BEYOND ACCULTURATION AND RESILIENCE: INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

NAVIGATING SHAME AND SELF-CONCEPT

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

This study highlights the unique experiences of international students while they pursue higher education, manage adjustment issues, and navigate internal struggles. To explore whether English proficiency and family expectations correlate with self-concept and acculturation resilience, this study focused on the acculturation process, incorporating aspects of shame and self-concept that contribute to a student's motivation and resilience. International students commonly face academic and personal challenges while adjusting to an environment that requires fluency in English. Additionally, many experience the pressure of high expectations from their families in their countries of origin. This study used a sociocultural approach to explore how international students' interactions, cultural practices, and belief systems influence their adjustment process while they are living and studying in Canada or the United States. A sample of 69 postsecondary international students completed the External and Internal Shame Scale, the Family Almost Perfect Scale, the Personal Self-Concept Questionnaire, and the Acculturation and Resilience Scale. Initiatives associated with campus counseling programming were reviewed along with administrative strategies for student services that demonstrate cultural awareness and address more effectively the needs of international students.

Keywords: international student, acculturation, resilience, counseling, self-concept, shame, postsecondary, family

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to the unnamed students who shared their time and experiences to support international student voices in research.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful for my community, those who willed me to finish this dissertation with prayers and words of encouragement. Thank you to everyone who has been influential during this process as tutors, mentors, coaches—my family, friends, peers, dissertation committee members, and Counselor Education and Supervision faculty members.

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CHAPTER 1: THE PROBLEM

Though the number of international students studying in the United States and Canada continues to rise (Canadian Bureau of International Education, 2022; Institute of International Education, 2022), research indicates that the counseling support offered to these students is inadequate to meet their unique mental health needs. This quantitative study supplements existing qualitative research on international students with statistical data on international students' experiences of shame, acculturation, and resilience to support actionable recommendations for counseling providers and institutions (Boafo-Arthur & Boafo-Arthur, 2016; Kim et al., 2019; Hwang et al., 2014; Hyun et al., 2007; Onabule & Boes, 2013). This chapter introduces the study by presenting the problem, the purpose statement, the significance of the study, the research questions, the conceptual framework, the operational definitions that underpin the research, and the study design. It also outlines the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations pertaining to the study.

Background to the Problem

International students are those from overseas who commonly travel to North America in pursuit of educational opportunities different, and often more favorable, than those available in their countries of origin (McLachlan & Justice, 2009). In the 2021–2022 academic year, nearly 1 million international students studied in the United States (Institute of International Education, 2022), and over 800,000 international students studied in Canada (Canadian Bureau of International Education, 2022). The number of international students studying in Canada and the United States is indicative that there should be campus counseling services that can handle issues relevant to these students.

International students have expressed a need for mental health support but are reluctant to

seek it because of various barriers. From the perspective of international students, their needs have not been adequately addressed by campus counseling services, which has perpetuated students' reluctance to participate in counseling (Boafo-Arthur & Boafo-Arthur, 2016; Hwang et al., 2014; Hyun et al., 2007; Kim et al., 2019; Onabule & Boes, 2013). For example, students needing counseling may encounter language barriers, discrimination, lack of representation, and lack of information concerning the scope of the counseling services. Existing literature also indicates that students' feelings of disparity, inadequacy, or cultural disconnect may make them reluctant to seek services (Prieto-Welch, 2016). The stigma surrounding mental health concerns from the country of origin and fear that seeking support services will result in breaches of confidentiality—affecting their jobs, grades, family relationships, and status in society—can also be a major deterrent (Hyun et al., 2007). Further, though all students face challenges, international students experience a range of multitiered intersecting challenges (Popadiuk & Arthur, 2004). As a result, these students may need a different kind of support than the sort that typically works for most students. For example, international students commonly make swift changes to adapt to the host country and the postsecondary institution they attend (Sherry et al., 2010). This practice challenges the students' capacity to maintain their cultural identity during their potentially brief stay in the host country (Prieto-Welch, 2016).

Though studies have been conducted exploring international students' experiences, especially adjustment to a new country, there is a shortage of recent quantitative studies providing data to support actionable solutions for these students. Most existing research centers on immigrants and refugees without focusing specifically on international students, whose needs may differ from the needs of these other groups (Shannon et al., 2015). Only four quantitative studies have focused on international students (Cemalcilar & Falbo, 2008; Chirkov et al., 2008;

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Hanassab, 2006; Krishnan & Vreclj, 2009); other sources are either outdated literature-review studies (Baker & Hawkins, 2006; Gold, 2016; Hyun et al., 2007; Olivas & Li, 2006; Ortiz & Choudaha, 2014; Popadiuk & Arthur, 2004), informal qualitative studies (see Jean-Francois, 2019), or too narrow in scope (Heng, 2019; Philip et al., 2019). To revise existing services to account for acculturation challenges, service providers need quantitative data concerning the timelines associated with acculturation, the impact of specific levels of English proficiency on self-concept and acculturation, and the correlation between shame, family expectations, and acculturation. This data would enable campus counseling service providers to better understand the issues compounding previously identified barriers, such as the impact of shame or misunderstandings, and tailor their approaches according to factors such as family influence. This study fills this gap by gathering quantitative data on the causal factors affecting international students' psychological well-being and how these factors are correlated to acculturation.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to provide quantitative data that describe international students' experiences, building on the existing qualitative data. This will address the gap in quantitative approaches to the experiences of international students and will support actionable solutions. The aim was to generate additional quantitative data to be used to support recommendations for higher education institution wellness and student services teams and to support professionals focused on removing barriers to accessing services.

Research Questions

The overarching research question guiding this study is, "What are the existing challenges concerning self-concept, acculturation, and resilience that can be addressed through

targeted counseling practices to better support international students?" The sub-questions that guide this study are as follows:

- Is there a correlation between self-concept and acculturation resilience?
- Is there a correlation between shame and self-concept?
- Do family expectations and values moderate the effect of shame on self-concept?
- Does the level of English proficiency moderate the effect of shame on self-concept?
- Are English proficiency and family expectations and values correlated with self-concept and acculturation resilience?

These sub-questions were answered by collecting quantitative data in line with the conceptual model. The hypotheses were as follows:

1. There will be a positive correlation between self-concept and acculturation resilience.
2. There will be a negative correlation between shame and self-concept.
3. The effect of shame on self-concept is moderated by family expectations and values.
4. The effect of shame on self-concept is moderated by the level of English proficiency.
5. High English proficiency and high family expectations and values are positively correlated with self-concept and acculturation resilience.

Conceptual Framework

To address the many components of the research questions, a conceptual model was developed that draws on the key themes concerning the unique challenges of international students identified in the literature review. These themes were the effects of shame (proneness) on self-concept, as moderated by family expectations and level of English proficiency, and how these correlations relate to acculturation resilience. Measurable variables were developed on the basis of these identified themes. Figure 1 shows how the variables work together to identify challenges concerning self-concept, acculturation, and resilience that can be addressed through targeted counseling practices to better support international students.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework for Examining the Relationship Between the Themes
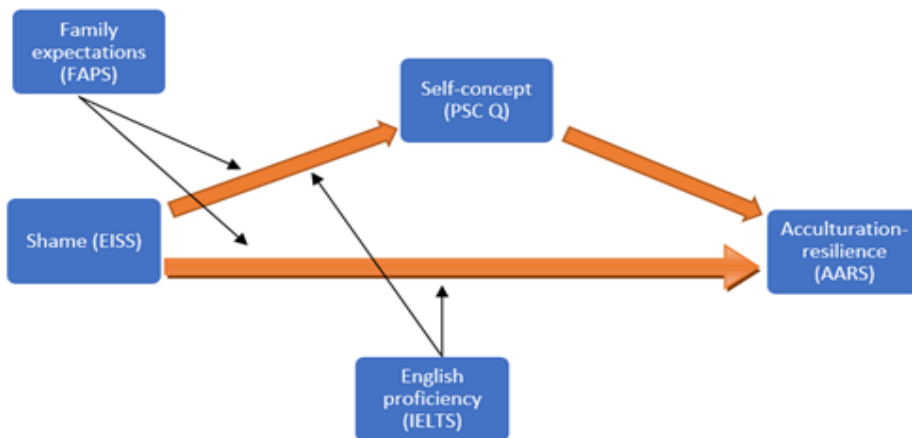
Note. FAPS = Family Almost Perfect Scale; PSC Q = Personal Self-Concept Questionnaire; AARS = Acculturation and Resilience Scale; IELTS = International English Language Testing System; EISS = External and Internal Shame Scale.

Nature of the Study

This quantitative study was designed to measure the challenges concerning self-concept, acculturation, and resilience that can be addressed through targeted counseling practices to better support international students. The population of interest for this study was currently enrolled international undergraduate students studying in the United States or Canada. The final sample for the study comprised 69 students selected from Atlasview University's Bachelor of Business Administration, Bachelor of Creative Arts, and Bachelor of Interior Design programs, both residential and online. These programs were chosen because they include pre-existing cohorts of international students and pre-arranged interactions with student services. These existing arrangements were utilized to ensure that participants would meet the inclusion criteria for the study. Postsecondary international students were recruited through pre-arranged class visits that included only eligible candidates, consisting of a 15-minute presentation and discussion with students. These visits were conducted in 27 classes, and an initial sample of 164 participants was selected. Of these, 69 participants completed the full data-collection process.

Once participants had been recruited to the study, they were given a link to access the survey (administered via Qualtrics), which they could complete anytime within 2 weeks. Informed consent was collected via the first question in the survey, which required participants to sign electronically before proceeding to the rest of the survey. The first part of the remaining survey collected data concerning the variables under observation, and the second part collected demographic data. One hundred sixty-four students opened the survey in Qualtrics, but only 69 submitted entries for all survey questions and met the criteria.

Following data collection, SPSS was used to conduct regression and correlational statistical analyses on the data. First, preliminary correlational analyses searched for correlations between the psychological variables outlined in the conceptual framework. Next, regression analysis was used to search for specific correlations relating to Research Question 1 (RQ 1) and Research Question 2 (RQ 2). Finally, using Hayes Model 10, a mediated moderation analysis was completed focusing on the moderation effects and main effects of English proficiency and family expectations on shame, self-concept, and acculturation resilience.

Records were kept confidential throughout the study, and only the primary researcher had access to the collected data. The online survey was anonymous, as names and email addresses were not collected as part of the study. Respondents were informed that they could stop participating at any time and for any reason without their decision affecting their relationship with the primary researcher or the educational institution. This research study has been reviewed and approved by Atlasview University's Research Ethics Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines.

Limitations

Two key limitations apply to this study. First, the study is based on self-report measures, and the respondents may have under- or overreported because of factors such as the stigma associated with mental health struggles or difficulty with unfamiliar terms due to language barriers. To mitigate the issues with language barriers, key terms and operational definitions were reviewed with participations before data collection. The primary researcher was accompanied during initial recruitment messages by a member of the counseling-services team to provide information about counseling (including confidentiality and privacy), with the goal of moderating factors like fear of stigma. Participants were also informed that their data would be anonymized and stored securely, mitigating any fears that might lead to underreporting.

The second limitation pertains to the design of the study. The study results are not generalizable for postsecondary international students in North America because the sample size was small (69) and included only undergraduate students at a private Canadian university. Also, because the study collected only quantitative data, it lacks the rich detail that could have been generated by qualitative or mixed-method data collection. This limitation was necessary because of limited resources. To account for these limitations, future researchers can build on the findings in this study and gather additional insights through larger sample sizes and qualitative or mixed-method approaches.

Delimitations

This study was conducted to provide support that would benefit international students and their families. It did not focus on support that would benefit employers, professors, governments, or other stakeholders. Although the study findings may indirectly affect recruitment and retention, the focus of the research objectives was on data-driven practice recommendations for

counseling services only. This study focused only on variables with a direct psychological impact on international students; other variables, such as finances, immigration status, and physical health, were not explored. All aspects of the study were conducted online only, and no paper or in-person options were provided. Study participants were recruited from undergraduate programs specifically; no graduate or postgraduate students were included.

