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The University of Southern Mississippi

AN EXAMINATION OF MATURE INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

AMONG INTERNATIONAL AND AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

by

Bona Aidoo

Abstract of a Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2012

ABSTRACT

AN EXAMINATION OF MATURE INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AMONG INTERNATIONAL AND AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

by Bona Aidoo

December 2012

Educating students to relate harmoniously with people from different backgrounds has become an important agenda for student affairs professional because of the increasingly diverse nature of the American society. The purpose of this study was to assess how American and international college students develop mature interpersonal relationship skills. All the participants were from a mid-sized comprehensive institution in the Southern United States. The two main constructs measured were *tolerance* and *quality of relationships*. Attempts were also made to identify other predictors that may influence mature interpersonal relationships: gender, age, educational level, and academic achievement as measured by GPA. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected.

A sample of 93 international and 93 American students completed the Mines-Jensen Interpersonal Relationships Inventory to collect quantitative data. Using MANOVA for statistical analysis, this study revealed statistically significant differences between American and international students' self-reported levels of tolerance and quality of relationships. Also, there were no statistically significant differences in the self-reported levels of tolerance and quality of relationships between male and female students. Multiple regression analysis was also conducted to determine whether the independent variables (GPA, educational level, and age) predict students' self-reported levels on tolerance and quality of relationships. There were no statistically significant

relationships between all the independent variables and students' self-reported levels of tolerance. Statistically significant relationships were identified by senior status and GPA less than 2.0. Senior status positively predicted student's self-reported levels of quality of relationships whereas GPA less than 2.0 was negatively related to quality of relationships.

Qualitative data were collected using interviews in order to gain broader perspectives about the development of mature interpersonal relationships. Five international students and five American students were recruited to participate in the study. Responses on how international and American students develop mature interpersonal relationships were quite similar. Also, international and American students noted that the college environment expanded their views about diversity, through meeting of diverse spectrum of students with varied ideas or beliefs. However, international and American students noted different views about how student affairs professionals could enhance tolerance among students from different backgrounds.

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A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
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for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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December 2012

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The development of students has been the primary aim of higher education institutions since the colonial era. Consequently, graduates from the early colonial colleges were expected to behave as gentlemen scholars in their respective colonies. In this regard, issues concerning their training were largely concentrated on intellectual, moral, and spiritual/religious development (Lucas, 1994). During that time, the population of students in the colleges was fairly homogeneous as higher education served mainly upper class white males termed as *aristocratic* and admission was also based on ability described as *meritocratic* (Cross, 1971, as cited in Cohen and Brawer, 2003).

The expansion of American society brought with it people from different cultural, religious, socioeconomic, and linguistic backgrounds. As society developed, more importance was attached to education and this helped boost the enrollment in higher education institutions. Several factors led to the surge in enrollment of diverse students. The Morrill Land Grant Acts of 1862 and 1890 gave America states the right to establish public colleges and Black colleges respectively (Nuss, 1996; Rudolph, 1991). Also, the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924 brought many college students and professors from foreign countries with varied cultural backgrounds. In addition to these trends, the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (G. I. Bill) provided impetus for the admission of older students. With these developments, the concept of *egalitarian* was used to describe American higher education which "means that everyone should have equality of access to educational opportunities, regardless of socio-economic background, race, sex, or ability" (as cited in Cohen & Brawer, 2003, p. 44). In this regard, as cultural diversity

increased, being able to recognize individual differences and relate well with diverse individuals became an important part of American's higher education environment.

In response to these trends, the American Council on Education published two influential documents, the 1937 and 1949 Student Personnel Point of Views. Both documents reiterated the need for institutions to pay particular attention to the student's well-rounded development – physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually, as well as intellectually. In addition, these documents frequently called on higher education institutions to implement co-curricular programs that would encourage students to develop their abilities or social life in relating harmoniously with people from diverse backgrounds. Since college life is sometimes regarded as preparing for adult life, the development of harmonious interpersonal relationships or awareness and empathy in college may enhance students' personal and professional lives. Consequently, the development of interpersonal relationships skills was considered to be important in society because all humans are social beings. The importance of developing harmonious interpersonal relationships in college has been substantiated by many authors.

Astin (1985) recommended affective development programs geared toward the development of skills in tolerance, empathy, maturity, managing emotions, and leadership. Astin (1993) explained further that just as institutions are supposed to educate students to develop intellectually, they must also be concerned with the development of their interpersonal skills which may help them fit into an increasingly multicultural society. Connections that students develop in the diverse college environment may have intense impact on students' lives. In order to develop fruitful connections with others, students may require several kinds of skills and attitudes: interpersonal skills, tolerance,

sensitivity to other cultures, and an awareness of the importance of interdependence in society (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). These connections may help develop students' relationship or community-building experiences (Dixon, 2001). Developing interpersonal relationships skills is a major prerequisite for collaborative learning which has been noted to have positive effects on students' self-reported gains in problem solving and knowledge in general education (Astin, 1993; Light, 2001).

Relationships and community building experiences in college may also allow students to transfer these attributes when interacting with diverse groups in societies or at workplaces in the future. In view of this, Pascarella & Terenzini (2005) proposed that a liberal education would help in the promotion of "self-understanding; expanding personal, intellectual, cultural, and social interests; confronting dogma and prejudice; and developing personal, moral and ethical standards while preparing students for participation in a democratic society" (p. 213). For example, in this twenty-first century, businesses are placing higher value on employees with the requisite technical and interpersonal relationship skills which would enable employees to communicate effectively across different cultures (House, 2004).

Furthermore, advances in technology and the ease with which people can migrate from one place to another have led to increasing connections among countries, thus making the world a global village. International trade is bringing nations together and this interconnectedness among countries calls for the appreciation of differences among cultures. House (2004) stated "at the present time there is a greater need for effective international and cross-cultural communication, collaboration, and cooperation, not only

for effective practice of management but also for the betterment of human condition” (p. 4).

In supporting the above ideals, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (1995a) proposed that college students “must learn, in every part of their educational experience, to live creatively with the multiplicity, ambiguity, and irreducible differences that are the defining conditions of the contemporary world” (p. xxii). In order to help students to appreciate and interact with people from different cultural backgrounds, higher education institutions have responded to diversity issues within the last two decades by diversifying their campuses. Many stakeholders now rank multicultural issues high among the components that describe a quality education (Dixon, 2001). For example, the Association of American Colleges and Universities reported in 1995 that about 63% of campuses’ mission statements reflected the ideals of diversity. Similarly, Humphreys (2000) revealed that about 62% of institutions had diversity as an important educational goal or were in the process of incorporating it in their missions. From the above, it can be seen that higher education institutions have acknowledged the importance of diversity and various measures have been undertaken to diversify their campuses through various approaches over the past decades. The types and importance of diversity are explained in the next section.

Diversity

Higher education institutions have often conceptualized diversity from three perspectives. Specifically, using Gurin’s (1999) work as foundation, Chang (2002), Milem and Hakuta (2000) proposed three main types of diversity. First, *structural diversity* refers to the proportional or numerical representation of students from different

cultural backgrounds. The second type is *diversity-related initiatives* which refer to all the activities that are incorporated into the curriculum and in various campus programs in order to promote better cultural understanding (i.e., core courses in diversity, workshops, study abroad programs, etc.). The last one is known as *diverse interactions*. This refers to the rate at which students interact with their peers in order to foster the exchange of ideas. The contribution of each type of diversity is enhanced by the presence of the other types. For example, these interactions may be enhanced when there are opportunities for formal and informal friendships among students in the learning community. Peer interactions have been noted to be very crucial in the development of students' affective and behavioral perspectives (Astin, 1993).

Several outcomes of diversity have been identified in the literature. Diversity in higher education benefits individual students, institutions, the economy and the larger society (Milem, 2003; Milem & Hakuta, 2000). Because this study is focused on the development of students' interpersonal relationships as a result of being exposed to diversity, it is appropriate to pay particular attention to the individual benefits. Two major individual outcomes have been identified (Gurin, 1999; Milem & Umbach, 2003). The first is *learning outcomes* which include all the interpersonal experiences of students that help in their intellectual and academic development.

The second is *democratic outcomes*. Democratic ideals can be important for the survival of students in society which is increasingly becoming diverse (Milem & Umbach, 2003). The appreciation and sensitivity to others from diverse cultures which may help to foster optimal interpersonal relationships is a democratic outcome. Three major categories of democracy outcomes are: citizenship engagement, racial/cultural

engagement, and tolerance or appreciation of differences (Gurin, 1999; Milem, 2003; Milem & Hakuta, 2000). Also, diversity initiatives on college campuses can help develop *cross-cultural* or *global competence* skills in students, therefore facilitating their ability to socially interact and communicate with people from diverse backgrounds (Bikson & Law, 1994; Brustein, 2007).

Interpersonal relationships skills and goals of education

In order to help students achieve the above outcomes, higher education institutions have taken measures to make their programs reflect the three specific educational goals proposed by Bowen (1997) which may be related to the development of interpersonal relationships in college. He concluded that these goals can be achieved through formal academic programs and various extracurricular activities. These are *intellectual tolerance*, *human understanding*, and *adaptability*.

Intellectual tolerance, which falls under the cognitive realm, refers to “freedom of the mind” (Bowen, 1997, p. 78) as a result of intellectual or cognitive sophistication. The individual develops qualities such as “openness to new ideas, willingness to question orthodoxy and ambiguity, appreciation of intellectual and cultural diversity, historical perspective, and cosmopolitan outlook” (Bowen, 1997, p. 78).

Human understanding, which belongs to the affective development realm, helps individuals develop skills in empathy, compassion, understanding, and cooperation, thus helping them to communicate and work with people from diverse backgrounds. Skills in human understanding can help individuals in their interpersonal relations (Bowen, 1997).

Adaptability exists within the practical competence realm and is applicable to “practical affairs” (Bowen, 1997, p. 140). Practical affairs consist of issues relating to

family life, work, and other community activities. The dispositions classified under this domain are as follows: tolerance for new ideas, versatility, willingness to adapt to change, keeping options open, and ability to compromise. The above issues are consistent with Chickering's theory of psychosocial development proposed in 1969 and revised in 1993 by Chickering and Reisser.

Chickering and Reisser (1993) proposed seven vectors of development which are related to physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development of college students. These vectors are: 1) developing competence (intellectual, physical and manual, and interpersonal), 2) managing emotions, 3) moving through autonomy toward interdependence, 4) developing mature interpersonal relationships, 5) establishing identity, 6) developing purpose, and 7) developing integrity. Chickering and Reisser (1993) concluded that the availability of opportunities for students to interact with others from different cultural backgrounds may enhance their development along all the vectors. In view of this, the development of interpersonal *relationships* is used as the main conceptual framework in this study. Development is seen as "qualitative changes in thinking, feeling, behaving, valuing, and relating to others and oneself" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 2).

Statement of the Problem

According to Murdock and Hoque (1999), minority groups made up 24.3% of the total U.S. population in 1990 and they predicted that this may increase to 47.2% in 2050. Race, ethnicity, and cultural diversity have influenced the higher education environment since the 1980s and 1990s (Botstein, 1991). The dimensions of diversity in American's colleges and society are becoming more complex in this twenty-first century when compared to several years ago. Such complexities are expected to increase further in the coming years (El-Khawas, 2003). Current diversity dimensions include the following background factors: gender, race and ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, age, disability, and nationality (El-Khawas, 2003). Students experience the world and the learning environment differently which may impact their socialization or interpersonal relationships processes.

