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FEELING WELCOME WITH NO “BUTS”: CHINESE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN RESIDENCE LIFE

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ABSTRACT

College student personnel and administrators working in residence halls are expected to provide a positive learning environment where every student's point of view is welcomed respectfully. Creating that learning community requires residence coordinators to understand the circumstances of all students providing the means of a safe engaging environment to all of them. College administrators have to come up with innovative techniques and strategies to accommodate and extend helping hands to these students.

Social adjustment is tumultuous for first year international students especially for those living in residence halls. Yet, research focused specifically on international residents in this environment is lacking (Paltridge et al., 2010). A quantitative study conducted at a Midwestern, midsized private institution examined first year international students' perception of racial climate, community, and diversity in residence halls and how their perception influences learning outcomes. A descriptive analysis of the data was conducted, and the results were compared to data collected from the American College and University Housing Satisfaction Survey to compare experiences between international and domestic students. With insights on international student perception, practitioners can tailor programming to engage them.

INTRODUCTION

For any new college student, the first year is critical in the socialization process into becoming a college student and to the student's success in higher education (Ramsay et al., 2007). For international students, social integration has focused on cultural factors and transitional challenges (Sovic, 2009). International students, typically devoid of families and friends in the host country, need to rely heavily on university-led support systems to form peer relationships as their access to social support networks is greatly reduced upon arrival in a foreign country (Paltridge et al., 2010; Razek & Coyner, 2013; Sovic, 2009). Residence halls serve as living spaces conducive to social and academic interaction among students, and thus offer an essential research setting in college life.

OBJECTIVES

In determining the perspectives of intercultural interactions between international and domestic students, Brebner (2008) found that international students were less interested in campus-wide cultural activities but more in administrators fostering a supportive campus environment. The purpose of this study is to examine how first year international students' perception of racial climate within residence halls affect their level of engagement on the floor through comparing it to that of domestic students. Knowledge of how student perceptions of racial climate and diversity affect student living experience, student affairs professionals may be better able to create an environment that truly supports intercultural exchange and engagement. Results provide answers to following research questions:

- 1) What are international students' perception of the residence hall living environment, community, and diversity?
- 2) How do these perceptions differ from the perceptions of domestic students?
- 3) How does this perception affect their level of engagement on the floor?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As first year international students begin their college career in the U.S., they experience a number of transitional challenges including lacking awareness of campus resources, language barriers, culture shock, and a lack of social support. The degree of peer interactions that students experience significantly affects their growth and development in college, as do racial diversity. Perceptions of racial-ethnic prejudice have negative effects especially on minority students' transition and adjustment to college, as well as their sense of belonging to their institutions (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Barriers Experienced By First-Year International Students

For any new college student, the first year is critical in the socialization process into becoming a college student and to the student's success in higher education (Ramsay, Jones & Barker, 2007). Social integration is equally important for all students, but the emphasis has been different for domestic and international students. For domestic students, social integration is commonly associated with academic success. For international students, however, the emphasis has been more on cultural factors and transitional challenges (Sovic, 2009). These challenges include adjustment issues, culture shock, a lack of peer support, a lack of awareness of campus resources, and difficulties securing basic amenities.

Adjustment Issues and Social Integration

Adjustment issues exacerbate the socialization process for first year international students during the initial transition period (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). According to Ying (as cited in Poyrazli and Grahame, 2007), a student's perceived discrimination, English language proficiency, personality type, and approach to forming relationships with Americans are additional variables to the success of student adjustment. These variables are further intensified for students from non-English speaking and non-Western backgrounds (Fontaine and Todd, 2011). During this initial arrival period, international students experience culture shock (Brown

& Holloway, 2008; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007) showing evidences of mainly negative mood states such as anxiety, depression, loneliness, and stress. Sovic (2009) reported that students who experience positive peer interactions have been reported to be better adjusted academically and socially, and generally have less psychological health problems associated with loneliness and isolation. Due to their lack of high language proficiency, international students are less likely to interact with peers and consequently missing this positive support.

International Students Experiences in Residence Halls

Residence halls offer an essential research setting for international students. This type of on-campus housing serves as the key environment for building a sense of community, facilitating group learning and enriching the college experience for students (Demarest, 2001). By nature of having students live in close proximity, on-campus housing may reflect a different racial climate than the university campus at-large (Johnson, 2003). Residence halls present the following diversity challenges and opportunities that ought to be examined.

