Examining the Impact of Team Identification and Leisure Participation on International Students' Acculturation

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Abstract

While participating in leisure activities received its notion to help international students' adjustment process, research regarding the effect of sports spectatorship is lacking. The main purpose of this study is to fill in the gap of the effect of being fans of college sports by examining how international students can also benefit from being fans of college sports for their acculturation. The analysis with 94 international students revealed that their team identification and social activity participation had a significant statistical causal relationship towards acculturation. The study's implications included utilizing sports spectatorship as a future acculturation strategy for international students.

Key words: International Student, Team Identification, Leisure Participation, Acculturation

Introduction

According to a report provided by the Institute of International Education (IIE) in 2020, the total number of international students in the U.S. is about one million, consisting of about 5.5% of total U.S. higher education enrollment. This population is said to contribute to the U.S. in many ways. For example, the NAFSA: Association of International Educators (2018) reported that international students contributed $39 billion to the U.S. economy in the 2017-2018 academic year. Moreover, previous literature mentioned how international students enrich domestic students' educational experience in U.S. higher education institutions by providing various perspectives from their country of origin (Wolanin, 2000). Knight (2004) also insists that colleges receive various benefits by recruiting international students, such as building international profile and reputation, developing faculty, student, and staff members, and producing research and knowledge. However, although the total number of international students is growing every year, there remain hardships for these students when they move to the United States from their home country. Along with

the academic burden that their domestic counterparts also experience, international students are exposed to the extra burden of inadequacy and insecurity due to studying in an unfamiliar environment with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (de Araujo, 2011; Gallagher, 2013; Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006).

There is a large number of studies related to international students' adjustment to new conditions using Berry's (1997) theory of acculturation (Bastien et al., 2018; Lee & Funk, 2011). According to Berry (1997), acculturation can be defined as a transition in values, beliefs, and behaviors derived from constant influence between two or more cultures. International students in the acculturation process are said to experience acculturative stress. This stress is accompanied by mild pathologic and disruptive behaviors and symptoms such as anxiety, depression, anger, substance abuse, identity confusion, and family conflict (Berry et al., 1987; Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1998).

Previous literature mentioned participation in leisure through social or sports activities as strategies to cope with acculturation stress for international students (Allen et al., 2010; Bertram et al., 2012; Gomez et al., 2014; Li & Stodolska, 2006; Ra & Trusty, 2017). On the other hand, sports spectatorship has not been studied much as a leisure activity to cope with acculturation stress (Stodolska & Tainsky, 2015). However, Agrergaard (2018) supports the possibility of using sports spectatorship as an acculturation strategy by mentioning, "…sports consumption may better relate to migrants' and descendants' identities, allowing them to feel at home in their new settings while also identifying across borders in line with their lifeworlds as transnational migrants" (p. 51).

Studies on domestic students have shown that becoming a fan of a college sports team by watching college sports can help students adjust to their new environment in college (Clopton, 2007, 2012; Clopton & Finch, 2010; Koo et al., 2015; Sung et al., 2015). Specifically, Clopton (2007, 2012) analyzed how the intercollegiate sports team's presence in college can help

students develop their sense of community and social connection. Moreover, Clopton and Finch (2010) and Koo et al. (2015) referred to the term fan identity developed by Wann (2006) to measure how becoming a fan of intercollegiate sports can help students' social adjustment. However, while most of the research dealt with domestic students, only a small number of international students were included in the research population, and none has focused strictly on international students.

Therefore, this research aims to investigate whether being a fan of one's college sports team can help an international student's acculturation process. As previous literature found that participating in leisure activities can help international students' acculturation process, this research focused on how sports spectatorship can be utilized for international students' acculturation process. Hence, the purpose of this study is to fill in the gap of the effect of being fans of college sports by examining how international students can also benefit from being fans of college sports, in addition to leisure participation, for their acculturation.