Current trends reveal that today's communities such as schools, churches, clubs, neighborhoods, workplaces, and even local networks are becoming more diverse as compared to those that existed in the past (Sullivan & Rosen, 2008). With the continuous growth of international travel and immigration, citizens in many countries around the world need skills that would enable them to deal with cross-cultural issues. In 2008, there were over 14 million illegal (Lee & Rytina, 2009) and legal (Monger & Barr, 2009) immigrants living in the United States. Their presence may have ripple effect on campuses of American colleges and universities. These students have different beliefs different from their American counterparts. For example, according to current trends, there were about 723,277 international students in the United States during the 2010/2011 academic year (Institute of International Education, 2011). It is anticipated that

international students and their American counterparts would take advantage of this situation to achieve interpersonal competency skills which are important ingredients for dealing with future challenges in the emerging global world.

The demands in the labor market and in society have resulted in frequent calls from stakeholders in higher education to prepare students who would be able to function effectively in a diverse global society. Higher education institutions can address this need through student affairs programs that are related to issues such as the development of tolerance and appreciation of differences. It has been concluded that education may lead to the development of tolerance (Vogt, 1997). Specifically, schooling may lead to *cognitive sophistication* which then leads to tolerance (Quinley & Glock, 1979; Vogt, 1997). But students may often face challenges within their relationships with others from different cultural backgrounds such as developing intimate relationships, becoming part of a group, and interacting harmoniously with students and faculty from different backgrounds (Newton & Ender, 2010). Moreover, Bok (2006) stated that today's college students receive "very little preparation either as citizens or as professionals for the international challenges that are likely to confront them" (p. 233). Additionally, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) identified that more efforts were spent on the students' economic development while less attention was given to students' personal or character development. Chickering and Reisser (1993) noted, "It is clear that diversity will only increase in the years ahead. It is also clear that if we are unable to deal with it, we are likely to face increasing social conflict, a two-tier society, and economic stagnation" (p. 473).

Because of the above stated challenges or problems, this research addressed international and American students' self-reported levels of *tolerance* and *quality of relationships*. These two components may be crucial for maintaining mature interpersonal relationships in the higher education environment which is increasingly becoming diverse. This study nested qualitative data within quantitative data (concurrent nested mixed methodology). Quantitative data using an instrument (Appendix C) was collected from students to address the quantitative research questions. Qualitative data which consisted of open-ended interview questions (Appendix E) was gathered to address the qualitative research questions. The interviews helped the researcher to gain broader perspectives about how students are relating with others from different backgrounds.

Research Questions

Quantitative Research Questions

The primary research question guiding this research is:

1. Are there significant differences in the self-reported levels on tolerance and quality of relationships in college between international and American students?

The subsidiary or secondary research questions are:

2. Are there significant differences in self-reported levels of tolerance and quality of relationships in college between female and male international students?

3. Are there significant differences in self-reported levels of tolerance and quality of relationships in college between female and male American students?
4. Does academic achievement as measured by grade point average, educational level, and age predict international and American students' self-reported levels of tolerance and quality of relationships?

Research Hypotheses

H₁: There are significant differences in self-reported levels of tolerance and quality of relationships in college between American and international students.

H₂: There are significant differences in self-reported levels of tolerance and quality of relationships in college between female and male international students.

H₃: There are significant differences in self-reported levels of *tolerance* and *quality of relationships* in college between *female and male American students*.

H₄: There are significant relationships between academic achievement as measured by *GPA, educational level, age* and students' self-reported scores on *tolerance* and *quality of relationships*.

Qualitative Research Questions

The following research questions were developed to assess the extent to which students are relating with others from different backgrounds in the college environment.

1. In what ways are international and American college students developing their mature interpersonal relationships skills with students from different backgrounds?

2. What could student affairs professionals do in order to enhance tolerance among students from different cultural backgrounds?
3. How is the college environment influencing international and American students' mature interpersonal relationships skills?
4. What differences exist between international and American students in terms of their development of mature interpersonal relationships in college?

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are worthy of definitions:

American students. For the purposes of this study, these are college students who were born or naturalized in the United States.

Academic Achievement. For the purposes of this study, is determined by a student's Grade Point Average (GPA).

Classification. For the purposes of this study, refers to whether a student is an American or international.

International students. For the purposes of this study, these are students who are citizens or permanent residents of countries other than the United States who study at a post-secondary institution in the United States on a temporary visa.

Interpersonal relationships. These refer to all kinds of social interactions between two or more people. Interpersonal relationships are common in many places such as: the workplace, family, school, church, and in society. They can also exist between friends (Firestone & Catlett, 2009).

Mature interpersonal relationships. These involve tolerance and appreciation of differences and capacity for intimacy. The development of these harmonious connections

requires skills and attitudes such as: openness, intercultural competence, awareness of differences, curiosity, thus helping to reduce biases and ethnocentrism (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). This construct was measured in this study.

Quality of relationships: “A shift in relationships with friends from either extreme dependence or independence, toward a state of interdependence” (Hood, 1986, p. 1).

Student development. “The ways that a student grows, progresses, or increases his or her developmental capabilities as a result of enrollment in an institution of higher education” (Rodgers, 1990, p. 27).

Tolerance. “Intentional self-restraint in the face of something one dislikes, object to, finds threatening, or otherwise has a negative attitude toward—usually in order to maintain a social or political group or to promote harmony in a group” (Vogt, 1997, p. 3).

Visa classification. F-1 Visa. This is issued to students who are citizens or permanent residents of countries other than the United States who wish to pursue academic studies at a United States’ college or university. *J-1 Visa.* This is issued to exchange visitors who are citizens or permanent residents of countries other than the United States, thus allowing them to stay in the United States for education, cultural, or business exchange.

Delimitations

The study was delimited to students in the United States attending a mid-sized Southern University. Only international students with F-1 and J-1 visa status and American students were included in this study. Also, only one of Chickering’s vectors of development, development of mature interpersonal relationships was used in the study.

Assumptions

The study is based on the assumption that respondents were honest in their responses to the survey and interview questions. One challenge that researchers normally face is when respondents do not tell the truth. Consequently, responses were assumed to reflect participants' actual attitudes and not merely socially desirable answers (Vogt, 1997). Furthermore, it is assumed that the information provided about international students by the International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) staff was accurate. The researcher also assumed that participants understood the survey and interview questions. Finally, the researcher assumed that Chickering and Reisser's (1993) concept about mature interpersonal relationships reflects the ideals in the present day society.

Justification

The results of this study can be used by both student affairs professionals and faculty members in higher education. Development of interpersonal relationship skills among students is very crucial for the achievement of successful learning community in higher education. Student affairs professionals can use these results to assess the effectiveness of their cultural or diversity programs. This will enable student affairs professionals to implement diversity programs or provide opportunities that will be targeted to the needs of students. For example, student affairs organizations may implement programs that may allay the fears people have related to the interactions with students from different cultural backgrounds. The results of this study could also be used to guide faculty in designing their teaching and learning environments to suit students' needs.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The chapter begins with the brief explanations of Chickering and Reisser's (1993) seven vectors of psychosocial development. The development of *mature interpersonal relationships* (vector 4) is discussed further because this was used to guide the project.

The development of mature interpersonal relationships is becoming vital in the college environment. This is because with the increasing diverse nature of the higher education environment, students are frequently dealing with people from various ethnic, socioeconomic, religious, and educational backgrounds. Consequently, as with most studies dealing with the issues of diversity, the concepts of culture, interpersonal and intercultural competence are worthy of discussion. According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), tolerance, which is an important factor in the development of mature interpersonal relationships, can be seen in both an *intercultural* and an *interpersonal* context. Likewise, Allport's contact theory which establishes an association between intergroup contacts and the ability of individuals to function effectively in diverse environments is relevant. In addition, because international students represent a major group in American's education system, information about them needs to be discussed. The last section of the literature review is devoted to the factors that influence the development of interpersonal relationships in college.

Chickering's Theory of Psychosocial Development

The main theory guiding this study is Arthur Chickering's theory of psychosocial development proposed in 1969 in his landmark book, *Education and Identity*. In collaboration with Linder Reisser, this theory was later revised in 1993. Chickering (1969) based his ideas on the work of Erikson's (1950) conceptions of identity and intimacy. Chickering's theory reflects issues concerning the physical, social, ethical, and emotional development of students.

The conceptual framework for the theory was based on information gained from students through personality inventories and achievement tests when Chickering was working at Goddard College between 1959 and 1965. He used the term *vector* instead of stage to describe the issues because "each seems to have direction and magnitude – even though the direction may be expressed more appropriately by a spiral or by steps than by a straight line" (Chickering, 1969, p. 8). Students can be dealing with several of the vectors at the same time rather than trying to deal with one before moving on to the other. Chickering and Reisser (1993) described these vectors as "major highways for journeying toward individuation" (p. 35).

Chickering's (1969) original seven vectors of student development included: 1) developing competence, 2) managing emotions, 3) developing autonomy, 4) establishing identity, 5) freeing interpersonal relationships, 6) developing purpose, and 7) developing integrity. Through additional research, Chickering and Reisser (1993) made revisions to the theory to incorporate findings from diverse populations. Thus, the following vectors of psychosocial development were identified in the 1993 edition of *Education and Identity*: 1) developing competence, 2) managing emotions, 3) moving from autonomy

toward interdependence, 4) developing mature interpersonal relationships, 5) establishing identity, 6) developing purpose, and 7) developing Integrity. Each vector is briefly explained below.

Vector 1: Developing Competence - This vector encompasses three important areas including intellectual, physical and manual, and interpersonal competence. Intellectual competence is the ability to reason and develop skills that will enable individuals to deal with life experiences. Physical competence relates to the ability to maintain strength and fitness in order to be able to participate in artistic and manual activities. Interpersonal competence involves the development of skills in communication, listening, and understanding that would enable individuals to function in a democratic society. According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), interpersonal competence or skills may be crucial for the development of mature interpersonal relationships.

Vector 2: Managing Emotions - this is described as “first becoming more aware of feelings and then as learning flexible control and appropriate means of expression or integration” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 88). Aggression and sexual desire were the main focus in his original theory, but he added issues such as anger, embarrassment, guilt, desire and others in the revised version.

Vector 3: Moving through autonomy toward interdependence – this involves the following ideals: instrumental independence – the ability to exhibit self-confidence in order to solve daily problems or carry on life activities and interdependence – realizing that humans rely on one another for the betterment of society.

Vector 4: Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships - this vector was originally named *freeing interpersonal relationships* but was renamed developing *mature interpersonal relationships* and was also placed before the vector, establishing identity. Chickering and Reisser (1993) did this in order “to recognize the importance of students’ experiences with relationships in the formation of their core sense of self” (p. 39). Issues related to this vector are the development of interpersonal and intercultural competence, tolerance, appreciation of differences, and capacity for intimacy.

