students in this series of studies. As recommended in the section above on Japanese students, the university should create an English only environment on campus which includes signage, English menus in the canteen and activities and clubs which require English based participation. There are rules such as these currently in place, but given the Thai culture's appreciation for pragmatism these rules are not enforced and most tend to employ the easiest method available in each given situation. Overall, the issue of academic adjustment was not an adjustment barrier to the Korean students due to the similarity of their academic culture.

The greatest adjustment barrier among the Korean students involved socializing and developing relationships with the hosts. This is due to the rise in Korean culture within Thailand. As a visibly distinct ethnic group, Koreans are quickly identified by Thais and are treated much differently than other Asians. This is the result of Korean media and the overall penetration of Korean media within Thai culture. Thais have been socialised to admire various aspects of Korean culture through media. The students in international colleges today grew up with Korean dramas and series on television every evening. This has had an impact on the affect, behavior and attitude towards Koreans. The K-pop phenomena have made Koreans in Thailand the object of desire, affection and social attention. This was not reported by the Japanese and thus clearly indicates the importance of the role of ethnicity as an adjustment variable in Thailand. Within the international education system which holds exceptionally positive attitudes of many aspects of Korean culture, the visiting Korean students are

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treated differently and this treatment has a direct negative impact on their adjustment experience.

The behavior or language we perceive as normal is shown to us from an early age through television and online videos. This process of cultural norming is generally achieved by repetition of images and cultural messages that are considered or accepted as mainstream thought (Gerbner, 1999; Gerbner & Gross, 1976) and lends to our socialization within that locale. This process of socialization is crucial to our development. As one might expect, due to the amount of time Thais spend with electronic media, the media have become a major agent of socialization. Barner (1999) argued that television is a powerful socializing agent, and one of the more commonly viewed television program genres in Thailand is the *'lakorn'* or drama. This is exemplified by the emergence of *Hallyu,* or the Korean wave. The impact of Korean media on Thai society can be seen in the use of cosmetics, fashion, and cosmetic surgery options (Kim, 2009) or the massive increase in Korean language schools and Korean restaurants in Bangkok following the broadcast of the Korean drama *Dae Jang Geum* (Amnatcharoenrit, 2006). This Korean drama was a hit with Thai audiences and is "very much a part of popular consciousness in Thailand today" (Ainslie, 2016, p.3). The fame attributed to some Korean dramas lends to the Thai reaction of socializing with Koreans as exciting and an opportunity for greater social attention holding potential. Yet from the Korean perspective, the Thai desire to create friendships is not genuine and is perceived of as mere social climbing through selfies and social media. The regular photo taking in the canteen, while giving a presentation, sitting the library doing one's homework, walking across campus, was not appreciated by the visiting Korean students. Thus, the Thais reactions, both on campus and off campus, to Korean ethnicity within their immediate environment were negative and resulted in the Koreans avoiding Thais when possible. The Korean students formed groups when going out in public and preferred to socialize only with other visiting or international students creating a clear barrier to the sociocultural adjustment experience. While both the Japanese and Koreans faced problems with language adjustment, academic experiences and social issues, it was the impact of

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ethnicity and this perceived ethnicity by the hosts which was the cause of the dramatically different Thai reaction to socializing with the Koreans or the Japanese.

6.4. African American Students

The African American students reported specifically on the impact of their ethnicity to their adjustment experiences (Rhein, 2018b). After collecting and collating the data four distinct themes emerged which encapsulate the significant sociocultural stressors which the African American students within this study. These issues are 1) a sense of isolation 2) a sense of excessive attention 3) adjusting and responding to the excessive attention received and 4) the adjustment to the academic differences. Each of these themes is addressed below.
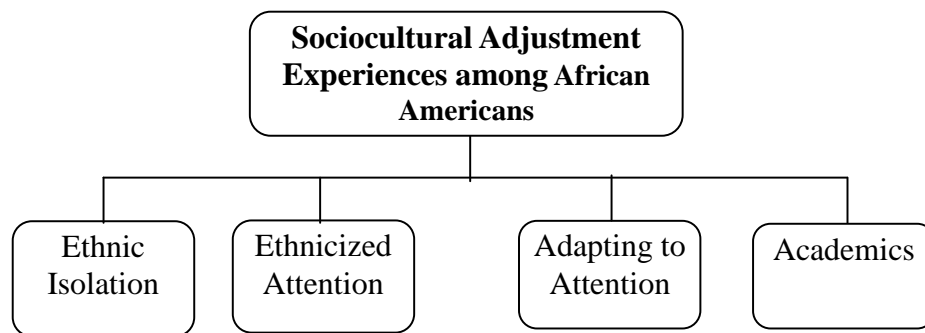

Figure 6. African American Students Sociocultural Adjustment

More than any other group, the African American students reported a greater sense of ethnic isolation. All of the respondents are from urban areas in the United States and thus in multiethnic communities. However, there are very few black people in Thailand and most are visiting on holiday or conducting business in textiles and thus often found in only specific areas of the city. Therefore, many Thais have not seen a black person before and have never interacted with a black person. Given this scenario, the African American students reported a sense of ethnic isolation. Ethnicity is a variable within this research because in cases such as the African American students, it is evident that they have experiences that a White American would not have. A student who is surrounding by other African American students

who suddenly finds oneself in an environment of zero or very few African American students is far more likely to experience some sociocultural adjustment issues such as social isolation. This is further evidenced by the sense of excessive ethnicized attention the African American students reported. Black students should be made aware of the potential for such experiences prior to arriving in Thailand. Marketing materials at HBCs should include the results of this research so as to prepare future students and increase the students' understanding of Thai culture in an effort to increase resiliency.

Given that there are very few black people in Thailand, their ethnic identity is largely unknown and thus a source of greater attention and often amusement among the hosts. This attention and amusement resulted in an additional adjustment demand which the students debated; the correct response to such attention. The culture of the United States is much different than that of Thailand. In the United States, staring or prolonged eye contact is often perceived of as aggressive. This is not the case in Thailand. As previously discussed, Thai culture prefers collectivism, conflict avoidance, harmony and femininity whereas American culture tends towards individualism, debate, assertiveness, moderate abrasiveness, competition and often accepts direct verbal confrontation. Essentially, these two societies have cultures which encourage much different reactions to similar stimuli such as prolonged eye contact which in the United States is may be considered as a micro-aggression and thus deserving a response. The ethnicized attention and the appropriate response to this attention is also an important element of the results as ethnicity is a predictor variable of adjustment in this series of studies. The Thai response and the American response are dictated by cultural norms and what one should do in Thailand does not equate to what one should do in New York or Boston. This was apparent from the respondent's reactions to excessive attention and inappropriate physical contact.

The respondents in this study debated between the promotion of cultural relativity and the need to educate the locals so as to avoid further ethnically motivated offense. The role of culture is an important aspect of this as in other situations such as group work, discussions with Thais on campus or in other situations; there was a clear appreciation

for some aspects of the Thai culture such as the pursuit of social harmony and conflict avoidance. This can potentially be confusing for many students from the United States as the disparity of enculturation patterns can leave one questioning what the best response is given the present circumstances. This was precisely the debate the African American students were engaged in regarding the appropriate response. The outcome of importance within this inquiry is not the appropriate response to these intercultural and ethnic sources of conflict, but to the use of culture and ethnicity as a variable to assist in the prediction of sociocultural adjustment within the Thai context. In the case of African American students in Thailand, both culture and ethnicity are predictor variables of sociocultural adjustment issues.

6.5. Burmese

More than any other cohort within this series of studies, the Burmese experienced the greatest degree of ethnicized experiences which are a direct result of the shared history of Thailand and Burma. This historical causation of this outlined in chapter 5 (Rhein, 2016) chronologically details how a nationally orchestrated and systematically manufactured ethnic enemy can have deleterious effects on intercultural relationships. The role of culture is instrumental to the enculturation and socialization of the Burmese as the enemy of the Thai. The Thai sense of social superiority is evident in the experiences of the Burmese in this research. The public and private self were not as so clearly delineated in regard to the Thai attitude of the ethnic Burmese. This private self which, contrary to Thai cultural norms, exhibited a clear disdain for the Burmese along with insincere or insulting social behaviors was identified by the Burmese students and became a source of frustration.

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          ┌─────────────────────────────┐
          │  Sociocultural Adjustment   │
          │   Experiences among Burmese │
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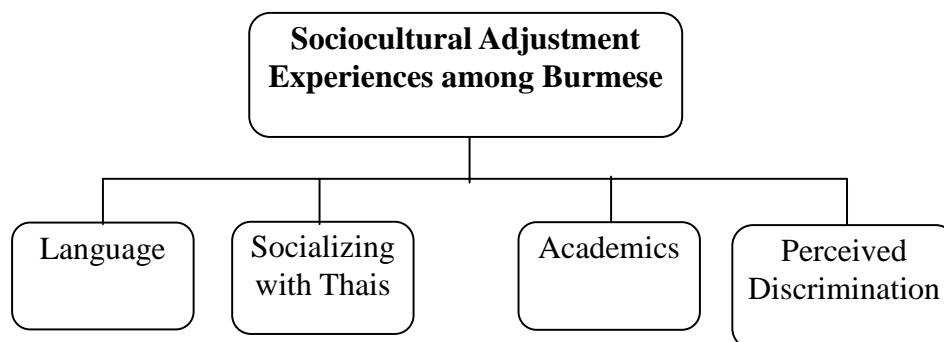| Language | Socializing with Thais | Academics | Perceived Discrimination |

Figure 7. Burmese Students Sociocultural Adjustment

Previous research on racial and ethnic attitudes (Esses, Dovidio & Jackson, 2002) has concluded that the geography and social context are essential as the strongest racial tensions are found when one group is in direct competition for the local resources. It can be argued that the Thai disdain for the Burmese is a result of historical tensions and competition for existing resources yet given the current environment it is necessary for the Thais to reduce their sense of privilege and begin to base their impressions of the Burmese students on personal experience as opposed to historically disseminated messages in media.

Academic issues or language issues were not adjustment barriers for the Burmese. The primary issues faced in this section of the study were based on cultural and ethnic problems. The Burmese response to discrimination and potential violence was different from the perceived discrimination of the African Americans in that while the African Americans debated how to approach the Thais to correct the behavior, the Burmese response was to warn other Burmese students to be quiet, careful and to hide their ethnicity from the host nationals. While it would be impossible for the African Americans to hide their ethnicity, it would also be highly unlikely as the culture of the United States encourages individualism and conflict which is not acceptable in Burma.