Literature Review

Leisure Activity Participation and Acculturation

According to Sayegh and Larsy (1993), the term 'assimilation' has been used by sociologists since 1661, while 'acculturation' was used from 1881. Assimilation can be defined as migrants' adaptation and began to receive more attention when the societies began to experience a rise in migrant population numbers after World War II. While assimilation shows the uni-dimensional process of a migrant group to the dominant group, acculturation shows the bi-directional process between migrant and dominant groups (Sayegh and Larsy, 1993).

Berry (1997) indicated four strategies to cope with the acculturation process: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. Migrants with assimilated states forfeit their cultural identity but

eagerly interact with other cultures. Separated migrants hold on to their original cultural identity and prefer not to interact with others. Integrated migrants show interest in both maintaining their original cultural identity and interacting with other cultures. When migrants show little interest in maintaining their cultural identity and interacting with other cultures, they are said to have a marginalized mindset (Berry, 1997).

Various researchers dealt with how migrant's acculturation is related to recreational sports participation. For example, while less acculturated individuals tend to use parks more, well-acculturated persons showed a higher participation rate in recreation sports (Gomez, 2002). Previous studies also dealt with migrant populations how their acculturative stress and leisure behaviors are correlated (Floyd et al., 2008; Stodolska & Walker, 2007; Walker et al., 2011). Moreover, migrants who participated in leisure were shown to have stronger home and host community networks and better adaptation to hardships in their host community (Stack & Iwasaki, 2009). Furthermore, previous research also found that when migrants participated in the host culture's leisure activities, migrant populations' acculturation or psychological changes were promoted (Toyda, 2012). In lieu with Toyda's (2012) study, Lee and Cardinal (2014) also found that the degree of migrants' acculturation can affect their choices to participate in physical activities during their leisure time. Yet, Gomez et al. (2014) insisted that international students and migrants differ in the ways and goals of their lives in a new environment: while international students are pursuing a degree and looking for a job, migrants are working for their life. Due to this difference, Gomez et al. (2014) further insisted that researchers should be cautioned when researchers are to utilize migrant studies to analyze the international students' leisure behavior.

Previous literature has also shown a relationship between recreational sports and extra-curricular leisure activities to international students' interaction, social integration, self-development, and confidence (Artinger

et al., 2006; Haines, 2001; Kanters & Forrester, 2000). Artinger et al. (2006) showed how participating in one or two intramural sports can help students in higher education to improve their cooperating skills with a diverse group and emphasized how leisure can contribute to students' retention and community building. However, previous research mentioned how the impact on international students' academic adjustment by participating in leisure activities is underestimated (Suminski et al., 2002; Hashim, 2012). Moreover, Berry (2006) emphasized the importance of international students' participation in leisure activities such as social activities. Research has shown that international students who receive more social support from their peers result in lowering the stress from acculturation. Previous research also showed how international students forming strong social networks amongst their peers from both the same and different cultural backgrounds contributed to having firm bases for acculturation (Glass, 2012; Glass & Westmont-Campbell, 2013).

However, despite the various benefits that leisure activity participation provides to international students, constraints that hinder international students from participating in leisure activities also exist (Cho & Price, 2018; Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Crawford et al., 1991; Jackson, 1988; Jackson & Henderson, 1995; Kutintara & Min, 2016). In leisure academia, leisure constraints are defined as any obstacles that hinder the population's leisure activity participation, both time and ability-wise (Jackson, 1988; Jackson & Henderson, 1995). The most commonly used leisure constraint factors were mentioned as interpersonal, intrapersonal, or structural leisure constraints (Crawford & Godbey, 1987). Interpersonal leisure can be defined as one's psychological obstruction, such as personality, attitudes, or feelings when it comes to leisure participation. Interpersonal constraint can be defined as one's interactive hindrance with others, such as family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers. Finally, structural constraints can be defined as external conditions' effect when participating in leisure, such as lack of chances,

time, and financial condition to participate in leisure activities (Crawford et al., 1991). Studies that dealt with international students' leisure constraints mentioned how international students are most likely to be unfamiliar with the American universities' recreation sports structure (Cho & Price, 2018), as well as to have difficulty in finding the right people to play the sports they used to play at their home country (Kutintara & Min, 2016). Hence, while many international students seem to benefit from participating in leisure activities during their acculturation process, there are also difficulties for international students to participate in leisure activities. Therefore, this study strived to test the following research hypothesis:

H₁: There will be a statistically significant causal relationship between international students' leisure activity participation, in forms of sports and social activity participation, and their acculturation.

