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BEING AND BELONGING: A CRITICAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF UNDERGRADUATE CHINESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' SENSE OF BELONGING IN RESIDENCE HALLS

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By

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ABSTRACT

BEING AND BELONGING: A CRITICAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF
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Despite the large number of international students from China in U.S. higher education, little research exists on these students' perceptions of the racial climate in residence halls. This research study illuminates the experiences affecting the sense of belonging of first-year Chinese international students and provides insights on how these students perceive the climate within their new collegiate 'home'. I used a phenomenological orientation to understand participants' lived experiences. A critical lens was used to analyze and examine the contextual influences on the participants' experiences.

This study is centered on understanding how undergraduate Chinese international students' experiences with domestic students affected the Chinese students' understanding of their sense of belonging in their residential communities. The study participants' perceptions of barriers to their sense of belonging are addressed in this study. In addition, the participants' perceptions of racial climate in residence halls are investigated. All of these factors illuminate the Chinese international participants' sense of belonging in their residence halls. This study is guided by Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, and Allen's (1999) framework for understanding the elements affecting campus climate for racial/ethnic diversity, with an emphasis on how these elements interact to affect student's sense of belonging, or perceived affiliation and connectedness, to their residence halls at Michigan State University.

The study's findings provided insights on the challenges that Chinese international students faced when navigating a foreign environment. Cultural differences and language barriers were the most salient issues affecting Chinese students' sense of belonging in the residence halls. The participants' lived experiences emphasized the importance of social interactions between Chinese students and their domestic peers. Language played a role in the intergroup interactions, specifically either a bridge or a barrier to Chinese students' connections to domestic students. Roommate and floormate relationships were also explored, with an examination of how these relationships as either served as a cultural bridge or led to discomfort in the residence halls. Overall, cultural tensions and language barriers emerged as important factors in Chinese students' sense of belonging.

In addition to interpersonal relationships, participants provided insights on their cognitive evaluations of their interactions with other students. Participants' perceptions of their outsider status on campus were highlighted, including these students' perception of language ability, feelings of discrimination and isolation, and awareness of being an outsider. The student participants recognized that as international students, they were considered foreign outsiders by domestic students, which affected their ability to "fit in" with American students. Again, language was an issue that affected all aspects of participants' experiences, including any perceived hostility from domestic students. The participants' sense of belonging was negatively impacted by incidents of discrimination and feelings of being an outsider.

I conclude by offering suggestions for practice, policy, and future research on undergraduate Chinese international students. The implications from this study indicated a critical need for university staff to examine campus culture and climate in order to facilitate academic and social success for Chinese international students.

To all of the Chinese international students who participated in and inspired this study.
But most importantly, this is dedicated to the very first Chinese international student I met.

Thanks for inspiring me and countless other people
to always do better and be better, Mom.

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I must also mention some other family members who were instrumental in my doctoral journal. Martha Wah Tsui Lee (1925-2013) was my maternal grandmother who was the very first teacher and educator in my life. She instilled in me the love of learning and the beauty in having as many students as there are stars in the sky. She was, and still is, an inspiration to me as a young scholar and educator, and I can only aspire to affect as many people in my work and deeds as she has in her 89 years of life. I love and miss you, Po-Po.

Paul H. Yao (1953-2003) was my "favorite dad"…and not just because he was my only dad. He taught me very important things in life that I still carry with me: to have fun, to find humor in every situation, and to live life to the fullest. I inherited all of his best qualities, which includes thinking up grandiose ideas, using my charm and wit in all circumstances, valuing the ritual of breaking bread with others, and figuring a way out of tight situations. Without these life skills, I never would have made it through this never-ending contentious cycle called academia. Thank you, Daddy, for staying with me and reminding me that there is more to life than reading and writing.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

International students are a growing population in American higher education (Institute of International Education, 2012a; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014; Yan & Berliner, 2010) due to increased emphasis on international education and exchange within this global society. In theory, the growth in international students serves as a win-win situation for all involved. Institutions in the United States gain economic benefits from full-paying international students as well as a positive growth in their international reputation. Additionally, the increase in international students on a U.S. campus allows domestic students the opportunity to increase their global competency as they interact with students from around the world. International students are able to immerse themselves in a different country as a way to gain international experience which serves as an investment in upward social mobility within their own home country (Marginson, Nyland, Sawir, & Forbes-Mewett, 2010).

However, recent publication headlines outline the growing tensions that have developed between international students and domestic students. Articles such as "I'm Not Racist, But" (Redden, 2012) and "Friendless in America" (Jaschik, 2012) illustrate the negative aspects of international study that students, mostly from East Asia, experience. The strain between Asian international students and domestic students has been increasing alongside the growth in international student numbers, with many reported racial incidents against international students at historically White campuses. The growth in international students has caused significant friction among students, and much of the tension is revealing itself in discriminatory acts against Chinese international students in particular since they are currently the largest international student population in the United States (Institute of International Education, 2013; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014; Yan & Berliner, 2010).

Students from mainland China comprise the largest group of international students coming into the United States in recent years (Yan & Berliner, 2010). In 2012-2013, overall international student enrollment increased by 7%, which was a record high, and new international student enrollment increased 9.8% over the previous year (Institute of International Education, 2013). This growth in international student enrollments is attributed to the large number of Chinese undergraduate students whose numbers increased 21.4% within the 2012-2013 academic year (Institute of International Education, 2013). In recent years, student flow from China consisted of over half a million students who studied abroad, with the United States being the top destination for Chinese students (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014). Of the 649,500 students who went abroad from China (excluding citizens from Hong Kong and Macau), the United States accepted over 19% of that population, with 178,890 Chinese nationals enrolling in U.S. institutions (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014).

However, although Chinese students are attending American institutions of higher education in record numbers, very little research is done specifically on the experiences of Chinese undergraduate students. Furthermore, there is very little research on how undergraduate Chinese students are adjusting and acclimating to their new environments in a foreign country, specifically in their residence halls, which become their new collegiate 'home'. This represents a major gap in the higher education literature. The differences between Chinese and American culture are significant, with these two cultures identified as having the "maximum cultural distance" (Samovar & Porter, 1991). This cultural distance includes different beliefs, epistemologies, political ideology, customs, and other daily norms that each culture may have.

Thus, how do undergraduate Chinese international students, who have grown up in an Eastern culture, adapt to living and studying at a historically White institution in the United

States? More importantly, what is their perception of the racial climate in a residence hall and how do these experiences affect their sense of belonging in their collegiate 'home'?

Racial climate is examined in this study because all students, both international and domestic, are living and learning within racialized contexts on college campuses. The "subenvironmental contexts in higher education are shaped by larger external and internal (institutional) contexts" (Hurtado et al., 1999, p. 4); thus, understanding the racial climate can provide insights on how the racialized collegiate environment may affect undergraduate Chinese international students' sense of belonging in the residence halls.

Residences halls are considered to be secure, comfortable spaces for students to both live and learn. Community building and student learning are often at the heart of residential programs, and residence halls are touted as the ideal setting for building community and intercultural relationships amongst students (Blimling, 2010). However, to what extent do Chinese international students feel a sense of belonging to their residential community, and what is the nature of the racial climate and relationships with domestic students for Chinese international students in the residence halls?

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions that undergraduate Chinese international students have of their interactions with domestic students in their residence halls. I examine how Chinese students understand their sense of belonging within the racial climate of their residence halls at a historically White institution. The findings from this study will illuminate the barriers that Chinese international students experience as temporary visitors to colleges in the United States.

The large number of international students from China has implications for all aspects of university life, including the role of various environments on these students' academic and co-curricular experiences. Many institutions require that all first-year students, both domestic and international, live on campus in university housing; however, there has been little research on international students' perceptions of the climate in residence halls and virtually no research specifically on Chinese international students' experiences in residence halls. Therefore, I hope to illuminate the experiences affecting the sense of belonging in undergraduate Chinese international students who are often required to live in residence halls, and to provide insights on these students' perception of the climate within their new collegiate 'home' on campus. The research questions guiding my study are:

- How do undergraduate Chinese international students' experiences with domestic students in their residential communities affect how Chinese students understand their sense of belonging?

  o What do undergraduate Chinese international students see as barriers to their sense of belonging in their residence halls?

  o What are undergraduate Chinese international students' perceptions of the racial climate in their residence halls at a historically White institution?

The Growing Population: Undergraduate Chinese International Students

All undergraduate students, both domestic and international, face similar adjustment issues when first arriving and living on a college campus. Although many transition issues may be similar for most undergraduate students, international students represent a special population within the U.S. higher education system for two distinct reasons. First, international students are non-U.S. citizens who have temporary residential status and do not have the rights and privileges

that domestic students have. The lack of rights and privileges includes several legal restrictions and requirements for international students, including the need to fill out extensive paperwork or restrictions in their hours of employment. This often results in assigning "participants outsider non-citizen status and an information gap," with the information gap due to lack of knowledge of colloquial terms as well as possible challenges with language capabilities (Marginson et al., 2010, p. 15).

The second reason that international students are a special population is due to the cultural differences that exist between their home culture and the culture of the United States (Marginson et al., 2010). This cultural difference can include communication practices as well as more practical matters such as eating habits and expectations of how people should be greeted. Although it could be argued that domestic students of color could have these same challenges with cultural differences, domestic students were raised within the United States culture and are likely used to navigating multiple cultural settings. Thus, international students have to learn to navigate a brand new culture within the United States and more importantly, learn the nuances of their new campus, all while adjusting to their new outsider status as foreigners.

All international students have some shared transition issues related to their temporary residential status and the cultural differences they experience in their host country. These are factors that are different from the common adjustment issues that all undergraduate college students face. International students are often combined into one homogenous group, which is misleading and inadequate since students come from divergent parts of the world with very different cultural backgrounds. Thus, although some commonalities exist amongst international students, the entire population should be deconstructed even further based on country and/or region of origin.

Several studies indicate that there are differences in issues faced within the various international student populations in the United States (Lee, 2010; Lee & Rice, 2007; Li & Kaye, 1998; Wilton & Constantine, 2003), most specifically between European nationals and Asian international students. Unlike European students, Asian international students face increased discrimination from domestic students as well as university faculty and staff. For example, Asian international students reported the highest level of discrimination from professors and university staff in a study conducted by Hanassab (2006) when compared with other students from Europe, South America, the Middle East, and Africa. Li and Kaye (1998) found that students from Asia had more difficulties than Western European international students in many areas affecting their transition to university in the United States, most notably with issues of isolation, language, and social integration.

Chinese international students are not only the largest population from Asia on college campuses in the United States, but also overall the largest international population on almost all campuses (Institute of International Education, 2013; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014; Yan & Berliner, 2010). This critical mass of students from mainland China highlights a need for understanding the unique experiences of this population, particularly since the cultural distance (Samovar & Porter, 1991) between Chinese and American culture are the most significant of any other world cultures. The cultural distance is due to the differences in Eastern and Western culture, most notably in areas of language, customs, and daily practices.

In addition to the need to specifically study Chinese students, the current literature about international students also represents a need for examining the undergraduate international student experience on U.S. college campuses. Current research predominantly focuses on graduate and postgraduate international students as their participants since very few studies

include undergraduate international students. This is a deficiency in the literature since undergraduate students have very specific needs and challenges within the early years of college. The early years are critical in ensuring students' sense of belonging and persistence, and the institutional environment and culture are correlated to students' collegiate success (Astin, 1994; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993). The first year is particularly vulnerable since students, especially those from other countries, have little commitment and integration with their university due to the newness of their environment, and thus are more susceptible to withdrawing from their college (Tinto, 1993).

Chinese international students present a critical mass simply based on their large numbers on college campuses; however, although there is a large representation from this population, there are severe implications for these students if the nuances of their experiences are not examined. Chinese international students often feel marginalized since many do not achieve a sense of belonging on their campuses (Lee, 2010; Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2010). International students are more likely than domestic students to feel isolated from the rest of campus because of cultural differences, which have both academic and social implications (Lee & Rice, 2007; Smith & Khawaja, 2011). Understanding the experiences of undergraduate Chinese international students in their residential environment is imperative to supporting these students through the academic and social aspects of their collegiate career. If these students do not feel a sense of belonging, they are at risk for being unsuccessful in college and may not persist to graduation (Tinto, 1993). Consequently, it is imperative for research to examine the racial climate for undergraduate Chinese international students to better understand the challenges in the residence halls in order to recognize the implications for the success and persistence of undergraduate Chinese international students at a historically White institution in the United States.

The Stakeholder: Higher Education Institutions in the United States

Institutions of higher education in the United States are major stakeholders in the success of undergraduate Chinese international students. The fact that a large number of Chinese students are choosing the United States as their number one destination adds significant benefits to American higher education, both in terms of reputation as well as financially. First, higher education institutions often gain increased prestige from both national as well as international sectors as the institutions' reputations as accommodating hosts to international students grow (Lee, 2010; Lee & Rice, 2007; Verbick & Lasanowski, 2007). The growth of positive institutional reputation assists in attracting additional international students who may contribute to an institution's mission and goals. In addition, the increase of international students provides opportunities for cross-cultural interactions for domestic students and faculty as they broaden their cultural perspectives. The increase of diverse peers on an American college campus often promotes more complex thinking in addition to increased cultural understanding and relationships (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999), thus contributing to the development and growth of domestic college students.

Although cultural understanding and student development are very positive benefits to American higher education, the financial investment from international students may be the most significant gain to the United States as the host country. In the 2012-2013, international students, over 20% of whom came from China, contributed over $24 billion dollars to the U.S. economy (Institute of International Education, 2014). The economic impact from international students primarily benefits the host institution since the expenditures are most often used on tuition, room and board, fees, health insurance, and other university-related expenses. In addition to impacting

the host institution, international students also contribute to the local economy by paying taxes, consuming material goods, and paying living expenses.

The money spent on and off-campus by international students represents cash flow primarily from non-U.S. sources. According to the Institute of International Education (2014), international students receive the majority (over 60%) of their educational funding from their families and personal sources. Additional funding comes from other sources outside of the United States, including assistance from students' home universities and government. When all of these outside, non-U.S. funding sources are combined, over 70% of international students' educations are covered by foreign sources, which is a significant economic contribution to the American economy. Currently, the influx of international college students is serving as one of the top service exports in the United States, which is a huge benefit to the country (Institute of International Education 2013). Consequently, due to the high financial investments from international students, the United States as a host country has a responsibility to provide quality services and promote positive experiences for international students at American institutions. By providing quality services and experiences, host institutions also benefit by potentially increasing the number of international students on their campuses as they develop a positive international reputation.

Many U.S. higher education institutions emphasize the importance of international education and exchange and use global competency and understanding as the compelling reasons for increasing the numbers of international students on college campuses. However, it would be an oversight to discount the economic motivations for recruiting and accepting international students. The effects of globalization have created some tensions within American higher education, with many critics claiming that higher education has become an "edubusiness" (Luke,

2010) as a result of academic capitalism (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2009). Academic capitalism theorizes that market forces increasingly drive institutions of higher education in every day decision-making, and that the commodification of higher education has created the marketing of services through profit-oriented activities (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2009). Luke (2010) states that the globalization of higher education has created "the emergence of a complex, chaotic, and unpredictable edubusiness, whose prioritization of the financial 'bottom line' has supplanted clear normative educational… and ideological intents" (p. 44).

The blurring of the lines between education and business (hence, 'edubusiness') has created tension within American higher education. One dimension of this phenomenon is the emphasis on recruitment of international students rather than on the support of creating welcoming environments for this population. Right now, U.S. institutions of higher education are the primary beneficiary of the high number of international students on college campuses, but this increased internationalization is often at the expense of international students. International students are recruited from other countries and contribute financially as full-pay students with high international fees, and institutions of higher education cannot assume that international students easily adjust to institutional and national culture with no institutional support. Thus, institutions of higher education must better understand the specific needs of international students in order to assist in their transition to an American university.

The Tension: Cultural Distance and Racial Climate

International students are perceived as the outsiders on American college campuses due to the differences in culture, language, and even appearance. This outsider perception is even more pronounced with Chinese international students since Chinese and mainstream American society have maximum cultural distance due to differences in language and cultural norms

(Samovar & Porter, 1991). Because of these cultural differences, Chinese international students often face discrimination from university officials, students, and surrounding community members (Hanassab, 2006; Lee, 2007; Lee & Rice, 2007). The discrimination stems from the othering of international students, particularly those from Asia. Othering is defined as "that process which serves to mark and name those thought to be different from oneself"(Weis, 1995) and othering is done by the dominant group to make a strong distinction between themselves and the non-dominant, outsider group (Luke, 2010; Said, 1978). In the case of this study, domestic American students serve as the dominant group and the "other" is the Chinese international students. This "Others of international student cohorts" (Luke, 2010, p. 44) has been created by the globalization of higher education, and a distinct difference between the domestic and international groups creates a tension within the college environment.

Domestic American students can be considered an in-group, which is an ascribed status simply based on nationality and a somewhat shared experience as United States citizens. The tension comes from this grouping that often happens naturally. Any time there is an in-group, there is always a resulting out-group, which in this case is Chinese international students. The results from in and out-group relations can lead to challenges for Chinese international students, most notably feelings of isolation, discrimination, and stress from negative interactions with the dominant group (Charles-Toussaint & Crowson, 2010; Lee & Rice, 2007; Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2009).

Chinese international students facing feelings of social distance from the mainstream culture bring negative implications for their overall educational and social experiences at institutions of higher education in the United States. The challenges experienced by Chinese international students require a comprehensive examination of the racial and cultural climate on

college campuses in order to facilitate feelings of belonging and inclusion for all students. Most universities have a goal of enacting diverse learning environments for all of their students, and many institutions have examined campus climate for domestic students of color from various racial/ethnic backgrounds (Hurtado et al., 1999). However, the idea of sustaining a diverse learning environment by examining the campus racial climate has not been extended in current literature to include undergraduate Chinese international students as part of the racial/ethnic diversity within a collegiate setting. Rather, much of the current literature views international students as a homogenous population rather than examining the nuances within the international population. Additionally, international students have received little attention in current studies as a population that is increasingly experiencing discriminatory behavior on college campuses, and there has been virtually no attention to international students' experiences with the racial climate within residence halls.

The tension between Chinese international students and domestic students within residence halls should elicit concern from institutions of higher education in the United States. All students, whether international or domestic, should feel a sense of belonging in their residential home, and the current strain between Chinese international students and domestic students that has been documented in the news (Jaschik, 2012; Redden, 2012) is indicative of a growing problem on college campuses. The United States, as a host country, benefits from the large number of Chinese international students who bring prestige and financial resources into their chosen college campuses. Thus, it is imperative and ethical for international students to feel a sense of belonging and be included as welcome participants in American higher education. In doing so, institutions of higher education can assist international students in their transition and adjustment to their collegiate experience, and institutions can influence positive educational

outcomes such as persistence and a sense of belonging by providing environments that support student success (Astin, 1994; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993).

The combination of being college students and in a foreign country brings major challenges to undergraduate Chinese students. These challenges are examined in this study. Through this research, I provide insight on the perceptions that undergraduate Chinese international students have of the racial climate in their residence halls at a historically White institution. Examining undergraduate Chinese international students' experiences with domestic students provides an understanding of how these interactions affect international students' sense of belonging within their residential communities. This study illuminates the structural and social obstacles that exist within the residential environment that pose as challenges to undergraduate Chinese international students that are caused by racial climate. The results from this study have implications that affect multiple stakeholders in a university, including the Chinese international students, domestic students, and higher education professionals.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The tension between undergraduate Chinese international students and domestic students can potentially influence Chinese students' sense of belonging in their residential environment. This topic includes several factors that must be examined, including the concept of sense of belonging, interactions with domestic students, and the nature of the racial climate on campus. In order to gain a better understanding of current issues facing Chinese international students in the United States, I review literature that is relevant to the Chinese college student experience. In an effort to clarify and frame multiple components of the study, I provide some definitions of terms and phrases that are continuously used in this study before I delve into the literature review.

Definition of Terms

There are several terms within the research questions that need to be clarified before reviewing current literature. In this section, I define and clarify several terms and phrases used throughout this study.

Undergraduate Chinese international students. This study is about undergraduate Chinese international students in the United States. Chinese students are often classified as one homogenous group; however, variations in language, religion, and ethnicity exist within this population. Chinese people make up 56 different ethnic groups that are recognized by the People's Republic of China, with over 90% of the population from the Han majority group (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2000). Many of the ethnic groups have their own distinct language and/or dialect as well as different religious practices. Although there may be ethnic differences within the undergraduate Chinese students in this study, I acknowledge that I run the risk of essentializing the Chinese international student

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experience by combining the students in one ethnic group based on my assumptions that these students are a part of the Han majority.

Historically White institution. The term "historically White institution" is used to refer to higher education institutions that have a predominantly White racial composition and a historical legacy of excluding people of color.

Racial climate. Campus climate is defined as "the current perceptions, attitudes, and expectations that define the institution and its members" (Peterson and Spencer, 1990). Racial climate extends the notion of campus climate to include several factors that influence an institution's approach towards racial/ethnic diversity. The four elements outlined by Hurtado et al. (1999) include an institution's historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion, its structural diversity in terms of numerical representation of different racial/ethnic groups, the psychological climate that includes perceptions of interactions with others, and a behavioral dimension, which includes relationships between groups on campus. All four of these elements interact in a way that conceptualizes racial climate as a phenomenon that is linked to historical, social, and structural components of an institution of higher education.

Student success. Student success is often very broadly defined and typically varies based on institutional mission and goals. For the purpose of this study, successful college students are defined as those who "persist, benefit in desired ways from their college experiences, are satisfied with college, and graduate" (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, and Associates, 2010, p. 8).

Sense of belonging. Sense of belonging can mean several different things, including feelings of membership and affiliation with a particular group. The comprehensive definition that is ideal for this research study comes from Strayhorn (2012), who states:

> Sense of belonging refers to students' perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted,

respected, valued by, and important to the group (e.g., campus community) or others on campus (e.g., faculty, peers). It's a cognitive evaluation that typically leads to an affective response or behavior. (p. 3).

Throughout this proposal, Strayhorn's definition is used to frame sense of belonging for undergraduate college students.

Review of Literature

I organize the literature based on subjects related to my research questions. The research questions are:

- How do undergraduate Chinese international students' experiences with domestic students in their residential communities affect how Chinese students understand their *sense of belonging*?

    o What do undergraduate Chinese international students see as *barriers* to their sense of belonging in their residence halls?

    o What are undergraduate Chinese international students' perceptions of the *racial climate* in their residence halls at a historically White institution?

The literature review is organized around the major issues related to the research questions: *sense of belonging, barriers to sense of belonging, and racial climate.* I organize this literature review in a deliberate way that provides an understanding of what *sense of belonging* is before delving into studies focused on circumstances that affect international students' identification and affiliation with their campus community. Sense of belonging is the overarching construct in this study, and it is important to first understand what it is before examining how it affects different aspects of Chinese international students' experiences in the residence halls.

In addition to providing an overview of sense of belonging, I review literature related to overall college adjustment and transition *barriers* that Chinese students experience as international students at institutions in the United States. I follow that section with literature related to *racial climate* in higher education institutions, including how discrimination and prejudice from others in Chinese international students' environment affect their educational experiences. Finally, I provide an overview of the conceptual framework that guides this research study on undergraduate Chinese international students and their sense of belonging in the residence halls.

Sense of Belonging: Effects on Performance and Student Success

Sense of belonging is a construct that influences students' performance and success in college. Within a collegiate context, sense of belonging is important since many students are "inclined to feel isolated, alienated, lonely, or invisible" (Strayhorn, 2012, p. 10), all of which can influence students' persistence and satisfaction with their collegiate career. Student success and persistence are at the forefront of student outcomes in college; thus, before a deeper discussion about sense of belonging as a construct, it is important to understand some foundational theories related to student success and persistence.

Student integration or cultural suicide?. Discussions of student success and persistence often begin with Tinto's (1993) theory of individual student departure, which he asserts is related to interactions between the student and the rest of the university community. Simply stated, Tinto emphasized the importance of the interactions between individuals and the campus community as students integrate into their social and academic environments, which in turn affects students' likelihood of persisting to graduation. According to Tinto, difficulty in integrating with the campus community often stems from students' inability to separate themselves from their past

experiences and challenges with adapting to a new environment. Thus, Tinto argued that the more students integrate into the mainstream social and academic structures of a university, the more likely it is for students to be successful and persist in college.

In order to better integrate with the university, Tinto (1993) proposed that students should voluntarily withdraw from the culture of their previous lives in order to better integrate with their collegiate environment. According to Tinto's model, successful integration requires a full removal from prior groups in order for students to better integrate with their new collegiate environment.

The critics of Tinto's (1993) theory argue that it places full responsibility for integration on the students and does not put enough emphasis on the institution for creating an environment that is supportive and conducive to student interactions and development, particularly for students from historically underrepresented groups (Kuh & Love, 2000; Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000; Tierney, 1992, 1999, 2000). Tierney is particularly vocal about how Tinto is not inclusive of minority students since Tinto's theory implies that students from underrepresented groups must abandon their cultural identities to assimilate to the mainstream campus culture. Tierney asserts that in order to integrate, racial/ethic minority students must commit a form of "cultural suicide" (p. 82) that can be detrimental to minority students' success in college. Students from underrepresented groups may not ever be able to assimilate into the dominant culture since the pressure to sever ties with one's home culture (i.e, cultural suicide) can have negative influences on students.

Although the entire campus community influences student success and persistence, the role of peer interactions is the most influential factor in student development. Astin (1993) found that "every aspect of the student's development- cognitive and affective, psychological and

behavioral—is affected in some way by peer group characteristics" (p. 363). According to Astin, student development, including values and behaviors, tended to be heavily influenced by the dominant orientation of their peer group. Peer group interaction had a significant effect on college student success, which leads to increased likelihood of academic success and persistence.

However, what are the implications if students cannot assimilate to the dominant peer group? In fact, it is unlikely that students from underrepresented groups can integrate to the dominant peer group because of difficulty navigating cultural differences. The issue of integration with a dominant peer culture arose in Berger and Milem's (1999) study that found African-American students had a lower likelihood of persisting through college than White students. Findings from this study suggested that students who had values and norms that were most congruent with the values and norms of the dominant group culture on campus were more likely to persist through college. Conversely, students that were "least like the dominant peer group on campus, particularly with regard to race and political attitudes, were least likely to persist" (Berger & Milem, 1999, p. 661). Although Berger and Milem's study is focused on domestic student experiences, the findings are relatable to international students since they are not a part of the dominant peer group on college campuses.

Overall, integration is not the ideal way of framing student success and persistence for students from underrepresented groups. Research on success and persistence (e.g., Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1993) indicates a lack of attention to students from underrepresented groups, particularly international students. The challenge with using integration as the ultimate measure for student persistence is that "integration can mean something completely different to student groups who have been historically marginalized in higher education" (Hurtado and Carter, 1997, p. 326). Furthermore, none of the major studies on persistence included international students among

their participants. International students have to navigate a brand new culture within their new college campus, all while adjusting to their new outsider status as foreigners in the United States, which makes integration extremely challenging.

The concept of integration for international students is faulty for three reasons. First, the idea of a dominant peer group wielding the highest level of influence is problematic, particularly when considering the cultural differences that exist between domestic students and international students. Tinto's (1993) theory assumes that international students must assimilate into the culture of the dominant group in order to be successful on campus. The suggestion of assimilation with the dominant culture can be problematic for international students who are very often seen as the "other" on college campuses. Tinto makes the assumption that students in the non-dominant culture can effectively and easily access and infiltrate the dominant cultural group, which may not be as accepting of others who do not fit the dominant groups norms and attitudes (Kuh & Love, 2000).

Second, according to Tinto's (1993) individualist idea of integration, international students must bear the principle burden of responsibility in their transition and integration to the college environment in the United States. Thus, the burden of affiliation and integration is placed on the international students rather than sharing this responsibility with other members of the university. In order to integrate successfully, international students are the ones who must initiate the effort to conform. The institution bears little responsibility for institutions to adapt and respond to the needs of diverse student populations.

The third and most important reason for integration being a faulty concept stems from the fact that international students are temporary members of the United States. Social integration is more difficult for international students, particularly those from non-Western countries, due to

the differences in language and cultural practices. It would be difficult for international students to completely separate from their past and fully integrate when they are temporary visitors who may not be able to fully assimilate into the dominant culture. Additionally, the idea of full integration brings up the question of whether international students *should* fully integrate, and at what cost to their personal well-being?

The case for sense of belonging. International students are not a part of the dominant campus culture due to their different cultural backgrounds and temporary citizenship status. Thus, knowledge of these students' perceptions of their sense of belonging is essential to understanding the influence of the environment and peer groups on their feelings of connection to a foreign college campus. Rather than focusing on integration to the dominant culture, understanding international students' perceptions of membership in the community could provide insight on the non-dominant student group's feelings of affiliation to their campus community. In doing so, the emphasis shifts to highlighting the non-dominant group's invisible narrative rather than focusing on the power of the dominant culture.

Feelings of belonging are a basic human need and often serve as motivation for positive behavior (Maslow, 1954; Strayhorn, 2012). The need to belong and to 'fit in' are a part of human desire to find connection and community with others. Sense of belonging is a concept based on the relational nature of individuals and groups. The need for belonging is particularly relevant for college students who are thrust into a foreign environment with strangers when they attend college.