There are many aspects of Thai culture which influenced the experiences of the Burmese participants. Issues such as conflict avoidance and collectivism were often discussed in the interviews. The Burmese students adherence to Thai cultural norms through conflict avoidance, social harmony, femininity and collectivism contributed to their ability to remain safe while in Thailand. Culturally, the Burmese response was a protective factor which allowed many of the respondents to continue their study experience in an environment where, if the other ethnicities in this series of studies had experienced similar physical threats, mistreatment and abuse would have had much different results. It is not likely that the African American students would have been equally predisposed to find humor in the prejudicial perceptions and physical threats of the hosts. This is the result of enculturation and, in the case of the Burmese; it has proven a valuable tool in coping with Thai ethnocentrism.

6.6. Conclusion

Both the Japanese and the Koreans found elements of Thai culture similar to that of their homeland and thus easier to adjust to. The areas of adjustment which proved problematic for the Japanese and the Koreans were the social situations which involved ethnicized treatment from their hosts. Ethnicity in the case of the Japanese was not a clear predictor variable of adjustment yet among the Koreans, African Americans and Burmese; ethnicity is a predictor of the negative experiences which these international student groups are likely to face while in Thailand. Participants in this series of studies expressed a clear preference for socializing with individuals from their own ethnic and cultural background as a first option and then with other international or visiting students. The visiting students only socialized with the Thais on campus or in the classroom. The results also indicate that depending on whether the ethnicity of inquiry is considered a in-group or out-group by the hosts, the treatment varied greatly as evidenced by the preferential treatment of the Koreans (in-group) in comparison to the ethnically discriminating treatment of the Burmese (the out-group). It is the social context which determines which group is accepted and which is discriminated against which further necessitates the need to further assess the

role of ethnicity and culture in relation to the host culture in future sociocultural adjustment research.

The Thai international higher education system should take steps to internationalize their campus and the student's approaches to the visiting students in an attempt to reduce the negative experiences as reported in this series of studies. The creation of a multicultural and ethnically diverse international setting within the Thai context would lend to a more conducive environment for learning among the visiting and exchange students.

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Chapter 7 Discussion, Implications, Limitations and Recommendations

This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the impact of the results on the international students in question and the institutional impacts. An overall conceptualization of the sociocultural adjustment research outcomes as discussed in this thesis are presented in the figure below.
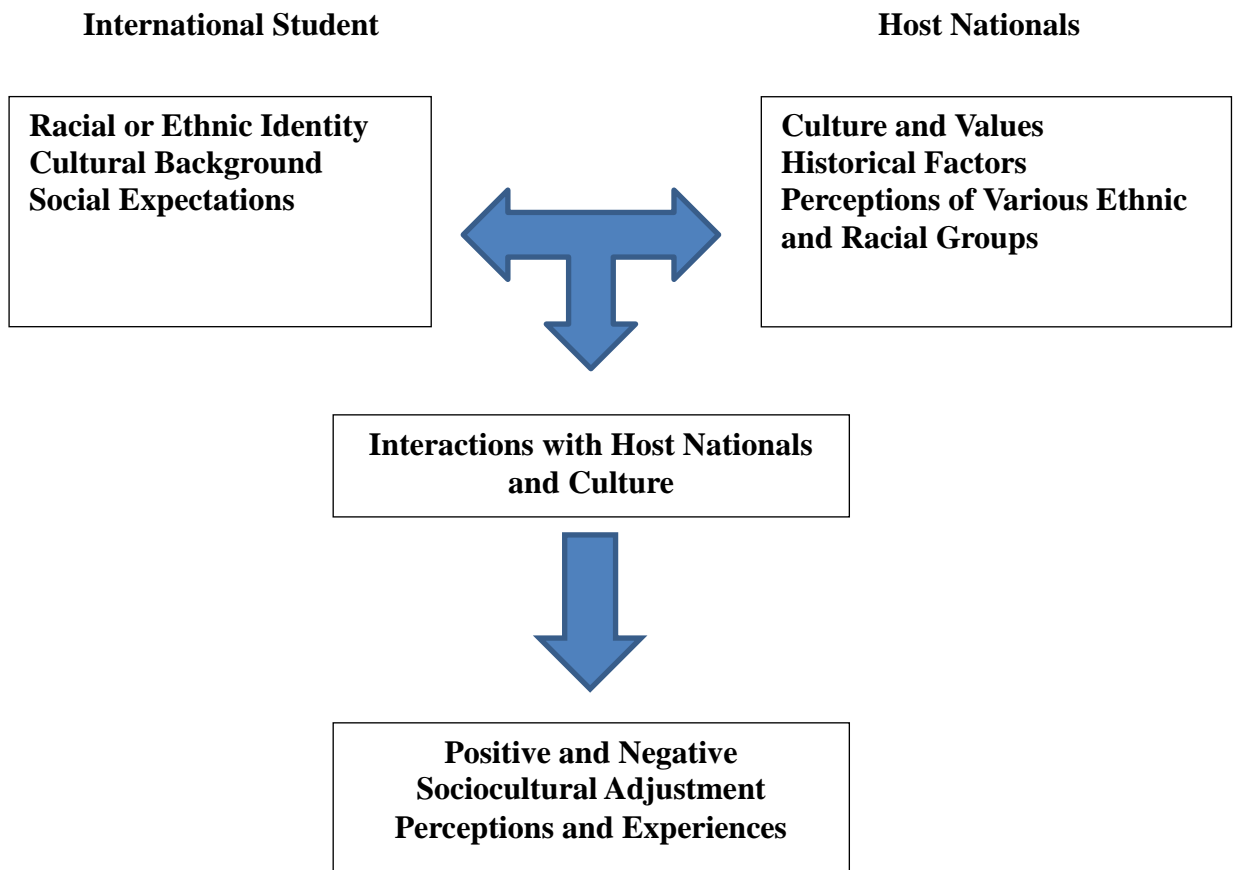
International Student   Host Nationals

Racial or Ethnic Identity **Cultural Background** **Social Expectations**	**Culture and Values** **Historical Factors** **Perceptions of Various Ethnic** **and Racial Groups**

Interactions with Host Nationals and Culture

Positive and Negative Sociocultural Adjustment Perceptions and Experiences

Figure 8. Conceptual Design of Sociocultural Adjustment at MUIC

Each ethnic group is considered in greater detail in relation to the impact of ethnicity on the adjustment barriers most commonly reported in the research. Many of the relevant adjustment barriers, such as language or contact with hosts, are described along with the particular coping mechanisms employed by the participants. Each ethnic group is discussed separately in an effort to provide an explanation regarding the participant's reports of the relevance of ethnicity and their perceptions of

international higher education in Thailand. In addition, a thorough description of the implications of this research on higher education in Thailand and the relevant organizations which are associated with this important student group is included. Lastly, the author recognizes possible limitations of this research and calls for further research which will continue to address RQ2 and increase our understanding of the impact of ethnicity on sociocultural adjustment.

The purpose of this research is to create knowledge and assist the fields of psychology and education. Improving educational environments for international students and decreasing cross-cultural educational adjustment issues will benefit multiple stakeholders including students, international relations departments and university programs recruiting international students. This research attempts to contribute to the growing area of knowledge on international students adjustment research through the identification of possible stressors and adjustment theory as it pertains to the conflicting models as proposed by Lysgaard (1955), Oberg (1960), Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963), Brown (1980), Adler (1975), Torbiorn (1994), Mohamed (1997) and Ward (1996). An investigative analysis of the causes of student adjustment can be further utilized in areas within the host country as well as in orientation sessions prior to student departure from their home country. Additionally, the process of eliminating or decreasing stressors should create a more positive learning and travel experience for future inbound students.

Previous studies have shown that the majority of international students experience financial problems (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007), yet the only problem discussed among participants in this series of studies was communication with the bank officers or attendants at the exchange centers. The financial aspects of study abroad are not a significant sociocultural adjustment factor for MUIC international students. Previous studies (Chen, 1999; Mori, 2000) have also discussed the greater tuition fees which contribute to international student stress, yet this too is not a significant factor of sociocultural adjustment in the Thai context.

The practical issues related to the adjustment to Thai international programs such as

the language aspect, inability to speak Thai, was a stressor which limited the use of public transport among other associated problems. Language was also an issue in terms of joining clubs or interacting with hosts outside of the classroom. The local students did not hold an expectation that the international students would assimilate into Thai culture. The local students often conducted themselves as if the international students were not present and continued conversations in Thai or conducted meetings in Thai without regard for the setting or the acknowledgement that MUIC is an English speaking college and all activities and clubs are supposed to be conducted in English. This led the international students to cope with this language problem with avoidance. As opposed to struggling against the language barrier or creating a conflict by demanding English is used during college activities, the international students chose to befriend other international students, most commonly compatriots, and socialize amongst each other. This can be interpreted as a positive coping mechanism in that it conforms to the local culture of conflict avoidance and face saving.

Previous research (Sawir, et al., 2008) on international student adjustment found that loneliness was common. This series of studies did not find that loneliness was a stressor to the students. This may be due to the limited time spent in Thailand or due to the accommodations which groups all of the international students into apartments where they meet daily and have the opportunity to socialize with one another. The international students in this series of studies did not report being marginalized to the point of isolation. On the contrary, many of the respondents viewed the apartments or dorms as a sanctuary away from the excessive attention they receive in Thai society. Additionally, previous research (Li & Gasser 2005; Kashima & Loh, 2006) has documented the importance of social ties with the host community. This series of studies confirmed the international students desire to develop relationships with the hosts but when these situations proved stressful the coping mechanism most commonly employed was avoidance of the hosts and socializing with compatriots. Very few of the international students develop close relationships with domestic students and most displayed a preference for co-national relationships. The participants in this series of studies found the necessary social support amongst their

fellow visiting students and these relationships acted as a buffer against the stressors related to the sociocultural adjustment process. This is in line with the findings by Kashima and Loh (2006). The results are also in line with Bochner, McLeod & Lin (1977) who reported that international students spend more time with compatriots than any other group.

