

The Potential Influence that U.S. Institutions Have on International Students' Values and Perspectives and Individual Future Planning:

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Boston College

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The Potential Influence that U.S. Institutions Have on International Students' Values and Perspectives and Individual Future Planning

Master's Thesis

By

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Yining Zhu

The number of international students has risen in the United States for the past twenty years. In order to better understand the role of this population in the U.S. higher education system, many studies have explored the cultural integration of international students, seeking to establish a comprehensive understanding of this commonly identified issue. However, integration difficulties remain integral to many international students' college life in the U.S. and impact both their in-college experience as well as their post-graduation transitions. Previous studies of international students' experience in the U.S. context have rarely focused on the endpoint of international students' learning process at college, which encompasses the graduation and post-graduation period. The significant and probably influential outcomes of the long journey international students went through in American Higher Education Institutions have been largely neglected, especially for the international population who attended mission-driven institutions whose educational purpose and focus are individual formation. Therefore, this study used college student development theories and a specific college influential model to understand the potential influence that a mission based American institution has exerted upon international students' perspectives and values and individual future planning. The study surveyed 27 international students and interviewed 11 international students at Boston College with the aim of gaining a solid understanding of the graduating international students' college experience in an effort to validate and interpret their development during college life. The study result indicates that most participants have developed a better understanding of themselves. This consolidated self-perception has become a basis in forming their future plans and facilitating their decision-making after graduation. However, the relationship between institutional influence and individual changes are difficult to determine due to lack of persuasive evidence.

Key words: International students, student development, college student affairs, higher education, internationalization

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Introduction

International students are a unique and compelling group of population in the U.S. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). In the past two decades, the continuous population growth rate and the massive number of international students attract significant attention from the American higher education community, as well as from an increasing number of researchers and scholars, who have been focusing on this population from different angles. According to IIE *Open Doors annual report*, the international student enrollment in the U.S. higher education system has increased 123% during the past two decades (1998/1999 - 2018/2019). In addition, the total amount of international student enrollment in 2018/19 is around 1.094 million, representing 5.5% of the entire U.S. higher education enrollment (Institute of International Education, 2019).

Not surprisingly, international students bring diversity to the American campuses, and their intercultural experience is distinctive which draws emerging attention. Therefore, researchers and scholars find it crucial to explore international students' unique learning and living experience in an environment that is different from what they are accustomed to. Primarily, researchers have focused heavily on international students' cultural and psychological integration process, including acculturative stress, cultural adjustment and academic adjustment. These difficulties challenged international students not only at the beginning of experience but also remained along the way (Berry, 2008). Factors like language barriers, lack of social support, different social and cultural context are frequently emphasized in research (Poyrazli, Kavanaugh, Baker, & Al-Timimi, 2004; Yeh & Inose, 2003; Jackson, Ray & Bybell, 2013; Zhang & Goodson, 2010). Furthermore, confusion around one's identity is one of the major psychological issues that international students face. Students have to confront identity transformations for survival in different cultural environments due to their multiple national, cultural and linguistic

identities (Adweale, Amico, & Salas, 2018). Therefore, a considerable amount of studies have identified various difficulties and challenges that international students potentially face when studying in American colleges and universities.

However, research focuses on the endpoint of international students' learning process in colleges has been scarce. Much less attention is paid to the significant and probably profound outcomes of the long journey international students went through in American colleges and universities. It is reasonable to assume the influence of U.S colleges and universities on international students as research has indicated the substantial role that U.S. institutions played in shaping college students' attitudes, values, and beliefs (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Pascarella, Salisbury, Martin, & Blaich, 2012; Sax, 2008; Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2011). Also, the probable impact of the U.S. HEIs on international students' future steps after graduation needs to be validated and properly interpreted. International students are not an overlooked population in American society as its economic contribution to the American society cannot be underrated. Furthermore, given the scarcity of research regarding international students in U.S. mission-driven institutions, the experience of international students in this type of institution are thus necessary to explore. Whether these U.S. HEIs have effectively passed on their values and missions to international students, and how international students perceived their college experience would be compelling to analyze.

Therefore, this study is designed to explore how a U.S. HEI that explicitly emphasizes student formation influences international students' development in value and perspectives changes and future plans. The study plans to draw from students' self-reported experience elicited through surveys and interviews, and is formed by college student development theory.

Literature Review

This chapter will first introduce relevant theories on college student development. The second part of the chapter will discuss college influence on student development with emphasis on the influence of mission driven institutions. The third part of the chapter will provide background information on international student population trends in the American higher education system. The research gap and research questions will be identified at the end of this chapter.

College Student Development

Psychological theories on Human Development

Since the late nineteenth century and throughout the course of the twentieth century, the study of human development has been generated as a significant part of psychology, especially in major western countries (Lerner, Hershberg, Hilliard & Johnson, 2015). A number of different developmental theories were developed to explain the changes over the course of human growth. Most theories inclined to emphasize the importance of social interaction and external environment in different stages of human development compared with biological attributions (Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quaye, 2016; Muthivhi, 2015). Sigmund Freud was one of the first few scholars to state that infancy and childhood experience contributed substantially throughout human development, which permanently influenced later evolution of human development theories (Browne, 2001). Freud believed that the childhood experience had a persistent influence on personality and adult behavior (Garcia, 1995; Browne, 2001). He identified individual development in to five stages: *oral stage, anal stage, phallic stage, latency, and genital stage* (Freud, 1917/1986, as cited in Garcia, 1995, p.498), known as Freud's Psychosexual Developmental Theory (1917/1986). Impacted by Freud 's work, another notable clinical

psychologist Erik Erikson suggested a psychosocial development centered theory, focused on “ego, identity, healthy personality functioning, culture and finally life span stages” (Browne, 2001, p.53). Erikson’s Psychosocial Development theory (1968) has divided the whole lifespan into eight stages, in which people experienced different conflicts that represented as “turning points” in individual developmental change (Erikson, 1968). Erikson (1968) also believed that individuals are capable of understanding “their present development on the basis of prior events” (Browne, 2001, p.53). Behaviorism then developed as an influential force within psychology during the first half of the twentieth century (Cherry, 2020), emphasizing the significance of observable behaviors in child development (Schlinger, 1992). One of the leading behaviorists, B.F. Skinner (1938/1975) proposed a causal relationship between individuals’ behavior and external stimulus variables, known as the theory of operant conditioning. Skinner (1975) also highlighted the significant role that the surrounding environment played in individual behaviors. Later, psychologist Jean Piaget (1950) came up with cognitive development theory, centered on cognitive development throughout the course of childhood. The theory emphasized on the cognitive differences between children and adults, and defined children’s intellectual development into four stages: the sensorimotor stage, the preoperational stage, the concrete operational stage, and the formal operational stage (Piaget, 1950).

Being few of the earliest psychologists that focused on the study of human development, Freud, Erikson, Skinner and Piaget contributed significantly to understanding how and why human beings grow, learn and behave, and their works are integral to the evolution of human development theories. Bunches of later studies were largely influenced by these theories (Downs, Liben, Daggs, 1998; Staats, 1988; Ruan & Wu, 2013; Schlinger, 1992; Kidwell, Dunham, Bacho, Pastorino, & Portes, 1995). Further, there are also a number of psychologists contributed

essentially to the study of human development, of which all theories cannot be thoroughly illustrated here (Browne, 2001).

Expanding theories on youth development

At the early stage of human development theories' evolution, the majority of research studies have focused on the stage of infancy and childhood, which was the primary focus of scholarship in this area through the 1970s (Lerner, Hershberg, Hilliard & Johnson, 2015). In 1970, Mussen (1970) stated the necessity of expanding knowledge of and explanations for the process of human development; meanwhile, an academic conference held at West Virginia University also promoted the study of human development into a lifespan view (Villarreal & Heckhausen 2015; Lerner, Hershberg, Hilliard & Johnson, 2015). During the same period, industrialized society altered the nature of adulthood development given that adult roles, such as marriage and parenting, were being increasingly delayed from early teens and early twenties to mid or late twenties in the U.S. and other industrialized countries (Arnett, 2000). Further, higher education has attracted an increasing population of young adults (Geiger, 2016), which also provided the population with various opportunities for further exploration and development. The late teens and early twenties, therefore, transformed as a “distinct period of the life course, characterized by change and exploration of possible life directions” instead of “a period of transition into adult roles” (Arnett, 2000, pp469). These changes have brought emerging research interests on early adulthood, which have been described as “the most volitional years of life” (Arnett, 2000, pp.469) that can be life-changing for individuals.

As more studies have been contributed to early adulthood development, more evidence has shown the significance of early adulthood in the development throughout the lifespan (Wright, Pincus & Lenzenweger, 2012). Roberts, Walton and Viechtbauer (2006) have stated the

substantial mark of early adulthood in personality development where “personality traits changed more often in young adulthood than any other period of the life course, including adolescence” (Robert, Walton & Viechtbauer, 2006, pp14). Further studies also reflected the early adulthood as an unparalleled period in personality development (Robins, Fraley, Roberts & Trzesniewski, 2001; Vaidya, Gray, Haig, Mroczek, & Watson, 2008). In addition, early adulthood shares distinctive characteristics in other aspects of development. Meeus, Branje, Der Valk and de Wied (2007) described an increased saliency of the psychological value of intimate relationships when individuals turn into early adulthood. Their study showed that the quality of the intimate relationship during early adulthood is relatively more permanent and emotional-linked, compared to adolescents. Furthermore, the value placed on work or vocational experience also becomes developmentally important after adolescence (Lindsay & Knox, 1984; Monrimer, Zimmer-Gembeck, Holmes & Shanahan, 2002; Johnson & Monserud, 2012). The changing and evolving societies enriched the experience of young adults, which led the developmental process to be more complex. Therefore, studies that only focus on early adult development contributed significantly to the knowledge of what happened as youth grow up in a fast-changing environment, considering the importance of early adulthood in lifespan development.

College Student Development

As the proportion of American young adults attending higher education institutions right after high school has expeditiously increased from 14% in 1940 to 69.8% in 2016 (Arnett, 2000; Jaschik, 2019), higher education, therefore, plays a crucial role in early adulthood development. In order to understand how college and universities affect individual development, scholars hence developed distinct developmental theories specific to college students (Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quaye, 2016).

College Student Development Theory. The potential human development outcomes during college comprise a substantial part of the student experience. What college students have encountered both unconsciously and intentionally can be theoretically elucidated by college student development theory, which refers to a collection of theories focus on interpreting college students' holistic development, elaborated based on the student development theory (Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quaye, 2016).

The evaluation of college student development theory can be traced back to the 1960s, when the changing demographics of the college student body promoted the need for understanding diverse students' perceptions and perspectives. More specifically, the massification of higher education enrollment during the 1960s drove the diversification of the student body (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). However, theories and research that are based on psychological development and cognitive-structural development show limitations in addressing college students' experience in many sectors, such as gender, race, ethnicity, etc. (Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quaye, 2016). Theories, therefore, expanded to include a more diverse population of college students. For instance, in 1992, Marcia Baxter Magolda conducted a longitudinal study, which included male and female college students, for understanding epistemological development at Miami University (Baxter Magolda, 1992). Theories also expanded to cover more aspects of student development during college. Since the 1990s, external forces and environmental influence on individual college students has been broadly emphasized by researchers (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), which facilitated the emergence of social identity theories. Similarity, identity development theories were developed later to explain the relationship between student development and race (Torres & Hernandez, 2007), ethnicity (Phinney, 1990), sexual orientation (Fassinger, 1998; Renn, 2007) and gender (Bussey, 2011).

Thus, theories have been advanced to become more comprehensive while holistic notions of development are gradually being applied to the practice of student affairs professionals' work (Winkle-Wagner, 2012). After years of evaluation and development, college student development theory currently consists of social identity development, psychosocial development, cognitive-structural development and integrative development (Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quaye, 2016).

As universities and colleges have become “more scrutinized than in [their] ability to help students make cognitive gains” (Mayhew et al. 2016, pp205), cognitive change has been widely assumed as the major development of college students (Mayhew et al. 2016). However, in the purpose of understanding students' perspective and value changes, social identity development, moral development and self-authorship development are more relevant to this study.

Social Identity Development. Social identity is a complicated concept that covers various disciplines and contexts. Within college practical contexts, "identity is commonly understood as one's personally held beliefs about the self in relation to a social group (e.g., race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation) and the ways one expresses that relationship" (Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009, pp.577). Vignoles, Schwartz, and Luyckx (2011) then interpreted the identity into four levels: individual, relational, collective and material, which represent "self-definitions at the individual level, roles established in relationship with others, an individual's sense of self within or outside of social categories, and social entities beyond the self" respectively (Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quaye, 2016, pp.72). The intersections among identity levels result in different outcomes at the individual level over time. For instance, a student who holds a relational identity as a college tennis team member during college time may retain a college athletic identity after graduation. Further, the historical and cultural interventions on individual identity development

establish a unique ecological attachment, which provides detailed information to interpret student development under various contexts (Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quaye, 2016). Meanwhile, noticing that people possess different types of social identities, such as race, social class, gender and sexuality, Jones and Abes (2013) have advanced frameworks for multiple dimensions of identity which expanded existing identity theory into a more social interrelated structure (Jones & Abes, 2013). Further, one of the early models of multiple dimensions of identity (MMDI) (Jones & McEwen, 2000) conceptualized the relationship between "socially constructed identities and the relative salience of each identity dimension" (Jones, 2009, pp287), which explains "the sense of self" being the center of people's identity within various contexts, such as "family background and sociocultural conditions" (Jones & McEwen, 2000, pp409).

The existing studies have been mainly focusing on the meaning of social identity to college students (McElderry, Williams, & Mayes, 2019). Further, the shift of students' perception to be more open to social identity-differences has been captured in Bergerson and Huftalin's study (2011). College students are making transformations in perceiving and understanding people with different identities from them, which is a positive signal for creating diverse campuses and learning environments. Meanwhile, social identity has been regularly connected to the "Who am I?" question, in which students may find it close to racial identity and ethnic class. The research by Quintana (2007) shows "consistent, normative, albeit gradual, increases in racial-ethnic identity exploration and identification" during early adolescence (Quintana, 2007, pp267). Still, college students are at the exploration stage for social identities, while multiple dimensions of identity may find themselves confused in interpretation. Therefore, studies with enhanced and deepened understanding of multiple identities are necessary to both higher

education student affairs professionals and students themselves (Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quaye, 2016).

Moral Development. Moral development in college students "describes the processes through which individuals develop more complex principles and ways of reasoning about what is right, just, and caring" (Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quaye, 2016, pp 403). Theories of moral development have been developed thoroughly due to the robust work of leading psychological theorists Lawrence Kohlberg, James Rest, and Carol Gilligan. As the primary theory, Kohlberg's theory concentrated on "moral reasoning, the cognitive component of moral behavior" (Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quaye, 2016, pp 403), and emphasized moral development as a structural change of one's thought (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977). Kohlberg's theory interpreted the moral development in six different stages within three levels: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977). Rest (1986) then advanced moral behavior by introducing three additional components: moral sensitivity, moral motivation and moral action. The establishment of the neo-Kohlbergian approach afterward is the response to addressing the criticism of Kohlberg's theory, while the concept of "developmental schemes" was introduced to differentiate from Kohlberg's theory (Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, & Bebeau, 2000). In Rest, et al.'s (2000) developmental schemes, the influence of external environment and the awareness of society as a system are underlined to individual moral development, and the interrelationships between "macro-morality" and "micro-morality" explained the transformation of one's thought from "face-to-face basis" to "society-wide basis" (Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, & Bebeau, 2000, pp 386). Further, different from Kohlberg's theory that focused on understanding rules and justices, Gilligan's theory (1977) proposed a new point of view, while women's moral development is composed of care and responsibility. More specifically, Gilligan's theory explained women's

morality from "unable to distinguish between necessity and desire" to "recognize her power to select among competing choices and keep her needs within the mix of moral alternatives" (Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quaye, 2016, pp 416).

Studies have applied Kohlberg's theory of moral stage development to various groups of the college student populations, in which distinct elements and factors are explored, having substantial impacts on moral development. Biggs and Barnett (1981), for example, examined the significant relationship between different experiential, background and attitude factors and the level of moral judgement development of upper-division students (Biggs & Barnett, 1981). The theory has also been applied as a classroom teaching instrument to understand community college students' different perceptions of institutions, society, and the world (Tinberg & Weisberger, 1998). Gilligan's theory has established a new perspective in the framework of moral development; however, the gender difference is regarded as a debatable element in individual moral development and care orientation (Walker, 2006). Further, cultural influence on college students' care orientation and moral decision-making has been addressed as an influential factor in some studies (Han, Glover, & Jeong, 2013; Olivera-La Rosa, Corradi, Villacampa, Martí-Vilar, Arango, & Rosselló, 2016; Gump, Baker, & Roll, 2000).