In applying the construct of sense of belonging to a collegiate setting, sense of belonging is students' "psychological sense of identification and affiliation with the campus community" (Hausmann, Ye, Schofield, & Woods, 2009, p. 650). College students' sense of belonging

includes students' perceptions of institutional support and relationships with others, all of which combine to elicit feelings of connectedness and affiliation with the campus community. It is a "cognitive evaluation that typically leads to an affective response or behavior" (Strayhorn, 2012, p. 3). The resulting feelings of belonging can positively influence students' academic achievement and persistence in college (Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007), particularly for students from underrepresented groups (Strayhorn, 2012).

Sense of belonging has an association with academic success and motivation, indicating that the psychological aspect of student perception plays a role beyond just socialization. Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen (2007) found that students' sense of belonging in their classrooms was associated with academic self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation. Additionally, students' sense of belonging at the university as a whole was strongly associated with their sense of social acceptance, implying that sense of belonging to the university is primarily influenced by social interactions and perception of acceptance by students' peers.

Peers play a critical role in students' sense of belonging since the emphasis is on interpersonal relations. Sense of belonging is a construct that falls within the idea of perceived cohesion, with an emphasis on the perception of group membership. Bollen and Hoyle (1990) described perceived cohesion as "an individual's sense of belonging to a particular group and his or her feelings of morale associated with membership in the group" (p. 482). Sense of belonging encompasses both cognitive and affective aspects. The cognitive level includes information about group experiences, and the affective level reflects the individual's appraisal of group interactions. The combination of both experiences and perceptions of interactions is likely a better predictor of international students' success and positive feelings towards their campus community, since sense of belonging measures feelings of membership in a community rather

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than measuring integration to a dominant culture, which is difficult for international students to achieve.

Sense of belonging for underrepresented students. Several studies have been conducted measuring sense of belonging in students of historically underrepresented groups. Differences were found in feelings of belonging from students of color and White students. For example, Berger (1997) found that living on campus had a positive relationship to students' socialization and sense of community. However, White students were more likely to identify with the community in their residence halls than were students of color. This study was conducted at a historically White institution, and this finding may indicate that there is "a dominant peer normative environment" (Berger, 1997, p. 449) that may affect underrepresented students' sense of belonging.

Racial differences in students' sense of belonging were also found in another study conducted with students living in residential communities. Johnson et al (2007) examined the sense of belonging in first-year students from different racial/ethnic groups and found that students of color perceived a lower sense of belonging on their campuses than White students. However, all students, with the exception of multiracial/multiethnic students, found the residence hall environment to be socially supportive. The residence hall can be a "compelling environment for shaping students' sense of belonging" (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 536), which is similar to previous studies that found positive effects of residence halls (Berger, 1997). Although studies in residence halls may have positive implications for international students, most of these studies only include domestic students and do not examine how cultural differences and language barriers may affect international students' sense of belonging in a residence hall.

Although studies in residence halls are most relevant to this proposed study, examining students' sense of belonging in the university as a whole is also important. In a study that included first-year African-American students, higher peer support for the participants was associated with higher sense of belonging throughout the academic year (Hausmann et al., 2007). Overall findings indicate greater sense of belonging with students who had more peer interactions, parental support, peer support, and faculty interactions. The higher sense of belonging associated at the beginning of the academic year was all based on interactions that were social in nature, which implies that for all students, early forms of social support received in their collegiate career "are likely to be better determinants of initial sense of belonging" (Hausmann et al., 2007 p. 829).

Hurtado and Carter (1997) also found that early social support for underrepresented students led to a higher sense of belonging. Latino students in their study reported needing more attention given to their sense of belonging and transition to campus life. One finding from Hurtado and Carter's study was that involvement in religious and community organizations outside of the college campus added to Latino students' sense of belonging and perceived membership to their college environment. This finding indicated that these students, who were likely linked with outside organizations prior to attending college, found an external community that supported and enhanced their experiences at a predominantly White institution; thus, this countered Tinto's (1993) assumption that separation was necessary for better transition and integration to college.

In a study on Filipino-American college students' sense of belonging, Museus and Maramba (2011) found that participants' difficulty in relating to the campus culture was correlated to higher levels of perceived pressure to commit cultural suicide, all of which

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decreased their sense of belonging. Overall, the authors found that the more that the students remained connected to their culture of origin, the easier it was for them to adjust to college, which directly counters Tinto's (1993) idea of necessary cultural separation. The Filipino-American students' connection with their own cultural group then led to a greater sense of belonging in college due to a more positive adjustment to the campus culture.

The findings from all studies on college students' sense of belonging indicate that students' perception of the campus environment and their interactions with others have implications for overall student success and persistence. Additionally, several of these studies indicate that students who maintain ties to their own cultural communities tend to have greater sense of belonging in college. The findings from these studies demonstrate that sense of belonging can influence student success and persistence in a culturally inclusive way that is lacking in Tinto's (1993) ideas of integration and the resultant cultural suicide.

However, one major limitation for all of the studies was that all participants were domestic students. Nevertheless, because sense of belonging emphasizes the role of the group and feelings of membership in individual students, this sense of belonging construct can help to understand the experiences and perceptions of students from marginalized populations, including international students. Thus, sense of belonging can provide a construct that goes beyond a focus on integration with the dominant group and can examine the specific experiences of marginalized students within their surrounding community.

Barriers to Sense of Belonging: Language and Social Factors

Current literature on challenges affecting international students' sense of belonging spans several different topics, including those that are derived from intrinsic factors such as language and cultural practices, as well as external barriers related to the institutional climate. Much of the

current literature on international students focuses on issues related to socio-cultural challenges as well as language barriers between international students and domestic students. There are very few recent studies that highlight undergraduate Chinese international students as the primary participants and even fewer in the residence hall setting; however, although there are several differences between students from various countries of origin, several current studies are relevant to the experiences of undergraduate Chinese international students. Additionally, much of the current literature on international students originates from other countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia; however, the findings from these international studies are still relevant since these are countries in which English is the primary language, similar to the United States.

Social adaptation. Challenges with social adaptation serve as an emerging theme in international students' experiences at colleges in the United States. Sherry, Thomas, and Chui (2009) conducted a study in which participants, who came from 30 different countries, reported issues with language, adapting to new cultural norms, financial problems, and developing friendships. Several participants reported a lack of friendship with domestic students, and international students were divided by region of origin in their responses to feeling included in the local community. Although some international students felt welcomed by the university community, several participants in the study, primarily those from Asia and the Middle East, reported feelings of isolation and a lack of connection with university community members. The findings from Asian and Middle Eastern students indicate that some cultural backgrounds can add more significant barriers in adapting to a new campus environment.

Asian international students were also primarily the population that experienced higher psychological distress due to high acculturation distress and intercultural incompetence in another study (Wilton & Constantine, 2003). The authors found that the participants in their

study may experience higher mental distress due to the perception that there were few cultural resources on their campuses, and these international students relied primarily on informal social resources rather than university departments for assistance to help with any personal stress they experienced. A positive finding indicated that increased length of stay at the host institution had a positive influence on the participants' psychological well-being, which brings attention to the need for better support systems for international students who were newly arrived on campus.

Psychological adaptation problems are more salient for international students who have a large cultural distance between their country of origin and the host country. Pan and Wong (2011) compared the acculturative stressors of graduate Chinese international students in Australia and mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong. Chinese international students in Australia were found to encounter greater stress, language deficiency, and cultural challenges than their counterparts in Hong Kong. The cultural distance to Australia, which is a Westernized country with different values and lifestyles, contributed to the higher acculturative stress for the Chinese international students. Findings from this study indicate that international students who migrate to countries with higher cultural distance are at an increased risk of psychological stress and acculturation pressures. This demonstrates a need to assist these international students with their transition to a foreign culture as early as possible.

The importance of early support for newly arrived international students is also highlighted in a study by Yan and Berliner (2011). The authors found that newly arrived students tended to have higher levels of anxiety related to language, academic challenges, and cultural differences. In addition, most participants in the study indicated that they were interested in acculturating to their new environment through integration strategies, which are considered the most successful; however, most observed behavior indicated that the participants tended to be

more separated from the domestic students by withdrawing from social activities and socializing only with others in the Chinese community. This study supports the findings from other studies that international students experience anxiety while adapting to a new environment, and that this stress may influence their social interactions with domestic students.

Formalized social interactions with domestic students can increase international students' learning and development. Glass (2012) found that Chinese international students' perception of their surrounding environment was an important factor in developing a sense of belonging. Chinese international students who participated in leadership programs, interacted with others from their own culture, and enrolled in courses in which professors facilitated intergroup dialogue reported a more positive perception of their campus climate. Also, participants' levels of learning and development were directly correlated with participation in leadership programs and community service, interactions with diverse populations, engagement in campus-led diversity discussions, and enrollment in courses with race and ethnicity as topics. Thus, this study supports the notion that universities should consider the importance of participation in campus activities when creating and facilitating environments to support the social development and positive perceptions of Chinese international students within the collegiate setting.

Language Barriers. In almost all studies on international students, language barriers continually arose as a primary source of frustration for international students when explaining their challenges with other domestic students. A study in the United Kingdom examined the experiences of Chinese international students, specifically their experience with living and studying in the U.K. (McMahon, 2011). Two recurring themes from the interviews that are relevant to this proposed study was the Chinese students' difficulty in meeting British students and their lack of confidence in their English language abilities. Similar to another study in the

United Kingdom (Li, Chen, and Duanmu, 2010), the social and language barriers carry over into other aspects of their daily lives, most notably with their participation in the classroom as well as their lack of confidence in seeking support services at the university.

The differences in language proficiency between Chinese and non-Chinese international students studying in the United Kingdom were examined through a study that found differences in learning behaviors between the two groups (Li et al., 2010). For example, Chinese students were less likely to be involved in social interaction with non-Chinese students and less likely to engage in active learning processes in the classroom. The English language proficiency of Chinese international students was significantly poorer when compared to other international students in the study; thus, this study concludes that English language ability was a critical predictor in any differences in academic performance between the Chinese and non-Chinese international students. Chinese international students are more likely to need additional English proficiency support from their institution than other non-Chinese international students.

Language barriers can lead to high level of anxiety in both academic and social settings (Edwards, Ran, & Lie, 2007). Chinese international students' lack of English proficiency created high stress and anxiety, especially since language skills are tightly tied to the overall socio-cultural challenges that Chinese international students face on college campuses. Briguglio and Smith (2012) conducted a study in Australia that sought to identify issues experienced by Chinese international students. Four areas were identified as most salient to the Chinese international students' experiences in Australian higher education: adaptation issues, differences in academic learning styles, English language issues, and the social interactions with various constituencies at and around the university. The most significant finding was related to English proficiency because almost all students interviewed stated that incoming Chinese students

needed to develop better English proficiency skills prior to arriving to Australia. The participants in this study also recommended that incoming Chinese students should make more effort to meet and interact with Australian students rather than just stay within their own cultural group, and this recommendation was intertwined with the recommendation of increasing English language skills. Participants in this study indicated that there was a divide between themselves and the larger Australian community at their university and stated that interpersonal communication skills served as a barrier to mixing more with domestic Australian students.

Limited English language abilities affected international graduate student participants' listening comprehension and oral proficiency when communicating with native English speakers at an American university (Kuo, 2011). Some participants reported some difficulty with understanding professors and students who are native English language speakers. Kuo (2011) concluded that international graduates might develop lower self-esteem since they cannot express their thoughts and feelings as easily as in their own native language. Additionally, some study participants indicated that "American students thought they were stupid and not intelligent" (Kuo, 2011, p. 40) because of the participants' lack of English fluency. Overall, the language barrier affected the participants' abilities to befriend American students and fully engage in the classroom.

Chinese students' English language abilities are necessary for interpersonal connections with other students both in academic settings as well as social situations. Language proficiency is essential for academic engagement and educational success, which are emphasized in Lin and Scherz's (2014) study on Chinese graduate students. Lin and Scherz (2014) found that Asian students pursuing graduate degrees in the United States experience transition challenges to American campuses. Linguistic and cultural challenges emerged as influential factors on the

participants' learning and performance in the American higher education context. Lack of language proficiency affected participants' understanding of lectures and ability to participate in social and academic conversations. Also, Asian graduate students in this study found it difficult to developing social relationships on campus and in the classroom due to the language barrier, which are similar to findings from Kuo's (2011) study on international graduate students in the United States.

Although most of the previous studies on language proficiency are situated in the United Kingdom and Australia, the findings are still relevant for the United States, which is also an English speaking country. The recurring theme from these studies indicates that English language proficiency plays a huge role in Chinese international students' social relationships and educational progress. Language proficiency issues indicate that although there may be some external and environmental challenges to international students' adjustment to colleges in the United States, international students also have barriers, most notably anxiety over language proficiency, that require personal responsibility to collaborate with the university on increasing language proficiency. Thus, language proficiency serves as a barrier that influences Chinese international students' social and academic adjustment to the university.

Racial Climate, Environment, and Interactions with Others

The racial climate of a university includes several elements that affect students and their experiences in a diverse environment. Chinese international students have language barriers and cultural differences that they bring to their environment, which affects their interactions with others. Although individual perceptions strongly affect students' experiences in higher education, the institutional environment has a role in the development and integration of students. The external environment serves as a setting that either inhibits or promotes student development and

growth during the collegiate years (Astin, 1993); thus, the environment of an institution and interactions with others are also extremely important aspects of determining student outcomes.

The role of peer relationships is an important factor in the collegiate experiences of undergraduate Chinese international students. Daily social interactions serve as a basis for Chinese international students' feelings of either belonging or exclusion on the college campus. Although interactions with university faculty and staff affect Chinese international students' collegiate experiences, this study is focused on peer-to-peer interactions with other college students rather than the influence of faculty and staff on Chinese international students' sense of belonging. Thus, the focus of this portion of the literature review refers to the interactions with peers.

Discrimination on campus. One growing area of literature that is relevant to this study focuses on the discrimination that international students experience on college campuses in the United States. Lee and Rice (2007) explored international students' perception of discrimination at a predominantly White research university in the Southwest United States. Neo-racism, which is discrimination based on cultural and national differences, served as the framework for analysis and findings conclude that neo-racism affected on and off campus interactions in multiple settings. The authors found a strong divide between the experiences of students based on nation of origin. For example, students with phenotypically White features from Canada, Europe, and New Zealand did not report any discrimination based on their culture or race whereas students from other countries such as Asia and India reported considerable negative experiences. Several students, primarily from Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America, felt cultural discrimination through hostile comments and frustration with language barriers from Americans, leading to feelings of discomfort and hostility both in and out of the classrooms. Utilizing neo-racism as a

framework allowed the authors to analyze the discriminatory acts experienced by international students in their study, layering both skin color and national origin as the foundation for neo-racist behavior by Americans.

Lee (2010) found similar results with international students' experiences based on country of origin through an examination of international students' experiences at a United States institution. In this quantitative study, Lee (2010) questioned participants on their prior expectations, level of satisfaction with their experience, and whether these students would recommend others from their home country to study at the host institution. The primary finding included students from predominantly non-White regions (Latin America, Africa, Middle East, East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia) reporting less satisfaction and greater difficulty with their host institution than their colleagues from Europe, Canada, and Australia. In addition to increased social adjustment issues, the students from predominantly non-White regions reported unfair treatment by community members of the university when compared to the treatment of domestic students. The difficulties were manifested in issues with perceived discrimination, unfair campus services and treatment, and financial difficulties. Overall, these experiences led international students from predominantly non-White regions to have less overall satisfaction and being less likely to recommend their host institution to others in their home country.

The issues of discrimination based on country of origin also emerged in a study by Hanassab (2006) who found that international students from different regions perceived varying degrees of discrimination on their college campus. International students from Europe experienced the least discrimination with their peers and students from the Middle East and Asia reported the highest levels of discrimination when interacting with their peers. Overall, students from non-White regions (Middle East, Africa, and Asia) reported more significant discrimination

from their professors, university staff, and surrounding community members than did international students from Europe.

Discrimination against international students, especially those from predominantly non-White regions, is an existing problem in Australia that has received significant scrutiny from both higher education administrators as well as political figures. Marginson, Nyland, Sawir, and Forbes-Mewett (2010) wrote a book on the many security issues facing international students in Australia. The emphasis in this book was groundbreaking in the sense that it brought to light the dangers and difficulties that international students face within the global student market. The authors focus on the "human security of mobile students" (Marginson et al., 2010, p. 11), with an emphasis on the social and economic security of students. Of the 200 interviews conducted, most of the students came from Southeast Asia (24.5%), Northeast Asia (14%), and South Asia (10.5%).

Similar to several studies situated in the United States (Hanassab, 2006; Lee, 2010; Lee and Rice, 2007), Marginson et al (2010) found that discrimination and abuse from local community members, including assault and bias with employment practices, were also issues for international students from predominantly non-White regions. In addition to discrimination, language difficulties were again the primary cause of anxiety for international students, particularly from students who came from countries in which English was considered a foreign language. The lack of English proficiency affected their social and academic integration into their university community, with 61% of the participants stating that language and cultural differences were the primary barriers in making friends across cultures. The issues with language proficiency, discrimination, and safety led to feelings of loneliness and negatively affected the students' ability to successfully connect with the campus community.

International students who experience hostility from domestic students may not always report incidents of racial discrimination. Wang (2010) found that Chinese international graduate students hesitated to report any incidents of perceived discrimination because it caused worry about the international students' legal status. Also, the reported incidents were subtle and indirect rather than overt occurrences which led to the Chinese participants to question if they should "call it discrimination or not" (Wang, 2010, p. 116). The findings from this study, as well as previously discussed studies, indicated that both overt and covert acts of discrimination affect the overall academic and social experiences of Chinese international students.

Being the "other". The discrimination experienced by international students from predominantly non-White regions requires further thought about why it is these students have such a marked difference in experiences from students from predominantly White regions. As a whole, international students and domestic students have major cultural differences, including language, food habits, and communication styles; however, international students from predominantly non-White regions seemingly have more differences due to skin color and ethnic origin. Thus, all international students are often considered to be foreign and different, but the additional issues with skin color and ethnic origin can be traced back to the idea of 'othering' that was popularized by Edward Said (1978).

"Othering" is defined as "that process which serves to mark and name those thought to be different from oneself"(Weis, 1995) and is done by the dominant group as a way to separate from and suppress the non-dominant, outsider group (Luke, 2010). The idea of "othering" can be traced from Edward Said's (1978) *Orientalism*, an influential book that generated academic discourse on the idea that the Western world tends to view the Orient (includes the Middle East, Asia, and Northern Africa) as backwards and undeveloped. Said used Orientalism as "a way of

coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience" (p. 1). Said stated that the Orient has served as a tool for defining the Western world from a contrasting 'us versus them' perspective. Tracing several historical examples related to colonization, Said makes the claim that throughout earlier global history, the Orient has always been portrayed as being the very antithesis of the civilized Western world. Thus, the idea of othering stems from a cultural hegemony that has been imposed by the Western world and has never really gone away since the effects of postcolonialism can still be felt in the modern world.

Othering positions the 'other' as the problem; specifically, in relation to this proposed study, Chinese international students are the "object" that is "stamped with an otherness" (Said, 1978, p. 97), a designation that is difficult to escape even in modern day perceptions since othering is a "set of structures inherited from the past" (p. 122). In contemporary perspectives, the influx of international students from China has created an othering of a specific population on college campuses. The globalization of higher education has created an "us" (domestic students) and a "them" (international students), leading to tension in and outside of the classrooms on college campuses.

Much of the othering can be based on the role of culture in verbal and non-verbal interactions between the international students and domestic students. Simply put, culture consists of "the rules for living and functioning in society" (Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel, 2009, p. 10). Although many cultures have significant differences between values and practices, Western and Eastern cultures have almost polarizing patterns of behavior and ways of understanding that can cause friction during interactions. The difference between cultures is called "cultural distance" and usually comes into effect when two cultures have more differences than similarities (Triandis, 2009, p. 18). In the instance of this study, Chinese students and

domestic students have fairly large cultural distance because of the difference in languages, social structures, and values.

Asian cultures, which tend to be collectivist societies, emphasize interdependence with others, use in-group norms to shape behavior, and view social relationships as a tightly woven community. The danger in the emphasis on collectivist behavior is that Asian people tend to "pay attention to the needs of others and stay in relationships even when that is not maximally beneficial to them" (Triandis, 2009, p. 19). Thus, the contrast of individualism in Western culture that is familiar to domestic college students creates a friction with international students, especially when the cultural differences come together in one common living environment. Individualism, which is typically valued in American culture, emphasizes the importance of the self and one's own personal needs; therefore, the individualistic behavior of domestic students and the collectivist behavior of Chinese students can often lead to an abrasive relationship that is compounded by language and other cultural barriers.

The differences in culture are often created by populations being designated either the in-group or out-group. In the most basic of definitions, an in-group is defined as a group that uses "the term 'we' with the same essential significance" (Allport, 1979, p. 31) and can include designations such as family, schoolmates, club, and any other population that has a group-like function. Thus, the out-group serves as any group that does not belong to the in-group, which can sometimes lead to feelings of negativity between the groups. Allport (1979) argued that nationalism is the most salient form of group loyalty since children learn it at a young age, and this is likely affects the relationship between domestic students and Chinese international students. The use of othering and out-group status helps the in-group, in this case domestic students, keep the Chinese international students at a distance that is easily explained by the

excuse of having language barriers and cultural differences in the way. Some of the discriminatory acts that have been committed against international students can be attributed to the in-group mentality that uses rejective behavior against others who are culturally distant. Rejective behaviors against out-groups often fit within three types that are outlined by Allport (1979): verbal rejection, discrimination, and physical attack, and these types of negative behaviors are mitigated by the idea that hostility towards out-groups tend to strengthen the in-group's own sense of belonging.

Although in-groups of domestic students have some responsibility in creating a negative environment for international students, Luke (2010) placed primary blame on institutions of higher education for the existence of a negative climate for international students, stating that the internationalization of higher education has created insiders and outsiders on college campuses. Using a critical lens, Luke argued that the emphasis on the financial bottom line for institutions has led to international students being viewed as 'others' and are being redefined within a Westernized framework that is similar to Said's (1978) claims of Orientalism by the Western world. In addition to othering, Luke (2010) also made an argument about generalizing the experiences and backgrounds of international students and stated that institutions of higher education must use more effort in their support structures and curriculum to better meet the needs of diverse international students. Thus, institutions must be more practical and strategic in constructing an environment that supports the needs of all students (both domestic and international) in a way that day-to-day interactions bring positive outcomes for all students in the collegiate environment.

Conceptual Framework

The experiences of undergraduate Chinese international students are influenced by their intrinsic attributes (e.g., language and cultural practices) and contextual factors (e.g., interactions with others and institutional support). For this study, I believe that a framework for understanding students' sense of belonging includes examining the interconnected elements that affect the overall residential experiences of undergraduate Chinese international students. I use sense of belonging as an overarching concept to examine Chinese students' experiences and also use Hurtado et al.'s (1999) framework for understanding various elements affecting an institution's racial climate (see Figure 2.1).

Sense of belonging as a construct will assist me in further understanding Chinese international students' perceptions of membership in their residential community. The emphasis on sense of belonging is appropriate in this study because it "illustrates the interplay between the individual and the institution" (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 526). However, in order to further analyze undergraduate Chinese international students' sense of belonging, a supplemental framework is needed that helps me examine the residential environment of the Chinese international students. Hurtado et al. (1999) developed a framework for understanding the different dimensions of a campus' racial climate. This framework includes four major parts that are relevant to this proposed study. These include *historical legacy, structural diversity, a behavioral dimension, and psychological climate.* This organizing framework provides a way to conceptualize the important elements affecting Chinese international students and their sense of belonging in their residential environment.

I acknowledge that Hurtado et al.'s (1999) framework for understanding elements that influence racial/ethnic climate is a construct developed primarily for use in the United States to

understand U.S.-based collegiate racial climates. The use of this framework may appear to be unsuitable for the Chinese participants in this study since the students are from a country that is fairly homogenous and does not necessarily identify race as a salient issue in their culture. However, the Chinese international students enter a racialized context as soon as they arrive in the United States for college. It is important to utilize a racial climate framework due to the fact that all students, both international and domestic, are living and learning within racialized contexts on college campuses. The "subenvironmental contexts in higher education are shaped by larger external and internal (institutional) contexts" (Hurtado et al., 1999, p. 4); thus, the four contexts identified by Hurtado et al. provide a good way of understanding how the environmental climate may affect undergraduate Chinese international students' sense of belonging in the residence halls.

The historical legacy of the university sets the stage for the contemporary campus racial climate. In this particular study, the historical legacy includes the institution's mission and goals related to internationalization that affects the policies and promotion of increasing international student exchange. The historical legacy in this proposed study would frame the institutional and residential support that may or may not exist for undergraduate Chinese students.

Structural diversity, which "refers primarily to the numerical representation of various racial, ethnic, and gender groups on campus" (Hurtado et al., 1999, p. 19), has both positive and negative effects on campus climate. Positive effects include increased social interactions among various diverse student groups and a reduction in tokenism due to the small numbers of students from diverse backgrounds. One major negative effect may occur because the larger the minority group, the "more likely minority individuals will be in conflict with members of the majority, presumably because they are in competition for limited resources" (Hurtado et al., 1999, p. 20).

Several recent events involving discriminatory acts against international students (Jaschik, 2012; Redden, 2012) and clashes between minority (international students) and majority groups (domestic students) have indicated a need to examine the structural diversity within institutions and residence halls to better address these conflicts.

The presence and behavior of surrounding peers influence the Chinese international student's perception of the residential environment. This is the behavioral dimension of Hurtado et al.'s (1999) framework. The behavioral dimension includes the social interactions and relations among various student groups on campus. This dimension, in conjunction with Hurtado et al.'s other three factors for campus climate, emphasizes the role of student involvement and integration in the retention and satisfaction of students. Examining the intergroup relationships between undergraduate Chinese international students and domestic students will allow for a better understanding of how student involvement affects international students' feelings of membership with the residential community at their institution.

The psychological climate, the fourth element of Hurtado et al.'s (1999) framework, involves students' perceptions of intergroup relationships and attitudes towards other students from different racial/ethnic backgrounds, which in this case would be the interplay between domestic students and Chinese international students. This element is dependent on the interactions described in the behavioral dimension. However, the psychological climate differs in the sense that this element evaluates how students *perceive* their relationships with others. The key idea within the psychological climate is that the student makes a subjective evaluation of his or her interactions with others. Within the psychological dimension, Chinese international students' perceptions of discrimination or racial conflict can be examined. The psychological dimension includes the students' awareness of their own position and power as well as their

perceived status as an insider or outsider, all of which are integral to the development of students' sense of belonging.

The behavioral dimension and psychological climate are the elements of Hurtado et al.'s (1999) framework that are most relevant to this study of undergraduate Chinese international students' sense of belonging; thus, these elements will be a primary focus in the conceptual framework. Historical legacy and structural diversity play a role in a racial climate of an institution; thus, these two elements will be outlined more specifically in Chapter 4 as part of the contextual background for this study.

Figure 2.1. Conceptual Framework

Elements Influencing the Climate for Racial/Ethnic Diversity
(Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, and Allen, 1999)
Copyright by John Wiley & Sons, Inc
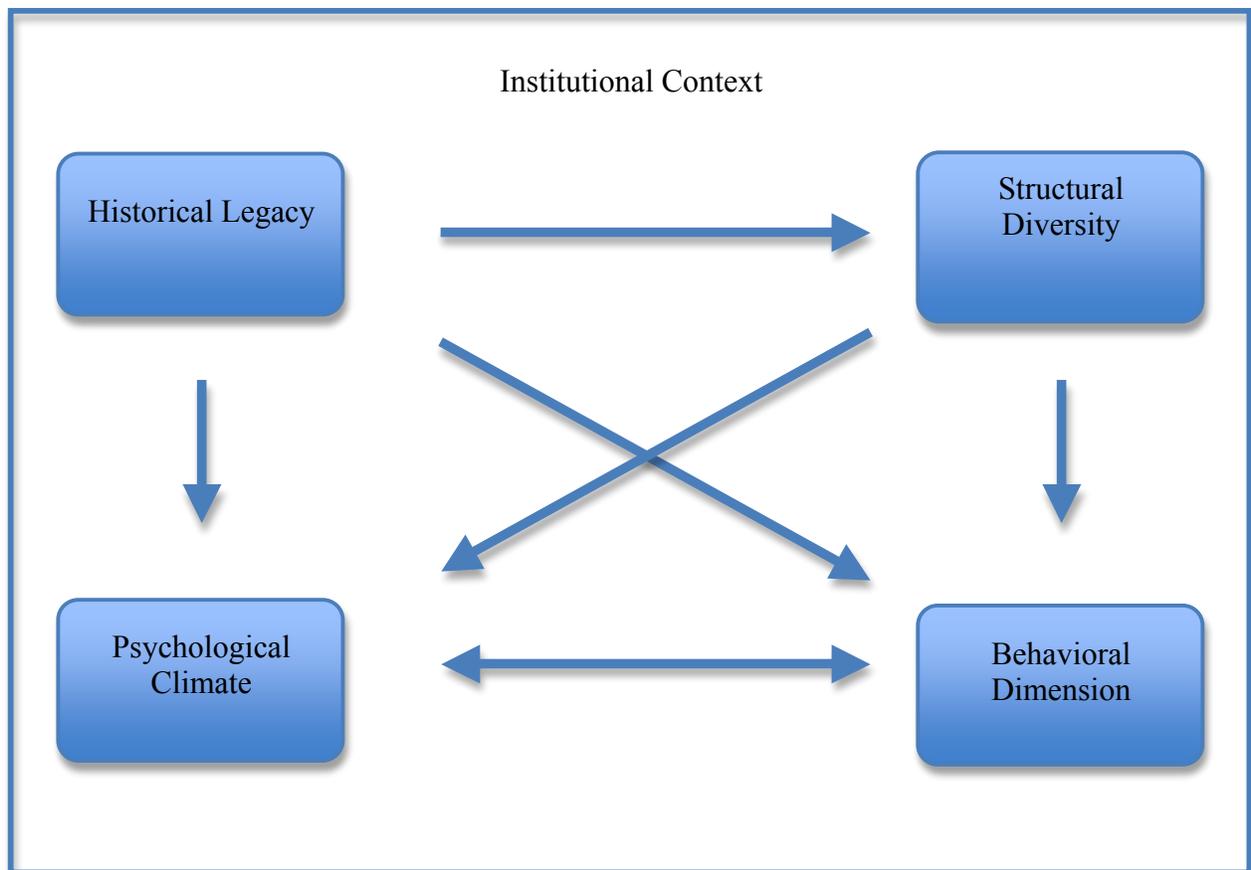
CHAPTER 3: METHODS

In the methods chapter, I provide an overview of the research approach and research design of my study. First, I provide an overview of my positionality as a researcher and how it may have affected my interactions with my participants and my interpretation of the data. Next I discuss my choice in using qualitative research methodology with a critical phenomenological approach. I then review my data collection processes and data analysis. I conclude this section with the limitations of this study.