Regarding the negative adjustment experiences as reported by the Japanese participants, the first and most prominent adjustment barrier which emerged was language. International colleges in Thailand utilize English as the language of the assessment, admissions and classroom discussions. This series of studies revealed that Japanese students are often in situations where Thai became the language of communication during activities and this placed these students at a disadvantage socially. The use of Thai language as a fundamental element of adjustment is an issue for administrative bodies as marketing Thai international programs and events based on the use of English can be viewed as problematic and perhaps disingenuous. Previous research on the importance of host language ability involving Japanese participants conducted in the United States reached similar conclusions (Cox & Yamaguchi, 2010; Huang & Rinaldo, 2009; Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006). The need to use both English and survival Thai was a source of frustration and adjustment for the participants as well. The second adjustment barrier as discussed as the issues related to studying in a multicultural environment. This was both positive and negative depending on the situation the Japanese found themselves in. The diversity of students on campus and in the housing facilities is exciting and provides an excellent opportunity to socialize and learn about new cultures and ways of interacting with the world. Yet, it was also a source of anxiety as these differences challenged the students to analyze their own approaches to lifestyle and academics or travel. Living in an international apartment or housing unit was an excellent example of the stressors of multicultural environments. The social and cultural scripts which created these stressors exemplify the clash of phenomenologies experienced by many international students

The third issue was the social issues related to adjustment. In this section, the

Japanese female respondents commented on the safety aspects of adjustment to life outside of the university setting. The students had been warned that Thailand was a dangerous society and that it was the duty of each student to protect them when in public areas. Comparatively, Japan is a safer society than Thailand. Thailand has serious problems with drug use and larceny which was brought to the student's attention prior to their departure from Japan. This may have created a confirmation bias whereby the students were told Thailand is dangerous and they then, perhaps unconsciously, began looking for evidence that the Thais did have greater criminal predilections. None of the Japanese students was a victim of a crime or witnessed a crime while in Thailand, yet the majority believed that Thailand was dangerous. Therefore, further contact with Japanese international relations departments is necessary to gain a better understanding of their intentions when informing female students of the 'rape culture' in Thailand. While it is very important to promote both on and off campus safety measures, it is also important that MUIC partners do not engage in hyperbole when conducting pre-departure training sessions.

The fourth adjustment barrier which was discussed by the Japanese related to friendships. The Japanese had trouble initiating and maintaining friendships with the host nationals. This was common among all international students in this series of studies. The most commonly cited reason for this was the language barrier as discussed. The use of Thai, when outside the classroom and socializing created an alienating effect on the majority of international students which resulted in avoidance of host nationals. The final adjustment barrier was the local sense of time. Many of the aspects of a new culture are perceived as both positive and negative. The Thai lack of adherence to fixed schedules is an example of this.

The Korean students encountered similar adjustment challenges as the most commonly reported theme which emerged was the Thai and English language problem. As previously stated, International colleges in Thailand utilize English as the language of the assessment, admissions and classroom discussions. The interviews revealed that Korean students are often in situations where Thai became the language of communication during on campus activities and this placed the

Korean students at a disadvantage both socially and academically. Similar to the Japanese students as described above, the use of Thai language is a fundamental barrier of adjustment which needs to be addressed by the faculty and administration. It has been argued (Swagler & Ellis, 2003) that a failure to understand language often means there is a failure to understand the culture as well. This may indeed be the case of Korean students in Thailand.

It should be noted that there is no Thai language ability requirement for acceptance to international schools in Thailand, yet Thai is being used during classroom discussions, activities and club meetings. This is clearly to the detriment of the majority of non-Thai speaking international students on campus. The academic aspect of studying in Thai international programs was not particularly distressing as most participants agreed that adjustment was generally smooth with a few minor exceptions such as the uniform policy. The similarity in culture and background made academic adjustment fairly easy for the students with the exception of group projects. Within this context the Korean students complained of free riders and the lack of equitable participation among all members of the group.

In this series of studies, the overall amount of socializing with the host nationals outside of the classroom was very low. Most of the Korean students tended to befriend other Koreans or other primarily English speaking international students. This is not a positive aspect of the research as interaction with the host culture and participation in social events can have a positive impact on sociocultural adjustment (Searle & Ward, 1990). Further, regarding social adjustment, one of the surprising issues which impacted their experiences in Thailand was the apparent impact of the Korean Wave and the resulting perceived ethnic prejudice. Many of the respondents complained of regular discrimination, sexism, stereotyping and various other forms of prejudice. This theme emerged particularly strongly among female participants who have taken defense strategies and group travel precautions to prevent further unwanted attention. Among the biased stereotypes against the Koreans by the Thais, all of the participants commented that this was both unexpected and often humiliating. Previous work (Ataca & Berry, 2002) found that such humiliating events which can

trigger psychological issues can have a negative impact on sociocultural adjustment. As evidenced from this research, the Korean students' response was often to avoid interaction with the host nationals. It seems that even when the stereotypes were positive, the Korean students felt it was depersonalizing and socially alienating. Many of the female respondents complained of gossip and being the unwanted recipient of attention while on campus and off campus. It should be noted that one study (Goldsmith & Baxter, 1996) reported that gossip was the most common form of daily talk among college students. Gossip serves an important social function albeit sometimes harmful to the recipients. In this research, the Korean international students considered gossip as in-direct aggression. Previous studies (McAndrew, 2008) have shown the negative impact of gossip. In contrast to previous research which posits that gossip can facilitate social interaction among international students and is related to sociocultural adjustment (Yeh & Inose, 2003), this research found that gossip had a negative impact on the sociocultural adjustment process as it was perceived as discrimination and thus decreased social interaction between the hosts and the Korean international students. In conclusion, while the Japanese and Korean participants did adjust to their short term study abroad session in Thailand, they did not adjust to their host culture well. Most respondents chose to avoid interaction with Thais outside of the classroom and created an international bubble filled with English, Korean, Japanese and other international students to facilitate their overall adjustment to the Thai environment. This should be of particular interest to stakeholders involved in international education.

The third ethnicity presented in this series of studies, the African American cohort, reported having intra-group debates regarding the Thai host's behavior. While some of the participants interpreted the excessive attention in shopping malls as eustress others found the same experience to be distressing and perceived the attention as based specifically on their ethnicity. That the hosts were behaving inappropriately was not questioned among the African American students. The intragroup debates and discussions centered on the students' ability to come to an agreement regarding an appropriate response which was cognizant of cultural relativism. Agreement was not

reached. The intent of the hosts was a focal point for the evaluation of the appropriate response. If the hosts are naïve or uninformed regarding the appropriate degree of eye contact or social etiquette such as touching the hair from the African American perspective, is this a behavior that should be corrected or tolerated?

The African American students also reported experiences with what they described was ethnically or racially motivated reactions from the hosts. Eye contact and staring was a common social adjustment demand among the participants, when the female participant's comments were extracted from the male comments a particularly relevant theme emerged; touching. Many of the female respondents expressed shock at the frequency of unknown host nationals approaching the participants and touching them, particularly touching their hair. Many of the participants said that Thais are just reacting to the appearance of African American students and it was important to act as ethnic ambassadors if they were to have any positive impact on the host nationals' perceptions of African Americans. The student debate, as reported in the interviews, was based on whether the students should implement a cultural relativism approach or if the students should come to the conclusion that Thai society was essentially racist and react as one would if they experienced the same situation in the United States.

The use of ethnicity as a variable in this research proved valuable for future research endeavors as this researcher suspects that Africans, Jamaicans, West Indians, and other dark skinned individuals of foreign decent would also experience perceived discrimination based solely on their skin color. The African American, Burmese and the Korean cohorts all experienced micro aggressions, micro assaults, and micro validations based on ethnicity. Thus, ethnic self-identification is an important aspect of the sociocultural adjustment to Thailand. The only cohort to report not experiencing any negative adjustment experiences based on ethnicity was the Japanese. This may be due to the extent of Japanese involvement in Thai history and the participation of Japanese companies in the Thai economy. Perhaps the Thai have accepted the Japanese and they are no longer considered a novelty.

The Burmese participants in this series of studies had a markedly different experience than the Japanese, Koreans and Americans for reasons related to Thai Burmese history. Given the commonly reported perceived discrimination and direct prejudice experienced by many of the Burmese participants, the article published on this ethnic group necessarily began with a detailed history of these two nations so as to attempt to explain the Thai reactions to Burmese. This is not intended as a rationalization or justification, but as an explanation for the importance of ethnicity in terms of international student sociocultural adjustment. Thus, the concept of cultural fit was not supported in this series of studies. The Burmese, the group with the most cultural, linguistic, culinary, religious and geographic similarities to the hosts experienced the least favorable adjustment. Previous studies on culture distance (Furham & Alibhai, 1985; Redmond & Bunyi, 1993) discussed weak host sojourner interactions on the differences in culture, yet this was not a significant factor of the adjustment experience of the students in this series of studies. Similarly the African American and Korean participants also reported prejudicial experiences and sought to explain these differences through the lens of ethnicity as a stigmatized group. These targets of ethnic prejudice quickly externalized the causes and concluded that the hosts were to blame for the perceived prejudice.

In regard to adjustment to the classroom experience, the respondents confirmed previous research (Chen, 1999) regarding the amount of participation among the American students when compared to the Thais, Koreans and Japanese. The impact of power distance and the professor being the obvious authority figure in the classroom engendered an environment where the Thai, Japanese, and Korean students tended to speak less when compared to the African American students who have a greater preference for individualism and low power distance. The Burmese and African Americans reported a lack of discussion and debate in the classroom which is indicative of a potential stressor regarding the adjustment, yet there was no discussion of academic failure or frustration given this cultural difference.

The overseas experience may lend to a minor competitive edge in the job market but it is necessary to realize that many students likely chose Thailand because of its

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beauty, cost and comfort, thus creating an academic tourism sector which has significant potential for development. The opportunity for travel in Thailand and in ASEAN was more frequently discussed than any academic experience. Previous research (Andrade, 2006) focused on the academic problems international students are likely to encounter such as English language use or academic writing style difficulties and the need to establish support services specifically for this group. This is not a particularly relevant concern to the international programs in Thailand. The assumption that South East Asia is unstable and presents serious health and safety risks to international students which would limit study flows was not sufficiently supported by the participants in this series of studies. Lastly, the degree of perceived discrimination and prejudice based on the ethnic backgrounds and appearance of participants in this series of studies was the most worrying aspect of this research.

Implications & Recommendations

These findings have significant implications for international higher education programs in Thailand and specifically for recruitment agencies and potential international students who intend to study in Thailand. In terms of the challenges facing international education, there were clear examples such as the abundance of complaints from these visiting students about the lack of English while engaging with the hosts. The Thai community values its culture, language and traditions, nevertheless, the results show that while international programs in Thailand use English as the lingua prima, outside of the classroom many local students continue to speak their native tongue which severely limits international student participation in activities and events. Allowing more English language based out of class interactions with international students from ASEAN backgrounds may increase levels of social connectedness and decrease discrimination and the resulting adjustment difficulties. Further, this research provides an opportunity and recommends an ASEAN educational synergy through making available the results and promoting a valuable and integral aspect of internationalisation of higher education in Thailand. Internationally, there is a need for progress in respect to sociocultural adjustment theory and particularly the analysis of ethnic differences as opposed to the

homogenization of the 'Asian' experience of international students in an Asian context. Developing more inclusive frameworks which assist ASEAN universities, particularly Thai universities, with developing international student adjustment awareness initiatives and promoting the special needs of international students within the ASEAN setting is needed. The local mindset may be fixed on the national perspective, yet integration with ASEAN requires a regional perspective. Integration with the international community and obtaining employment with many of the multinational corporations based in Bangkok requires a global perspective.