Vector 5: Establishing Identity - This vector brings together development that takes place in the previous vectors. Establishing identity involves:

Comfort with body and appearance, comfort with gender and sexual orientation, sense of self in a social, historical, and cultural context, clarification of self-concepts through roles and life-style, sense of self in response to feedback from valued others, self-acceptance and self-esteem, and personal stability and integration. (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 49)

Vector 6: Developing Purpose - this includes the ability to develop clear-cut educational and vocational plans, make personal lifestyle choices, and establish strong interpersonal and family commitments. Individuals acknowledge major issues that are really important in life.

Vector 7: Developing Integrity. Development on this vector is evidenced when the individual establishes his/her values, beliefs and purposes and includes the following overlapping stages:

- (1) Humanizing values – shifting away from automatic application of uncompromising beliefs and using principled thinking in balancing one’s own

self-interest with the interests of one's fellow human beings, (2) personalizing values – consciously affirming core values and beliefs while respecting other points of view, and (3) developing congruence – matching personal values with socially responsible behavior. (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, pp. 236-237)

Higher education has been noted to be a liberalizing environment for students to work through these crises (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Perry, 1970). Consequently, student affairs professionals can help students to move along these vectors in order for them to develop more “awareness, skills, confidence, complexity, stability, and integration (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 34).

Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships

According to Sherfield, Montgomery, and Moody (2004), interdependence can be crucial for human beings in all spheres of society as this may enable people to function in a healthy and happy manner. In their assertion, interpersonal relationships can be crucial for our survival because humans need one another in order to function successfully in society. They further concluded that everything learned in life depends on the varied relationships initiated with others. In this case, the development of interpersonal relationships has become implicit in daily life. Interpersonal relationships involve all the social interactions that take place in life: close relationships, friendship, couple or marital relationships, and various forms of social networks. Interpersonal relationships can occur in many places: family, workplace, church, and in the larger society (Firestone & Catlett, 2009).

But, due to the diverse nature of the college environment, students may often face several personal challenges: interpersonal skills, building healthy relationships, expressing and managing feelings, resolving difference, and building healthy relationships (Newton & Ender, 2010). Firestone and Catlett (2009) identified culture as one of the barriers to interpersonal relationships. Cultural barrier include: gender, age, socioeconomic status, and cultural background.

Consistent with this work, Chickering and Reisser (1993) acknowledged the importance of social development or networks in the lives of college students and the notion that in the college environment, students become part of a community that necessitates them to interact with various campus constituents from diverse backgrounds: roommates, classmates, faculty, and administrators. According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), in order for students to develop mature interpersonal relationships, they need to be sensitive to other cultures and also accept differences. They further stated that “sensitivity to people from other cultures needs to move beyond intellectual understanding” (p. 146).

Two main components which describe Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) vector of mature interpersonal relationships are 1) tolerance and appreciation or acceptance of differences and 2) capacity for intimacy. Consequently, they suggested that student affairs programs should help students achieve the following multifaceted skills: resolving conflicts/differences, managing and expressing emotions, interpersonal competence, nurturing healthy relationships, and the awareness of the importance of interdependence in society.

Tolerance and Appreciation of Differences

Chickering and Reisser stated that in developing tolerance, students need “communication skills to initiate dialogue, the courage to challenge prejudice, and the commitment to reach across barriers created by unfamiliarity” (p. 146). One concept that could negatively affect the development of tolerance is *ethnocentrism* which describes the tendency for people to view their cultural or ethnic practices as superior to other cultures (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Chickering and Reisser supported the idea of college programs that can challenge students to become citizens of the world and sensitive members of a multicultural society. Information seeking through dialogue becomes very important if students want to gain intercultural understanding. With the diversity of the population increasing on college campuses and in the American society, Chickering and Reisser (1993) stated “now that multicultural communities are growing, academic institutions have a responsibility to equip their graduates with tolerance and empathy as essential surviving skills” (p. 150). Tolerance enables students to become sensitive to people from diverse cultures, objective, and also to understand how stereotyping or discrimination can negatively affect a sense of community building. Thus, tolerance is a major prerequisite to the development of intercultural and mature interpersonal relationships (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Chickering and Reisser also agreed with Bennett’s (1986) developmental model of intercultural tolerance. This describes the movement from *ethnocentric* states, which encompass stages of resistance to cultural diversity, to *ethnorelative* states. Behaviors that can be exhibited during the ethnocentric states are: *denial of differences* (cultural differences are not recognized due to lack of interactions), *defense against differences*

(differences are identified in the interaction process, but they are not appreciated, which can lead to negative stereotypes), and *minimization of differences* (through frequent interactions, people begin to realize the similarities they share). In the ethnorelative states, there is the *acceptance of differences* (not only do they not find fault with others who are different, they also enjoy diversity and cultural relativism replaces dualistic ideas), *adaptation to differences* (individuals develop communication and interpersonal skills that can facilitate intercultural communication or interactions), and lastly *integration of differences* (multicultural views are internalized).

In addition to Chickering and Reisser's (1993) works on tolerance, other researchers have done extensive work on this concept. Vogt (1997) defined tolerance as “intentional self-restraint in the face of something one dislikes, objects to, finds threatening, or otherwise has a negative attitude toward – usually in order to maintain a social or political group or to promote harmony in a group” (p. 3). He explained that the group can either be a couple, a school, a society or a nation. According to Newton and Ender (2010), tolerance is when one develops the habit of appreciating other individuals' lifestyles, whether or not they are in line with his or her own. They further described a statement for tolerance as “live and let live” (p. 89). In the broadest sense, tolerance is when we are able to accept differences (Afdal, 2006). Afdal further provided two conditions of tolerance. First, there should be a situation of diversity, and second, there should be some reasons for appreciating these differences. The development of effective harmonious interactions with people depends on how an individual is able to tolerate ambiguities in his or her environment.

Vogt (1997) further categorized tolerance as *political*, *moral*, and *social* by its objects (Toleratees). Political tolerance refers to tolerance of acts portrayed in the public sphere, for example: demonstrations, speech, and organizing meetings. Political tolerance is often referred to as civil liberties in the United States. Moral tolerance, on the other hand refers to tolerance of acts in the private sphere (such as abortion, homosexuality, and pornography), and lastly, social tolerance which is tolerance of individuals' state of being (such as color, socio-economic status, and disability).

The distinctions between attitudes and behaviors in the interaction process have prompted researchers to differentiate between functional tolerance and true tolerance. According to Patchen, Hofmann, and Brown (1977), contact “does not have to lead to general attitude change for friendly interaction to occur” (p. 69), nor will attitude change automatically lead to friendly contact (as cited in Vogt, 1997, p. 174). Serow (1983) calls this *functional tolerance* as noted by Vogt (1997). On the other hand, *true tolerance* involves “knowing how to get along with different people, to cooperate with them in a modern social setting” (Vogt, 1997, p. 174). True tolerance can be vital to the development of harmonious intergroup relations. Encountering ambiguous situations are inevitable due the increasingly diverse nature of this modern society. This has encouraged many researchers to introduce the concept of *tolerance of ambiguity*.

Tolerance of ambiguity. Frenkel-Brunswik (1948) was the first researcher to introduce the concept of tolerance of ambiguity and described it as a personality attribute which may influence a person's behavior, cognition, and attitudes. She posited that people with low tolerance for ambiguity tend to exhibit inflexible, authoritarian, ethnocentric, and dichotomous behaviors or attitudes. Also, individuals who are

intolerant of ambiguities often see ambiguous issues as sources of conflict and anxiety. In conducting a study using 100 adults and 200 children between the ages of 9 to 14 years old, Frenkel-Brunswik (1948) examined their attitudes toward ethnic prejudice and concluded that ambiguity tolerance is “a general personality variable relevant to basic social orientation” (p. 268). She also further explained that prejudiced persons are noted for their rigid social dichotomatizing and premature reduction to certainty of ambiguous situations. She asserted that when confronted with ambiguous situations, persons tolerant of ambiguity may experience multiple or repeated perspectives before they make meaning of the situation. Conversely, persons who are intolerant of ambiguity would rigidly reach a conclusion very early and would also not be willing to modify or change their perspectives. In 1949, Frenkel-Brunswik concluded that the concept of tolerance of ambiguity is a personality variable by generalizing it to an individual’s emotional, cognitive, social, and interpersonal functions. She went on to state further that intolerance of ambiguity is “a tendency to resort to black-and-white solutions, to arrive at premature closure,...often at the neglect of reality” (p. 115).

The concept of tolerance of ambiguity has been explored over the years by several authors since Frenkel-Brunswik’s hallmark study. Budner (1962) introduced three conditions to describe ambiguous situations: “novelty, complexity, and insolubility” (p. 30). The concept of ambiguity is noted to be a subjective term because it depends on the individual’s perception about the situation he or she is experiencing (Budner, 1962; Reisberg, 2006; Zimbardo, Johnson, & Weber, 2006). Budner defined tolerance of ambiguity as “the tendency to perceive ambiguous situations as desirable” (p. 29). Conversely, intolerance of ambiguity is “the tendency to perceive (i.e. interpret)

ambiguous situations as a source of threat” (p. 29). In addition, Furnham and Ribchester (1995) explained ambiguity tolerance as the type of behaviors or attitudes portrayed by individuals when they are exposed to unfamiliar or complex clues. In order to avoid stress, individuals with low tolerance of ambiguity would normally not be willing to encounter ambiguous situations. At the other extreme, however, individuals with high tolerance of ambiguity see ambiguous stimuli as a learning process, challenging, and desirable.

The relationship between tolerance of ambiguity and other variables. Several early authors have examined the relationship between tolerance for ambiguity and other constructs that may help students function in groups. Intolerant individuals are noted for their rigid social dichotomatizing attitudes which can negatively affecting their interpersonal and social functioning in society (Frenkel-Brunswik, 1949), rational decision-making and also, individuals with low tolerance of ambiguity are noted for their desire for premature disclosure in solving group problems. Such behaviors may cause strains in relationships (Ellsberg, 1961; Lowe & Reckers, 1997; Taub, 1995), resistance to the learning of a second language (Chapelle & Roberts, 1986), and difficulties dealing with integrative process of learning among undergraduate students (Johnson, Court, Roersma, & Kinnaman, 1995).

Ruben and Kealey (1979) identified six interpersonal communication skills that were vital to cross-cultural adjustment: respect, empathy, role behavior flexibility, interaction posture, interaction management, and orientation to knowledge. Nishida (1985) utilized these skills to rate communicative behaviors and performance of Japanese students who studied in the United States for four weeks. She assessed the language skills

of the students at the beginning and also measured their culture shock, psychological adjustment, and interaction effectiveness at the end of their stay. Pre-test and post-test scores revealed that only one of the seven communication behaviors, ambiguity of tolerance had direct correlation with culture shock. Specifically, students with high ambiguity tolerance experienced less culture shock whereas those with low ambiguity tolerance experienced high culture shock.

Jonassen and Grabowski (1993) asserted that people with tolerant views may excel in new and complex learning environments while intolerant learners may avoid or give up when they are challenged with ambiguous activities. Intolerant students who encounter colleagues from diverse backgrounds may not be as willing to establish harmonious relationships with them thus posing problems in the collaborative learning environment and in their affective development (Vogt, 1997). Vogt has explained that collaborative learning helps promote tolerance among students because this type of learning technique is solution-oriented, egalitarian, and noncompetitive.