Social Identity and Team Identification

Social identity theory is used in various literature to describe and explain how individuals relate to their society and how these actions define individuals' methods of interacting with the world. This theory emphasizes its focus on individuals' actions and presumes that one's belonging to specific social groups defines part of an individuals' self-concept (Abrams & Hogg, 1988). In other words, according to Tajfel (1972), social identity can be defined as "the individual's knowledge that he [or she] belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him [or her] of this group membership" (p. 31). Tajfel (1981) also mentioned how individuals who have close interaction with their ingroup members tend to compare themselves to rival groups and insisted that this leads individuals to have meaningful emotions and values towards their ingroup.

Anderson and Stone (1981) were one of the first researchers who identified how sports could be used for individuals to form groups with other members of individuals' society. The authors insisted urbanization of the 20th century affected individuals' way of living and how that led to forming a society based on an individual's interest (Anderson & Stone, 1981). Wann (2006), in his research, mentioned that when individuals identify themselves with a particular team, their identification will be more likely to have a positive effect on their social-psychological health. Since forming an identification with a certain group can lead to significant connectedness to others, individuals who identify themselves as followers of a certain team are said to feel a sense of belonging to that group. This sense of belonging will lead to friendships with other members of the group and is expected to have positive psychological benefits. Yet, Agergaard (2018) mentioned in her book that, "Little attention has been given to the role of sports in migrants' and descendants' broader leisure activities and the identification process following from sports spectatorship and sports tourism (Stodolska, 2015; Stodolska & Tainsky, 2015, as cited in Agergaard, 2018, p. 48)". Hence, although previous research indicated various positive social networking effects that sharing team identification can contribute, there is a gap in the literature on how team identification can contribute to international students' acculturation status.

Team Identification Impact on School Adjustment

Team identification was often used to analyze its effect on domestic students' social/emotional adjustment to campus (Clopton, 2007, 2008; Clopton & Bourke, 2011; Clopton & Finch, 2010; Koo et al., 2015; Sung et al., 2015). Studies (Clopton, 2007; Clopton & Bourke, 2011; Clopton & Finch, 2010) showed how domestic students utilize their team identification to build a sense of community and social capital and ultimately receive help in adjusting to campus socially. Team identification was also used to demonstrate that

when one identifies themselves more strongly with the team, they are following, they are more likely to have psychological well-being, such as a positive mindset, sense of belonging, and higher self-esteem (Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Wann, 2006). Personal self-esteem was also shown to have a moderating effect between students' team identification and social/emotional adjustment (Koo et al., 2015; Sung et al., 2015). Wann (2006) developed the Psychological Health Model, which explained how one's higher team identification creates stronger social/emotional rapport with members of an ingroup, and this eventually leads to psychological well-being (Wann, 2006).

While studies mentioned above (Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Clopton, 2007, 2008; Clopton & Bourke, 2011; Clopton & Finch, 2010; Koo et al., 2015; Sung et al., 2015; Wann, 2006) focused on the effect of team identification to adjustment and psychological well-being of domestic students, the study that focused solely on team identification's impact to international students is lacking. Hence, this study focuses on testing the following research hypothesis:

H₂: There will be a statistically significant causal relationship between international students' college sports team identification and their acculturation.

Methods

Data Collection

International students at one of the power-5 conference affiliated universities were contacted by utilizing purposeful sampling. Emails requesting their voluntary consent and participation in this research were sent with help from an international student office at one of the power-5 conference affiliated universities. Consent to participate in this research was provided in the email. An online survey was used to collect responses from participants. Prior research indicated the

advantages of online survey techniques: low costs, high response rate, and a low rate of missing data than traditional data collection (McDonald & Adam, 2003).