An additional implication of this research is the need to revise institutional orientation programs which introduce sociocultural stressors and potential coping mechanisms. International relations departments would benefit from producing comprehensive international student orientation, pre-departure media packs and post arrival counseling coordination. In that regard, this research provides descriptive explanations of the problems from this limited and yet growing segment of students.

There are some trends which were identified in this research; namely lack of contact between international students and Thais, the problems associated with the host language and the conflicts which resulted from prejudice. It has long been recognized that interactions between groups can reduce stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination. The results of this series of studies indicate that the Burmese were the only ethnicity in question to report more negative interactions with the host nationals than positive. The Burmese experience in Thailand is presented in this series of studies as the result of a national campaign to create an enemy. This problem needs to be addressed on the national level. Burmese students should be informed of the degree of ethnocentrism and bigotry prior to committing to enrolling in a Thai international program. The Burmese were not the only ethnicity to experience perceived prejudice or other ethnicity related stressors. The ability to predict a stressor increases cognition and preparation of coping mechanisms. If the discrimination is unexpected and the student lacked any previous experience with ethnocentricity, prejudice or discrimination, then it is possible that this stressor could tarnish the whole international student experience. Additional intervention practices

such as the establishment of a support group for international students or the creation of more group activities with the host community and the international students as well as a "buddy system" would facilitate the development of a support network among the hosts and the sojourners. This is common in many schools and has proven to be very effective (Allameh, 1996; Bigelow, 1996). Activities involving peers bring students together regardless of whether it is intended to promote academic or social issues.

This researcher further recommends that the implementation of multicultural educational pedagogy which addresses the ethnocentrism and gives all students enrolled at MUIC the opportunity to analyze the historical and sociocultural factors from various national, cross-cultural or ethnic perspectives would facilitate greater intercultural awareness and competency. This approach should include the analysis of attitudes and perceptions in an effort to reduce prejudice and discrimination.

This series of studies revealed that many of the international student participants had very few experiences interacting with the host nationals outside of the classroom. If these international students had more contact with the local community and the Thai students the result could have been a decrease in sociocultural stress and more positive thoughts regarding their study abroad experience. Research suggests that students who experience a sense of connection with the hosts often display lower levels of stress (Russell et al., 2010). Further research (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001) outline the benefits of extended contact with the host culture.

An additional implication from this series of studies is the need to emphasize the importance of using English when on campus, participating in school related activities and when communicating with international students regarding the scheduling of clubs and other activities. This will have multiple benefits in the long term. The visiting international students will be able to participate in clubs, events and activities which would remove an important stressor of the sociocultural adjustment experience. The Thai international students will use English (or other foreign languages depending on whether they are communicating with French, German or other

international language speakers) more often and thus are more likely to improve their fluency and comfort with the use of foreign languages. This will then lend to greater employment opportunities upon graduation. The encouragement of an English language campus (including signs, maps and menus) should increase student competency from many perspectives.

While the international students commented that their housing or accommodations were instrumental in socializing and coping, it is also necessary to protect these students from isolation from the host nationals. English language psychological services should be made on campus. If MUIC is to market itself internationally and continue to accept hundreds of international students each year, it must employ English speaking mental health professionals. Given the stressors experienced by some of the students in this series of studies, MUIC is very fortunate to have not experienced a disastrous incident which resulted in death or serious bodily harm.

There is clearly a space for improvement in regard to cultural inclusiveness. A program which aims to reduce the social avoidance coping mechanisms of international students should be created and maintained. Further attention should be given to providing opportunities for contact. The careful planning and management of intercultural contact, either formal or informal, would increase the likelihood of intergroup contact. Encouraging the clubs and sport teams to communicate in English when possible or developing international student based clubs and teams to compete with local groups would support the development of networks and increase communication. The importance of the language issue should not be minimized. Many of the Thai international students choose these programs for the purpose of developing English language skills which they hope will increase their market value when they begin searching for employment. The visiting international students have clearly expressed their desire for more activities in English. The Thai students enrolled in the international program have chosen to study in an English language curriculum, which is far more expensive than the Thai curriculum, in order to develop these language skills.

An additional implication of this series of studies is that, on the whole, students did not find the academic aspects of the study abroad experience to be too challenging and that the most commonly mentioned positive aspects of the experience was travel and as such more school coordinated travel events should be arranged. Some of the international students expressed interest in getting involved in clubs which participated in charitable events, yet the clubs communicated in Thai. If the college were to create a similar club which included monthly or bimonthly activities and which was open to all students and used English as the primary tool to communicate with members, there would be greater involvement and communication between the Thai and international students. The creation of such activities would lend to further inter-cultural contact, more English language usage and the opportunity to travel. It is likely that this one particular implication could have a positive cascade effect on many aspects of the international student experience.

When considering the current problems facing Thai higher education and international education, it is evident that Thailand needs to recruit and retain more international students and faculty to participate in activities and clubs. However, international higher education in Thailand is experiencing a population decline and the number of open seats in the classroom continues to increase. As an aging population, Thailand is experiencing a decline in fertility rates (Rhein, 2017). This decline is commonly seen as nations become more developed. While the enrolment ratio of students in Thai higher education is on the rise, the total number of annual enrollments has fallen due to changes in the population rates of school aged children. As discussed in Chapter 1, the Bureau of International Cooperation Strategy, an office within the Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC) reported that in 2013 there were 2,298,000 students enrolled in higher education institutions whereas in 2015 enrollment had dropped to 2,025,000 (OHEC, 2016). This is a decline of 273,000 seats or a 12% drop from the 2013 numbers. This gradual decline will have an impact on budgets and course offerings. It is foreseeable that enrollment statistics will continue to decline as population growth rates continue to decline. Therefore, in the long term, if the present rate of growth continues, Thai higher education may face a similar problem to that currently being experienced in Japan.

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It is estimated that Japan has an oversupply of 200 universities due to a declining student population, so existing institutions are desperate for students and are lowering their standards (Stewart, 2016). Thailand cannot afford to lower its standards in order to attract more students. The majority of tertiary students in Thailand attend Thai programs (OHEC, 2016) which are more affordable and often more prestigious. Given the expense associated with international education for the Thais, stakeholders are often left to consider the tradeoffs of studying abroad, investing in the pricey international programs or attending Thai language degree programs. As annual enrollments continue to decrease many students will find it easier to gain access to these once limited prestigious programs, thus decreasing enrollment within the international colleges. A potential solution to the current demographic challenge can be found in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) economic and educational mission.

International programs in ASEAN would benefit from greater cooperation and mutual trust. Allowing students a choice of compatible international tertiary education with curriculums, grades and academic qualifications which are recognized regionally would facilitate greater inbound student flows and bolster cross border educational opportunities, both in terms of research and study opportunities. The promotion of student mobility within ASEAN has the potential to lead to greater cultural exchanges and regional harmonization. As the comparability and compatibility of education grew, the global student flows would follow thus possibly creating a regional space for higher education. To complete this task greater collaboration is necessary among ASEAN organizations such as the ASEAN University Network (AUN), the ASEAN Secretariat and the various ministries of education throughout South East Asia.

The increasing number of visiting students has many potential benefits to the college yet their needs must be recognized and ameliorated to the best of each institution's ability. The international relations department at MUIC has been tasked with increasing the number of visiting students each year and should be commended on their progress. The graph below represents the number of visiting and exchange

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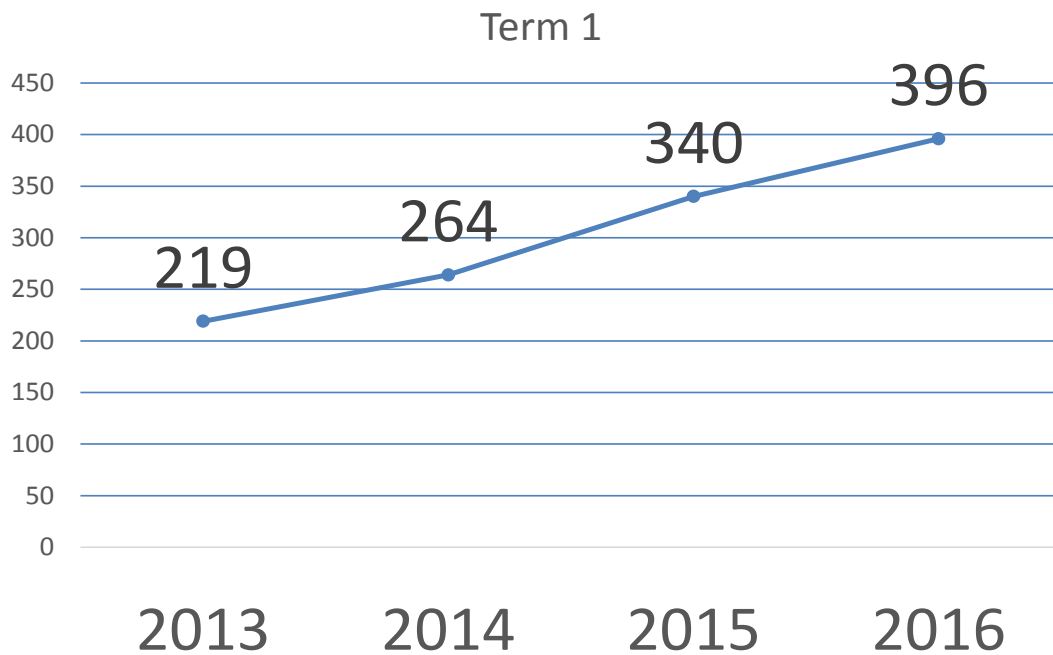students who have enrolled in trimester one of each academic year.

Term 1

Figure 9. International Student numbers 2013-2016

As the number of visiting and exchange students continues to rise MUIC is in a unique position to capitalize on the tourism infrastructure, the relatively low cost of living and tuition, the quality of international housing, the ranking of MU and the ability to offer English language education. If the political and social stability remain consistent, MUIC can take advantage of this unique position and continue to recruit large numbers of visiting students, decrease the sociocultural stressors while also increasing the rate of international student retention. However, the political and social stability is not as predictable as international students and parents would prefer. Once considered the rock of South East Asia Thailand has since degenerated in color coded infighting, social instability and military dictatorships. The 2006 coup which removed Thaksin Shinawatra launched a near decade long civil conflict which often made international headlines due to the bloody results. This conflict continues today with a military regime at the head of government. Further bloodshed in the streets of Bangkok could negatively impact student mobility and faculty recruitment. This is coupled with concerns for national security. International terrorism began in Thailand

in August 2015 when a bomb exploded in central Bangkok. While litigation continues at the time of this writing, it is fairly clear that the goals of the terrorist involved included inciting fear and destabilizing the tourism sector. Thailand has also been fighting a separatist movement in the south which has intensified in the last twenty years which could further exacerbate national security concerns. If the military leadership in Thailand fails to stabilize the present domestic conflagration, international education will face further declines in student numbers and international faculty will choose safer locations to continue their careers abroad.