Self-Authorship Development. The concept of self-authorship development is one of the most recently applied theories that conceptualize college students' lifelong self-evaluation, which relate to one's beliefs, values, and internal loyalties (Ignelzi, 2011). Two theories (Kegan, 1994; Baxter Magolda, 2001) have contributed significantly to this concept. In Kegan's theory, the main focus is the "evolution of consciousness" (Kegan, 1994, p.9), and the process of development is interpreted as "an effort to resolve the tension between a desire for differentiation and an equally powerful desire to be immersed in one's surroundings" (Patton, Renn, Guido, &

Quaye, 2016, pp 425). The levels of consciousness have been defined in six orders, from Order 0 to Order 5, in which individuals will gradually develop a more comprehensive understanding of themselves, of the relationship with others, and of the surrounding environment (Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quaye, 2016). Kegan (1994) further argued that postmodern life requires a more comprehensive and thorough understanding of oneself and related surroundings, which few people have ever reached (Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quaye, 2016). As Kegan mentioned postmodern life way before Internet has been adequately implemented in daily lives, Patton, Renn Guido and Quaye (2016) hence discussed the potential influence that digital society have in helping people achieving a “more complex orders of consciousness” (Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quaye, 2016, pp 428). Different from Kegan (1994)’s theory that emphasized the transformation of self-consciousness, Baxter Magolda pays close attention to the “involving movement from external to internal self-definition” in her self-authorship theory. (Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quaye, 2016, pp436). Cultivated from the research (Baxter Magolda, 1992) on the epistemological development of college students, Baxter Magolda’s theory (2001) identified four phases in achieving self-authorship, which includes following formulas, crossroads, becoming the author of one’s life, and internal foundation. Baxter Magolda (2001) explained the four phases as a critical pathway while young adults transformed from “doing what one supposed to do to be successful” (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p.78) to having a “solidified and comprehensive system of belief” (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. 155) that is apart from any external criticism. Baxter Magolda (2008) further explained three essential elements of self-authorship: *trusting the internal voice*, *building an internal foundation*, and *securing internal commitment*. In addition, Baxter Magolda’s theory have been extended to more diverse population by fellow scholars, “including

male and female Bedouin and Jewish adolescents, female undergraduates in Australia, and Japanese college students” (Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quaye, 2016, p.441).

In summary, college student development incorporates substantial changes in psychological well-being (e.g. identity development, self-concept, and self-esteem), attitudes and values (e.g. racial and gender attitudes, personal beliefs), and moral development (Mayhew et al, 2016). The factors relating to college student development are varied while college experience is the one that institutions can cultivate. Some institutions are characterized by distinct approaches to fostering a typical campus environment, seeking to affect and inspire student development. One such set of institutions is those mission-driven institutions whose core missions are fostering student formation and educating the whole person.

College Influence and Mission-Driven Institutions

How college affects student development is a challenging question given that college students will develop and change “for all kinds of reasons, including normal maturation and human development, experiences that have nothing to do with college” (Mayhew et al, 2016, p529). It has been argued in the past that college and universities have a positive influence on cognitive development, self-concept, civic engagement, racial and gender attitudes and use of principled moral reasonings (Pascarella & Terezini, 1991, 2005). Interestingly, recent studies tend towards less definite conclusions, suggesting that student development changes during college can be due to mixed factors, and “the net effect of college” is therefore difficult to distinguish (Mayhew et al, 2016).

Given the heterogeneity of U.S. higher education institutions, the divergent effects of institutions on students caused by factors like institutional type, size, and structural

characteristics are defined as between-college effects (Mayhey et al, 2016). Both Pascarella and Terezini's work (1991, 2005) and Mayhey et al.'s (2016) concluded that the between-college effect differences could result from "promoting certain types of college experiences and environment" (Mayhey et al, 2016, p533), but would be relatively modest when compared to the net effect of college on student development (Mayhey et al, 2016). However, the variables assessed in this study are limited to "structural characteristics of the institutions" (Mayhey et al., 2016), such as institutional size and type. Between-college differences, such as campus culture and institutional mission and vision, are not considered in the study.

However, American HEIs are diverse in their mission and values. Among 4,298 degree-granting institutions, 1,724 of which were degree-granting public institutions and 2,691 of which were degree-granting private institutions (IPEDS, 2019), there are some that explicitly focus on student formation as their institutional mission. Their goal is to embed their mission and values in profound ways campus-wide. Being one such group of HEI, Jesuit institutions are unique due to their charismatic Christian mission, history and traditions. Their core mission rooted in the value of liberal arts and Jesuit Education enriches the concept of student formation. Furthermore, their long history and the centrality of student development to their mission makes them an interesting group to study in terms of their influence on college student development.

Jesuit Education and Jesuit Institutions in the U.S.

Brief History The inception of twentieth-century Jesuit education in the United States can be traced back to the time between the mid-nineteenth century and World War I due to the wave of Catholic immigration and educational reformation (Leahy, 1991). During the nineteenth century, the boost of European Catholic immigrants expanded the Catholic community as well as its interstate network, which also accelerated the population's "spiritual, psychological, physical"

(Leahy, 1991, p2), educational and vocational needs for better integrating to the American life, especially the urban life (Leahy, 1991). In light of demand from the community as well as religious prejudice in the local society, the Jesuits of the United States established higher education institutions to educate the population, which has continuously been regarded as the essential contribution to both the church and the American Society (Codina S.J., 2000). The conflicts in cultural and language differences as well as the crisis of "Americanism" and financial shortages challenged the Jesuit institutions in the early days (Leahy, 1991; Codina S.J. 2000). In 1937, the Jesuit Education Association(JEA), "the first association of national character in the society" (Codina S.J. ,2000, p26), was established for the guidance and support of the consistent expansion of American Jesuit colleges and universities (Codina S.J. ,2000; AJCU, 2020). In 1948, the "Instruction", published by Father General Janssens, "approved new regulation for colleges and universities organizing further Jesuit education networks, which was steadily gaining in strength and prestige" (Codina S.J., 2000, p26). Meanwhile, the outbreak of World War II completely impacted American society in politics and culture as well as to the Catholic community. The continuously shrinking community and the desperate needs of reformation to the changing society during the post-WWII forced the Jesuit HEIs into a critical period (Codina S.J. 2000; Leahy, 1991). In 1967, the involvement of lay people as administrative board members in Jesuit educational institutions commenced a more inclusive and democratic governance structure, which developed an alternative governance formula for Jesuit HEIs (Codina S.J., 2000). In 1970, the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU), separated from JEA, redefined and restructured the direction of Jesuit education: "the search for academic excellence based on an Ignatian vision which draws its fundamental inspiration from the Spiritual Exercises" (Codian S.J., 2000, p27). Later on, in responding to the needs of the

society and the systematic education reformation, Jesuit institutions proactively explored their potential characters in different social contexts, for instance, Jesuit institutions highlighted the education of marginalized population during 1990s (Codian S.J., 2000; Gleason, 1995). At present, among all 186 U.S. Roman Catholic Colleges sponsored by religious orders, there are in total 28 Jesuit higher education HEIs, which enroll 128, 711 undergrad students, which is the largest portion of all Roman Catholic colleges enrollment (IPEDS, 2010). Among the twenty-eight Jesuit HEIs, twenty-one of which were established during the late nineteenth century (Codian S.J., 2000).

The Content of Jesuit Education. The content of Jesuit Education has been firstly explained publicly by Father John W. Donohue, S.J. of Fordham University, who was appointed by the Jesuit Educational Association officially, in a volume entitled *Jesuit Education: An Essay on the foundation of its idea*. This study has been described as “a thorough exploration of the motives, origins and development of the theory and philosophy of Jesuit education” (Fitzgerald, 1966, p408), as well as been broadly reviewed by later scholars. In Father John’s study, the foundations of Jesuit educational practice are to be “found in the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* and the *Ratio Studiorum*” (Fitzgerald, 1968, p.408). Father John further explained that “the really central theses of the theory underlying Jesuit education are not likely to be derived ... from an analysis of methods..., but rather from reflection upon the nature of man and upon the character of the educational process in general and that of Christian education in particular” (Donohue, S.J., 1962, p.xv). Evans (2015) further explained the meaning of *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* in which the experience is the key point “convergence between the disciplines of theology, philosophy, psychology and phenomenology” (Evans, 2015, p.264). The constitutions of the Society of Jesus were studied

less while scholars would usually interpret the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius to understand Jesuit education (Coupeau, 2004). Coupeau's (2004) rhetorical analysis explicitly explained the Constitutions "were written to inspire Jesuits to religious as well as civil action, that is to help souls to do it for free, choosing even when other considerations are equal" (Coupeau, 2004, p207). The *Ratio Studiorum* followed Ignatius's original vision for Jesuit Education. In McCluskey's (2012) study, she discussed the *Ratio Studiorum* as "a general concern for the spiritual and moral well-being of the students" and "a particular degree of liberty granted to professors regarding the implementation of their course" (McCluskey, 2012, p58). Rooted in these original practices of theories, Jesuit institutions nowadays have integrated these concepts into their various institutional missions while also taking into account the needs of modern society.

Jesuit Education contributed to the diversity of American higher education system, while its educational philosophy on self-reflection and spiritual and moral well-being are distinctive compared to other non-religious affiliated institutions. The peculiar characteristics of Jesuit higher education institutions, therefore, are invaluable to the study of college influence on student development. In addition to the institutional characteristics, who the students are plays a central role in the discussion of how college affects the student development (Mayhew et al. 2016). The changing demographic characteristics of the college student population therefore facilitates the reconsideration of the traditional definition of college student (Mayhew et al. 2016). This demographic change has been in part due to rapid increases in the enrollment of international students into the U.S higher education in recent years.

International Students in the U.S.

In light of the emerging trends of globalization and internationalization of higher education, global student mobility is one of the influential phenomena that drives transformations in higher education institutions worldwide. Being the major receiving country of international students, the United States perceives a dramatic change of international student population in the past few decades (Mamiseishvili, 2012).

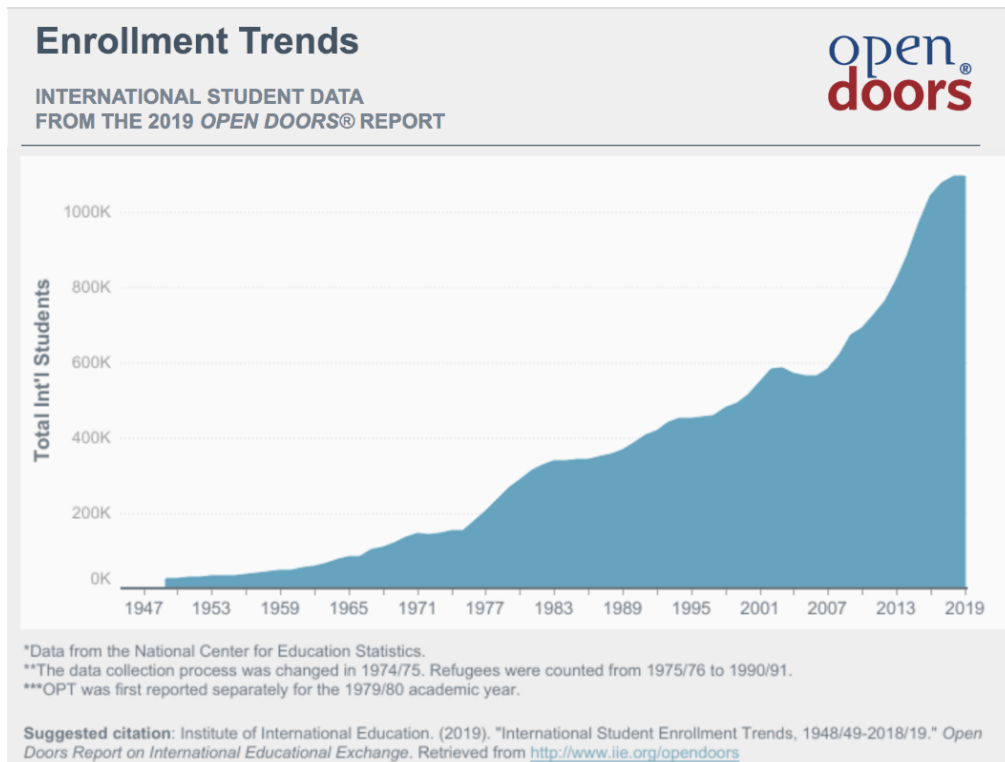
Population Change in the Past Few Decades

According to the record of IIE Open Doors data (shown in figure 2.1), the population of international students was relatively low in the mid-twentieth century, which represented 1.1% of the entire U.S. higher education enrollment. The population increased slightly from 25,464 to 154,580 during a thirty-year's period before 1974/75. The population then reached its first emerging period which increased by 118% in only a decade. Since 1982/83, the number of international students has grown steadily with an average annual increase rate of 2.74% till 2002/3. Due to the influence of the 9/11 attack, the population declined from 2003/04 to 2005/06. Starting from 2005/06, the number of international students have expanded dramatically till 2018/19 by 93.93%, in which the actual number grew up to 1,095,299, comprising around 5.5% of total U.S. higher education enrollment. Compared to the 12% increment of total U.S. higher education enrollment since 2005/06, the expansion of the international student population is, therefore, substitutional to realize (IIE, 2019). What worth noticing is that the continuous expanding rate of the population has decelerated in the past three years while less international students have chosen the United States as a desirable destination for higher education (Helms, Brajkovic, & Struthers, 2017). IIE's Fall 2019 International Student Enrollment Snapshot Survey suggests a significant decline institution-wide where 51% of survey

participant HEIs reported an enrollment decrease in the 2019 fall semester; however, the population still remains substantial to the U.S. higher education community.

Figure 2.1

Enrollment Trends of International Students in the U.S., 1947-2019



Note. Figure 2.1. The graph explains the enrollment trends of international students in the U.S. between 1947 and 2019. Reprinted from *Institute of International Education Open Door Data*. In Institute of International Education, Retrieved April 15, 2020, from <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors/Data/International-Students/Enrollment> . Copyright 2019 by IIE Open Door. Reprinted with permission.

Leading place of origins

In addition to the population trend, places of origins of these international students are also compelling in providing effective information for the higher education community. Among the top ten sending places, 6 out of 10 places are Asian from which composes 62.9% of all

international students' population; while the top two countries, China and India, comprise more than half of the population (IIE, 2019; Mackie, 2019; see figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2

Top Leading Place of Origin, the academic year 2018/19

Leading Places of Origin <small>INTERNATIONAL STUDENT DATA FROM THE 2019 OPEN DOORS® REPORT</small>				
Rank	Place of Origin	Number of Students	% of Total	% Change
1	China	369,548	33.7	1.7
2	India	202,014	18.4	2.9
3	South Korea	52,250	4.8	-4.2
4	Saudi Arabia	37,080	3.4	-16.5
5	Canada	26,122	2.4	0.8
6	Vietnam	24,392	2.2	0.3
7	Taiwan	23,369	2.1	4.1
8	Japan	18,105	1.7	-3.5
9	Brazil	16,059	1.5	9.8
10	Mexico	15,229	1.4	-1.5

Note. Figure 2.2. The graph explains the leading places of Origins of international student population in the academic year 2018/19. Reprinted from *Institute of International Education Open Door Data*. In Institute of International Education, Retrieved April 15, 2020, from <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors/Data/International-Students/Places-of-Origin>. Copyright 2019 by IIE Open Door. Reprinted with permission.

While the international student trend maps demographic characteristics of the enrollment population, the situation of international students after graduation have been captured by the data of OPT enrollment.

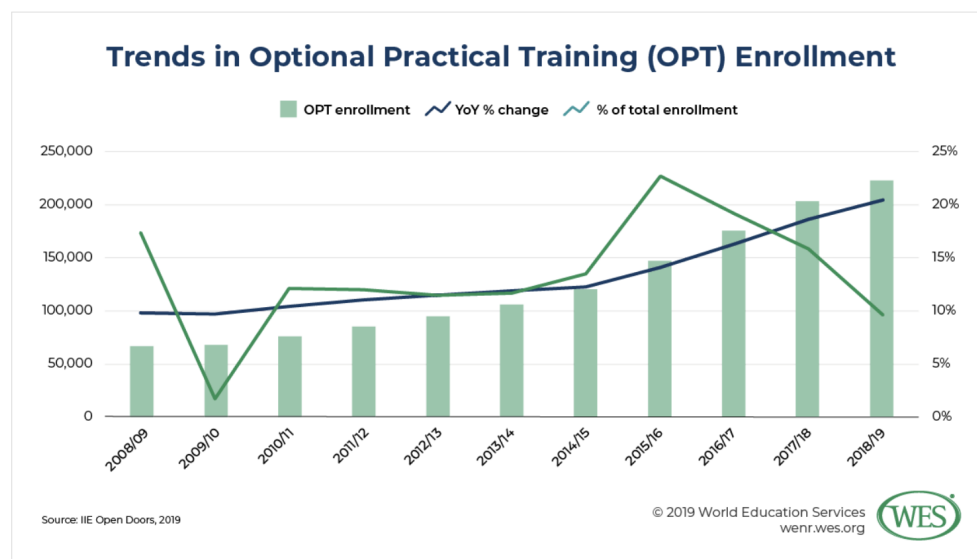
OPT Enrollment

International students' post-graduation situation has gradually captivated the higher education community's attention, particularly with respect to OPT, or optional practical training. OPT, is a governmental authorized working period for each international student after graduation

from degree programs (USCIS, 2020). Qualified international students are eligible to apply for a 12 month OPT while STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) graduates are eligible to apply for an additional 12-24 months of STEM OPT (USCIS, 2020). In most of the cases, OPT is the starting point as well as the only chance for international students to acquire working experience after graduation in the U.S. labor market. According to WES’s summarizing graph (see figure 2.3), the OPT enrollment number raised up steadily each year since 2008/09; however, the percentage of OPT enrollment dropped quickly after peaking at 22.6% in 2015/16 (Mackie, 2019).