International student experiences of living on campus can be a negative impact on their college experience if they constantly experience discrimination. A perceived negative racial climate could lead them to feeling disenchanting with their living experience. Further, when residence life staff members lack intercultural sensitivity to engage domestic and international students, it may result in a lack of diverse interactions between both parties. Barriers in cross cultural communications may further exacerbate the residential living experience for international students, stemming from reasons such as differences in personality, interests, and communication preferences.

Perceived negative racial climate

International students frequently experience issues revolving around racial climate. The largest international student populations have historically been from China, Saudi Arabia, South Korea and India ("Open Doors", 2012). The majority of international students inevitably become racially underrepresented students on campus. As students who may not have been previously exposed to academic culture in the U.S., they can very easily perceive student affairs professionals as catering only to White students (Patton & Hannon, 2008). Subsequently, they may perceive that mainstream activities such as homecoming and Greek Week as unwelcoming of diverse participants or even boring. Such perceptions may pose as barriers for meaningful interactions between international and domestic students.

Lack of intercultural sensitivity

Racial and ethnic sensitivity can become a challenge specifically for international residence hall students, especially in predominantly White institutions. Due to the close living proximity in residence halls, students may embrace diversity differently compared to the classroom, where they may be more open to accepting diversity intellectually (Johnson, 2003). Because residence halls are where college students spend the majority of their time, negative racial climates can adversely impact the perception of international students toward American students. The small number of international students who participated in Johnson's (2003) study indicated their perceived need for hall programs to reflect more of an international presence. They also felt like the staff was unable to relate to them and that they often felt misunderstood. This result is particularly problematic, as institutional staff members play a role in shaping

students' perceptions of the overall campus climate, particularly for students of color (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Hindering factors in cross cultural communication

Diverse interactions do not always develop organically. Domestic students expect the “visitors” to be the ones trying to get to know them rather than the other way around (Brebner, 2008). Conversely, international students perceive cultural differences, personality issues, and common interests as factors hindering cross-cultural relationships (Brebner, 2008). Other deterring factors include language barrier that leads to reluctance in residents to bridge intercultural gaps, differences in experiences, preferred means of communication (Paltridge, Mayson & Schapper, 2010), age, qualifications, and expectations (Razek & Coyner, 2013; Sovic, 2009).

METHODS

To examine first year international students' perception of racial climate, community, and diversity in residence halls and to determine how their perception affects their level of engagement in the residence hall a quantitative inquiry was conducted seeking self-reported feedback from first year international students. To fully realize these objectives, we had three hypotheses:

1. H1: International students will report dissatisfaction with the racial climate in their residence halls
2. H1: International students' perceptions of the residence hall climate will influence their campus engagement.
3. H1: International students will show more dissatisfaction with residence hall cultural climate than that of their domestic peers.

A quantitative, cross-sectional research was conducted in residence halls in the Spring 2013 term. Respondents were first-year students enrolled full time in the university with approximately a hundred international students. This method allowed inference to be drawn about international students' experiences in residence halls in the U.S. based on data tabulated from a relatively small sample size (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

DATA SOURCES

Data were collected at a mid-sized, private, religiously affiliated higher education institution. The institution has approximately 7,000 undergraduate students with a population of 1,500 international students. Out of the total 150 first year international students who live on campus, 98 students voluntarily responded to the questionnaire with a response rate of 65%.

Instrument and Data Collection

The survey instrument consisted of three main parts: demographics information, satisfaction section, and racial climate perception section. In the first section, demographic variables, including current place of residence, length of residency in current hall, gender,

academic classification, ethnicity, national origin, and ethnicity of residence hall staff were collected. The variables were presented and analyzed for categorical frequencies.

The second section was adapted from the American College and University Housing Officers-International/Educational Benchmarks, Inc. (ACUHO-I/EBI) Satisfaction Survey. This survey is routinely administered in 1,500 colleges and universities and measures the effectiveness of housing programs from the residents' perspectives. Questions included factors such as satisfaction of hall staff, floor climate, community, and diverse interactions. Participants were asked to select on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

The third section was adapted from the Perceptions of Racial Climate Questionnaire (PRCQ) (Johnson-Durgans, 1990; Johnson-Durgans, 1992; Johnson, 2003) used to assess the perception of racial climates among students living in residence halls. The components in the questionnaire were on the perception of hall environment, staff, and hall peers. The questionnaire was again presented in a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). Each perception statement was stated positively to avoid suggestion of a negative climate, researcher bias, and inadvertently causing respondents' uncomfortable feelings (Johnson-Durgans, 1994).