A further implication of this research is the impact of Thai culture and the promotion of Thai values and traditions (ie. Thainess). Many of the values which underlie Thainess are not in-line with global citizenship. Applying Hofstede's cultural indicators to Thailand (Hofstede, 2011), one can see Thailand as a culture which respects higher power distance, *greng-jai* (social deference to status), collectivism, femininity and uncertainty avoidance. In such a culture, students and faculty are often discouraged from disagreeing with authority or revealing abuses of power or position. In the limited cases when university staff report cases of corruption and incompetence there are often harsh penalties waiting for these ethical faculty members (Wongsamuth, 2016). If the promotion of Thai culture supersedes the promotion of ethics, problems of transparency and accountability will remain. This issue is further worsened by the potential impact of the ASEAN Economic Community making it easier for student migration and enrollment across ASEAN countries. If Thai lecturers and Thai students (which make up the vast majority of faculty and student enrollment) are focused on the promotion of Thai culture and behavior as opposed to a regional or global outlook, then one can expect further challenges within the context of ASEAN educational integration and promotion (Thanosawan & Laws, 2013)

Lastly, the results of this series of studies should be made available to education leaders in Thailand in the hopes that it will lend to some measure of action which can decrease the sociocultural adjustment stressors articulated herein. Thai institutions benefit from the influx of international students in many ways. The social and economic implications of increasing international students in Thailand should not go

unnoticed. Further efforts should be made to improve the visibility of Thailand as a destination for international students. Marketing materials which highlight the positive aspects of this experience, as detailed above, should include photographs of the campus and apartment facilities while also informing potential students of the finances involved. The quality of services and accommodations, availability of travel and adventure and relatively low cost are surely features of international study abroad programs which would entice students. These features, along with the improvement of host national and international student contact, are important defining features of the higher education market. These signify a possibility for MUIC to market itself as a study abroad destination.

Limitations

This series of studies has several limitations. The limited sample size and snowball sampling affects the generalizability of the findings in this research. Further, this series of studies was conducted near Bangkok, which is not representative to Thailand as a whole or to the rest of Asia for that matter. Further research on the academic and sociocultural adjustment within an Asian setting should recognize that there is no one size fits all model to cross-cultural adjustment and that the ethnic, racial or cultural background of the individual does impact the perceptions of and adjustment to the host community. It is important to emphasize that the participants' perceptions of their cross-cultural experiences is inherently subjective in nature. The perceptions or misperceptions of the international students must not be applied to Thai society as a whole. The generalizability of qualitative research is an inherent limitation as discussed previously. One of the main limitations of this research is the lack of generalizability of the results as the adjustment of multiple nationalities to a Thai college occurs within a very specific cross-cultural milieu. The Japanese, Korean, African American and Burmese in this research may not be representative of their groups as a whole. Also, Thailand today is in a transition phase due to the death of its beloved monarch and the decade long shifts in governmental power-brokering. The college where this research took place, MUIC, is located in Mahidol University which is thirty kilometers from Bangkok and consistently recognized as the best university

in the country. Therefore, international students in this series of studies may have vastly different experiences from those at colleges in the city center or in more provincial locations with less international students and faculty. The interaction of the multiple ethnicities of the participants, their concept of their own ethnic identity and the Thai educational and cultural setting resulted in many of the participants framing their responses within a comparative construct. As the reader is aware, the participants continually reflected on how things are done at home and then responded to the questions in a dichotomous paradigm.

Perhaps another limitation in this series of studies is the bias of the researcher. As the sole data collector in this research, it is plausible that my personal background created a bias and influenced some of the follow-up question formats or assumptions regarding the direction the participants' were going in when they answered the interview questions. This researcher was raised in the suburbs of Detroit and am familiar with the African American community. This researcher had previously lived in Korea and Japan for a year each and has travelled extensively in Asia. This researcher has studied Korean, Japanese and Thai languages in the past and frequently visited friends in these countries. This researcher has also lived in Thailand for over twenty years and has in-depth knowledge of the culture, language and people. The combination of all of the above lends to the possibility of researcher bias. Specific steps were taken to avoid undue impact of this bias on the research outcomes as described in chapter four under the subsection entitled Privileged Observer. While this researcher cannot entirely eliminate these biases, concerted efforts were made to remain aware this potential for bias and to mitigate the potential for bias through the use of audio recording the interviews and using the coding system described in the methodology section so as to avoid over emphasis of any personal views and potential biases.

Another important limitation is the lack of longitudinal data to confirm trends found in this initial survey. As previously stated, adjustment to a new culture is a process which is dependent on many variables such as ethnicity, culture and individual identity or personality traits. Individual personality traits were not assessed prior to

coming to Thailand and previous overseas experience was also not accounted for within this sociocultural adjustment research. This research was not intended to explore the universal nature of the international student adjustment experience. The intent, from the onset, was to explore adjustment demands of particular ethnic groups to lend insight into the diversity of the lived experience among groups of students in a particular research setting, thus from inception, generalizability was not the intention of this project.

It is important to recognize that cross-cultural experiences are inherently subjective in nature. The perceptions or misperceptions of Burmese international students must not be applied to Thai society as a whole. Readers may perceive the experiences of the Burmese as mere conjecture on the nature of Thai ethnocentrism. Additionally, Burmese international students are likely to represent a rather high socioeconomic status when compared to the majority of students in Burma. As such, these students have transitioned from an environment of social dominance and privilege to the Thai environment which does not necessarily recognize their previously held social status. The interviews with the Burmese students were both informative and upsetting, yet several limitations diminish the generalizability of this research; for example, the lack of longitudinal data to confirm trends found in this exploratory interview process.

This research is also limited by the inability to identify sub-group discrimination which is identified in interviews and in the open-ended questions but has not been further explored in Thailand. Are the Malay, Lao and Khmer subjected to similar treatment as the Burmese? Lastly, it is also important to note that international students face problems regardless of the host nation. There is an abundance of research available on students of Asian descent and the host of problems they encounter as international students in various countries the world over. The results are intriguing as Burma is in the process of social and political liberalization and international student flow will continue to grow with the increasing establishment of the ASEAN community. Historical revisionism and perpetual vilification of the Burmese in Thai media has created an environment of discrimination and neo-racism which international programs and higher education professionals need to address.

A final limitation in the data collection aspect of this research is that all of the interviews were conducted in English. Three of the four groups of students interviewed were not native speakers of English, only the African Americans were speaking their native language. This approach may have limited the fluency of responses and word choice or articulation of the non-native English speakers. However, the participants were able to voice their thoughts and feelings accurately and without apparent fear of fluency or articulation during the interviews.

Conclusions

This summary of research conducted in a series of studies examined the voices of four ethnic minority groups attending an international college in Thailand. All of these students were influenced by their experiences studying abroad. Given the preponderance of adjustment research on White students abroad or Asian students in the West, it is important to recognize and document the adjustment experiences of these ethnicities in a Thai or South East Asian context. While not everyone adjusts to new environments the students in this series of studies did find comfort during their sojourn in Thailand. It is clear that not everyone wants to adjust to every facet of the Thai experience, yet from the cognitive perspective, the international students adjusted to the perceived stressors and found coping mechanisms such as socializing, traveling and befriending other international students. When confronted with perceived racism or other obstacles which required adjustment, the students were able to summon the requisite motivation to either overcome the obstacle or to cope. The concepts of adjustment presented here are not based on a universalistic curve model or sequence. Rather, this research presents a cognitive model of international student adjustment from a comparative ethnicity based perspective which describes individuals thinking about their experiences and processing appropriate reactions in a new setting. The sociocultural adjustment experience is not a matter of subjugation. Rather it is an active process of responding to adjustment demands in a new environment. The appropriate reaction in Boston may not be the appropriate reaction in Bangkok. The participant's believed that their ethnicity had an impact on how they

were treated by the host nationals and influenced their overall experiences in Thailand. The Burmese in particular felt that they experienced a great deal of negativity as a result of historical factors; whereas, the Koreans felt that due to the rise of Korean culture in South East Asai and Thailand in particular, they were 'othered' to a degree of discomfort. The exegesis of the experiences of the African Americans and the impact of their ethnicity was important as little documentation is available regarding the African American students abroad with the exception of heritage programs. The Japanese participants reported the least sociocultural adjustment issues in this research.

Recommendations for Future Research

This thesis by publication has attempted to elucidate the experiences Korean, Japanese, African American and Burmese students in an international program in Thailand. While Thailand, like many societies today, continues to practice civil, legal and social exclusion based on arguments of cultural uniqueness, the respondents' sense of social exclusion was balanced with a reportedly intense sense of kindness and hospitality. This perception of the duality of the Thai interactions with the international was paramount to the overall sociocultural adjustment. Further research on the academic and sociocultural adjustment within an Asian setting should recognize that there is no one size fits all model to cross-cultural adjustment and that the ethnic and cultural background of the individual does impact the perceptions of and adjustment to the host community. As such, further exploration of African American student adjustment from various Asian nations would lend to the discussion and understanding of this phenomenon. As the ASEAN integration gradually leads to increases in credit transfer and equivalency agreements and increasing numbers of intra-ASEAN MOUs there should be more cross border educational opportunities and great cross border flows of students. To that end, further research should address the sociocultural adjustment demands placed on various ethnicities in relation to their student abroad experience. For example, this researcher had discussions with Laotian international students at a conference in the Thai province of Nakhon Phanom (a small Mekong river based province on the Laos border) in August 2016 who reported

similar experiences to the Burmese, yet a survey of the international student research through the relevant databases reveals no existing literature on the Laos students. Therefore, the greatest recommendation for further research is the continuation of investigations of various groups of international students in Asia as they begin to migrate throughout ASEAN. As ASEAN continues to open the borders and cross border education becomes more common, it is essential that education service providers, students and teachers have a greater understanding of the students attending these programs and the experiences these students have. The repetition of such research on a regular basis should serve to act as a window into the international student experience. If changing patterns are observed over time, educational institutions can react as appropriate and improve the quality of services as needed.