Definitions

The following operational definitions apply to this study.

Acculturation: The process during which people immigrate and begin settling in a new country; this can be permanent or temporary. During this time, those who immigrated interact with cultures different from their own (Gibson, 2001), and these cross-cultural experiences influence methods of coping with the transition and adapting to a new environment (Schwartz et al., 2010).

Culture: The social construction of human identity includes economic status, ethnicity, race, language, and nationality (Ratts et al., 2015). In this dissertation, "culture" is used to classify specific beliefs and practices that students bring from their home environments to the study environment in Canada or the United States, especially with regard to separating the familiar from the unfamiliar.

Help-seeking: Seeking mental health services or participating in mental health treatment (Na et al., 2016).

Host country: The country where the student has migrated to pursue education (Hanassab, 2006).

International English Language Testing System (IELTS): IELTS is one of the most popular and widely used assessments designed to measure English proficiency. Students are

required to take this assessment when seeking visas to study abroad at certain postsecondary institutions. Receiving a score of between 6.0 and 7.0 out of 9.0 demonstrates modest to competent use of the English language, and this is a common admissions requirement for universities (Feast, 2002).

International student: In this dissertation, "international student" refers to an individual enrolled in an educational institution in Canada or the United States whose country of origin is outside of Canada or the United States.

Resilience: Perseverance in the presence of obstacles, which can be social, cultural, or academic (Morales, 2008). In this dissertation, "resilience" refers to a student's perseverance in the presence of the challenges posed by acculturation.

Self-concept: The perception that individuals have of themselves based on physical, academic, and social factors (Goñi et al., 2011).

Significance of the Study

Postsecondary institutions have an interest in recruiting and welcoming international students because their presence can increase the diversity on campus and the cultural awareness of domestic students (McLachlan & Justice, 2009). However, there is a gap between international students and their use of support services, such as counseling (Boafo-Arthur & Boafo-Arthur, 2016; Hwang et al., 2014; Hyun et al., 2007; Kim et al., 2019; Onabule & Boes, 2013). The recommendations generated by this study can help improve student outcomes and retention by addressing some of these issues, specifically social integration, academic goals and commitments, and the quality of the counseling services available. Some of the most common factors associated with attrition are having inadequate family support and encouragement, being a member of a minority group, and lacking a feeling of belonging; additional issues may be

overwhelming academic goals and commitments, insufficient academic and social integration, and inadequate quality of college services and facilities (Aljohani, 2016). The findings may also help improve the efficiency of existing support resources, enabling better use of funding and resources in these areas. As a professional application, this study will help fill the gap in quantitative data to support actionable solutions. This will support the growing need for programs, services, and approaches that assess and put into practice cultural responsiveness (Arredondo & Toporek, 2004; Queener & Martin, 2001; Watson-Singleton et al., 2019).

By providing data to support positive social change, this study can help alleviate the challenges faced by postsecondary students, including international students, that can have a serious impact on academics and on health. These include suicide and self-harm (Cunningham & Duffy, 2019), mental health issues such as anxiety and depression (Wiens et al., 2020), high levels of noncompletion of both classes and the degree as a whole (Cunningham & Duffy, 2019), and lower grades (Cunningham & Duffy, 2019). International students specifically can experience a range of consequences, from fatigue and inability to sleep to poor academic performance and depression (Hyun et al., 2007). Supporting better student health can help these students develop into beneficial, contributing community members, benefiting society.

Summary

This chapter introduced the study, presenting the problem, the purpose statement, the significance of the study, the research questions, the conceptual framework, the operational definitions that underpin the research, and the study design. It also outlined the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations pertaining to the study. Chapter 2 will explore the topic of international students in more detail, summarizing existing research on the unique experiences of international students—language and English proficiency, acculturation resilience, self-concept

and shame, campus support from student services, fear of stigma, and willingness to seek help. The chapter will also delineate the current gaps in research though this comprehensive literature review. It will also present the conceptual framework for this study in greater detail.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This quantitative study supplements existing qualitative research on international students with statistical data on international students' experiences of shame, acculturation, and resilience to support actionable recommendations for counseling providers and institutions. This chapter summarizes research on the unique experiences of international students, including such aspects as language and English proficiency, acculturation resilience, self-concept and shame, campus support from student services, stigma, and attitudes toward seeking help. In addition, the chapter highlights the current gaps in research and discusses the conceptual framework for this study.

Introduction

International students are a population of interest, especially as postsecondary institutions begin to acknowledge the economic and social benefits of increasing the diversity of the student population on campus (Girmay et al., 2019). However, acculturation and unmet family expectations contribute to international students' adjustment difficulties (Kashima & Loh, 2006). International students who are not native English-language speakers are commonly viewed as inept, especially during interactions with classmates and professors (Hanassab, 2006). The way that students view themselves in the presence of adversity or acculturative stress can be a determinant of how they will cope and whether they will demonstrate resilience (Poyrazli et al., 2004). Best practices for providing counseling services and increased awareness of the concerns of international students should be more prevalent in counselor education programs (Nate & Haddock, 2014). In addition, coordinating efforts with other student-service areas on campus could be beneficial in addressing the needs of international students (Wu et al., 2015). The following sections review the existing literature on international students, and addresses some of the unique challenges referenced above concerning language and English proficiency,

acculturation and resilience, self-concept, shame, help-seeking, and campus support services, as well as the impact of stigma on access to those services.

Challenges and Experiences of International Students

There are commonalities among international students, despite their diverse backgrounds (Mori, 2000). Most of them, for example, initially plan to remain in the host country temporarily. As a result, they may lack stable social connections and strong support networks. These students also face acculturation challenges that result in stressors associated with cultural adjustments. They may also share challenges relating to language barriers, financial stressors, and interpersonal relationships (Mori, 2000). International students are also susceptible to mental, physical, and academic challenges in their new environment, ranging from fatigue and inability to sleep to poor academic performance and depression (Hyun et al., 2007). Institutions offer a range of supports to help with these challenges, including academic advisors, career support services, campus support services (such as writing centers and tutoring services), health centers, and counseling services (Hyun et al., 2007). However, international students are underutilizing these services, which may not be targeted closely enough to their acculturation and resilience needs (Hyun et al., 2007; Mori, 2000).

For international students, the focus of immigrating from one country to another can be on adapting and assimilating to ensure acceptance and a seamless transition while pursuing their studies. Alternatively, to cope with the changes that come from being in a new environment, students may seek reminders of the country of origin to produce a sense of safety and a feeling of comfort. Acculturation can be understood as the process by which students adjust to their new environment after migrating to pursue a degree, and resilience can be understood as a student's ability to cope successfully with challenges and changing circumstances. Students need to

balance these two processes to thrive in higher education, but to do so they need counseling support that addresses the emotional and mental health challenges associated with these processes. These supports must be culturally responsive and informed by these students' specific and unique experiences (Srivastava & Srivastava, 2019). Exploring the journey toward acculturation resilience, including the impacts of shame, self-concept, English proficiency, and family expectations, can enable providers to better understand and address the issues faced by international students.

International students choose to pursue studies away from their countries of origin because they seek alternate opportunities that were not otherwise available to them (McLachlan & Justice, 2009). Though there can be adjustment challenges for any student attending a postsecondary institution for the first time, the challenges tend to increase for international students, international students of color, and international students with a foreign accent or who speak English as a second language (Hanassab, 2006; Leong & Chou, 1996; Popadiuk & Arthur, 2004). More differences between the student's country of origin and the host country often result in more difficulties with adjustment for students. International students can feel socially isolated as they are separated from loved ones and may experience difficulty developing new relationships or finding social events to attend where they can connect with others. The transition into an unfamiliar way of living can be described as a culture shock through which this population faces feelings of uncertainty, inferiority, and loss (Yi et al., 2003). International students can also struggle with how others perceive them, on and off campus, as they face discrimination. When students arrive in the host country, they may be presented with negative stereotypes associated with their country of origin. It is important, therefore, to remember that international students face the same challenges as other students and additional, unique

challenges, all of which require targeted support.

The Psychological Impacts of Change

Transitioning from one country to another requires significant adjustment, and the first 6 to 12 months can be the most challenging for international students (McLachlan & Justice, 2009). Suppose students leave their homes in a third-world country to study in a first-world country. In that case, it cannot be assumed that the transition will automatically be easier because they are moving into what is expected to be a more privileged way of living (Hazen & Alberts, 2006). Students may still feel that they are experiencing a lack in terms of access to financial resources, social support, and safety (Komiya & Eells, 2001). Furthermore, some students may be traveling outside their home country for the first time. If students travel alone, they can be overwhelmed as they consider how to prepare themselves for the uncertainty that awaits them in the host country (Poyrazli et al., 2004).

Financial and Logistical Challenges

When people decide to leave their country of origin to pursue education in another country, namely Canada or the United States, various considerations must be made initially. They must consider costs associated with tuition, travel, living accommodations, program applications, English-proficiency assessments, and immigration requirements (Hefner-Babb & Khoshlessan, 2018). Upon arrival, they must consider what comes next to maintain the current arrangement, which includes financial management. Costs can easily be underestimated due to a lack of familiarity or understanding of systems. Students may seek employment while completing their studies to keep up with the cost of living and tuition fees. Additionally, students may plan to send funds to loved ones back home to offer support, show appreciation, or repay loans. For an international student, the pressure to succeed can also be influenced by the source

funding the student's education; guidelines or expectations are attached to any such agreement, whether the source is family, a national government, or a scholarship from an institution (e.g., the expectation to return with a terminal degree, achieve honors, or start a business). Some students may feel more pressure to conform to the family's standards and expectations because they depend on the family for finances and basic needs in the host country and the country of origin (Anwar & Qonita, 2019; Sarwono, 2013). Family members may not completely understand the costs associated with studying abroad, and students can face financial strain attempting to balance their expenses while contributing financially to the family they left behind (Baxter, 2019).

Language and Educational Challenges

When considering language proficiency, *literacy* refers to understanding and practical application of knowledge in academic and nonacademic settings (Nickel, 2007; Vágvölgyi et al., 2016). Educational expectations and standards regarding literacy are not universal, as different countries and cultures have their own adaptations (Abel & Abel, 2017). Complete fluency in English is not required for admission to postsecondary institutions in North America; however, the expectation is that all students will be able to communicate and complete coursework in the language of instruction, English. The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is one of the most commonly used assessments for English postsecondary institutions and is an admissions requirement for many. Still, higher IELTS scores did not indicate student success (Hayes & Read, 2004). Though English proficiency benefits students, other social factors related to adaptation to the institution also impact student achievement.

Cultural context provides a framework for understanding language and common practices, which can vary significantly from one country to another. Cultural literacy can also

facilitate ease of access within a country (Abel & Abel, 2017). Language is a communication component and can contribute to a sense of community when a common language is shared. Immigrants in America who do not speak English as their native language tend to struggle with feeling accepted or experiencing a sense of belonging (Olsen, 2000). Status, access to resources, and group identification can affect how individuals with foreign accents cope with accent-related prejudice and discrimination (Freynet & Clément, 2019). The level of English proficiency and the accent students have can influence how they are perceived and how they perceive themselves; furthermore, these factors can affect international students' ability to understand information and be understood by others (Hanassab, 2006). For instance, international students from countries such as Nigeria were surprised to discover that after interacting with people in the United States, there were consistent communication barriers despite everyone speaking English (Aurah, 2014). In addition to accents and English proficiency, language interpretations and colloquialisms are related to the cultural context, which connects to the acculturation process. Demonstrating competence in the dominant culture's language denotes power and promotes inclusion instead of marginalization (Roysircar et al., 2005). Not speaking English or speaking English incorrectly can result in ridicule and discrimination.

