**Coming to America**

 ***Uncovering the Divide between International and Domestic Perception in the American Collegiate System***

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***Introduction***

The United States collegiate system has a long history of hosting international students across its campuses. Their presence on campus is important for a number of reasons. It promotes cultural understanding, fosters international bonds, improves diversity and broadens perspective as well as critical thinking on a global scale, rather than hyper-local. Our goal in examining prior research is to conceptualize the current understanding of how foreign students interact and are perceived based on the domestic point of view. Focusing on the institutional level of academia and how international students acquire success, we examine the role discrimination plays in both the experiences of international and domestic students on western campuses.

***Previous Research***

***Academics***

In most cases, international students chose to travel to the United States because of the quality of academic programs. For example, researchersZhao et al **(**2005)investigated the correlation of domestic and international students’ activity and involvement in areas specific to their success in higher education. The study found first-year international students were more engaged in educational practices that contribute to their academic outcomes compared to their American counterparts. International students exceeded in student-faculty interaction, academic challenges and engaged more with technology. Researchers also indicated by foreigner’s senior year, their level of academic engagement as compared with their American counterparts no longer indicated a great difference. Both groups spent relatively equal amounts of time relaxing and socializing. Specialists determined the change between first and last year international students was a result of cultural acclimation — seniors would inevitably feel more comfortable to socialize. Despite assimilation or population increase, both perceived campus inhabitants to be less supportive. Unfortunately, researchers did not determine why the gap existed, encouraging future studies to do so instead.

An article by Hayes, Richard and Lin, Heng-Rue (1994)**,** on the other hand, focused on how the problem might be solved to improve experiences at American colleges, altering the perceptions of international students. More specifically, how internationals could more easily make friends. Researchers concluded that it’s easiest for international students to make friends with those from their home country. The group almost always had more friends from where they’re from than Americans. However, those that had many friends from their host country were more content and had less homesickness. Specialists made a grid measuring where international students’ friends were from and their varying level of friendships Initially, the study proves a correlation between satisfaction and the ability to form bonds with domestics. Yet, researchers still failed to provide a solution to bridge that gap.

Though Hayes, Richard and Lind, Heng- Rue (1994) have not been able to cite an answer that would generate a bridge between domestic and foreign students, researchers were able to locate behaviors that would further inhibit international students on college campuses. In particular, researchers observed self-defeating behaviors that international students exhibited in the classroom. By surveying teachers at two universities, specialist determined what behaviors were most detrimental. International students were also to identify what the most aspects of their adjustment period to the American education system. According to the report, teachers deemed a lack of participation in class as the most damaging to a student’s success. International students, rather, cited a lack of social support as the biggest challenge when trying to assimilate to American culture. In observing the causes for these issues, researchers found the language barrier to be the biggest issue. Both sides struggled to comprehend ESL students’. Researchers also determined that students without a social support system did not meet the needs required for basic psychological human interaction. As a result, their academic success was undermined.

Robertson et al (2000) furthered research of in-class behavior, offering a more comprehensive understanding of academic settings international students encountered. The study uses a specific self-response questionnaire called the Delphi technique, in which the problems identified are narrowed by consensus through multiple iterations of the surveys administered. The surveys, featuring open-ended questions, were administered to university students and faculty to determine their perceptions of the learning environment. International students’ responses throughout the study indicated they struggled most with a lack of comprehension of the domestic language, social isolation and difficulties with facilities and administration. Staff responses indicated the most prevalent problems in dealing with international students’ were their lack of in-class participation and their inability to understand lecture content. Specialists suggested that it is the responsibility of staff to encourage a learning environment that’s conducive to domestic and international students, considering the extreme difficulties the foreign students face on a daily basis like language differences. How to do so, however, is still left for future professionals to determine.

Understanding the complexity of language barriers, Stoynoff (1997) presented statistical analyses on the factors that contribute to the success of international students based on speech. By examining language proficiency and learning strategies and it correlation with academic performance, researches recorded results after the first six months of international students’ academic career. They found preliminary proficiency tests such as the TOEFL and LASSI are beneficial but not the best predictors of future academic success, as were certain learning strategies. Instead, researchers determined it was a combination of all factors — effective learning strategies and coping methods in response to stress — that led to foreign students’ level of success. To reach any form of achievement, however, students would still need to successfully integrate into the collegiate world, which presents an entirely new challenge.