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Appendix A

Semi-structured Interview Questions—Most of these questions have been amended for Thailand and are taken from Steele (2008) and her work on Chinese international students in Singapore

Tell me the most important adjustment issues you or any of your friends have encountered after you came to Thailand.

What organizations/groups have you joined or are a part of? What support do they offer that help you adjust to life/school in Thailand?

Where do you live? How is it? Does this affect your adjustment at all? How?

Who are your closest friends here in Thailand? Do you have any Thai friends?

What programs/services/people do turn to most frequently for a) personal matters and b) academic matters.

What do you think we could do to help international students make better adjustments?

Are there any programs/services that we could offer that would better help international students?

Would you recommend studying in Thailand to a friend? Why or why not?

What advice would you give someone else who is coming to Thailand to study?

What have you learned from being an international student in Thailand that can help you in the future?

In your opinion, how 'successful' do you feel you have been in adjusting to:

- School/academics
- Weather
- General life in Thailand
- Meeting friends who are Thai
- Meeting friends who are international students
- Customs
- Food
- Learning and speaking in English
- Culture shock
- Understanding Thai
- New holidays
- Transportation
- How lonely are you?

- Are you homesick?
- Is money a big concern for you?

Appendix B

Email Letter to Participants
Dear *International Student*,

In an effort to analyze the adjustment process of international students at Mahidol University International College (MUIC), *Ajarn Douglas Rhein* is conducting a research study with *international students who have recently arrived in Thailand*. Your input can help us to gain more knowledge regarding your experience, adjustment process and opinions of MUIC that will help us to improve the quality of the international experience for our students. The interview is also an opportunity for participants to share their stories and experiences in Thailand.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a new international student at MUIC. Participation will require bimonthly interview sessions which are expected to last about an hour each in my office or at a location which is convenient for you. An audio record of the interviews will be kept to ensure accuracy of analysis.

Sample questions include but are not limited to:
a) What have been the most important adjustment issues or situations you or any of your friends have encountered during your stay? How has this influenced your experience here?
b) Describe the organizations/groups you joined or are a part of? Do they offer support or help you adjust to life/school in Thailand? How?
c) Which programs/services should be offered to help international students?

All interviews will be recorded and then transcribed and sent to participants within a week for your consideration, approval, clarification or amendment. It is important to understand that your individual privacy will be maintained throughout this study. In order to preserve the confidentiality/anonymity of your responses, we will create an alias for you and store all information on an encrypted USB in a locked office. Your name or any identifying remarks will not be used in any published reports.

All participation is completely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to answer any question(s) for any reason, without penalty. You also have the right to withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty. If you choose not to participate simply do not respond in any way to this invitation.
Your input is very important to us and will be kept strictly confidential (used only for the purposes of research for this project). If you have any questions or would prefer to speak to me, feel free to visit my office (2116) or email me at
Douglas.rhe@mahidol.ac.th or dougrhein@hotmail.com

Sincerely,

Douglas Rhein
Psychology Coordinator
Mahidol University International College
999 Bhuddamonthon 4 Rd.
Salaya, Nakhon Pathom
73170

Appendix C
Ethics Letter

To complete this form

- The form should be completed electronically. Answers should be given in <u>plain language.</u>
- Click the check boxes were appropriate**.** Fill in text frames by typing your answers in the space provided underneath the question. The frame will expand to accommodate the text.
- Do not remove/alter formatting

Submission

- Please forward the finalised application including supporting documentation <u>via email</u> to ethics@usq.edu.au. You do not need to forward a hard copy.
- Print the signatures page (last page), arrange signatures and forward to Ethics Officer, ORHD USQ, West St. Toowoomba 4350. QLD, Australia.

NOTE: RESEARCH MUST NOT COMMENCE UNTIL THE APPLICATION HAS BEEN GRANTED ETHICS APPROVAL BY THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND (USQ) HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HREC)

GENERAL INFORMATION

Title of project	**An Exploratory Analysis of Sociocultural Adjustment among International University Students in Bangkok, Thailand**

Applicant details:

Name of applicant	Douglas Rhein
Faculty/School/Section	Faculty of Education- DEDU
Campus	Toowoomba
Postal Address	999 Bhuddamonthon 4 Rd. Salaya, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand, 73170
Email	dougrhein@hotmail.com
Telephone	+660818163913
Purpose of Research	☐ USQ staff research X Student research, *please name the degree(s) the research will contribute to*: **DEDU**

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Supervisor details (if applicable):

Name of supervisor	Anne Jasman
Faculty/School/Section	Teacher Education and Early Childhood DEDU Program
Campus	Toowoomba
Postal Address	
Email	Anne.jasman@usq.edu.au
Telephone	61 7 4631 5315

Additional research team members (if applicable):

Please name the investigator and their organisation/employer *Press 'enter' to add more investigators*	1. None 2. 3.

Proposed dates of data collection: *This will be the dates clearance is given for inclusive. Clearance is provided for a <u>max</u> 3 years*	Start: January, 2014	End: September, 2014

Status of funding/support for the project:	☐ Unfunded ☐ Funding pending **X Funding received** *If the project is funded, briefly describe the name of the funding organisation and the title of the grant application.* Mahidol University International College is funding this research. This research grant will be funded by the Social Science department through the internal research committee.

PROJECT DETAILS

2.1 Plain language statement of project
Using "lay language", provide a brief summary of the project (300 words max) outlining the project's broad aims, participant group(s), and possible outcomes.

The aim of this research project is to examine the sociocultural adjustment of international students within the Thai university context.

To achieve this aim, 10 international students will be interviewed and asked to describe how they experience adjusting to Thailand and the local international program. Specific areas of adjustment which will be explored include:

University environment and academics
Housing and services
Language and food
Thai culture and behaviour in and out of the classroom

This is a descriptive study using a phenomenological approach to explore the adjustment process of international students in Thailand. This approach was chosen as concepts of social anxiety, social adjustment and comfort in ones environment mainly reside in the consciousness of the individual.

This research aims to describe the meaning of the lived experience of ten international students in Thailand and compare how individuals perceived their adjustment within this context. The selection of phenomenology is based on the goal of understanding the lived experiences of international students in Thailand. It is expected that this exploratory qualitative method will lend detailed, rich, and in-depth reports of the rewarding and challenging experiences students faced in Thailand. This approach will also allow for further identification of specific stressors which, if possible, can be removed thus creating a more positive experience for future students. Open, explorative questions will be used to identify specific issues influencing the adjustment process of international students. This aspect of inquiry will emphasize unique attributes which contributed to the sociocultural adjustment process. As some of the participants may be enrolled in the researchers' courses thus creating the potential for a dependent relationship, an independent contact, Dr. Matthew Copeland (Matthew.cop@mahidol.ac.th) will be made available for all participants to discuss complaints, concerns or to withdraw from the study without penalty as per the 2011 NHMRC standard for research indicates.

The study will contribute to existing theories of student adjustment. The purpose is to create knowledge and assist the fields of psychology and education. This research attempts to contribute to the growing area of knowledge on international student adjustment research through the identification of possible stressors and adjustment theory as it pertains to the conflicting models of adjustment.

Candidature for the DEDU is pending. The confirmation panel is reviewing the proposal for this project.

2.2 Research Categories

Please mark as many categories as are relevant to the proposed research

☐ Anonymous questionnaire/survey (Participants are not personally identified and cannot be re-identified from collected data)

☐ Coded (potentially identifiable) questionnaire/survey

☐ Identified questionnaire/survey

☐ Examination of student work, educational instructional techniques etc.

☐ Examination of medical, education, personnel or other confidential records

☐ Observation (overt – with participant's knowledge)

☐ Observation (covert – without participant's knowledge)

☐ Focus groups

X   Interviews (structured or unstructured)

☐ Telephone interviews

☐ Procedures involving physical experiments (e.g. exercise)

☐ Procedures involving administration of substances (e.g. drugs, alcohol, food)

☐ Physical examination of participants (e.g. blood glucose, blood pressure and temperature monitoring)

☐ Surgical procedures

☐ Recordings (video)

X   Recordings (audio)

☐ Other:

2.3 Research Methodology

Outline the proposed method, including data collection techniques and instruments, tasks participants will be asked to complete, estimated time commitment required of them, and how data will be analysed (300 words max).

The research will be conducted using semi-structured techniques and participants will be asked to describe their experiences as international students in Thailand. Every two months the volunteers will be interviewed. In total, there will be three interviews every second month for a six month period. The goal of regular intervals is to ascertain specific examples of stressors, processes and coping mechanisms which influence the adjustment process. All interviews will take place at a location convenient for the participants. Typical venues for such interviews include faculty offices, meeting rooms and more informal locations such as coffee shops or local restaurants. If at any time a participant is returning to their home country, an exit interview will be conducted to receive final comments.

These interviews are semi-structured in that the researcher will ask a standard set of questions in order, but will also use prompts and follow up questions as appropriate and based on the respondents' comments. A semi-structured approach was chosen to maximize participant authenticity.

Establishing rapport and creating an open discussion should assist in developing

genuine or unadulterated descriptions of their adjustment process. These subjective responses to questions should lend to the development of a conceptual scaffold adding authenticity to the research. The interviews will be conducted in English as all incoming students have passed an English proficiency examination prior to acceptance to this international program. The semi-structured interview questions (Attachment 1) are designed to develop rich descriptions of the students' experiences. Each interview should last approximately one hour to ninety minutes.

The audio recordings of the interviews will be transcribed and coded using a qualitative data program such as Quality Discourse Analysis.

PARTICIPANTS AND RECRUITMENT

*Section 4 of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research has identified particular groups of research participants which require special ethical consideration. These groups include: **pregnant women and the foetus** (Ch 4.1); **children and young people** (Ch 4.2); **people in dependent or unequal relationships** (Ch 4.3); **people highly dependent on medical care** (Ch 4.4); **people with cognitive impairment, intellectual disability, or mental illness** (Ch 4.5); **people involved in illegal activities** (Ch 4.6); **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples** (Ch 4.7); **people in other countries** (Ch 4.8); **other cultural and ethnic groups**. Researchers are obliged to ensure they protect the interests of these groups if they are in any way involved in a project, and are therefore advised to investigate thoroughly how these special groups may or may not be involved in, or represented in, the project and to consider if there might be an adverse effect on members of these groups if they are involved in or represented in the project.*

*If participation of any of the above-listed groups is a focus of your research, your ethics application will **not** qualify for review through the Fast Track process.*

3.1 Participants
Please provide detail on the group and source of potential participant(s).

The participants will be international students who have enrolled in courses at this university (Mahidol University International College). To be eligible to participate in this research, students must meet two criteria: (1) have not previously stayed in Thailand for more than 6 months, and (2) do not speak Thai.