Lack of confidence and associated discomfort with the English language can deter students from communicating in English unless necessary. Some students speak English specifically for academic purposes (Sherry, 2010). However, the classroom environment can encourage or deter students from openly practicing the language. Emphasizing the differences of individuals with foreign accents in occupational and educational settings promotes exclusion and discrimination (McCrocklin & Link, 2016). Pronunciations, teaching methods, and classroom format may all be unfamiliar to international students (Hefner-Babb & Khoshlessan, 2018).

Reinforcement from teachers and the opportunity to share feelings and struggles without judgment can influence a student's choice to speak in class (Galmiche, 2017). International students' confusion concerning which language to use for self-expression and their apprehension about how their comments will be received encourages silence (Olsen, 2000). Students may hold back even if they have sufficient information, or if they know the correct answers. Receiving lower-than-usual grades may be perceived as failure and may engender feelings of inadequacy for students who fear disappointing families in their countries of origin (Poyrazli et al., 2004). Further, the continued practice of code-switching has the potential to deter the achievement of fluency in the nonnative language and fluency retention in the native language (Nwokwu et al., 2021).

In academia, there are various factors for English-language learners to consider. Suppose students have already met the minimum English requirements for their program of study. In that case, they will have to decide how much time and effort should be placed on increasing their English knowledge versus knowledge of the chosen subject area. If a person does not speak English, it is often assumed that they will be learning English as a second language; in reality, English may be the third or fourth language being learned (Zarrinabadi & Khodarahmi, 2017). If students find that they are struggling with communication and that improving their spoken English is a priority, they must determine where to go and from whom to seek help. Help-seeking can be a challenge on its own, as discussed later in this chapter, as help-seekers may feel that they are not being taken seriously or that they are being judged for their shortcomings. International students must also consider the impact of speaking English with an accent (i.e., to retain aspects of their culture) on their identity and acculturation (McCrocklin & Link, 2016).

Family Expectations

What a family expects of students who travel to study in North America can be associated with what they value and the standards set within the family; some may value wealth, a comfortable lifestyle, or a certain socioeconomic status. Because of the personal goals and expectations of loved ones, academic performance can be a significant source of stress for international students. Parental expectations involve what parents hope their children will accomplish in terms of family, education, or career (Sasikala & Karunanidhi, 2011). But a family may desire further educational advancement for future generations, even if those expectations seem unrealistic (Anwar & Qonita, 2019; Heffner, 2011). Parents' roles in early socialization set the stage for family expectations and influence students' motivation during their educational pursuits. Some students view their family's expectations of them as a stressor and thus demotivating, whereas others view such expectations as motivation toward achievement (Anwar & Qonita, 2019). Students who are not motivated by the pressure may feel that they will never live up to what is expected of them and may become discouraged from attempting to achieve the outlined goals; students who are motivated by expectations placed on them may take it as a challenge to compete against themselves and continue to endeavor to be better.

Personal Expectations

All students have plans and goals when learning at a postsecondary institution. They may aspire to reach the highest level in their chosen profession, or they may simply aim to pass all of the program's compulsory classes. When international students move to another country, in addition to the expectations placed on them by family members and friends, they have their expectations and a limited time frame for completion (e.g., 4 years while completing an undergraduate degree). Students can set goals for themselves before even entering the host

country. They will also have expectations of how they will live and what life will be like once they leave home. *Striver* is a term used in various contexts, but it commonly refers to motivated and determined individuals. There are three factors that can identify international students as strivers: being passionate about their goals and not wanting to waste the opportunities at hand; having a competitive nature that leads them to challenge themselves to achieve more; and feeling motivated by the pressure to please family (Kundu, 2019).

Stereotypes and Assumptions

Assumptions can lead to an inaccurate profile of the international student. There has been a mistaken belief by domestic students that international students are generally young and lacking in social skills and that their only responsibility or concern is related to completing an educational program (Gomes et al., 2015). This does not leave room for the concerns of international students who are parents, have spouses, or are pursuing a second career as mature students (Yi et al., 2003). These students may feel out of place because they do not fit the stereotype of the average international student, and their needs are not addressed (Spencer-Rodgers, 2001). As parents, these students will have childcare concerns and will struggle to find time to attend classes and complete assignments. Students with spouses may have additional stressors at home, particularly if their spouse is a new immigrant. Together, these life challenges can lead to social isolation and deter international students from embracing their current home (Wu et al., 2015). Representation also becomes an issue when students are viewed as representatives of their country to carry the weight of that country's positive or negative depiction. These depictions create added stressors of discrimination and a burden to either live up to expectations or disprove the assumptions (Baxter, 2019). Students may also find themselves categorized as minorities for the first time after leaving countries where they were

comfortably recognized as part of the majority (Popadiuk & Arthur, 2004). Social isolation is experienced by international students when they feel singled out because of prejudice or difficulty understanding and complying with cultural norms; as a result, they lack social connectedness (McLachlan & Justice, 2009).

Acculturation and Resilience of International Students

Acculturation

As international students live, work, and learn in a different country, they experience a lifestyle transition while navigating cultural interactions (Popadiuk & Arthur, 2004). Despite the challenges faced, international students are urged to explore and immerse themselves in the culture; however, the acculturation process does not have specific guidelines, because each individual determines their own path and pace. The challenges and concerns of international students can be delegitimized by those who do not understand what this transition to another country entails (Spencer-Rodgers, 2001). For international students, acculturation takes place within the learning environment as well as everywhere else the students find themselves while they observe and interact with others and their surroundings. There is a constant opportunity to learn from encounters with others, whether one chooses to focus on similarities or differences. Ideally, students will openly engage in this form of exploration as they pursue personal and professional development (Beitin et al., 2008). However, international students are faced with deciding how to consolidate aspects of their cultural backgrounds while seeking to understand the language and norms of the host country and the culture of the postsecondary institution they are attending (Kashima & Loh, 2006). International students must consider what losing their native language could mean for their family in their country of origin. For some students, the temporary nature of their stay in North America deters them from actively acculturating (Jang &

Kim, 2009).

Hoffstede's (2011) six cultural dimensions—power distance, uncertainty avoidance, collectivism/individualism, masculinity/femininity, long-term/short-term orientation, indulgence/restraint—provide a framework for reviewing and understanding some of the differences in values and beliefs between the host country and a student's country of origin. *Power distance* highlights views of respected elders and obedience toward parents even after children become adults. A large power distance can increase a student's sense of obligation to comply with parental expectations. *Uncertainty avoidance* involves authoritarian views with structure, rigidity, and a low tolerance for error or flexibility (e.g., with high uncertainty avoidance, a student would continue a degree until the end, even if they dislike the program). With *collectivism*, relationships and a sense of belonging are important, as well as considering the group's interests. A student from a collectivist culture who goes against the norm can experience feelings of shame and become isolated. *Societal masculinity* refers to prioritizing work, admiring strength, and emphasizing facts over feelings. *Long-term orientation* highlights a collectivistic view with a shared decision-making model in the family. Regardless of past circumstances, there is an opportunity for change in the future, and people are encouraged to be adaptable in the presence of these changes (e.g., students from a culture with a long-term orientation are generally seeking to learn all they can from the experience of studying outside of their country of origin, and they believe success or failure is solely dependent on their efforts). When *restraint* is uppermost, maintaining order is a priority. Students from a restrained culture tend to place less importance on positive emotions and experience greater unhappiness.

Resilience

Resilience is not limited to one occurrence or a specific situation; it can appear

throughout the life span. Resilience is demonstrated when challenges do not inhibit an individual from effectively adapting to changing circumstances and maintaining mental wellness (Herrman et al., 2011). When people are described as resilient, they have experienced adversity without detrimental consequences. A range of factors—personal (demographics, personality, coping methods), biological (brain development, childhood maltreatment, cortisol levels), and environmental (parental attachment, culture, social and community support)—contribute to an individual's ability to exhibit resilience. Emphasizing the strength and courage associated with leaving for another country to pursue higher education can contribute to the empowerment and resiliency of international students, especially when they are feeling discouraged or facing seemingly insurmountable challenges (Toporek et al., 2009). Counseling interventions to assist with developing effective coping strategies should include improving self-concept and increasing confidence for international students.

Acculturation, viewed through the lens of resilience, can be described as the ability to interact with stressful, culturally related incidents and display an adaptive response without experiencing negative outcomes (Pan, 2011). Opportunities for cultural interaction nurture resilience. When international students travel to study abroad, they have the opportunity to interact with culture in a way that allows them to determine what they choose to be involved in and to what degree. They can engage in personal and academic exploration before deciding which cultural norms to adopt or reject as they develop their own preferences (Beitin et al., 2008). Despite the steep cultural learning curve and adjustment challenges many international students initially encounter, openness can increase comfort and contribute to resilience (McLachlan & Justice, 2009).

Shame

Shame can be considered an emotion experienced universally, and it impacts psychological and social aspects of an individual's life during moral development. It is a strong emotion related to feeling flawed, substandard, incapable, and self-conscious, and it tends to lead people to suppress weaknesses or avoid uncomfortable situations (Ferreira et al., 2020; Gilbert, 2007). These unwanted feelings can appear when individuals perceive a loss in social status or a failure (Zhang et al., 2011). Moreover, shame can be conceptualized in a general way or divided into external and internal experiences (Ferreira et al., 2020). *External shame* pertains to people seeing themselves as being observed and judged negatively, as well as feeling that their defects are being exposed by others; in contrast, *internal shame* pertains to people observing and judging themselves, and arises from an identification with perceived negative evaluations of others, negative self-evaluations, and self-criticism (Gilbert & Andrews, 1998; Gilbert, 2007). Furthermore, shame can be described as either a state-like emotion (i.e., feelings of shame experienced by individuals in a given moment; Turner, 2014) or as a trait-like disposition, when it involves the general propensity of a person to experience shame in varied situations, or the tendency to experience shame as a relatively stable personality trait (i.e., shame-proneness; Ferreira et al., 2020; Tangney, 1996; Thompson, Altmann, & Davidson, 2004). Thus, people who are shame-prone can experience more frequently mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and obsessive-compulsive symptoms (Harder, Cutler & Rockart, 1992; Tangney, 1996).

Shame is linked to early socialization and insecure attachment, and specifically to preoccupied and fearful attachment (Passanisi et al., 2015). Through early socialization, the experience of shame and the appraisal of shame experiences can significantly influence people's behavior and beliefs about themselves (Elison et al., 2006; Vagos et al., 2019). Creed et al.

(2014) defined shame as "a person's experience of negative self-evaluations based on anticipated or actual depreciation by others" (p. 276); this implies that shame can be experienced in the absence of transgression. Feelings of shame can stem from the desire for acceptance or to prove competence in a certain area. Aside from competence, the need to be accepted and to have one's behavior viewed by others as acceptable is also associated with shame (Gao et al., 2010; Gilbert, 2007). Shame has a negative connotation; the common assumption is that some action or inaction calls for apology or reparation (Woods & Proeve, 2014). Shame experiences are sometimes described as feeling small, inadequate, and humiliated (Wells & Jones, 2000). Generally speaking, shame is not linked to a particular action or behavior but is attributed to how people assess themselves. Shame involves perceptions of failure when the objectives are both set and unmet by the same person judging themself (Wells & Jones, 2000). Shame can also be distinguished from guilt: The latter is an emotion that usually stems from an action perceived as correctable, whereas in the case of shame the emotion stems from a subjective perception of actions as uncorrectable; it involves personal flaws deemed unacceptable (Turner, 2014).