Data Analysis

The questions were grouped into four factors: perception of hall environment, perception of hall staff, perception of hall peers, and learning outcomes. A descriptive analysis was then conducted to compare students' overall perceptions with the intended learning outcomes. This analysis helped determine the correlations between their perception and their overall learning experience. Next, the data was compared with the dataset from the ACUHO-I/EBI survey that was administered to all residential students on campus during Spring 2012. The response rate from the ACUHO-I EBI survey was representative of the institution's population and was generalized to the university's undergraduate population for data comparison and for a more balanced discussion.

RESULTS

A sample of 98 students responded to the survey out of 150 first-year international students who lived in residence halls, representing a return rate of 65%. 88 students indicated that their ethnicity was Chinese and with 86 students indicating that they were from China. The other countries represented were Sweden, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Togo, El Salvador, and Thailand. Other self-identified ethnicities were white, Arabic, African, and Latino. Male students represented 63% of the respondents and female students represented 37%. The respondents identified 88 of their Resident Assistant or Residence Coordinator as White. The other ethnicities represented on the hall staff were African American (2%), international (4%), Latino (3%), and Asian (1%). Although data were obtained from other nationalities, their numbers were too small to include in the data analysis. For this purpose, the data analysis will focus only on Chinese respondents.

Perception of Hall Staff, Peers, and Climate

Based on the original questionnaires, the set of 20 questions were initially grouped into four categories: (1) perception of hall environment, (2) perception of hall staff, (3) perception of hall peers, and (4) learning outcomes. The dimensionality of the 20 items from the questionnaire was then analyzed using principle component factor analysis. Two criteria were used to determine the number of factors to rotate: the scree test and the interpretability of the factor solution. Based on the scree plot, four factors were rotated using a Varimax rotation and Kaiser normalization. The rotated solution identified a five-factor solution accounting for 69% of the variance in scores, labeled as: (1) perception of hall environment; (2) perception of hall staff; (3) perception of hall community; (4) perception of hall diversity; and (5) learning outcomes.

The majority of Chinese students responded positively on each of the questions. Between 40% and 60% of the students responded “agree” to each question and between 27% and 59% of all students responded “strongly agree” to each question. All 88 of the Chinese students unanimously agreed or strongly agreed that they “respect people of different race or ethnicities.” Questions with about ten percent of disagree responses are that the programs in the hall are for people of all races (11%), there are enough non-whites on the hall staff (17%), the students do not mind being on the hall staff (20%), the staff relates well to people of all races (17%), students feeling a part of their floor (14%), and that living in the residence hall enhancing students’ ability to improve interpersonal relationships (10%).

Relationship between Hall Staff, Peers, and Climate

Students’ perception that they felt welcome when first moved into the hall moderately correlates with their perception of hall diversity ($r=.553$, $p<0.1$) and hall community ($r=.599$, $p<0.1$). Specifically, students who felt welcome initially are likely to perceive that the residents in their hall are friendly ($r=.559$, $p<0.1$), that residents get along well regardless of race ($r=.501$, $p<0.1$), and that hall programs are for people of all races ($r=.576$, $p<0.1$). Further, students who perceive an initial sense of welcome into the community were also likely to interact with residents who are different from them ($r=.536$, $p<0.1$) and benefit from those diverse relationships ($r=.509$, $p<0.1$). This finding confirms that the early weeks at college are a crucial time for building relationships (Sovic, 2009).

Hall Perception and Learning Outcomes

A standard multiple regression analysis was conducted to evaluate how well factors 1-4 predicted the overall perceived learning outcomes from living in on-campus housing. The linear combination of the factors were significantly related to overall program effectiveness, $p<.001$. The multiple correlation coefficient was .84, indicating that approximately 71% of the variance of the learning outcomes can be accounted for by the linear combination of the four factors. A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was then computed to assess which factors were most closely associated with the learning outcomes. There was a significant relationship between student perception of hall diversity ($r=.789$, $p<0.1$) and hall community ($r=.777$, $p<0.1$) and perceived learning outcomes. Among the four factors, perception of hall staff was the least associated with perceived learning outcomes ($r=.518$, $p<0.1$); student perception of hall environment was moderately correlated with perceived learning outcome ($r=.608$, $p<0.1$).