Figure 2.3

Trends in Optional Practical Training (OPT) Enrollment, 2008/09-2018/19

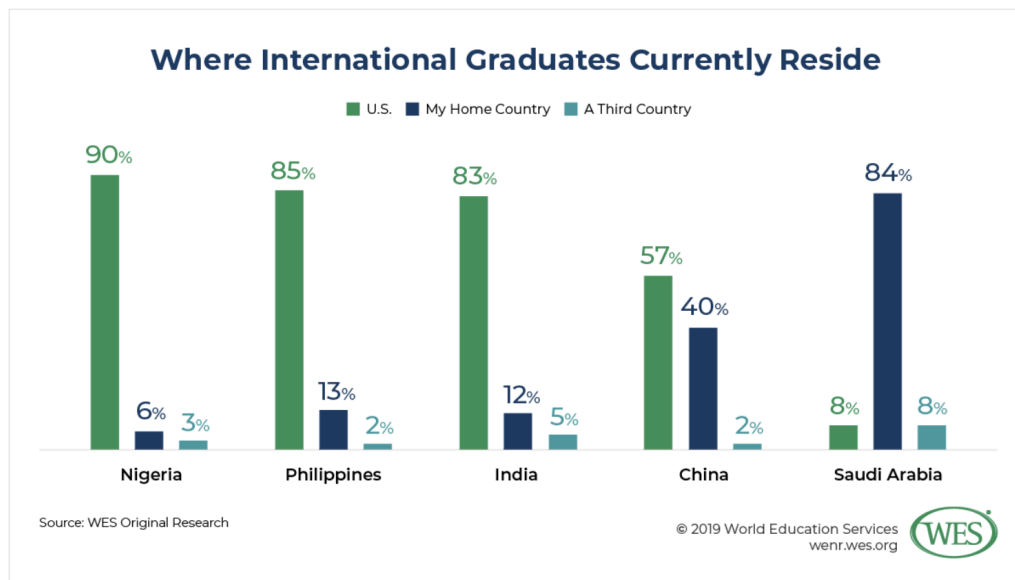


Note. Figure 2.3. The bar graph explains the trends in Optional Practical Training (OPT Enrollment in the U.S. between 2008/09 and 2018/19. Reprinted from “OPT’s Critical Importance to Enrollment and Other Takeaways from the 2019 Open Door Report”, by C. Mackie, 2019, <https://wenr.wes.org/2019/12/opt-critical-importance-to-enrollment-and-other-takeaways-from-the-2019-open-doors-report>. Copyright 2019 by World Education Services. Reprinted with permission.

In addition to the overall international students' trends in OPT enrollment, individual students' post-graduation status has been captured by a WES study, which “surveyed 1,655 international alumni who graduated between 2012-2019” (Ohorodnik, 2019, pp2). According to the survey results, most of the alumni (70%) are still in the U.S, while 75% of which are full-time employees in the U.S workforce. Country diversity has also been displayed. Chinese alumni demonstrate their evenly split choice in residing in the U.S. and China after graduation while most Saudi Arabia alums have returned back to Saudi Arabia (See Figure 2.4). The results saw an optimistic situation in labor market integration, however, restrictions in immigration policies and visa applications would potentially or eventually shift international students' journey into precarity (Ohorodnik, 2019).

Figure 2.4

Where International Graduates Currently Reside, 2019



Note. Figure 2.4. The bar graph explains the percentage of where international graduates currently reside in 2019. Reprinted from “Was it Worth It? International Student Views on the Value of Their U.S. Education”, by M. Ohorodink, 2019, <https://wenr.wes.org/2019/10/was-it-worth-it-international-student-views-on-the-value-of-their-u-s-education>. Copyright 2019 by World Education Services. Reprinted with permission.

U.S. Institution's Influence on International Students Life

Studies on international students in the U.S. have primarily focused on their integration difficulties into various aspects of their life in the US. These include, for example, acculturative stress, cultural adjustment and academic adjustment (Poyrazli, Kavanaugh, Baker, & Al-Timimi, 2004; Yeh & Inose, 2003; Jackson, Ray & Bybell, 2013; Zhang & Goodson, 2010). A search of available literature on the international student experience in the U.S. did not find any studies focused specifically on the influence of the college experience on international student development. Research focused on college student development has rarely included international students (Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quayle, 2016), who are often classified as non-traditional college students in the U.S. context. Some that have included international students have categorized them as a minority group, especially when the total international percentages are relatively low in some institutions (Mayhew et al, 2016). Thus far, although international student enrollment in the U.S. higher education system is a rising trend in the past two decades, their experience and development are not widely known and explored. Furthermore, the literature is also limited in exploring international students' post-graduation life. Studies on International students' post-graduation plans and career-relevant issues are usually explored based on cultural adjustment difficulties or culturally related difficulties (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007). To help shed light on the college influence on international students' development, this study focused on the influence that a single U.S. mission-based college had on international student's post-study intentions. Boston College is a Jesuit research institution that follows its mission in focusing on explicitly fostering individual formation for its student body, which, therefore, is applicable to this study. Further, the institution is selected due to the convenience and accessibility of collecting student data, given the researcher was one of its graduate students.

Therefore, one primary research question and two sub-questions were asked:

How did this mission-based institution influence international students' development?

- How did students perceive the influence of their college experience on their values and perspectives?
- How did they perceive the influence of their college experience on their career choice and post-graduation plans?

Research Context

This chapter will briefly introduce the context of this research, which mainly focuses on the descriptions of the structure, size, strengths, mission and vision of Boston College. The chapter will conclude with a brief discussion of the international student population at Boston College.

Boston College - History and Structure

Boston College is a Jesuit private research institution, founded in 1863, located in Chestnut Hill, Boston, Massachusetts. Boston College started as an Irish male-only Catholic Institution for the purpose of educating young Irish Catholic immigrants who experienced discrimination constantly in that period in history (Donovan, Dunigan, & FitzGerald, 1990). The college then developed its academic theme to a more applicable liberal arts education in the late 1960s, responding to the expectation and the new need of the society (Donovan, Dunigan, & FitzGerald, 1990). By continuously adding more departments and graduate programs during the twentieth century, the institution then expanded and developed as a comprehensive research university, classified by the Carnegie index as “R1: Doctoral Universities” (Boston College, 2020). By now, Boston College comprises nine schools and colleges, which are Morrissey College of Arts & Science, Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, Carroll School of Management,

Lynch School of Education and Human Development, Connell School of Nursing, School of Social Work, Law School, School of Theology and Ministry and Woods College of Advancing Studies. Boston College also increased its locations up to 3 campuses, which includes Chestnut Hill Campus (main campus), Newton campus, and Brighton Campus.

Boston College - Demographics: Student and Faculty

Boston College is a relatively small research institution compared to other private research universities in the Boston area, such as Harvard University, MIT and Boston University. The original purpose of institution establishment constrained the expansion of student diversity, while the demographic of the student body remained exclusive until institutional strategic expansion to non-Catholic students (Donovan, Dunigan & FitzGerald, 1990). Further, the G.I Bill intentionally boosts the student enrollment after World War II; and by 1970, female students were eligible to enroll in all undergraduate programs (University Historian and Public Affairs, 2003). The total enrollment of Boston College in 2020 Spring is 14,600, and total undergrad enrollment is 9377. The undergrad population contains 34% of AHANA (people of African, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American descent) students and 8% of international students, while the ratio of female students to male students is 53:47. The top three popular undergraduate majors are economics, finance and computer science. The faculty population is also worth noticing due to its low student to faculty ratio, 11:1. According to the U.S. News and Report, the average student to faculty ratio of U.S universities and colleges is 18 to 1 (Henshaw, 2017). The number of full-time faculty is 860 and 93% faculty hold doctoral degrees.

Boston College - Vision and Mission

After more than one and half century's development, Boston College carries the mission from both Jesuit education and liberal arts education with a global perspective and has become

an “internationally respected research university and a center of academic excellence” (Boston College, 2020, para.4). The institution has emphasized its Jesuit mission of “faith and services” and “its responsibilities to students, community and Catholic Church” (Boston College, 2020, para.5). According to the institution's mission statement, Boston College remains committed to “[lead] its students on a comprehensive journey of discovery - one that integrates their intellectual, personal, ethical, and religious formation” (Boston College, 2020, para.6). More specifically, Boston College focuses on forming students’ values and perspectives through the academic and extracurricular experience. Further, in light of the currently growing trend of globalization and internationalization in the higher education community, Boston College also “commits itself in the coming years to increasing its presence and impact through creative partnerships on the local and national levels, increased outreach to international students, recruitment of faculty with international backgrounds, and the development of programs that promote global cooperation” as one of its strategic development plans (Boston College Strategic Direction IV, 2020, para 3).

Based on the institutional mission of fostering student formation, the institution developed a three-dimensional model of student formation (see figure 3.1), which comprises intellectual dimension, social dimension and spiritual dimension (Boston College, 2020).

Figure 3.1

Boston College Three Dimensions of Formation Model



Figure 1: Three Dimensions of Formation

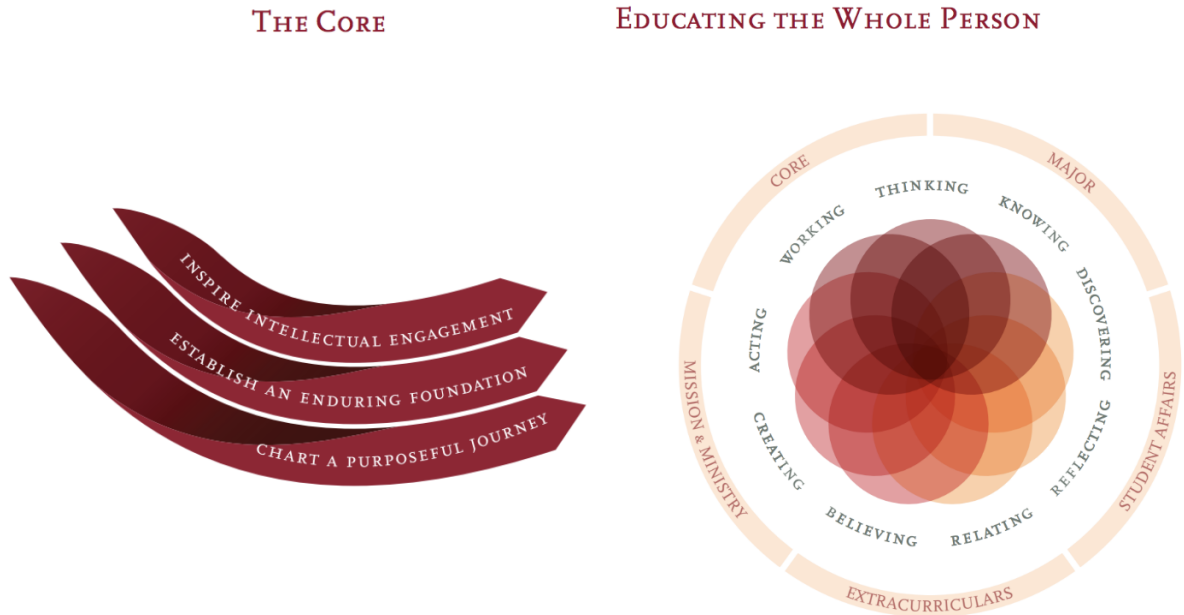
Note. Figure 3.1. The image explains the model of Boston College three dimensions of formation. From “The Journey into Adulthood: Understanding Student Formation”, by Boston College Center for Student Formation, 2020, p.15 (<https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/offices/mission/pdf1/umml.pdf>) Copyright 2020 by Boston College Center for Student Formation.

The intellectual dimension represents the academic experience that includes institutional instruction, such as course, syllabi, and study time, etc. The social dimension includes the social experience during college years, which mostly emphasized peer interactions on a daily basis. The spiritual dimension is designed to develop one’s self-consciously for “being spiritually and religiously authentic and to which they can contribute their energies and talents” (Boston College, 2020, pp.14).

In addition, a unique core curriculum was designed to enrich the intellectual dimension and advance students’ academic experience (see figure 3.2). The core curriculum has been revised several times, while the newest version was published in 2015, entitled Renewed Core (see figure 3.3).

Figure 3.2

Boston College Vision for the Renewed Core



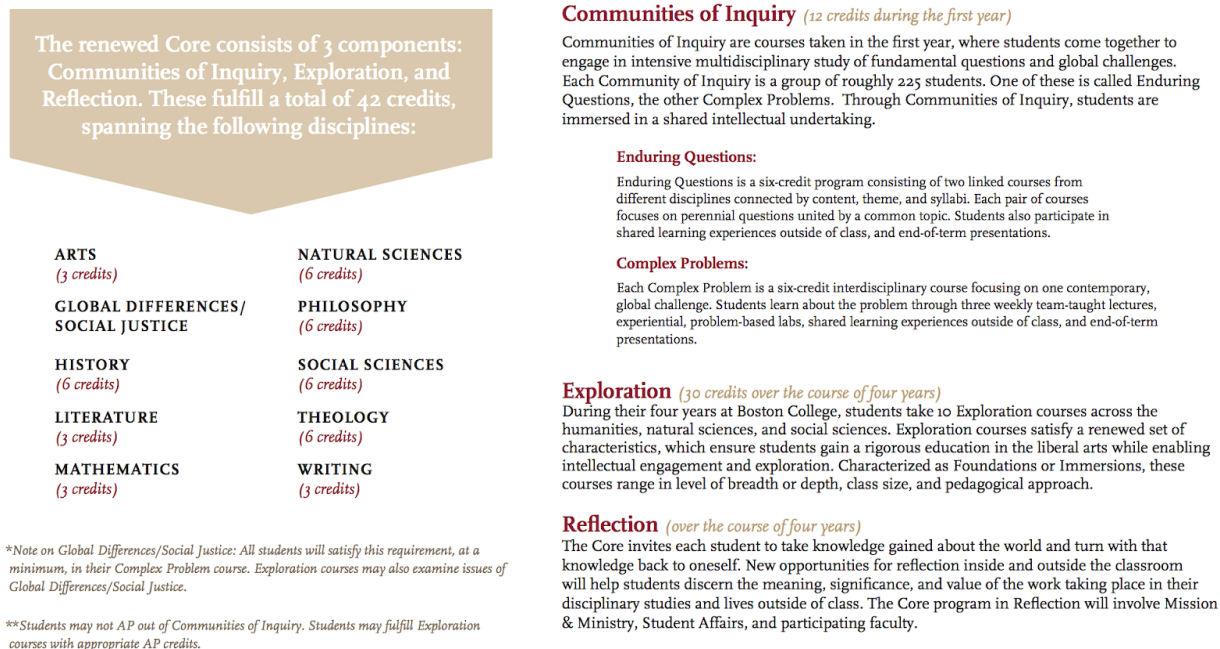
Note. Figure 3.2. The figure explains the design idea of Boston College's renewed core curriculum. From “Toward a Renewed Core”, by Boston College, 2013, p.4-5

(https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/schools/cas_sites/core/Toward-a-Renewed-Core-10.30.13.pdf) Copyright

2013 by Boston College.

Figure 3.3

Boston College: The Renewed Core



Note. Figure 3.3. The figure explains the detailed subjects and credits included by the renewed core curriculum.

From “Toward a Renewed Core”, by Boston College, 2013, p.6

(https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/schools/cas_sites/core/Toward-a-Renewed-Core-10.30.13.pdf) Copyright

2013 by Boston College.