To determine what a successfully integrated student looked like,Rienties et al (2012) examined the process and its impact. Researchers administered questionnaires to assess academic, social, personal-emotional adjustment and attachment. In succession, they formulated another survey to measure perception of the faculty, study support, student satisfaction and financial support. Researchers then evaluated students’ academic performance by tracking their credits and overall GPA. International students who had well developed integration skills also had high levels of academic achievement. These students were also typically from a country that had cultural similarities or were closer to home. A student’s success wasn’t necessarily linked to efforts made by specific schools or programs but instead had less differences and more similarities with their host. Differences and increased diversity, as a result, contributed to the difficulty a student faced in attempting integration.

***Discrimination and Racism***

 Academic success is not only dependent upon social integration or language competency, instances of discrimination and racism can also play a part (Baruppan and Barari, 2011). Realizing the importance of these concepts, researchers are attempting to understand why the U.S. is falling as the global leader for international learning. More aggressive recruiting by European nations and Australia is partially to blame, but the researchers are instead focusing on whether or not discrimination faced while in the U.S. is causing the decline. To make this determination, data, collected from 227 usable surveys from the 267 received, was used to indicate that discrimination did in fact have negative impact on learning outcomes. Despite the significant finding, discrimination did not actually hinder academic performance. Overall, researchers felt language proficiency was the most important factor in relation to students’ ability to feel comfortable to participate with the university. In this instance, the language barrier served as the cause for discrimination or racism students encountered — unable to communicate misunderstandings or differences in a constructive manner.

 Still, why must international students be expected to tolerate or experience discriminatory behaviors, especially if the U.S. collegiate system benefits from the diverse culture and point of view they have to offer? To further dissect the question,Charles-Toussaint and Crowson (2010) used Integrated Threat Theory (ITT) to determine how right-wing authoritarianism (RAW) and social dominance orientation (SDO) could explain why domestic students exhibited prejudice and racism towards international classmates. ITT has four different pillars, but only two were used within the context of the study — realistic and symbolic threats. Realistic threats refer to members of an in-group feeling threatened by the conflicting ideas and goals of an out-group. Symbolic threats represent the conflicting norms of an out-group that an in-group may fear disrupt their way of life. Researchers believed both RAW and SDO could help illustrate domestic and international perceptions and their reasoning, hoping to accommodate all students’ well-being. For more accurate results, 188 American students were surveyed to assess their prejudices against International students on a mid-sized campus in the Southwestern United States. After data collection and analysis, researchers concluded realistic and symbolic threats were the primary sources contributing to American students’ prejudice. To change these perceptions, researchers proposed an improved educational emphasis on cultural differences, enlightening domestic students with cultural understanding and consideration enabling them to act out of compassion rather than fear. Specialists acknowledged the suggestion wouldn’t work for all students. However, in any capacity, increased interaction between domestic and international students would surely benefit and assist in altering prior misconceptions or stereotypes.

 Brown and Jones (2013) found racist behaviors were not only present on U.S. campuses but were also prevalent experiences for post-graduate students at a U.K. university, as well. The study used short questionnaires and in depth, unstructured interviews with willing participants to determine how frequent individuals were faced with racism and discrimination and its lasting affects. Two main reasons international students felt uncomfortable on campus were because of loneliness and racism. Students experienced “racially motivated incidents,” representing 12 percent of crime against minority ethnic people on campus (1006, Brown and Jones, 2013). The study surveyed 153 students of varying ethnicity, age and gender. Of the 153 surveyed, 49 claimed to have experienced racism and 15 refused to interview because “they felt too distressed, angry or uncomfortable to talk about their painful experiences” (1008, Brown and Jones, 2013). In most instances, racism was limited to verbal assault; however, there were some cases of students throwing things or physical threats. As a result, many students felt depressed and distressed about their experiences. Some refused to return to the U.K. or even discouraged others from traveling there. In understanding the potential struggle that international students face when studying in foreign countries, sociologists may begin to comprehend and diagnose the abuse and discrimination international students face and possibly provide a solution. But, like most sociological issues, the solution or cause is not always so black and white.