Hall Environment and Learning Outcomes

Students' sense of welcome when they first moved into the hall is moderately correlated with their perception that living in the residence halls have enhanced their communication skills ($r=.558$, $p<0.1$) and ability to meet other people ($r=.500$, $p<0.1$). Interestingly, the students' perception of whether the staff is consistent and fair in discipline matters ($r=.278$, $p<0.009$) and their satisfaction with their hall staff's efforts ($r=.300$, $p=.005$) to get to know them has low correlation with their perceived learning outcomes. This finding counters the argument that residence life staff members' ability to create a positive environment could impact students' experience (Dusselier et al., 2005).

Additionally, students' perception of a lack of racial problems on their hall moderately correlated with their perceived ability to live cooperatively with others ($r=.551$, $p<0.1$). Students who perceive their hall as a great place for diverse races to live are linked to an enhanced ability to live with others ($r=.501$, $p<0.1$) and improved interpersonal relationships ($r=.520$, $p<0.1$). These findings signify the impact a positive racial climate plays on students' learning and living experience. Conversely, although students unanimously perceived that they respect diverse others in their residence hall, this perception has low correlation with each of the learning outcomes, with Pearson's r ranging from .320 to .380. Hence, it is likely that in order to achieve the learning outcomes, their perceived quality of hall environment plays a more important role than their attitude towards others.

Hall Staff and Learning Outcomes

Students' perception of their hall staff is moderately correlated with their self-reported learning outcome ($r=.518$, $p<0.1$). The number of non-white staff on the floor has little correlation with students' perceived learning outcomes ($r=.146$, $p=.175$). Additionally, students' perception of having sufficient diverse staff members on their floor has little correlation with their perceived ability to respect other ethnicities ($r=.085$, $p=.430$). These findings suggest that the ethnicity or race of the residence life hall staff may have little impact on students' perceived learning. At the same time, because the residence hall staff at the sampled institution is predominantly White, it is difficult to determine if residents with cultural minorities as resident assistants had different perceptions of hall climate and learning outcomes than residents who do not.

Hall Diversity and Learning Outcomes

Students who perceive that they interact with diverse others and benefit from diverse interactions are highly correlated with a perception that living in the residence hall have enhanced their ability to respect other races and ethnicities ($r=.710$, $p<0.1$). The hall diversity factor also moderately correlates with other learning outcomes, such as improved communication skills ($r=.693$, $p<0.1$), enhanced ability to live cooperatively with others ($r=.694$, $p<0.1$), and improved interpersonal relationships ($r=.688$, $p<0.1$). This finding confirms that positive interactions among diverse residents help prepare students to develop greater openness to diversity (Pike, 2002).

Hall Community and Learning Outcome

Students' perception of their hall community is highly correlated with their perception that living in the residence hall enhanced their ability to live with others ($r=.749$, $p<0.1$) and to

improve interpersonal relationships ($r=.707$, $p<0.1$). Additionally, students' perception that everyone gets along well regardless of race moderately correlates with their perceived ability to live cooperatively with others ($r=.696$, $p<0.1$). Students who feel very much a part of their floor are also moderately correlated with their ability to improve interpersonal relationships ($r=.669$, $p<0.1$). These findings relate to international students' perceived importance of social influences in influencing the satisfaction of their education experience (Zhang & Brunton, 2007). Social companionship support is highly valued by international students (Ramsay, Jones & Barker, 2007) and the analysis suggests a similar conclusion.

INTERPRETATION

An examination of the data reveals that student perception of hall peers significantly correlates with their perceived learning outcomes. Students who considered themselves as benefiting from diverse interactions were more likely to perceive that their living experience positively impacted them as a whole. Students who report that they interact with residents who are different from them also perceive that their on-campus experience enhanced their ability to respect other races and ethnicities. This finding confirms that the quality rather than the quantity of social interactions were more important for Chinese international students (Ward and Rana-Deuba, 2000). Additionally, students who believe that they interact with diverse others and feel a part of their floor help their ability to meet the learning outcomes as described in the questionnaire. Specifically, when students perceive that they are a part of their floor, they tend to rank positively that living in the residence hall has enhanced their ability to improve interpersonal relationships and to live cooperatively with others.