Role of Researcher

Qualitative research is often described as the intersections of personal narratives in a way of making meaning (Glesne, 2006). As the researcher, I fully recognize that I am an integral part of the meaning making process. Thus, since I am working with a specific ethnic population, I know that it is imperative for me to reflect on my own personal narrative and how my paradigm shapes my role as a researcher.

I identify as an Asian-American woman who was born and raised in the Southeast region of the United States. I am a child of immigrants from Hong Kong. My mom was the first international student to enroll at what is now known as Armstrong Atlantic State University, and my father immigrated to Savannah, Georgia, with his family at a young age. Although I am considered ethnically Chinese, I do not necessarily identify as Chinese since Hong Kong was a British colony at the time of my parents' migration to the United States. My last name is typically Chinese; however, my phenotype often causes other Asian people confusion since I often get questioned about my ethnic background and asked if I am Japanese or Korean.

I reflect on my personal identity because I believe that it is important and relevant to my relationship with the participants. As the researcher, I am the "primary instrument for data

collection and analysis" (Merriam, 2009, p. 15). As a human instrument, I know that I come with internal biases as well as external constructs that may or may not affect this proposed research study. Since this is a study on a potentially vulnerable population, I feel that it is imperative for me to first outline my positionality as a researcher before I even delve into the specifics of methodology. Orienting myself is a necessary aspect of conducting this study, particularly since my study is an inquiry on the orientation and positioning of a specific population (undergraduate Chinese international students) within a particular space (residence halls on a college campus).

Although I may share my ethnic background with the participants of this study, I fully recognize that we have more differences than similarities. In fact, some of the participants viewed me as both an insider and an outsider during the interviews. First, English is my primary language, and although I can speak and understand some Chinese, my primary dialect is Cantonese rather than the traditional Mandarin that most students speak. The language difference served as a bit of a barrier in the interviews, particularly with accents from the participants and my habit of speaking English quickly. However, I found that my insider perspective did help build rapport with most of the participants since there were a few times when they would talk about China and I could understand what they were talking about due to my ethnic connection.

Another difference that is distinct from my participants is my perception of race and ethnicity, which is drastically different from most Chinese international students. In China, race is not really an issue since the majority of the country consists of Chinese nationals who are from the Han ethnic group; however, ethnicity is emphasized due to the differences in phenotype and culture amongst the ethnic minorities. As an American, I am different from Chinese nationals in the sense that I am aware of differences in skin color, and race and racism are often my framework for observing and living in this world. Race and racism serve as my lens for

understanding the world, which is why I identify as a researcher who comes from the constructivist and critical perspective.

My research approach is from a constructivist perspective which "assumes that reality is socially constructed" because there is "no single, observable reality" (Merriam, 2009, p. 8). I believe that our understanding of the world is formed through interactions with others and our construction of meaning stems from historical and social structures that frame individual experiences. The critical perspective is also an important part of my research approach since critical research goes beyond the constructivist perspective of individual meaning making in the world. I fully subscribe to using critical inquiry as a part of research since it brings in the importance of critiquing and challenging the dominant paradigm and status quo that dominates social and educational structures in current society. As a critical researcher, I seek to understand the notion of power in relationships—"who has it, how it's negotiated, what structures in society reinforce the current distribution of power" (Merriam, 2009, p. 10)—as a way to promote change and empower those who do not have the power in relationships. The constructivist and critical paradigms are often considered separate entities; however, I feel that the two perspectives overlap in a way that best describes my role of as a critical constructivist researcher.

Research Design

I used qualitative methodology in my study, which is most appropriate in answering the study's research questions:

- How do undergraduate Chinese international students' experiences with domestic students in their residential communities affect how the Chinese students understand their sense of belonging?

o What do undergraduate Chinese international students see as barriers to their sense of belonging in their residence halls?

o What are undergraduate Chinese international students' perceptions of the racial climate in their residence halls at a historically White institution?

Qualitative Approach

A qualitative research was most appropriate for this study. By studying the experiences of undergraduate Chinese international experiences, I was able to examine how, as temporary residents at a university, "people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). The qualitative approach allowed me to focus on the context and to interpret the data, which included emergent data rather than preconfigured themes (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The focus on context was important to this study since the environment and climate in which undergraduate Chinese students live were integral to understanding the participants' sense of belonging. The interpretive nature of qualitative research allowed me to analyze and describe the participants' experiences in thoughtful and comprehensive ways that best illuminated the interplay of self and environment and their effects on participants' sense of belonging.

Qualitative research includes several genres of research. For this study, I believe it was appropriate to use both phenomenological and critical orientations. The blend of both methodologies allowed me to understand the lived experiences (Van Manen, 1990) of the participants through a critical interpretive lens that situated their experiences within a specific context (Merriam, 2009).

Critical Phenomenology

Phenomenology, described as the study of lived experiences, allows the researcher to explore and articulate the deep meanings of participants' experiences (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). As the researcher, my role was to examine the insights that brought me into direct contact with the participants' world and how they understood a specific phenomenon in their world. In this study, I examined how several participants described their experience with the phenomenon of sense of belonging in their residence halls and attempted to determine what all participants had in common by reducing "individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence" (Creswell, 2007, p. 58). The "essence" of the phenomenon was revealed though a "systematic attempt to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning structures, of lived experience" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 10).

With a phenomenological methodology, I was able to examine the lived experiences of undergraduate Chinese international students as a way to better understand the essence of their shared experiences within their environment. However, an added layer of a critical research perspective was necessary since the participants were from a marginalized and othered group in this study. Critical research "goes beyond uncovering the interpretation of people's understandings of their world" (Merriam, 2009, p. 9) and includes the issues of power and empowerment in the research questions and analysis.

My research study had a critical nature since it is situated in how self, others, and the environment affected Chinese international students' sense of belonging. There was an interactive relationship between Chinese international students and domestic students, and as illustrated in the literature review, the layers of culture, language, and skin color influenced the power dynamic between the two student populations. A critical approach assisted me in better

understanding the interplay between international students and domestic students as I examined and interpreted the participants' lived experiences in the residence halls.

Critical research differs from phenomenology in the sense that critical researchers tend to focus more on context rather than on individuals (Merriam, 2009). Critical research emphasizes the importance of understanding power relations that includes how certain groups gain power while oppressing other groups or how systems within education are organized to benefit specific groups. Within critical research, there are certain basic assumptions that are relevant to this study:

> That all thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations that are social and historically constituted; that facts can never be isolated from the domain of values or removed from some form of ideological inscription; that the relationship between concept and object and between signifier and signified is never stable or fixed and is often mediated by the social relations (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 304).

Critical research is vital in understanding research data in a holistic and reciprocal way—that is, that the data should be studied in "parts in relation to the whole and the whole in relation to parts" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 312). Thus, critical research emphasizes the interpretation of the data in a way that can produce insights that may lead to understanding the influence of context and power on individual people.

At first glance, critical research and phenomenology appear to be at odds with each other based on their different emphases; however, I believe that both approaches had value in my research study since the interactions between the individual (undergraduate Chinese international students) and context (environment in residence halls) played a role in the participants' sense of belonging in the residence halls. Although critical phenomenology is not a commonly used methodology, several studies (Campbell, 2008; Ray, 2008) in recent years have used a blend of phenomenology and critical research in order to better understand the lived experiences of

individuals within a context that has power differentiations between different groups in the study. Simply said, if phenomenology was used as the lens for viewing this study, then a critical perspective served as the tint on the lens for a deep analysis of findings and implications.

As I conducted my research study, I utilized a phenomenological orientation with a critical perspective when interviewing participants and interpreting participants' lived experiences. Phenomenology was a suitable approach for this study since it proposed that there were multiple realities that are dependent on the context; however, the use of a critical approach expanded the idea of multiple realities by emphasizing the importance of cultural and social contexts within which one reality is privileged (Merriam 2009).

Site Selection and Research

For this study, I selected a single institution as my site. The selected institution was Michigan State University (MSU), a large, public research institution in the Midwest that is considered a historically White institution. Michigan State University has a large residential population as well as a large international student population. In addition, all first-year, non-commuter students are required to live on campus, which means that most undergraduate Chinese students had a common experience of living on campus during their first year of college. The residential requirements and international emphasis at MSU provide valuable context for examining the residential experiences of Chinese international students.

Contextual influences are an integral part of this study. As I was developing this study, I grappled with whether or not I should name the site in my study. After careful consideration, I decided that it was important to this study to make it clear that Michigan State University was the site for three reasons. First, MSU has a significant number of Chinese international students, with one in eight first-year students coming from China (see more details in Chapter 4).

Anecdotally, MSU is touted across the nation and among other higher education institutions as a university that is doing well in acculturating the many international students on its campus. Second, context is very important in this study, particularly when examining the racial climate. Thus, I felt that it was important to be transparent about the historical legacy and structural diversity of the site. In order to get a complete picture of the institutional environment, I knew that I could not keep the site anonymous. Finally, as mentioned previously, all first-year students are required to live on campus; thus, the residential requirements of MSU bring some implications with them since all Chinese students, as international students, are required to live on campus without many other viable housing options.

Although the selected site is very specific, the implications of this study can be relevant for other institutions of higher education. There are few universities that have the large international population of MSU; however, internationalization of college campuses is growing as a result of increased globalization and interconnectedness. Thus, many colleges and universities can learn from MSU's challenges and current practices. Other universities can adapt the implications from this study to their own campuses. The transparency of the site selection will aid in other universities' understanding of how context matters. Additional contextual information about Michigan State University is included in Chapter 4.

The contextual information about Michigan State University was researched in consultation with an archivist from the MSU University Archives and Historical Collections. The university archivist recommended three books (Dressel, 1987; Thomas, 2008; Widder, 2005) that traced MSU's history from the beginning to more recent years. Although the books had limited information about the internationalization of campus, I was able to find relevant material that I used to create a clearer picture of MSU's history with internationalizing the campus. I was able

to utilize the recommended texts from the university archivist to illustrate the historical legacy of MSU, particularly the internationalization of the campus. I also researched the MSU website for more current information related to university practices and policies for international students.

Sampling

Selection of participants was a result of purposeful sampling, which is often used when "the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). The use of purposeful sampling allowed me to get information-rich interviews from participants. I intentionally solicited undergraduate Chinese international students in their first year at the university who lived in the residence halls. These participants have lived on campus in the United States long enough to be able to reflect upon their residential experiences and think about their sense of belonging in the residence halls.

Michigan State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this study as exempt on March 12, 2013 (see Appendix A). In late spring of 2013, I drafted an email that was sent through the Office of the Registrar at Michigan State University to all students who fit my required demographics for this study: first-year international students from China who live on campus in university owned residence halls (see Appendix B). In the email, I included information about my study and what requirements I had for participants. The email also included information about my incentive for each participant, which was a $10 gift card to Amazon.com for the first interview and $25 for the second round interviews. I embedded a link to an online survey through Qualtrics Survey Software and asked all interested students to submit their information through that online software. The information gathered through the software program included the following: full name, cell phone number, email address, hometown,

gender, age, anticipated major, current residence hall, anticipated housing in the following year, semesters enrolled at Michigan State University, chosen pseudonym, and preferred method of contact (text message, phone call, or email).

After receiving interested students' information, I reached out to every interested student either through text message or email to request an interview. I received 34 interested students, and of that number, I interviewed 21 participants. All participants were first-year students from China who were completing their second semester at Michigan State University. The participants included six men and 15 women. The number of participants in this current study fit within Creswell's (2007) recommendation that five to 25 individuals who have experienced the phenomenon being studied should be interviewed for one study. All first interviews were conducted prior to the end of the 2013 spring semester. Second round interviews were conducted at the start of the 2013 fall semester. Seventeen of the 21 participants agreed to a second interview. Of those interviewed, 16 travelled home to China for their summer break.

Data Collection

In-depth interviews were conducted with each participant in a person-to-person format and recorded with a digital voice recorder. Interviewing was the most beneficial data collection strategy since it allowed me to hear and record participants' stories and experiences. Additionally, interviewing was ideal since I could not "observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them" (Merriam, 2009, p. 88) within the privacy of their residence hall rooms. Broad and general questions related to sense of belonging in the residence halls were asked of each participant in semi-structured interviews (see Appendix C). Semi-structured interviews were most helpful in this study since questions were asked related to participants' experiences in the residence halls. However, this type of interview also allowed for some

flexibility in wording and ordering of questions. This enabled me to be more responsive to the

emerging worldview of the participants as well as rephrase wordings when language barriers

arose. The broad and general questions in interviews were helpful in getting "a textural

description and structural description of the experiences, and … provide an understanding of the

common experiences" (Creswell, 2007, p. 61).

I conducted pilot interviews with two advanced international undergraduate students from

China in March 2013. I reviewed the interview protocols with each student who provided

valuable feedback on word choice and terminology. I incorporated their feedback to make the

interview questions clearer and to simplify terminology that would allow study participants to

better understand what I was asking. As a result, the interview protocol was updated in order to

get better results from participant interviews.

I reserved private space to interview each participant and each interview was scheduled

for 90 minutes. I would begin by introducing myself and include my ethnic background as part

of my opening. I explained the purpose of the study and then verbally walked each participant

through the interview protocol, describing the open-ended questioning. I asked for their

permission to audio record the interview, and all participants did give permission to record the

interview. Participants were asked to sign a consent form that assured anonymity by allowing

each participant to choose a pseudonym (see Appendix D). The consent form also had all of my

contact information as well as a brief description of my study.

After the consent form was signed, I gave a copy of the form to each participant for his or

her records. I then started the audio recorder and began asking open-ended questions within a

semi-structured interview setting. I would follow up with additional questions when I needed

clarification or explanation of certain phrases or topics. At the conclusion of the interview, I let

the participants know that I would be contacting them in the fall of 2013 to schedule follow up interviews.

Follow up interviews were conducted with 17 of the 21 participants. Seidman (1998) recommends that three interviews be conducted in order to gather phenomenological data: the life history, details of experience, and reflection on the meaning. I did two interviews, with the first focusing on participants' life experiences and details related to their sense of belonging in the residence halls. The second interview asked participants to reflect on the meaning of their experiences, with questions that probed deeper into the information provided at the previous interviews. The second interview included more reflective questions based on the previous interviews, with questions that integrated prior information that emerged from the first interview.

The second follow-up interview provided me the opportunity as the researcher to make meaning of the participants' details of their experiences. By reviewing the information gathered in the first interview, I was able to reflect on the interview and gain deeper understanding of the students' lived experiences, which assisted me in developing questions that could get the participants to go deeper in their reflection of their experiences and how that experience affected their sense of belonging. Gathering and reflecting are considered two different stages in phenomenological interviewing (Van Manen, 1990), and thus, after some reflection I was able to clarify details and gain deeper understanding from the participants in order to uncover their lived experiences.

Data Analysis

My role with the interview data was to make meaning of what the participants said. I focused on participants' descriptions and observations, and then I developed analytical categories. First, gathered data was organized and transcribed on an ongoing basis, including

details on dates, pseudonyms, and any other notes that I took during and after the interviews. Transcriptions were conducted immediately following the first round interviews. This allowed me to analyze the data and develop questions for the second round interview that would assist me in getting deeper and richer information. I transcribed all second round interviews immediately following each meeting and organized all hand written notes.

Immediately following transcribing the interviews, I went through and de-identified all transcripts. This included removing any identifying information that could link the data back to participants' real names. I also gave pseudonyms to other potentially identifying information, such as renaming residence halls and institutional spaces. De-identified transcripts were then uploaded into Dedoose, a web application for qualitative and mixed methods research, and descriptors for each participant were linked to the appropriate transcripts. Descriptor information included pseudonym, age, gender, current residence hall room, hometown, anticipated housing for Fall 2013, and anticipated major/minor. The linking of descriptor information allowed me to run descriptive statistics for my project and conduct more quantified analysis of my participants.

Coding Scheme

Coding is described by Charmaz (2001) as the "critical link between data collection and their explanation of meaning" (p. 3-4). As the qualitative researcher, I created codes that are a "researcher-generated construct that symbolizes and thus attributes interpreted meaning to each individual datum for later purposes of pattern detection, categorization, theory building, and other analytic processes" (Charmaz, 2001, p. 72). By using codes for analysis, I was able to use deep reflection on the data and subsequently conduct deeper analysis and interpretation of gathered data for this study.

After uploading transcripts to Dedoose, I familiarized myself with the data by reviewing transcripts repeatedly in order to become "intimate with the data" (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 282). As I read through the transcripts both electronically and in print, I manually took notes on major topics that consistently emerged from the data. Categories were made based on the research questions and conceptual framework, which was consistent with analysis typically conducted in phenomenology (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). This was the start of my first cycle coding (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014) which allowed me to create initial codes for large data chunks. I utilized deductive coding, which includes a "start list" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 81) based on this study's interview protocol and conceptual framework. I started with descriptive codes, which are label summaries in a word or short phrase, to identify the major topics of data passages in the transcripts. At the same time, I was aware of needing to allow for inductive coding as well, which allows "other codes to emerge progressively during data collection" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 81). The emergence of codes through inductive coding is particularly important to the use of phenomenological methods for this study.

I first searched for broad categories and then developed themes that emerged from the participants' experiences. Themes were coded by "lifting appropriate phrases or by capturing in singular statements the main thrust of the meaning of the themes" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 93). I found myself conducting values coding as I reviewed the transcripts. Values coding is often used to "reflect a participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his or her perspectives or worldview" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 75). Values coding is appropriate in this study since this method of coding is typically used for studies that examine cultural value and interpersonal participant experiences. I first manually coded on paper copies of the transcripts by writing codes in the margins and highlighting relevant text. Then I would review the transcripts that were

uploaded electronically in Dedoose and electronically apply codes. After completing the electronic coding, I would compare the results with the paper copies to check for consistency.

After concluding first cycle coding, I then moved on to second cycle coding. Second cycle coding includes pattern coding, which is "a way of grouping those summaries into a smaller number of categories, themes, or constructs" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 86). Pattern codes allowed me to "identify an emergent theme, configuration, or explanation" (p. 86) in order to organize and make meaning from the first cycle codes. I organized the first cycle codes by clustering them under common themes, or patterns, that emerged from the interviews. I went through an iterative process of reflecting and clustering codes into code categories. I was continuously refining and restructuring the pattern codes until I felt the final codes were representative of the participants' lived experiences.

Interpretation of the themes and experiences was the most important part of the analytical process, and went beyond simple formulaic or mechanical methods on my part. Van Manen's (1990) approach to phenomenology, called hermeneutical phenomenology, is an interaction between the lived experiences (phenomenology) and the interpretation of the "texts" from participants (hermeneutics). Critical hermeneutics embraces the formation of cultural criticism "revealing power dynamics within social and cultural texts" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 311) in an attempt to connect text, participants, researchers, and social circumstances. Hermeneutical phenomenology requires the researcher to interpret the lived experiences of the participants; thus, the researcher is very involved and also considered somewhat of a participant in the interpretive process. The inclusion of hemeneutics is more focused on the interpretation of the researcher rather than on bracketing out the researchers' experience to focus on the pure experiences of the participants. As a researcher from the constructivist and critical paradigms, I

did not feel that I as able to bracket out my own views when analyzing the interview data, and I recognize that my own life experiences and epistemological paradigm affects my role in interpreting the participants' experiences. Thus, despite the seemingly mechanical and systematic data interpretation process, the interpretation of the data is a reflection on my own way of thinking and understanding of the participants' live experiences.

Trustworthiness and Validity

I recognize that trustworthiness could be an issue due to my positionality and sense of affiliation with participants' experiences. Internal validity questions how the findings from a study were congruent with reality, which is always a concern in qualitative studies. Again, as the researcher, I recognize that my interpretation of the interviews is represented as reality in the study; however, several strategies were used that will assist in the internal validity of this study. Triangulation was used to support the validity. I used two specific techniques in this proposed study: the use of multiple sources of data and peer review (Merriam, 2009). Multiple data sources were used due to the two interviews conducted with each participant and multiple sources allow me to cross-check and compare data between the two interviews. The use of two interviews also allowed me to conduct member checks, which provided feedback on my emerging findings and interpretation from the first interviews. In addition to multiple data sources, I also capitalized on utilizing my peers and their expertise in this study. Although I was the primary investigator in this study, I triangulated data with two peers who were able to critique my findings and provide alternative viewpoints. I provided data to my peers for them to review, and we then discussed their suggestions and critiques as a way to challenge and clarify my findings.

Limitations

As with all research studies, limitations do exist for this current study. First, the participants were interviewed at the end of their first year on campus. Although this does provide the opportunity for them to immediately reflect on their first year, this also may not give them enough time to fully reflect and make meaning of their first year. Also, only six of the 21 participants identify as men. This study could benefit from having a more balanced gender representation that reflects the percentage of men in the general student body. And finally, all interviews were conducted in English, which is not the primary language for any of the participants. Thus, some word choices may not truly indicate their exact meaning of their experiences. However, ample time was given to participants to respond to questions, and questions were often repeated and rephrased in order to assist in their understanding.

CHAPTER 4: CONTEXT: HISTORICAL LEGACY AND STRUCTURAL DIVERSITY

Institutional and Participant Context

This chapter reports the institutional and participant contexts in this study. The framework for understanding various elements affecting an institution's racial climate (Hurtado et al., 1999) is used to organized this chapter (Chapter 4) as well as Chapter 5. The four framework elements addressed in these two chapters are: historical legacy, structural diversity, behavioral dimension, and psychological climate.

In this chapter, I elaborate on the context of the research site and the study participants. The elements I focus on in this chapter are historical legacy and structural diversity. The historical legacy of Michigan State University addressed includes the mission of the university and the history of its international student population. The structural diversity of the site includes the demographics of students at Michigan State University, including international and Chinese students. Participant profiles are then provided for each of the 21 Chinese international student participants.

Historical Legacy of Michigan State University

The historical legacy of a university includes the institution's philosophy and mission related to diversity issues on its campus. Within this element of the framework (Hurtado et al., 1999), the emphasis is on an institution's historical response to "the entrance of diverse students and its early establishment of programs to accommodate them" (p. 9). A university's historical legacy of exclusion measures the climate for underrepresented minorities from various ethnic and racial groups (Hurtado et al., 1999). Although historical legacy has typically been used as a measure of American-based race and ethnicity, elements of historical legacy (e.g., institutional

mission and philosophy on diversity) are extended for the purpose of this study to include international students on college campuses.

From Land-Grant to World-Grant: History and Mission of MSU

Michigan State University (MSU) was founded in 1855 and received land-grant university status after President Abraham Lincoln signed the Morrill Act in 1862. The mission of the university at its inception was to be "America's first four-year college devoted to the study and teaching of agriculture" (Widder, 2005, p. 15). In recent years, Michigan State University has expanded its original purpose to include a more global dimension by stating its mission to "advance knowledge and transform lives by":

> providing outstanding undergraduate, graduate, and professional education to promising, qualified students in order to prepare them to contribute fully to society as globally engaged citizen leaders; conducting research of the highest caliber that seeks to answer questions and create solutions in order to expand human understanding and make a positive difference, both locally and globally; advancing outreach, engagement, and economic development activities that are innovative, research-driven, and lead to a better quality of life for individuals and communities, at home and around the world. (Michigan State University, 2013)

In the 1940s, Michigan State University started to enlarge its focus to infusing internationalization in its philosophical and programmatic efforts (Dressel, 1987). President John Hannah, Michigan State University's president from 1941-1969, led the charge to create more internationally focused priorities on campus, citing the need to aid in post-World War II efforts of rebuilding and restoration. In his annual report of 1944-1945, he stated:

> The American democracy, the fundamental ideology for which we are fighting, must be made a beacon of fairness and opportunity to common people everywhere, a pattern that the world will want to copy and make work for all the peoples of the world, to their own immense advantage. That will be the greatest challenge, and the education of men and women who can meet it will be the new task of our universities. (Dressel, 1987, p. 265).

This international emphasis led to many changes on campus under President Hannah's leadership. The university administration recruited faculty from other countries to teach and

engage with students. Also, the curriculum was altered to include courses focused on international perspectives, and the campus often welcomed foreign visitors who wanted to learn more about the curricular and cocurricular activities on MSU's campus. International involvement by MSU led to increased publicity and a positive reputation in both national and international contexts. By 1947, Michigan State University was ranked sixth in the nation among land-grant institutions for enrolling a high number of international students. This is similar to Michigan State University's current ranking as ninth in the nation for top institutions enrolling international students in 2012-2013 (Dressel, 1987; Institute of International Education, 2013).

Michigan State University's identity shift from being primarily a land-grant institution was gradual yet intentional in the past 60 years; now, the common phrase associated with MSU is "world grant," indicating a move towards an international campus and a globalized mission. President Lou Anna K. Simon, the current president of the university, published a monograph (Simon, 2009) that addressed the university's shift towards a global emphasis. The phrase "world grant ideal" was intended to encompass the idea of "integrating the attributes and strengths of all segments of society for the sustainable prosperity and well-being of peoples and nations throughout the world" (p. 2). Specifically, the president was urging campus constituents to extend the idea of being a land-grant institution into a "journey to affirm and to extend the core values of the Morrill Act beyond our borders, fueling and inspiring higher education's engagement with a global society in the century ahead" (p. 2). This change into a world-grant ideal led the university to an increase of movement across international borders, including ideas and research.

Historical and Current Legacy of International Students

Since the late 1800s, Michigan State University has welcomed international students who wanted to receive a land-grant education on its campus. The early international students on campus were all men who wanted to study scientific agriculture and engineering as a way to improve the agricultural system in their home country. The earliest record of international students on MSU's campus was in the 1880s, with an unclear number of enrolled international students. In 1904-1905, 16 international students enrolled at MSU out of the total 2,673 international students in the United States. By 1921, the number of students from China studying in the United States grew from 93 to 1,444 students, with China being the primary exporter of international students to the U.S. Of the 1,444 students, approximately 25 men from China studied on Michigan State University's campus, with these students leading the trend of Chinese enrollment at MSU (Widder, 2005). Over the years, particularly under President Hannah's presidency, the numbers of international students on MSU's campus continued to grow through the decades.

Although President Hannah led the internationalization of MSU, his efforts, along with those of the faculty and administrators, could not prevent problems from arising for international students on campus (Widder, 2005). The administration was "not always successful in maintaining harmony between American students and their classmates from other nations" (Widder, 2005, p. 355-356) due to prejudice and lack of understanding. The internationalization of campus was at its peak in the 1940s; however, discrimination from American students already existed on campus prior to the growing influx of international students later in the 20th century.

The first record of discrimination towards international students occurred in 1888 when

eight to ten American MSU students physically and verbally harassed three Japanese students.

All three international students soon left the university, with one student stating,

> But, now I must go out this college, because I suspect that we may not be hereafter in this
> college in comfortable condition…Yet, I fear that, all the men in this college, except a
> few, will constantly display their worst feelings upon us; or at least, some bodies will be
> in utmost animosity against us, for they naturally like their own countrymen further than
> a stranger. (Widder, 2005, p. 357).

The discrimination experienced by the Japanese students was a recurring problem during

the early history of Michigan State University. Discrimination was aimed primarily towards

Asian nationals. The negative feelings towards Asian students were likely a result of anti-

Chinese and anti-Japanese feelings before and during World War I. Although many international

students had positive experiences on MSU's campus, there were many times "prejudice bubbled

up" and American students "demeaned and hurt students who came from places that had

different cultures" (Widder, 2005, p. 356). A language barrier very likely caused the cultural

tensions since "limited ability with the English language proved to be a significant obstacle for

international students" (Widder, 2005, p. 362).