 TakeLee and Rice’s 2007 study for example. The study focused on the unwelcoming atmosphere international students encountered when on American soil. This atmosphere may have been a direct result of declining international enrollment, especially after 9/11. The attacks caused many Americans to fear the “other” and what “others” might do to their established ways of life. Researcher’s supposition was that many institutions had an “unwelcoming” climate based on prejudices and neo-racism, particularly that of cultural preservation. The unwelcoming climate could also be a result of wary Americans, scared of potential threat international students posed to cultural norms. In this case, 501 international students on an unknown American campus participated in an online survey, which asked about their goals, experiences and satisfaction with said university. Of the respondents, researchers interviewed 24, Interviews consisted of questions inquiring about how they chose the university, their initial perceptions, how those perceptions changed over time, their personal experiences and whether or not they experienced discrimination or racism. The results found neo-racism was the cause behind most discrimination. White international students (European, Canadian, New Zealander) reported little to no experiences with discrimination while on campus. Students from other regions of the world, such as the Gulf, Latin America, Asia and Africa, reported experiencing some form of discrimination. Reasons for this discrimination could have been a result of media portrayals, exclusion in class discussion and activities, among others. Specialists discount stereotyping solely because they were based on untrue perceptions of different cultures instead of a previous prejudice. Despite discrimination that international students faced, the U.S. remains the most popular destination for foreign study. But to improve its popularity and international students’ experiences abroad, Lee and Rice propose the American collegiate system has a duty to not only determine the cause of discrimination but to hinder the lack of cultural education, awareness and understanding offered in their programs.

In an article byQuisar Sultana and Ron Smith (2011)**,** an increase of integration for both domestic and foreign students is proposed as a solution to decrease discrimination at American universities. The study consisted of a questionnaire, distributed to 36 international students, with 24 questions about students’ academic, social and cultural experiences at EKU. In the social aspect of the study, students complained of not having interactions with American students and not having American friends. They were disappointed American students did not participate in activities sponsored by the International Students Association, especially at the annual International Banquet. International students also said they were not informed or invited to activities and events sponsored by other student organizations on the campus. They said when fliers promoting activities were passed out around campus others failed to give them to international students. As a result, international students became bored during the weekend and on short breaks. Sultana and Smith found the largest contributor to discrimination to be a shortage in multicultural involvement. There's only way to solve the problem — promotion and communication.

This boredom or absence of involvement and detachment could be a reasonable explanation for an associated increase in homesickness and decrease in gratification from attending American universities, according to Poyrazli and Lopez (2007). Social networks played an important role in quality of experience for both local and abroad students. The more prominent social support indicated a lower rate of homesickness while less support meant more homesickness. . To compare international and domestic point of view, Poyrazli and Lopez worked to prove a correlation in the differences between each group in terms of homesickness and perceived discrimination. They chose to assess homesickness and discrimination because students who were homesick reported a feeling of loneliness also felt discriminated against, as well, which made them feel even more displaced. Researchers also considered student and faculty discrimination non-white American students faced. Participants in the study were from two different campuses of the same university, which consisted of 198 international students and 241 American students. Each participating student filled out three questionnaires regarding demographics, homesickness and discrimination. Students were asked to measure the level of homesickness and discrimination they experienced on campus. Results were relatively predictable; international students perceived or experienced more discrimination than Americans, homesickness was a valuable predictor for perceived discrimination as was race and ethnicity, and the longer an international student had been in the U.S., the more discrimination they experienced. Researchers believed though there may not always be effective methods to eradicate discrimination and homesickness on campus, there are ways of reducing their effects. For example, multicultural education for, international and American students, as well as faculty would be mutually beneficial. Support groups for international students to share their experiences would help psychologically, as well. In any case, reducing discrimination through education is the primary goal.

***Adjustment problems and difficulties***

Though education is the primary goal for all groups, little research has actually been done highlighting the domestic point of view when considering interactions between the group and international students**.** Instead, experts Sultana, Quisar; Smith, Ron (2011) emphasized considerations regarding the needs or perceptions of foreign students: quality of contact, functional roles, social systems and adjustment periods. The majority of these studies found a low rate in cultural interactions and interest; international students desired more contact and experiences while abroad as spontaneous interaction became more unlikely and domestic students seem uninterested.