Participants

A total of 94 international students participated in this research. Within the research sample, the majority of participants were female (n=56, 59.5%), Asian (n=52, 55.3%), and graduate students (n=60, 63.8%). Table 1 shows the overall demographic information of the research sample. The authors utilized G*Power software developed by Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, and Lang (2009) and were able to find that the minimum number of samples needed to run multiple regression analysis with three predictors is 74, which is less than the current number of the research sample.

Table 1. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS

	N	%
Gender		
Male	38	40.43
Female	56	59.57
Class Level		
Freshman	7	7.45
Sophomore	6	6.38
Junior	10	10.64
Senior	11	11.70
Master	35	37.23
Doctoral	25	26.60
Region of Origin		
Africa	9	9.57
Asia	52	55.32
Europe	15	15.96
North America	4	4
South America	14	14.89
Oceania	0	0

Instruments

The survey was composed of 33 questions combining four scales that have been determined to be valid and

reliable. Demographic information, such as class level, nationality, and gender, was asked at the beginning of the survey. Team identification was measured with Wann and Branscombe's (1993) Spectator Sport Identification Scale (SSIS). The SSIS has been extensively utilized, which verified its reliability and psychometric properties (e.g., Koo et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2010; Madrigal & Chen, 2008). The original scale had seven items forming one measure of identification. While Wann and Branscombe's (1993) original internal consistency reliability rating (Cronbach's α =.91) was strong, the question regarding the degree to which the individual dislikes their respective team's rival was omitted, as it was determined not to fit the current study. Prior sport management research has similarly utilized a reduced SSIS scale (i.e., Koo et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2010; Madrigal & Chen, 2008). Sample questions asked were: (a) How important to you is it that your intercollegiate sports team wins? (b) How strongly do you see yourself as a fan of your intercollegiate sports team? (c) How strongly do your friends see you as a fan of your intercollegiate sports team? This scale utilized a 5-point Likert type scale from (1) being strongly disagree to (5) being strongly agree. The results of the current study yielded an acceptable Cronbach's α =.89 for the revised SSIS scale.

Second, engagement in social activities utilized a revised scale of Ragheb's (1980) scale, which used five items to ask in what social activities people participated. The questions were simplified to four questions that specifically asked if international students engaged in social activities with friends from the U.S. or friends from their home country. Sample questions asked were: (a) How often do you hang out with friends from the U.S.? (b) How often do you attend parties with friends from the U.S.? (c) How often do you hang out with friends from your home country? (d) How often do you attend parties with friends from your home country? This scale utilized a 5-point Likert type scale from (1) being never to (5) being always. Although Ragheb's (1980) original study did not mention Cronbach's α in

their study, the current study revealed an adequate internal consistency reliability rating, Cronbach's α = .86, for the revised social activity participation items.

Ragheb's (1980) scale used five items to ask in what sports activities people participated. The modified scale removed attending sports events as a spectator option since this study used a different scale to measure international students' team identification by engaging in sports spectatorship activity. Furthermore, questions were modified to ask specifically if international students participated in recreational sports activities with friends from the U.S. or friends from their home country. Hence, eight questions were utilized in this study and sample questions asked were: (a) How often do you participate in fitness activities with friends from the U.S.? (b) How often do you participate in team sports with friends from the U.S.? (c) How often do you participate in fitness activities with friends from your home country? (d) How often do you participate in team sports with friends from your home country? This scale utilized a 5-point Likert type scale from (1) being never to (5) being always. Although Ragheb's (1980) original study did not mention Cronbach's α in their study, the current study's scale revealed an acceptable Cronbach's α = .80 for the revised sports participation items.