Recent discriminatory incidents have occurred on MSU's campus with three reported acts

of racial slurs against Asian students in 2012. The acts of racial slurs were published in the *State

News,* the independent student newspaper at Michigan State University. In one news report, a

current Chinese international student stated that there is "a problem with prejudice and racism

against Asians and [s/he] has heard many students say that Asian students should "Go back to

China" (Moran, 2012). Another Chinese student described his experiences walking down the

street on weekend nights and enduring the racial comments and slurs against him. This student

said that although these incidents are unsettling, "it's something that he has learned to absorb so

he can move on—until the next time it happens" (Moran, 2012). In the spring of 2012, a Twitter account named @MSU_Token_Asian would tweet stereotypical and offensive statements against Asian international students in 140 characters or less. Although this Twitter handle was deleted soon after its discovery, the aftershocks still caused discomfort for Asian students on MSU's campus.

The Chinese international student experience at Michigan State University received national attention when an article was published in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* in September 2013 (Fischer, 2013). The author of the article followed three Chinese international students from the moment of their arrival on campus until the end of their first academic year at MSU. The dominant theme in the article outlined the Chinese students' struggles to adjust to a new environment and their feelings of distance from American students, including their American roommates. The issue of language, similar to the international students in the 1940s, was a common thread through the three Chinese students' discomfort with living in an English-speaking environment on a daily basis. Another common thread through the article was the large number of MSU students from China, something that was cited by the three students as both a source of comfort and a barrier to full membership in the MSU community. The demographics of Chinese international students at MSU are addressed in the section on structural diversity.

From Dormitories to Neighborhoods: History of Residence Halls at MSU

The first documented residential facility at Michigan State University was in 1857, when the first male students stayed in a boarding hall that they dubbed "Saints' Rest" (Widder, 2005, p. 286). After Saints' Rest burned down in 1876, the first dormitory-style residence hall was built and dubbed Wells Hall. Administrators at MSU recognized that a separate facility was needed to house female students, so Williams Hall, which was opened in 1870, included a floor of rooms

specifically allotted to female students. The first facility assigned to only women was opened in 1900, and Michigan Agricultural College was able to house 120 "co-eds" in the Women's Building.

Jonathan L. Snyder was the president of the university in the late 1800s, and he believed "that his land-grant college should advance democracy" which led him to advocate for the dormitory system (Widder, 2005, p. 288). President Snyder believed that requiring all students, both rich and poor, to live in the dormitories could dismantle class distinctions. Over time, the demand for on campus housing exceeded MSU's capability to house so many students, especially after many veterans returned from war in the 1930s and 1940s (Thomas, 2008). Additional dormitories were constructed, such as Snyder-Phillips Hall for men and Campbell, Mayo, and Williams Halls for women. MSU's student enrollment continued to grow, and as a result, two additional residence halls were built in the late 1940s. Additional dormitories, namely Shaw Hall and Holmes Hall, were built in the late 1950s and early 1960s in order to accommodate the large influx of students.

There was no record of international students living on campus in MSU's archives. However, historical accounts about the racial integration of students of color in residence halls were recorded. Although MSU was conscious of the benefit of requiring all students to live on campus, racial tensions prevented African-American students from being permitted to reside in the residence halls. In the early 1900s, Black women and Black men were not welcomed in the dormitories (Widder, 2005). In 1940, African-American students were allocated "a space in Wells Hall reserved for Negro men students" (Thomas, 2008, p. 51). The residential options for African-American students were described as "undesirable basement rooms in the dormitories or found housing off campus" (Thomas, 2008, p. 54). After President Hannah assumed the college

presidency in 1941, he made it a priority to integrate students in the residence halls. William

Burke, a reporter for the Lansing State Journal, wrote in a 1957 article that "one of Hannah's

first acts after taking office 'was to integrate white and Negro students in dormitory rooms'"

(Thomas, 2008 p. 53). President Hannah was successful in integrating White and Black students

into residence halls despite the alarm and dismay from other administrators and faculty.

Although racial integration of residence halls was established under President Hannah's

presidency, the result of the integration produced a residential environment that would often have

climate issues for underrepresented students.

Current residential system. The dormitory system that President Snyder established in

the late 1800s still exists in the present day. All first year students are required to live on campus

according to the Michigan State University Housing Terms and Conditions (Residence

Education and Housing Services, 2014). The only exceptions granted are to students who are:

married, 20 years or older, U.S. armed services veterans, living with a legal guardian, or taking

six or fewer credits during the semester. Students are permitted to move off campus at the start of

their second academic year at the university. Thus, almost all international students are required

to live on campus during their first year since very few of them will fulfill the requirements of

the exemption policy.

Michigan State University currently has approximately 15,000 students who live on

campus in 27 residence halls (Residence Education and Housing Services, 2014). The

Department of Residence Education and Housing Services (REHS) has primary responsibility

for all areas impacting students' on campus living experiences, including residence education,

housing assignments, facilities, and operations. REHS's mission statement states: "We are

dedicated to creating a safe, sustainable and inclusive residential environment that enhances the

MSU experience and inspires our community to: Live. Learn. Lead. Impact the World"

(Residence Education and Housing Services, 2014).

The 27 residence halls are organized into five distinct neighborhoods: Brody, North, East, River Trail, and South Neighborhoods (Neighborhoods, 2014). The Neighborhood concept was established in 2010 after REHS engaged in a strategic planning process in 2007-2008 to determine how they could deliver outstanding Spartan experiences to all students. REHS was facing a challenge at that time:

> How do we create a residential experience that provides students with opportunities for intentional interactions, both academically and socially, that allow students to discover their unique strengths, celebrate the rich diversity of community, and connect to the Spartan experience? (Neighborhoods, 2014).

The emphasis for the Neighborhoods project was to cluster residence halls into an "urban village" model, which centers the village around the business and retail area with residents living in the surrounding residential neighborhoods (Neighborhoods, 2014). Thus, the Neighborhood concept at Michigan State University "seeks to integrate academics, student services and operations into a seamless, intentional and connected experience for students at a scale that makes a large institution feel small" (Neighborhoods, 2014). Each Neighborhood houses an Engagement Center, a space that is designated to be a hub for important student services and departments. For example, each Engagement Center provides access to tutoring, academic advising, and health care, all of which are located in one central location in each Neighborhood. Each Engagement Center also includes study lounges, game rooms, and other spaces that are intended for academic and social use. The Neighborhoods' goal is for MSU students to "use engagement centers to prepare for college and the future, connect campus resources, achieve academic success, live healthy lifestyles, explore new cultures and join the MSU community" (Neighborhoods, 2014). The Neighborhood concept was created as a way to connect with

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residential students in a meaningful way to ensure their success both socially and academically during their time at Michigan State University.

Structural Diversity of Michigan State University

Structural diversity refers to an institution's numerical representation of racial and ethnic groups on campus (Hurtado et al., 1999). This element is typically used by to itemize the representation of domestic racial/ethnic groups. Structural diversity is often considered "the first important step in the process of improving the climate for diversity" (Hurtado et al., 1999, p. 19), based on the idea that numerical representation ensures a critical mass that is needed to improve the experiences of historically underrepresented groups. In this current study, structural diversity may only appear to be a minor issue for Chinese international students since they are heavily represented on MSU's campus. However, structural diversity is very relevant to understanding Chinese international students for multiple reasons. First, although there are many students from China, they are still considered a minority population since they are in a majority white American campus. This contributes to their social stigma (Steele, 1992). Second, the large number of Chinese students can also serve as a barrier to Chinese student interactions with American students since they have the option to stay primarily with those with whom they are familiar. Finally, Chinese international students are considered a minority based on their non-Western phenotype and cultural representation, all of which have led to discriminatory acts and cultural dissonance throughout MSU's timeline of internationalization (Fischer, 2013; Moran, 2012; Widder, 2005). Elaborating on student demographics will assist in understanding the numerical impact of Chinese international students at Michigan State University.

Domestic and International Student Demographics

Michigan State University has a very large undergraduate population, with full time undergraduate student enrollment at over 33,000 students in fall 2012, the entering year for the participants in this current study (Office of Planning and Budgets, 2012). The overall enrollment at the university increased 2.6% in fiscal year 2011, with a 5% increase in first-time, degree-seeking first-year student enrollment. The international student population also grew between 2011 and 2012, with the numbers increasing 27% overall and 21.4% for first-year student from countries outside of the United States. The increase in international students at MSU surpassed the national trend of a 6.5% increase (Institute for International Education, 2012b). Chinese undergraduate international students grew the most in one year: 24% for all undergraduates and 41% for first-year students from China (Office of the Registrar, 2013). Approximately one in eight first-year MSU students identify China as their country of origin. (See Table 4.1).

In 2012, China was the top area of origin for all international students in the United States, and this was consistent with Chinese enrollment at MSU. Nationally, China exported 235,597 graduate and undergraduate students to the United States in 2012-2013 (Institute for International Education, 2012a). At MSU, primary international enrollment came from China (Office of International Students and Scholars, 2012). Conversely, the retention rates between fall 2012 and fall 2013 indicate a sharp drop for Chinese international students from the first to second year of college (Office of International Students and Scholars, 2012). Overall retention of all first-year students from 2012 to 2013 dropped 9% (Office of Planning and Budgets, 2013). A larger drop in international student numbers that year was reported by the MSU Office of the Registrar (2013), with only 56% of the Fall 2012 entering international students remaining at MSU. Of all the Chinese international students who entered MSU's 2012 first-year class, only

54% remained enrolled for their subsequent year (Office of the Registrar, 2013). The low

retention numbers of Chinese international students illuminate the need to examine the

experiences of first-year Chinese students in order to understand their low retention rates after

just one year at Michigan State University.

Table 4.1. Demographic changes in undergraduate students at MSU from 2011 to 2012

Demographic	Fall 2011 Enrollment		Fall 2012 Enrollment		Percentage of Change from 2011-12	
	Total Degree-Seeking	Full-Time First-Year Students	Total Degree-Seeking	Full-Time First-Year Students	Total Degree-Seeking	Full-Time First-Year Students
Total Undergraduate Students*	33,134	7,827	34,002	8,218	+2.6%	+5%
International Undergraduate Students*	3,351	1,031	4,254	1,252	+27%	+21.4%
Chinese Undergraduate Students**	3,017	1,094	3,729	1,543	+24.0%	+41.0%

* Data from the MSU Office of Planning and Budgets
** Data from the MSU Office of the Registrar

Demographics of Residence Halls

The MSU Department of Residence Education and Housing Services (REHS) houses

students in 27 residence halls (Residence Education and Housing Services, 2014). In fall 2012,

7,355 out of 7,615 eligible first-year students lived on campus, indicating that 96% of all eligible

entering students lived in residence halls. In that same academic year, 1,051 Chinese students

lived in the residence halls, making up 14.3% of the total first-year residential population. Seven

Chinese students did not live on campus, but they were exempt because, as permanent residents,

they lived with their families (K. Collins, personal communication, December 11, 2013).

Residence halls at Michigan State University are divided into five neighborhoods: Brody, North, East, River Trail, and South Neighborhoods (Neighborhoods, 2014). The largest representation of Chinese international students is in the East Neighborhood, with Chinese students making up 18.2% of the total residential population. (See Table 4.3). The high percentage in East Neighborhood is primarily a product of Iota Hall, which houses a total of 455 Chinese students out of a total 1,155 students. The demographics of the participants are representative of the high number of Chinese students in Iota Hall since eight out of 21 participants all reside in Iota. Table 3 displays the total student number as well as the total number of Chinese students in each neighborhood. The numbers displayed include all residential students, including first-year and more advanced students.

Table 4.2. Chinese student demographics by neighborhood in 2012

Neighborhood	Total Students	Total Chinese Students	Percentage of Chinese Students
Brody Neighborhood	2,046	172	8.4%
North Neighborhood	2,456	111	4.5%
East Neighborhood	3,578	650	18.2%
River Trail Neighborhood	2,755	353	12.8%
South Neighborhood	4,040	206	5.1%

Participants in the Study

This section presents brief biographical summaries of each participant. All participants were members of Michigan State University's entering first-year class in fall 2012. The following summaries include information about their hometowns, anecdotes about their experiences, and their future plans after graduating from Michigan State University. A summary

of participants' demographics in Table 4 includes the participants' pseudonym, age, gender, residence hall, high school type, and type of assigned roommate, all at the time of when the interviews were conducted. (See Table 4.4).

Table 4.3. Participant Demographics

Participant*	Age	Gender	Residence Hall*/ Neighborhood	High School Type	Roommate
D	20	Male	Lambda/River Trail	Chinese	Non-Chinese
Riverkid	19	Female	Kappa/North	Chinese	Chinese
Jack	18	Male	Alpha/North	Chinese	Chinese
Sunny	19	Female	Omega/South	International (U.S.)	Chinese
Zoey	19	Female	Iota/East	Chinese	Non-Chinese
Mora	19	Female	Lambda/River Trail	Chinese	Non-Chinese
Lu	19	Female	Lambda/River Trail	Chinese	Non-Chinese
Waffle	19	Female	Iota/East	Chinese	Chinese
Mike	20	Male	Iota/East	Chinese	Chinese
Peter	18	Male	Beta/Brody	Chinese	Chinese
Kay	18	Female	Epsilon/South	International (China)	Non-Chinese
Julie	20	Female	Iota/East	Chinese	Chinese
Tom	19	Male	Iota/East	Chinese	Chinese
Shirley	21	Female	Lambda/River Trail	International (China)	Non-Chinese
Rachel	20	Female	Iota/East	Chinese	Chinese
Gwen	19	Female	Iota/East	Chinese	Chinese
Grace	19	Female	Lambda/River Trail	Chinese	Chinese
Vicky	18	Female	Iota/East	Chinese	Chinese
Camilla	19	Female	Epsilon/South	International (China)	Non-Chinese
Nancy	19	Female	Gamma/Brody	International (U.S.)	Chinese
Derek	20	Male	Theta/East	Chinese	Non-Chinese

* pseudonyms to protect confidentiality of participants

D

D is a 20-year-old male student from Nantong, which is located in the Jiangshu province. His roommate is a White American student, and they became good friends. D lived in Lamba Hall his first year and transferred to another university (Western University) in the summer after his first year at Michigan State University. D noticed that there are fewer Chinese students at

Western University and "likes that better." D had a mix of friends his first year, with his friend group including Chinese, American, and other international students. He felt that his adjustment to college in the United States was easier for him than for other international students for two reasons: first, he attended a high school that was not in his hometown so he was accustomed to living away from his family. The other reason for his easier adjustment was because of his strong English skills and comfort with communicating with diverse people. As a computer science major, D plans to stay in the United States for a few years after graduating to work and then move back to China.

Riverkid

Riverkid, a female student, is a 19-year-old Engineering major from Chongqing. She attended college for one year in China, but due to low test scores, was admitted into a college that was not as good as she wanted. She decided to transfer to the United States because she felt that Chinese higher education did not provide as strong of an education as college in the United States; thus, she ended up attending Michigan State University. Riverkid struggled her first year to keep her grades at or above a 3.5, citing language issues as a barrier to doing well in her classes. She was assigned a Chinese international student as her first roommate and due to roommate conflicts, Riverkid moved to another residence hall to live with a Chinese friend. She does not have many American friends, stating that her "English is not as good as American students so they might not understand [her]" and that it is "harder for me to make friends with them." After graduation, Riverkid plans to stay in the United States for 10 years, with the hopes of getting a Ph.D. before moving back to China.

Jack

Jack is an 18-year-old male student from Shenzhen. He moved to Alpha Hall second semester after deciding that he could no longer live with his Chinese roommate in Iota Hall. He had a great second semester, much of it due to having one Chinese and two American roommates in his quad. Jack really appreciated the blend of cultures in his room "because sometimes we talk about things only Chinese can understand. And with the two American guys we can also talk about American culture." An avid sports fan, Jack participated in intramural sports which he said allowed him to meet more non-Chinese students. As a Computer Science major, he was not sure if he will stay in the United States or return to China. His decision on where to go will depend on his social relationships and what work opportunities may arise.

Sunny

Sunny is a 19-years-old female and is from Nanjing, which is located in Jiangsu province. An Economics major, Sunny plans to go to Canada after graduation since her parents will immigrate there next year. She also spent four years in an American high school prior to attending Michigan State University, which she credits for her comfort and ability to adapt quickly to college life at MSU. Sunny was able to achieve a high grade point average in high school; thus, she thought she would be able to do well academically at MSU although she struggled to keep her GPA at a 3.5 her first year. She ended up having to retake a few online classes over the summer while she was at home in China. Although she is happy that she moved off campus for her second year, she does miss being in the dorms because it is the best way to make new friends—especially American friends.

Zoey

Zoey is a 19-year-old female Advertising major from Qufu, which is located in the Shandong province. She spent one year studying at Sichuan University where she spent most of her time preparing for the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Zoey transferred to Michigan State University after a close Chinese friend recommended it. She has very limited interactions with American students because "I'm not that type of person," referring to not being a "party girl." She did, however, appreciate practicing her English speaking skills with her American roommate her first year. She made the choice to move off campus to live with another Chinese student her second year. After graduation, Zoey plans to get a job in the United States for a few years and then return to China since all of her family and friends are there. If she does choose to pursue a masters degree, she will stay in the United States to complete a graduate program.

Mora

Mora, a 19-year-old female student, is from Beijing. She did not like the food nor the weather at Michigan State University, and was very excited to spend her summer after her first year at home in China. However, she was very excited to return to the United States. In her first year, she was temporarily placed in a room with two other students, and ended up moving out and living with an American. Her roommate was helpful in her transition, explaining how to write emails or order things online. After graduation, Mora hopes to use her degree in finance to find a job. She wants to work in the United States and hopefully buy a house because she loves living in the United States. Compared to the bustle in Beijing, people in the United States are busy yet still make time "to take care of others and to hang out," Mora observes.

Lu

Lu is 19-years-old and a female student from Taiyuan, which is located near Beijing. Lu spent a year in the English Learning Center at Michigan State University, leading to feelings of guilt since she perceived taking language classes as a way to "waste time and money." She chose to stay in the United States in the summer after her first year and was able to accumulate 12 academic credits, which made her very happy. She chose to live off campus for her second year and was an orientation leader for new international students. Lu likes to help other students by writing articles that are posted online for new Chinese international students. A marketing major, she plans to stay in the United States for two years after graduation to either work or attend graduate school. After the two years, she will return to China since all of her friends and family are there.

Waffle

Waffle, a 19-year-old female, comes from the city of Tsingtao, which was once occupied by Germany. She was an education major her first year, but changed her major before the start of her second year at Michigan State University because she "doesn't like children." As a commercial recreation and tourism major, Waffle hopes to work in a hotel or travel agency when she graduates but is not sure if she will stay in the United States or return to China. She does not have many American friends, although she says she did have a good experience living in the residence hall her first year. Waffle's feeling of connection to her residential community came from her resident assistant who helped make the residential floor feel like home. Although she does enjoy living off campus her second year, Waffle misses the convenience of living near campus.

Mike

Mike is 20 years old and comes to Michigan State University from his hometown of Xian. He attended a normal high school in China that is known as the best one in the province. He attended college for two years in China as an electrical engineering major, but decided to transfer to Michigan State University so he could change his major to landscape architecture. Mike wanted an American roommate so he could learn more about American culture and practice speaking English, but after being paired with a Chinese roommate, Mike was okay with living with someone who shared his same culture. In an effort to make more friends, Mike joined a Bible study group his second semester and was able to make more American friends. After graduation, Mike plans to stay in the United States for a few years to get his landscape architecture license and then return to China to live and work.

Peter

Peter is an 18-year-old male native of Shenzhen, which is located near Hong Kong. His father was influential in his decision to attend college in the United States and instilled the belief that the United States will provide more opportunities for advancement. Peter really likes the location of Michigan State University, stating that he appreciates the natural beauty of the area. He has some American friends, but hangs out primarily with other Chinese international students because they share the same culture. He decided to live on campus in his same residence hall for his second year so he can continue to practice his English speaking skills. He felt that living off campus "would be bad for the language, because off campus, I have to just live with Chinese people. Because it's convenient and we don't use English in the house."A finance major, Peter plans to return to China after graduation. Although he would like to stay in the United States for a few years, he felt that he should return to China to be with his family.

Kay

   Kay, an 18-year-old woman, was born in Shenzhen. Her family currently lives in Hong Kong. She was a participant in a living-learning community focused on international relations and political science in her first year at Michigan State University, and she changed her major from international relations after realizing her interest shifted to economics. Kay was happy to leave her living-learning community because she felt a lot of stress from the heavy workload. English language capabilities were at the heart of her experience as an international student. She hired an English language tutor at the start of her second year at the university so she could practice conversing in English. She believes that "your language level basically stands for your living standards here." After graduation, Kay plans to return to her family in China, unless she is accepted to a graduate program in New York City where she can enjoy the city life.

Julie

   Julie is 20 years old and comes to Michigan State University from Yanji, located in Jilin province. An accounting major, she applied for the international relations living-learning community and was accepted for her second year at the university. Julie became very involved on campus after focusing only on her studies her first semester. In her second semester on campus, she joined a student support group for new prospective students who have questions about life on campus. She also served as an orientation leader for new international students and was the only international student to get involved on the sexual assault prevention student group. Julie is generally very happy to be at Michigan State University, and mentioned that language and cultural barriers could be problematic but recommended that international students needed to continue to try to get involved with the campus culture. She plans to apply to law school and stay in the United States for 5-6 years after graduation before returning to China.

Tom

Tom, 19 years old, is from the town of Xian in China. He went home for the summer

after his first year and discussed changing his major with his parents. He wanted to change to

either kinesiology or film studies, but his parents convinced him to continue with his studies in

supply chain management. Tom chose to return to living on campus for his second year, and as a

whole, his second year experience has been very positive since there are fewer Chinese

international students in his current residence hall. While at home for the summer, Tom says that

his parents called him an "American boy" now because he is more free and open with his

opinions than he was prior to leaving for the United States. Tom plans to stay in the United

States to work for a few years and then will bring new ideas back home to China.

Shirley

Shirley, who is 21 years old, studied at an international high school in her hometown of

Guangdong. The teachers at her high school mostly came from the United States and would

teach "a lot of U.S. history and their culture, maybe reduce culture shock." Shirley was very

excited to come to the United States and views herself as a bridge between Chinese international

students and domestic American students due to her experience with exposure to cross cultural

communication in an American high school. She also has a sibling who recently became a

student at Michigan State University, and her parents just moved to California. After graduation,

Shirley plans to be an accountant but is unsure of where she will live since much of her plans

will depend on her parents' recommendations.

Rachel

Rachel, a 20-year-old female from Tsingtao, attended high school in her province. She is

very involved in different organizations on campus, stating that this helps her meet more people

and get more experience with American culture. Rachel decided to come to the United States and Michigan State University because she did not get into a "good" university in China. Her parents encouraged her to go abroad. She enjoyed living in her residence hall her first year because it provided opportunities to meet more American students which is very important to her desire of having an American college experience. Rachel sometimes feels a little limited by her English skills and her international status, explaining her frustration that some companies will not hire international students due to visa issues. As a supply chain management major, Rachel plans to complete her degree at Michigan State University and then return to China to live with her family.

Gwen

Gwen is a 19-year-old female who comes from the city of Jiaxin in the Zhejiang province. She did not have many American friends during her first year in the residence halls because she "only hung out with one Chinese friend." She decided to live on campus her second year in a different residence hall and has experienced an increase in her cross cultural friendships after becoming more outgoing after her first year. Advice she would give to incoming Chinese international students is: "if you want to make friends with American people, you should be outgoing." A hospitality business major, Gwen plans to return home to China after graduation. Her preference would be to move to Hong Kong or Singapore, but stated if she received an internship in the United States, she would remain here.

Grace

Grace, a 19-year-old female Finance major from Jinhua city, is very open about her love of music and her happiness with having American friends. American students were her friendship base although she did have some Chinese friends as well. As a whole, she had a very

positive experience living in the residence hall her first year, stating that she was able to meet a lot of people and make a lot of friends. Her only complaint was the drunk people—"especially American guys"—who would make rude comments to her about being Chinese when they were drunk and in public spaces. She would like to stay in the United States after graduation; however, since she is an only child, her parents expect her to go back to China to run her father's factory.

Vicky

Vicky, an 18-year-old female, is from the city of Zibo. She decided at the age of 15 that she wanted to attend college in the United States after her father encouraged her to think about it. She chose her roommate based on the fact that her roommate is Chinese but had lived in the United States during her high school years. Vicky felt that her roommate had the perfect blend of having Chinese culture yet, due to having lived in the U.S. in high school, she was able to help Vicky better understand American culture. She is an accounting major and, although she is unsure exactly what she will do after graduating, she knows that she wants to stay in the United States.

Camilla

Camilla is a 19-year-old woman from Jinhua city, located in Zhejiang province. She studied in a foreign language high school in China and entered into a special educational program affiliated with the Canadian government. Despite her academic affiliation with Canada, Camilla decided to follow her best friend to the United States. She liked her residence hall, and, as the only Chinese student on her floor, felt like she could be friendly "but not friends" with the American students on her floor. Camilla is a general management major.

Nancy

Nancy is a 19 years old female from Beijing. She lived in the United States for three years in high school, in the states of Colorado, Kansas, and Pennsylvania, before finally graduating from a high school in Colorado. She became interested in attending high school in the United States after her teachers at her Canadian high school in China recommended that she participate in an exchange program. After spending three years in the United States, Nancy feels that she is "kind of half and half"—living half in Chinese culture and half in American culture. She socializes primarily with Chinese international students and feels that Americans sometimes will "look at you like you are very weird." Nancy is a chemical engineering major.

Derek

Derek is a 20-year-old male from Shijiazhuang city. He was happy to get assigned to an American roommate, claiming that an American roommate could help him practice his English and be his bridge across cultures. He was living in a traditional residence hall his first semester, but then was accepted to a pre-med living-learning community and had to move residences. He was the only Chinese student in his living-learning community, and as a result, he felt very lonely. Derek had difficulties keeping up with the assignments due to English being his second language, so he decided to change his major from Biology to Computer Science. Changing his major allowed him to move off campus for his second year since he was no longer associated with the living-learning program, which he was very excited about since he could live with his Chinese friends.

Summary of Historical Legacy, Structural Diversity, and Participant Biographies

In this chapter, I elaborated on the context of the research site and the study participants. The information in this chapter provides context and frames the study. This chapter utilized two

elements from Hurtado et al.'s (1999) framework for understanding racial climate: historical legacy and structural diversity. These two components established the foundation for understanding Michigan State University's racial climate, specifically related to the history, mission, and current demographics of the university. Understanding the context of the institution enhances understanding of Chinese students' experiences in the residence halls, and, ultimately, provides insight on factors that affect the participants' sense of belonging.

The context of Michigan State University is better understood by examining the historical legacy and structural diversity of the institution. I provided an overview of the history, mission, and goals of Michigan State University as they relate to internationalizing the campus and student body. The historical facts as well as demographic information presented some relevant factors to contemplate in regards to the institutional support and drive for admitting a high number of Chinese students.

Through the participant context summaries, I illustrated that Chinese international students are not a homogenous group and each student has a very different background and experiences. Similarly, I often clustered domestic American students into one homogenous group throughout this study, and I recognize that there are extreme differences within the domestic student population, including race, ethnicity, and culture, all of which have an influence on their student development and engagement with other students. As I summarize and discuss additional findings in the subsequent chapter, I acknowledge that there are nuances and complexities of differences within both the domestic and international student groups, and although the findings and discussion may be broad, I emphasize that it is impossible to completely generalize the experiences of domestic and international college students.

This chapter described the historical legacy and structural diversity elements for Michigan State University. In the next chapter, Michigan State University's behavioral dimension and psychological climate are outlined as they relate to Chinese undergraduate students. As illustrated by Hurtado et al.'s (1999) framework for understanding racial climate, the two elements addressed in this chapter interact with the behavioral dimension and psychological climate in the next chapter to better illustrate the factors that influence institutional racial climate. All of these factors combine to create an environment that ultimately affects Chinese students' sense of belonging in their residences halls.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS: BEHAVIORAL DIMENSION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CLIMATE

In this chapter, I present the findings from this study of Chinese international students' sense of belonging in residence halls. The previous chapter (Chapter 4) included the context of the research site and the study participants. Chapters 4 and 5 are organized using Hurtado et al.'s (1999) framework for understanding various elements affecting an institution's racial climate. The framework includes four different elements: historical legacy, structural diversity, behavioral dimension, and psychological climate. Chapter 4 addressed the historical legacy and structural diversity of the study site. This chapter focuses on the remaining two elements of Hurtado et al.'s framework.

Findings from participant interviews are organized under two broad categories from Hurtado et al.'s (1999) framework: the behavioral dimension and the psychological climate. Within the behavioral dimension, two overarching themes are discussed: the role of language and roommate/floormate relationships. Three overarching themes are discussed under the heading of psychological climate. These include the perception of language ability, cultural tension with American students, and participants' awareness of their outsider status in the residence halls. The behavioral and psychological experiences are intertwined with students' sense of belonging in the residence halls; thus, the concept of sense of belonging is addressed throughout the findings from this study.