The disinterest cited in the research proved to be a large problem, as international students made up a large and important part of American education, culturally and economically, according to Sultana, Quisar; Smith, Ron (2011)**.** As the number of international students visiting the states increased, Asian Indian students were the “leading country of origin.” Despite the growth in numbers and importance, foreign students continued to struggle to adjust to the United States’ higher education system, academically, culturally and socially, especially as a result of differing requirements and expectations.

College is already a stressful experience because of the extent of requirements and expectations. But, as researchers Quisar Sulatana and Ron Smith (2011) point out, when there’s more than an ocean between a student and their hometown and family, the experience becomes even more complicated. Without a home-base to provide encouragement and comfort, international students must find it elsewhere. As a result, foreign students are more likely to turn to religious beliefs in the first year of studying and adjusting or coping with the states’ way of life.

To assist international students’ adjustment to way of life in a strange country, researchers Zhao, Chun-Mei; Kuh, George D; Carini, Robert M (2005**)** found universities tried to develop programs linking both international and domestic students together. One particular program, PASS, or Peer Assisted Study Sessions, was developed in an Australian college. During the study, researchers found the program successful. Domestic students became model or “lead” students helping foreign students adjust and understand to the country’s tendencies. As a result, programs offering interaction and facilitation academically and socially provided important resources for international students bridging the cultural gap.

These gaps, however, are not a result of inadequate integration simulation. Instead, these differences could be a result in pre-existing conceptions or misunderstandings. An article by Ruble, R.A.; Zhang (2013), discussed how international students, particularly Chinese students were perceived through American students eyes — especially in terms of preconceptions formed about Chinese students. The study consisted of two parts. The first included 100 students at a midwestern university who listed traits they believed Chinese students exhibited, which resulted in 31 commonalities. The second group consisted of 146 students that depicted the percent of Chinese students they thought possessed each trait as an individual. The most common stereotypes deemed Chinese students as smart, good at math, intelligent and different. While these stereotypes seem positive they negatively affected Chinese students psychological wellbeing. Some stereotypes, however, were positive, deeming Chinese students as kind, friendly, nice and polite. Other popular and negative stereotypes were that Chinese students never spoke English, were bad at speaking English, were only friends with other Chinese students, and were socially awkward and oblivious.

Overall, to understand how international students adjust to life overseas and how to solve problems stemming from ignorance and discrimination, specialists determined that it’s important to understand how international students felt domestics perceived them and how they’re actually perceived. Identifying three adjustment patterns, some students found their social skills to be helpful but were still homesick; others, unable to communicate well, facilitated help from people with similar backgrounds or fellow countrymen; others, committed to their study and families, found those roles to be helpful but felt more of a financial burden. All three groups faced similar difficulties in cross-cultural adjustment with social or cultural barriers, which highlighted glaring differences, financial difficulties, discrimination and unrealistic expectations. In most cases, how international and domestic students were actually perceived did not match that of reality, individually or demographically, based on each group’s point of view. These instances were a direct result of enabled inter-cultural practices rather than multi-cultural encouragement, involvement or education from college institutions. Not only is the challenges international students face when visiting American colleges a sociological issue, but it’s a structural flaw as well.

***Current Research Methods***

Throughout this project, we used a variety of methods to complete our research about the perceptions of international students. We used both qualitative and quantitative tools in order to discover the different patterns that exist on college campuses. For our qualitative portion, we all completed both observations and interviews with relevant sources. In our quantitative portion, we distributed an online survey created on qualtrics to our peers via social media and campus emails. Each of these tools provided invaluable information with regards to our research question.

***Qualitative***

Our qualitative research was broken into two different sections: interviews and observations. In order to make the interviews and observations yield appropriate information with regards to our research question, we needed to locate people and events that had an international focus and where there would be and have been interactions with domestic and international students. Each of the researchers selected their own interviewees as well as their own location for an observation. All of these experiences yielded pertinent and useful information for our research question. After our interviews and observations, each researcher transcribed the interview in its entirety. Using these transcripts, we went through an open coding process individually. During this process, we went line by line of the interview and the observations finding different terms that could represent the general idea of each section. From here, we combined our lists of open codes to create a list of focus codes, which can therefore represent each of our interview transcripts and our observations.