International student response of hall environment is related to their perceived ability to meet other people, live cooperatively with others, improve interpersonal relationships, respect others, and improve their communication skills. When students perceive that they benefit from interactions with residents who are different from them, it positively impacts their ratings of all learning outcomes. Students need to feel that they are benefiting from diverse relationships; this perception is key because it influences how they rank their learning outcomes and experiences. It is not as influential that they only interact with diverse others; it is more important that they benefit from those relationships. Residence life staff members thus need to be very intentional about how they program and educate students about differences; it needs to be meaningful and impactful relationship building. Further, the data reveals that student perception of hall staff affects how they perceive their hall environment. When students feel welcomed when they first moved into the residence hall, they are more likely to believe that hall programs are for students of all races.

DISCUSSION

The data reveal that students' sense of welcome when they first moved into the residence hall influence their perception of hall diversity and hall staff. This finding indicates that the resident assistants need to ensure that they make efforts to welcome new students on their floor.

When students perceive as being a part of their floor, they tend to rank positively that their living experience have enhanced their ability to improve interpersonal relationships and to live cooperatively with others, which confirms literary findings that integration with domestic students is crucial to ensuring that students can foster positive interpersonal relationships.

Factors Influencing Chinese Student Response

Due to the overwhelmingly high number of Chinese respondents in this study, it would be beneficial to take a closer look at possible cultural factors influencing the responses from this population. These factors include collectivism, high power distance, *renqing* (reciprocity), *mianzi* (face) and *guanxi* (relations).

Collectivistic culture

The lack of significant statistical difference between students' age, gender and residential areas is perhaps suggestive of the collective nature of the Chinese culture. Hofstede (1980) suggested that Chinese societies are generally considered more collectivistic in value orientation (as cited in Hwang, Ang & Francesco, 2002). Collectivistic cultures influence what may be perceived as acceptable social behaviors. In collectivistic cultures, conformance to socially expected behaviors is key and there is a strong desire for harmony, unity, loyalty, and conformance (Hwang, Ang & Francesco, 2002). This concern for harmony may influence students' willingness to voice contrarian opinions or negative evaluations in the surveys for fear that their views may be unacceptable to authority figures, such as the Resident Assistants or Residence Coordinators.

Social desirability bias

Social desirability bias (Furnham, 1986) is the tendency among individuals to admit socially desirable actions and to deny engaging in less socially desirable acts (as cited in Dunn and Shome, 2009). A low social desirability bias occurs when the values of the respondents are similar to that of their peers. In a study comparing the ethical attitudes between Chinese and Canadian business students, Dunn and Shome (2009) found that Chinese students revealed a low social desirability bias, which is consistent with the collectivist Chinese culture. Because the results among Chinese students are comparable, it is possible that the data in this study also indicate a low social desirability bias.

Respect for authority

Prevalent among Asian cultures is the respect for authority figures. Many Chinese students are governed by the fundamental rule of respect for superiors in their identity with Confucianism as the central element of Chinese identity (Ping, 2010). Confucian teaching stresses respecting and obeying authorities, and when Chinese students come to U.S. universities, they bring with them a Confucian-oriented perspective (Dong and Chittooran, 2012). This high respect for authority may cause Chinese students to consider questioning an authority figure to be inappropriate. Such act of questioning may imply a challenge to the knowledge and authority of the one in power (Hwang, Ang & Francesco, 2002). The survey instrument was distributed and collected by Resident Assistants in each area. While students returned the surveys anonymously, it is possible that the respondents did not feel that it was disagree, if indeed they were dissatisfied with their living environment.

The principle of reciprocity

Additionally, the principle of *renqing* is more tightly bound up with ideas of reciprocity compared to other cultures (Hwang, 1987). This principle implies a normative standard for regulating social exchange and emphasizes the value of maintaining personal harmony and social order among those in hierarchically structured relationships (Hwang, 1987). If Chinese students indeed perceive their Resident Assistants (RAs) as authority figures who demand respect, then for the sake of *renqing*, they may feel it necessary to provide positive feedback about their RAs and living experience so as not to jeopardize their relationship.