Shame and Motivation

The link between shame and motivation (i.e., what moves a person to make decisions, expend effort, and engage and persist in actions; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011) has resulted in mixed findings. Shame has generally been viewed as disadvantageous to personal and interpersonal motivation as well as associated with the tendency to avoid actions and contribute to future demotivation (Covert et al., 2003; Thompson, Altmann, & Davidson, 2004; Turner, 2014). On the other hand, Lickel et al. (2014) presented shame as a catalyst for change in ways that can be beneficial to motivation. When a change is linked to stronger negative emotions, the outcomes of this change are posited to become more stable (Lickel et al., 2014). These mixed

findings are also applicable to the higher education context. Shame can be both motivating and discouraging in the context of student success; for instance, the wish to avoid shame may motivate some immigrants to learn English (Olsen, 2000), but shame can also be linked to worsened academic outcomes (Thompson, Altmann, & Davidson, 2004).

Responses to Shame Experiences

An individual's response to feelings of shame can be maladaptive or adaptive and is influenced by periods of vulnerability associated with the environment and the student's developmental stage (Kroger, 2004; Nathanson, 1994; Vagos et al., 2019). Generally, the experiences of shame and guilt are influenced by cultural perceptions. International students' perception of personal failure can contribute to their experiences of shame. If students are concerned about meeting expectations set for themselves or imposed by loved ones and feelings of failure ensue, this lays the groundwork for shame. Shame regarding a perceived lack of ability can encourage concealment of failure for fear of being condemned or considered inferior (Gausel et al., 2012). Laughter can be utilized as a coping mechanism to disguise shame and dissociate from feelings of pain or vulnerability (Stengel, 2014). Feelings of shame can incite avoidant behaviors, and students may believe they are deficient compared to their peers (Bartlett, 2007). To avoid judgment, students may say or do things to present themselves in a way that would appear more favorable (Baxter, 2019). A shortcoming in one area can easily be generalized, being equated in the student's mind with overall personal failure and shame (Lewis, 2000; Turner & Husman, 2008).

The perception of international students includes the expectation that they will encounter adjustment difficulties in the host country. When students experience other challenges related to academic success or have a fear of failure, they may be ashamed to admit these feelings that do

not necessarily fit into the expected norm. Experiences of shame are associated with feelings of

inadequacy, inferiority, and fear of exposure (Leeming & Boyle, 2004). People's fear of

exposure of their perceived failure related to shame can lead to self-defensive responses to avoid

rejection or condemnation by others (Gausel, Vignoles, & Leach, 2016). Furthermore, limited

knowledge of higher education systems in North America fuels unrealistic expectations for

students and their families (Baxter, 2019). Individuals with literacy deficiencies prefer to limit

exposure of their shortcomings and isolate in an effort to reduce shame experiences (Floyd &

Sakellariou, 2017). Feelings of shame can evoke feelings of helplessness and belief in impending

failure (Smith & McElwee, 2011). Students experiencing shame in relation to lack of literacy

tend to internalize this as part of their identity (Kearns, 2011).

Self-Concept

Self-concept can be defined broadly as the manner in which people see themselves, and it

is not limited to physical appearance or characteristics. It is related to people's perception of

themselves and is closely tied to personal development socially and professionally; it also

encompasses elements of self-knowledge, self-image, and identity (e.g., Epstein, 1973; Goñi et

al., 2011). Because the aforementioned definition seems too broad for a comprehensive

assessment, I will review self-concept using four distinct operationalizable subdimensions: self-

concept self-fulfillment ("how a person sees themselves in relation to achieving the aims and

objectives of their life,." Goñi et al., 2011, p. 511), self-concept autonomy ("the perception of the

extent to which each person makes decisions about their life in accordance with their own

criteria," Goñi et al., 2011, p. 511), self-concept honesty ("the extent to which a person considers

themselves to be honest and decent," Goñi et al., 2011, p. 511), and emotional self-concept

("how a person sees themselves in relation to emotional adjustment or regulation," Goñi et al.,

2011, p. 511).

International students are navigating the differences between how they were perceived in the country they migrated from versus the country where they currently find themselves. Consideration is also given to how they think and feel about themselves in the host country compared with the country of origin. Unmet expectations of achievement in one area can shape a student's overall self-concept rather than being appraised as an isolated incident (Turner & Husman, 2008). The way that a student receives and responds to information will be determined by their cultural viewpoint, which in turn has been shaped by their experiences.

Saving Face

When considering how self-concept is constructed, an individual's cultural perspective is a key component. If a collectivist culture is dominant, self-concept is not solely an individual matter. How people define themselves is within the context of a larger group, and ideologies are linked to the needs of the group (Hoffstede, 2011; Zhang et al., 2006). In cases in which international students believe their actions or inactions are representative of a particular set of people, they may feel pressure to save face. The notion of "saving face" stems from Chinese Confucian philosophies and is commonly practiced in collectivist societies (Hu, 1944). To save face can be conceptualized as retaining a sense of dignity or honor and is associated with how people are perceived by others. In contrast, "losing face" amounts to a decline in social status and results in a negative representation (Zhang et al., 2011). There are repercussions to either saving or losing face that impact behaviors and decision-making; however, losing face is damaging and can result in shame and rejection (Kim & Nam, 1998; Zhang et al., 2011).

Campus Supports for International Students

Student service departments may offer support through tutoring, writing assistance,

career services, academic accommodations, and mental health counseling to aid student success. Although international and domestic students can experience mental health concerns while attempting to complete their academic programs, there are some issues that are specific to international students. Stressors related to adjustment are common among international students in addition to the stress associated with being a postsecondary student (Mori, 2000). International students who feel vulnerable and believe they do not measure up to their peers can easily feel out of place. Counselors are responsible for advocating for this population and providing counseling interventions that are needs-based (Toporek et al., 2009).

Needs-Based Services

When determining the resources that might be most helpful to international students, it is important to assess their needs first. Some students will simply be looking for more information and local support to assist them with adjusting to their new home. In contrast, others are seeking someone who looks more like them or who has had a similar experience and can offer recommendations regarding effective ways of adapting to the culture (McLachlan & Justice, 2009). Some strategies postsecondary institutions can utilize to address the needs of international students are (a) encouraging the development of social connections with other students, (b) providing information about the institution and local resources, and (c) offering support through student services that includes career and mental health counseling (McLachlan & Justice, 2009). Engaging in environments where cultural similarities and mutual understanding are evident can help decrease international students' feelings of homesickness. Cross-cultural experiences in which international students are able to integrate aspects of both cultures lays the foundation for more understanding, inclusion, and acceptance. Among ethnic minorities, increased awareness of common mental health issues, psychoeducation, and information regarding treatment and

resources that are available would assist in countering misinformation. Diversity among those

providing services could also encourage more individuals from various ethnic groups to seek

mental health consultation.

Barriers to Seeking Help

In addition to stigma, barriers to help-seeking and accessing treatment can include

language, cultural differences in practice, understanding of mental health treatments and

diagnoses, and knowledge of where to access services. Use of campus counseling services is not

prevalent among international students because of the belief that their needs will not be

adequately addressed (Mori, 2000). Some campus counseling services do not consider that

international students encounter many of the same challenges as domestic students, such as

course selection, which contributes to stereotyping and marginalization of international students

(Spencer-Rodgers, 2001). Regardless of the campus counseling programming format, the

wording used to promote services should also be reviewed. In some countries, receiving

counseling services would be considered taboo, but academic or career counseling may be

considered more acceptable (Yi et al., 2003). Engrained cultural beliefs can support the notion

that someone who seeks counseling may be perceived as fragile, ill, or incapacitated,

perpetuating the stigma associated with mental illness and receiving mental health counseling.

Use of campus counseling services may also be viewed as a consequence of deviant behavior,

increasing the stigma associated with seeking counseling. Perceptions and stigma related to help-

seeking behaviors and mental health inhibit international students from participating in campus

counseling (Popadiuk & Arthur, 2004; Yang et al., 2013). When providing counseling and

support to international students, counselors' lack of awareness of the challenges these students

face can serve as an additional barrier (McLachlan & Justice, 2009).

Focusing on a wellness model rather than an illness model for mental health matters can normalize the counseling process and cause students to reconsider notions of stigma that stem from their countries of origin. When considering the support and resources offered to international students, counselors should not view international students as helpless or as having a problem that needs to be solved. International students may benefit from counseling solely for personal growth and development (Yoon & Portman, 2004). Rather than viewing the differences of international students negatively, counselors can practice reframing so that students' unique experiences are valued as a new and worthwhile perspective (Wu et al., 2015). International students have the opportunity to experience life in a way that provides them with a unique outlook, and their voices must be heard. Recommendations include a student-centered focus that recognizes, welcomes, and appreciates international students alongside domestic students (Baxter, 2019; Sherry, 2010). The interaction between aspects of a student's country of origin and the host country is a transnational relationship that affects the student's overall educational experience (Baxter, 2019). Campus recognition of international student achievement and extracurricular involvement shows that they are valued as part of the postsecondary community (Sherry, 2010).

Culturally Relevant Counseling

The American Counseling Association (ACA) encourages diversity through various groups, including the Multiracial Multiethnic Counseling Concerns Interest Network. It offers a space for ACA professionals to discuss current issues related to multiculturalism in counseling, and it also provides helpful resources for counselors. New resources can be developed and shared within the group and disseminated to nonmembers to promote awareness of multicultural issues and more informed practice among counseling professionals. According to the ACA Code

of Ethics (2014), counseling should be conducted using methods that are culturally and developmentally appropriate. Professionals providing counseling that is culturally competent is an ethical practice because the needs of the client can more adequately be addressed with consideration of contributing factors to the presenting problem—factors that may be inherently cultural. The *Journal of Cultural Diversity* and the *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development* are both sources of current information that provide insight concerning trends and advancements relevant to multicultural competence and counseling. Bledsoe, Pacino, and Warren (2018) mention the importance of recognizing diversity and finding effective ways of addressing cultural differences. Ratts et al. (2015) discuss the need for a multicultural approach to counseling that addresses the needs of marginalized groups. The topics highlighted by authors in these journals promote further learning and research, which could benefit both counseling professionals and clients. The progression toward more culturally relevant service provision continues as the research in these areas contributes to evidence-based treatment methods.

A multicultural approach to counseling takes into consideration various preexisting factors. This approach incorporates race, nationality, language, socialization, sexuality, and current environment. Ratts et al. (2015) assert that a multicultural approach integrates the social construction of human identity, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, religion, spirituality, and disability status. Multicultural counseling should be multifaceted because there is no "one-size-fits-all" method to be used; instead, every situation and every individual should be viewed as unique while considering the variables that influence the presenting issue (Arredondo & Toporek, 2004). A counselor's nonjudgmental approach allows clients to incorporate aspects of culture in counseling. Conner and Walker (2017) contend that the absence of cultural competence in counseling can be unethical, as the counselor can

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potentially harm. Although multicultural counseling was once considered a specialization, counselors are encouraged to develop an awareness of how culture influences counseling sessions (Conner & Walker, 2017). Because of increasing cultural diversity in the United States, there is a growing population of people with first languages other than English. It is argued that multicultural and multilingual competence are important considerations for counselors if they wish to meet the needs of diverse groups effectively. Cultural immersion, cross-cultural exposure, and second-language acquisition are proposed professional development approaches for counselors to improve multicultural competence. Appreciation of cultural diversity within the counseling setting can assist in encouraging clients to access counseling services (Ivers et al., 2013).

Further, regardless of the race or ethnicity of the professionals providing mental health services, it is important that the counseling is culturally relevant to adequately support the needs of the clients counselors seek to serve, both international and domestic. Culturally relevant practice in counseling and diversity within the institution through cultural representation is necessary to recognize and address some of the needs of international students (Leong & Huang, 2008). Countries and cultural groups have varied ways of identifying, communicating, and managing mental health and wellness situations. Similarly, misunderstandings about factors preceding mental illness, as well as symptomology and effective coping strategies, are informed by cultural beliefs (Na et al., 2016). Effective campus counseling initiatives for international students are individualized and needs-based; they focus on building the therapeutic relationship between counselors and students, they are culturally sensitive (i.e., they consider cross-cultural adjustment issues), and they are multidisciplinary (i.e., they connect international students with other professionals and organizations, such as employment advisors, medical clinics, and

churches, where they can access helpful resources; Wu et al., 2015). When international students arrive on campus, the information provided to them will help them formulate their ideas about help-seeking (see Komiya & Eells, 2001). Cultural immersion, cross-cultural exposure, and second-language acquisition can improve multicultural competence among counselors. As indicated earlier, an appreciation of cultural diversity within the counseling setting can assist in encouraging clients to access counseling services (Ivers et al., 2013). Essentially, culture cannot be ignored because cultural factors are present within the counseling environment, regardless of whether or not they are addressed or accepted.