***Interviews***

Each researcher conducted various interviews totaling four hours. From these interviews we were able to amass various focus codes in order to present our research with ease. Together, the researchers created a rough interview guide that each would use to begin and guide their interviews. Each researcher used this guide to direct the interview but it was adapted during each interview according to the interviewee’s responses.

One researcher interviewed her friend, a domestic student at Ohio University who has extensive experience working with international students. She was selected because she holds two different positions in which she works one-on-one with international students on campus. She also has a globally focused major, which has pushed her into different interactions with international students.

 Another researcher interviewed an international student advisor at the International Student and Faculty Services at Ohio University. He was selected because he is knowledgeable about the experiences that international students go through both because he works with them and he was an international student himself.

 The third researcher interviewed an international student from Malaysia. He was selected because of his perceived unique experiences as an international student from a less commonly thought about country.

 The final researcher interviewed three separate individuals. The first was an international student from China and he was selected because of his international perspective. The second person was a Muslim woman from Syria. She was selected because of her experience being an Arab in the United States. The final individual was another international student from Taiwan and he was able to provide another Asian perspective.

***Observations***

 The researchers completed three separate observations in which there were expected interactions between international and domestic students. Each of these observations lasted at least an hour. One researcher observed a panel of international students. The audience was entirely made up of American students who were able to ask questions at the end of the panel discussion. This observation was a good example of international students sharing their personal experiences both at home and here in the US. It also gave the domestic students the opportunity to inquire about the experiences of international students.

 The other researcher attended the Indo-American Friendship Dinner held in baker ballroom. It focused on the relationship between Ohio University and India. This was a great opportunity to observe the interactions between domestic students and students from India and to see how their relationships have formed.

 The third researcher went to one of the bars on campus during a professional football game to observe the interactions and responses of domestic and international students. The researcher was able to observe two different nationalities interacting with American students in a very normal setting on college campuses.

***Quantitative***

 Our target population was college aged individuals because the researchers believed that these individuals would have had more interactions or the opportunities for interactions with international students. Our goal was to receive responses from around 400 students in order to have a sample that was representative of a college student body. Unfortunately, we were unable to reach this high level of response. We received about 172 surveys. Our original aim was to have responses from both domestic and international students so that we would be able to compare perceptions of each from their respective perspectives. However, with only 12 international respondents, our research question will be narrowed to perceptions of international students from the domestic point of view.

***Survey***

For our survey, we complied a list of questions based on our thoughts on the subject as well as the results of our observations and interviews. We tried to compile a list of questions that would yield the types of responses we were expecting because of our research question. We then went onto qualtrics to create a survey with separate sections for international students and domestic students and a final section at the end of the survey in which both populations would respond.

Our survey consisted of 29 questions, spread out into three sections. These questions consisted of multiple choice questions, open-ended responses and scales. These allowed respondents to rank their feelings towards their peers and the campus while also giving them the opportunity to express their own thoughts on the matter as well as to share their experiences. This was of great benefit to the researchers. Using the multiple choice and scale questions, we were able to create crosstabs to compare and understand our research. It is this data that allows us to answer or address our research question with supporting evidence. The open-ended response questions provided even more qualitative data for the researchers to use to support the quantitative crosstabs.

We sent out campus emails through Blackboard to our previous academic classes at Ohio University as well as posting our survey link on social media sites, such as Facebook. We hoped that in using an online survey, we would be able to yield our goal sample size due to the fact that a majority, if not all, of our target population uses online mediums, such as email and social media, on a daily basis.

Finally, using all of the quantitative data received from our survey responses, we analyzed the data using crosstabs that were created in qualtrics. We also used excel to create our graphs and charts that are being used to visually represent our data.

***Results and Discussion***

Based on observation, interviews and survey questions, the perceptions and experiences of international and domestic students at American universities were affected by personal understanding and knowledge and structural opportunities on campus. Perspective varied based on the individual, collective and educational point of view affected by previous experience and institutional opportunities.

***Qualitative: personal***

 As a result of existing preconceptions and stereotypes on both sides, domestic and international students felt judged or discriminated against. From an individual’s point of view, the other group made little to no effort to reach out because of disinterest or judgment.

 In the majority of our observations, groups were segregated between foreign and domestic students, even at events including conversation hours that encouraged multicultural integration. The separation was even more noticeable in everyday settings, like coffee shops or classrooms.