Higher education serves as a liberalizing environment for the cognitive sophistication of students. Thus, it has been concluded that on the average, seniors would be more tolerant than freshmen (Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Perry, 1970). But Rich (1980) criticized this assertion by noting that the development of tolerance depends on the belief held by students about civil liberties before entering college. While some may be supporters, others may hold conservative views about civil liberties. Consequently, he noted that “better students become more tolerant, while poorer students do not change at all” (p. 28). Using the Student-Institution Fit models, many authors have proposed that intolerance toward minority groups is crucial for determining students’ maladjustment

with institutions. Intolerance toward minority groups may result in low involvement with various campus constituents, thus affecting social and academic development (Beau, 1990; Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999; Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996; Tinto, 1993).

Beginning in the Twenty-first century, several researchers have explored the relationship between tolerance of ambiguity and other constructs. These works established positive correlations between tolerance of ambiguity and other variables/constructs such as leadership skills (Lane & Klenke, 2004), coping with unstructured elements of a course (DeRoma, Martin, & Kessler, 2003), coping with uncertainty (Stoycheva, 2001), creativity (Piiro, 2004), academic achievement of undergraduate students (Boyd, Hunt, Kandell, & Lucas, 2003), work satisfaction and performance (Wittenburg & Norcross, 2001), relationship skills (Morton et al., 2000), positive attitudes towards risk (Johanson, 2000; Lauriola & Levin, 2001), and the objective ratings of employees for hiring or promotion (Bauer & Truxillo, 2000). Empathy and flexibility have been noted to be important constructs in the development of tolerance. The development of empathy may lead to the following outcomes: better interaction with people, personal adjustment, and non-ethnocentrism (Leong, 2007; Van Oudenhoven & Van der Zee, 2002; Van der Zee, Zaal, & Piekstra, 2003). Also, individuals who are tolerant of others may be able to exhibit general adjustment and flexible behaviors in their immediate environments (Mol, Born, Willemsen, & Van Der Molen, 2005; Shaffer, Harrison, Gregersen, Black, & Ferzandi, 2006).

It should be noted, however, that some authors' works have also established negative correlations between ambiguity tolerance and other variables such as anxiety

related issues including stress, worry, and panic (Dugas, Gosselin, & Ladouceur, 2001), and distortion of information (Yurtsever, 2001). The other component of interpersonal relationships identified by Chickering and Reisser (1993) is capacity for intimacy. Developing tolerance and appreciating differences may also lead to an increased capacity for intimacy.

Capacity for Intimacy

Erikson (1950) is noted for his pioneering role in the introduction of the construct of intimacy in his eight stages of psychosocial development. Erikson proposed *intimacy* vs. *isolation* as one of his stages which may relate to young adults (20 to 32 years). For quality intimacy to exist, Erikson proposed three important elements: eagerness to make a commitment to one another, capacity to exhibit self-disclosure of inner thoughts and feelings, and readiness to share at a profoundly personal level.

The development of tolerance, empathy, and openness to others enhance students' chances for establishing deep connections with diverse people. Increased capacity for intimacy refers to the existence of interdependence relationships between equal partners. In this case, there is neither too much dependence nor too much dominance in the relationship. Partners see the relationship as unconditional thus it is the intrinsic rewards that are helping to keep them together. Openness enhances better communication, and it also helps to identify the weakness and strengths of each partner in the friendship or romantic relationship (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Authors have explained the construct of intimacy from different viewpoints. Two of these are briefly described here.

The developmental model of intimacy. Collins and Sroufe (1999) argued that the development of intimacy has “emerging properties” (p. 2). Thus, the previous interactions with others in society serve as the foundation for the development of intimacy in future. Intimacy, which consists of motivational, emotional, and behavioral facets, needs to proceed through a series of phases. First, there must be an orientation toward closeness. The individual needs to be active in this process. Second, the intense closeness may help expose each individual’s feelings and emotions thus making it necessary for partners to tolerate each other. Finally, each partner must realize that the relationship is reciprocal and partners should be sensitive to each other’s development.

The interpersonal model of intimacy. According to Reis and Shaver (1988), intimacy is a product of transactional and an interpersonal process in which partners bear a connection to the daily interactions that take place between them. These authors proposed that the intimacy should be reciprocal and must be accompanied by *self-disclosure* and *partner responsiveness* as fundamental components. They also distinguished between *factual* (i.e., descriptive) and *emotional* (i.e., evaluative) disclosure. Factual self-disclosures entail the revelation of personal facts and information while emotional self-disclosures deal with a partner’s private opinions, thoughts, and feelings. Partner responsiveness occurs when partners perceive each partner’s response as understanding and valued in order for the relationship to thrive. The interpretation of the listener’s communication by the speaker is noted to be very important in the intimacy relationship than a speaker’s self-disclosure or even a listener’s responsiveness. This model has empirically been tested and supported by other researchers (Laurenceau, Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 1998; Laurenceau, Barrett, & Rovine, 2005).

Research on the development of intimacy. The growing concerns in political, social, and religious circles about high divorce rates in the United States have encouraged researchers to explore the extent to which the potential for intimacy in young adulthood would predict divorce in midlife (Weinberger, Hofstein, & Whitbourne, 2008). It has been found that about one-half of first marriages end in divorce (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002; Rogers, 2004). Some concerned scholars have examined gender and racial/ethnic differences in the expression of intimacy.

According to Hyde (2007), the existence of gender differences in the literature could be explained due to the early socialization processes that boys and girls experienced. Several empirical studies have revealed that women reported higher intimacy and interpersonal relationships than men (Foubert, Sisson, & Barnes, 2005; Hook, Gerstein, Detterich, & Gridley, 2003). Moreover, in terms of language use patterns in the expression of intimacy, men are more likely to adopt an assertive approach while women are more likely to adopt an affiliative approach (Leaper & Ayres, 2007). In addition, according to Duck and Wood (2006), women tend to think about their relationships much more than men. This supports Gilligan's (1982) theory of moral development of women in which she concluded that women exhibited care orientation in relationships which is in contrast to Kohlberg's (1971) justice orientation for men.

Studies have shown that there are racial and ethnic differences in the development of intimacy among college students. In one study, Caucasians rated higher on intimacy than Native American, African Americans, and Hispanic Americans (Utterback, Spooner, Barbieri, & Fox, 1995). Asian international first-year students scored lower than

American students in the development of mature interpersonal relationships and intimacy but there were no gender differences in this study (Sheehan & Pearson, 1995).

Chickering and Reisser (1993) reiterated Douvan's (1981) assertion on why higher education should encourage the capacity for intimacy among college students. Developing sustained relationships in college helps students to understand themselves (i.e. interpersonal style, beliefs, and values). This may help boost their future interpersonal interactions at the workplace, home, and in the larger community. Students developing along this vector are able to differentiate between healthy relationships and those that are not encouraging. According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), the development of interpersonal competence is another concept that may be a prerequisite for individuals to develop mature interpersonal relationships with others from different backgrounds. Interpersonal competence is examined in the next section.

Interpersonal Competence

Relationship functioning and quality can be boosted through effective interpersonal competence (McGaha & Fitzpatrick, 2005). Interpersonal competence involves the acquisition of skills in listening, leadership, understanding, communication, cooperation as well as the ability to align personal goals to those of the group. Chickering and Reisser (1993) concluded that every interaction initiated requires individuals to exhibit some forms of competencies by stating that:

Learning to communicate directly and diplomatically involves much observation and trial and error. With positive experiences, students begin to feel an overall sense of effectiveness in their interactions. They learn to be adaptable in taking

initiative or easing up, in self-disclosing or holding back, in expressing opinions or testing the waters. (p. 75)

Buhrmester (1990) also defined interpersonal competence across five domains: initiating contact, dealing with negative assertion, self-disclosing, providing emotional support, and resolving conflicts. Chickering and Reisser (1993) explained that the acquisition of these skills enable individuals to function successfully in friendships, intimate relationships, families, society, as well as in career aspirations. In addition, they noted how contemporary colleges are now placing greater emphasis on these skills as part of their education process. They cited Alverno College's competence-based curriculum which assesses students' competencies in social interaction, communication, and effective intrapersonal and intergroup relations.

Studies about interpersonal competence have had various findings. For example, an individual's educational attainment can be given a major boost through the development of interpersonal competence (Mahoney, Cairns, & Farmer, 2003). In view of this, it is appropriate for institutions to implement programs that would facilitate students' persistence in the college environment. Maintaining good relations with peers and avoiding aggressive conflicts are noted to be core indicators of the development of interpersonal competence (Cairns & Cairns, 1994; Luthar & Burack, 2000).

Interpersonal competence has been found to be positively related to a number of variables. For example, higher skills in interpersonal competence may lead to satisfaction in undergraduate students' romantic relationships (Lamke, Sollie, Durbin, & Fitzpatrick, 1994). Additionally, Miller and deWinstanley (2002) concluded that interpersonally competent students had greater recall skills during problem-solving encounters with

same-sex peers. Such recall skills might help in conflict resolutions and also be indicative that a person is sensitive to others. Interpersonal competence may also help to reduce dropout because students are able to initiate harmonious interactions with college constituents thus fostering their academic success (McGaha, & Fitzpatrick, 2005).

On the other hand, some studies have revealed that too much socialization or competence in personal relations might interfere with students' ability to meet academic demands (Czopp, Lasane, Sweigard, Bradshaw, & Hammer, 1998; Eronen & Nurmi, 2001). Regardless, development of skills in this area can generally help students to build meaningful relationships with peers and faculty in college. These fruitful interactions may enhance the college learning environments that are increasingly becoming collaborative in nature. Culture may affect the ways individuals interact in society as it provides the basis for our understanding of intercultural competence, communication or interactions.

Culture

For the purposes of this study, Hoopes and Pusch's (1979) definition of culture was adopted:

Culture...includes values, beliefs, linguistic expression, patterns of thinking, behavioral norms, and styles of communication which a group of people has developed to assure its survival in a particular physical and human environment...Culture is the response of a group of human beings to the valid and particular needs of its members. (p. 3)

Using this definition as the guiding principle, Talbot (2003) classified the variety of campus constituents falling under the concept of culture as: Asian Americans, Jews, men, Latinos, Gays, women, whites, nontraditional students, students with physical and mental disabilities, and varied international populations. Culture helps us to classify individuals who share similar characteristics but Talbot cautioned that using this principle can often lead to stereotyping. This is what Allport (1954) referred to as *overcategorization*. Vogt (1997) also concluded that “Humans are categorizing animals” (p. 42). In view of this, the acts of stereotyping would be inevitable in every society but he supported the view that each individual is culturally different.

Singer (1987) argued that:

Each individual in this world is a member of a unique collection of groups. No two humans share only and exactly the same group memberships, or exactly the same ranking of the importance, to themselves, of the group memberships they do share. Thus, each person must be culturally unique. (p. 2)

Newton and Ender (2010) also agreed with this argument by stating that “culture includes broad differences such as ethnicity, religion, or gender but also covers the unique outlook of the individual” (p. 59). They concluded that group cultures are easily identified through stereotyping but the culture of the individual is very complex and infinite. Thus, having an assumption that a person will behave in a certain way because he/she comes from a particular group may be erroneous. The individual’s personal characteristics serve as guiding principles for viewing and interacting with the environment thus effective intergroup interaction requires careful thoughtful consideration.