From the perspective of international students, their needs have not adequately been addressed by the mental health services offered to them. Sociocultural context is a consideration that can easily be overlooked by professionals seeking to work with international students. Western views on emotional expression may not be congruent with international students' experiences or beliefs (Komiya & Eells, 2001). Student services professionals should also be conscious of the existing stereotypes and discrimination encountered by international students (both on and off campus), as a reminder to consider the sociocultural context when addressing the complexities of adjustment to life in Canada or the United States (Hanassab, 2006). Promoting multicultural competence among counseling professionals can improve client retention (Ivers & Villalba, 2015). Early termination of counseling services among ethnic minorities is a problem that counseling professionals seek to address. The study by Presley and Day (2018) investigated the effects of Asian American clients receiving counseling services from counselors of similar ethnic backgrounds. Using this model, client dropout rates decreased because of ethnic or language matching between clients and counselors. When matching clients with counselors on the basis of language or ethnicity is not feasible, it is suggested that

counselors engage in professional development to enhance knowledge of important cultural differences and to obtain information and resources that are specific to the client's language or culture; multilingualism among counseling professionals is encouraged (Presley & Day, 2018). Knowledge of beliefs and practices specific to certain cultures can assist counselors in connecting with students and exploring more effective approaches to providing treatment or offering support, even if some of the methods are nontraditional by North American standards (Heppner et al., 2008; Niegocki & Ægisdóttir, 2019).

Research Gap

By improving student counseling services and encouraging cultural representation during the transition to the host country, institutions may find resulting benefits through student retention. However, most existing research focuses on immigrants and refugees without focusing specifically on international students, whose needs may differ (see Shannon et al., 2015). Further, there is a lack of recent quantitative studies providing data to support actionable solutions for these students. Many of the existing sources are outdated literature-review studies or cite outdated sources (Baker & Hawkins, 2006; Gold, 2016; Hyun et al., 2007; Olivas & Li, 2006; Popadiuk & Arthur, 2004). For example, though Baker and Hawkins (2006) described insights into the international student experience, it is more than ten years out of date and lacks a focus on mental health support and counseling interventions. More recent research is needed, especially on the role of campus counselors in supporting international students and on programs to promote success and retention (Olivas & Li, 2006).

Many sources that present more recently conducted research are informal qualitative studies; some offer subjective, observation-based data that lack the rigor of quantitative data (Jean-Francois, 2019; Shannon et al., 2015; Wu et al., 2015). Others are too narrow in scope,

lacking a holistic emphasis on coping strategies and counseling interventions (Philip et al., 2019; Yi et al., 2003; Yoon & Portman, 2004). Others are qualitative case studies focusing primarily on Asian students (Heggins & Jackson, 2003; Heng, 2019; Slaten et al., 2016). Though these studies offer valuable insights, they do not reveal whether the same insights apply to non-Asian international students.

To revise existing services to account for acculturation challenges, service providers need quantitative data concerning the timelines associated with acculturation, the impact of specific levels of English proficiency on self-concept and acculturation, and the correlation between shame, family expectations, and acculturation. Having this data would enable campus counseling service providers to understand better the issues compounding previously identified barriers, such as the impact of shame or misunderstanding. It would also enable them to adjust their approaches according to factors such as the length of time the student has been in the host country, the student's proficiency in self-expression in English, and the intensity of family influence the student is experiencing. This study addresses the research gap in quantitative data on the causal factors affecting international students' psychological well-being and how these correlate to acculturation. The goal is to enable campus counseling service providers to make data-driven modifications to existing services for these students.

Conceptual Framework

To address the many components of the research questions, the researcher developed a conceptual model, that draws on the key themes identified during the review of the existing literature concerning the unique challenges of international students. These themes were the effects of shame on self-concept, as moderated by family expectations and level of English proficiency, and how these correlations relate to acculturation resilience. Measurable variables

were developed on the basis of these identified themes.

Shame as a character trait has been described as increasing an individual's susceptibility to experiencing shame. Research indicates that individuals more prone to experiencing shame may be more vulnerable to other influences on acculturation and resilience, such as the opinions and criticisms of others (Tangney et al., 2000). In this framework, shame is, therefore, an independent variable.

Self-concept is how people see themselves holistically across a broad spectrum of traits, abilities, characteristics, and achievements (Goñi et al., 2011). It is the next link between variables like shame and students' acculturation resilience. In this framework, self-concept can function as an independent or a dependent variable: it functions as an independent variable in relation to the acculturation variable and as a dependent variable in relation to the shame variable. Establishing causal sequence is important for establishing the importance of order, because the model explores the development of self-concept in which shame is considered a preexisting condition.

As an early socialization tool, family is where an individual's initial understandings, beliefs, and values are shaped. Though family structure can vary considerably across cultures, each family has distinct norms and expectations, ranging from a favored demeanor to goals for academic achievement, financial gain, and career paths (Sasikala & Karunanidhi, 2011). When international students arrive in the host country, they bring with them ingrained family expectations and values and are faced with the task of choosing how these expectations and values will influence their decisions and actions.

English proficiency is not generalizable across cultures but can be universally understood when measured on a spectrum. The IELTS assesses nine levels of English proficiency, ranging

from nonuser to expert user (Feast, 2002). This variable was important to measure because all international students applying to postsecondary education require English proficiency. In the conceptual framework for this study, family expectations and English proficiency are moderators for the shame and self-concept variables. They are intended to show the impact of the relationship between shame and self-concept as well as the impact of the relationship between shame and acculturation.

Although acculturation has become a normative process for international students, the duration and details of acculturation are understood in the context of an individual's experience (Kashima & Loh, 2006). The term *resilience* is comparable to perseverance while adapting; however, when paired, *acculturation resilience* involves an international student's ability to adapt to an unfamiliar or changing environment while coping with challenges that arise (Khawaja et al., 2014). An example of acculturation resilience is evident when an international student effectively navigates cultural, academic, familial, and emotional issues. In this model, the acculturation-resilience variable functions as the outcome after family expectations and English proficiency have moderated the shame and self-concept variables.

Summary

This chapter presented the topic of international students in detail, summarizing existing research on the unique experiences of international students and addressing such issues as language and English proficiency, acculturation resilience, self-concept and shame, campus support from student services, stigma, and barriers to seeking help. It also delineated the current gaps in research and presented the conceptual framework for this study in greater detail.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

This quantitative study supplements qualitative research on international students with statistical data on international students' experiences of shame, acculturation, and resilience to support actionable recommendations for counseling providers and institutions. This chapter introduces the study design, including the research design and approach, the setting and sample for the study, the instruments and materials used to collect data, the data-processing and analysis procedures, the informed consent and confidentiality measures, and the role of the researcher.

Research Design and Approach

A quantitative cross-sectional design was implemented because the research questions and objectives revolve around identifying and characterizing interrelationships between psychological, educational, and social variables, with a further need to generalize sample results within a broader student population. A correlational approach was deemed an ideal fit for the objectives (see Creswell, 2012; Creswell & Creswell, 2022) because it involves analyzing complex relationships among variables to address specific theory-guided questions and assumptions. The present work followed a quantitative approach to test the proposed model and address the research questions.

Selection of Participants

A convenience sampling approach was used for this study. Convenience sampling is nonrandom and provides the researcher with a non-probability method of recruiting participants from the target population when random sampling is not feasible (Etikan et al., 2016). Nonrandom sampling was considered the most appropriate for this study because of the focus on international students at the postsecondary level. Because this population is comparatively difficult to access compared to other types of students, the convenience sampling approach

allowed the researcher to select a sample of qualified participants quickly and easily while staying within the funding and time constraints of the project. A sample of 164 international students were selected from Atlasview University's Bachelor of Business Administration, Bachelor of Creative Arts, and Bachelor of Interior Design programs, both residential and online. Postsecondary international students were recruited through class visits, which consisted of a 15-minute presentation and facilitated discussion with students.

Screening questions were included in the data-collection instrument to determine participant eligibility for the study. To be included in the study, participants needed to be classified as international students—that is, students who listed their nationality as anything other than Canadian in the screening questions for the study. Because English proficiency was one of the variables being studied for this research, participants were required to complete the IELTS and provide the results in order to participate in the study; this criterion was met by recruiting only from enrolled students, all of whom had to have completed the IELTS to enroll in their programs. There were no age restrictions, because the age of the students was not a concern for the objectives of this study. The total number of participants who met the criteria and completed the survey was 69 students. This sample size is acceptable for a high confidence level and low margin of error (Sauro & Lewis, 2016).

Instrumentation

To collect data for this study, participants completed four online self-report assessments: the External and Internal Shame Scale (EISS), the Family Almost Perfect Scale (FAPS), the Personal Self-Concept (PSC) Questionnaire, and the Acculturation and Resilience Scale (AARS). These assessments were delivered via a single online survey disseminated using Qualtrics. In addition to containing the four assessments, the survey also included a demographic

questionnaire that collected data on participants' nationality, race, ethnicity, age, gender, length of time in Canada, IELTS score, and program of study. These questions were developed to assist with classifying responses provided by the participants and to provide context for the results generated by the four scales.

Eligible participants were presented with information concerning the study during class visits and provided with the online survey link. Students were asked to complete the survey in their own time. The survey was closed 2 weeks after the live class recruitment session. All surveys completed within that time frame by participants indicating nationality outside of Canada were included in the data analysis.

EISS

The EISS was developed by identifying four core domains of experiencing shame: inferiority, isolation/exclusion, uselessness, and criticism. It includes eight items that measure trait shame within external dimensions (e.g., "Other people see me as uninteresting"), internal dimensions (e.g., "I am different and inferior to others"), and general dimensions (overall tendency to experience both external and internal shame; Ferreira et al., 2020). For each item, participants are asked to choose one of four options on a Likert scale ranging from *always* to *never* to represent the frequency associated with the occurrence of each statement. The scale has shown satisfactory internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alphas of .80 and .82 for respective external/internal shame scores, and .89 regarding general shame) and evidence of construct validity for both external and internal shame dimensions and an overarching general shame factor. Moreover, satisfactory concurrent validity has also been established within the development study between the three scales (external/internal/general) and an additional shame scale, self-criticizing and self-reassurance, and depression (Ferreira et al., 2020).

FAPS

The FAPS is a 17-item assessment instrument with three subscales: Family Discrepancy, defined as the family's perceived difference between the priorly set standards for behavior and the actual performance (e.g., "Nothing short of perfect is acceptable in my family"); Family Standards, defined as the family's performance standards (e.g., "My family expects the best from me"); and Family Order, defined as the family's preference for neatness and orderliness (e.g., "My family thinks things should be put away in their place"). The scale was developed by adapting the Almost Perfect Scale–Revised (Slaney et al., 1996) items to measure family-oriented perfectionism, followed by factor analyses to verify the instrument's adequacy of its internal structure and further external validity studies. For each item, participants are asked to choose one of seven options on a Likert scale ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree* to represent their level of agreement with the statement. The scale has shown acceptable reliability (Cronbach's alphas ranging from .78 to .91 for the three subscales) and adequate construct; furthermore, satisfactory concurrent, convergent, and divergent validity evidence—with individual perfectionism—was reported (Wang, 2010). In the present study, the Family Order subscale was removed, leaving a total of 13 statements related to family discrepancy and family standards.