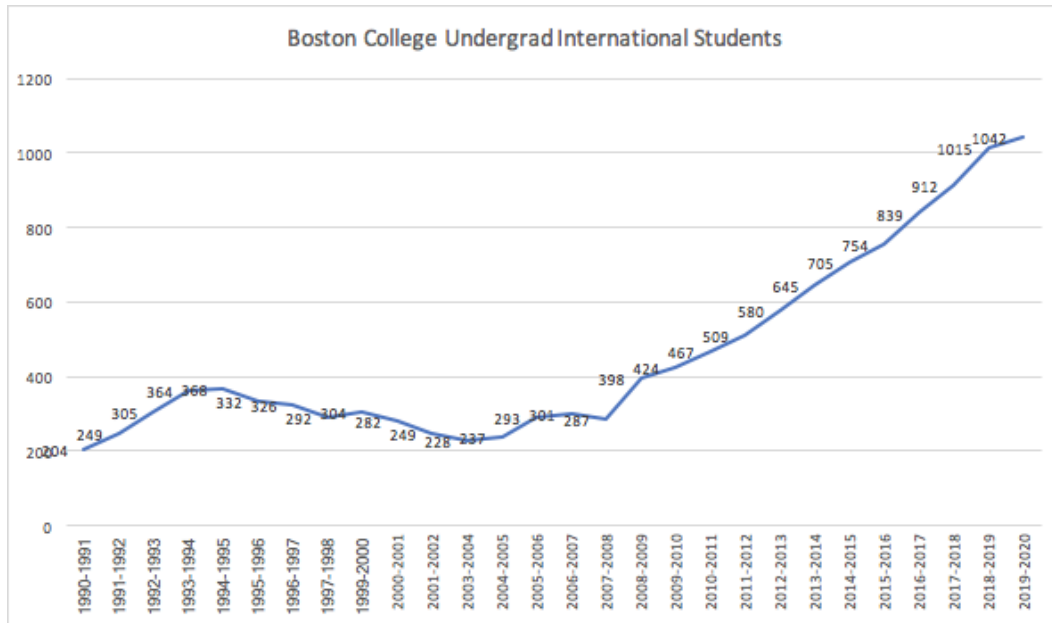
The renewed core “consists of 3 components: communities of inquiry, exploration and reflection” (Boston College, 2015, p6), which entails 10 disciplines: arts, global difference/social justice, history, literature, mathematics, natural sciences, philosophy, social sciences, theology, and writing and in total 42 credits. Compared to major courses and elective curriculum, the core course “[plays] a central role in each student's education as a whole person, preparing them for citizenship, service, and leadership in a global society” (Boston College, 2015, p5).

Boston College - Undergraduate International Student Population

Boston College has evolved from being a “small, local, commuter college to a post-World War II regional university and, in the past four decades, to the status of a national and increasingly international university” (Boston College Strategic Direction IV, 2020, para.2). Boston College, therefore, contains a relatively low international student population both in percentage and actual numbers under the fast-growing trends of global mobility. Based on the Institute of International Education's data, Boston College is listed as No.143 among all HEIs which contains more than 1,000 international students (IIE, 2018). According to the international student demographics collected by Boston College Office of International Students and Scholars (OISS), the undergrad international population remains steadily unchanged between 1990 and 2008 (shows in Figure 3.4). Starting from the academic year 2008 - 2009, the undergrad international population grew dramatically in the following decade. During the academic year 2018-2019, the international population of undergraduates had for the first time exceeded 1,000 (shows in Figure 3.4). Among all undergraduate international students, there are in total 169 freshmen, 208 sophomores, 240 juniors, and 188 seniors (shows in Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.4

Boston College Undergrad International Student Population 1990-2020



Note. Figure 3.4 explains the enrollment trend of Boston College undergrad international student population between 1990-2020. From “Boston College Statistics of International Students, Faculty & Research Scholars, 2019-2020”, 2019/20, (<https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/offices/oiss/pdf/2019-2020%20Statistics.pdf>) Copyright 2020 by Boston College Office of International Students and Scholars.

Figure 3.5

Boston College Undergrad International & Exchange Students, 2019/20

Undergraduate International & Exchange Students							
School	Year *		Visa Type**		Gender		
Carroll School of Management	176	Freshmen	169	F-1	1042	Female	537
Connell School of Nursing	2	Sophomores	208			Male	505
Lynch School of Education & Human Development	49	Juniors	240				
Morrissey College of Arts & Sciences	548	Seniors	188				
University Exchange	219	Exchange Students	219				
Woods College of Advancing Studies	48	BCE Program*	18				
Total	1042		1042		1042		1042

* Boston College Experience Program

** For visa description, see below

Note. Figure 3.6 explains the undergrad international student population by school, year, visa type and gender. From “Boston College Statistics of International Students, Faculty & Research Scholars, 2019-2020”, 2019/20, p.5 (<https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/offices/oiss/pdf/2019-2020%20Statistics.pdf>) Copyright 2020 by Boston College Office of International Students and Scholars.

In terms of students’ place of origins, China, South Korea and Spain are the top three leading countries for the past decade (see figure 3.6), which are distinct from the global trend of leading place of origins of international students in the U.S., where Spain is rarely captured as the top sending countries (IIE, 2019). More precisely, most Chinese and South Korean students are degree seeking students while most Spanish students are exchange students (Boston College OISS Statistics, 2019).

Figure 3.6

Top Five Countries with Largest Students Representation at Boston College

Countries with Largest Student Representation at Boston College												
Countries	08-09	09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20
China, People’s Republic	143	157	194	245	320	366	487	585	641	793	927	924
South Korea	106	109	125	149	177	183	182	169	180	162	139	132
Spain	24	30	32	40	43	40	41	40	48	51	54	60
Canada	46	49	47	46	42	41	44	36	43	45	53	53
India	37	41	43	39	36	32	33	34	40	35	41	49

Notes. Figure 3.5 lists the 5 leading places of origins of Boston College undergrad international student population in 2019/20. From “Boston College Statistics of International Students, Faculty & Research Scholars, 2019-2020”, 2019/20, p.9 (<https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/offices/oiss/pdf/2019-2020%20Statistics.pdf>) Copyright 2020 by Boston College Office of International Students and Scholars.

According to the current academic year’s data (2019-2020), Morrissey College of Arts & Sciences holds the most undergrad international students, followed by Carroll School of

Management (see figure 3.5). As for the most popular degree programs, aside from the undecided and undeclared students, economics, finance and market are the prominent choices for international students (see figure 3.7).

Figure 3.7

Boston College Undergrad International & Exchange Students in Degree Programs

Degree			
Accounting	9	History	14
Accounting for Finance and Consulting	1	Information Systems	9
Applied Psychology and Human Development	42	Information Systems and Accounting	1
Applied Statistics and Psychometrics	1	International Studies	26
Art History	6	Law	4
Biochemistry	21	Management	13
Biology	32	Management & Leadership	12
Business Analytics	4	Marketing	35
Chemistry	11	Mathematics	75
Communication	49	Natural Sciences	4
Computer Science	44	Nursing	2
Corporate Systems	4	Operations Management	7
Economics	190	Philosophy	17
Elementary Education	4	Physics	8
English	17	Political Science	64
Entrepreneurship	4	Psychology	41
Environmental Geoscience	5	Social Science	2
Environmental Studies	2	Sociology	21
Film Studies	6	Studio Art	5
Finance	109	Undeclared	104
General Management	17		
Total			1042

Note. Figure 3.7 explains the undergrad international student population by degree programs. From “Boston College Statistics of International Students, Faculty & Research Scholars, 2019-2020”, 2019/20, p.5

(<https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/offices/oiss/pdf/2019-2020%20Statistics.pdf>) Copyright 2020 by Boston

College Office of International Students and Scholars.

Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methods that have been deployed in the study to answer research questions. This chapter will demonstrate the research design, sampling, data collection, and data analysis. Rationales of the chosen methodology will be explained. In addition, the profile of the study participants will be discussed.

Overview of General Research Design

The study applied mixed methods in concurrent triangulation design for the purpose of providing a comprehensive understanding of the topic with complementary data produced by qualitative and quantitative research methods (Creswell, & Plano Clark, 2007). Given its proficiency in integrating the qualitative data and quantitative data for strong and validating results (Creswell, & Plano Clark, 2007), the concurrent triangulation design is applicable and reasonable for this study due to the equal value that quantitative data and qualitative data contributed to the eventual findings. More explicitly, this study is aiming at eliciting a comprehensive understanding of a group of international students' perspectives on their college experience. Both quantitative data of students' prevailing thoughts and qualitative data of students' generous sharing of their individual experiences are thus essential to this study. In addition, the limitations of conducting only qualitative or quantitative research in this study are substantial. Quantitative researches are commonly involved with numerical scores which produce analyzable general trends for a wide range of populations but limited in accessing in-depth perspectives and insights (Gravetter & Forzano, 2018; Ochieng, 2009). On the other hand, qualitative research is efficient in analyzing and capturing "a sustained and intensive experience" (Creswell, 2014) from participants with the limitation in generalizing the findings to broader populations (Ochieng, 2009). A mixed research approach, thus, is competent in this study where

quantitative trends observed within diverse populations and individual-level experience are both captured for further analysis.

Specific Research Methods

The study applied survey and semi-structured interview as quantitative and qualitative research methods respectively. The survey design provides “a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (Creswell, 2014, pp.201), which produces generalizable findings for researchers to draw reasonable presumptions on the population. In order to understand the potential influence that this institution has on international students, the trends of international students’ opinions on college effect are essential to identify. Hence, the survey design is appropriate for collecting this type of data. The survey for this study was designed to collect international students’ thoughts through experience-related questions and to produce a general trend of international students’ thoughts on what they have gained and experienced from this institution. A sample of survey questions can be found in Appendix A.

The semi-structured interview is “conducted conversationally with one respondent at a time” and employs “a blend of closed- and open-ended questions, often accompanied by follow-up why or how questions” (Adams, 2015, pp492), which are efficient in collecting detailed individual experience and capturing relevant background information. For the purpose of interpreting how this American institution influenced international students’ perspectives and values, semi-structured interviews are appropriate because they enable deep exploration of international students’ personal experiences and perceptions on their college lives. The semi-structured interview for this study was designed to assemble international students’ personal

viewpoints on their changes and development during college. The interview findings can also generate thematic trends of these personal experiences to draw a more in-depth understanding of what students have experienced in a mission-driven institution. A sample of interview questions can be found in Appendix B. The interview participants were a subset of the survey population.

Considering the study aimed at researching the endpoint of international students' learning process during college study, both survey and interview were targeted to senior international students, who are going to graduate in May 2020 from Boston College. Senior students are the population who have nearly completed their undergraduate studies and are at the vital stage of making decisions for post-graduation plans.

Sampling

Different sampling procedures were applied to two research methods for recruiting participants, while two recruiting processes were conducted simultaneously. For recruiting quantitative survey participants, a census method (Lavrakas, 2008) was applied at the initial stage since each senior international student has been contacted for volunteering participation. The census is “an attempt to list all elements in a group and to measure one or more characteristics of those elements” (Lavrakas, 2008, pp61). However, due to initially low participation rate (5.85%), snowball sampling was then implemented. Snowball sampling is a nonprobability sample method using possible connections between target populations, where “a small number of individuals, who have the characteristics in which researchers are interested, used as informants to identify, or put the researchers in touch with, others who qualify for inclusion” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

Convenience sampling was applied in the first phase of interview participant recruitment. Convenience sampling is one of the most commonly used non-probability sample methods where

“researchers simply use as participants those individuals who are easy to get” (Gravetter & Forzano, 2018, pp.121). Snowball sampling was applied in the second phase of the recruitment in order to reach more potential participants. Further, interview participants who were interested in the survey questions were also invited to complete the survey in order to increase the survey participation rate.

The recruitment for the survey and interviews took place concurrently. The survey was sent out initially by the Boston College Office of International Students and Scholars (OISS) email to all senior international students (in total 188 students) on behalf of the principal researcher's interests. The student email listserv was provided by the Office. This first round of recruitment resulted in a low participation rate of 5.85% (11/188), with the timing and the format of the survey identified as two contributing factors; participants were expected to finish 35 open-ended questions during the winter break. In order to increase the participation rate, the survey was re-designed to multiple-choice questions and survey link was re-sent through multiple channels, which includes OISS emails, interview participants, social media group-chats, teaching assistant emails, participants referral and related friends' referral. The return rate on this second round of recruitment was 13.82% (26/188), which has increased 7.97% from the first-round recruiting. As for interview recruitment, invitations were sent out mostly through Chinese social media WeChat to 3 potential participants at the first phase with study purpose and target participants included, since potential participants of other nationalities were challenging to approach after realizing the researcher's limited social connections in the undergrad population. The invitation messages were then sent out by interview participants to their friends and classmates through various communication channels, such as text messages, social media group-chats and WeChat. Overall, there were 2 Chinese students and 1 Chinese Canadian student

recruited in the first phase and 7 Chinese students and 1 Saudi Arabia student recruited in the second phase.

Potential bias might be presented while applying convenience sampling and snowball sampling. Convenience sampling has been criticized due to its limited control on the representativeness of the sample which might result in sample bias (Gravetter & Forzano, 2018). Snowball sampling can be limited in determining possible sampling error and making generalizations (Sharma, 2017). However, because of the definite constraints in time and resources, convenience sampling and snowball sampling are the most effective procedures that can be applied in conducting a small-scale research (Sharma, 2017). Therefore, it is important to identify the influence of the small sample size and the dominance of Chinese students in this study. As most of the participants came from one nationality, the findings may be skewed and the conclusions are therefore not applicable to generalize a significant trend. Also, as this study is conducted in one U.S. institution, the findings can only be discussed in the context of this particular institution.

Data Collection

The data collection in this study was conducted separately for quantitative data and qualitative data. The survey was designed through Qualtrics, an online survey design website that ensures anonymous data collection. Interviews were conducted both in person and virtually, while in-person interviews were conducted in library individual study rooms for privacy. Interviewees were given explicit explanations on the research purpose, the utilization of the interview information and the confidentiality of the information before the interview. All interviews were recorded by a non-internet connected voice recorder, and the recordings were stored separately on the researcher's department server. Further, the transcriptions have been

initially conducted by an automatic transcribe tool, Temi, and have been reviewed manually for final check. The IRB approval has been received before the data collecting process, and all participants signed a consent form virtually or physically (see Appendix C).

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Quantitative data and qualitative data were analyzed independently in this study. Noticing that the survey produced non-parametric data, which refers to the data are “those which make no assumptions about the populations” (Cohen, Manion & 2011, pp.504), descriptive studies were implemented to “summarize single variables for a specific group of individuals” (Gravetter & Forzano, 2018, pp.137). The survey results were analyzed within the Qualtrics analyzing functions, where frequencies and percentages of international students’ opinions on college experience were calculated automatically for each question. In addition, the Qualtrics data interpretation functions then produced visualizing tables and charts on frequencies and percentages, which helped indicate the trend of international students’ general perspectives and views on their changes for further interpretation.

Thematic analysis method was used to analyze the interview data. Thematic analysis is a method for “identifying, analyzing, organizing, describing, and reporting themes found within a data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp.79). For this study, trustworthy thematic analysis (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017) was applied step-by step to delve into international students’ perspectives on major change, college expectations, academic life, social life, institutional mission and vision, next-step plan and recognized personal changes. Precisely, the trustworthy thematic analysis includes 6 major analyzing phases, which are familiarizing with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Nowel, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). However, this study only

conducted three phases, which are generating initial codes, searching for themes and defining and naming themes, due to the small scope of interview data.

After independent analysis, the qualitative data and the quantitative data were brought up together in the final analysis but used slightly differently than was originally planned. Due to the unexpectedly small scope of the survey data, the idea of outlining broad trends in the population and then focusing on the specific experiences of a small group of students was impossible to achieve. Thus, the survey findings of this study were simply used to investigate a group of senior international students' perspectives and reflections on their gaining and changes after 4-year undergrad experience at Boston College, rather than in representing the general trends of the entire senior international student population's insights on undergrad experience. The interview findings provide more detailed insights and comprehension on how individual international students perceive their changes and development based on Boston College experience. The survey findings and interview findings were eventually incorporated together and demonstrated thematically based on interview analysis.