An international dinner, however, highlighted the amount of cultural tolerance that is present at the university. Though it didn’t include many students, and wasn’t a free event, many university employees and local political leaders were present, encouraging multiculturalism on campus.

The separation, though, seems to be student driven. Some opportunities helped to explain the phenomenon, such as a panel of five international students. One woman, dating an American man, said they needed to keep a very open mind to deal with the differences. Even still, the cultural and linguistic differences made it difficult for them to interact at the end of the day.

Because of these differences, many interviewees expressed feelings of outcast and isolation because of language barriers, stereotypes and cultural understanding — or lack there of. In the survey, respondents reported to have witnessed or experienced international student harassment, discrimination and racism; mocked accents and appearances, Muslims deemed unsafe to be around, use of derogatory terms like “terrorists,” “nigger” or “ching-chong,” bullying and even threats to blow up dorms “so they were relocated and spread out across campus.” Some students even noticed university faculty “who were unable to understand international students just pass them off to someone else, or send them to a different department even though the student was in the right place to start with.”

Interviewees also noticed instances of racism and unequal treatment on campus.

“I’ve heard a lot of my Islamic and Arab friends tell me stories,” an interviewee said. “Like I have a friend who was playing soccer in Ping and a domestic student, while playing soccer for the other team, pushed him down and called him a “sand digger,” which is absolutely inappropriate. I know a lot of my students … who are fully veiled … they see fear in a person’s eyes even if they are just trying to order a drink in a coffee shop … They feel very isolated. They feel people don’t see them as another student. They see them as another entity.”

These types of stereotypes are possibly a result of prior personal opinions or assumptions made about a culture or race. On campus, it’s especially prominent in the judgments of Asian students. One interviewee from Malaysia said even professors have assumed he drove a nice car and smoked, predicting he would do well in class but would be detached socially. He “had to work harder than other students” to become a part of class discussion and prove his abilities with the English language, which he’s studied for years.

Some students blindly perpetuated differences and stereotypes applied to international students without questioning. In one interview with a domestic student, they weren’t even sure were the idea came from, it was simply understood Asian students “had nice cars,” and even “had it in their head” that Islamic women with hijabs were a threat. Interactions with such women became a source of anxiety.

“I’m not really sure if I’ve just proven that in my mind or not,” the interviewee said. “But… I’m not sure if I’ve really debunked that stereotype or if its been reinforced, it might have been reinforced, actually.”

Students did understand some physiological challenges international students dealt with, but mainly as a form of sympathy or assumption rather than personal conversation or experience. Most domestics pinpointed language barriers, the distance from home and family and cultural differences as a possible source of stress. However, the main source of stress international students emphasized was their inability to assimilate with their peers.

Most international interviewees said it was hard to make friends with Americans, not just because of language barriers but also because of the way people functioned socially, in class, in person or technologically.

“I think it’s weird that you can be good friends with someone in a class and go to lunch with them but then, all of sudden, when that class is over, they don’t even acknowledge you when you pass on the street,” one interviewee said. “You can text all day but never talk in person… That’s not what friendship was like back home in Malaysia.”

***Qualitative: structural***

 Without a structural or institutional program to expose students to other cultures, their personal biases remain unchallenged.

Ohio University, for example, does make an effort to do so with varying panels, events and classes, but students outside of international organizations are not fully encouraged to participate or converse with students from varying backgrounds. Instead, most domestic and international students intertwined during class, but friendships or communication quickly dissipated once the course ended. Without the importance of cultural awareness and participation stressed to outsiders, promotion hardly reached people who weren’t actively seeking a way to get involved and some domestic students weren’t even aware they were welcome at international events until much later.

Many survey respondents even suggested more events that would combine both groups and stray from the label “international or multicultural,” inadvertently discouraging students to join because they didn’t fit the mold.

 Because of the lack in promotion for these events, one interviewee thought international students became even more isolated through internationally affiliated and liberal arts programs. They’d be better served to find other ways to reach outside of the international community, the interviewee said.

This might be even be a factor inspiring responses received throughout the survey saying “they normally just stay together and seem to be more comfortable sticking to people they can associate with.”