PSC Questionnaire

The PSC Questionnaire assesses self-concept with 22 items categorized by four subscales: Self-Fulfillment (e.g., "I feel proud of how I am managing my life"), Autonomy (e.g., "In order to do anything, I first need other people's approval"), Honesty (e.g., "I am a trustworthy person"), and Emotional Self-Concept (e.g., "I suffer too much when something goes wrong"; Goñi et al., 2011). There are six statements related to self-fulfillment, five for

autonomy, five for honesty, and six for emotional self-concept. For each item, participants are asked to choose one of five options on a Likert scale ranging from *totally agree* to *totally disagree* to represent their level of agreement with the statement (Goñi et al., 2011). The scale showed satisfactory internal consistency reliability levels for each of its dimensions (Cronbach's alphas over .70; Carretero-Dios & Pérez, 2007), and good construct validity evidence for a four-factor oblique structure was gathered via confirmatory factor analyses (Goñi et al., 2011). In this study, the Honesty subscale was removed, leaving 17 statements related to self-fulfillment, autonomy, and emotional self-concept.

AARS

The AARS is a 27-item assessment composed of three subscales: Acculturation (e.g., "I feel comfortable talking about my culture of origin"), Resilience (e.g., "I am able to cope with new situations"), and Spirituality (e.g., "My religious beliefs help me manage migration challenges"; Khawaja et al., 2014). There are 14 questions measuring resilience, 11 for acculturation, and two for spirituality. For each question, participants are given four options on a Likert scale—*do not agree*, *agree sometimes*, *agree mostly*, *always agree*—to determine which statement best describes how much they agree with the question. The scale was developed with culturally and linguistically diverse Australian migrants and international students to assess migrants' experiences while adapting to a new way of life within a different country. The AARS has exhibited satisfactory internal consistency and test-retest reliability for its three subscales and a general score in its original study (Cronbach's alphas above .70 and test-retest correlations .65 and upwards) as well as satisfactory construct and divergent validity evidence (the latter with psychological distress; Khawaja et al., 2014). For this study, the Spirituality subscale was removed, leaving 25 statements related to acculturation and resilience.

Assumptions

It was assumed that the participants in this study would provide honest and truthful responses. This assumption is supported by the study design, which incorporated anonymous data collection to mitigate the risk of participants providing inaccurate responses through fear of negative repercussions. It was also assumed that the norms associated with the study location (a private Canadian university), such as speaking English or having an individualistic culture, are generalizable to other U.S. and Canadian higher education environments.

In terms of the statistical analysis, certain assumptions were made when defining the variables in the conceptual model. In the model, English proficiency and family expectations were defined as moderating variables based on the assumption that those variables would impact the association between other variables. This assumption was based on both synthesis of the existing literature and the measurement values expressed in the Personal Self-Concept (PSC) Questionnaire, the FAPS, and Acculturation and Resilience Scale (AARS), all of which define these variables as outcome or moderating variables.

Data Processing and Analysis

IBM SPSS version 27 was used to analyze the data uploaded from the survey created in Qualtrics. Incomplete surveys and respondents who did not complete the consent form were excluded. The remaining data were reviewed in SPSS to identify correlations. The hypotheses were tested using regression analyses. The data analysis for this study consisted of a preliminary analysis phase followed by statistical analysis of the data for each research question. As preliminary analyses, Pearson's *r* correlation coefficients were calculated between the main psychological variables; standardized Cronbach's alpha coefficients were also calculated to assess internal consistency reliability. Then, for RQ 1 and RQ 2, drawing from the preliminary

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analyses, specific *r* correlation coefficients were examined—namely, correlations between self-concept (self-fulfillment, autonomy, emotional) and acculturation resilience, and between shame and self-concept (self-fulfillment, autonomy, emotional). For RQ 3 and RQ 4, a mediated-moderation model with heteroscedasticity-consistent standard errors was specified to address moderation effects, with shame as an independent variable, self-concept dimensions as mediators, acculturation resilience as the outcome variable, and family expectations/values and English proficiency as moderators. Parts of the overall model were assessed to examine the respective moderation effects. The interaction between shame and family expectations/values effects was examined for RQ 3, whereas shame and English-proficiency interaction effects were analyzed to answer RQ 4. Finally, for RQ 5, drawing from the prior overall mediated-moderation analysis, its main effects were examined from parts of the model to assess the effect of family expectations/values and English proficiency on self-concept dimensions and levels of acculturation resilience.

Informed Consent and Confidentiality

This research has been reviewed and approved by Atlasview University's Research Ethics Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. Confidentiality was provided to all participants to the fullest extent possible. Participants' electronically signed informed consent forms were stored in a password-protected program called Qualtrics. Records were kept confidential, and only the researchers had access to the collected data. The online survey and demographic forms were anonymous; participants' names and email addresses were not collected as part of the study. The results of this research may be published in professional journals or presented at conferences, but any such presentations will report only general findings, maintaining anonymity. Students were informed that deciding

to stop participating or refusing to answer particular questions would not affect their relationship with the researchers, the institution, or any other group associated with this project. If students chose to withdraw from the study, all associated data collected were immediately destroyed wherever possible.

Summary

This quantitative study expands on qualitative research on international students with statistical data on international students' experiences of shame, acculturation, and resilience to support actionable recommendations for counseling providers and institutions. This chapter presented the study design used to support this objective, including the research design and approach, the setting and sample for the study, the instruments and materials used to collect data, the data-processing and data-analysis procedures, and the informed consent and confidentiality measures. The following chapter will present the research findings.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This quantitative study supplements qualitative research on international students with statistical data on international students' experiences of shame, acculturation, and resilience to support actionable recommendations for counseling providers and institutions. This chapter presents the findings from the data collection, including the demographic data and the statistical analysis results on the questionnaire data. Finally, it correlates these findings to the study outcomes with reference to the research hypotheses.

Demographic Data

One hundred and sixty-four students opened the survey in Qualtrics, four declined the option to provide consent, and 80 moved through the survey questions until the end. Of these students, five listed their nationality as Canadian and therefore did not meet the eligibility criteria as an international student; six of the remaining students left some questions unanswered. In total, 69 students submitted entries for all survey questions.

From the sample of 69 participants, most of the students (53 students; 76.8% of participants) were between 18 and 24. Thirty-five (50.7%) participants were male, and 33 (47.8%) were female. Regarding ethnicity, 41 of the participants (59.4%) identified as South Asian (Bangladeshi, East Indian, Indo-Caribbean, Pakistani, Sri Lankan), the highest representation among the ethnic groups. Of the students surveyed, 56 (81.2%) were enrolled in the Bachelor of Business Administration program. Finally, 34 (49.3%) of the students were new Canadian residents, noting they had been in Canada for less than 1 year. Table 1 illustrates the demographic information.

Table 1.

Participant Demographics

Variable	%
Age	
18–24	76.8%
25–34	18.8%
35–44	2.9%
45–54	1.4%
Gender	
Male	50.7%
Female	47.8%
Nonbinary	1.4%
Race/ethnicity	
East/Southeast Asian	17.4%
South Asian	59.4%
Black	1.4%
Latin American	2.9%
Middle Eastern	1.4%
Mixed race	1.4%
Other	10.1%
Time in Canada	
Less than 1 year	49.3%
1–2 years	13.0%
3–4 years	10.1%
5 or more years	7.2%
No response	20.3%
Program	
Bachelor of Business Administration	81.2%
Bachelor of Creative Arts	5.8%
Bachelor of Interior Design	10.1%
No response	2.9%
IELTS score	
4–5	5.8%
6–7	85.5%
8–9	7.2%
No response	1.4%

Note. IELTS = International English Language Testing System.

The average IELTS score was 6–7, with 59 students (85.5%) achieving test results that identified them as having either an effective or operational command of the English language, despite some inaccuracies and misunderstandings (Hayes & Read, 2004). Nine bands are used to

describe the skill level associated with each score: Band 6 represents a competent user, and Band 7 represents a good user (see Fig. 2).

Figure 2

IELTS Scale

Band score	Skill level	Description
9	Expert user	The test taker has fully operational command of the language. Their use of English is appropriate, accurate and fluent, and shows complete understanding.
8	Very good user	The test taker has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriate usage. They may misunderstand some things in unfamiliar situations. They handle complex and detailed argumentation well.
7	Good user	The test taker has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriate usage and misunderstandings in some situations. They generally handle complex language well and understand detailed reasoning.
6	Competent user	The test taker has an effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriate usage and misunderstandings. They can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.
5	Modest user	The test taker has a partial command of the language and copes with overall meaning in most situations, although they are likely to make many mistakes. They should be able to handle basic communication in their own field.
4	Limited user	The test taker's basic competence is limited to familiar situations. They frequently show problems in understanding and expression. They are not able to use complex language.
3	Extremely limited user	The test taker conveys and understands only general meaning in very familiar situations. There are frequent breakdowns in communication.
2	Intermittent user	The test taker has great difficulty understanding spoken and written English.
1	Non-user	The test taker has no ability to use the language except a few isolated words.
0	Did not attempt the test	The test taker did not answer the questions.

Note. Adapted from *Understanding your score: IELTS band score* by IELTS, 2022. (https://www.ielts.org/for-test-takers/how-ielts-is-scored)

RQ 1: Correlation Between Self-Concept and Acculturation Resilience

Pearson's *r* correlation coefficients were calculated to determine whether there is a correlation between self-concept and acculturation resilience (see Table 2). The correlation between acculturation resilience and self-concept self-fulfillment was negative and statistically significant ($r = -.55, p < .001$). The association between self-concept autonomy and acculturation resilience was positive and statistically significant ($r = .42, p = < .001$). Moreover, no statistically significant correlations were found between emotional self-concept and acculturation resilience ($r = .20, p = .104$).

Table 2

Correlations Between Main Psychological Variables by p Value

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Autonomy	.287								
Emotional	.154	< .001							
Family standards	.002	.112	.036						
Family discrepancy	.781	< .001	< .001	< .001					
Internal shame	< .001	.089	.502	.164	.252				
External shame	.004	.273	.526	.228	.988	< .001			
Total shame	< .001	.111	.461	.141	.495	< .001	< .001		
Resilience	< .001	< .001	.104	.687	.012	< .001	.050	< .001	
Acculturation	.002	.220	.317	.587	.252	.001	.054	.003	< .001

Note. PSC Questionnaire = Personal Self-Concept Questionnaire; the FAPS = the Family Almost Perfect Scale; AARS = Acculturation and Resilience Scale; EISS = External and Internal Shame Scale. Self-fulfillment = 1, autonomy = 2, emotional = 3 on the PSC Questionnaire; family standards = 4, family discrepancy = 5 on the FAPS; internal shame = 6, external shame = 7, total shame = 8 on the EISS; resilience = 9 on the AARS.

RQ 2: Correlation Between Shame and Self-Concept

The correlation between shame and self-concept self-fulfillment was positive ($r = .46$, $p < .001$). In contrast, no other statistically significant associations were found regarding shame and self-concept autonomy ($r = -.20$, $p = .111$) or shame and emotional self-concept ($r = -.09$, $p = .461$).

RQ 3: Moderation Effects of Family Expectations/Values

Moderation effects were assessed by examining the mediated-moderation model moderation parameters (Tables 3, 4, and 5). There were no statistically significant moderation effects of family expectations on the shame effect on self-concept dimensions: self-concept self-fulfillment: unstandardized coefficient = −0.07, $p = .567$, CI = [−0.33, 0.18]; self-concept autonomy: unstandardized coefficient = −0.08, $p = .770$, CI = [−0.61, 0.45]; and emotional self-concept: unstandardized coefficient = −0.15, $p = .555$, CI = [−0.64, 0.35].