Behavioral Dimension

According to Hurtado et al. (1999), the behavioral dimension of an institution's racial climate includes the social interactions among different racial and ethnic groups on a college campus. The nature of relations among multiple groups is examined within this element, with an emphasis on students' involvement on campus and interactions with other groups. The relational

nature of the participants' experiences with other students directly influences their sense of

belonging in the residence halls. Sense of belonging, which focuses on mattering and making

connections, blends together with the behavioral dimension in this section of the findings from

this study. The participants' lived experiences are organized within the behavioral dimension,

which emphasizes social interactions between the Chinese international students and their

domestic peers. (See Table 5.1).

The behavioral dimension includes the role that language plays in the intergroup

interactions, specifically acting as either a bridge or barrier to Chinese international students'

connections to domestic students. Also, the participants' relationships with their roommates and

floormates are examined, with an emphasis on how these relationships serve as a cultural bridge

or lead to discomfort in their residence halls. An overview of cultural tensions between the

participants and domestic students is provided. All of these factors affect participants' overall

sense of belonging in their residence halls.

Table 5.1. Findings Related to the Behavioral Dimension

Theme	Subtheme	Subtheme	Subtheme	Subtheme
Role of language	Bridge to belonging	Barrier to connecting with domestic students		
Interactions with roommate/floormates	American roommates as a cultural bridge	Chinese students as a barrier to connecting	Cultural differences with American students	Communication problems at 'home'

"Better English is the Better Mind": Role of Language in Social Interactions

The role of language continuously emerged as a central theme in all participants'

experiences. Most participants noted that the desire to improve their English skills fueled their

interactions with domestic students since better speaking skills was their primary reason for wanting to make American friends. Very few participants expressed confidence in their English language skills. Participants who were more confident with their English language aptitude spoke of their ability to relate to American students and to develop meaningful relationships; conversely, students with less confidence in their English skills were open about their discomfort in communicating with native English speakers.

Language as a bridge to belonging. Not surprisingly, most of the students who were confident with their language abilities either attended an international high school in China or attended an American high school prior to attending Michigan State University. Of the 21 participants, five Chinese students attended either an international high school in China or a high school in the United States. These five students had an easier time adjusting to American culture and the English language since they had preparation in high school prior to attending Michigan State University. Their language ability affected their sense of belonging to the campus community because these students felt somewhat prepared by the groundwork established in their high school years. Shirley shared this thought when asked about how her attendance at an American high school in China influenced her current experience with domestic students:

> Normally in high school, the normal student in China, they don't really study a lot about the culture of America but for us, we study American history. We study another thing—is that we know how to communicate with American guys and girls, in like a different way. Because Chinese girls is pretty shy. They don't know to face-to-face talk with American guy or girl. They cannot eye contact. With us, we practiced, hey, you need to do one thing. If you want to respect Americans, men or women, you need to eye contact with them so they know you are listening to them. (Shirley)

Despite having attended either an international high school in China or a high school in the United States, the five students did have some problems adjusting to speaking English with domestic students at Michigan State University. Although they had a better understanding of

Western culture and better basic language skills than participants who attended Chinese high schools, they still had trouble grasping the colloquial terms used in everyday conversation. One of the biggest challenges that many Chinese students experienced was the inability to find common conversation topics. For example, Nancy, who lived in the United States for three years of high school, reported difficulty in finding common conversation topics with American students:

> Americans think that Chinese are just in a group and won't like to talk to them. But the thing is, Chinese students think that American students don't want to talk to Chinese. The Chinese think that if they talk to Americans, Americans won't talk to them because of poor English or some other things. It would be hard to find common topics between Chinese and Americans because it happened to me. (Nancy)

All participants understood the value of English speaking skills in being able to connect with domestic students. Kay, who attended an international high school, spoke extensively about the role that language played in her experience at Michigan State University. Her English language ability exceeded all of the other interviewed participants; however, despite her high language level, Kay disclosed that she hired an English language tutor at the beginning of her second year at Michigan State University to practice conversing in English. Kay addressed the need for better English skills in order to have a better life in the United States, when she stated:

> The not very awesome part is the language barrier. One theory I really believe is that living in the United States, your language level basically stands for your living standards here. Better English is the better mind. If we have American style mind and you speak English really good, as an international student, you can live very well in the United States. But if you stay here for three or four years and you still speak broken English, then you have a very sucks life. (Kay)

Kay recognized the necessity of being confident enough to approach American students. She stated that as a foreigner, she had to "push myself to involve into this culture" in order to "live a good life" in the United States.

Only one participant expressed full confidence in his ability to speak English with native

English speakers. D identified himself as someone who loves to speak and loves to learn languages. D stated that he had a relatively easy time adjusting to life at Michigan State University despite attending a Chinese high school. He credited his ease in finding new friends and feeling comfortable to his English speaking abilities:

> For me, it's pretty easy for me to adjust to the life here because a lot of—some Chinese students don't speak English very well. For me, I'm kind of open and speak not really bad. And I talk a lot and I go to a lot exhibits with my friends. I like the life here, but a little different from the lifestyle in my hometown. Some of my friends, they told me that they have a hard time adjusting to the life here because of some cultural problems, language problems. (D)

D spoke openly about his Chinese friends having difficulty with cultural and language problems. When asked what makes it different for him, he stated that his willingness to "put himself out there" was what gave him the advantage over other international students. As a result of being confident in his language abilities, D was able to make more American friends and because of these friendships, they were able to find more topics in common, such as sports and clothes. Thus, D was able to use his confidence in his language ability as a bridge to connect with domestic American students, leading him to a higher sense of belonging. This was not the case for most participants in this study.

Language ability as a barrier to connecting with domestic students. D was the outlier when compared to other participants' experiences with language. Students who were currently taking English as a Second Language (ESL) classes or had more trouble verbalizing their thoughts in English discussed their shyness or fear of approaching American students to make friends. They felt that their lack of English language skills was a hindrance to communicating with American students, and more often than not, felt that they could not even get their courage up to approach domestic students. Mora, who attended high school in Beijing, had a difficult time communicating with the American students on her floor.

The jokes—I can't understand and sometimes when they are talking too fast, I cannot understand what they are talking about. When they ask me something, I don't know how to experience my feelings or how to transfer my feelings. I feel really awkward and embarrassed. So it's hard. (Mora)

Mora's experience was fairly common among many of the participants, including, Tom, who attended high school in China. Tom also had difficulty befriending American students on his floor, despite the fact that his residence hall had a high number of international students. Tom, who had a Chinese roommate, put effort into meeting American students but had a difficult time sustaining these relationships. He credited this to not being fully able to join in conversations with American students on the residence hall floors. Tom spoke of this, stating:

They talk about their own lives and I have no idea what they are talking about. Or I don't know how to make a sentence to make comments to them. I feel bad to interrupt them to make a new conversation. So I just follow them. (Tom)

Tom followed that statement by saying that he thought he did well participating passively in conversation with the students on the floor. However, he noted that American students very seldom initiated additional conversation with him. This confused Tom, who said, "I don't know why. And they never call me even though I gave them my phone number."

Riverkid also found it difficult to approach American students due to her lack of confidence in her English speaking skills. She expected it to be difficult to make American friends since prior to arriving to the United States, she browsed some discussion forums on the internet. The forums included several Chinese international students who said that the language barrier was a big problem for international students in the United States. Although Riverkid knew it would be difficult, she was not prepared for how hard it was in reality for her to make friends in her residence hall her first year. She felt that she lacked the ability to connect with American students, stating:

I tried to find students to be my friend, but sadly, I didn't find them. I think the biggest barrier is the language. Because I find for international students, Chinese is really different from English. It's hard to manage English. (Riverkid)

Many study participants found it difficult to find American friends due to the language barrier. Understandably, most of them found friends within the larger Chinese international student community. Several participants spoke very postively of the strong Chinese community at Michigan State University, often using the term "family" to talk about other Chinese international students. However, although there were benefits of having a large Chinese population on campus, the high number of Chinese students appeared to impact negatively some of the participants' interactions with American students.

Rachel explained she made a conscious effort to avoid other Chinese students in her residence hall. She was very involved in several student organizations on campus and viewed herself as being fairly successful in making American friends. She observed:

Before I go abroad, Chinese people, I heard about that if they stay together, they won't practice English. They will always do something, talk about shopping, guys want to play computer games. I try to avoid getting in touch with Chinese people too much. I try to get courage to talk to foreign people so I can learn more about their culture and something like that. (Rachel)

Rachel made a distinct choice not to immerse herself completely into the Chinese community at Michigan State University. She spoke very candidly about how having too many Chinese friends would hinder her developing relationships with American students, so she was deliberate about interacting mostly with American students on her floor. However, she did join some of the Chinese student organizations on campus because she realized that, "sometimes you need Chinese friends because they can understand you better and can communicate better."

Although Rachel originally made the choice to avoid the larger Chinese community early in the academic year, she still felt the need for a Chinese community despite the problems that a

complete immersion in the Chinese groups could bring. Similarly, Derek realized this quickly

after he moved to a new residence hall. Derek had to change rooms after his first semester

because he was admitted to a pre-med living-learning community for the spring semester. As a

member of a pre-med living-learning community, he was required to live in a specific residence

hall with other members of his academic program. Derek moved from Iota Hall, which had a

large international student population, to Theta Hall, where he was the only Chinese international

student. Derek spoke passionately about the loneliness he experienced as the only Chinese

student in Iota Hall:

> I feel really lonely. Because most of the time, there are Chinese classmates and they can help each other. But in my classes, I'm doing it all alone. The experience is at first, I had a biology lab. And all of my classmates have American partners. It's really hard. It's not the course that is hard, it's the language that's hard. I have a different language studying hard things, so I have a really hard time understanding. They get together to talk and discuss a question. I try to listen and understand, so I don't have any time to speak up and give my opinion. So what I do is keep quiet during three-hour meetings. I really feel uncomfortable. So I quit and I dropped that class. (Derek)

The isolation that Derek felt was the result of a language barrier. He had a difficult time

engaging with students in his classes, all of whom were also living with him in his residence hall.

He felt very disengaged from his classmates who, at first, would attempt to engage him in class

discussions but then quickly stopped because he was unable to keep up with the pace of the

conversations. Derek felt incapable of having meaningful interactions with the American

students, and this lack of belonging to his living-learning community affected his satisfaction in

both his classes and his residence hall.

Similar to Derek's experience, other participants described the isolation they felt from

domestic students in their residence halls. Unlike Derek who participated in a living-learning

program, Lu spent her first year taking English language classes through the university's English

Learning Center. Although she was considered a full-time first-year student, Lu did not take any

university courses; rather, she was required to take English classes to improve her language proficiency before she was allowed to take university courses. She was not very connected to American students since only international students were in her classes, and her language proficiency was a barrier to communicating with other students on her floor. Lu explained this by stating:

> The persons I talked to most are the Chinese. And I still have one problem. When talking to Americans, classmates or friends, I don't know what I should say. I don't know how to better communicate with them. (Lu)

Overall, language was a theme that continuously emerged when participants discussed their interactions with domestic students. English language proficiency was repeatedly mentioned as either a bridge or barrier to the participants' engagement at Michigan State University. Every single participant brought up language proficiency as the biggest factor in their feelings of connectedness and belonging to the Michigan State University community. Most students recognized that their language skills were the foundation of all interactions with students, especially with domestic American students. The intergroup dynamics between Chinese international students and domestic students were heavily influenced by English language ability. The role of language is also a factor in subsequent behavioral themes that emerged from participant interviews.

"Better To Get an American Roommate": Interactions with Roommates/Floormates

The importance of one's roommate is also related to the role of language in the participants' experiences. Participants' relationships with their roommates and floormates varied; however, even those with roommate/floormate problems noted the value of living on campus as a way to meet more American students. Sunny, who moved off campus to an apartment for her second year, spoke about how important it was for her to live on campus as a way to form a

community:

> Because now I'm living off campus, I think that living in the dorm is the best way to meet some new friends. Especially the American friends. But when I move out, I cannot meet that many more people. And living in the dorm, sometimes I will get in trouble but still there is an RA. There are always some people to take care of you. (Sunny)

Several participants cited their frustrations with living on campus, especially with the meal plans and small living quarters. However, all of the participants stated that they were glad they lived in residence halls during their first year because it assisted in their transition to the university, particularly with interacting with domestic American students.

American roommates as a cultural bridge. Of participants who had roommates randomly assigned to them, most stated that they really wanted an American roommate. The Chinese students cited two main reasons for their desire to room with a domestic student: they would be able to practice speaking English and immerse themselves in American culture. Derek illustrated this desire for an American roommate:

> I think I am studying overseas—if I have a Chinese roommate, I believe most of the time we will only speak to each other. And we will always speak Chinese and never have my English skills improve. I think if I have a roommate who is American to build the bridge between the cultures, then I think that will be good. (Derek)

Other participants also cited their desire to practice English with an American roommate. The participants viewed having an American roommate as an automatic path to better English skills and to better understanding of American culture. Twelve of the 21 participants were assigned a Chinese roommate. Of that 12, only three requested a Chinese student for a roommate. Some participants, like Rachel, arrived on campus and were disappointed to find out they were assigned to another Chinese student. When asked about her roommate, Rachel explained:

> To be honest, I want an American student because I … it's kind of selfish, but I think if
> you have a roommate with really good English [it is good]… I even talked to my RA to
> try to apply for an American roommate. (Rachel)

Much like other participants, Camilla's reason for wanting a domestic roommate was based on

her desire to be forced to speak English on a daily basis. She also hoped to "get involved into

American society instead of Chinese society." Many participants felt that an American roommate

would connect them to additional American friends. Peter expressed this thought by saying, "I

think it's better to get an American roommate. It's better because if I just get an American

roommate, I can more easily join the American group. It's faster maybe."

Many of the study participants viewed American students as the easiest way to feelings of

connectedness and belonging on campus. American students were viewed as teachers and guides

who would be able to help Chinese students acclimate faster to American culture. Some

American roommates and floormates did fill the role of teacher, as Tom explained about his

American friends on his floor:

> They teach me a lot about the American language and American ways of thinking. And
> even American manners. One time, when I was eating in Theta, with my friend, he ate
> pizza but with his hands. He'd pick it up. I didn't want to use my hands because I didn't
> want to make it oily. I used a fork to fold it into one piece. It was a really big piece so I
> folded it several times and then eat it. He said to me to not eat it like that because it was
> not good manners to eat it like that at the table. Either cut it into really small pieces or eat
> it by hand. And he helps me correct my pronunciation. (Tom)

Tom expressed appreciation for his American friend, stating that he felt better prepared to

participate in American society after learning more about American dining etiquette. He felt that

his American friend provided much needed guidance on American practices, a sentiment that

Shirley shared. Shirley befriended American students easily, most likely due to her earlier

exposure to Western culture at her international high school in China. Although she had prior

knowledge of American cultural practices, Shirley still benefited from befriending the American

students on her floor. Shirley spoke about the differences between her friend groups, stating:

> I don't know how to describe that, but maybe the difference is my American friends will teach me like I'm kind of a baby and they are my parents. They'll say, hey you need to do this one and this one. And that is wrong, you can't do that… people will think of you as a weird person if you do this thing. Everything they teach me. And I think, that's so nice like they're my parents. My Chinese friends are kind of like my sisters and brothers. (Shirley)

Mora agreed with both Shirley and Tom about the important role that friendly American

students played in her transition. She stated that she would have had a very different transition to

life at Michigan State University, and credits much of her positive experience to her American

roommate's guidance. Mora explained:

> I think if I had a Chinese roommate, I think it would be different. I think my roommate is the first person that I know [who] is American and she teaches me a lot. So if I have a Chinese roommate, I cannot know [the US] better. (Mora)

Most participants reiterated Mora's sentiment, indicating the importance of friendly American

roommates and floormates. The participants who had welcoming American friends were able to

use these relationships as bridges to better understanding of American culture. Similar to Mora,

Derek was placed with an American roommate who showed interest in Chinese culture and was

willing to assist Derek in his transition to Michigan State University. Derek felt that his

roommate really made an effort to help him in his transition to the university:

> Yeah, he helped me a lot. I tried my best to fit in. At first, I felt really really lonely because everything is different. Like once, we went to the football game and before I came here I didn't even know what was football. What I did, I learned the rules on that. I even watched a video all night to learn the rules before I go with them and I tried to learn when they would watch it. I learned those things and how to do those things so I can go with them. I did whatever I could to fit in. He tried to help me, he tried to teach me. When I have questions, I would ask him and he would help me. (Derek)

Derek's experience with his roommate was an anomaly when compared with the

experience of most participants. In fact, only two other study participants had positive

experiences with their American roommates. Most participants with American roommates appeared to have lower feelings of belonging to their residence halls, and often would seek out Chinese friends in order to gain a sense of connection within the MSU environment.

Chinese students as a barrier to connecting. Interestingly, many participants spoke openly about how having too many Chinese friends actually served as a barrier to being more involved in American culture. For example, although Tom had positive experiences with Americans on his floor, he felt that his Chinese roommate became problematic to his social interactions. Tom stated:

> One of my friends requested to be my roommate. He's a Chinese student and we are really good friends so I can't say no. So I have a new roommate, but it kind of restrict me from spending time with my American friends. Because we always eat together and before, when I was eating in the dining hall, my American friends would sit with me. Now they ask me, why don't you invite us? I feel really bad to ignore them and spend time with my Chinese friend. After some time, I am losing time to spend with them. (Tom)

Similar to Tom's experiences, several participants with Chinese roommates stated that a negative outcome of having a Chinese roommate was that they had little social interaction with domestic students in their residence halls. Rather, they primarily socialized within the Chinese student community, leading to limited interactions with American students.

Waffle, who lived in Iota Hall, expressed frustration with the large number of Chinese international students in her residence hall. When asked about the negative aspects of her residence hall, Waffle stated, "A lot of Chinese students. I think the school should separate the Chinese students into different dormitories. Because people who are Chinese all live here." Several participants who lived in Iota agreed with Waffle, expressing their dissatisfaction with the fact that a large Chinese population lived around them. As a whole, these students felt that the Chinese community in their residence hall served as a barrier to connecting more with

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American students. Most participants placed a very high value on having domestic friends serve as ambassadors of American culture; however, the intercultural relationships between Chinese and American students often led to some tension between the two groups.

For many participants, feelings of discomfort in the residence halls often resulted from not being able to connect in meaningful ways with domestic students. Thus, several students ended up befriending mostly other Chinese international students since they shared a similar culture and language. However, despite being more comfortable with their Chinese peer group, most participants complained at the same time about having too many Chinese students around, in essence stating that high structural diversity on their campus was problematic.

The high numbers of Chinese international students were challenging because the participants would often default to having a Chinese friend group, which defeated the purpose of attending college in the U.S. When asked if she likes the large number of Chinese in Iota Hall, Waffle stated:

> No. It's not like America. You always see Chinese students. There are still American people but there are a lot of Chinese students. I think that it's harder to learn American culture, to learn some things. (Waffle)

Waffle believed the large number of Chinese students hindered her ability to become involved in American culture. She spoke specifically about Iota Hall, stating, "I think the school should separate the Chinese students into different dormitories. Because people who are Chinese all live here." This is somewhat consistent with the demographic breakdown of the participants in this study, with eight of the 21 participants living in Iota Hall. Mike, another resident of Iota Hall, agreed with Waffle's sentiments. He also believed that there were too many Chinese residents in his residence hall:

I think that a lot of Chinese students, they don't hang out with American students and that's not right. That's not good. Because if they don't do that, they should stay in China. (Mike)

Mike was vocal about the need to limit his interactions with other Chinese international students in his residence hall. He felt that he needed to invest more time and effort in meeting American students since that was his purpose for attending college in the United States. Like many other participants, Mike was rooming with another Chinese student, and he felt that his proximity to another international student made it easier for him not to have to seek out American students. Mike appreciated the ease of living with someone from his culture; however, he recognized the challenges he faced. He may have felt comfortable in his 'home,' but he also recognized there are limitations to living with someone who shared the same language and culture.

In contrast, Sunny, a resident of another residence hall, spoke about her satisfaction with her housing assignment. Sunny elaborated by saying, "Because here does not have that many Chinese people so we do not get into the [problem] because [of having] too many Chinese people here." Sunny shared her happiness that although there were some negative interactions, overall the living environment was positive because there were fewer Chinese students living in her residence hall. She enjoyed her experience because prior to arriving to the United States, Sunny wanted to meet many American students and have meaningful interactions with them. Otherwise, she said, there would be no point in attending Michigan State University. Interestingly, Sunny was placed with a Chinese student in her room, so that could potentially contribute to her overall comfort and happiness in her residence hall assignment.

D, who transferred to another university in the same state after his first year, agreed with Sunny's sentiments of wanting meaningful interactions with domestic students. D transferred because he wanted a different educational experience. When explaining his reasons, he spoke

extensively about the fact that he wanted to be at an institution with fewer Chinese students. D explained:

> First reason is just there are too many Chinese students at MSU and the Chinese students didn't leave a good impression to the American students. And also there are not so many Asians in [city of new institution]. (D)

D was very happy at his new institution and he credited much of that to his ability to make more American friends than he did at MSU. He wanted to befriend American students when he arrived at MSU, but he felt that it was difficult due to the high number of Chinese students. He had a few negative interactions with American students in his residence hall, but overall enjoyed connecting with American students.

Similar to D, Lu noted the large number of Chinese students at MSU. She spoke about her experience as an orientation leader in the summer before her second year on campus:

> In orientation this year, there was about 500 Chinese students coming in. There are too much Chinese students. They can't meet American students. (Lu)

The irony in Lu's comment, along with the feelings of the other participants, was that she was one of the many Chinese students on campus. She said repeatedly that there were too many Chinese students, and she did not seem to include herself in those numbers. Several participants lamented the challenges of having too many Chinese students on campus; however, they also spoke about the ease and comfort in having Chinese friends who shared their culture. This revealed a tension between the desire of Chinese students to have American friends, yet being uncomfortable with immersing themselves into American culture. Thus, although the participants perceived that there were too many Chinese students, they were able to benefit from having a large population of Chinese students so they were able to establish meaningful friendships. The tension experienced by many of the participants indicated that the large number of Chinese peers helped increase their sense of belonging to the Chinese campus community. At the same time,

the large percentage of Chinese students also led to a decrease in sense of belonging in the participants' residence halls and the larger campus.

Cultural differences with American students. All study participants cited the importance of having an American roommate to assist in their transition to MSU and to their residential community. However, only about half of the participants were housed with an American roommate, and several of these participants stated that their feelings towards their American roommates changed over time. The early anticipation and excitement of living with a domestic student soon faded after realizing that the cultural differences caused much discomfort in the room. Zoey, who was originally very excited to live with a non-Chinese students, stated:

> We talk[ed] a lot at the beginning, but I think when time goes by, we don't have so much interest in each others' culture. And so we don't communicate a lot. Just necessary talk. (Zoey)

Zoey believed that after getting to know each other earlier in the year, she and her roommate ran out of topics to talk about. Zoey was vocal about her roommate having no interest in Chinese culture, and this was surprising to her. Zoey stated that she thought her American roommate would have a lot of questions since Chinese and American cultures are so different; however, Zoey realized that "maybe she has no interest in that." The conversation exchange soon became uneven, so Zoey stopped trying so hard to connect with her roommate. Despite this communication challenge in her room, Zoey was still happy that she had an American roommate. As she explained:

> I think it's a bad idea to have a Chinese roommate here because I always live with Chinese people. It's not—I think I go to America to study, to improve my English, so it's not helpful to be with Chinese people all the time. (Zoey)

Similarly, Camilla's relationship with her American roommate also changed during the academic year. Her early experience was positive when her American roommate would assist

Camilla with her transition to the United States. However, their relationship never developed

beyond the surface level of cohabitating. They never established a friendship. Camilla stated:

> It's good. I can't say it's too good because we're not familiar with each other even though we live in the same room for nearly one year now. But we never have arguments and she comforted me a lot in the first month because you know the first month always has many problems in our lives or in our studies. But I have some problems in my heart is that I just feel like we're just roommates instead of friends. It can be kind of a language problem between us. And some cultural problem between us. (Camilla)

Interestingly, Camilla attended a Canadian foreign language high school in China for two years

before coming to college in the United States. Even with her early introduction to Western

culture, Camilla still had a difficult time finding common conversation topics with her

roommate. Although Camilla was deliberate about requesting an American roommate, she

decided to move off-campus with Chinese international friends for her second year because it

would be an easier living environment.

Derek, a member of a living-learning program, had a very positive rooming experience

his first semester. But once he moved to his new room in the second semester, he had a very

difficult time with his roommate. Derek's first roommate, who was American, made a lot of

effort to engage with Derek and assisted him with his transition to university. On the other hand,

Derek's second roommate was very disengaged and that led to Derek having a less positive

residential experience his second semester. Derek explained:

> We don't really have common language and we don't have the same topics we are both interested in. Most of the time, he is in front of the computer doing computer games and I don't really do that. So we don't really have any topics to talk about. So that's why we don't really get along. It's not like we don't get along, we don't talk. We never bother each other, we have different social lives. (Derek)

Derek spoke about his feelings of loneliness and disconnection from his roommate and his

floormates. He credited his discomfort to the fact that he was the only Chinese international

student in his living-learning community. Because of this, he had a very difficult time finding

other students who wanted to connect with him, leading to feelings of dissatisfaction with his living environment.

Mike did not personally experience being uncomfortable in his living space but did share stories about his Chinese friends. Mike, who had a Chinese roommate, originally wanted a United States native as his roommate. Mike felt that a domestic roommate could be his bridge to better understanding of American culture. When asked if he was satisfied with his current living arrangements, he said that he was. He explained that he heard stories from his Chinese friends who had difficulty befriending their American roommates. Mike reported on his Chinese friends' perceptions of their relationships with their American roomates:

> With my friends, for example—their roommates were American students and none of them got along with them. And they told me that they hate them. (Mike)

Mike stated that he thinks it is difficult for Chinese and American roommates to get along because of their cultural differences. He reported that his friends said they were treated differently from other students because of being Chinese although Mike personally never had that experience. Mike was able to recount stories from Chinese friends who felt very disconnected from their American students and American culture. The experiences of Mike's friends were very similar to many of the participants who felt that disconnection from their American roommates led to feelings of discomfort in their residence halls.

Communication problems at 'home'. Close proximity to domestic students was beneficial on the whole to the participants' adjustment to life at Michigan State University; however, the cultural differences within their residence hall room would often lead to some communication problems for many of the Chinese participants. Kay was excited to be paired up with an American roommate, assuming that the close proximity would foster improved communication and cultural exchange. However, after some time passed in the first semester, she

and her roommate only communicated when necessary. Kay found that having an American

roommate led to some dissatisfaction in her room. She eventually moved rooms, explaining:

> Last semester, I lived with a White girl. And actually, she's very nice and I'm a nice girl
> too. We lived together but we don't really have any mutual topics. So every time, every
> night, when we sit in one room we just keep silent. That's so bad. Actually, we did know
> that we can get along well but we just don't have much mutual topics. And this semester,
> I moved out and I live with one of my Chinese friends. We have more topics to talk
> about. (Kay)

Kay's situation with her roommate, which was a fairly neutral relationship with no hostility,

appeared to be common among the participants who had American roommates. Interestingly,

several participants who did not have American roommates spoke about how they noticed other

Chinese friends having less-than-comfortable living arrangements. Shirley outlined the problem

between Chinese and domestic students, claiming that communication issues were at the heart of

the matter. She realized this when her American roommate told her that American students have

the perception that Chinese students do not want to interact with Americans. This was surprising

to Shirley, who said the solution would be for Chinese students to "talk—not keep their mouths

shut." Shirley also added:

> And of course, they should communicate with their roommates. Because a lot of Chinese
> girls or boys, they don't communicate with their roommates and that makes things a big
> problem. The Asians with the Americans, they have conflict. But they need to
> negotiate—I mean, they need to communicate. Like me, I don't really have that kind of
> thing happens because every time, we say hey, let us make a plan for our schedule. So my
> roommate will say, okay this time, I will do this kind of stuff, maybe next time do this. I
> will take a shower in the evening and she will shower in the morning. So we don't have
> problems together. So of course communication is important. (Shirley)

Communication problems between roommates and floormates also stemmed from the

lack of available common interests. Several participants found it difficult to find things to talk

about with the American students in their residence hall. Peter expressed this sentiment:

Yeah, I want to know them. I want to join the group, like the American group. But still I can't because like, we don't have the same topics. So the topics are very important. It's like the key but I didn't find it. (Peter)

Peter found it challenging to connect with American students in his residence hall, and credited much of that to cultural differences and lack of common discussion topics. Similar to Peter, Lu indicated that there was a learning curve to communicating with domestic students. She talked extensively about "learning how to get along with American students." She indicated she was afraid to start conversations with her American roommate. Lu would try to push herself to reach out to domestic students but felt frustration that "they don't come to my dorm room to say, hi, how are you doing." Lu stated that she and her roommate had very different lifestyles, which also contributed to the lack of communication in the room.