The next 11 questions were adapted from the Acculturation and Resiliency Scale (AARS) developed by Khawaja et al. (2014) to measure each international student's acculturation level into U.S. culture. Although the original scale showed three factors within AARS (Resilience, Acculturation, and Spirituality), the current study only utilized the acculturation part of the scale and modified the questions to specifically ask international student's acculturation level in U.S. Sample questions asked were: (a) I am okay with accepting both U.S. and my own cultural values (b) I am open-minded and curious about my new culture (c) I feel comfortable talking about my culture of origin (d) I am proud of my cultural background. This scale utilized a 5-point Likert type scale from (1) being strongly disagree to (5) being strongly agree. The

original scale of the acculturation sector in AARS yielded a Cronbach's α =.83. The current study results yielded an adequate internal consistency reliability rating of Cronbach's α =.80 for the revised AARS scale.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed through statistical software, SPSS version 23. Prior to conducting statistical analysis related to the research question, descriptive statistics were conducted, including, when appropriate, means and frequencies. Second, Pearson's correlation for team identification, sport, and social activity participation and acculturalization scales was conducted to examine their relationship. Cronbach's (1951) alpha was calculated for the scales to measure internal consistency reliability. Next, the research hypotheses were examined with a regression model to determine the proportion of variance in international student acculturation into the United States higher education is determined by social and/or sports activity participation and/or team identification with university athletic teams.

Results

A Pearson's correlation matrix was utilized to examine the correlations between team identification, sports participation, social activity participation and international student's acculturation. Results revealed a significant correlation between team identification and acculturation (r (92) = .28, p =.006). Social activity participation also showed significant correlation with acculturation (r (92) = .32, p = .002). Sports participation exhibited a significant correlation with team identification (r (92) = .22, p = .04) but not with acculturation (r (92) = .13, p = .22). Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics, correlations amongst all variables used in this study.

Next, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with a Varimax (orthogonal) rotation of 29 Likert-type scale items from this study's survey questionnaire was conducted with data gathered from 94 participants. Sampling adequacy was tested through the Kaiser-Meyer Olkin measure, and the result showed that the sample was factorable (KMO = .695). Table 3 shows the results of the Varimax rotation of the solution. While the analysis yielded a four-factor solution, some items showed factor loading less than .4 (e.g., item 3, 4, 5, 26), which may seem unstable (Guadagnoli & Velicer, 1988). Yet, the authors decided to keep the items following a recommendation to remove the item when the factor loading is less than .3 (Field, 2013). Moreover, although item 26 showed factor loading less than .3, the authors decided to keep this item to maintain the original subscale since removing this item showed only a minor change in the scale's alpha coefficient (from .80 to .82).

Regression analysis was used to determine the

Table 2. MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS (S.D.), AND CORRELATIONS FOR VARIABLES

	Measure	M	1	2	3
1	Acculturation	4.11 (.50)	-		
2	Team Identification	2.30 (.89)	.28**	-	
3	Sports Participation	1.68 (.63)	.13	.22*	-
4	Social Activity Participation	2.75 (.43)	.32**	.12	.14

Note. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$ for all analyses. Standard deviations appear in parenthesis below means.

Table 3. EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS FOR 29 SURVEY ITEMS

Component	1	2	3	4
Social 1	-.01	.13	.00	**.83**
Social 2	.00	.25	.01	**.82**
Social 3	.11	.21	.05	**-.36**
Social 4	.11	.16	.18	**-.31**
Sports Participation 1	.18	-.04	**.30**	**.60**
Sports Participation 2	.12	-.06	**.61**	**.38**
Sports Participation 3	.00	-.02	**.55**	**.51**
Sports Participation 4	.02	-.14	**.73**	**.40**
Sports Participation 5	.00	.08	**.60**	-.14
Sports Participation 6	.07	.06	**.70**	.06
Sports Participation 7	.03	.08	**.64**	-.06
Sports Participation 8	.22	.00	**.60**	-.20
Team Identification 1	**.76**	.07	.12	-.06
Team Identification 2	**.73**	.18	.06	-.10
Team Identification 3	**.65**	.15	.20	.04
Team Identification 4	**.74**	.15	.07	.06
Team Identification 5	**.91**	.03	-.06	.02
Team Identification 6	**.66**	.10	.01	-.03
Acculturation 1	.16	**.67**	.07	-.03
Acculturation 2	.15	**.76**	.04	-.21
Acculturation 3	-.08	**.61**	.03	.07
Acculturation 4	.02	**.48**	.04	.09
Acculturation 5	.16	**.52**	.11	.05
Acculturation 6	.21	**.63**	-.02	-.01
Acculturation 7	.08	**.51.**	.01	-.08
Acculturation 8	.22	.28	.18	-.17
Acculturation 9	.03	**.50**	-.24	-.05
Acculturation 10	.06	**.54**	-.08	.12
Acculturation 11	.06	**.43**	.24	-.24