Table 3

Mediated-Moderation Model for Self-Concept and Self-Fulfillment

	Unstandardized coefficient	*SE* (HC4)	*T*	*p*	LLCI	ULCI

	Unstandardized coefficient	SE (HC4)	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	2.3360	.0820	28.498	< .001	2.172	2.500
Shame	.5423	.2278	2.3810	.020	.0869	.9978
Family expectations/values	.1892	.0662	2.8600	.006	.0569	.3215
English proficiency	.0110	.3141	.035	.972	−.6170	.6391
Shame × Family Expectations/values	−.0734	.1273	−.576	.567	−.3280	.1812
Shame × English Proficiency	.3858	.7673	.503	.617	−1.149	1.920

Note. LLCI = Lower Limit Confidence Interval; ULCI = Upper Limit Confidence Interval.

Table 4

Mediated-Moderation Model for Self-Concept Autonomy

	Unstandardized coefficient	SE (HC4)	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	3.511	.1019	34.470	< .001	3.308	3.715
Shame	−.295	.2641	−1.118	.268	−.824	.233
Family expectations/values	.198	.1170	1.692	.096	−.036	.432
English proficiency	.335	.5497	.610	.544	−.764	1.434
Shame × Family Expectations/values	−.078	.2651	−.294	.770	−.608	.452
Shame × English Proficiency	−.967	1.2019	−.805	.424	−3.371	1.436

Note. LLCI = Lower Limit Confidence Interval; ULCI = Upper Limit Confidence Interval.

Table 5

Mediated-Moderation Model for Emotional Self-Concept

	Unstandardized coefficient	SE (HC4)	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	2.675	.065	41.084	< .001	2.545	2.806
Shame	−.044	.175	−.254	.800	−.394	.305
Family expectations/values	.121	.090	1.351	.182	−.058	.300
English proficiency	−.320	.365	−.878	.383	−1.049	.409
Shame × Family Expectations/values	−.146	.246	−.593	.555	−.639	.346
Shame × English Proficiency	−.764	.799	−.957	.342	−2.361	.833

Note. LLCI = Lower Limit Confidence Interval; ULCI = Upper Limit Confidence Interval.

RQ 4: Moderation Effects of English Proficiency

The mediated-moderation model parameters were examined, as with RQ 3. No statistically significant moderation effects of English proficiency on the effect of shame on self-concept were found: self-concept self-fulfillment: unstandardized coefficient = 0.39, p = .617, CI = [−1.15, 1.92]; self-concept autonomy: unstandardized coefficient = −0.97, p = .424, CI = [−3.37, 1.43]; and emotional self-concept: unstandardized coefficient = −0.76, p = .342, CI = [−2.36, 0.83].

RQ 5: Self-Concept—Correlations with English Proficiency and Family Expectations/Values

Regarding the associations between English proficiency and self-concept and acculturation resilience, a moderated-mediation model (see Table 6) was used to assess the results. First, the associations between English proficiency and the three self-concept dimensions were not statistically significant (proficiency and self-concept self-fulfillment: unstandardized coefficient = 0.01, p = .972; proficiency and self-concept autonomy: unstandardized coefficient = 0.34, p = .544; proficiency and emotional self-concept: unstandardized coefficient = −0.32, p = .383). No statistically significant associations were found between English proficiency and acculturation resilience (unstandardized coefficient = −0.02, p = .920). As for the associations between family expectations/values and self-concept and acculturation resilience, a statistically significant and positive association was detected between family expectations and self-concept self-fulfillment (unstandardized coefficient = 0.19, p = .006), whereas no statistically significant associations were found between family expectations and self-concept autonomy and emotional self-concept (family expectations and self-concept autonomy: unstandardized coefficient = 0.20, p = .096; family expectations and emotional self-concept: unstandardized coefficient = 0.12, p =

.182). Moreover, no statistically significant associations were found between family expectations and acculturation resilience (unstandardized coefficient = −0.02, p = .649).

Table 6

Mediated-Moderation Model for Acculturation Resilience

	Unstandardized coefficient	SE (HC4)	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	2.826	.666	4.241	< .001	1.492	4.160
Shame	−.154	.150	−1.023	.310	−.454	.147
Self-concept self-fulfillment	−.372	.123	−3.022	.004	−.618	−.126
Self-concept autonomy	.161	.099	1.621	.111	−.038	.360
Emotional self-concept	.176	.135	1.300	.199	−.095	.446
Family expectations/values	−.024	.053	−.458	.649	−.131	.082
Shame × Family Expectations/values	.211	.122	1.727	.090	−.034	.455
English proficiency	−.024	.237	−.101	.920	−.497	.450
Shame × English Proficiency	.026	.561	.046	.964	−1.098	1.149

Note. LLCI = Lower Limit Confidence Interval; ULCI = Upper Limit Confidence Interval.

Findings in Relation to Study Outcomes

Correlation analyses revealed that self-concept and acculturation resilience are only partly associated. An inverse association was found between self-concept self-fulfillment and acculturation resilience (RQ 1). Correlations displayed only a partial association between the variables; a direct association between shame and self-concept self-fulfillment was found (RQ 2). No statistically significant moderation effects of English proficiency or family expectations/values on the shame–self-concept relationship were found (RQ 3 and RQ 4). A positive association was found between family expectations and self-concept self-fulfillment (RQ 5).

Sample Size Considerations

The sample size (N = 69) is an important aspect of the present work. A sample of this size may have hindered the ability to detect statistically significant effects stemming from the more

comprehensive mediated-moderation model. Higher statistical power could have facilitated the interpretation of marginally nonsignificant findings (i.e., p values close to .05 but above this threshold). For instance, within the mediated-moderation model, the following was observed regarding the main association effects between family expectations and self-concept autonomy ($p = .096$) as well as between family expectations and emotional self-concept ($p = .182$). Had this research been conducted with a larger sample, there could have been a clearer illustration of these relationships, because these effects stemming from a more complex model could have been estimated with higher precision.

This notion is further underscored by the fact that statistically significant yet hypothesis-contradicting results were found, which could indicate that the relationships between the studied variables were not as clear as previously stated by the hypotheses. Two marginally nonsignificant correlations were observed between acculturation resilience and emotional self-concept ($p = .104$) and shame and self-concept autonomy ($p = .111$). These nonsignificant associations were observed when examining the same research questions for which the hypothesis-contradicting effects were found (correlations between self-concept dimensions and acculturation resilience and shame, RQ 1 and RQ 2). These results could indicate that these relationships may be conditional on other factors related to self-concept, shame, and acculturation constructs. This topic—psychological aspects surrounding acculturation with international students—warrants additional research. Further, this research would benefit from larger samples to provide more solid grounds on which assumptions of future research could be constructed.

Summary

This quantitative study provides statistical data on international students' experiences of shame, acculturation, and resilience to support actionable recommendations for counseling providers and institutions. As preliminary analyses, correlations between the main psychological variables were calculated. Moreover, to assess internal consistency reliability, standardized Cronbach's alphas were calculated, and acceptable-to-good values were found regarding all scales but emotional self-concept (PSC: self-fulfillment = .725, PSC: emotional self-concept = .426, PSC: autonomy = .736, FAP: family discrepancy = .840, FAP: family standards = .832, Total EISS = .782, AARS: resilience = .894, AARS: acculturation = .875). Chapter 5 will discuss these findings with recommendations for practice and further research.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to determine how family expectations, English proficiency, and self-concept influence an international student's acculturation resilience. A key aim of the study was to provide the data needed to instigate reform for campus counseling services and counselor education programming to increase international student engagement. The following chapter explores the interpretation of the findings with reference to both the conceptual framework and the literature review. It also discusses the implications of the findings for social change and makes specific recommendations for practice and further study.

Summary of the Findings

The hypotheses stated that positive associations would be found between self-concept and acculturation resilience (RQ 1), negative correlations would be observed between shame and self-concept (RQ 2), and family expectations/values and English proficiency would moderate the effect of shame on self-concept (RQ 3 and RQ 4) as well as correlate positively with self-concept and acculturation resilience (RQ 5). Results showed only partial support for some of the hypotheses. Overall, partial support was found for RQ 1, where one self-concept dimension (autonomy) correlated with acculturation resilience, as expected; however, both contradictory findings and nonsignificant effects were found for the two remaining self-concept dimensions (self-fulfillment and emotional self-concept). Regarding RQ 2, no support was identified because of contradictory findings and nonsignificant effects between self-concept dimensions and shame. Furthermore, no support was found for the moderation effects of family expectations and English proficiency analyzed within RQ 3 and RQ 4. The outcome with RQ 5 was similar: only one effect was observed as following the hypothesized association between family expectations and one self-concept dimension (self-fulfillment); no other significant effects were found, resulting in

only partial support for this hypothesis.

RQ 1

Correlation analyses revealed that self-concept and acculturation resilience are only partly associated. First, an inverse association between self-concept self-fulfillment and acculturation resilience was found—an opposite finding regarding Hypothesis 1. Previous studies have indicated that the process of acculturation allows international students to demonstrate resilience and self-concept autonomy through independent decision-making (Herrman et al., 2011; Pan, 2011; Spencer-Rodgers, 2001). There is the opportunity for goal-setting and achievement associated with self-concept self-fulfillment during acculturation (Beitin et al., 2008; Toporek et al., 2009). These factors led the researcher to hypothesize that there would be a positive correlation between self-concept and acculturation resilience. However, the data have shown this theory to be incorrect. Students who saw themselves as more aligned with meeting the objectives of their lives tended to report a lower ability to adapt to unfamiliar or changing environments and vice versa. It could be hypothesized that when international students demonstrate more acculturation resilience and adaptability, they are becoming more acculturated to American/Canadian standards and consequently leave behind aspects of their original cultures. Perhaps, in this way, they exhibit lower self-concept self-fulfillment.

Second, a positive association was found between self-concept autonomy and acculturation resilience, as previously assumed. When international students are away from their homes and loved ones, there are opportunities for exploration and independence during the transition to a new country. Additionally, students are forced to move forward independently, accepting responsibility for their choices and decision-making (Spencer-Rodgers, 2001; Popadiuk & Arthur, 2004; Beitin et al., 2008). Consequently, they are able to demonstrate higher

acculturation resilience due to increased levels of self-concept autonomy. Finally, no statistically significant correlations were found between emotional self-concept and acculturation resilience, contrary to the original assumption (positive self-concept and acculturation-resilience association). A notable consideration is that only specific self-concept subtypes are related to acculturation resilience in a statistically significant manner; it is possible that not all aspects of self-concept may be positively related to acculturation resilience.

RQ 2

As for RQ 2, correlations displayed only a partial association between the variables, and none of the assessed effects supported Hypothesis 2, that there would be a negative correlation between shame and self-concept. Previous studies have indicated that shame is demotivating (Covert et al., 2003; Graham & Weiner, 2012; Thompson et al., 2008; Turner, 2014) and that shame experiences result in negative self-perceptions (Creed et al., 2014; Ferreira et al., 2020; Wells & Jones, 2000); however, this data collection contradicts those findings. First, a direct association between shame and self-concept self-fulfillment was found. International students who experienced higher levels of shame also tended to report being more aligned with meeting their life goals. This was not an expected result, as a negative association was assumed. It could be hypothesized that familiarity with shame experiences and the avoidance of shame can motivate international students to pursue achievement and thus lead to higher levels of self-concept self-fulfillment (Lickel et al., 2014). Moreover, no other self-concept subtype exhibited significant associations with shame.

RQ 3

Hypothesis 3 proposed that family expectations would moderate the effect of shame on self-concept because studies indicated that expectations of international students initiated by

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family members had been identified as stressful, discouraging, or motivating (Anwar & Qonita, 2019; Heffner, 2011); however, no statistically significant moderation effects were found. The evidence for the moderating role of family expectations on the shame–self-concept relationship was weak. Nevertheless, further research is needed to confirm this association.