Profile of Research Participants

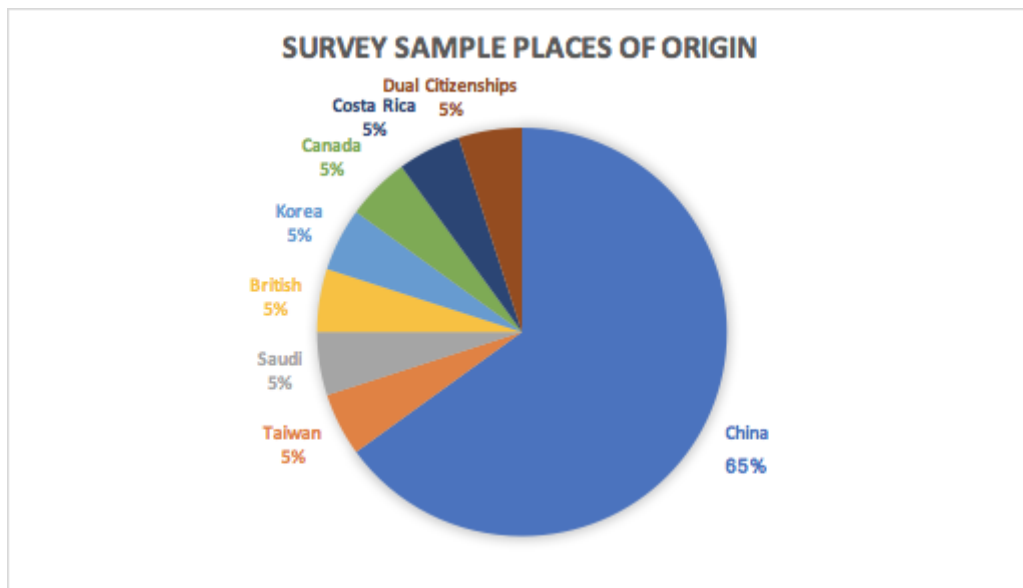
Survey participants profile

The study received in total 26 completed survey responses. Considering Boston College was determined as the target institution for this study, transfer students who have been influenced by their previous college institutions, which carry different institutional missions than Boston College, needed to be eliminated for this study. Therefore, 6 responses were eliminated since participants identified themselves as transfer students in question ten. The valid survey responses for analysis descended to 20, with 65% of respondents from mainland China and 35% are equally represented by Taiwan, Saudi Arabia, British, Korea, Canada, Costa Rica and Dual

citizenships (see figure 4.1). Also, 70% of participants were 21 or 22 years (see figure 4.2). Further, 70% of them finished high school in the country of their nationalities, 15% of them finished high school in the U.S. while 15% report finishing their high school in “other places”. As for the program of study, the final sample is scattered in 12 different majors (see table 4.1), while 40% of them are STEM majors, 40% are non-STEM majors and 20% are double majors.

Figure 4.1

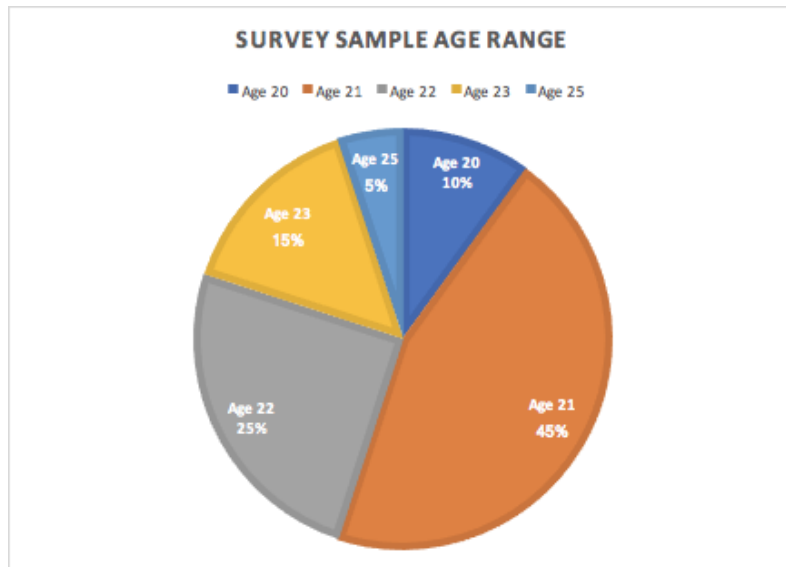
Survey sample places of origin



Note. Figure 4.1. The pie chart explains the survey participants' places of origin.

Figure 4.2

Survey Sample Age Range



Note. Figure 4.2. The pie chart explains the age range of the survey participants.

Table 4.1

Survey Sample Program of Study

Stem-Major	n*	Non-Stem Major	n*	Double Major	n*
Biochemistry	2	Applied Psychology	4	Math & Econ	1
Economics	1	Communication	1	Econ & Psych	1
Environmental Geoscience	1	Operations Management	1	CS & Applied Psych	1
Biology	2	International Affairs	1		
Math	2	Sociology	1		
		English	1		

* *n* = number of students; Total *n* = 20

Interview participants profile

There were in total 11 interview participants in this study. Similar to the demographic of survey samples, the majority of the interview participants came from mainland China. Further,

there was only one male student among all participants. Detailed information about interview participants are listed in the table below (see Table 4.2). The interviewees' identification information in this study was protected, therefore all interview participants will use pseudonyms in the final analysis.

Table 4.2

Interview Participants Detailed Information

Student Name	Age	Gender	Place of Origin	High School Curriculum	Program of Study
ZC	22	Female	China	International Program	Applied Psych
KZ	21	Male	Canada	U.S. High School	Math
AZ	22	Female	China	Domestic Curriculum + International Program	Economics
JC	21	Female	China	Domestic Curriculum + International Program	Biochemistry
JP	23	Female	China	Domestic Curriculum + International Program	English
XF	23	Female	China	International Program	Applied Psych
YL	23	Female	Taiwan	International Program	Econ + Psych
MJ	23	Female	China	U.S. High School	Applied Psych
ZZ	22	Female	China	Domestic Curriculum +	Communication

				International Program	
SH	22	Female	Saudi Arabia	Domestic Curriculum + International Program	Applied Psych
MP	23	Female	China	U.S. High School	Developmental Psychology + Linguistic

Ethics

The main ethical issues that arose in this study was the complexity of the researcher's assistantship position at the Office of International Students and Scholars, where the researcher served the study target population on a daily basis. In order to avoid ethical issues for this study, the recruiting email was sent through OISS email address on behalf of the researcher, and it was clearly stated that the study had no relation to any OISS daily operation or services. Students' interests and willingness to participate in the study would not, it was made clear, bring any benefits or damages to their relationships with OISS. In addition, the researcher is not allowed to download the senior international student name list or to collect the data during working hours based on the position convenience.

Findings

This chapter will display distinctive findings from student surveys and individual interviews. The chapter is structured in four major finding themes: expectations about the Boston College experience, experience at Boston College, substantial changes and influential factors,

and perceptions on institutional mission. The chapter will conclude with an analytical discussion in an attempt to answer research questions.

Expectations about the BC experience

Understanding students' expectations can help the institution recognize its strengths and advantages in different groups of the student population. What international students expect for their college experience is a clue to indicate what international students need and also a foundation to perceive students' developmental starting points. The initial image that international students form of an institution affects how they perceive the institution and how they would interact with the institutional environment during their integration period. In terms of learning international students' expectations on their undergrad experience and college outcomes before the college starts, both survey questions and interview questions captured students' perspectives and insights on these topics.

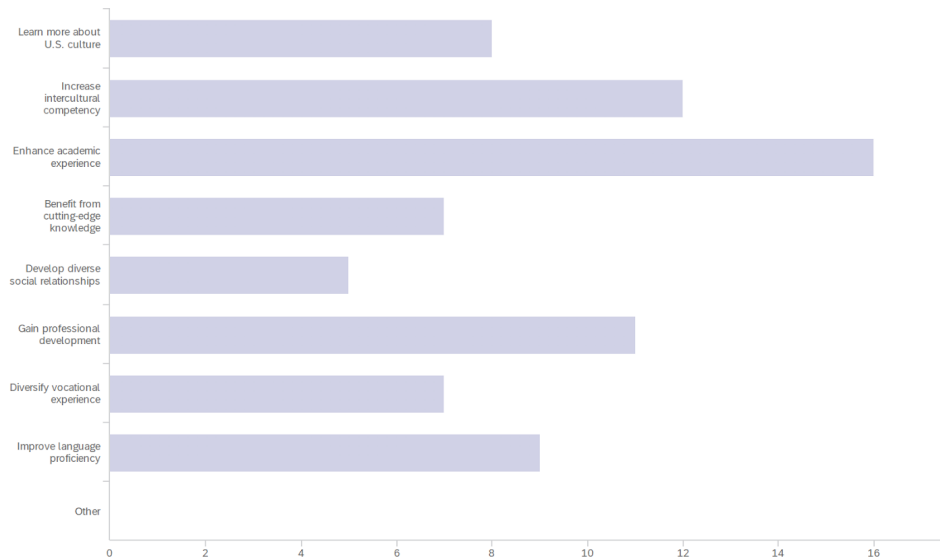
Academic Life

The response from the survey indicates that academic experience, intercultural adjustment and professional development are the top three aspects that international students expected to gain before coming to Boston College (see figure 5.1). In terms of the reasons choosing Boston College, participants listed institutional location, school rankings and academic reputations as top three criteria (see figure 5.2). Given the above data, the study participants perceived Boston College as an academic-focused institution with high prestige nationwide in a great area.

Figure 5.1

Students' Expectations Before Coming to Boston College

Q13 - What are the expectations you have before coming to U.S.? (Choose up to 4 answers)



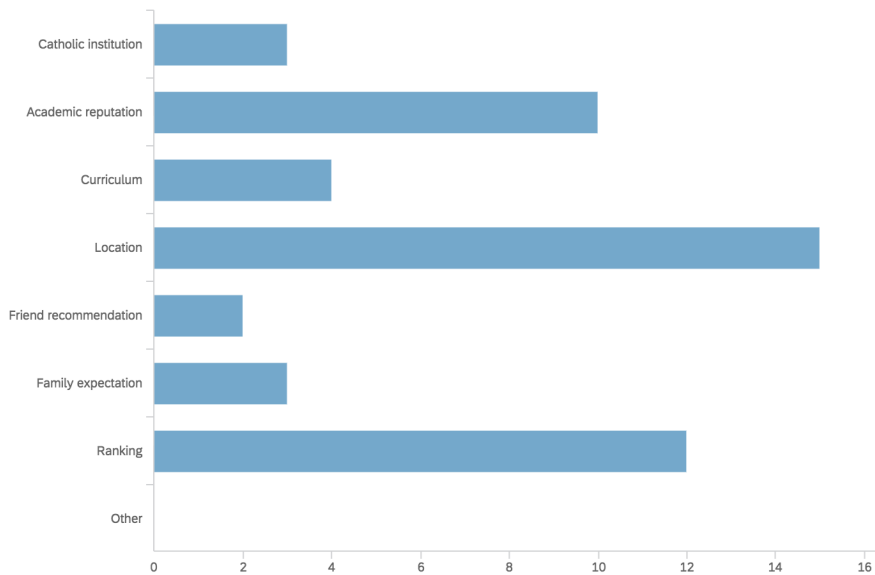
Note. Figure 5.1. Survey response to survey questions 13: What are the expectations you have before coming to the U.S.? (Choose up to 4 answers)

Figure 5.2

Students' Responses to the Reason of Choosing Boston College

Q14 - Why did you choose this institution? (Choose up to 3 answers)

Page Options ▾



Note. Figure 5.2. Survey response to survey question 14: Why did you choose Boston College? (Choose up to 3 answers)

Resonated by the survey's data on high expectations of quality academic experience, interview results further explained the details behind these broader trends demonstrating that international students gravitated towards specific criteria of quality academic experience. One student explained that the faculty student ratio was one of the high-quality markers:

“So, I picked a school that has small classrooms, I don’t really like big lectures, BC has, like, a really nice ratio of students to ... Professor to student ratio” (Interviewee MJ, personal communication, February 3, 2020)

Another interviewee also credited Jesuit Education as one of the criteria which facilitated a high quality academic experience:

“Another reason [I choose Boston College] is that Boston College is a Jesuit school, and I’ve never had an education in, like, a catholic school, and I know like the Jesuit community is very educated. They’re like the top 1 % of the other people and I want to like have more experience with this community” (Interviewee AZ, personal communication, January 17, 2020)

Social Life

Although there is an emphasis on academics, which has been predominantly indicated by the survey data, students also had expectations about their social lives and experiences. Most interview participants expressed their expectations on developing close interpersonal relationships or friendships during college life. Some students had expectations on establishing friendships with local students specifically, while others expected to develop relatively close friendships with students of the same nationalities. This can be explained as international students’ emotional needs while facing a completely new life stage as well as a new living and studying environment. One interviewee explained her expectations in making lots of friends and joining social life in college:

“I expect myself to be more sociable and to make more friends and to really enjoy life here, that... that was my expectation when I didn't study abroad” (Interviewee ZC, personal communication, January 16, 2020).

Another interviewee stated her expectations in making one or two good friends but predicted to be challenging due to similar experiences:

“Basically, I am from Taiwan, and I studied in mainland China before I came to the U.S., basically I'm studying [with] someone who [is] not really from my hometown ... I don't have a lot of common topics with my classmates, even teachers like faculty.... So, when I came to BC I was basically expecting the same. It's like, it's not really easy to make really good friends but I might still meet one or two, and when I take effort into it”
(Interviewee YL, personal communication, January 31, 2020)

Individual Development

Few students focused closely on individual development being one of the expected experiences during college. Topics such as interests and passion were less frequently mentioned among interviewees while discussing expectations. It is possible that interview participants pay less attention in fostering passion and interests before college, which cannot be generalized to the entire international population. The one student who has mentioned passion and interest as her expectations displayed a strong internal motivation to make a difference during college time. As she mentioned that “who I am now is very different from who I thought I would be ”
(Interviewee MP, personal communication, February 7, 2020) and she also wished to “know that earlier”, especially in high school when she felt hard realizing what she really interested in
(Interviewee MP, personal communication, February 7, 2020)

Experience at Boston College

Students' experience during college is a major indicator demonstrating what students actually went through within the four years. College experience, in the U.S. context, entails not only academic experience, but also on and off campus activities and social lives, which therefore creates various influencers affecting students' development. Hence, it is substantial to understand

how international students perceive their college life and what memorable experience the international students have mentioned.

Academic life: Guidance and Workload

Academic experiences among international students at Boston College are both fruitful and rigorous. Being the major facilitators and influencers to students' undergrad experience, affable and helpful professors have been widely mentioned in the conversations. Majority of the interviewees agreed that these professors are not only accessible in coursework, knowledgeable in their passionate career field and life experience, but also encouraging and caring to students.

“I took several [German] courses with the same professor. And I feel like, I really know her and she really knows me. And I didn't expect that I would develop that kind of relationship with the professor during [my] college year. And then yeah, and she was really encouraging me to speak up German and then yeah, and [encourage me] to pursue what I want to pursue” (Interviewee JP, personal communication, January 27, 2020).

“I mean I think the deepest impression was, students and professors here are over friendly and very helpful, you know, [professors] especially in office hours and they all seem to be very interested in talking to students outside of class, providing help for exams and papers. I also build up a few personal connections with professors which is really great for me” (Interviewee JC, personal communication, January 24, 2020)

One interviewee also mentioned the positive interactions with professors, which helped her a lot in building up academic confidence and find academic interests, and making the learning experience more personal:

“I think [it] has exceeded my expectations... I took many classes in CSOM, and I love my professors. They are very knowledgeable. They have a lot of experience in the industry. And they're passionate about education. And they also taught me a lot of experience and gave me suggestions. So, I think I learned a lot of valuable information from them” (Interviewee AZ, personal communication, January 17, 2020).

Good professors can be one of the significant foundations for higher education institutions that provide influential and quality education, which also includes creating space and opportunities for students to explore and try. Majority of interviewees agreed that they have found concurrent professional interests after four-year study, which has been highly related to the flexibility in taking non-major required courses and professors' guidance. One interviewee explained that she has tried out all types of major classes in order to find the most preferred subject.

“So, I declare my English major because, at first, I want to try all of the subjects, including math and science and CS, but then I figured that I was not like, for science material.... but I declare my minor because I attended a class which is like cross listed as English and Film, and I was really interested in that, and that made me want to enter the film industry” (Interviewee JP, personal communication, January 27, 2020)

Hence, participants have found their college journey challenging but meaningful while the college learning has not been limited to only intellectual development but became lifelong benefiting in many aspects. One interviewee described her undergraduate experience in different stages while each year has been a phase to contribute to development in a specific aspect.

“And for my junior year, junior is a year for me to explore my academic possibilities and career opportunities. And so, this year is my last year at college, and I cherish every last

opportunity to take part in any activities in Boston College” (Interviewee AZ, personal communication, January 17, 2020).

Not surprisingly, more exploring and trying in a limited time period under a fastidious academic requirement means heavier workload for students. Most interviewees have mentioned that they have declared more than one major or minors, which has become a normal phenomenon in Boston College, and meanwhile, creates a competitive learning environment for students. One interviewee described a fulfilled academic schedule if students want to finish more than one major or minor on time without complementing advanced AP credits.

“That’s actually not a lot, like, at there. At BC, it’s quite normal to see someone double majoring or double minoring or I even see people who are double majoring and minoring in something else, that just means if you don’t have don’t already have, I would say like six AP credits that means you don’t have any free class in your scheduling and your four years, because it’s all filled with major and minor required classes” (Interviewee MJ, personal communication, February 3, 2020)

Further, peer pressure can be serious to most participants while considering the large family investment in their higher education and high family expectations on ultimate outcomes from college for their future development. Akin to what interviewee mentioned above, the peer pressure not only came from within the international group, the differences between AP credits between domestic students and international students would drive international students to take more classes. These pressures also facilitate international students to spend more time in academics than other college life, while one interviewee noticed the less time she spent in social life, but she was also questioning her potential academic achievement if less time was spent in academics.