Note. Factor loading greater than .3 are in bold.

proportion of variance in international student acculturalization into the United States higher education based on team identification with university athletic teams, social activity and sport participation. Results indicated a significant regression equation (F (3, 90) = 5.39, p = .002), with an R^2 of .152. Yet, only international students' team identification and social activity participation showed a significant statistical

causal relationship with acculturation and explained 15% of the acculturation scale variance. Moreover, results showed that variables used in this study did not have multicollinearity issues by all variables having tolerance over .95 and VIF over 1.01. International students' acculturalization score increased .148 points for every one-point increase in total team identification and .314 points for every one-point increase in total

Table 4. MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS FOR ACCULTURATION PREDICTION WITH TEAM IDENTIFICATION AND SOCIAL ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION

Variable	B	S.E.	β	t	p	df
Constant	2.94	.34		8.63		89
Team Identification	.15*	.06	.26	2.62	.01	
Social Activity Participation	.31**	.11	.27	2.75	.007	
Sport Activity Participation	-.02	.08	-.03	-.28	.78	

$F = 5.389$, $R = .39$, $R^2 = .15$, Adjusted $R^2 = .12$

* $= p < .05$, ** $= p < .01$ for all analyses.

social activity participation. Hence, the authors were able to find part of the research hypothesis 1 is supported and research hypothesis 2 is fully supported. Table 4 shows the decomposition of multiple regression analysis used for this study.

Discussion

Discussion of the Results

The findings of this study were able to provide interesting results to support how participation in leisure activities and team identification can contribute to international students' acculturation. Firstly, although previous research mentioned how participating in sports activities can foster international student's acculturation (Floyd et al., 2008; Stodolska & Walker, 2007; Walker et al., 2011), this study was unable to find the statistical causal relationship between international student's sports participation and acculturation since our correlation result did not show a statistically significant relation with acculturation. However, previous studies consistently mentioned leisure constraints (Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Crawford et al., 1991; Jackson, 1988; Jackson & Henderson, 1995), and international students are said to have constraints in leisure participation as well (Cho & Price, 2018; Kutintara & Min, 2016). Intrapersonal constraints, such as international students having difficulty finding peers to play sports in which they are interested, were mentioned as one of the constraints for this population (Kutintara & Min, 2016).

Structural constraints, such as understanding the system of intramural sports or not having the proper equipment to play certain sports, were mentioned as the biggest obstacles for international students to participate in sports activities (Cho & Price, 2018).

Hence, as it is difficult for international students to participate in sports activities in the first place, receiving help from the university recreation offices can be considered as one option to help international students participate in sports. The university recreation offices can present a session explaining the intramural or club sports system to international students during their orientation. Moreover, the international students' office can cooperate with the university recreation office to help international students who are having trouble finding teams or opponents. Both offices can cooperate to create networking space for both international and domestic students when looking for opponents. Providing information and opportunities to international students is important as this population can decide to drop out of playing sports instead of getting used to sports that domestic students play (Kutintara & Min, 2016).

Moreover, the regression analysis revealed that an international student's team identification towards their intercollegiate sports team and social activity participation directly contributes to acculturation status. These findings align with the previous study that showed international students' social activity participation helped their acculturation (Stack & Iwasaki, 2009; Toyda, 2012). The results from previous studies on how most domestic students' team

identification towards their intercollegiate sports teams contributes to social adjustment to the new environment on campus were also supported in this study (Clopton, 2007, 2012; Clopton & Finch, 2010; Koo et al., 2015). These findings are significant to international students' acculturation literature by providing foundational evidence of the effect of international students' sports spectatorship and their acculturation process. This study was able to fill the research gap in sports spectatorship's effect on the migrant populations' acculturation process (Stodolska & Tainsky, 2015). The results also provide another option on how international students can feel attached to their campus, which was the strongest predictor of international students' overall adjustment to the U.S. (Bastien et al., 2018).