Conceptualizing Interpersonal Relationships in the Contexts of Cultural Dimensions

In order to ensure its survival, society normally transmits the shared customs, values, beliefs, and norms to individuals through various avenues (i.e., the media, interactions with older generation, as well as through legal, political, and educational systems. Individuals may usually express these core ideas during their daily interactions in future (Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, Nisbett, 1998). Because it is widely noted that social interactions may primarily be influenced by culture (Berscheid, 1995; Dwyer, 2000), it is appropriate to examine interpersonal relationships in the contexts of some cultural dimensions or variations.

Cultural Typologies in Anthropology

Early anthropologists viewed culture as one of the important facets of human life and as a result spent time studying societies or communities (Kluckhohn, 1973). Their studies enabled them to ascertain the uniform ways of doing things in various communities or societies. Kluckhohn (1973) defined culture as specific learned behaviors, which are uniform to the group and these behaviors are usually transmitted by the older generation to the younger ones (Kluckhohn, 1973). Consequently, there is a general agreement that every human being develops in the context of a certain culture.

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) studied five communities in Southwestern part of the United States of America (the Zuni Pueblo dwellers, the Navaho, the Mexican-Americans, the Mormon villagers, and the Texans of Homestead) and found marked differences in their value orientations relating to the perspectives of self, human nature, family, nature, society, and the supernatural. They provided possible behaviors which would be exhibited by individuals depending on beliefs above six value orientations.

Since then, other culture researchers have proposed cultural theories of universal values orientations (Hofstede, 2001).

High-Context vs. Low-Context Cultures

Hall (1976) initiated the cultural classification of high-context vs. low context cultures based on how individuals rely on context to arrive at meanings of communication with people in their societies. In high-context societies, people exhibit close connections over a long period of time, thus cultural behaviors are often made implicit. Maintaining close relationships enables members to utilize the prevailing external physical environments, non-verbal cues or behaviors, and the established social rules to arrive at meanings to messages conveyed in the environment. Some examples of countries with this type of culture orientation are China, Japan, France and Arabic countries (Yamazaki, 2005).

Conversely, in low-context culture, cultural beliefs and behaviors are usually explicitly spelled out and people play by external rules. Thus, less emphasis is placed on the importance of the physical environment, surrounding situations, and non-verbal cues to determine meanings of messages. Interpersonal relationships normally last for a relatively shorter period of time. Some countries with this type of culture are the United States, Germany, and Switzerland (Yamazaki, 2005).

Shame vs. guilt Culture

Benedict (1946) classified culture based on emotions of guilt and shame from a comparative study of Japanese and Western societies. Tangney and Stuewig (2004) referred to these as moral emotions. Shame involves behaviors which are being negatively evaluated by others in society (external criticism). In this case, members are

very conscious about their audiences and the environments. On the other hand, in guilt cultures, the inner standard of behavior (internal Criticism) within self seems to be more important than the outer standards. Japanese culture is associated with shame culture while the United States culture relates to guilt culture (Yamazaki, 2005).

Cross-Cultural Psychology

Cross-cultural psychology authors base their arguments on the ways in which cultural factors influence human motivation, cognition, emotion, and behavior. Two cultural typologies that may influence the behaviors of people are differing construct of the self: independent versus interdependent (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) and cognitive styles of field-dependent versus field independent (Witkin, 1976).

Independent Construal of Self vs. Interdependent Construal of Self

In some cultures, individuals exhibit self-reliant attitudes to express their unique characteristics in society. Such individuals usually have a belief in their wholeness and thus may not want to depend on others or do not prefer regular give and take relationships for survival. Other terms that could be used to describe this cultural typology are: individualistic, autonomous, egocentric, and self-contained (Marcus & Kitayama, 1991). The Independent-self is mostly exemplified by people in America as well as in many western European cultures.

In contrast, individuals who exhibit interdependence conceptions of self are mostly connected to each other in the surrounding social context and prefer give-and-take relationships in society. Marcus and Kitayama (1991) stated that this involves perceiving “oneself as part of an encompassing social relationship and recognizing that one’s behavior is determined, contingent on, and, to a large extent organized by what the actor

perceives to be the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others in the relationship” (p. 227).

The dimension of interdependent-self is exhibited mostly by people in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and most southern European Countries (Yamazaki, 2005).

Field-dependence vs. field-independence

Witkin’s (1976) dimension of cognitive learning styles of field-dependence and field-independence can also be helpful in explaining students’ interaction preferences in the teaching and learning environment. These typologies of learning assess whether a student prefers an “analytical as opposed to a global way of experiencing the [the subject matter] environment” (Keefe, 1979, p. 9).

Field-dependent/global learners usually rely upon the immediate learning environment for knowledge and typically feel the need to interact with teachers and peers. Yamazaki (2005) stated “the less autonomous functioning of field-dependent people leads them to possess social and interpersonal orientations with great emotional openness in communication with others” (p. 531). Field-dependent learners often have externally defined goals and reinforcement.

Field-independent/analytic learners do not solely rely on the learning environment for the acquisition of knowledge thus they are normally intrinsically motivated to direct their learning activities. Field-independent learners tend to exhibit impersonal orientation, and competitiveness.

Cross-Cultural Management

Several authors have explored culture dimensions at the organizational level and related them to leadership effectiveness (Joy & Kolb, 2009). This cross-cultural management literature has provided us with information about the attitudes of

organizational managers in term of their perceptions, cognition, behaviors, and values exhibited in their leadership processes (Yamazaki, 2005). Hofstede's (2001) cultural model is examined here in this current study. In his study of IBM workers, he empirically identified five dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity vs. femininity, long-term vs. short-term orientation, and individualism vs. collectivism.

Collectivism and individualism are explored further here because they are the two fundamental value orientations frequently used by social and behavioral scientists to differentiate between Eastern and Western cultures (Hofstede, 2001; Joy & Kolb, 2009; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Phinney, Ong, & Madden, 2000). Joy and Kolb (2009) further noted that both scholars and laymen often advocate this global dichotomous framework as a sensible way of explaining cultural differences. However, some researchers have criticized the validity of this framework. For example, Takano and Osaka's (1999) reanalysis of 15 empirical studies between Japanese and American cultures did not provide enough support for this dichotomous cultural framework.

Individualism vs. collectivism

These refer to the extent to which identity is derived from the *self* versus the *collective* (Ng, Sorensen, & Yim, 2009). In *individualistic cultures*, members normally portray orientations such as self-reliance, independence, autonomy, freedom and competitiveness and may not commit themselves so much to the family or colleague groups. Individuals focus on personal needs or accomplishments, and rights. Carr-Ruffino (1999) referred to this as *me-first* cultures. Individuals will contribute to groups' goals as long as it does not interfere with their personal goals. Interpersonal relationships may not last long or be considered as important because individuals

maintain such relationships after carefully evaluating the cost and benefits associated with these. Cultures in North America, Great Britain, and Australia are associated with this orientation (Gelfand & Realo, 1999; Hofstede, 2001).

On the other hand, members in *collectivist cultures* define themselves as having interdependence on others in their societies. Thus, their personal goals are closely aligned to the groups' goals. The maintenance of interpersonal relationships is perceived as very important in society, even if these relationships would not directly benefit individuals (Triandis, 1995). Members may normally feel loyal to in-groups such as the family and the community thus the focus is on *we* in most of their communications (Hofstede, 2001). Carr-Ruffino (1999) described this as *us-first* cultures. Individuals usually stay close to their parents and relatives for a long time. Conformity to prevailing norms such as maintaining harmony and cooperation are prevalent in these societies (Gelfand & Realo, 1999). Most societies in Asia, some parts of Africa, Arab nations, and Latin America exhibit such cultural orientation (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

In view of all the above, it is crucial for students to develop skills that may enable them to maintain harmonious interaction with the various college constituents who may exhibit different cultural orientations. Optimal interactions may help to improve the ideals of a sense of community which institutions are frequently aspiring for in the 21st century. Thus, there is the need for students to be culturally competent in order to function successfully in the diverse college environment. The concept of intercultural competence is explored in the next section.

Intercultural Competence

The concept of intercultural competence started becoming popular among researchers from the beginning of the 1950s as studies explored the experiences of Peace Corps volunteers working abroad. In order to foster effective collaborations with people from diverse backgrounds, these volunteers needed to exhibit cross-cultural understandings. In the 1970s, the perspectives of intercultural competence were extended to cover international business, study abroad programs, and immigrant acculturation (Sinicrope, Norris, & Watanabe, 2007). With the development of technology, the world is increasingly becoming a *global village*, thus making the appreciation of diversity very difficult to put aside in this modern environment. In view of this, being able to thrive in a multicultural environment has become a major demand in the American society. Higher educational institutions have been tasked with promoting intercultural competence among students thus helping them to fit into the global society. Bowen (1997) has outlined three educational goals that are related to intercultural competence: intellectual tolerance, human understanding, and adaptability.

The multicultural environment is becoming complex and challenging in many countries around the world thus making research on diversity issues abundant in the literature. Throughout the literature, researchers used alternative terms to explain intercultural competence because they approached it from a variety of fields and methodologies. Notable among them are: *intercultural effectiveness* (Stone, 2006), *intercultural literacy* (Heyward, 2002), *global competence* (Hunter, White, & Godbey, 2006), *interpersonal communication competence* (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984), *intercultural sensitivity* (Bennett, 1986) and *intercultural communication competence*

(Spitzberg, 1991). Even though the definition of intercultural competence continues to evolve, these varied terms and the associated explanations have certain things in common: the acquisition of skills and knowledge to interact, communicate, and cooperate harmoniously with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. In this study, interpersonal communication competence, intercultural communication competence, and multicultural competence are all synonymous with intercultural competence. This is because they all include a communication dimension in the skill of interaction. The lack of conceptual clarity prompted Deardorff (2006) to undertake a survey to seek consensus among intercultural scholars on what constitutes intercultural competence and the best way to measure it. Deardorff reported that the definition that was most widely accepted by administrators and institutions was Byram's (1997) work which explained the factors in the concept as "skills to interpret and relate; knowledge of self and others; skills to discover and/or interact; attitudes of relativising self and valuing others and the development of critical cultural awareness" (p. 34).

Deardorff (2009) defined intercultural competence as "a cultural learning process—through observing, listening, and asking those who are from different backgrounds to teach, to share, to enter into dialogue together about relevant needs and issues" (p. xiii). He explained further that interpersonal competence involves all the complex abilities that enable individuals to interact harmoniously with others who are linguistically different and culturally diverse from themselves. Sorti (1990) also defined intercultural competence as "the process of learning a new culture and its language and behaviors in an effort to understand and empathize with the people of the culture and to live among and interact successfully with them" (p. 6). Spitzberg (1991) on the other

hand identified a list of components vital to intercultural communication competence including (1) “ability to adjust to different cultures, 2) ability to deal with psychological stress, (3), ability to establish interpersonal relationships, (4) awareness of implications of cultural differences, (5), charisma, (6) empathy/efficacy, (7) interpersonal flexibility, (8), interpersonal harmony, (9) self-consciousness, (10) self-disclosure, (11) social adjustment, and (12) strength of personality” (p. 355).