“I think I’m focused, a little bit, too much on academics, which can be a normal thing here, especially for Chinese students. You know, a senior kind of wished I probably have spent a lot more time on activities or volunteering.....if I really spent those time on activities and social and whatever, will I still academically achieve what I have now? I don't know” (Interviewee JC, personal communication, January 24, 2020).

On/off Campus activities: Less active but consequential

As academic life has composed most of their time, international students generally invest less time in on/off campus activities. Most interviewees participated in one or two on campus student club activities and cultural related association activities, or off campus service associations. One interviewee explained her frequency of club participation as a “non-active member”:

“Most of them, I’ve been [to] MSA, which is the Muslim Student Association, [I] have also been to the Arabic Student Association. I didn’t go a lot honestly. I have been to couples of international [events], like open music and trivia nights, stuff like that. But I’m not an active member I would say. It is just whatever I wanted to go, [and] I would go” (SH, personal communication, February 6, 2020).

Few students have time participating in all on-campus activities. Withal, these experiences were memorable adventures to international students, which have been described as alternative opportunities to know other students and learn American campus cultures by those interviewees. Some interviewees show a relatively high involvement in the club activities, in which provided new channels to establish relationships. One interviewee described her on-campus experience as the preeminent way to expand her network.

“I attend like CSA [Chinese Student Association], not that CSSA [Chinese Students and Scholar Association]. Yeah, so I always like participating in culture shows. I attend club meetings, and I was [like] doing chamber music orchestra. So, I met a lot of people”

(Interview YL, Personal communication, January 31, 2020)

Passively Social Isolation

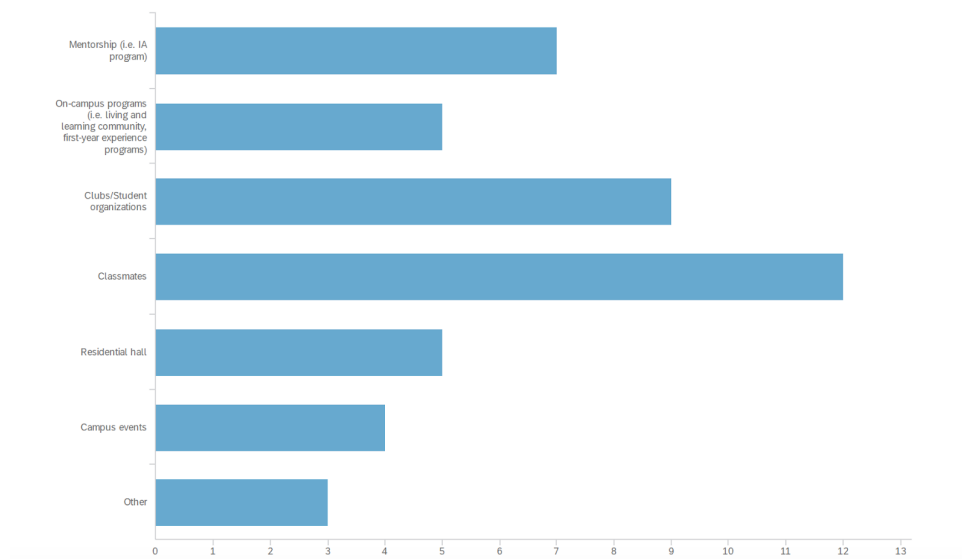
The survey data illustrates that more than 80% of participants have developed friendships with students of other nationalities. More specifically, “having the same class” would be the most efficient and easiest way in connecting with students of other nationalities, followed by “joining a student club and association” or “mentor program (International Assistant program)”, which also create opportunities for students to develop friendships with students of other cultures (see figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3

Ways of Developing Friendships with Students of Other Nationalities

Q27 - How did you develop your friendships with students of other nationalities? (Select

all that apply)



Note. Figure 5.3. Survey response to survey question 27: How did you develop your friendships with students of other nationalities (Select all that apply).

While contrasting the questions from “establishing friendship with students of other nationalities” to “establishing friendship with local students”, the interview results explicitly indicate international students’ difficulties in finding local friends. Less than half of the interviewees mentioned their experience with local friends, and only half of them have described the relationship as intimate. Although cultural differences have been anticipated as major barriers for international students to integrate to the U.S. campuses, students also claimed that they are capable of accepting and accommodating these differences. Most interviewees mentioned cultural differences as one factor that affect daily conversations with local students but as predicted experience they would go through.

“I thought I could ... get along well...get close to American students, but actually I couldn’t understand their slangs and [special events] in news, so I just can’t join their conversation especially when I was a freshman, I couldn’t follow them because they [spoke] so fast ...even though I’m getting better now, but it was very difficult at very beginning” (Interviewee XF, personal communication, January 27, 2020)

However, how to interpret friendship and how to establish the relationship became arduous to international students. Interviewee XF noticed the difficulties in building close friendships while having different class schedules:

“For one thing, I thought I will have many, not many, but close friends, friends from the U.S. But actually, the things here, especially the friends here, the definition of friends here might be a little bit different when I was back in China, because [in] the Chinese schools, we have one class, and we stay together for three years all together... but at BC,

and all the schools here in America, we have different classrooms and we go to different classes” (Interviewee XF, personal communication, January 27, 2020).

Friendships within educational institutions can be performed in a typical model due to the specific setting, such as classroom setting, class schedule, like what interviewee XF mentioned back to her home country. The conceptual differences in friendship that the interviewee noticed may impact individuals' demeanor in accepting new friends in a completely new environment.

Most participants demonstrated their disappointment during their transition period in Boston College. Several students clearly stated their feeling of loneliness and isolation during their first or second semester. One interviewee described the transition period a lot tougher than expected especially during her freshman year:

“Well the adjusting period was definitely a lot more challenging than I expected...and there was definitely a really huge culture shock because it was just so hard to find common topics or like, just to be, like really genuine and making, like real friends. And [like] that was something I was struggling a lot, when I was a freshman” (Interviewee ZZ, personal communication, February 4, 2020).

Another interviewee found her expectations reversed while having few or none international students in a classroom is a stressful environment to adopt:

“It matched my expectations personally at that time, like less international students, less Chinese population, I thought that’s what I wanted when I came here.... I had a really hard time in freshman year transition, from high school to college because I found [myself] isolated because.... I was used to being in a classroom that has like at least one Asian face” (Interviewee MJ, personal communication, February 3, 2020)

Few participants also notified the low diverse population and small international population as one of the essential reasons that increased the difficulties to easily develop friendships with others. Being permanent outsiders in a relatively less diverse community, international students would easily feel excluded while having difficulties finding a similar group of students.

“I feel like it was so hard being where I was from and like, coming to a place where it was mostly white Americans. Yeah, like prior to coming here, I thought it would be more diverse than those. So, I struggled with that my first year. “(Interview SH, personal communication, February 6, 2020)

Therefore, passively social isolation can be most challenging to study participants compared to cultural adjustment. The sense of socially insecure pushed these students to attempt to establish friendships with students who are culturally in-common. Yet, international students would also feel marginalized from the mainstream culture while they don't have any local friends.

“But after I went here, I found that my life, my social circle was rather limited. And I communicate most of the time with my close friends who are Chinese. So, [and] I also find myself a little bit intimidated to make friends who [do] not speak the same language as me” (Interviewee ZC, personal communication, January 16, 2020).

Reflection: Substantial changes and influential factors

Expectations before college and experience during college indicate the differences between what students predict to happen and what students actually went through, as well as depict an ordinary life of a group of international students at Boston College. Interpreting how students' have been influenced further requires more analysis on international students' evident changes and relevant essential factors. Thus, both the survey findings and the interview data

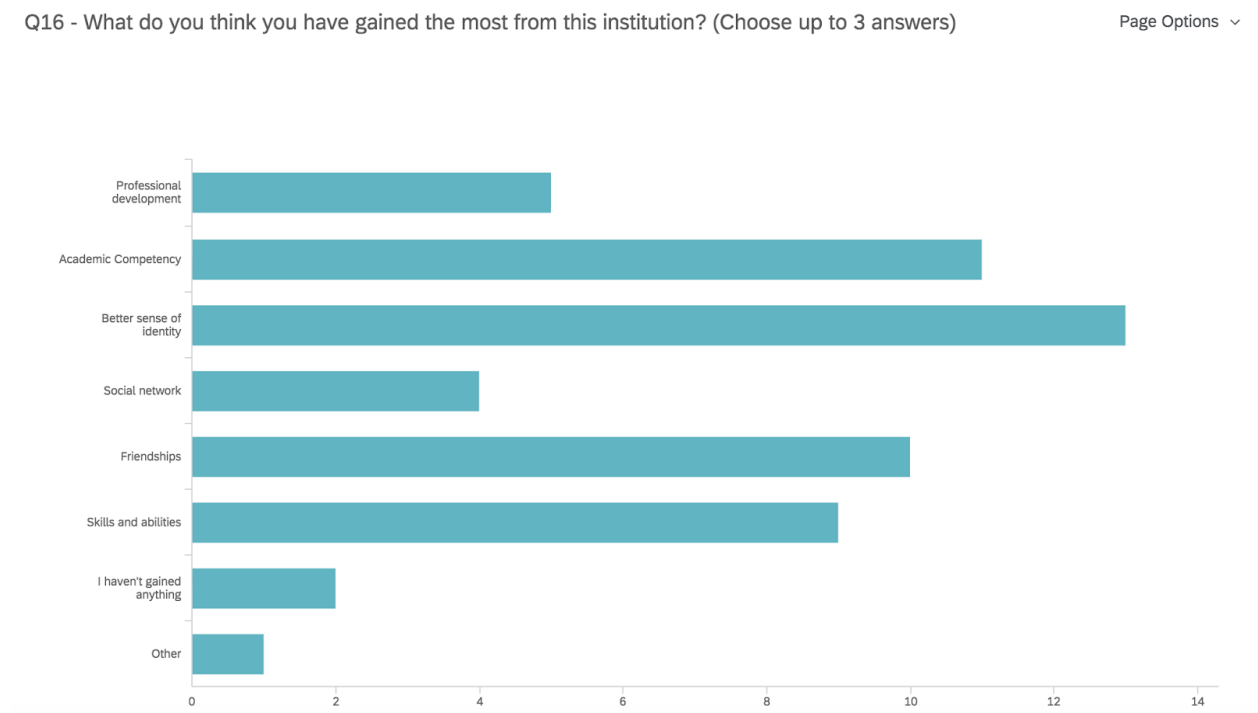
collects international students' opinions on how they have changed and why they think the changes happened.

Substantial Changes

Perspective change: How to understand yourself. Understanding oneself is a lifelong lesson while guidance can be significant, especially when the population has less anticipated experience on self-development and self-identification at the initial point, which has been discussed in the expectations section. According to the survey's result, most participants stated that having a better sense of identity is one of the most significant gains after attending Boston College (see Figure 5.4), thus, the changes between students' expectations and eventual gains indicates a compelling shift in students' perceptions on what we should value in college experience and what we can learn from undergraduate experience.

Figure 5.4

Most Important Gain from Boston College



Note. Survey response to survey question 16: What do you think you have gained the most from this institution?
(Choose up to 3 answers)

While the survey result indicates the general description of having a better understanding of identities, interviewees depicted categorically on what parts have been really changed and how the changes took place.

Changes on Personality. Most interview participants noticed their changes in their personalities, in which “became more confident” and “became more independent” have been mentioned the most. One student explained that the changes were evident simply based on her in-class performance.

“And so I feel like the biggest change for me was I gained more confidence in speaking out in class to participate, and to just like do presentations, and present my ideas of essays and film projects” (Interviewee JP, personal communication, January 27, 2020).

One student described “being independent” as an appropriate way to know herself and get along well with herself.

“I think the most important thing is being independent. Well, for me, personally, [being] independent and not [being] around people all the time is really the hard thing to do. I am a people person, so I always surround myself with my friends, I really, I am just kind of terrified of being alone a lot of times, especially in high school. But after four years.... I just feel like I’m more comfortable with being with myself and also like just trying to see what really brings me joy.” (Interviewee ZZ, personal communication, February 4, 2020)

More generally, students described the personality changes as a journey to fully accept themselves and to better express themselves to others.

Changes on Self-Identification. Besides personality changes, more than half of the interviewees also stated their changes on self-identifications. Self-identification is a complex idea which entails various components including cultural backgrounds, personal experience, environmental factors, etc., which composes the individual level of social identity development, based on Vignoles, Schwartz and Luyckx (2011) research. Participants stated their better understanding in knowing their strengths, drawbacks, capacity, interests and important characteristics. One student explained her changes in understanding her personal strengths and shortages.

“Probably how I value myself and how I deal with everything around me, is like one of the values that Jesuit education gives me is self-reflection. So, that’s how I get to see what I’m doing well, what I’m not doing [well] and what I need to improve.”

(Interviewee YL, personal communication, January 31, 2020)

With a comprehensive understanding of themselves, participants also noticed their changes in better acceptance of themselves.

“One major thing [is] definitely, I accept myself a lot more than when I was in high school. Like I don’t judge myself as often” (Interviewee ZZ, personal communication, February 4, 2020)

Changes on Major Choice and Career Path. Along with personality changes and self-identification changes, students therefore perceive a better understanding of themselves and what they want to pursue. Majority study participants have experienced changes either in major choices or professional development. 40% of survey participants indicate that they have changed their majors, and personal interests are defined as one of the influential factors that affect students’ choices. Resonated with the survey data, less than half of the interview stated their

major changes, yet students without major change added at least one minor due to their expanded interests. One student explained that she has added one minor after the practical experience.

“I started trading [in] the stock market. And I realize I am very passionate about [the] stock market and equity market in general. So, I felt like I should [like] learn something more about my interest and passion. That’s why I want to declare a minor in finance”

(Interviewee AZ, personal communication, January 17, 2020)

Further, interviewees who defined their major change explained the decisions as the result of interest exposure and tryout. The understanding of major has been developed as more classes have been taken as well as more potential choices have been provided.

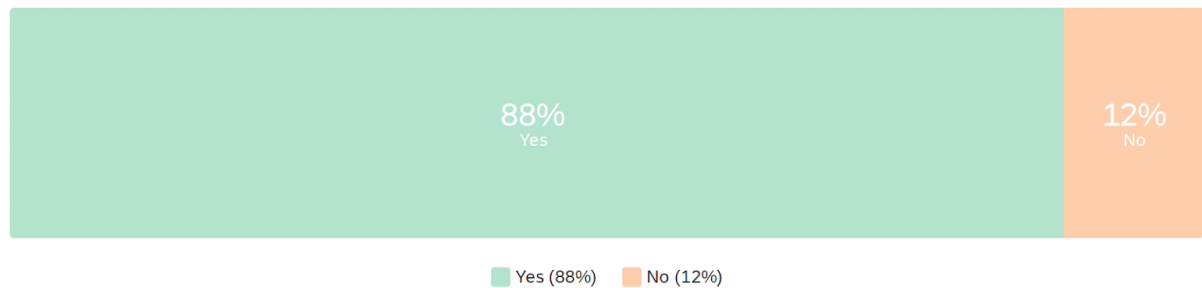
“I came in as a psych major in arts and sciences, and then the first year I switched to Applied Psychology and the second year I added my minor and then also added my concentration... I made a decision on my own because I didn’t like the program in arts and science as much as like in Lynch, which [has] bigger focus on developmental and like Child psychology, whereas the other one was more science based and for those who wanted to go into psychiatry more, so that’s why I switched” (Interviewee SH, personal communication, February 6, 2020).

Aligned with major changes, 88% of survey participants indicate their experience in changing their career plans over the undergrad experience (see figure 5.5). Major changes would be a possible indicator that leads to career plan changes as students gradually explore their potential interests as careers during their undergrad experience.

Figure 5.5

Students’ Responses to Whether Their Thoughts on Career Plans Have Changed

Q23 - Have you ever thought about changing your career plans over the past 4 years?



Note. Survey response to survey question 23: Have you ever thought about changing your career plans over the past 4 years?

The interview results, therefore, have captured international students’ insights on changes in finding a passionate career pathway and what have actually caused the changes. One student explained that knowing what she is not interested in is the major reasoning.

“I used to, want to... be a psychologist, but after taking, after the four years’ experience [at] BC, I realized that I am not a...not so tend to research and not [interested in being a pure scholar]. Yeah, I want to do more practical things and to get to know more people to ... build a relationship with them. So, that [made] me change my plan. So, I don’t want to take PhD or other further study, I just wanted to take a year master program and then tend to go back to China and work as a counselor, maybe] (Interviewee XF, personal communication, January 27, 2020).

Another student also believed that knowing what she is not really interested at college stage is not a bad thing, as she explained “it’s not a bad thing, it just I feel like I don’t have that kind of aspiration any more” (Interviewee JP, personal communication, January 27, 2020). What also worth noticing is that students realized their changes in interested careers during college as well as they anticipated their interests may change in the future.