Participation in the study is on a purely voluntary basis. Students will be informed of the aims of the study, its importance, and the time commitment required of them.

3.2 Expected age(s) of participant(s) – please mark one or more

☐   Children (under 14)

☐   Young people (14-18)

X   Adults (> 18)

3.3 Expected number of participant(s)
If the research has several stages and/or groups of participants, please provide the total number of participants expected as well as the number and participant group involved in each stage.

Ten

3.4 How will potential participants in your research be recruited?
Please provide detail on:
*   how contact will be made with participants (i.e. personal approach, email, through an organisation, advertisements, mail out);*
*   who will be involved in the recruitment of participants;*
*   "gate-keeper" approvals and evidence of same, ie approval or permission from a person representing an organisation which gives permission for the researcher to access participants under their authority. For eg a Principal of a particular school may be an authorised person from Education Qld providing authority for a researcher to interview teachers or students from that school.*

As a participant in the international student orientation seminar, this researcher will brief all incoming international students of this research verbally. Following this, an email (Attachment 2) describing the research will be distributed to all of the new international students with this researchers email included and volunteers will be able to contact this researcher or the chosen representative from the International Relations office to participate. Students will be informed of the aims of the study, its importance, and the time commitment required of them. They will also be informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

3.5 List the location(s) where the data will be collected

It is likely that the majority of the interviews will take place in the International College. Interviews may be done at neutral locations such as the university coffee shop or canteen depending on participants' requests.

3.6 Does this research involve recruitment through an organisation other than USQ?	**Yes** **X**	**No** ☐
If YES, please list the organisations; and specify whether you have obtained written permission from the organisation to recruit the participants. Mahidol University International College Yes, written permission to recruit participants and conduct interviews		

on campus has been obtained (Attachment 3)

3.7 Does this research involve USQ staff, students or data? If YES, please list the relevant faculties/school/section; and specify whether you have obtained written permission to recruit USQ students and provide documentary evidence of the approval given	Yes ☐	No X

RISKS AND BENEFITS

4.1 Please indicate any potential <u>risks</u> to participants, researchers and/or others connected with the proposed project. Please tick the appropriate risk category and elaborate in 4.3-4.5.
A risk is a potential form of harm, discomfort or inconvenience.

☐ Physical risks
☐ *to the participant/s*
☐ *to the researcher/s*
☐ Social risks
X **Time imposition**
X Other risks (please explain in the space provided below)
☐ No risks

A conceivable psychological or social risk is inherent in any research involving participants. The motivational factors which led to students travelling to Thailand are unknown and exploration of this environment may uncover some psychological or social trauma.The interviews will involve discussions of perception of Thailand adjustment and educational environments which may result in participants becoming critical of their previous study experience or experiences in their homeland. Within any discussion which involves personal decision making or airing of perceptions, there is psychological risk.

Indicate what you think is the overall level of risk for prospective participants:

☐ extreme risk
☐ high risk
X some risk
☐ low risk
☐ no foreseeable risk associated with the project

Explain why have you indicated this level of risk?

There is some risk that participants may describe negative impressions of the host

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culture (particularly the monarchy) which, if discussed openly, may have negative social consequences. This risk will be minimised through directing the questions towards university life. Additionally, some participants may reveal personal information or detail experiences which they may prefer are not publicly attributed to them. This researcher is well aware that these interviews will provide access to privileged information which must be kept confidential. All information regarding the participants and their comments will be stored on encrypted files ensuring confidentiality. All participation will be confidential. An additional risk to participants may be time allocation for interviews. Potential participant risk will be mitigated through anonymity, confidentiality and strictly following ethical academic research standards. The interviews also require a significant time imposition but the opportunity to talk about the experience of studying in Thailand may be a positive experience, particularly given the confidential nature of the interview, thus providing some mitigation of risk to participants.

Please explain your assessment of the risks associated with the research, giving details of the ethical considerations attached to the proposed project.

There is some risk to participants. All interviews are voluntary and confidential. The responses will be confidential and participation will be kept confidential. The risk of a time imposition will be managed with preparation and the scheduling of convenient interview sessions with participants. If participants feel the topic is too sensitive or the time implications are too demanding, they are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. At each stage of the research all participants will be informed of the research goals and be asked if they choose to continue. Finally, one week after the interviews participants will be provided with a transcript and the ability to amend or delete any of their responses. At each interview participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without penalty or any repercussions.

Please justify the study in terms of the risk to participants.
Give your assessment of how the potential benefits to the participants or contributions to the general body of knowledge would outweigh the risks.

There is some risk. There is much to be learned about this group and anonymous, confidential interviews which are transcribed and encrypted do much to minimize the risk as outlined above. The time imposition will be minimized as participants will be informed of the possible time requirements, interview schedules will be discussed and times will be set based on participant convenience. As previously stated, all participants will be able to withdraw from the study at any time.

How will any potential risks be minimised and/or managed?

The primarily methods of minimizing participant risk are is through anonymity and

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confidentiality. Some respondents may have critical comments regarding their homeland or their impressions of Thailand and they may be concerned that these negative comments, when made public, may have negative consequences. All data collected for the final research document will be on a 32 bit encrypted password protected storage device to decrease the likelihood of jeopardizing the participants' rights to anonymity and confidentiality.

At the start of the recorded interview participant will again listen to a summary of the research aims, goals and will be provided with the opportunity to withdraw at their discretion (either in writing or spoken) or verbally consent and the interview will proceed.   Participants will not suffer any discrimination, penalty or disadvantage if they choose not to take part or wirthdraw prior to the completion of the study. One week after the interviews participants will be provided with a transcript and the ability to amend or delete any of their responses. As previously stated, all participants will be able to withdraw from the study at any time and this researcher will work hard to mitigate any potential risks as well as to maintain confidentiality and demonstrate academic ethical standards. This research will be conducted in Thailand. As such consistent supervision by the supervisor will be essential to maintain ethical standards. The researcher will communicate with USQ supervisors prior to and following each of the bi-monthly interview sessions. Additionally, there will be regular Skype meetings with the researchers supervisor to ensure all processes are being adhered to according to professional academic research standards as stipulated by the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.

For physiological studies – is exposure to bodily fluids e.g. blood, likely to occur?
Please also provide detail on the precautions to avoid exposure and the measures to be undertaken if exposure occurs. Consult the 'Guidelines for the prevention of transmission of infectious diseases' for more information.

N/A

Detail the expected benefits of the study to the participants and/or the wider community.
As stated in 4.4. Further, there is a gap in the literature available on international students in a Thai context. If the research concludes that some aspects of the international experience can be improved, then some action may be taken to create these improvements. It is hoped that understanding the factors which influence international student adjustment will assist the service providers (tutors, counselors, administrators, housing officials, transport officers, legal and visa teams and international relations officers). This is of increasing importance as the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) integration in 2015 will create the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and will open the doors for international education travel among ASEAN students. The AEC further allows for nonrestrictive travel and study within ASEAN. International educational institutions in Thailand have yet to publish the specific factors leading to international student adjusment

experiences while studying in Thailand. As the international student market continues to grow, universities offering services to this student group should become more aware of how well the international students are adjusting to life in their host country.

CONSENT PROCESS		

5.1 How will consent for participation be obtained?
For each of the research categories identified in Question 2.2 please indicate whether consent will be obtained by:
    writing
    verbally
    tacit (e.g. indicated by completion and return of survey – only for anonymous surveys)
    other
    consent not being sought (explain why)
 	
Consent will be obtained in writing, using the participant consent form attached.		

5.2 Is it anticipated that all participants will have the capacity to consent to their participation in the research? If NO, please explain why not (e.g. children, incompetent participants, etc.) and explain how proxy or substitute consent will be obtained from the person with legal authority to consent on behalf of the participant.	**Yes** **X**	**No** ☐
5.3 Does the research <u>specifically</u> target the following groups of participants: minors (under 18 years) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples people from non-English speaking backgrounds people with an intellectual impairment or a mental illness prisoners people who may be involved in illegal activities people in dependent relationships with the researcher, institution or funding body (i.e. researcher's clinical clients or students; employees of the institution; recipients of services provided by the funding body) any other vulnerable group of participants	**Yes** **X**	**No** ☐

5.4 If you have answered <u>yes</u> in question 5.3, please provide details of:
the group of participants
how the research participants' rights will be protected
how you will be sensitive to cultural backgrounds (if applicable).

l backgrounds is paramount and this researcher will protect the participants from potential ramifications through confidentialty, anonymity and cultural sensitivity.

5.5 How does the consent process ensure that informed consent is freely obtained from participants? *Please detail*

Participation is voluntary. The introductory description of the research will be distributed orally at orientation and then via email with a written description of the research, volunteer request and a consent form. The attached consent form and participant volunteer forms will be signed by all participants. Prior to the interviews all participants will be given an additional opportunity to withdraw from the research. At each stage of the research participants will be informed of the research goals and their consent to continue with further interviews will be obtained both orally and in writing. Coercion, pressure or persuasion to participate will not be tolerated and all participants will be informed of their right to withdraw at each stage of this research.

Participation is voluntary. The introductory description of the research will be distributed orally at orientation and then via email with a written description of the research, volunteer request and a consent form. The attached consent form and participant volunteer forms will be signed by all participants. Prior to the interviews all participants will be given an additional opportunity to withdraw from the research. At each stage of the research participants will be informed of the research goals and their consent to continue with further interviews will be obtained both orally and in writing. Coercion, pressure or persuasion to participate will not be tolerated and all participants will be informed of their right to withdraw at each stage of this research.

5.6 How does the project address the participant(s) freedom to discontinue participation? Will there be any adverse effects on participants if they withdraw their consent? *Please detail*

All participants will be informed of their right to discontinue participation without penalty at any time both orally and in written form at the start of each interview. An independent contact from the international relations department will be used to approach participants and seek consent. The independent contact will not be an advisor, counsellor or a local (Thai) to ease participant concerns regarding refusal to participate or withdrawing prior to completion of the research. While repetition of participants consent at each stage of the research may become mundane it is a necessary step to ensure that at no time any participant feel intimidated in

participating with this research. A further goal of this is to ensure active participation without coercion, fear or duress.

5.7 Will participants be able to withdraw data concerning themselves if they withdraw their consent to participate? *Please detail*

Yes. All participants will be given a written transcript of the interview one week after the interview date. As previously stated some information (name) will have been altered for confidentiality and anonymity. If the participant chooses to withdraw from the study, this data will be erased.