The studied college's international student office provides various social activity participation opportunities to international students, such as cultural night, conversation club, volunteering opportunities, etc. Although the studied college is affiliated with one of the power-5 conferences, the international student's office does not hold many events related to going to sports events with the international student group. While the international student office holds events to go to sports games that are none-revenue generating, there are limited numbers of events related to watching revenue-generating college sports on campus. Considering the value of having the crowd, cheerleaders, and overall excitement, which generates the feeling of being part of something big, it is important for the international students to hold events to watch revenue-generating college sports games. For example, providing free tickets for international students to get a glimpse of the biggest college sports events, such as football or Men's basketball, can be one of the events that both offices can cooperate and hold. This event can be a way to develop international students' team identification towards their college sports team and feel more acculturated to a new environment, just as how team identification help domestic students' adjustment to campus (Clopton, 2007, 2012; Clopton & Finch,

2010; Koo et al., 2015). Furthermore, the international student's office could provide road trips to away football games, which requires students to commit their entire day to travel together to the opponent's campus. This will increase the probability that friendships and connections will be made, increasing the international student's new home's adjustment. Hence, an international student's office at the studied college can consider cooperating with the university athletic department to provide opportunities for international students to experience more significant college sports events.

Limitations

As this study looked specifically at one of the power-5 conference affiliated colleges' cases of how international students' team identification, sports, and social activity participation can contribute to their acculturation status, findings in this study have limitations in generalizing the results. This study asked for voluntary participation in answering the survey, which resulted in low numbers of international students' participation. Our study's participants had skewed opinions in sports participation by showing that most participants answered they did not participate in sports activities, which would have caused an insignificant correlation between sports participation and acculturation. This study's survey questionnaire did not ask if students participated in activities with international students who share different nationalities. Hence, this study mainly reflected the opinions of those who participate in leisure activities with either domestic students or international students from their home country. Finally, this study did not reflect on international students' team identification towards smaller collegiate sports teams, such as those affiliated in NCAA Division II or III or the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA).

Future Directions

Future studies can provide rewards for answering survey questionnaires is suggested to increase the participation rate. Conducting interviews with international students on their in-depth thoughts on how their team identification can strengthen international students' acculturation and leisure participation (sports and social activities) is suggested. This will allow research participants to express their thoughts and opinions in more detail, which will provide comprehensive opinions from various stakeholders. Future studies can also include more variables to predict international students' acculturation, such as demographic variables (e.g., years of study abroad, ages of starting to study abroad, ethnicity, etc.), participating in religious activities, forming a sense of community with locals, developing a transnational mindset of oneself, etc. Future researchers can include an option that asks if students participate in leisure activities with international students from different countries. Moreover, future studies may consider testing a model investigating how acculturation derived from being a fan of college sport and participating in leisure activities can foster academic outcomes (such as grade point average, retention rate, etc.) of international students. Additionally, future studies can utilize hierarchical regression analysis by utilizing a nested model (such as including time lived in the U.S., previous leisure participation experience, etc.) to find out how each of the predictors may vary based on the nested data. Finally, a replication study that includes more schools and different size schools will increase the results' generalizability.

Conclusion

The current study focused on analyzing how international students' fan identity and leisure participation can contribute to their acculturation. Results revealed that international students at the studied university showed participating in social activity and being a fan of their college sports team showed both significant correlation and statistical causal relationship towards acculturation. The study adds to international students' acculturation literature by providing foundational evidence on how international students' team identification can be used as one of the acculturation strategies to a new environment. Suggestions for future research, such as conducting interviews and increasing the generalizability of the study, were provided.

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