Research on intercultural competence.

Graf (2004) used a matched sample of American and German MBA students with international experience (n=112) to identify significant skill profiles or competencies which are vital to the development of intercultural communication competence. The most important competency was the ability to speak the language of the one you interact with, followed by openness to and knowledge of other cultures, religion, and customs; tolerance; and adaptability.

Factors that promote or hinder intercultural friendships or interactions among diverse people have been noted in a number of studies. For example, it has been found out that there is a positive relationship between sensation seeking and intercultural communication competence. High-sensation seekers are more competent in dealing with diversity than low sensation-seekers. Also, there is a negative relationship between ethnocentrism and intercultural communication competence (Arasaratnam & Banerjee, 2010). Ethnocentrism hinders individuals’ motivation to form friendships or interactions with people from other cultures (Arasaratnam & Banerjee, 2007).

Intercultural contact may lead to several issues (i.e., positive and negative) for people. Consequently, it is appropriate to review the theoretical implications of Allport's (1954) contact theory.

Contact Theory/Hypothesis

Many social scientists in the early part of the nineteenth century indicated that hostility and conflicts were inevitable when there is contact among diverse groups. Some authors were critical while others were supportive of this view. Baker (1934) concluded that frequent contact between the races would lead to "suspicion, fear, resentment, disturbance, and at times open conflict" (p. 120). In contrast, Lett (1945) proposed that intergroup experiences with a common objective would normally lead to "mutual understanding and regard" (p. 35). Others like Brameld (1946) stated "when groups are isolated from one another, prejudice and conflict grow like a disease" (p. 245). Prompted by the frequent intergroup tensions in America's society, Williams (1947) proposed 102 testable propositions on intergroup contacts that included the preliminary premises of intergroup contact theory (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2005).

It can be seen from the above that many authors' views related to intergroup contact were already in the literature by the mid-1930s but Allport (1954) has commonly been credited with this theory in his famous book, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Kawakami, 2003). Contact theory gained popularity among policy makers in the 1950s and early 1960s as a means to support the racial desegregation efforts in American society. Strong claims about the benefits of interracial contact were made by the United States Supreme Court in the landmark decision on desegregation *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). Thus, this hypothesis/theory has been considered to provide

the basis for effective strategies for improving intergroup interactions for the past 56 years

Allport (1954) expressed concerns about ways to improve relations among groups that were encountering prejudice or conflict in society. Allport used the *peaceful progression* model as a guide in describing various steps involved before arriving at cordial or peaceful relationships. The beginning process involves a “*sheer contact*, leading to *competition*, which gives way to *accommodation*, and finally to *assimilation*” (p. 261). He explained that the law of peaceful progression will hold depending how contacts were initiated thus contact would yield positive results under the following conditions: 1) equal status within the situation, 2) common goals or interests, 3) intergroup cooperation, and 4) institutional support (authorities, law, custom or local atmosphere).

Allport (1954) stressed that mere contact *per se* would not automatically improve intergroup relationships thus he advocated that the interaction process must reach “below the surface” in varied ways in order to foster positive intergroup relations. Interactions which are associated with deeper and more genuine attitudes are more important than is frequency. Consequently, elements such as *intimate interactions* (Amir, 1976), and *frequent friendships* (Pettigrew, 1998) are also very important for optimal contact to take place.

Intergroup contact theory received much attention in the literature as researchers proposed alternative perspectives or models to explain how optimal intergroup contact could be achieved. Two of such models were proposed by Pettigrew (1998) and Dovidio et al. (2003).

Pettigrew (1998) proposed a three-stage intergroup contact theory to substantiate how optimal contact situation progresses gradually. First, there will be *deategorization and individuation* in which individuals' actions may be characterized by threat and anxiety. But decategorization helps to minimize this negative effect. Second, the initial contact leads to *salient categorization* in which there would be generalized positive attitudes towards each group. Third, a perception of a common in-group is achieved which is known as *recategorization*.

In addition to Allport's four conditions of equal status, common goals, intergroup cooperation, and institutional support. Dovidio et al. (2003) identified two prerequisite conditions: *personal interaction* and *friendship opportunities* in their unified framework to explain how optimal contact could occur. They argued that these six conditions lead to five mediating mechanisms which help to reduce intergroup stereotyping and bias. The mediating mechanisms are *functional relations* (e.g. cooperative interdependence), *behavioral factors* (e.g. reduction in cognitive dissonance), and *affective factors* (e.g. empathy, emotions and anxiety). The two cognitive factors are *learning new information about the out-group* and also *social representations*.

Criteria for effective contact

The contact hypothesis has gained wide acceptance among various researchers since the 1950s as one of the most effective means for improving intergroup interactions. Many researchers discerned that frequently contacts were not leading to optimal intergroup relations because of the absence of prerequisite conditions. The nature of the interaction has been noted to be more important than the frequency of its occurrence. In this case, Allport (1954), Amir (1969), Pettigrew (1998), and Williams (1947) suggested

that for contact to achieve better results, the interactions need to be more intimate and genuine rather than being superficial (Vogt, 1997). These authors and those from other studies have recommended the following four basic criteria that would help inform policy practices in schools: firm enforcement, meaningful interaction, equal status, and cooperation. Although each criterion can bring positive effects on the interaction process, the contribution of each would be enhanced by the presence of the other criteria.

Positive results may be achieved in intergroup contact if it receives the support of authorities and other social institutions (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2005). This is what Vogt (1997) described as the “*quick and firm*” approach (p. 155). This criterion may lead to some controversies among people in society as a result of the competition between the fear of the unknown and the benefits of intergroup interactions. Thus, rigorous measures may even worsen racial equity; likewise gradual measures may also be interpreted in society as authorities’ lack of interest in eliminating segregation (Hochschild, 1984). In the higher education environment, simply increasing the number of students from different backgrounds may not be the ultimate means to improve intergroup relations. Higher education institutions would need to foster diversity-related initiatives in the curriculum and in campus programs that would encourage students to interact in harmonious and cooperative manners (Milem & Hakuta, 2000; Schofield, 1993; Vogt, 1997).

Meaningful interactions are needed in order to promote harmonious relationships but superficial interactions may not help change individuals’ attitudes and behaviors in a positive manner (Allport, 1954; Amir, 1969; Pettigrew, 1998; Vogt, 1997). Higher education institutions’ diversity-related initiatives can address the importance of

intergroup contact in achieving group goals. In light of this, Pettigrew (1998) advocated for “true integration,” which would encourage students to accept each other which Allport referred to as “acquaintance” (p. 267). In order for this criterion to have positive effects, students must be encouraged to exhibit true tolerance, thus helping them to appreciate the contributions of diverse individuals in the contact process (Vogt, 1997).

The concept of equal status has been noted to be particularly challenging to educators in the contact process. This is because majority of students may not be willing to shed their status in the school environment which can lead to stereotyping among groups (Vogt, 1997). Vogt also advocated that teachers use appropriate strategies that would enable students to perceive equal status in the interaction process.

Cooperation is necessary to instill in group members the importance of interdependence in the achievement of group goals. In this case, activities in the contact situation can be structured in cooperative ways rather than being competitive (Johnson, Johnson, & Maruyama, 1983; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2005).

Dixon, Durrheim, and Tredoux (2005) noted that contact theory has been refined by other researchers and several conditions have been proposed. From their analysis of several of these studies, they concluded that the contact situation should:

- Be regular and frequent
- Involve a balanced ratio of in-group to out-group members
- Have genuine “acquaintance potential”
- Occur across a variety of social settings and situations
- Be free from competition
- Be evaluated as “important” to the group

- Occur between individuals of equal status
- Involve interaction with a counter-stereotypic member of another group
- Be organized around cooperation toward the achievement of a superordinate goal
- Be normatively and institutionally sanctioned
- Be free from anxiety or other negative emotions
- Be personalized and involve genuine friendship formation
- Be with a person who is deemed a typical or representative member of another group. (p. 699)

At the core of all these conditions is the development of tolerance among individuals in the contact situation. The more frequent and in-depth interactions individual have with diverse people, the more skillful they would be in the development of tolerance.

International Students in the United States

International students have become an integral part of the American educational system. According to Trice (2003), international students started coming to the United States since 1784. In an effort to attest to United States' interest in fostering lasting peace with other countries, the Institute of International Education was created in 1919 to catalyze the educational exchange process. In this regard, in 1954, the Institute of International Education started conducting an annual statistical analysis of foreign student population in the United States which is now known as *Open Doors*. In addition to this, college students had being exempted from quotas for immigrants entering the United States since the introduction of the Immigration Act of 1924 and this has given colleges

and universities the mandate to admit qualified international students.

There are many students from other countries studying in America because of these major reasons: the reputation of United States' higher educational institutions on the international scene, the variety of institutions that offer diverse educational programs and the open door policies adopted by the Federal Government concerning universal access to higher education. The number of international students studying in the United States has continued to increase every academic year (Institute of International Education, 2011).

Formerly referred to as foreign students, international students are people who are citizens or permanent residents of countries other than the United States who are studying in the United States on a temporary student visa. According to current trends, the United States remains the world's leader in international student enrollment, hosting about 723,277 international students during the 2010/2011 academic year and this figure represents about a quarter of all international students studying worldwide making the United States' higher education system the most diverse in the world. This figure represents an increase of 4.7% when compared to the previous academic year's figure of 690,923 (Institute of International Education, 2011). More than 2,500 U.S. institutions host international students whose presence varies from institution to institution (Komives, Woodard, & Associates, 2003).

General Characteristics and Attitudes of International Students

With a primary goal of earning their degrees and returning to their home country, international students represent several continents. Students from Asia comprise over half (57%) of all international enrollments, followed by Europe (13%), Latin America (12%),

Africa (7%), the Middle East (6%), North America (5%), and Oceania (1%). China is the leading country of origin for international students (157, 558) followed by India (103, 895), South Korea (73, 351), and Canada (27, 546) (Institute of International Education, 2011).

International students tend to study in areas of the U.S where there are large centers of finance, education, trade, industry, and media services. For example, according to the Open Door Report by the Institute of International Education in 2010/2011, California was the leading host state for international students (96, 535), followed by New York (78, 888), Texas (61,636), Massachusetts (38, 696), Illinois (33, 766), and Pennsylvania (28, 097). Also, in 2010/2011, the University of Southern California hosted the largest number of international students (8, 615) followed by University of Illinois – Urbana-Champaign (7, 991). New York University and Purdue University – Main Campus hosted 7, 998 and 7, 562 students respectively.

The most common visa category for international students is F-1 (student visa). Students with this status are not allowed to work off-campus, but are limited to performing on-campus jobs for a maximum of 20 hours per week. On-campus jobs do not supply adequate income so many without scholarships often face financial difficulties. Nearly 75% of all international students' funding comes from sources outside of the United States. Sixty-three percent of all international students receive their primary source of support from family and personal sources (Institute of International Education, 2011).

The most popular field of study for international students in the United States is business and management (21.5%), followed by engineering (18.7%), math and computer

Science (8.9%) physical and life sciences (8.8%) and social sciences (8.8%) (Institute of International Education, 2011).