Derek also acknowledged the role lifestyle differences played in his interactions with the domestic students in his residence hall:

So I can study hard, but sometimes with the social life, I still have trouble with them. The way we see the things and we treat them is different. Like people is different and the way we do our things is different. It's the different ways of doing things. Like in all of my class, I can listen to music and do my work in quiet. But most people like to turn on loud music and party and drink and whatever. And we prefer—at least me—I prefer to study where I live. And the people on my floor are very noisy. I don't know if it is a common thing or if it is special, but that is different. (Derek)

Several participants were vocal about the discomfort they felt around domestic students in their residence hall. In fact, some participants bluntly said that being around American students was sometimes exhausting. Nancy spoke about having to think a lot about what topics she could discuss with domestic students:

They will talk about different topics. Like Americans like to talk about their daily lives. Chinese like to talk about gossip or something like that. It's hard to talk to Americans with gossip because I don't like to watch TV—well, it's not that I don't like it, but it's complicated to remember. Probably we just talk about class and how their day goes. (Nancy)

Although Nancy did have American friends, she explained she sometimes can get frustrated with their conversations. Nancy explained that the same topics kept coming up, when people would "ask me the same question about the Chinese culture, I just feel like, don't ask me anymore. I don't want to answer that."

Several participants heard about the tensions between Chinese and American students prior to arriving on campus. This led to them requesting Chinese student roommates as a way to prevent discomfort in their residence hall rooms. Of the 21 participants, 13 participants had Chinese roommates assigned to their room, either through mutual request or random assignment by the housing office. Overall, participants who had Chinese roommates tended to have more positive roommate experiences. When asked why they are able to cohabitate effectively with their Chinese roommates, participants responded that it was easier to live with someone who shared the same culture and language. These participants expressed a sense of relief to be able to return to their rooms and be comfortable around those that are culturally similar. Nancy, who attended high school for three years in the United States, expressed her thoughts when contemplating her roommate possibilities:

> I was actually thinking about a Chinese roommate at first. The reason why is because I think the living style and also the dining habits would be more similar. And the communication wouldn't be too hard. Because after three years, I figured out that no matter how I change, I have some habits I cannot change. (Nancy)

Nancy did request a Chinese roommate, after deciding that it would be easier to live in one room with someone who shared the same culture. Vicky shared the same sentiment about living with another Chinese student. She had met a Chinese student online through social media prior to arriving on campus, and decided to request that student to avoid any cultural tension in the room. Vicky shared:

My roommate is great. I'm so happy to have this kind of roommate because some of my friends don't get along with their roommate. They have arguments over some things, in some ways. Maybe cleaning the room or the sleeping time. (Vicky)

When asked about her Chinese friends' experiences, Vicky said that most of her friends with American roommates were the ones who had roommate problems. Although Vicky had originally thought she would make a lot of American friends in her residence hall, she realized that their lifestyles are too different. She spoke openly about not wanting to make friends with the domestic students on her floor, stating that they are "really crazy" and like to "play loud music." Vicky credited her discomfort with her floormates to cultural differences and the lack of conversation topics between Chinese and American students. Of the 30 students on her floor, she claimed to know only two American women. Otherwise, she mostly socialized with her roommate and other Chinese friends since she did not feel a connection with others on her floor.

Mike, who was paired with another Chinese international student, had originally wanted an American roommate. He explained that the "reason I came here is that I wanted to experience American culture." Mike felt that living with an American roommate could help him experience new things. However, he was assigned a Chinese international roommate and they became good friends and felt comfortable in their room. Mike's rooming situation resulted in him feeling very happy and satisfied with his housing assignment with another Chinese student.

Jack had a similar experience with his Chinese roommate, who was his high school classmate from their hometown of Shenzhen. They live in a four-person room with two American students. Jack described that living situation as being the best possible scenario for an international student. He was able to have a roommate with the same cultural background, but was able to get exposed to American culture in his room with his two domestic roommates. When asked about the benefits of his living situation, Jack stated:

It's more convenient because sometimes we talk about things only Chinese can understand. And if with the two American guys, we can also talk about American culture. (Jack)

Waffle also spoke about the influence her roommate had on her overall comfort in her room. Waffle was placed with a Chinese roommate through random assignment from the housing office. She had wanted an American roommate so she could "know more about American culture" and could "improve my speaking." However, she found that she had a very comfortable living environment with her Chinese roommate and was still able to connect with Americans who lived in the adjoining suite. Waffle expressed her initial feelings about not having an American roommate:

I feel a little disappointed but it's okay. Because in the hallway, there's a lot of American people. And also we room with an American. The neighbor—we share a restroom. (Waffle)

Like Waffle, several participants with Chinese roommates spoke positively about living with someone who had a similar cultural background and living habits. At the same time, these participants recognized the need to have some connection with American culture, no matter how tenuous it may be. Vicky specifically requested a Chinese roommate who attended high school in the United States, and explained her reasoning:

I'm afraid I would not get along with Americans because the culture difference and the habits we have. They are different. So I think it would make me feel uncomfortable so I decided to choose Chinese student who was in high school here, in the U.S. I think also one way they can help me to learn about the U.S. culture. And because she is Chinese, we don't have much difference. (Vicky)

Vicky was very happy and satisfied with her choice of a roommate. When asked about her housing preference for the next academic year, Vicky said that she decided to live with her current roommate and two other Chinese women for their second year. She felt most comfortable living with other Chinese students and anticipated a positive living situation for the next year.

Similarly to Vicky, most participants decided to live with another Chinese student for their second academic year. Several described their thought processes for choosing to live with Chinese students, and most cited the need to be comfortable in their living space. Gwen, who had a Chinese roommate her first year, decided to live with another Chinese student for her next year on campus. She described her reasoning by stating:

> One of my friends has a roommate who is American. I always ask her questions, like 'do you think you improve your English a lot' or 'do you feel comfortable living with an American.' She tells me it's fine, but I don't think she hangs out with her roommate a lot. Like, it's just okay living with American friends. At first I was thinking if I should choose an American friend as my roommate, but finally, I decided to choose a Chinese student again. I'm kind of afraid if I have an American roommate because we live together for one year—it's a long time if we don't get along well. (Gwen)

Most participants stated that their roommate had the most significant influence over their comfort and sense of 'home' in their residence hall. Derek outlined the importance of having a good roommate:

> Last semester, I ate most of the time with my roommate. That's why I feel like a roommate is very important. He is the person who spent all day with you, you live together, you can eat together. He is the person most important, at least for me, in college. So if I can get along with my roommate, then it would be easier to get around and just say, hey dude you want to go to the café and get some food? It would be easier and that's why the roommate is important. (Derek)

Derek credited his roommate for being the most important person in his transition to university life, a sentiment shared by many other participants. The participants who wanted American roommates anticipated an easier transition to American culture. However, as indicated by the participants' stories, making meaningful connections with American students proved to be more challenging than they anticipated.

Many participants started college with preconceived notions about their interactions with American and Chinese roommates and floormates, and most anticipated a positive living experience in their residence hall. Although many participants were satisfied with their living

arrangements, most participants spoke extensively about the role of their roommate in their on-campus housing experience. On the whole, the participants with American roommates had some discomfort living in the same space due to cultural differences. The lack of a common culture affected the Chinese students' sense of comfort and belonging in their rooms and residence halls, which was evident in their housing choices for their second year at Michigan State University. Of the 21 participants, only six chose to live in on-campus housing for their second year. The other 15 participants decided to move off campus and all of them chose to live with other Chinese students. Their choices in housing for their second academic year indicated that for many of the participants, the residence halls do not necessarily provide a very comfortable living space.

The majority of participants requested an American roommate for their first year, with the expectation that domestic roommates would help international students bridge the gap to American culture. However, many participants came to feel uncomfortable in their residence hall, citing a lack of connection with American students and an overabundance of Chinese students on the campus. The participants' feelings of discomfort in their residence hall led to decreased interactions with American students and some tension with the large number of Chinese international students on campus. Within the behavioral dimension of Hurtado et al.'s (1999) framework, the role of language and roommate/floormate relationships overlap to create a less than satisfactory residential experience for the Chinese participants in this study, all of which negatively affected the participants' sense of belonging in the residence halls.

Psychological Climate

According to Hurtado et al. (1999), the psychological climate of a higher education institution involves students' perceptions of intergroup relationships and attitudes towards other

students from different racial/ethnic backgrounds. That is, the psychological climate focuses on

how the participants make sense of their interactions within the context of American culture.

This element is related to the interactions described in the behavioral dimension; however, the

psychological climate differs in the sense that this element evaluates how students perceive their

relationships with others, including institutional receptiveness towards diversity as well as

perceptions of cultural conflict (Hurtado et al., 1999). (See Table 5.2).

Participants' perceptions of their outsider status on campus are highlighted within the

psychological climate, all of which affects students overall sense of belonging. The feelings of

belonging include students' perception of social support and feeling valued by the campus

community. In this study, sense of belonging is based on Chinese students' cognitive evaluation

of their interactions with other students, which leads to an affective response, all of which falls

within the psychological climate. In this section, findings related to the psychological climate are

discussed, with an emphasis on the following three overarching themes: perception of language

ability, feelings of discrimination and isolation, and awareness of being an outsider.

Table 5.2. Findings Related to the Psychological Climate

Theme	Subtheme	Subtheme
Perception of language ability	Fear of speaking English	
Feelings of discrimination and isolation		
Awareness of being an outsider	Perception of Americans' feelings	Pressure to conform

"Some Kind of Terror to Speak to Others": Perception of Language Ability

The issue of language ability was prevalent in the behavioral dimension, and it is also a

factor in the psychological climate. Although the role of language was addressed within the

behavioral dimension, the psychological climate focuses on the internalization of how the Chinese students' language ability affects their interactions with domestic students. Rather than examining language aptitude, as discussed in the behavioral dimension, Chinese students' perception of their own language ability is emphasized within the psychological climate. Through the lens of the psychological climate, it is possible to examine how these students make a cognitive evaluation of how their English language skills manifest themselves in affective responses such as their willingness to approach American students.

Most participants stated that they were very uncomfortable speaking conversational English with domestic students. They perceived that possessing poor English skills affected their comfort level approaching American students to establish friendships. Most of them stated that they lacked the confidence to approach native English speakers. Their own perception of their abilities made them feel that their language skills negatively affected their social lives in their residence halls.

Fear of speaking English. Most participants stated that they felt uncomfortable speaking English because they perceived their abilities to be very elementary. These feelings of discomfort are related to the role of language in the behavioral dimension, and the participants felt that these feelings hindered their progress in engaging with non-Chinese students. Thus, they felt that their perception of their speaking abilities served as a barrier to connecting with Americans and American culture. Riverkid spoke of this, explaining:

> I tried to find students to be my friend, but sadly, I didn't find them. I think the biggest barrier is the language. Because I find for international students, Chinese is really different from English. It's hard to manage English. (Riverkid)

Riverkid felt that her limited conversational English skills prevented her from approaching American students. She was prepared for the difficulty of meeting American students because

she browsed some online forums about Chinese students studying in the United States. Several

Chinese students on the online forums said that connecting with American students "is a big

problem in America because of the language." Although Riverkid knew it would be difficult, she

still was disappointed when she did not make domestic friends easily, and blamed this mostly on

her fear of speaking English. The cognitive evaluation of her speaking abilities led Riverkid to

avoid approaching American students, and this choice led to decreased feelings of belonging to

her residential community.

Gwen also had difficulty approaching American students. She chose to work in the

cafeteria in her residential area and often felt that her English skills were a barrier to other

student workers including her in their lives:

> Actually, I'm kind of afraid—the basic thing like my English—I don't think I will
> communicate with Americans well. Some of them are really nice, but now I work in
> the cafeteria and my partners are American students. They talk to me a lot, but
> actually, most of them won't ask me to join his or her life. I think there is a cultural
> barrier. (Gwen)

Similarly, Derek felt that his lack of English speaking ability hindered his progress

engaging in American culture. Interestingly, when asked why he participated in this study, Derek

openly stated that it was so he could practice his conversational English. He felt that after

moving to the living-learning program that predominantly housed domestic students, he lost his

chance to practice conversational English. Although one would assume the large number of

domestic students would lead to increased interaction, Derek felt very isolated from the rest of

the students in his living-learning program and residence hall floor and had a hard time making

connections. When asked about his feelings concerning the language barrier, he emotionally

shared this story:

> I still think the language is the most important thing—at least for me. So if you can speak
> one thing, and you can speak things that will make them confused, they won't do it again.

For example, last semester, I had a really hard time to speak English. Sometimes I don't understand them and they don't understand me. So one time, a guy was talking to me and I ask him a few times to repeat things. After I asked him the third time, he said never mind, forget it. It made me upset. That next time, I had to understand him. That I have to study hard and understand English. I don't want to feel that anymore. I don't want to be in a same situation like "forget it." I don't want to do that any more. (Derek)

Derek's description of that incident was indicative of the feelings that many participants experienced on a frequent basis when interacting with non-Chinese students. They often feel distant from domestic students and experience feelings of inferiority when communication challenges occur. For example, Rachel spoke about her frustrations with her English skills:

I still feel that as an international student, I don't think I'm that good. Sometimes, I know a person from the organization, she's a freshman and she did her internship this summer. And she's really—even to know her, you can feel that confidence from her. Sometimes I think that if I was a native person, I can do a better job than her. (Rachel)

Rachel spoke extensively concerning her feelings about her lack of English speaking skills. She felt that she was often left on the sidelines when it came to opportunities, including leadership positions in student organizations. She credited these challenges to campus involvement to her language abilities, stating multiple times that she would have more opportunities for campus engagement if she were a native English speaker.

Most participants' confidence in their English speaking skills was overall very low. Many participants spoke about their inability to get their courage up to approach American students. Riverkid, who said that language was her barrier to making American friends, talked extensively about her lack of confidence in her English skills and how she has to force herself to approach other students:

Because since language—my English is not as good as American student's so they might not understand what I'm talking about. So it's much harder for me to talk with them and communicate with them. So it's much harder for me to make friends with them. I have to be very very outgoing to be brave enough to be friends with them. (Riverkid)

Riverkid's experience was similar to Zoey's, who felt nervousness when she had to communicate in English with others. She stated:

> You know, my English is not perfect now. So if somebody talks to me, I can understand only 80%. So I'm kind of nervous if I communicate with others. If I communicate with some people, I don't get nervous. (Zoey)

Zoey was referring to other Chinese students as the people who do not make her nervous when communicating. Her nervousness manifested itself when she needed to speak with native English speakers, which often limited her interactions with American students. She had difficulty connecting with American students because of her lack of confidence in her speaking abilities. D, who also was comfortable speaking with native English speakers on a regular basis, noted the lack of confidence of many Chinese international students. D verbalized his perception of Chinese students' problems communicating with domestic students:

> I know a lot of things, but for students who really miss home and they have insecurity speaking English well, they are afraid to talk to people sometimes because they are really not good at English. Because if you don't know something, you have some kind of terror to speak to others. But if you really want to know them, you won't find it so terrifying. (D)

D accurately summarized much of the participants' feelings about their English skills and their comfort with approaching domestic students. D advises that if Chinese students really want to connect with American students, they need to lose some of their fear in approaching American students. Similarly to D, Shirley, who was fairly comfortable with her English speaking skills, spoke about her perception of Chinese international students' comfort with speaking English. Shirley gave some insights on how most Chinese students perceive their English skills. She credited her years in an international high school for enabling her to be comfortable with her own speaking abilities. She was able to reflect on her experience and describe why other Chinese students seem to have a difficult time connecting with American culture:

I think maybe cultural difference—they don't really express their feelings. For most American girls, they just say, hey I don't want to do this. Maybe we should do this. I think it's really good they have to practice by themselves. Not all in their thinking but more their speaking. They cannot really express what they are feeling when they speak out. They are afraid of, oh I made a mistake when I talked that time. Did I offend him or her? I want to say that they know it's not your mother language but they will forgive you if you say the wrong thing. (Shirley)

According to Shirley, Chinese students were too afraid to approach American students because of their perceived limited language ability. In her opinion, based on observation, she believed that Chinese students were too focused on possibly making mistakes when speaking with American students. Shirley felt that Chinese students were limiting themselves by distancing themselves from American students and American culture. Shirley was likely correct in her assessment since the experience for many participants reflected what Shirley described— that there was fear and nervousness when speaking English with domestic students. Overall, these feelings led to the participants feeling less comfortable with approaching American students. Essentially, their perception of their language abilities hindered their progress in engaging in American culture and interacting with American students. Fear limited their interactions and, hence, their educational and cultural development.

"They Don't Care About You": Discrimination and Isolation in the Residence Halls

Approximately half of the student participants described issues of discrimination and isolation at Michigan State University. Not surprisingly, many of these incidents stem from issues related to language ability. Some participants gave examples of explicit acts of discrimination against them, although most participants had stories about more subtle forms of discrimination from their interactions with American students. D described an interaction in his residence hall with a domestic student who made derogatory remarks related to Chinese international students:

> One time when I was walking to Main Street from Lambda. It's winter, and winter break I stayed here. There is one guy from I think Mu Hall—he came out, he saw me, and he just shouted, "Fucking Asian people." Just like that. We don't know each other, we are really far away from each other, I don't know why. (D)

D described the harasser as a White male, and D could not understand why that student felt the need to yell at him. D chose not to respond to the student. When D returned to his room, he told his American roommate about the experience. His roommate was very supportive and told him to put that experience out of his mind. But D spoke about how that incident stayed with him and occupied his thoughts for a long time after the incident. This experience likely put him a bit more on the defensive around White American students and made D more aware of negative interactions. D described another incident he experienced in his residence hall:

> One time that I ran into a guy, and he was unfriendly to the Chinese students—I knew that afterwards. He talked like- he pretends to be really friendly, and smile really quickly. But after a while, I noticed something is wrong. Yeah, but he is not so obvious. He's kind of subtle. Because when we talked, he just smiled really quickly. And when his friends came out, his friends smiled really really strange, weird. Yeah, and they got away and I heard their discussion about me, about Asian, Chinese people, kind of yeah. So I sensed a little bit of unfriendly. But they didn't say unfriendly things [to me]. (D)

Interestingly, D identified himself as being very capable of befriending American students due to his solid grasp of conversational English. However, these incidents indicate that, although he may have the necessary communication skills, he still experienced hostility from domestic students due to his nationality and ethnicity.

Discrimination by Americans was something that several of the participants expected, having received warnings from other Chinese international students who had experienced an American collegiate environment. Waffle had heard from Chinese friends that negative things could happen to Chinese people in the United States, and she told this story to illustrate one such experience:

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But some American people, they have discrimination about Chinese students. Example is that last Saturday, last week, we finished lunch and then we came back. In the corner, there was a car coming near, and there was a White man inside the car. So when it came closer, you could look in the car. And the White man did the 'fuck' gesture to us. There was only me and my friend who come from China. We were standing there waiting to cross the road and the man in the car did the gesture to us. (Waffle)

D and Waffle, who both experienced blatant acts of discrimination, were in the minority when compared to other participants. Many participants were able to describe discriminatory situations that were more nuanced and subtle in nature. Grace described her feelings with some students on her floor:

Sometimes the people party too loud. They put the music too loud. They will be pretty loud. And some American people, American guys especially, will say something rude about being Chinese. I don't understand it really, but I can feel it. It's not very good. They were drunk. (Grace)

Several other participants echoed Grace's experience. These participants sometimes did not quite understand exactly what was being said to them; however, they could sense some tension being directed towards them by American students. Nancy explained, "I can feel it. They will just look at you in a weird—look at you like you're very weird." These subtle acts of cultural and language dissonance were repeatedly discussed by several participants to illustrate their lack of connection with American students and American culture. Kay explained how she made sense of these negative situations, blaming much of the disconnect on language and racial/ethnic norms in American culture:

Of course language was the most important. But sometimes it seemed that the Whites only stayed with Whites and the Black with Black. So it's like a universal standard. I got a little bit of a bad feeling. (Kay)

Interestingly, although many participants stated that they never experienced any direct negative interactions with domestic students, several were able to share a story about a Chinese friend who had discriminatory experiences on campus. Julie told this story about her friend:

My friend, she asked people in the elevator, "Is that going down?" and they say, "What?" She asked again and they said yes. She went into the elevator and they said, "Do you speaking English?" She said, "What?" They said, "You should practice your English". She said, "Oh I'm an international student, it's my first semester here." And they said, "But you are in America!" It made her feel so bad. (Julie)

When asked about her experiences with being treated differently due to her Chinese background, Rachel also told a story about a Chinese friend:

I heard from my friend that there is one day when she and her friend goes to the Bank of America, and they were waiting for a bus. A car passed by them, and the guy in the car threw the pop can at them. That's really mean I think. I don't experience things like this before, but it happened to my friend. (Rachel)

Nancy also did not have any direct negative experiences with non-Chinese students, but much like Julie and Rachel, was able to tell a story about one of her Chinese friends. This friend had some American students go up to her and say things like "don't speak Chinese" or "don't speak your language." Nancy and her friend felt it was very unfair for American students to impose these restrictions on Chinese students who are more comfortable conversing in Chinese.

In addition to these acts of discrimination, participants also dealt with stereotypes that many domestic students have of Chinese students. These stereotypes were commonly centered on the perception that Chinese students had high math proficiency. When asked about his interactions with American students, Jack explained that he would get asked about math:

Um, a little bit. I mean, not only myself. But also my other friends. They always say— their roommates, if they are Americans or other international students, they always ask them about math and physics. (Jack)

D also spoke about the stereotypes that American students hold about Chinese students. He shared:

One thing, the idea that all Chinese students are really good at math. But sometimes, no. Some Chinese students are not good at math. They're afraid of math, actually. One time in Athens Hall, my friend, he has a problem with his math homework. There was another guy sitting beside him. He's an American. He talked to my friend, and said, "oh you are

Chinese" and he was just really surprised that a Chinese student would ask him about a math problem. (D)

Experiences of this type have led to study participants being a bit more defensive when around American students in their residence halls. These experiences very likely have led to increased distance between the two student groups. The cultural dissonance with American students has led to several participants feeling isolated and removed from their residential community. For example, Riverkid felt very isolated from American students, saying that her lack of English ability tends to be a barrier to interacting with other students. She stated that it is difficult to get up the courage to talk to American students. This led to some loneliness for her since her residence hall has only a small number of Chinese international students.

Tom also spoke about feelings of isolation from American students on his floor. He has made an effort to befriend American students, but then started to feel a lack of connection with unfriendly Americans on his floor. He felt that several domestic students on his floor had "a really bad idea about Chinese students." He described his feelings about his floor:

> For me, I made more friends with Americans because I really want to know them. But actually when we met each other, they don't really say hi. But the Chinese students always greet you every time we meet each other. The thing is, at the first floor meeting, I met a couple [of Chinese students] and we hang out with each other and eat together and study together. And after that, I met more Chinese friends and yeah, I can't just spend time with American students. (Tom)

Tom was initially very surprised that American students were not as friendly as he expected prior to attending Michigan State University. This experience elicited a lot of thinking on his part, and he came to the conclusion that Americans do not want to be friends with Chinese students for cultural reasons. He explained:

> At first, I felt surprised. But after time passes, I know some Americans just don't want to have friends with Chinese students. Because they have different ways of thinking and different backgrounds. They have no benefits for making Chinese friends. I think the most important thing is they already have their American friends. They already have their

social network, so they don't want to expand their social network. So they just don't want to have friends with Chinese students. (Tom)

Although many participants expressed their continued desire to make American friends, several participants stated that they did not want to put in so much effort to expand their current circle of friends. Peter was one example. He felt somewhat disillusioned about American students' friendliness and cultural competency, explaining that after several interactions, he has realized that American students do not care to make friends with Chinese students. Based on these interactions, Peter was less interested in befriending American students. His experiences with American students have led to feelings of ambivalence towards making new friends. His statement summarized the problems that many Chinese international students face at the Michigan State University campus. These experiences that many Chinese participants faced were indicative of the difficult psychological climate, all of which negatively affected participants' sense of belonging in the residence halls.

"No Benefits for Making Chinese Friends": Awareness of Being an Outsider

All of the participants spoke about their awareness of being an outsider in their residence hall and on campus. They were fully aware that they were viewed as outsiders and foreigners by domestic students. As a way to connect with American students, all but two of them chose "American" names. Most of them spoke about an awareness that they had of how domestic students felt towards them. Many said that it was a "feeling" that they get when interacting with domestic students, leading to their interactions being forced to conform to American culture in order to make connections. Although all participants exhibited pride in their Chinese heritage and spoke about retaining their Chinese cultural habits, the participants' cognitive evaluation of their interactions with domestic students led to adopting American habits (e.g., Anglicized names) as a way to make it more comfortable for American students. The Chinese students'

awareness of being different and an outsider elicits feelings of alienation and isolation, all of which are direct opposites of a sense of belonging.

Perception of Americans' feelings. The perception of being an outsider led to some negative feelings for several participants. Peter explained his perspective:

> I recently…don't like the Americans here. They just—I don't know, maybe it's because I'm Chinese, but they don't care about you. They don't help you, this kind of stuff. I don't know if it's personality or because I'm Chinese. (Peter)

Peter was representative of several participants who had negative experiences that led to an awareness of being an outsider. Not very many of the participants who spoke about their outsider status were able to pinpoint exactly why or what caused this awareness, although the common speculation was language ability and cultural background. Nancy tried to describe her perception of American students' feelings towards her as an international student:

> I can feel it. They will just look at you weird—look at you like you're very weird. I haven't had any things happen to me like Americans coming up to me and saying don't speak Chinese or don't speak your language. But one of my friends did. She was saying that it was perfectly unfair. (Nancy)

Nancy credited the negative feelings she perceived from American students to the differences in language. She stated that due to the large number of Chinese international students at MSU, the Chinese students tended to talk only to each other using their own language. She explained her perception of why this was problematic to domestic students:

> Because there are so many international students here, and international students talk to each other and use their own language. Some Americans don't like that because they cannot understand what I am talking about. I won't say that they are racist, but if they don't know you, they will think what they know previous Chinese students to be like. (Nancy)

Rachel had an experience similar to Nancy's, also getting a feeling that she was treated a certain way because she is Chinese. When asked if she was ever treated differently because she was Chinese, Rachel explained:

Sometimes. I mean, I think this stuff is hard to say. Because sometimes maybe it's just you are too sensitive. For example, I work here. There are two American girls that work with me. The three of us are working at the same table, and they are talking and I am talking to them. And sometimes they talk to each other more than to me. So you think, of maybe they treat us—they just try to ignore me because I'm Chinese. That's some personal reasons. I mean, you can think this way or you can think that way—all depends on you. (Rachel)

Rachel identified herself as an international student who "had a lot of American friends." Still, she found the connections difficult as times. As illustrated by the above scenario, Rachel sometimes would get the feeling that she was treated differently due to her nationality, but she recognized that it could be due to heightened sensitivity to these situations. However, several other participants were quick to point out their perception that American students simply do not like Chinese students. Kay explained:

Only a few of them are interested in Asian culture, like Japanese and Chinese culture. But most of them, they don't give a shit. Most of the time—sometimes, most of them see my Chinese characters on paper and say that it looks so difficult. (Kay)

Kay verbalized her frustration towards domestic students. She felt that they had absolutely no interest in meeting Chinese students, and Kay felt that they were not reciprocal in cross-cultural communication. Gwen agreed with Kay, stating, "I don't think all of them are willing to make friends with Chinese students." Gwen felt that most American students were just being polite when they would be nice to Chinese international students. Vicky also expressed a similar sentiment, saying, "I have heard that before, that some Americans, they don't like Chinese." This perception became a common undercurrent when many participants recounted their perception of their interactions with domestic students. Waffle was even more specific with the population of students that she felt were particularly unwilling to mingle with Chinese students. When asked if American students are open to meeting Chinese students, Waffle said:

It depends on different people. It's true that the US is a very open country. There are lots of people who come from different parts of the world. But still there are some American

people who think they are the best. And they are the white people. So it depends on different people. (Waffle)

Waffle was specific in saying that White students walked around with an air of superiority towards others students, and she credited these feelings of arrogance for the lack of interest in Chinese culture. Grace also targeted a specific group that she felt disliked Chinese students. Grace said:

I think most Americans are nice. Some of them, they probably look down upon Chinese people. Especially some guys when they're drunk—they get crazy. (Grace)

Grace recounted several incidents with drunken men in her residence hall. She felt a bit of fear from that group, particularly on the weekends when the men's inhibitions were affected by alcohol. Drunken men would sometimes approach her in common spaces in the residence halls and make unwelcome remarks towards her. Grace felt that these men were more likely to say negative things to her when under the influence of alcohol. As Waffle and Grace explained, some of the participants were able to target specific types of students (e.g., men, White students) who would make Chinese international students feel like outsiders in their residence halls.

Tom also felt some negativity from members of his residence hall. He was able to give a quick summary of why he felt that American students would avoid befriending him. He stated:

I will say that it has happens to me. Because somebody has a really bad idea about Chinese students. So they have that idea but they don't want to spend time with Chinese students. And I think, okay that's okay—if you don't want to hang out with me. At first, I felt surprised. But after time passes, I know some Americans just don't want to have friends with Chinese students. Because they have different ways of thinking and different backgrounds. They have no benefits for making Chinese friends. I think the most important thing is they already have their American friends. They already have their social network, so they don't want to expand their social network. So they just don't want to have friends with Chinese students. (Tom)

Tom explained some possible reasons why American friends would not want to befriend Chinese students. He felt that when it came down to it, there was no benefit for making Chinese friends.

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Tom was aware that there was no need for the inclusion of Chinese students in American students' social networks. Based on these reasons, Tom would often feel like an outsider when around other American students on his floor. Similar to Tom, several participants spoke candidly about their lack of connection with American students due to their feelings of being outsiders and foreigners on campus.