RQ 4

Hypothesis 4 proposed that English proficiency would moderate the effect of shame on self-concept. Sense of belonging, acceptance, and social status or lack thereof (Freynet & Clément, 2019; Hanassab, 2006; Olsen, 2000), as well as marginalization and exclusion (McCrocklin & Link, 2016; Roysircar et al., 2005) were associated with English proficiency for international students. Regarding RQ 4, no statistically significant moderation effects of English proficiency on the shame–self-concept relationship were found; therefore, no support was found regarding Hypothesis 4. As was the case regarding RQ 3, there is not enough evidence in favor of the moderating role of English proficiency on the shame and self-concept relationship. However, additional research is needed to assess this more thoroughly.

RQ 5

No statistically significant effects were found concerning the associations between English proficiency and self-concept and acculturation resilience. These findings contradict Hypothesis 5. Previous studies have identified lower English proficiency as a barrier that negatively impacted an international student's self-expression, self-perception, presentation in class, and level of inclusion (Galmiche, 2017; Hanassab, 2006; McCrocklin & Link, 2016), leading the researcher to hypothesize that high English proficiency is positively correlated with self-concept and acculturation resilience. However, this supposition was shown to be incorrect through this data collection.

A positive association was found between family expectations and self-concept self-fulfillment. It was presumed that when international students actively work toward goals influenced by family expectations/values, the resulting achievement would be both encouraging and fulfilling because studies have indicated that the inverse was true: Failure to achieve expected outcomes is discouraging and stressful (Anwar & Qonita, 2019; Sasikala & Karunanidhi, 2011). Moreover, when international students hold strong family values, the sense of achievement related to self-fulfillment aligns with meeting family expectations (Kundu, 2019). Aside from self-fulfillment, there were no other statistically significant effects of family expectations on the remaining self-concept subtypes or on acculturation resilience, resulting in only partial support for Hypothesis 5.

Implications
for Social Changes

English Proficiency and Perceptions

The findings suggest that the beliefs concerning international students, as reported in past research, may have changed in recent years, may not have been endorsed by international students, or may have been assumed without detailing specific influential factors for international students. First, English proficiency did not have as great an impact as expected; a student's English proficiency was not necessarily a hindrance regarding self-concept. In the case of international students, this could be viewed positively if English proficiency does not greatly affect acculturation resilience. Moreover, cultural educational standards might be comparable between international and local students when emphasizing literacy over English proficiency (Abel & Abel, 2017). Proponents of this concept could create more employment opportunities for immigrants if there is a common understanding that potential for success and achievement is not contingent on a perceived lack of English proficiency. This would also help prevent

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employee shortages when qualified workers may have been neglected over this issue.

Self-fulfillment and Achievement

Because the self-concept subtype drove most of the significant or expected results, self-concept self-fulfillment should be emphasized. Focusing on the meaning of self-fulfillment for international students and their perceptions of achievement and goal-setting could clarify the role of self-concept in acculturation resilience and could help support student retention, as challenges with academic goals and commitments are a known reason for attrition (Aljohani, 2016). Ultimately, self-fulfillment was linked to family values and to guiding principles for accomplishments that were established in students' countries of origin. Emphasis on cultural affirmation could support students toward greater academic and career advancement without deterring them based on North American expectations, resulting in productive members of society who can also give back to their communities by being in a better position to offer help.

Shame and Motivation

Finally, the concept of shame appeared significant in the findings of the current study. On the basis of the relationship between shame and self-fulfillment found here, it could be theorized that if students report low levels of shame, they may also exhibit lower self-awareness and thus experience lower levels of self-fulfillment. Additionally, it could be posited that shame-prone people move toward goal-setting and achievement because avoidance of shame is a motivating factor, and that achieving their goals naturally leads to higher self-fulfillment. Rather than shame-proneness being perceived as a negative trait, pushing past or overcoming shame experiences could be inspirational for individuals who have previously struggled with achievement because of shame. This change in perspective could help to reduce negative academic and mental health impacts.

Recommendations for Counseling and Counselor Education

Student-services professionals and counseling and mental health professionals could reframe their understanding of international students' needs by reading and understanding the results of this study. A particularly noteworthy topic is identifying the avoidance of shame as a motivating factor toward achievement. Next, English proficiency was less impactful than the former literature suggests. Though researchers have previously emphasized that language acquisition is the key challenge hindering academic success and acculturation (Olsen, 2000), this study has shown that this is not the case. Instead, self-concept and self-fulfillment seemed to have a much more significant impact on student acculturation. This finding indicates that the situation and experiences of international students may have changed in the years since this topic was last researched; newer research approaches have uncovered other variables—such as shame and self-concept—that are rising in significance for this population of students.

To account for these changes in the situation of international students, it is also recommended that stakeholders consider the real experiences and needs of international students concerning their life goals and their responses to the expectations of others when engaging in student-service program planning and mental health-service treatment planning. For example, student services professionals may want to collect culturally specific data as an integral part of the pre-enrollment process to increase knowledge and openness for mental health interventions that would be more culturally affirming for students. Similarly, personal experience has demonstrated that the intake process for students seeking mental health support is typically generic, so it is recommended that mental health professionals working with international students should instead use a cultural-formulation approach that is individualized and culturally responsive, providing benefits directly relevant to the client's needs. As a final suggestion, stakeholders could use a culturally relevant approach to gathering data about barriers and

supports for retention and program completion, focusing on the real acculturation challenges that might contribute to attrition among international students (Aljohani, 2016).

To ensure that the approaches to program planning are grounded in students' genuine needs, it is recommended that stakeholders include international students in research and information gathering, so that their needs are accurately represented. For example, stakeholders could plan focus groups and conduct surveys with international students as an integral part of the enrollment process or orientation package, to spotlight students' voices and perspectives. This will enable stakeholders to gain an accurate picture of needs and challenges directly from the students, ensuring that important aspects of their changing situations are not missed.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study indicates several areas where further research would be beneficial to understand better the current context of international student experiences with acculturation and resilience. First, to fulfill the practice recommendations effectively, more research is needed to support data-driven changes. It is recommended that future studies investigate both the positive and the negative causal factors in more depth, including the barriers that hinder international students from seeking services and the factors that might motivate international students to seek services and support.

Since the present work was cross-sectional, additional studies could be conducted with longitudinal or experimental designs to assess more deeply the causal relationships between the variables in this study. Further, future researchers could also consider conducting analyses with larger samples to test hypotheses with higher statistical power; this is underscored by the marginally nonsignificant findings mentioned above in the present study (i.e., p values close to .05 but above this threshold). More precise estimations of the assessed correlation effects could be obtained by employing larger samples.

Many past studies of international students have been qualitative (Jean-Francois, 2019; Shannon et al., 2015; Wu et al., 2015). The current study's quantitative approach has helped address this gap; however, it is recommended that future studies include a mixed-methods approach that would simultaneously explore measurable outcomes and explanatory narratives. Studies could assess achievement-related and intrinsic motivation as possible mediators of the shame and self-fulfillment association for international students. Such studies could shed further light on the seemingly contradictory findings of the present study regarding the correlations between self-concept self-fulfillment and acculturation and shame. Moreover, further research could dive more deeply into whether the cultural standards of international and local students are comparable because of the absence of findings regarding the impact of international students' English proficiency on acculturation, shame, and self-concept.

Concluding Summary

Though generally hesitant to seek on-campus support, international students have expressed a need for mental health services. The stigma associated with mental illness or with receiving mental health counseling remains an issue. Although stigmatization is a mainstream concern, it can significantly affect cultural groups. For example, within Chinese society, mental illness engenders negative stereotypes and social restrictions, which encourages people to conceal mental health issues and avoid seeking treatment (Yang et al., 2013). Awareness of common mental health issues, psychoeducation, and information regarding treatment and resources that are available would assist in countering the misinformation or lack of information that supports mental health stigmatization. Additionally, an increased understanding of international student perceptions of shame and self-concept could enhance efforts to build rapport and encourage comfort in help-seeking.

Encouraging diversity among professionals providing services could encourage more

international students to pursue mental health support. Lived experience as a member of a racialized or ethnic group does not automatically equate to a competent counselor, but trained professionals classified as ethnic minorities could bring distinctive experiences and perspectives to counseling and consultation that would benefit the people receiving services. Nevertheless, regardless of the race or country of origin of the professionals providing counseling, it is important that the services provided are culturally responsive and that they adequately meet the needs of those being served. Making authentic connections will allow research and programming to be informed by international-student experiences, and ongoing relationships and partnerships between international students, researchers, and mental health service providers will allow these providers to implement services driven by students' current needs.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Participant Consent Form

We are inviting you to participate in a research study for international students. Please read all of the information below before you decide to participate. Participation is optional and you can choose not to take part in the research. If you have any questions or would like more information, please feel free to contact ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Thank you for your time.

Study: The Acculturation and Resilience of International Students

Researchers: Shauna Thompson, MA, Director of Mental Health and Wellness at Atlasview University and doctoral candidate completing a dissertation at Liberty University (principal investigator) and Fred Volk, PhD, faculty at Liberty University (supervisor).

Purpose of the Research
We are inviting international students to participate in an online survey study which is designed to gain a greater understanding of the challenges and methods of coping associated with adjusting to postsecondary student life in another country. The information collected is not intended to directly affect the counselling and wellness services offered by Atlasview University. The goal is to benefit postsecondary institutions in general, the counselling profession and its related fields, providing insight as to how counsellors and student service departments can offer relevant and appropriate support and resources to international students.

Who can participate?
To be eligible to participate in this study, you must:
- be currently enrolled in a degree program at Atlasview University

- be from a country other than Canada or the United States;

- have completed the IELTS if English is not your first language.

Your participation in the research is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. A participant's decision not to continue participating will not influence their relationship or the nature of their relationship with researchers or with staff of Atlasview University either now or in the future.

What will happen in the study?
As a participant in this study, you can expect to:
- complete the statement of consent.

- complete the online survey with demographic form.

It will take approximately 12 minutes to complete the survey.

Risks and Discomforts

The risk of participating in this study is minimal. Participants may experience discomfort while remembering personal experiences associated with the survey questions. To offer appropriate support, ███████████████████████ a trained professional counsellor, will be available to participants who wish to debrief their experience after participating in this study.

Data will be collected using the internet; we anticipate that your participation in this study presents no greater risk than everyday use of the internet. Though we are taking precautions to protect your privacy, you should be aware that information sent through email or the internet could potentially be accessed by a third party.

Benefits

Sharing your experiences can be empowering and your participation in this study will contribute to the body of existing literature concerning ways to more effectively support international students. Your participation in this study will be of great importance in gaining insights into the readiness and competence of student services to address unique aspects of students' cultural backgrounds that play a role in, and have an impact on, their psychological and emotional wellbeing during their time as students.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law. Your electronically signed informed consent will be stored in a password protected program called Qualtrics. Records are kept confidential and only the researchers will have access to the collected data. The online survey and demographic form are anonymous; your name and email address will not be collected as part of the study. The results of this research may be published in professional journals or presented at conferences, but any such presentations will report only general findings, maintaining anonymity as not to breach individual confidentiality.

Questions About the Study

The research team consists Shauna Thompson, Director of Mental Health and Wellness at Atlasview University and Dr. Fred Volk, faculty member at Liberty University. For any questions, or if you are interested in receiving a copy of the study's findings, please contact the Principal Investigator, Shauna Thompson, ███████████████████████ ███████████████████████ and Supervisor, Dr. Fred Volk, ███████████████████

This research has been reviewed and approved by Atlasview University's Research Ethics Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, you may contact The Vice-Chair ███████████████████████

Withdrawal

You may stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with the researchers, Atlasview University, or any other group associated with this project. In the event that you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible.

APPENDIX B: Places of Origin of International Students in Canada in 2022

Removed to comply with copyright.

Note. Data from *Where do inbound students come from?* by Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2022. (https://cbie.ca/infographic/)

APPENDIX C: Places of Origin of International Students in the United States in 2022

Removed to comply with copyright.

Note. Data from *Leading places of origin of international students, 2021/22* by Institute of International Education, 2022. (https://opendoorsdata.org/infographic/leading-places-of-origin-of-international-students-2021-22/)