The principle of *renqing* may have also impacted the high response rate among Chinese students. Whereas quantitative research typically receives low response rates from international students (Dusselier et al., 2005; Paltridge et al., 2010; Ramsay et al., 2007), the difference in this study could be the personal delivery of the survey through the RAs. *Renqing* connotes a set of social norms that one has to abide in order to get along well with other people (Hwang, 1987). One reason for Chinese students to complete the surveys is because they may anticipate having to continue to interact with their RAs in the future and wishing to prevent interpersonal conflict (Hwang, 1987).

Building relationships and saving “face”

Closely related to relationship building is the principle of maintaining *mianzi*. This term literally means “face” and is “a function of perceived social position and prestige within one’s social network” (Hwang, 1987, p.961). Knowing that *mianzi* is vital to others in maintaining a harmonious social network, one common strategy to render someone *mianzi* or to “save face” for another includes avoiding criticizing anyone, especially superiors (Hwang, 1987).

Within the highly communal Chinese culture, the establishment of *guanxi* (relationships) with other people is central. According to Hwang (1987), “In a relation-oriented society, such as China, an individual’s *guanxi* are an important consideration for all concerned” (p.958). In the case of this study, if a Chinese student neglects the rule of *renqing* and turns down the Resident Assistant’s request to complete the survey, their *guanxi* could be inadvertently be marred. Therefore, the need of reciprocity (*renqing*), maintaining one’s image (*mianzi*), and establishing relationships (*guanxi*), may have likely influenced Chinese international students to not only complete the surveys, but also select positive statements in the questionnaire.

Factors influencing positive responses

While current research suggests that international students experience acculturation challenges during their transition to the American campus (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Brown & Holloway, 2008), the experiences of some students may be positive. University of Dayton, the setting of this research, ranked first in international student satisfaction for two straight years in 2007 and 2008, according to an International Barometer Survey (Robinson, 2009). The International Student Barometer is the largest study of international students in the world and is administered by a U.K.-based company named I-Graduate. International students at the University of Dayton reported high satisfaction rates in areas including support services, university orientation, quality of instructors, and the registration and orientation process (Seaver, 2012). When compared to national data, UD was ranked higher in all areas of satisfaction and showed lower dissatisfaction ratings, except in the area of transportation.

LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Several key factors testify to the significance of this project. First, students' sense of community closely relates with their "feelings of being cared about, treated in a caring way, valued as an individual and accepted as a part of community and the quality of social life on campus" (Cheng, 2004, p.216). Most studies consist of large-scale Web based student surveys to students in various classes (Cheng, 2004; Brown & Holloway, 2008) however, research remains lacking in residence halls. Second, studies are typically conducted at a single institution with predominantly white students (Dusselier et al, 2005; Paltridge et al., 2010; Ramsay, Jones & Barker, 2007). Hence, there is a lack of racial and ethnic heterogeneity, meaning that current data do not adequately represent the views of international students who are typically racially underrepresented on campus. Third, while studies provide valuable insights of perceived racial climates in residence halls, the international student response rates are typically much lower than the representation in the overall student population, thus affecting the generalizability of the original population (Johnson, 2003). In sum, this research project is a concentrated effort to gain feedback from international students so that residence life administrators may better serve this population.

While the questionnaire is a good tool to gauge students' perceptions, it is limited in providing in-depth knowledge about why the respondents answered the questions a certain way. Additionally, although the response rate of this questionnaire is relatively high, international students perceiving a negative floor climate may not have been willing to complete a hall-issued questionnaire (Johnson, 2003). Finally, the survey instrument could not adequately address various factors contributing to student learning outcomes. Qualitative studies such as focus groups or interviews may provide additional insight in order to examine other variables influencing students' perceptions about their on campus accommodations.

One inherent limitation of this research is that it was conducted at a single institution with a significant Chinese student population. The sample is skewed toward Chinese students and thus comparisons between international students from different regions are limited. As a result, the results from this study may not generalize to institutions with student populations that include more racial and ethnic heterogeneity. Moreover, the majority of the residence life staff members are White students, thus limiting the determination of whether or not diverse staff hiring may affect international student perceptions of hall racial climate.

Further research may address the aforementioned limitations to increase the generalizability of findings. First, studies may target diverse international student populations to ensure eliminating the mono cultural influence that was apparent in the current study. Targeting more diverse staff members at similar campuses would be helpful to determine whether the diversity in staff influence students' experience in residence halls.

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