5.8 Does the project involve withholding relevant information from participants or deceiving them about some aspect of the research?	**Yes** ☐	**No** **X**
If YES, please justify		

5.9 Will participants be offered reimbursements, payments or incentives to participate in the research?	**Yes** ☐	**No** **X**
If YES, what is the amount/benefit and the justification for this?		

DEBRIEF AND FEEDBACK

6.1 Will participant(s) be debriefed at the completion of the research?
Please also include details of agencies to which participants may be referred if they become distressed by the procedures (if applicable).

Yes. Prior to and immediately following each interview participants will be reminded of the counseling services available on campus. If any negative reaction to the adjustment process, the interview content or any other issues arise names and contact numbers of service providers will be provided to participants. This information will also be included in the Participant Information Sheet and will be discussed prior to the onset of each interview.

6.2 Will feedback/summary of results be made available to participant(s)?
If feedback is available, please explain the process for providing the information and how participant confidentiality will be maintained.

Yes, within 6 months following the completion of this research a written report detailing the conclusions reached will be emailed to participants. To protect confidentiality and anonymity, all participants will be referred to using the alias of their choice.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND STORAGE

7.1 Collection of data: Please indicate in what form personal information will be collected.
Personal information means information, or an opinion, that can be part of a database, whether true or not and whether recorded in a material form or not, about an individual whose identity is apparent or can reasonably be ascertained from the information or opinion.

X Identified
X De-identified

☐ Re-identifiable/coded
☐ No personal information will be collected

Additional information, provide here:

The transcripts sent to the participants will be identifiable during the research although aliases will be created for each participant. Transcription will be completed by this researcher.

7.2 Storage of data: Please indicate in what form personal information will be stored.

☐ Identified
☐ De-identified

X Re-identifiable/coded

☐ No personal information will be collected

Additional information, provide here:

The audio recording and transcripts will be stored on an encrypted file.

7.3 Publication/reporting of data: Please indicate in what form personal information will be published/reported.

☐ Identified   ☐ Re-identifiable/coded
X De-identified   ☐ No personal information
                                                     will be published

Additional information, provide here:

Only de-identified data will be published or reported.

7.4 Describe the procedures that will be adopted to ensure confidentiality of participant(s) during the collection of the data, in the storage of the data, and in the publication of results.

The interviews will take place in this researchers' office or at the location choice of the participants. No other persons will be present during the interviews. The purpose of the interview/participant meeting will not be made public or divulged to any other person.

During the study and for 5 years following the study, all data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet with encryption software. Only this researcher will have access to the locked desk and only this researcher will have the access code to open the password protected file which contains the resulting data and interview transcripts. Transcription will be completed by this researcher. The interview transcripts and audio recordings will be protected by password enabled encryption. Each participant will create their own Word.doc password at the conclusion of the first interview which will be necessary to open the emails containing the transcripts. This will ensure confidentiality in the case that nonparticipants have access to a participants email account. All data will be de-identified prior to publication. Following the 5 year deadline, all audio data will be deleted.

All data will be stored on an encrypted USB in a locked desk in a locked office on campus.

7.5 Will a recording (audio, video, photograph or other) of participants be made? If so, what purpose will this recording be used for? Will it be retained and used beyond the initial transcription/analysis or will it be erased following transcription?

The interviews will be recorded and the recordings will be transcribed and sent to the participants for feedback, editing and approval. The recordings will be stored for five years as stated in 7.4.

7.6 Will the data be stored for the requisite 5 years (or 15 years for clinical research) and then destroyed?	**Yes** **X**	**No** ☐
If NO, please justify		

7.7 Give details of the arrangements for safe storage of data (e.g. locked filing cabinet, password protected computer)

during the study

As described in 7.4, during this study all data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and on a computer with encryption software. Only this researcher will have access to the locked desk and only this researcher will have the access code to open the password protected file which contains the resulting data and interview transcripts. The interview transcripts and audio recordings will be protected by password enabled encryption. All data will be de-identified prior to publication. Following the 5 year deadline, all audio data will be deleted.

after completion of the study

Following the completion of this study, the data will continue to be stored on an encrypted USB in a locked desk in a locked office on campus for 5 years. Following the 5 year deadline, all audio data will be deleted.

7.8 For physiological studies – are provisions made for the participant(s) and his/her usual medical attendant to be informed of information obtained throughout the research? What steps will be taken to ensure that the relationships between participant(s) and their usual medical attendants are not adversely affected by the research, and confidential relationship(s) between doctor(s) and patient(s) are preserved?

    Not applicable

PRIVACY		
8.1 Does this project involve obtaining <u>identifiable</u> information (e.g. data) from a third party without prior consent from the participant(s) or their legal guardian(s)?	Yes ☐	No **X**
8.2 Will the research involve access to <u>identifiable</u> personal information (e.g. contact lists) held by another agency/body subject to the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) or Public Health Act 2005 (QLD)? If YES, outline the measures to obtain *prior* consent from the identified	Yes ☐	No **X**

individuals, or the procedures to address the regulatory privacy considerations (please contact the Ethics Officer for guidance). If the exemption under s95/s95A of the Privacy Act is to be sought please contact the Ethics Officer.

CHECKLIST: Have the following (where applicable) been attached to this application?	
Anonymous survey	☐ Survey ☐ Participant Information Sheet
Identified survey	☐ Survey ☐ Participant Information Sheet ☐ Consent Form
Interview/focus groups	X Sample questions X Participant Information Sheet X Consent Form
Other method (where applicable)	☐ Instrument ☐ Participant Information Sheet ☐ Consent Form
Advertisements/letters of invitation (where applicable)	☐ Yes ☐ N/A
Evidence of permission from external organisation to conduct research and/or recruit participants (e.g. School or Hospital)	X Yes ☐ Currently being sought ☐ N/A
Evidence of permission from USQ to recruit USQ students	☐ Yes ☐ Currently being sought ☐ N/A
Other, please describe	

SUBMISSION

1) Please forward the finalised application including supporting documentation <u>via email</u> to ethics@usq.edu.au. You do not need to forward a hard copy.
2) Print the signatures page (last page), arrange signatures and forward to Ethics Officer, ORHD USQ, West St. Toowoomba 4350. QLD, Australia.

To: Dr. Matthew Copeland (Program Director: Social Sciences)
Date: September 10, 2013
Venue: Mahidol University International College
Re: Permission to Conduct Research Study

Dear Dr. Copeland:

I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study at MUIC. I am currently enrolled in the doctoral program of education at the University of Southern Queensland, Australia, and am in the process of conducting the research for my doctoral dissertation. The study is entitled An Exploratory Analysis of Sociocultural Adjustment among International University Students in Bangkok, Thailand.

I hope that the school administration will allow me to recruit approximately ten international students from the school to participate in interviews regarding their experiences adjusting to Thailand and MUIC. Interested students, who volunteer to participate, will be given a consent form to be signed. All interviews will be recorded and then transcribed and sent to participants within a week for consideration, approval, clarification or amendment. In order to preserve the confidentiality/anonymity of student responses, I will create an alias for all participants and store all information on an encrypted USB in a locked office. No names or identifying remarks will be used in any published reports.

All participants will have the right to refuse to answer any question(s) for any reason, without penalty. They will also have the right to withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty.

If approval is granted, student participants will be interviewed bimonthly for approximately six months. No costs will be incurred by either your school/center or the individual participants. Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated.
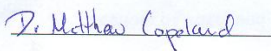
If you agree, kindly sign the space below.

Sincerely,

Douglas Rhein
Psychology Coordinator
Mahidol University International College
999 Bhuddamonthon 4 Rd.
Salaya, Nakhon Pathom
73170

Approved by:

Dr. Matthew Copeland   _____   10/09/13
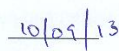Print your name and title here   Signature   Date

Appendix D
Mr Douglas Rhein
999 Bhuddamonthan 4 Rd
Nakhon Pathom
 73170 THAILAND

Dear Doug

The USQ Human Research Ethics Committee has recently reviewed your responses to the
conditions placed upon the ethical approval for the project outlined below. Your proposal is
now deemed to meet the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in
Human Research (2007) and full ethical approval has been granted.

Approval No.   H13REA221

Project Title : **An exploratory analysis of sociocultural adjustment among international university students in Bangkok, Thailand**

Approval date   16 December 2013

Expiry date   16 December 2016

HREC Decision   Approved

The standard conditions of this approval are:
(a) conduct the project strictly in accordance with the proposal submitted and granted ethics approval, including any amendments made to the proposal required by the HREC
(b) advise (email: ethics@usq.edu.au) immediately of any complaints or other issues in relation to the project which may warrant review of the ethical approval of the project
(c) make submission for approval of amendments to the approved project before implementing such changes
(d) provide a 'progress report' for every year of approval
(e) provide a 'final report' when the project is complete
(f) advise in writing if the project has been discontinued.

Please note that failure to comply with the conditions of approval and the National Statement (2007) may result in withdrawal of approval for the project.

You may now commence your project. I wish you all the best for the conduct of the project.

Annmaree Jackson

Ethics Committee Support Officer

Appendix E
Sociocultural Adaptation Scale by Ward and Kennedy (1999)
How difficult do you find each of the following situations? Answer 1-5 based on the following Likert scale: 1- No difficulty 2-slight difficulty 3- moderate difficulty 4- difficult 5- extreme difficult

1. Making friends
2. Using the transport system
3. Making yourself understood
4. Getting used to the pace of life
5. Going shopping
6. Going to social events/gatherings/functions
7. Worshipping in your usual way
8. Talking about yourself with others
9. Understanding jokes and humor
10. Dealing with someone who is unpleasant/cross/aggressive
11. Getting used to the local food/finding food you enjoy
12. Following rules and regulations
13. Dealing with people in authority
14. Dealing with the bureaucracy
15. Making yourself understood
16. Adapting to local accommodation
17. Communicating with people of a different ethnic group
18. Relating to members of the opposite sex
19. Dealing with unsatisfactory service
20. Finding your way around
21. Dealing with the climate
22. Dealing with people staring at you
23. Going to coffee shops/ food stalls/restaurants/fast food outlets
24. Understanding the local accent/language
25. Living away from family members overseas/independently from your parents
26. Adapting to local etiquette
27. Getting used to the population density
28. Relating to older people
29. Dealing with people of higher status
30. Understanding what is required of you at university
31. Coping with academic work
32. Dealing with foreign staff at the university
33. Expressing your ideas in class
34. Living with your host family
35. Accepting /understanding the local political system
36. Understanding the locals' world view
37. Taking a local perspective on the culture
38. Understanding the local value system
39. Seeing things from the locals' point of view
40. Understanding cultural differences
41. Being able to see two sides of an intercultural issue

The first ten items are common to all cross-sectional studies and are used in the comparative analyses.