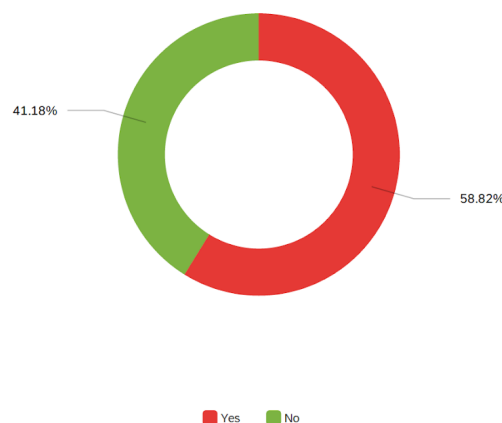
“I just like that to be in the production area. It’s just something I know I love and I don’t think it will lose my interest and like, and I would say in the next 10 years, and I am especially interested in working in the entertainment industry... so it’s just something I like and I want to try it out until I don’t want to try it anymore...” (Interviewee MJ, personal communication, February 3, 2020)

Changes on Next Step Plan. The survey findings indicated that 58.82% of the participants have changed their post-graduation plans (see figure 5.6). As a result, 65% of survey participants decided to go to grad school, and 35% of participants plan to enter the labor market, while no students stated that they are unclear about their next step (see figure 5.7).

Figure 5.6

Students’ Responses to Whether They Have Changed Their Post-Graduation Plan

Q21 - Have you ever changed your post-graduation plan ? For example, you are initially planning to go back home after graduation and now you want to stay for OPT/grad school.



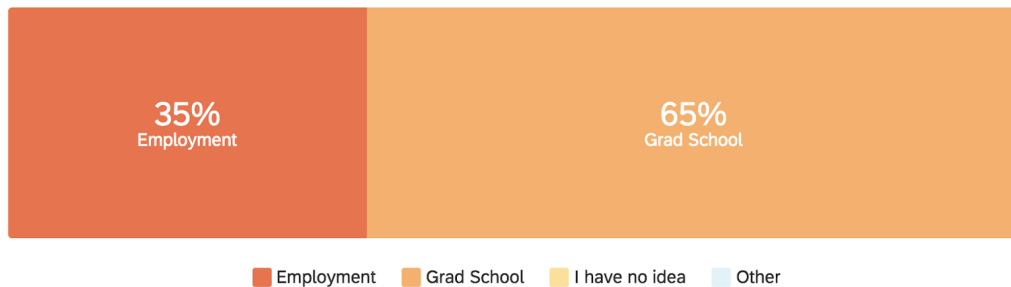
Note. Survey responses to survey question 21: Have you ever changed your post-graduation plan? (for example, you are initially planning to go back home after graduation and now you want to stay for OPT/Grad school)

Figure 5.7

Students' Choice for Their Next Step Plan

Q20 - What are your plans after graduation?

Page Options ▾



Note. Survey response to survey question 20: What are your plans after graduation?

Similar to the survey findings, more interviewees decided to attend grad school than pursue employment. Interestingly, the interview findings also captured students' thoughts on where to reside after the next period of study. As one interviewee explained, “I will stay in the U.S. for like, one or two years. Then I will go back to China, and find the next job” (Interviewee AZ, personal communication, January 17, 2020). Another interviewee also agreed to go back to home country after grad school.

“my next step is going to grad school for a year, and yeah, and I have no other plans besides this, but I am thinking... going back to China and working in China”

(Interviewee XF, personal communication, January 27, 2020).

Rather than only stating “change plans” for their post-graduation stage, international students explained how the plan has been changed in interviews. Most interview participants stated that the changes had been performed from “had a plan” to “the plan became differently”. One student described her depth understanding of what the next step plan means.

“So, at first, I thought, after four years’ experience at BC, I will have a clear understanding of what I am going to do next, and it should be my life path and I will definitely [go] through that path [without changing]. But after taking that ‘find and following’ and that all the liberal arts education I had at BC, and so now I began to understand that life has many paths and I do not have to stick on one, or [it is okay] if now I don’t have any other thoughts on my future plans... After going to the grad school, I don’t have any [further] plans. It’s okay, so now I accept these” (Interviewee XF, personal communication, January 27, 2020).

Another interviewee explained the changes from “had a plan” to “the plan became differently” explicitly, which has been the results of better understanding of herself and of the American society.

“Before, like when I went to college, I felt like I might just go back to China while [completing] my undergraduate studies. I also think about, like, applying to a graduate school in China. Like, after four years of study, I felt like America is like more advanced and more powerful, and definitely want to stay here for [further studies]” (Interviewee AZ, personal communication, January 17, 2020).

Value Change: How to understand others/world. College experience can also influence international students’ viewpoints on how to interact with others and how to perceive the surrounding world while college students are at the developmental stage establishing self-authorship. Most interview participants demonstrated their changing thoughts on surrounding people and environments. One interviewee mentioned her changed insights on how to perceive controversial issues and complicated difficulties.

“So intellectually, I feel like I’m a very different person from four years ago...and I believe that BC courses really teach you a mode of thinking to phrase the deeper meaning behind a superficial phenomenon and talk about all those aspects before making... before reaching a conclusion” (Interviewee ZC, personal communication, January 16, 2020).

Value Change: How to understand Jesuit education. Jesuit Education was unfamiliar to some interview participants due to the absence of Jesuit education in some unpopulated regions of the sending countries as well as the misunderstanding of the relationships between catholic churches and the institution. More specially, the value and principles of Jesuit education has not been widely spread globally where students from different religious backgrounds might easily find it confusing. One interviewee has described their alternative perceptions on Jesuit education especially after taking the core curriculum in Boston College.

“My expectation, like every student who heard the name of Catholic institution's background would [be] a bit intimidated by this work, feeling that they might probably like, try to spread some kind of ideology or stuff. It wasn't. I feel like BC did a really good job in this, it really stops my worry. Then the first year at theology course, and I found that BC was trying to let the students know the kind of the value behind the regions, like all the love for others, the love and care for others, and to accept the diversity and different opinions. So, I think in this aspect, this is something I hadn't imagined for Boston College” (Interviewee ZC, personal communication, January 16, 2020).

Exception. Exceptions are also compelling to notice which generally displayed few students' distinctive opinions and experience from most students. According to previous demonstrations, the majority of the interview students stated their d both intellectually and

occupationally; however, one student didn't feel many changes during his college experience due to the fact that Boston College might not be an appropriate choice for him.

“I don't think I ever had thought about my future...Honestly, I don't think much, like, I don't just sit down and think much about, and [I think] that's basically I'm passing time, and [I will feel that] my life is just killing time [in that way] ...I don't really see my purpose yet. I guess that's [how I] would sum it up” (Interviewee JC, personal communication, January 17, 2020)

Influential Factors

Personal Connections/Social connections. Reflecting on their four-year college experience, some interview participants believed that some of their changes are closely related to their interactions with professors and friends, who they spent most time with during their college life. As demonstrated earlier, many interviewees commented frequently on their interactions with professors as a positive part of their undergrad experience. The daily interactions with these acquainted individuals can directly influence students' perspectives and values especially during in-depth conversations and discussions. One interview also explained her career plan change due to the daily observations on professorship, which has been indirectly influenced by professors.

“Before entering Boston College, I aspire to become a professor because I thought it would be very easy... It's not easy at all when I see my professors teaching class and hold office hours and then do research, they are serious about their work. It makes me think... for their repertoire of knowledge and their expertise. And I feel like I don't have that kind of aspiration anymore. But it's not a bad thing” (Interviewee JP, personal communication, January 27, 2020).

Another interview mentioned the influence from the friendship she had, which led her to become more opinionated than before.

“I think the most important thing that happens to me is that I started to consider more for myself and try to form my own opinion.... My closest friend is also very strongly opinionated. But we hold very different opinions. In order to still hold my own opinion, I was forced to think deeply about many things. And I guess, like, yeah, the friends would make the environment and I’ve generally been more mature all those add up”

(Interviewee JC, personal communication, January 24, 2020)

Jesuit Education Influence. Jesuit Education proposed distinctive educational values and missions where Boston College was rooted. As the elements of Jesuit education have been embedded widely in Boston College’s teaching and learning and campus life, international students acknowledged the differences as well as its influence on their college experience. Most interview students defined that the core curriculum and the opportunities of community services have proactively changed their values and perspectives in many aspects. One interview has explicitly identified the capstone course as the key to grasp her potential interests.

“I definitely have a clear understanding of myself. In terms of career, I would say there are many courses that gradually are stepping stones towards building up [an] image of who I am. So, for example, I took a capstone course in my senior year, and I feel like it was the most crucial course for me because it helped me to find what I really liked. A variety of interesting tasks, like doing personality tests, like writing reflections, writing a eulogy for yourself, stuff like that. And I believe that this is just one course and there are many other courses and many contacts with people who support you and want to see you succeed” (Interviewee ZC, personal communication, January 16, 2020).

Another interview explained Jesuit education as the core course she took, while theology and philosophy are the two courses she remembered the most.

“BC definitely affected me a lot because a lot of programs here. There is a class called PULSE, it’s a combination of theology and philosophy. So, with core, with two classes each week and also need to volunteer eight hours [in] the community. It was in sophomore year, I was volunteering at the Suicide Prevention hotline. So, I like, I talked to people and be friend to people who have suicide thoughts. And I feel like that was a really life-changing experience for me because I never realized how, just how privileged and how fortunate I am... and just being there listen to those stories made me feel like I am so lucky and why I was never satisfied in my life, So I feel like that definitely changed me” (Interviewee ZZ, personal communication, February 4, 2020).

Interviewee AZ also agreed theology class as the “most important lesson I’ve learned at Boston College”, as she explained “I have learned the most from the theology class, among all core classes, I think” (Interviewee AZ, personal communication, January 17, 2020). Interviewee YL further explained the changing perspectives on these two lessons:

“Like philosophy and theology were not something that I would be initially interested in taking, but it was really rewarding very much” (Interviewee YL, personal communication, January 31, 2020).

External Influence. Not mentioning the cultural differences that international students experienced for their college lives, influencers such as living conditions, the American social environment, and internship experience would also contribute essentially to students' experience. Hence, aside from the personal connections and Jesuit Educations, some interview participants

have notified the above factors are influential as well. One interviewee described the American independent culture as the factor that forces international students to be independent.

“I mean one thing, I think ...I would say it’s a [cultural] thing because the U.S. [has a] very individual [culture]. And I would say international students who came here, because they have to, you know, live alone. They learn to take on certain responsibilities to know that every action. They have to be responsible for their actions and for what they say”

(Interviewee MJ, personal communication, February 3, 2020)

Another interviewee believed that living away from parents and family members created flexibility to accept new perspectives.

“Like, I used to rely on my parents very much. I think many things have urged that [change] to happen. One is that I am generally more away from my parents, and their opinions cannot influence me, you know, every day and every minute.” (Interviewee JC, personal communication, January 24, 2020)

Personal Internal Influence. Some students also noticed internal influence as one of the major factors which can be significant to whether students would accept the above influences that have been discussed. One student believed that self-motivation would be vital when promoting oneself to step out of the comfort zones and accept the changes.

“And in that aspect, that’s probably not grown to college, also you have [to] push for a little bit more. You would necessarily become more mature, or more sophisticated, or more [resilient] because you went to college, it’s more like you went through specific experience and that experience [changed] you. And if you try hard, you push yourself hard, then you would grow, if you just stay in your comfort zone, I don’t think that will change like whether it’s Eastern.... Like no matter how advanced or educational level, if

you stay in your comfort zone, I don't think you really change much" (Interviewee MP, personal communication, February 7, 2020)

Reflection: Perceptions on Institutional Mission

Knowing what changes and development international students have experienced and how international students interpret these changes are still insufficient in establishing possible relationships between the institutional influence and these substantial changes, specifically because some changes that international students experienced can be considered as part of general young adult development. The interpretations that international students have on institutional missions, therefore, capture essential information on how international students perceive Boston College at the endpoint of their college journey and how well the institution has circulated its mission to this population.

Mission and Vision of Boston College

The survey results indicated that all survey participants expressed a comprehensive understanding of Boston College's value and mission based on their experience and perspectives. While asking "in up to 5 words, how would you explain the value and mission of this institution to somebody else?" participants mentioned "Jesuit, love, reflective, world, excellence" the most (see figure 5.8), which has thoroughly summarized Boston College itself mission statement. According to the most frequently occurring words in participants' response, it seems evident that Boston College deeply embedded institutional mission and vision in these individuals, including those who originated in non-American and non-Catholic cultural backgrounds.

Figure 5.8

Students' thoughts on Boston College's Value and Mission

Q17 - In up to 5 words, how would you explain the value and mission of this institution to somebody else?



Note. Survey response to survey question 17: In up to 5 words, how would you explain the value and mission of this institution to somebody else?

The interview data also demonstrated international students' strong sense on what Boston College is trying to teach them and what value that BC wants to pass on to them. Most of the interviewees believed that Boston College focuses on educating people to care and love others and contribute back to society. Interviewee Zhao explained that "Boston College wants to educate students [to] care for others and want to make an impact in the world in a humanistic way" (Interviewee AZ, personal communication, January 17, 2020) as her understanding of the school's mission. Interviewee ZZ also agreed that Boston College is not only trying to teach knowledge to students but also try to influence the students profoundly in specific aspects:

"I feel like for mission of BC is definitely not only to get educated, but also to really learn to love other people and genuinely care for the people also, I feel like BC really

helped us to just talk to oneself and be vulnerable and really listen to ourselves, is like a mental connection with ourselves” (Interviewee ZZ, personal communication, February 3, 2020).

Some students believed that Boston College focused on individual development, which emphasizes on helping students to know themselves better, one interview explained this individual development as “being yourself”.

“I think the mission or vision of Boston College for me is really distilled to two things, so the first one is to really be yourself and the other is to care for others.” (Interviewee ZC, personal communication, January 16, 2020).

Mission Reflected in the undergrad life

Beside collecting information on what international students think the institutional mission is, the interview also captured information on how international students feel the mission has been reflected in their daily life.

Curriculum & Professors. Most interviewees believed they received the mission mostly from the curriculum and professors. As interviewee YL explained that

“Jesuit education is really focusing on self-reflection. And that’s a really big deal in all of our classes. No matter you are taking, science or like liberal arts, I mean the core. But every class is making you think about yourself, what your role in the world and how you think about the world.” (Interviewee YL, personal communication, January 31, 2020)

Another interviewee further explained how the mission has been implicated in teaching as well as in a classroom setting.

“I remember like yesterday, and taking a material science minor. So, I'm taking a class called ocean and our professor is an oenologist. And she talked about how the American

funded the ocean research so little compared to NASA. And she also showed us how early Jesuit actually set up different earthquake stations around the world so that we can have a better understanding of the metal, the earthquakes, all kinds of stuff. I felt like, at that moment, I felt like I'm very impressed and inspired. I felt like as a graduate of Boston College, I should like, also spread this mission and information and actually go to the word and make some impact.” (Interviewee AZ, personal communication, January 17, 2020)

Students also captured professors as essential role models and transmitters who have reflected the mission on themselves. Interviewee JC thought that she can really feel professors’ support through these four years.

“I do think like, you know, BC or it says ever to excel. Also, you know, we were taught about being men and women for others. And I do think these are generally [tied] through the experience these years. I mean, at least I know everyone around me [is] all very hardworking and competitive. And I think you know, professors here are very helpful for, to students, which provide a supportive environment.” (Interviewee JC, personal communication, January 24, 2020)

Campus Environment. Some interviewees also think the general campus environment has shown its mission evidently. Interviewee MP noticed that Boston College has campus culture for volunteering, which manifested the institutional mission of caring and loving others.

“The mission, like the school really have large emphasize on serving like men and women for others and average in share, I definitely see that in myself like oh, I think we have a huge campus culture for volunteering, that was in my freshmen year, you have ethic to apply to volunteer, I heard of, it makes you want to help others, want to help

others and help your community, fight for a community, help to make others better.”

(Interviewee MP, personal communication, February 7, 2020)

Discussion

Based on the survey and interview findings presented in previous sections, this section will discuss the interconnections between various themes and attempt to answer whether international students' values and perspectives have been influenced by this particular U.S. institution, and how such institution affects international students' post-grad life and career choice.

Developmental Changes and Institutional Influence

In order to understand whether this mission-driven institution has substantial influence on international students' perspectives and values, two proofs are waiting to be ascertained: whether international students have experienced developmental changes in perspectives and values during college, and whether such changes are related to institutional missions that focus on individual formation.

Social Identity Development. Given the finding that study participants experienced most difficulties in integrating to the native student population, the question of “who am I” became gradually evident to most of the participants. Participants have developed a clear perception of “international students”, “native students”, “students of same culture” and “students of same nationality” in a less diverse campus. The intention of building friendship with those students of the same nationality represents these international students' desires in integrating to the group with similar identity. Given that the historical and cultural interventions on individual identity development establish a unique ecological attachment (Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quaye, 2016), the process of knowing others' culture to understand others' culture and finally becoming

accustomed to that culture challenged students' understanding of their social identities.