“There should be more integration between the orientation programs for international and domestic students,” a respondent wrote. “Also, domestic students should be taught more cross-cultural communication skills, and be given an opportunity to practice them.”

Others placed more blame on the material covered in American academia, which may focus on more formal language but not current cultural slag or differences and doing away with dorms separating international and domestic students. By emphasizing those cultural differences in all programs, students both domestic and international could have an opportunity to practice their skills and relate them to real world instances, enabling an integrated culture on campus.

***Quantitative: Personal***

A majority of the questions asked in the survey were directed towards examining this concept. The data that we collected indicated largely conflicting responses. For instance, of the 142 respondents, only 22 indicated having a close relationship with an international student. Yet, when asked if they felt comfortable with establishing a relationship with a peer from a different national background, 82% designated that they agreed with this statement. These results allude to a purported view that doesn’t match up to a behavior. Further, 48% of respondents indicated that they make no effort in establishing relationships with international students.  It’s interesting that when the wording of the question changed from “feeling comfortable” to “effort”, that the response percentage dropped nearly 40 points. This also describes a viewpoint that is contradictory to when the question is evaluating a perspective versus the behavior one must put into it.

These results provoke the response of “what’s going on here?” Why can an overwhelming majority claim to feel comfortable, and yet an underwhelming minority of 15% claim to actually have a relationship with an international student? A possible contributing factor is what might be a pervasive form of prejudice against foreign peoples. Another factor might be a more large-scale structural issue.



The final piece of data that can demonstrate a contributing factor is that of the year of school a student is at currently. For instance, of those that claim to have a close relationship with an international student, there is a generally increasing amount when the year in school increases as well. Freshman and Sophomores only contribute to around 16% of those that have a relationship and the percentage amount increases until the Graduate and Post-Graduate level who contribute to around 62%. It would appear that those that are present in higher education for longer, spend more time and have more opportunities to interact with international students and thus are more open to establish a relationship.

***Quantitative: Structural***

The second concept included the expansive structural components that might affect perceptions of international students. The first selection of data that might give an insight into this concept analyzed whether domestic students believed in the preconceived notions of international students. 51% indicated that they neither agreed nor disagreed with these preconceptions. A possible explanation for this ambivalence is that these two groups do not have a significant amount of time for interaction and thus are not able to disconfirm these preconceived notions. This can be shown by 65% of respondents indicating that they thought that there should be more ways to work together with international students. This result, however encouraging, also signifies that there might be insufficient services that promote the interaction between these two groups as well.

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Another piece of data details the witnessing of discrimination. Of the 142 respondents, 42 indicated that they have witnessed an incident where an international student had been treated poorly. Although, not a majority by any means, any single instance of discrimination is enough to give notice and become concerned. When reviewing each respondent’s open-ended answers, the results range from instances of name-calling to the provocation of a bomb threat 2 years ago. Obviously, these are alarming and bring to question the large-scale racist tendencies still apparent within our society. This cycles back to the data collected about services that bring international and domestic students together. It can serve as a possible solution to combat these unjustified fears and hostilities.

***Conclusion***

 This research project began as a way to evaluate the differences between the domestic and international populations on college campuses. Campuses around the United States are inundated with international students from around the world. Our original goal was to look at the opinions domestic students held about international students and compare that with the opinions that international students held about domestic students. After collecting and analyzing our data, we adjusting our focus to only look at how domestic perceive their international peers. We were able to find that upperclassman students were more likely to have established friendships with international students, due to the fact that they have had more opportunities for contact with the international populations. We have found that the relationships that domestic students create with their international peers tends to be relatively limited, due in large part to the perceived barriers and differences between the two groups. We wanted to research and understand why there is a disconnect between the domestic and international students on college campuses, with a main focus on Ohio University.

 While we were able to discover interesting patterns through the data that we collected, we were unable to find anything statistically significant. This was due in large part to the limitations of our research abilities, namely the time in which we had to collect and analyze the data as well as the narrowness of our respondents. We received a majority of our data from American female students. We were able to find the patterns that exist between year in school with the amount of friendships with international students as well as the persistence of discrimination that is noticed by domestic students. More research could be done in order to compare the perceptions on both sides, but this would be a solid starting point for any kind of continuation.

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***Appendices***

***Demographic results:***