Pressure to conform. Several participants spoke about the feelings of needing to conform to American culture in order to fit in. Several spoke about their awareness of being an outsider and the need to adapt their daily habits and practices in order to fit in better with domestic students. For example, all participants, except for two, chose American names when they arrived to the United States. These participants felt that American names would assist in communicating with domestic student who find it difficult to pronounce Chinese names. The adoption of easily pronounced American names was a deliberate way for the student participants to begin their transition to Michigan State University. Another example of feeling the need to conform was the desire for on campus employment. Thirteen of the 21 participants worked in a residential dining facility in their first year for three primary reasons: to meet people, make spending money, and get a social security number. The opportunities from on campus employment provided the participants with an entry into American culture as they transitioned to life at MSU.

Zoey spoke about her initial experiences when she first arrived in the United States and some of her transitional issues. Zoey described her transition as difficult, although she was happy to be in the United States. She attributed the difficulty in adjusting to American culture to "the language, the thinking" and recognized that she had a very difficult time meeting American friends. When asked why she did not have many American friends, Zoey explained:

I don't think I meet so much American friends because I'm not that kind of person—a party girl. And I feel like a lot of American girls, they like to hang out very much. But I prefer to stay in more sometimes and I prefer to stay with familiar people than to meet new people. If I can choose. I don't—that doesn't mean that I don't want to meet new people, just staying with familiar people makes it easier. (Zoey)

Zoey did not have many American friends even though she expected to make several American friends when she came to Michigan State University. She realized that in order to befriend American students, she needed to fit into American culture. Her perception was that she needed to become a "party girl" in order to be more American and that was not something that made her comfortable. She never did conform to the "party girl" role, and she felt that was a reason she never made many American friends. However, she did say that "I'm more outgoing than before, I think" as a result of living in close proximity with Americans in her residence hall.

Jack also spoke about the need to conform to American culture in order to fit in with American students. Jack claimed that he actually had a difficult time connecting with American students because "I'm not a party guy." Similar to Zoey, Jack believed that parties are an important part of American life on a college campus, and that was a lifestyle in which he had no interest. Thus, he had a very small number of American friends due to these perceived differences in lifestyles.

Jack spoke about the cultural differences between Chinese and American students, and how he had to adapt to these differences on campus:

Chinese, they always when they want to say something, they choose another one. Not direct. But now I'm more direct. If I feel you are rude, I will tell you, don't do that. (Jack)

Jack realized that he had to be more direct in his communication with others and made an effort to change his communication style. He knew he changed over the course of his first year after he went back to China for the summer. His family and friends told him that he had become more American, which included his new directness and improved English skills. Thus, although Jack

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had difficulty conforming to the social aspects of campus life, he did experience a change in his communication style after living on campus for a year. This change was likely due to his perception of communication styles in American culture and his desire to adapt to these differences.

Similarly, Nancy spoke about her adaptation to American culture. Nancy, who attended high school in the United States, shared her challenges with adapting to campus culture in the United States. She was asked if she still identifies as feeling completely Chinese or if she had become more American. She answered:

> Well I think maybe half and half. I might have different ideas and different points of view from other Chinese students who might think another way. (Nancy)

Although she had lived in the United States for over three years, Nancy still experienced difficulty fitting in with American culture and students. She claimed that she had changed, but only a little bit and not enough to completely feel comfortable in American culture. Thus she felt discomfort rather than a sense of belonging to her new campus community. Derek, who only arrived in the United States this past year, experienced similar discomfort with American culture. Derek spoke about feeling pressure to change his personality in order to adapt to American culture:

> Like, hanging out with Americans is kind of my learning part. Hanging out with them is not just that fun. I am learning things, and always thinking and learning. I feel like if I hang out with American friends, I have to learn something from them. I only have four years here if I don't go to graduate school. With Chinese students, it's just relaxed and you can do whatever you want. With Americans, we have a barrier between us because we still have some culture gap. We have to cross that. Most of the time, if they didn't do something you think is you have to think about the cultural difference. And the personality difference. (Derek)

Derek explained that socializing with American students was not very fun for him because it was so much work. He spoke extensively about his great relationship with his first

American roommate, but overall, Derek had a more difficult time in larger groups of domestic students. He classified his time with American student groups as his time for learning, rather than a time for relaxing. As mentioned previously, Derek told a story about attending his first American football game with American students and shared that he stayed up all night to learn so he could fully participate in the experience and not embarrass himself in front of domestic students. The stress of trying so hard to hang out with American friends led Derek to socialize primarily with other Chinese international students. He openly admitted that he wanted to immerse himself in American culture by making a group of American friends; however, the stress of forcing himself to make domestic friends led him to revert back to socializing primarily with his Chinese friends. Derek's experiences illustrated the tension Chinese students feel when trying to make American friends and conform to a different culture.

Within the psychological climate, several participants described their feelings and perceptions of intergroup dynamics with American students. The role of language was pervasive when participants recounted their experiences with domestic students. In the student participants' opinions, their language ability affected all aspects of their perceived interactions with other students. Participants had a heightened awareness of the cultural issues that they faced, much of it related to discriminatory acts or awareness of being an outsider. In an effort to feel connected to American culture on campus, most of the participants felt pressure to conform to American standards (e.g., adopting American names). These pressures were both external and internal, most likely internalized due to a desire to adapt to the external environment as a way to connect with domestic students. As the themes in this section indicate, the psychological climate negatively affects participants' sense of belonging in their residence halls.

Summary of Behavior Dimension and Psychological Climate

This chapter presented participants' perspectives of their experiences and perceptions of living in the residence halls on campus. Overall, participants had difficulty adapting to living on campus during their first academic year at Michigan State University. The role of language was clearly the major factor that led to several of the themes that emerged from this study. Language ability actually permeated all themes, from interactions with roommates to participants' awareness of their outsider status in the campus community.

The behavioral dimension of Hurtado et al.'s (1999) framework, when applied to the MSU context, included the importance of language and how it affected interpersonal relationships and sometimes served as a catalyst for cultural tension in the residence halls. Participants cited the importance of having an American roommate who could assist in the transition to college; however, the reality of intercultural cohabitation proved to be uncomfortable and challenging for most participants who had an American roommate. The sense of belonging for most participants did not come from positive living and learning experiences with domestic students in their residence halls; rather, feelings of belonging most often came from immersion in the MSU Chinese community. Interestingly, although the large Chinese community assisted in participants' transitions to life in the United States, most participants expressed dissatisfaction with the large number of Chinese international students on campus. Many participants felt that the large number of Chinese students hindered their ability to befriend Americans. At the same time, most participants shared cultural and communication problems that they experienced with domestic students, all of which interconnect to the participants' overall sense of belonging to their residence halls.

The psychological climate that Chinese students experience at the university included participants' perceptions of their interactions with other students, including their perception of language ability, feelings of discrimination and isolation, and awareness of their outsider status in the residence halls. Similarly to the behavioral dimension, language played a large role in the participants' psychological climate. However, in contrast to the behavioral dimension, the psychological climate focused on *perceptions* and *feelings* related to one's language ability. In addition, participants shared some situations of overt and covert discrimination by American students, often leading to isolation and loneliness. All participants felt that they were outsiders in their residence halls. All but two participants chose an American name that would help them communicate with American students and as a way to conform to the norms of American culture. The participants' sense of belonging was negatively impacted by the incidents of discrimination and feelings of being an outsider, indicating a negative connection between the psychological climate and participants' feelings of belonging.

These findings have implications for policy and practice, including recommendations for residence life professionals, advisors, other student affairs departments, and faculty. The findings also have implications for further research on Chinese students' sense of belonging. Implications and recommendations are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine Chinese international students' sense of belonging in their residence halls. The study highlighted the perceptions that undergraduate Chinese international students have of their interactions with domestic students. I examined how Chinese students understand their sense of belonging within the racial climate of their residence halls at a historically White institution. Sense of belonging is an important concept to examine since a sense of belonging and connectedness often lead to success and persistence in college (Haustmann et al., 2007; Strayhorn, 2012). This study contributes to existing literature focused on campus climate and sense of belonging; however, this study includes international students, who are currently excluded from most studies on racial climates at historically White institutions.

Participants in this study discussed factors that affect their sense of belonging in their residence halls. Findings include the importance of roommate and floormate interactions as well as the cultural challenges faced in day-to-day contact with American students. Participants also shared their experiences with discrimination and isolation from domestic students as well as their awareness of being an outsider. The role of language served as an overarching theme that all participants cited as the primary factor affecting their overall sense of belonging at Michigan State University.

This chapter includes a broad discussion of the overall findings from this study. Connections to current literature as well as deeper analysis of the participants' experiences are included and examined. This discussion is organized by the research questions, which are:

- How do undergraduate Chinese international students' experiences with domestic students in their residential communities affect how Chinese students understand their sense of belonging?

o   What do undergraduate Chinese international students see as barriers to their sense of belonging in their residence halls?

o   What are undergraduate Chinese international students' perceptions of the racial climate in their residence halls at a historically White institution?

The organization of this chapter is intended to provide a sequence that will address elements of the research questions. I first address the two sub-questions related to barriers and racial climate. The primary research question is addressed as a culmination of the findings. The organization of the discussion include the following overarching themes that relate to the research questions: perception of barriers to sense of belonging, influence of racial climate on sense of belonging, and sense of belonging in residence halls. I also address implications of the findings for practice and policy, and include recommendations for future research. I conclude with a summary of this study.

Perception of Barriers to Sense of Belonging

The participants' perceptions of barriers to their sense of belonging are addressed in this section. Overall, the barriers of language ability, cultural differences, and structural diversity affected the participants' sense of belonging in their residence halls. Language and language ability emerged as the primary factor in both the positive and negative interactions between Chinese and domestic students. English language speaking ability affected participants' communication with domestic students, and these interactions led to some cultural dissonance, which affected participants' feelings of belonging to their residential community. The effects of structural diversity on intercultural interactions are also discussed in this section.

English language speaking ability. Language continually emerged as both a barrier and a bridge to participants' feelings of belonging and connection to the larger campus community.

The issue of language ability is consistent with current literature about the influence of language ability on international students' sense of belonging (Briguglio & Smith, 2012; Edwards, Ran, & Lie, 2007; Li, Chen, & Duanmu, 2010; McMahon, 2011). Several participants, including Mora and Tom, indicated that they felt excluded from conversations because they simply could not follow the fast-paced dialogue in English. Their inability to engage in meaningful conversations with American students affected their sense of belonging, which Riverkid, for example, also experienced. Participants' difficulties in making American friends was consistent with McMahon's (2011) study in which Chinese students found difficulty in meeting British students due to language barriers.

The issue of language emerged both within the behavioral dimension and the psychological climate examined in this study. This indicates the pervasive importance of language proficiency for the student participants. The actual interactions with domestic students (behavioral dimension) were affected by participants' comfort with speaking the English language. Meaningful social interactions between Chinese and domestic students were limited, which created barriers to connecting and generated discomfort when cohabitating in the residence halls. The lack of meaningful interactions between Chinese and domestic students correlates with the findings from Li, Chen, and Duanmu (2010), who reported that social and language barriers affect all aspects of Chinese students' daily lives in foreign universities.

In the psychological dimension, language also emerged as an important factor. The psychological dimension focuses on the Chinese students' perception of their own language ability. Speaking English to native English speakers created anxiety in most of the Chinese participants, something that has been found in previous studies of Chinese international students (Edwards, Ran, & Li, 2007; McMahon, 2011). This anxiety would cause many of the

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participants to lack the confidence to approach native English speakers. Anxiety and nervousness were apparent for many participants who experienced discomfort with domestic students, in particular with roommates and floormates in their residence halls.

Cultural differences. Although most participants cited a desire to have an American roommate, those who were placed with a domestic student often had trouble becoming true friends with their roommate. Chinese international students' language proficiency relates to their social interactions with their roommates and floormates. Several participants indicated a desire to live with and among American students, yet when those opportunities arose, the participants struggled with making meaningful connections. Zoey was an example of someone who initially was very excited to have an American roommate; however, as the academic year went on, she and her roommate communicated less after they exhausted common conversation topics. Derek had a similar experience with his second roommate when he moved into his living-learning program mid-semester. He spoke extensively about his feelings of loneliness and disconnection from his roommate, leading to overall dissatisfaction in his living environment.

Derek's experience with his second roommate was a familiar situation for many other participants who also described feeling disconnected from their American roommates. Social adaptation to the American campus was a challenge for many participants, which is reflective of other studies of international students (Sherry et al., 2009; Wilton & Constantine, 2003). Participants in this current study reported similar finding to Sherry et al (2009), who learned that international students, particularly those from Asia, have difficulty befriending American students. Asian international students as a whole tend to have more difficulty adjusting to the new campus environment and connecting to domestic students when compared to students from other countries (Sherry et al., 2009; Wilton & Constantine, 2003; Yan & Berliner, 2011).

"Cultural distance" (Triandis, 2009, p. 18) could be affecting the relationships Chinese students have with their roommates. Chinese and Western cultures have a high degree of difference in social norms. The Chinese students and their roommates likely have large differences in their expectations of relationships with their roommates and floormates. The United States tends to be a more individualistic culture as a whole, whereas Chinese culture is collectivist. Thus, the participants in this study who had difficulty with their roommates may have had higher expectations of connecting with their roommates in more meaningful ways. Differing expectations between Chinese and American roommates could be contributing to cultural clashes in their residence hall communities in their first year on campus.

When asked what advice they would give to incoming Chinese international students, most of the participants emphasized the need for incoming students to develop better English proficiency skills, which correlates with findings from a study by Briguglio and Smith (2012). Experiences of participants in Briguglio and Smith's study included adaptation issues and language barriers. Findings from Briguglio and Smith's study parallel those of participants in this study, all of whom recommend that Chinese students should make more effort to meet and interact with domestic students rather than just stay within their own cultural group. The recommendation includes the need to find courage and confidence to approach American students, which is intertwined with the recommendation of increasing English language skills with continuous practice. Interestingly, three participants highlighted the importance of practicing English-speaking skills by stating that the reason for their participation in this study was to practice speaking English with a stranger who is a native English speaker.

The issue of language was particularly salient in the findings since it permeated all aspects of the participants' sense of belonging. Language ability encompassed both intrinsic

(e.g., feelings of inadequacy related to language skills) and external factors (e.g., inability to communicate effectively with domestic students), as indicated by the findings in both the behavioral dimension and psychological climate. The language barriers led into additional challenges faced by the participants, particularly the cultural differences they experienced with other residential students. For example, Zoey and Jack spoke extensively about not being a "party girl" or "party guy." They both spoke openly about their perception that American students really like to party, and that they would likely make more American friends if they chose to participate in the partying. Although they felt the pressure to conform to American college culture, they chose to behave in a manner consistent with their prior lifestyle.

However, several participants adopted some changes, including Zoey who spoke about being more outgoing than when she first arrived in the United States. Many participants spoke of being more direct and outgoing, which they felt was necessary in order to function successfully on campus. All participants spoke about keeping their Chinese culture strong, although that did come at a cost when evaluating the quantity and quality of their relationships with American students. The choices made by most of the participants to remain true to their Chinese culture was similar to the experiences of Filipino-American students in a study by Museus and Maramba (2001). Museus and Maramba found that participants' difficulty in relating to the campus culture was correlated with higher levels of perceived pressure to commit "cultural suicide" (Tierney, 1999), all of which decreased their sense of belonging. However, the authors found that the more students remained connected to their culture of origin, the easier it was for them to adjust to the college environment. Similarly to the Filipino-American students in the Museus and Maramba study, the Chinese participants in this current study spoke about the importance of remaining close to their own Chinese culture.

Structural diversity. Although most participants had a limited sense of belonging to their residence halls, almost all spoke extensively about their relationship with the larger Chinese community at Michigan State University. The large number of Chinese students, a major component of the structural diversity in this study, proved to be both a limiting factor as well as an element of comfort for the Chinese participants. Several Chinese participants expressed their disappointment in the large number of Chinese students attending Michigan State University; yet, they also spoke about the value in finding a familiar cultural community while in a foreign environment. The student participants did not always feel a sense of belonging to their residence hall; rather, their sense of belonging was often associated with the larger Chinese community at Michigan State University.

This indicates that structural diversity, which is the numerical representation of diverse groups on campus, does not necessarily always promote increased interactions or understanding between different student groups. Rather, the phenomenon of a large Chinese population has created tension for all students, both Chinese and domestic. The large number of Chinese students likely enabled Chinese students to retreat to their comfort zones and cluster together. The high number of Chinese students has likely caused some conflict and resistance from domestic student groups. Blalock (as cited in Hurtado et al., 1999) theorized that a larger minority group increases the likelihood of minority individuals "in conflict with members of the majority, presumably because they are in competition for limited resources." The conflict between Chinese and domestic students at MSU was apparent in recent news articles in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Fischer, 2013) and the MSU *State News* (Moran, 2012), with some domestic students saying that Chinese students should "go back to China." The findings from this study as well as current news articles suggest that simply increasing the structural

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diversity on a campus is not sufficient for creating a diverse and supportive climate for all students. Rather, additional consideration must be given to institutional culture, policies, and practices in order to create a positive living and learning environment for all students.

Influence of Racial Climate on Sense of Belonging

This section addresses the influence of the racial climate in the residence halls on the participants' sense of belonging. The contextual influences on the participants' experiences are examined through a critical lens which contextualizes the participants' lived experiences and includes the issues of power in interpersonal interactions. An examination of the environment is necessary in order to situate the participants' experiences within the larger institutional culture. This includes the effects of culture, language, and skin color on the power dynamic between Chinese and domestic students. Climate evaluation is important in this study, but only as a backdrop to the lived experiences of the participants.

Neo-racism. Chinese international students in this study spoke extensively about their feelings of discomfort and awareness of being outsiders on campus. Several participants, such as D and Waffle, shared some blatant acts of discrimination that were committed by American students. D's situation was clearly a result of his Chinese heritage, as indicated by the perpetrator including the qualifier "Asian" in his slur. D also experienced a less obvious incident in his residence hall with an American student who was unfriendly yet subtle in his interactions. However, D did overhear the American student say something about "Asian, Chinese people" as he was walking away so it was clearly directed towards D's nationality. The discriminatory acts that D described are similar to the experiences of international students of Asian descent in Australia, who were abused and discriminated against by local community members (Marginson et al., 2010).

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Waffle also described her situation as discrimination against her because of her national origin. She perceived that the White man who made the rude gesture to her and her friend only did so because they were Chinese. Prior to arriving in the United States, Waffle was aware that her country of origin could cause tension with domestic students. Waffle and D, as Chinese international students, had similar experiences with participants in other studies, who found that students from Asia would often report higher levels of discrimination on their campuses when compared to international students from Europe, Australia, or other predominantly White countries (Hanassab, 2006; Lee, 2010; Lee and Rice, 2007; Marginson et al., 2010). These experiences appear to be a result of neo-racism, which is discrimination based on cultural and national differences (Lee and Rice, 2007). Neo-racism (Lee and Rice, 2007) adds the layer of language and national origin to the current racial climate in the United States, and appears to be the appropriate lens to use to analyze the participants' findings.

The experiences faced by the study's participants were indicative of a larger, institutional problem. Many of the domestic students mentioned in this study appeared to feel that it was acceptable to make slurs towards the Chinese participants. The perpetrators' behaviors were most likely due to the Chinese students' basic English language skills and foreign status. Neo-racism, which literally translates to "new racism," names this phenomenon of anti-foreign sentiments from domestic students towards international students. The anti-Asian sentiments were apparent in the early history of Michigan State University (Widder, 2005) as well as more recently, as indicated by several cultural incidents documented by the student newspaper (Moran, 2012).

"Othered" population. As international students, the study's participants have become an othered population on campus when compared to the dominant majority student group. The

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othering that has been revealed in this study indicates a need for the university to address the stratification that exists between Chinese and domestic students. The solution to this problem is not easy; in fact, the structure of othering has been in place since the first international students arrived at Michigan State University as indicated by the historical legacy, which is the institution's history, mission, and goals. Chinese international students have been "stamped with an otherness" (Said, 1978, p. 97) that is impossible for the students to escape without larger institutional intervention. Chinese international students appear to be viewed as foreign visitors by domestic members of the university and are redefined within a Westernized framework in which the Orient and its people are considered to be the exact opposite of what it means to be American. This Westernized framework, within which the Chinese participants must navigate, sets up a negative environment for the study's participants since they have become designated as the outsiders on their college campus. Luke (2010) cautioned against the dangers of othering since it is a way for the dominant group to suppress the non-dominant group, leading to tension on college campuses.

The participants' roles as outsiders were also demonstrated by the stereotypes imposed on them by some domestic students. Several participants commented on the expectation that they have high math proficiency. Although this stereotype does not appear to be negative, it indicates an underlying issue. The danger in stereotypes is that the experiences and backgrounds of Chinese international students are generalized which is problematic when considering the diversity within the Chinese community. As indicated by the participants in this study, Chinese students represent significant diversity. The 21 participants came from different provinces, attended different high schools, and had different levels of collegiate preparation, all of which required different support structures when they came to the United States. Thus, institutions of

higher education must consider the variation within the Chinese population and actively communicate and address these differences in regards to establishing environments that promote learning for all students.

Some environmental factors can be subtler than overt acts of discrimination and stereotypes. Within the psychological dimension, all of the participants shared their feelings about being outsiders in their residence halls. The Chinese students' perceptions of being viewed as outsiders and foreigners led to feelings of alienation and isolation. Because of the participants' differences in language and communication styles, they were very aware of domestic students' feelings towards them. For example, Nancy stated, "I can feel it. They will just look at you like you're weird." This tension likely stemmed from the cultural differences that are so polarizing between Western and Eastern cultures. The "cultural distance" (Triandis, 2009, p. 18), which is the degree of difference between two cultures, between the Chinese students and domestic students is fairly large due to differences in language, social structures, and values. Allport (1979) hypothesized that nationalism is the most salient form of group loyalty because it becomes ingrained in children at a very young age. Thus, the cultural distance between Chinese and domestic students is deeply rooted and requires significant intervention by the institution of higher education. The large cultural distance could develop into complicated and difficult relationships between Chinese and domestic students that is compounded by language and cultural barriers.

The racial climate, as outlined by Hurtado et al. (1999), includes four elements that must be examined in order to better understand the contextual factors affecting participants' sense of belonging. In this current study, the historical legacy of welcoming international students at Michigan State University has set the foundation for recruiting large incoming international

classes. Also, the structural diversity indicates that although there is a critical mass of Chinese students on campus, it actually causes more friction between domestic and international students than anticipated. The interactions within the behavioral dimension clearly indicate that there is a lot of cultural tension between different students groups, and the psychological climate tends to be fairly negative for Chinese students. Overall, the institution of higher education must take all of these factors into consideration when developing strategic policies and practices to better support Chinese international students and their sense of belonging.

Sense of Belonging in Residence Halls

This final discussion section addresses how the residential communities affect the Chinese student participants' sense of belonging in the residence halls. This is the culmination of the previously discussed findings since sense of belonging is the essence of this study. The interactions between Chinese and domestic students, with emphasis on the role of roommates, are discussed in this section. The pervasive issue of language ability is revisted, particularly as it affects Chinese students in their first year in college. The following statement guides this section:

"Sense of belonging takes on heightened importance (a) in certain contexts… (b) at certain times… as well as (c) among certain populations" (Strayhorn, 2012, p. 20).

"In certain contexts…" As a whole, the participants in this study felt a relatively low sense of belonging in their residence halls. Many participants faced interpersonal challenges with American students in the residence halls as a result of their national origin. This is consistent with the literature on international students' experiences of discrimination from domestic students (Hanassab, 2006; Lee, 2010; Lee and Rice, 2007; Marginson et al., 2010). This finding is not surprising since relevant literature indicates that feelings of belonging in residence hall communities tended to be higher for White students than for students of color (Berger, 1997;

Johnson et al., 2007). Berger (1997)'s study, also conducted at a historically White institution, concluded that there is "a dominant peer normative environment" (p. 449) that likely affects underrepresented students. The existence of a dominant normative environment is not surprising nor is it easy to resist, particularly for international students who are temporary visitors to a very different cultural environment.

However, it is important to note that although the Chinese participants have a relatively low sense of belonging, there is a compelling case for international students living on campus in residence halls. This is particularly true for those who are in the first year of their collegiate career. Living on campus has a positive influence on first-year students' sense of belonging (Johnson et al, 2007). Johnson et al. found that the residence hall can be a "compelling environment for shaping students' sense of belonging" (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 536), which is similar to previous studies that found positive effects of residence halls on students' socialization and sense of community (Berger, 1997). The value of on-campus living was illustrated by the participants' housing situations in their second year at the university. Of the 21 participants, only 6 Chinese students chose to remain living in on-campus housing for their second year. However, most of the off-campus students stated in their second interviews that they wished they had stayed on campus for two reasons; convenience and the ability to interact with American students. These participants indicated that living in residence halls helped with their overall feelings of connectedness to the larger campus community.

Although some participants had positive experiences with American students in the residence halls, they tended to be outliers when compared with all of the participants in this study. Overall, most of the participants in this study have a low sense of belonging in their residence halls. The low feelings of belonging could be a result of feeling like they are outsiders

and not full members of the residential community. Several students stated they were fairly comfortable in their rooms, but they did not necessarily feel like they were a part of the community in their residence halls. These findings were not surprising when considering the various factors that affect the participants' negative residential experiences.

"At certain times…"As first year students, the participants in this study are particularly vulnerable. The first year at university tends to be the most critical in ensuring students' success and persistence (Astin, 1994; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993), especially for international students who must navigate a completely foreign educational and societal culture (Marginson et al., 2010). Chinese international students are at risk of attrition since they tend to feel isolated from the rest of campus because of cultural differences (Lee & Rice, 2007; Smith & Khawaja, 2011). The social and academic challenges, particular in the first year, could hinder success in college and persistence to graduation (Tinto, 1993).

During the interviews, the participants in this study shared their pre-departure expectations of life at Michigan State University as well as their actual experiences in their first year. Many of the participants expected that it would be easy for them to make American friends, yet when they actually arrived in the United States, they found it surprisingly difficulty to make meaningful connections with domestic students. The participants' experiences were similar to those who participated in Yan and Berliner's (2011) study on newly arrived international students' need for early support. Yan and Berliner found that although newly arrived international students professed the intention to make American friends, most participants were observed to have withdrawn from social activities with domestic students and socializing only with the Chinese community. Initial arrival on a college campus can be cause anxiety for international students (Yan & Berliner, 2011) which may hinder progress in making American

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friends since there could be anxiety related to speaking a new language in a new environment. Thus, support for first-year Chinese students is imperative since Hurtado and Carter (1997) found that early support for underrepresented students leads to a higher sense of belonging.

"Among certain populations…" As Chinese international students, the participants continually credited English language skills as the primary factor that set them apart from other students on campus. Chinese students' language proficiency influences their social interactions with domestic students, particularly with their roommates and their floormates. Several participants indicated a desire to live with and among American students, yet when those opportunities arose, the participants struggled with making meaningful connections. Most participants shared that prior to arriving at Michigan State University, they very much wanted an American roommate who could serve as a bridge to understanding American culture and practicing speaking English. However, only three (Derek, Mora, and Shirley) out of nine participants with American roommates had positive living experiences with their roommates. These three participants spoke extensively about how helpful their roommates were to their transition to college. Their experiences demonstrated the importance of peers in affecting the participants' perception of group membership and feelings of morale (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990).

Tom was a participant who had positive interactions with some American students on his floor. Tom shared a story about his American floormate, who taught him about "American language… and American ways of thinking. And even American manners" on how to eat pizza. Although Tom had more challenges than successes in befriending American students, he was able to connect with a helpful domestic student who assisted him in understanding some of the cultural practices in the United States. He felt a sense of mattering to at least one other person, which affected his feelings of belonging to his community. Tom's sense of mattering is

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important because "to satisfy the need for belongingness, the person must believe one cares" (Strayhorn, 2012, p. 21).

As a whole, the participants primarily socialized with other Chinese international students because it was easier to mingle with those from a similar culture. Although the large Chinese population was a source of tension for both Chinese and domestic students, there were benefits to having a strong Chinese community on campus. The Chinese community formed a support network for these first-year participants and provided a sense of reassurance that the participants could fit in with some members of the Michigan State University community. According to Museus and Maramba's (2011) study of Filipino-American students, students can adjust to college with the help of continuing connections with ones' culture of origin. Similarly, Latino students in Hurtado and Carter's (1997) study on sense of belonging found a large external community that they could not find on their own campus. The support from outside organizations added to the Latino students' sense of belonging and perceived membership in their university. Thus, having a large Chinese population can actually be beneficial for the participants in this study, particularly if strategic connections are made to the larger Chinese community by the university. As the findings suggest, structural diversity presents some challenges; however, the large number of Chinese students at the university, if engaged effectively, could positively influence students' sense of belonging to their residence halls.

In this study, the combination of experiences and perceptions of interactions influences Chinese international students' success and positive feelings towards their campus community. Sense of belonging measures feelings of membership in a community rather than measuring integration to a dominant culture, which is difficult for international students to achieve. Feelings of belonging are a basic human need and often serve as motivation for positive behavior

(Maslow, 1954; Strayhorn, 2012). Sense of belonging, which encompasses both cognitive and affective aspects, includes information about group experiences (cognitive) and the individual's appraisal of group interactions (affective) (Strayhorn, 2012).