Therefore, these study participants have experienced social identity changes and developed understanding in their identity during undergrad experience.

Self-Authorship Development. The self-authorship development is defined as “an effort to resolve the tension between a desire for differentiation and an equally powerful desire to be immersed in one’s surroundings” (Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quaye, 2016, pp 425) in Kegan’s theory. Given the finding that participants have experienced substantial changes in personality and self-identification and altered their decisions in major selections and career plans, participants in this study underwent changes in self-awareness. Further, participants’ changes on how to understand the surroundings and Jesuit education enables exploration of the relationships between themselves and the external world. Participants were therefore exploring ways in interpreting themselves and their potential strengths to further recognize their differences with others and identify their future roles to the society.

Moral Development. Moral Development can be somehow difficult to observe since both survey questions and interview questions may not directly include questions such as “do you think this behavior is morally correct”. What students in this study have exhibited about moral development were their acknowledgement of Jesuit Education on “caring and loving others” and their experience in “helping and assisting others” by the influence of the campus culture and professors. Given that cultural influence as an influential factor on college students’ care orientation and moral decision-making (Han, Glover, & Jeong, 2013; Olivera-La Rosa, Corradi, Villacampa, Martí-Vilar, Arango, & Rosselló, 2016; Gump, Baker, & Roll, 2000), the interview findings have shown the impact of the campus culture on participants’ perspective changes on care orientation. In addition, the possibility of American culture on international

students' moral decision-making can be predicted. However, no further direct evidence shows these students' moral development in pre-conventional, conventional and post conventional stages, described by Kohlberg's theory.

Therefore, given what the study has discovered in survey and interview findings, study participants have experienced most changes in developing a more comprehensive self-cognition since students perceive deeply on personal characteristics, self-identity, and potential interests, which further impact students' choices on majors and career plans.

Interrelationship Between Student Changes and Institutional Missions. The interrelationship between student changes and institutional missions are somehow difficult to determine. Based on study participants' interpretations of how developmental changes took place, most participants agreed the substantial impacts of interpersonal connections with faculty, friends and the Jesuit curriculum. Students are not only influenced profoundly by faculty's and friends' perspectives, but have also broadened their existing perspectives by taking the Core (i.e. theology and philosophy courses), attending community services projects and developing capstone projects. Not only the participants' interpretations of how individual changes have explained institutional infrastructures (i.e. faculty and curriculum) as the dominant factor, participants' comprehensions of institutional mission also draw the interrelationship. Most study participants acknowledged that Boston College's missions were trying to teach them how to love and care for others and how to understand themselves. Study participants also conceded that institutional missions were reflected in the curriculum, faculty's perspectives and behaviors and campus environment. In accordance with Boston College Three Dimensions of Formation Model (see figure 5.9) which has been developed to expand institutional mission, Boston College is aimed at forming students in intellectual, social and spiritual dimensions. Participants'

interpretations therefore explicitly showed how three dimensions have played in actual college life and whether these influences have been achieved.

Figure 5.9

Boston College Three Dimensions of Formation



Model

Figure 1: Three Dimensions of Formation

Note. Figure 5.9. The image explains the model of Boston College three dimensions of formation. From “The Journey into Adulthood: Understanding Student Formation”, by Boston College Center for Student Formation, 2020, p.15 (<https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/offices/mission/pdf1/umm1.pdf>) Copyright 2020 by Boston College Center for Student Formation.

Echoing Boston College’s mission statement in “leading its students on a comprehensive journey of discovery -- one that integrates their intellectual, personal, ethnical, and religious formation” (Boston College, 2020), it is therefore clear that correspondence between study participants’ developmental changes and institutional mission can probably be drawn based on the data displayed.

Influence distribution channel on students' next step plan

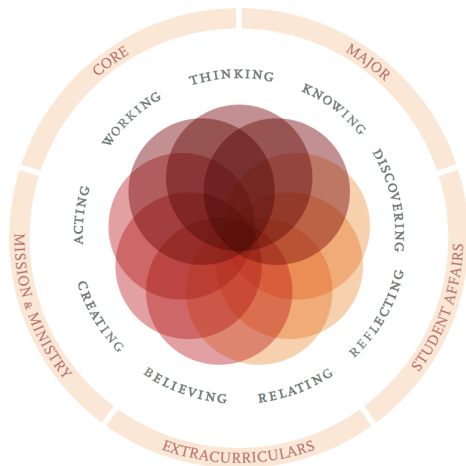
Given the findings on what participants have experienced at Boston College, students are provided with opportunities in academic exploration which therefore resulted in major changes

or minor adding, proved by most interview participants. Further, the experience of on and off campus experience and relatively challenging social experience assist students to perceive an in-depth understanding of self-awareness, helping students define their strengths, drawbacks and potential interests. In addition, discrepancies between participants' perceptions on "expectations about BC experience" and their eventual takeaways indicates a significant shift in perceptions of the value of college. In line with Boston College Vision for the Renewed Core (see figure 5.10), Boston College is trying to educate the whole person particularly through a designed core curriculum, while the core, major, student affairs, extracurricular and mission and ministry are incorporated together.

Figure 5.10

Boston College Vision for the Renewed Core

RENEWED CORE VISION
EDUCATING THE WHOLE PERSON



Note. Figure 5.10. The figure explains the design idea of Boston College's renewed core curriculum. From "Toward a Renewed Core", by Boston College, 2013, p.4

The results suggest that the participants in this study changed their career and post-graduation plans while at Boston College. They developed holistically during college and developed a clearer understanding on what will be the right next step for themselves. More specifically, participants gradually became capable of understanding what they desire to practice for the next step and what they prefer to pursue for their lives. Such comprehensive understanding would further help this group of international students to make clear and definite decisions on their first or following jobs, graduate programs, locations after graduation, and even further challenges.

However, it must be emphasized that data collected in this study can and only can represent this group of international students' insights on their college experience and their perceptions on institutional influence. As Chinese students dominated the study sample, the findings of this study can be skewed due to the homogeneity of participants. Furthermore, although the participants experienced developmental changes in perspective and values and their experience aligned with the institutional design on student campus experience, the interrelationship between student changes and institutional influence cannot be generalized to the entire international student group. Similarly, more powerful evidence is demanded to clearly draw the relationship between institutional influence on personal career choices and post-grad plan changes. It is therefore more reasonable to conclude that this group of international students experienced a rewarding journey at Boston College in forming a more comprehensive and mature understanding of themselves, their career choice and post-graduation plan, which aligned with the institutional mission and designed campus experience.

Conclusion

This study found that most participants had developed a better understanding of themselves during their time at Boston College and this deeper understanding of themselves had an influence on their future plans and facilitated their decision-making after graduation. However, the extent to which their educational experience at Boston College influenced their development versus the extent to which such changes were the result of maturity and general life experience was not able to be determined due to insufficient evidence. The size of the sample recruited for this study was not large or diverse enough to draw conclusions on the relative impact of these factors for a broader population of students.

Why This Research Matters

Given the findings of this study, this group of international students were aware of Boston College's institutional mission and connections between the mission and the campus culture. Further, this study finds out more about international students' perceptions of their college experience in a mission-driven institution which could help the institution to better understand this population's demand. As few studies have researched the endpoints of international students' undergrad journey, this study raises questions on how international students develop in a U.S. mission-driven institution. The developmental changes that have been captured in this study would be compelling for interested researchers. Furthermore, more comprehensive studies comparing how the development of international students and domestic students are shaped by college culture would be valuable in understanding the relative influence of the college experience versus life experience on college student development.

Limitations

The limitations of this study have limited the conclusions able to be drawn from it. The size of the study and the limited scope of the survey participants mean that broad conclusions on the impact of a mission driven college experience on international students are impossible to present. The main student group interviewed was Chinese international students, thus the research results might not be generalized to a more racially diverse international student body. The insights and perspectives of international students from different cultures are not equally represented. Further, this study only focuses on one mission-driven institution. Including more colleges and universities with similar missions would also help to generate insights into the impact of mission-driven college experiences on international students.

Recommendations for Future Studies

Future studies in this area are suggested to include a more diverse group of international students in order to have an adequately heterogeneous study sample. In addition, higher education institutions with similar missions can be incorporated for future studies in order to produce more generalizable findings. Future studies may also include international students from mission-driven universities in other countries as well.

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Appendix A Sample Survey Questions

Sample Survey Questions

This section of questions will ask information about your personal background (i.e., nationality, high-school attending).

1. Please state your nationality
2. Did you spend the majority of your pre-college years in the country of your nationality?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

If Q2 selected No, where did you spend the majority of your life before coming to Boston College?

- o Country of nationality
 - o The U.S.
 - o Other
3. How old are you?
4. Please state the type of the high school curriculum you enrolled?
 - a. Domestic Diploma Program
 - b. International Program (I.e. IB, A-Level, AP)
 - c. Both
 - d. Other
5. Where did you attend your high school?
 - a. Country of Nationality
 - b. The U.S.
 - c. Other
6. Are you a transfer student?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

If Q5 selected No, where did you transfer from? _____

This section of questions will ask about your student status (i.e., major changes)

7. What's your major? _____
8. Have you ever changed your major?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

If Q2 selected no, when did you make this change? What did you change from, and why?

*This section of questions will ask about your learning expectations **before** and **after** attending/reasons for choosing Boston College.*

9. What are the expectations you have before coming to U.S.(Choose up to 4 answers)
 - a. Learn more about U.S. culture
 - b. Increase intercultural competency
 - c. Enhance academic experience
 - d. Benefit from cutting-edge knowledge
 - e. Develop diverse social relationships
 - f. Gain professional development
 - g. Diversity Vocational experience
 - h. Improve language proficiency
 - i. Other
10. Why did you choose this institution?
 - a. Catholic institution
 - b. Academic reputation
 - c. Curriculum
 - d. Location
 - e. Friend recommendation
 - f. Family expectation
 - g. Ranking
 - h. Other
11. What do you think you have gained the most from this institution (Choose up to 3 answers)
 - a. Professional development
 - b. Academic Competency
 - c. Better Sense of Identity
 - d. Social network
 - e. Friendships
 - f. Skills and abilities
 - g. I haven't gained anything
 - h. Other

This section of questions will ask about your future plan (i.e. career plan, life plan)

12. What are your plans after graduation?
 - a. Employment
 - b. Grad School
 - c. I have no idea
 - d. Other

13. Where do you plan to stay after graduation?
- a. The U.S
 - b. Home country
 - c. Other countries
 - d. I have no idea
14. Have you ever changed your post-graduation plan? For example, you are initially planning to go back home after graduation and now you want to stay for OPT/grad school.
- a. Yes
 - b. No
- If Q14 selected No, can you explain your changes on your post-graduation plan in a few words?
15. Have you ever thought about changing your career plan over the past 4 years?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
- If Q15 selected No, can you explain the changes in a few words?

This section of questions will ask about your social relationships and self-development.

16. How often do you contact your parents/friends in home countries?
- a. Once a week
 - b. Several times a week
 - c. Once a month
 - d. Several times a month
 - e. I rarely contact them
 - f. None of the above, please explain
17. Did your relationships with your parents/friends change after studying here?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
- If Q17 selected no, please explain in a few words
18. Have you developed friendships with students of other nationalities?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
- If 18 Yes is selected, how did you develop your friendships with students of other nationalities? (Select all that apply)
- Mentorship (i.e. IA program)
 - On-campus programs (i.e. living and learning community, first-year experience programs)
 - Clubs/Student organizations
 - Classmates

- Residential Hall
- Campus events
- Other

19. How do you evaluate the closeness of your friendships with students of other nationalities? (Rate from 0-100)

This section of questions will ask about your thoughts on your undergrad experience at Boston College.

20. After 4 years of studying, do you think your experience has met your expectations? **Why or Why not?** (Try to explain in **one sentence**)
21. In up to **5 words**, how would you explain the **value and mission** of this institution to somebody else?

Appendix B Sample Interview Questions

Sample Interview Questions

- Can you tell me a bit about your experience as a student here?
 - Was your experience similar to what you imagined it would be ?
 - If so, why?
 - If not, why not?
 - Did you find your life at BC to be life changing in any way?
 - If so, why?
 - If not, why not?
 - What do you think are the mission/visions of Boston College? Do you think these were reflected in your experience?
- Do you feel that you changed at all as a result of your time at Boston College?
 - If so, how? (i.e., changes on personal values and perspectives)
 - What was the most important change on you? Why do you think that happened?
- Can you tell me a little bit more about your next step plan?
 - To what extent was this plan/career plan influenced by your time at Boston College?

Appendix C Consent Form



Boston College Consent Form

Boston College [*Lynch School of Education: Educational Leadership & Higher Education*]
Informed Consent to be in study [*The U.S. institutions' transformative influence on international students' values and perspectives on individual future planning*]

Researcher: [Yining (Sally) Zhu]

Study Sponsor: [N/A]

Type of consent [Adult Consent Form]

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. You were selected to be in the study because you are currently enrolled as senior international students in Boston College. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Important Information about the Research Study

Things you should know:

- The purpose of the study is to understand whether U.S. institutions would have transformative influences on international students' values and perspectives. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to do an anonymous survey on-line during 2019 winter break. This will take approximately 20-30 minutes.
- Risks or discomforts from this research include: Although it's possible that the interview will remind you of some less comfortable experiences during your time as an undergraduate, my thesis is not focused on these kinds of experiences, so you should not feel obliged to discuss them in any detail. I do not anticipate that participation in this study will cause you any significant risk or discomfort.
- The study will probably help you reflect on your undergrad experience.
- Taking part in this research project is voluntary. You don't have to participate and you can stop at any time.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why are we doing it?

The purpose of the study is to understand whether U.S. institutions that explicitly emphasize formation of the complete individuals have transformative influence on international students' value and perspectives, and interpret how the transformative influence affect international students' life after graduation. The total number of people in this study is expected to be 400 in maximum.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to fill out an anonymous survey online during 2019 winter break. The survey will be completely anonymous; no personal information is needed in this survey. We expect this to take about 20-30 minutes. The information collected by this survey will not be linked to other data (e.g., research data, protected health information, or administrative data such as US Census data). At the end of the survey, you will be asked if you are willing to participate in the interview. If you agree to participate in the interview, you will be invited to an in-person interview. We expected the interview to take about 30-45 mins. The information collected by the interview will not be linked to other data (e.g., research data, protected health information, or administrative data such as US Census data).

How could you benefit from this study?

Although you will not directly benefit from being in this study, others might benefit because the survey and the interview may help you reflect on your undergrad experience and might help you understand the choices you made.

What risks might result from being in this study?

There are some risks you might experience from being in this study. Although it's possible that the interview will remind you of some less comfortable experiences during your time as an undergraduate, my thesis is not focused on these kinds of experiences, so you should not feel obliged to discuss them in any detail. I do not anticipate that participation in this study will cause you any significant risk or discomfort.

Participants are not encouraged to share their sensitive experience. Both survey questions and interview questions are not designed to ask sensitive personal experience.

How will we protect your information?

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report, we may publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked file.

All electronic information will be coded and secured using a password-protected file.

Only the principle investigator (Yining Zhu) and the research supervisor (Rebecca Schendel) will have access to the data. The data will not be used for any other education purpose. The recording data will be erased/destroyed from the recorder after finishing transcription.

Mainly just the researchers will have access to information; Also, the Institutional Review Board at Boston College and internal Boston College auditors may review the research records. Otherwise, the researchers will not release to others any information that identifies you unless you give your permission, or unless we are legally required to

do so.

What will happen to the information we collect about you after the study is over?

I will not keep your research data to use for future research or other purpose. Your name and other information that can directly identify you will be deleted from the research data collected as part of the project.

How will we compensate you for being part of the study?

There will be no compensation for your participation in this study.

What are the costs to you to be part of the study?

There is no cost to you to be in this research study.

Your Participation in this Study is Voluntary

It is totally up to you to decide to be in this research study. Participating in this study is voluntary. Even if you decide to be part of the study now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. If you decide to withdraw before this study is completed, your survey result will not be included to the final data analysis.

If you choose not to be in this study, it will not affect your current or future relations with the University or Boston College Office of International Students and Scholars.

Contact Information for the Study Team and Questions about the Research

If you have questions about this research, you may contact Yining Zhu, zhuis@bc.edu, 949-529-8442, and my research supervisor Rebecca Schendel, schendel@bc.edu, 617-552-1269.

Contact Information for Questions about Your Rights as a Research Participant

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the following:

Boston College
Office for Research Protections
Phone: (617) 552-4778
Email: irb@bc.edu

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. I/We will give you a copy of this

document for your records. I/We will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I understand what the study is about and my questions so far have been answered. I agree to take part in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature

Date

Parent or Legally Authorized Representative Permission

Consent to be Audio/video Recorded

I agree to be audio/video recorded.

Yes _____ **NO** _____

Signature

Date