Benefits Derived from International Students

Although several questions have been raised about international students after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the benefits of enrolling international students are enormous and these can be seen in the areas of economic, social-political and multicultural perspectives on campuses and the larger United States' society. In view of these, El-Khawas (2003) classified international students as an important population in United States' higher education institutions. In this regard, it not surprising that many policy reports and authors have elaborated on how their presence in higher education institutions is benefiting the United States. The National Academy of Sciences (2005) stated "international students contribute to U.S society not only academically and economically, but also by fostering the global and cultural knowledge and understanding necessary for effective U.S leadership, competitiveness, and security" (p. 72).

The importance of having international students is summed up:

Until this century, the United States enjoyed the status of destination of choice for the world's international students and scholars, and we reaped great benefits from this status: the opportunity to educate the world's future leaders; the ability to attract the world's best talent to our universities and research institutes; the educational benefits that our students derived from foreign professors and from having other cultures represented on campus; and billions of dollars of spending in our economy. (NAFSA, 2008, p. 4)

Economic benefits. International students' money spent on tuition, leisure, living expenses, and cost-related issues, brought approximately \$20.23 billion to the U.S. economy during the 2010/2011 academic year. Thus, the U.S Department of Commerce's data described U.S. higher education as the country's fifth largest service sector export in 2011 (NAFSA, 2011).

Some international students who become used to specific products while living in America may still prefer to buy them when they are living abroad. This can increase the export earnings of America which may help improve other sectors of the economy (Althen, 1995).

The skills of most international students who decide to stay in America after completion of their programs are tapped as academicians or researchers to advance America's competitiveness in the STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) at the local, state, and/ or national levels. This situation arises because the number of American citizens in these fields usually falls short of demand (Althen, 1995; Pandit, 2007; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Consequently, international students continue to contribute to the scientific and technological advancement of the United States.

The presence of international students has also helped to create jobs for many Americans in the student affairs division. Colleges with international students have established international education offices to facilitate their adjustments and legal stay in the United States.

Academic benefits. International students help enrich the cultural diversity on campuses which is an important ingredient in student development in college.

Developing mature interpersonal relationships is one of the important factors of psychosocial development during the college years (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The issues associated with this factor are the development of intercultural and interpersonal tolerance and appreciation of individual differences. Consequently, developing fruitful interactions with international students can help American students achieve these tasks. The American students' exposure to varied cultures can help boost their leadership aspirations for a successful career in today's increasingly interdependent global economy. Many stakeholders in education now view the preparing of culturally competent citizens as an important aim of higher educational institutions. Pandit (2007) referred to this as "global competence" by stating that "there has been an increasing recognition that our graduates will be competing in an international labor market and need to become comfortable in working with students from different parts of the world" (p. 156).

Pandit (2007) also argued that the globalization of the world has encouraged many researchers in some American universities to conduct research in other nations, thus helping them to build their international scholarly production activities. Many of these scholarly works are accomplished through international students who have links to researchers in their countries. These works can help faculty members in the promotion and tenure processes.

The presence of international students also provides pedagogical benefits as this group adds varied perspectives to the teaching and learning environment by sharing experiences from different cultures (Bevis, 2002; Harrison, 2002; Pandit, 2007). This may encourage instructors to vary their teaching styles to suit these perspectives.

Political benefits. The United Nations currently encourages nations to build

healthy relationships among themselves which in turn can promote international peace and trade. The responsibility of this task lies in the hands of leaders of these nations. International students become used to American norms while studying in the United States and this may lead them to become ambassadors of American culture, thus serving as potential political capital when they go home (Althen, 1995; Pandit, 2007). Many of these students return home to be leaders and may help support U.S policies and political interest.

Challenges facing International Students in the United States.

The main aim of most international students is to finish their education successfully and return to their home country. International students have been socialized since childhood by various socialization agents in their home countries in order to help them respond to the existing cultural or societal demands. The learning experiences acquired in their respective societies guide them when they are responding to any current situation. Schools are important agents in the socialization process. Since the culture of education varies among countries in the world, international students can also be regarded as transitional students. Periods of transitions, however, come with problems. A transition is defined as “any event, or non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and role” (Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995, p. 27). The academic traditions these students encountered are totally different from what they encounter in the United States.

Andrade (2006) also asserted that “students from families, communities, and schools with widely different norms and behaviors from those in the college environment may have difficulty adjusting to the new environment” (p. 61). Because the main aim of

so many international students is to graduate and go back to their countries, they want to fit into the academic community as quickly as possible. Althen (1995) proposed that international students would find the American education system different no matter what type of education they went through in their home countries. Thus, if they may find it difficult to fit into the system and they often experience alienation, stress, and cultural shock (Andrade, 2006; Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas, 2000). Even though the international student population cannot be classified as a homogenous group, they may experience certain common challenges which are related to academic and social factors (Pavel, 2006). It has been indicated that frequent opportunities for social contact between international and American students play a major role in international students' cultural adjustment to the American higher education environment (Church, 1982; Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002).

Not fitting into the academic community may lead to homesickness. Yi, Giseala, & Kishimoto (2003) asserted that homesickness is the most common of the problems international students encounter. Other studies have also attempted to compare the expectations or perceptions of instructors with that of international students. In most of the studies, there were mismatches between instructors and international students (Robertson et al., 2000).

Althen (1995) also found that international students have problems with local English language, colloquialisms, and the American accent. Institutions can play a role by learning more about these students and making programs available that will help them to adjust to academic and social life on campus.

Factors Influencing the Development of Mature Interpersonal Relationships in College

Chickering and Reisser (1993) and Chickering (1969) proposed several factors that can exert influences on students' development in college. Chickering and Reisser refer to these as *key influences*. These key influences and other college impact theories are reviewed in this section.

Institutional Objectives

Chickering and Reisser (1993) proposed that students would feel greater impact in their development, if institutions' objectives are clear and consistent. Institutional leaders can make efforts to ensure that their objectives are helping to encourage cross-racial interactions among college constituents. In this regard, the objectives should be clear and consistent on all the three types of diversity that may have a profound impact on student development: structural diversity, diversity-related initiatives, and diverse interactions. All these perspectives enhance overall diversity. The impact of each type is lessened in institutions where the other types are considered as unimportant (Milem, 2003; Milem & Hakuta, 2000). Clear and consistent objectives help to identify opportunities for students that may enhance their interpersonal relationships.

In addition, objectives concerning diversity should be widely-shared and articulated in both oral and written communications. For example, Chickering and Reisser (1993) cited Schmitz's description of Alverno College's objectives concerning eight competency skills that are clearly articulated and taken seriously: communication, analysis, problem solving, valuing in decision making, social interaction, global perspectives, effective citizenship, and aesthetic response.

Institutional Size

Chickering and Reisser (1993) argued that increased institutional size may often reduce the opportunities for contacts among campus constituents. Chickering and Reisser (1993) stated further that “as the number of persons outstrips the opportunities for significant participation and satisfaction, the developmental potential of available settings is attenuated for all” (p. 269). The reduced opportunities for frequent contacts may lead to in-group and out-group, racism, prejudice, and other forms of intolerance among students. Institutions must create the necessary opportunities that would help to enhance meaningful student participation and involvement (Astin, 1977; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Conversely, in institutions with under-populated settings, the development of healthy relationships may be enhanced because the environment is more manageable and members may know one another more easily (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Curriculum

The curriculum involves “all the courses of study offered by an educational institution” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p.340). The learning experiences in the curriculum need to foster a liberal form of education that would enable students to function effectively in society. Vogt (1997) advocates the need for higher education to teach tolerance as part of the regular courses of study through civic, moral, and multicultural education. Chickering and Reisser (1993) cited Cardinal Newman’s key objectives of liberal education and how these objectives are related to the seven vectors of development. In interpreting his key objectives, Chickering and Reisser noted how the

liberal education curriculum could be used to enhance intercultural competence, empathy, understanding, cooperation, and intimacy among students.

The incorporation of diversity courses into the curriculum also helps, in part, to prepare students to function effectively in the democratic society. It may enhance interactions among diverse students (Laird, Engberg, & Hurtado, 2005). Chickering and Reisser (1993) recommended that when institutions are choosing content for the curriculum, institutions should “make content relevant to students’ backgrounds and prior experience” (p. 362); “recognize significant dimensions of individual differences between students” (p. 364); “create encounters with diverse perspectives that challenge existing information, assumptions, and values” (p. 365); and finally “provide activities that help students integrate diverse, assumptions, value orientations” (p. 367). These perspectives in the curriculum may lead to positive outcomes that are related to the development of interpersonal relationships: reducing prejudice and increasing cognitive openness to varied perspectives (Chang, 2002), increasing cultural awareness (Astin, 1993; Gurin, 1999), and interpersonal skills and tolerance (Hurtado, 2001).

Teaching

According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), most teachings practiced by faculty in various institutions falls short of the ideals of promoting the total development of students. Citing Palmer (1990) and Dewey (1938), Chickering and Reisser (1993) acknowledged the impact of teachers’ behaviors on the development of students. Chickering and Reisser (1993) criticized passive learning environments which may not normally promote learning. They recommended active engagement of students in teaching and learning situations. Teaching activities should go beyond pedagogy. They

also suggested Chickering and Gamson's (19 *Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education*, which posited that good practice in teaching 1) encourages student-faculty contact, 2) encourages cooperation among students, 3) encourages active learning, 4) gives prompt feedback, 5) emphasizes time on task, 6) communicates high expectations, 7) respects diverse talents and ways of learning. Thus, development does not only occur during out-of-classroom experiences, but could also occur satisfactorily within in-classroom activities (i.e., sharing personal stories, group work, and oral presentations). Such teaching and learning situations may lead to cognitive sophistication, cooperation, cultural awareness, tolerance and interdependence among participants.

Friendships and student communities

The higher education environment is a learning community in which the various constituents serving as agents of socialization interact for the purposes of achieving specific objectives. Consequently, everything that students learn in the community depends on their meaningful relationships with peers. Communities may be created through informal or more formal interactions such as the relationships that occur in the residence halls, classroom, athletics, and student organizations. Therefore, Chickering and Reisser concluded that "a student's most important teacher is often another student" (p. 392). With the diverse nature of the higher education environment, these relationships may enhance the development of tolerance which is an important prerequisite for the development along all the seven vectors (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

The existence of friendly, helpful, and harmonious relationships among students enhances both their class-related and out-of-class experiences. The importance of class-related and out-of-class experiences in the lives of college students has been noted

frequently in the literature (Astin, 1999; Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Student development programs and services

In helping students to develop, institutions adopt various strategies to provide services and programs. Chickering and Reisser (1993) recommended that faculty and student affairs professionals need to work together to provide the appropriate developmental programs and services. Through extensive research, Manning, Kinzie, and Schuh (2006) presented two main types of models that are related to student affairs practice. These are the traditional models and the innovative models. The extracurricular programs are related to the traditional models.

Extra-curricular or co-curricular programs are popular on most campuses because of their contributions to students' personal development (intellectual, social, and emotional). These programs which are manifested through student involvement have often been recommended by several authors (Astin, 1977; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). In such programs, "students are exposed to diverse populations of people, learn management and leadership, work collaboratively with peers, articulate a point of view to institutional leadership, gain confidence and expertise" (Manning et al., 2006, pp. 41-42). Mature interpersonal relationships skills may be acquired through leadership programs, campus employment, and participation in student clubs, societies, or organizations (Manning et al., 2006).