Sense of belonging is a contruct that is fairly individualistic—that is, it is a binary that examines the relationship between the individual and the group. Thus, the traditional definition of belonging and connecting may need to be adapted to include students who come from more collectivist cultures. The Chinese students in this study grew up in a collectivist society and could have had higher expectations for meaningful interactions with others in their residence halls. Perhaps the concept of sense of belonging when applied to Chinese students should shift from being so individualistic into a collective sense of belonging. Rather than focusing primarily on the individual Chinese student's belonging to the larger residential community, the discourse on sense of belonging could shift to the individual's connection to a sub-group (e.g., larger Chinese population in the residence hall) and then the overall collective belonging to the residence hall. Simply said, collective sense of belonging could focus on group-to-group interactions rather than on individual-to-group connections. The focus of sense of belonging could shift into a more inclusive concept (e.g., individual to sub-group to large group) rather than remaining as a binary that is individualistic (e.g., individual to large group). Thus, institutions of higher education must consider what polices and practices they can enact in order to create a positive living and learning environment for all students, including those from other countries and cultures who may be from more collectivist societies.

Implications for Practice

Implications for practice are presented in this section. Six specific suggestions for improving the campus climate for Chinese international students are outlined as a result of the

findings and discussion of this study. The suggestions include: construct intentional housing assignments, create opportunities for meaningful interactions, develop opportunities for language improvement, train university staff, include the larger Chinese community, and communicate with domestic students about the cultural diversity in the residence halls. The recommendations for practice are deliberately presented in a broad manner, with the intention that the suggestions can be applied at most colleges and universities in the United States.

Construct intentional housing assignments. Housing assignments for first-year students are often randomly generated in an effort to be fair and neutral. However, the findings of this study suggest that residence life offices seriously think about how they can intentionally create supportive living environments for Chinese students in the residence halls. Most of the participants in this study had roommates randomly assigned and only a few requested specific roommates. Thus, it appears that international students are open to being paired with a student who they do not know prior to attending college.

One suggestion is to intentionally place international students in rooms with American students in a specific grouping scheme. For example, Jack had what he viewed as an ideal residential situation: a suite with another Chinese student and two American students. He liked the mix because he was able to communicate about "things only Chinese can understand" with his Chinese roommate, but also was able to talk about American culture with the two American students. Jack credited his rooming situation with his happiness in his residence hall. This arrangement also influenced his decision to return to his residence hall for his second academic year. His hope is that he and his Chinese roommate will be paired with two American suitemates again so they can have a similar positive intercultural experience. This type of housing configuration is likely the most beneficial way to ensure that Chinese international students are

able to navigate learning about American culture and staying connected to their familiar Chinese culture.

On a larger scale, residence life staff should take into consideration intentional housing assignments that offer intercultural residential spaces. These intercultural spaces, much like Jack's suite that mixes Chinese with American students, would be the ideal balance of challenge and support for Chinese students. Providing a living environment that could potentially promote more intergroup dialogue and intercultural interactions would benefit both international students and domestic American students.

For example, Waffle and Mike spoke about how so many Chinese students live in Iota Hall. It would be beneficial to strategically assign international students to different halls around campus. This could be construed as manipulation of a specific population of students; however, this research suggests the benefits of intentionally managing the structural diversity in each individual residence hall outweigh any potential negative effects. Strategic housing assignments are necessary in order to facilitate ideal environments that would benefit all students and their interactions with others from different backgrounds.

Create opportunities for meaningful interactions. Meaningful interactions are at the heart of developing respect and understanding among all student demographics. As demonstrated by the participants' experiences with domestic students, issues of discrimination and isolation were problematic in creating safe and comfortable spaces for international students. One can assume that the blatant acts of discrimination reported were isolated incidents that do not often occur; however, even the more subtle acts are troublesome and affect Chinese students' feelings of belonging to their residence hall. Thus, residence hall staff should intentionally create opportunities for positive intercultural communication and intergroup dialogue (Quaye, 2012;

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Zuniga, Nagda, & Sevig, 2002). Peer interactions have the greatest influence on the student experience (Astin, 1993); thus, it is crucial for college campuses to provide the proper environments that will lead to positive relationships through improved quality of contact amongst these diverse groups, whether through formal structures such as facilitated intergroup dialogues (Quaye, 2012; Zuniga et al., 2002) or informal processes such as casual conversations in hallways (Chang, et al., 2006). These programs should occur systematically throughout the academic year, but the foundation must be laid prior to students' arrival on campus.

Most of the participants mentioned the role of social media in their preparation for living on campus. Several used Weibo, a Chinese microblogging site that is a hybrid of Twitter and Facebook, prior to their departure from China to connect with other Chinese students who were attending Michigan State University. Most American college students rely on Twitter and Facebook for their digital connections with others. However, Twitter and Facebook are not permitted in China; thus, a critical campus population is excluded from two major social media platforms that often are used to promote community and campus pride. Although Weibo could be difficult to access both in China and the United States, some form of social media could be utilized to help the Chinese students transition to university life. There may be existing social media platforms that can be utilized in multiple countries and would be accessible for all incoming students, no matter what their country of origin. If no suitable social media platform is found to be usable by all students, I suggest that universities consider creating their own social platform for their campus community.

I recommend that university administrators, including residence life staff, utilize social media as a way to facilitate early communication with Chinese international students. Information about living on campus can be relayed in informative ways, including chat rooms

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that are facilitated by current Resident Assistants, videos of social programs offered in the residence halls, and video chat opportunities with current university staff, such as residence life professionals and other student affairs staff. Online interactions would benefit international students since these can be accessed prior to departing their country of origin and would provide early contextual information about life in the residence halls.

In addition to making connections with international students, social media can also be a platform for outreach to domestic students. Again, Twitter and Facebook, all of which are commonly used in the United States, are not accessible in all countries; thus, an alternative media platform would need to be used and the benefits of using this new platform must be communicated to all students. Students, both domestic and international, should be encouraged to connect with their future roommates and floormates on a social media site in order to build a foundation for communication and connection. Online clusters can be formed by grouping together students who are assigned to specific buildings and communities. This early communication can foster intergroup dialogue and also prepare all students for the diversity in their residential communities.

Utilizing social media in a strategic and systematic way can promote increased understanding before the academic year even begins. Social media could be a powerful tool for facilitating intergroup dialogue. Studies show that social media can increase social capital in young adults (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Valenzuela, Park, & Kee, 2009); thus, the use of social media to facilitate international and domestic student interactions could be extremely beneficial for all members of the university community.

Develop opportunities for language improvement. Language continuously emerged as the largest factor in the participants' experiences with domestic students. The need for practicing

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English language speaking affected the participants' desire for American roommates, but as indicated by the findings, having an American roommate did not necessarily facilitate increased dialogue and interaction. Thus, university administrators and faculty have a responsibility to develop both formal and informal programmatic efforts to assist Chinese students in their English language abilities.

Formal efforts should begin prior to the Chinese students' arrival on campus. As mentioned before, social media is a good medium for communicating university-specific terminology and colloquial terms to incoming Chinese students. Upper-level domestic and international students should partner as virtual student mentors or guides and facilitate conversation related to university and American vocabulary that incoming students may need to know. Also, on-campus transition programs should be strategic and creative in developing programs that reach out to Chinese students as a larger group. Chinese students tend to be more collectivist in nature, so marketing programs to the larger population rather than individuals would likely be more effective. For example, resident assistants can partner with staff from the Career Center to create opportunities for Chinese students to prepare for interviews that may come up for employment and/or internships. The interview preparation information can be disseminated to small clusters of Chinese students who are mixed in with domestic students with a facilitator for each group. This would allow for a more intimate group setting that may make non-native English speakers more comfortable to speak and allow for more intentional interaction between students in the group. In addition to effectively marketing towards groups rather than individuals, the formation of small clusters, such as the one described in the previous example, would be beneficial in creating a positive and effective learning community that would

be useful for multiple topics (e.g., workshops for developing effective study habits, fireside chats about current issues affecting higher education) throughout the academic year.

Informal measures for increasing English language ability could include monthly bulletin boards related to current popular culture topics. These bulletin boards could serve as conversation topics for all students on the residence hall floor. Informal conversation in the hallways could form as a result of having some recommended topics of conversation posted around the floors and building. Also, informal programs should include the opportunity for Chinese students to learn more slang, colloquial terms, and popular culture from domestic students. The participants in this study had all studied English as a foreign language prior to arriving to the United States. However, a limitation of learning English as a second language includes not knowing informal conversational English that permeates communication among college students. The incorporation of popular culture through different medias (e.g., bulletin boards, social media, video links sent through email) could allow for increased interaction and understanding of commonly used language by college students as well as spark additional conversation between Chinese and domestic students.

Train university staff. Meaningful peer interaction also requires well-trained resident assistants and other student leaders who are committed to creating intercultural interactions with all of their residents. Training on intercultural communication and diversity is imperative for all residence hall staff members, particularly resident assistants who are living in close proximity to Chinese international students. Resident assistants are influential through their daily interactions and program planning for residents; thus, it is imperative that student staff are trained to facilitate intercultural dialogue and interactions amongst all residents.

Very few participants mentioned their resident assistant as being helpful in their transition, and even fewer participants established relationships with these residential staff members. However, meaningful connections between residential student leaders and international students should also be fostered. Residential staff must be comfortable with and understand their roles as facilitators and resources in order to best support conversations and interaction amongst diverse students (Quaye, 2012). Training processes could take advantage of the knowledge base that already exists on campus, such as international student support offices, through collaborative facilitation and programs. Another suggestion for intentional connections would be to pair resident assistants with orientation leaders during student transition programs prior to the start of the academic year. Partnerships among multiple campus offices would help to create a seamless transition for international students through orientation and the rest of the academic year.

One cannot assume that professional staff are prepared to work specifically with international students. Faculty and staff must go through intentional training on the needs and diversity of international students. University professionals have extensive contact with international students, and they must be trained in cultural sensitivity, particularly in regards to campus policies. Administrators who exhibit discriminatory behaviors are "a key contributor to a diminished sense of belonging among [underrepresented] students attending predominantly white institutions" (Hurtado et al., 1999, p. 77). Training for faculty and staff is imperative to ensuring success for all student members of the university community.

Include the existing Chinese community. As mentioned previously, structural diversity can be a benefit as well as a challenge to students' sense of belonging on campus. The large number of Chinese students already on campus can be extremely helpful and essential in making

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connections with newly admitted Chinese international students. Older and more advanced Chinese students should be utilized as allies and resources: to provide cultural and contextual background to university staff and to assist new Chinese students in their transition to campus. Studies have shown that connections with students' culture of origin (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Museus & Maramba, 2011) are helpful for underrepresented students at a historically White insitution.

More advanced Chinese students need be actively recruited to serve as orientation leaders, resident assistants, and in other leadership roles around campus. Visibility of Chinese student leaders would allow first-year Chinese students to identify resources at the institution from their own cultural background. This would demonstrate that the university has an interest in encouraging more international students to get involved in campus life. This is important because "campus climates that encourage students' involvement more often support diversity" (Hurtado et al., 1999, p. 76). Also, Asian cultures tend to be collectivist societies and emphasize interdependence with others. Asian cultures often have tightly knit social groups and often use group norms to shape behavior (Triandis, 2009); thus, the involvement of more advanced Chinese students should be easy to implement since older students are likely already connected to the new students. University departments should reach out to advanced Chinese students in order to establish relationships based on trust and understanding that will benefit incoming Chinese international students.

Additionally, university departments that recruit Chinese students for leadership positions must consider their hiring practices. Many interview processes benefit native English speakers who have the confidence and language abilities to communicate easily. Chinese students may find difficulty in feeling comfortable and finding confidence to successfully go through the

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interview process. Thus, university administrators need to reconsider how they run their hiring process for student leadership positions to ensure there is not favoritism (both intended and unintended) towards native English speakers.

Communicate with domestic students. Perhaps the most significant factor in increasing Chinese international students' sense of belonging would be preparing domestic students to live with international students by early communication on the diverse nature of residence halls. By doing so, some of the responsibility for creating meaningful interactions shifts into the purview of domestic students. Rather than only expecting Chinese students to adapt to a new collegiate environment, domestic students should also prepare to live in a diverse residential environment with students from a variety of nationalities and backgrounds.

Several of the participants mentioned that they had done some research prior to arriving to campus on what could be expected of their interactions with American students. This allowed for some preparation for what communication practices may be successful or detrimental to interactions between American and Chinese students. Similarly to the international students' pre-departure research, domestic first-year students would benefit from early preparation to the culture of campus as they prepare for their arrival to college. It would benefit domestic students to receive some guidance on effective communication with other students, particularly international students, in their residence halls. Domestic students should receive information about the diverse nature of the residence halls on campus, and residence life offices should provide tips on building open communication and dialogue among roommates and floormates. This information about communication would benefit for all students, whether they are domestic or international students.

Again, social media could be a good medium to use to communicate this information to domestic students, including Twitter, Facebook, and other online spaces. In addition to utilizing active communication tools, the university should also ensure that marketing materials are reflective of the diverse nature of campus. Brochures and websites should include photographs and text that clearly celebrate the global and diverse nature of campus. The traditional images of the American college and university are no longer relevant to today's college campuses. Rather, universities need to communicate clearly the global nature of their student bodies, and ensure they welcome all students from all backgrounds.

Implications for Policy

The policy suggestions are institutionally-based since national policy change is beyond the scope of this study. Policy implications for university admissions and student services/student affairs emerged from this study.

The admissions policies for an institution should be examined to ensure that best practices are being implemented. Institutional policy should promote success for all students, both international and domestic students. Admissions offices, often following the direction of university leaders, should evaluate the university's ability to admit a large international population. What are the systemic needs of the university related to international recruitment? Are the needs based on budgetary projections or the desire to internationalize the campus? Simply stated, what is the purpose of admitting international students and can the campus support their academic and social needs? The answers to these questions should be critically examined in order to conduct long-term strategic planning that affects institutional policy, which in turn affects the Chinese international student experience.

After successfully going through the admissions process, student services and student affairs department usually take the lead on assisting international students in their transition to campus. International student support offices often take on the primary responsibility for working with international students. However, all student services and student affairs offices need to take an equal part in the responsibility in effectively supporting international students' transition to college in the United States. Various offices, including residence life, student activities, the counseling center, and the career center, must collaborate with international student support offices to construct a network of support that will benefit international students and their successful transition to college. When campus-wide collaborations occur, some policy implications must be addressed. For example, how are resources allocated? Are there rewards for offices that successfully assist all students, domestic and international, with their transition and retention in college? Also, institutions of higher education should evaluate the training processes for staff and faculty who work with diverse student groups. Human resources departments may need to get involved in preparing university employees to work with international students. Personnel management should be a critical factor when examining institutional policy affecting international students.

Implications for Theory

This study used two different conceptual frameworks: racial climate and sense of belonging. The study's findings suggest these two theories can be expanded. First, the framework of elements affecting racial climate (Hurtado et al., 1999) should be extended to include issues related to nationality and language. The concepts of race and ethnicity are very U.S.-centric, based on socio-historical factors that affect current race relations in the United States. Racial climate is primarily applied to domestic students; however, the changing

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demographics on college campuses require theoretical frameworks for understanding campus climate to better reflect the international nature of the student body. The issues of nationality and language are clearly salient factors that affect Chinese international students' perception of the racial climate on campus; thus, the inclusion of the additional elements of nationality and language are necessary to fully understand the overall campus climate for all students.

The second implication for theory is related to sense of belonging. Sense of belonging is an individualistic construct that requires self-reflection on one's interactions with other students. As previously mentioned, Chinese students tend to be collectivist in nature; thus, the concept of sense of belonging may need to be reexamined to be more inclusive of students who may not come from an individualistic background. There is compelling data in this study to suggest that perhaps sense of belonging can be reconstructed (or potentially deconstructed) to be more applicable to international students. Perhaps a collective sense of belonging is a more appropriate measure for Chinese students. This would require measurement of Chinese students' belonging to the Chinese campus population as a way to connect to the larger campus environment. That is, the idea of collective sense of belonging would focus more on connections from individual to sub-group to large group rather than on the measurement of individual to large group connections. Several possibilities for reimagining and reconceptualizing sense of belonging for international students emerged from this study, leading to implications for further theory development.

Recommendations for Further Research

I recommend six areas for further research on understanding the sense of belonging of Chinese international students and its relationship to their educational development and success. These recommendations include: extending the research into a longitudinal study, examining

differences by gender, social class, and province of origin, investigating across differences institutional types, and including domestic students' perspectives on their interactions with Chinese students. Also, I recommend additional research that considers how Chinese students fit in the model minority myth and further research on the history of Chinese students at Michigan State University.

As indicated in the limitations section of this paper, the participants were first-year students, which indicates a limited amount of exposure to their overall collegiate experience. This study could be made more robust by extending it into longitudinal research that examines how participants' sense of belonging changes over time. Increased duration on campus could lead to increased sense of belonging. Wilton and Constantine (2003) found that although Asian international students tended to experience higher acculturation distress and intercultural incompetence, increased length of stay at the host institution positively influenced the students' psychological well-being. Thus, increased time and participation on campus could be factors affecting Chinese students' sense of belonging. Examining the experiences of Chinese students through their entire collegiate career on one campus would be beneficial for understanding how their sense of belonging evolves over a four-to-six year period.

Nuancing the study based on participants' demographics could be illuminating in understanding sense of belonging in Chinese international students. I am interested in interviewing more male participants and examining any differences that may emerge between men and women in residence halls. This study is heavily skewed towards women, and it would be interesting to study more men to get a sense of any differences that may arise. In addition to gender, students' social class could be another factor in their sense of belonging. Understanding

their social status could be illuminating, particularly the Chinese studnets' perception of how their social class may affect their interpersonal relationships.

Another demographic thread of continued research on international students' sense of belonging could include stratifying students based on their province of origin, which would allow for the examination of geographical differences on students' experiences. Provinces in China are extremely diverse, often having specialized dialects, food, and daily habits. Understanding regional differences on Chinese students' sense of belonging could be illuminating in understanding previous contextual factors and how they may influence their adaptation to college in the United States.

This study was conducted at a research intensive, land-grant university that has a very distinctive institutional culture related to internationalization. As the international student experience is influenced by contextual and environmental factors, the research could be extended to include different institutional types. Chinese international students are likely to have different experiences based on different settings. For example, examining the experiences of Chinese students at a small liberal arts college could result in very different findings and implications based on the environment. Expanding the research to include other institutional types could reveal additional implications that are more inclusive of the larger Chinese student population.

Another possibility for continued research would be to interview the participants' roommates and floormates to get a sense of their perceptions of the Chinese students on their floor. Through interviews, domestic students could give their perspectives on the cultural tension that exists in residence halls and on campus between Chinese and domestic students. Adding this dimension to the study could produce additional recommendations for practice in regards to Chinese students' sense of belonging. Extending this research to include domestic students could

provide some compelling insights on the perceptions and nature of Chinese and domestic student interactions.

This study was an examination of racial climate for Chinese international students and yet there was very little mention of the "model minority" myth. Typically, Asian-Americans fall within the model minority stereotype which is not often applied to Asian international students. However, the participants became racialized beings when they arrived on a campus in the United States; thus, it would be interesting to delve deeper into their perception of becoming part of the model minority on campus. The perception of Chinese students having high math proficiency and being high academic achievers falls within the model minority label, and it would be interesting to delve deeper into the nuances of Chinese students becoming racialized beings on college campuses. Evidence from the participants in this study indicated that stereotypes fitting the model minority myth emerged from interactions between Chinese and domestic students. Thus, additional research could benefit from using the model minority myth as a lens to examine Chinese international students' experiences.

Further understanding of the contextual factors in this study could be enhanced. There was limited information about Chinese international students' arrival at Michigan State University. Thus, additional research on the historical context of Chinese students at Michigan State University could be helpful in better understanding the MSU-specific context. Textual and archival review could illuminate additional factors that affect Chinese students and their experiences in the residence halls.

Conclusion

This study examined Chinese international students' sense of belonging in the residences halls of a historically White university. The findings from this study illuminate the challenges

experienced by the 21 Chinese international student participants within the racial climate of their residential communities. Overall, most participants cited a desire to be more connected with American students. Even those who experienced discriminatory acts against them were still vocal about their desire to make strong connections with American students, stating that although those incidents were very upsetting, they still wanted to immerse themselves in American culture. The bottom line for all participants in this study was that they wanted to gain English speaking skills and experience American culture. They had a need to feel a sense of belonging to their college communities, and their experiences revealed in this study indicate that feelings of belongingness are not easy for Chinese international students to achieve.

Feelings of belonging are a basic human need, (Maslow, 1954; Strayhorn, 2012), and the need to belong and to 'fit in' are a part of human desire to find connection and community with others. Sense of belonging is a concept based on the relational nature of individuals and groups. International students are not a part of the dominant campus culture due to their different cultural backgrounds and temporary citizenship status. Thus, knowledge of these students' perceptions of their sense of belonging is essential to understanding the influence of the environment and peer groups on their feelings of connection to a foreign college campus. Rather than focusing on integration to the dominant culture, understanding international students' perceptions of membership in the community can provide insight on the non-dominant student group's feelings of affiliation to their campus community. In doing so, the emphasis shifts to highlighting the non-dominant group's narrative rather than focusing on the power of the dominant culture.

The need for belonging is particularly relevant for Chinese international students who are thrust into a foreign environment with strangers when they attend college. Chinese international students facing feelings of social distance from the mainstream culture could develop negative

implications for their overall educational and social experiences at institutions of higher education in the United States. International students' perception of the campus environment, feelings of belonging, and their interactions with others have implications for overall student success and persistence (Hausmann et al., 2007; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Museus & Maramba, 2011). Within a collegiate context, sense of belonging is important since many international students are "inclined to feel isolated, alienated, lonely, or invisible" (Strayhorn, 2012, p. 10), all of which can influence their persistence and satisfaction with their collegiate career. Thus, it is imperative for international students to feel a sense of belonging and be included as welcome participants in American higher education. To achieve this objective, institutions have a responsibility to assist Chinese international students in their transition and adjustment to their collegiate experience. Institutions can promote positive educational outcomes, such as persistence and degree completion, by creating environments that support students' success and help them feel like they belong.

Sense of belonging is critical in ensuring that Chinese international students can live happily and securely in residence halls on campus. The role of peer relationships is an important factor in the collegiate experiences of undergraduate Chinese international students. Daily social interactions serve as a basis for Chinese international students' feelings of either belonging or exclusion on the college campus. The findings of this study have important implications that can affect other growing international student populations. Institutions of higher education must enhance their support structures to better meet the needs of diverse international students. Institutions must be more practical and strategic in constructing environments that support the needs of all students, both international and domestic.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

March 12, 2013
To: Roger Baldwin
417 Erickson Hall
Re: IRB# x13-250e
Category: Exempt 1.2
Approval Date:
March 12, 2013

Title: Being and Belonging: A Critical Phenomenological Study of Undergraduate Chinese International Students' Sense of Belonging in Residence Halls

The Institutional Review Board has completed their review of your project. I am pleased to adviseyou that your project has been deemed as exempt in accordance with federal regulations. The IRB has found that your research project meets the criteria for exempt status and the criteria for the protection of human subjects in exempt research. Under our exempt policy the Principal Investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of human subjects in this project as outlined in the assurance letter and exempt educational material. The IRB office has received your signed assurance for exempt research. A copy of this signed agreement is appended for your information and records.

Renewals: Exempt protocols do not need to be renewed. If the project is completed, please submit an Application for Permanent Closure.

Revisions: Exempt protocols do not require revisions. However, if changes are made to a protocol that may no longer meet the exempt criteria, a new initial application will be required.

Problems: If issues should arise during the conduct of the research, such as unanticipated problems, adverse events, or any problem that may increase the risk to the human subjects and change the category of review, notify the IRB office promptly. Any complaints from participants regarding the risk and benefits of the project must be reported to the IRB.

Follow-up : If your exempt project is not completed and closed after three years, the IRB office will contact you regarding the status of the project and to verify that no changes have occurred that may affect exempt status. Please use the IRB number listed above on any forms submitted which relate to this project, or on any correspondence with the IRB office.

Good luck in your research. If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at 517-355-2180 or via email at IRB@msu.edu. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Harry McGee, MPH
SIRB Chair
cc: Christina Yao

Appendix B: Participant Solicitation Letter

Greetings--

My name is Christina Yao, and I am currently a doctoral candidate in Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education at Michigan State University. I am reaching out to you to invite you to participate in a study on the experiences of first-year Chinese international students in the residence halls. This study is important because it will provide information about the barriers that Chinese international students experience at college in the United States, and give information about success for Chinese students.

Your participation will help me better understand what can help you be successful as an international student on campus, and will illuminate the perceptions that you have of your interactions with domestic American students in the residence halls. The information from the interviews will be for completion of my dissertation on the experiences of undergraduate Chinese international students.

Participation will include two interviews-- one this semester and a follow-up interview when you return to campus in the fall. Interviews will be in person and will accommodate your schedule. My goal is to conduct interviews through the end of this semester. Any identifying information will be removed from final documents and analysis. As a token of appreciation for your time, you will be given a $10 gift card to Amazon.com for your participation in the first interview and then a $20 gift card for the second interview.

If you are willing to participate, please fill out the information form through this link and I will be in touch as soon as possible to schedule an interview with you:
https://msucoe.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_4157tBpNJgOxxfn

I appreciate your willingness to consider participating in this study. Also, please feel free to forward this email to any friends that would fit the needs of this study. Participants need to be first year students at MSU who identify as Chinese international students and live on campus in a residence hall.

Thanks!
Christina Yao
Michigan State University
Doctoral Candidate and Research Assistant
Higher Adult & Lifelong Education

Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself as a student in China.

2. How did you decide to come to this university?

3. What was your idea of being "American" before arriving in the United States?

    a. How do you see yourself fitting in or agree to this idea of being "American"?

4. What was your idea of college is supposed to be like? What were your expectations? Where did these expectations come from?

5. Describe to me your experiences when you arrived on campus and were moving into your residence hall.

6. Tell me what it's like to live in a residence hall at this university.

    a. What did you expect? Was anything surprising about life in the residence hall?

7. Describe a typical weeknight in your residence hall/room.

8. Describe your relationship with your roommate(s).

    a. What are your daily interactions with your roommate(s)?

9. Describe your relationship with your floormates. Residence hall staff?

10. How do you feel when you are in your room (by yourself, with your roommate)? Residence hall?

    a. Are you comfortable? Do you feel at home?

11. Describe the type of students you hang out with in your residence hall.

12. What kind of programs and events do you attend in your residence hall?

13. Describe where you eat on campus (i.e, cafeterias), including what you think of the food.

14. What is your relationship with non-Chinese students in your residence hall?

15. Describe how you feel about your residence hall.

a. Do you feel like you are a member of your residence hall?

b. How much does feeling like a member of that community matter to you?

16. What groups at the university do you feel like you belong to (student group, academic group)?

17. Can you talk about any experiences when you feel like you were treated differently from other students in the residence hall? Why?

18. Is there anything else about your experience as an international Chinese student at this university that you would like to share?

Appendix D: Participant Consent Form

Dear Participant:

This study is intended to study factors that influence undergraduate Chinese international students' sense of belonging in residence halls. Your participation in this study will help me to better understand the factors that lead to the persistence and success of undergraduate Chinese international students within the campus climate. This is an invitation to participate in two 90 minute interviews and completion of an information sheet. Data analysis will follow standard qualitative procedures and will be conducted by Christina Yao under the supervision of Dr. Roger Baldwin. Participants will be assigned pseudonyms prior to analysis, and all identifying information will be removed from transcripts prior to analysis. As a token of appreciation for your time, you will be given a $10 gift card to Amazon.com for your participation in the first interview and then a $20 gift card for the second interview.

Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time, with no penalty for doing so. However, if you are under the age of 18, you cannot participate in this study. You can choose not to participate at all, or not answer some or all of the questions. There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study. The interviews will be audio recorded. If this is an issue, you can choose to not participate in the interview. If you agree that I may do so, you can request at any time that I turn off the recorder. Digital recordings will be kept in a secure location until three years after this study is completed, at which time they will be erased. The information form, on which you indicate your name, contact information, and chosen pseudonym, will be maintained by the researchers in a secure location until three years after the end of the study, when it will be destroyed. The information form will be kept in a separate secure location than that of the digital recording.

Your identity will remain confidential in all transcribing, analyzing, and reporting of data. Because this study involves face-to-face interviews, I cannot provide anonymity to participants. However, you privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. I will use a pseudonym of your choice in transcribing, analyzing, and reporting data.

It is possible that you may become uncomfortable discussing your experiences. I remind you that you may, at any time and without penalty, elect not to answer a question or terminate the interview.

Please indicate on the information form if you would like me to provide you with a copy of the findings of the study, a bibliography of resources for further reading on the topic, or both. If you have any concerns or questions regarding your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact the researcher: Christina Yao, (912) 656-3388, yaochris@msu.edu, or my faculty member Dr. Roger Baldwin, Professor in Educational Administration, 429 Erickson Hall, Michigan State University, by phone: (517) 355-6452, or email: rbaldwin@msu.edu.

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 202 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____

Name of Participant (please print)

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