Also appropriate to the development of students' interpersonal relationships are the application of the student-centered innovative models. Three of these are the student-driven, student-centered ethic of care, and student agency models. Student-driven models

rely on the trust of students in their ability to manage college activities (Manning et al., 2006). Students are given the opportunities to manage campus programs through their employment as paraprofessionals thus showing that institutions are concerned with their personal development. When students realize that they are considered as important of the community, their engagement, integration, and involvement in campus activities are enhanced (Manning et al., 2006). Programs typically aim to empower students to become involved in community enable them to interact with diverse people on campus.

In the student-centered ethic of care model, care and relationships development should be the main principle in student affairs programs. This model is related to Gilligan's (1982) theory about women's moral development. Noddings (1984) noted "caring involves stepping out of one's own personal frame of reference into the others. When we care, we consider other's point of views, his [sic] objective needs, and what he expects of us" (as cited in Manning et al., 2006, p. 100). Students' involvement and engagement in the campus community may be enhanced through the application of the student-centered ethic of care model.

In the student agency model, programs move several steps beyond the student-driven model. Students work as full partners in the development of programs on campus thus they are seen as equals by faculty and administrators. They work on various committees, help develop courses, and also perform various governance tasks. All these activities may help in their personal responsibility development (Manning et al., 2006).

Summary

In summary, this study looked at the development of mature interpersonal relationships among college students and its importance in students' lives. Chickering

and Reisser's (1993), psychosocial theory served as the theoretical framework. The study was limited to the fourth vector (Developing interpersonal relationships). Literature has revealed that students often face interpersonal relationships problems because of the increasingly diverse nature of the college environments (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Newton & Ender, 2010). Two main components considered under the development of interpersonal relationships are *tolerance and appreciation of differences* and the *capacity for intimacy*. Studies related to these components were examined. Interpersonal competence was also explored because skills in this area may be needed in order for students to be able to relate harmoniously with diverse people. Cultural issues come into play during intergroup interactions, thus it was also appropriate to examine the concepts of culture and intercultural competence. As international students have become a major group in the American educational system, it is appropriate to provide brief information about them.

Lastly, the factors that enhance the development of interpersonal relationships in college were examined. These factors are what Chickering and Reisser (1993) call key environmental influences.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology for the study which includes the research design, selection of participants, instrumentation, administration procedures, limitations, and methods for analyzing the data. As its main focus, this study seeks to assess the differences that exist between American and international students' self-reported levels of tolerance and their quality of relationships in college.

Design

This study employed a *concurrent nested/embedded* (mixed-methods) model to investigate the extent to which students had developed their interpersonal relationship skills. In such studies, both quantitative and qualitative data are collected concurrently, but the secondary method is “given less priority, [since] the secondary method (quantitative or qualitative) is embedded or nested, within the predominant method (quantitative or qualitative)” (Cresswell, 2009, p. 214). A pre-existing survey instrument was used to collect quantitative data while the qualitative aspect was assessed through interviews to enhance the description of participants' perspectives and expressions about their interpersonal relationship skills. Consequently, Light (2001) stated “personal interviews offer a special depth and richness that no checks-box questionnaire, however well designed, could easily tap” (p. 7).

Participants/Subjects

All participants came from a mid-sized southern university. Equal samples from international and American student population were obtained. The actual number of

American students was determined by the number of international students who were willing to participate in the study. Participants included students at all levels of the institutions' educational systems (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, and graduate). International students were limited to those with F-1 and J-1 visas.

Instrument

Quantitative Data

The primary variables, *tolerance* and *quality of relationships*, were assessed using the Mines-Jensen Interpersonal Relationships Inventory (Appendix C) developed in 1977. The original version which was known as the Freeing of Interpersonal Relationships Inventory was made up of 93 items (Tolerance = 40, Quality of Relationships = 53), but through item analysis many items were removed to arrive at a final version of 42 items. The final version of the instrument is made up of two subscales: Tolerance (20 items) and Quality of Relationships (22 items). Inventory questions are constructed to address issues concerning four content areas: peers, adults, friends, and significant others. Item responses are on a 4-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree), thus possible scores on the Tolerance scale range from 20 to 80 while Quality of Relationships range from 22 to 88.

Internal reliability coefficients of .71 for Tolerance and .79 for Quality of Relationships (N = 255) have been reported (White & Hood, 1989). Several researchers have validated and used the instrument in their studies (Chafin, 2006; Inoue, 2003; Moran, 2003; Robalik, 2006; Taub, 1995). The Mines-Jensen Interpersonal Relationships Inventory has been validated by significant relationships between Quality of Relationships and recreational activities, work experiences and involvement in campus

organizations and also between religious beliefs and Tolerance (N = 82) (Hood & Mines, 1986). Chafin (2006) also found that the Tolerance and Quality of Relationships subscales were related to student's self-reported ratings on understanding philosophies, cultures, and diverse opinions (N = 503).

Qualitative Data

The researcher developed an instrument (Appendix E) with 12 open-ended questions to serve as the interview protocol. The strategy of *member checks* was used to ensure internal validity of the data (Merriam, 2009). Transcribed interviews were given back to participants to check whether they were plausible. In order to ensure reliability, the researcher used the strategy of *peer review/examination* (Merriam, 2009)

Procedures

Quantitative Data

After the researcher obtained permission from the author of the Mines-Jensen Interpersonal Relationships Inventory (Appendix A), the research proposal was submitted to the university's Institutional Review Board Committee for approval (Appendix B). Upon approval, the researcher then consulted the university's International Students and Scholar Services (ISSS) staff for information about all scheduled international students' meetings (parties, orientations, and workshops, etc.). The researcher was given a copy of the 2012 Spring Newsletter which contained all the scheduled meetings for the semester. The questionnaires were given to the international students before the start of the meetings. Some international students completed the questionnaires before leaving while others returned their completed surveys later to the ISSS office or to the researcher's department. With regard to the selection of American students, the researcher randomly

selected one class from each of the following colleges: College Education and Psychology, College of Business, College of Health, and Honors College. Information about classes was obtained from the university's Online Accessible Records. E-mails were sent to instructors in order to obtain their permissions for American students to complete the questionnaires.

Qualitative Data

The researcher selected five participants each from the sample of international participants and from the American participants to participate in individual interview sessions. E-mails were sent to international students by the International Student and Scholar Services staff requesting volunteers. Those who responded were contacted by the researcher. Efforts were made to interview students from different countries. The researcher scheduled interview sessions with participants at appropriate times convenient to them. Each interview session lasted for about 35 minutes. Every participant signed a consent form (Appendix F) before the interview process.

For American student recruitment, the researcher asked for volunteers during the completion of the questionnaires. Those who showed interested were contacted through e-mails or phone calls to schedule the interviews. Efforts were made to include students from different races.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data

The main focus was to assess the differences between international and American students on the two quantitative dependent variables (Tolerance and Quality of Relationships). The subsidiary questions also had two or more groups (gender, age

categories, and students' classifications). In this case, in order to determine the differences between or among the groups, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was used to analyze questions 1, 2, and 3. Alternatively, Multiple Regression was used to analyze research question 4.

Description of variables. Several variables were used in this study. The major dependent variables are *Tolerance* and *Quality of Relationships* as measured by the two subscales of the Mines-Jensen Interpersonal Relationships Inventory. The independent variables were student classification (international or American), gender, age categories, and educational level (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, and graduate).

Qualitative Data

All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed for data analysis purposes. Since this is a comparative study, interview transcripts were analyzed using the method of *Category construction* (Merriam, 2009). Category construction involves the creation of themes that reveal some patterns in the data.

The following steps were used to analyze the data. The researcher analyzed the interview transcripts and noted comments, notes and queries in the margin. These notations are bits of data that strike the researcher as important or potentially meaningful to the study (Merriam, 2009). These notations were then sorted and grouped into common themes. Each category was then given a name. According to Merriam (2009), category names should: a) *reflect the purpose of the research*; b) be *exhaustive*; c) be *mutually exclusive*; d) be *sensitive*; and e) *conceptually exclusive*.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter provides information about the sample, tolerance and quality of relationships scales and their related Cronbach's alpha ratings, statistical testing of hypotheses and their associated results. Also included are results of qualitative data obtained from the analysis of interview transcripts. The interviews were done in order to assess broader perspectives about how international and American students are developing their mature interpersonal relationships in college.

Sample Description

Quantitative Results

Sample size included 186 higher education students with an even split in the population based on classification (International N=93 and American N=93). Demographic information revealed that 104 (55.9%) of the participants were female and 82 (44.1%) were male. For male participants, 59 were international students while 23 were American students. More than half of the population was graduate students (54%). Eighty (43%) of the participants had a GPA range of 3.5-4.0. The demographic information is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Descriptive Demographic Frequencies

| Variable | International <i>n</i> | American <i>n</i> | Total <i>n</i> | Percent % |
|-----------------|---------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Gender | | | | |
| Male | 59 | 23 | 82 | 44.1 |
| Female | 34 | 70 | 104 | 55.9 |
| Education Level | | | | |
| Freshman | 5 | 4 | 9 | 4.8 |
| Soph. | 3 | 13 | 16 | 8.6 |
| Junior | 3 | 23 | 26 | 14.0 |
| Senior | 3 | 30 | 33 | 17.7 |
| Grad. Stu. | 79 | 23 | 102 | 54.8 |
| Age Category | | | | |
| 18 – 22 | 14 | 59 | 73 | 39.2 |
| 23 – 28 | 46 | 24 | 70 | 37.6 |
| 29 – 33 | 20 | 4 | 24 | 12.9 |
| > 33 | 13 | 6 | 19 | 10.2 |
| GPA Range | | | | |
| < 2.0 | - | 2 | 2 | 1.1 |
| 2.0 – 2.49 | - | 11 | 11 | 5.9 |
| 2.5 – 2.99 | 3 | 22 | 25 | 13.4 |
| 3.0 – 3.49 | 28 | 38 | 66 | 35.5 |
| 3.5 – 4.0 | 60 | 20 | 80 | 43.5 |

Description of the Measures (Tolerance and Quality of Relationships Scales)

The Mines-Jensen Interpersonal Relationships Inventory consists of two subscales (Tolerance and Quality of Relationships). Higher tolerance means an openness to and acceptance of diversity which allows individuals to maintain satisfying

interpersonal relationships. Quality of relationships with others refers to moving from dependence through independence toward interdependence, thus allowing a wider range of freedom in the interaction process.

The tolerance scale contains 20 items and Quality of Relationships is made up of 22 items. Nineteen items were reversed scored (Tolerance = 6, Quality of relationships = 13) and twenty-three item were scored normally. Item responses are on a 4-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). Therefore, possible scores on the Tolerance scale range from 20 to 80 while Quality of Relationships also range from 22 to 88. In this study, internal consistency of the instrument was calculated and revealed Cronbach's alphas of .56 and .76 for tolerance and quality of relationships scales respectively. There were few missing values and these were replaced by substituting them with participants' mean scores on the Quality of Relationships and Tolerance subscales.

Descriptive Means/Standard Deviations for Participants' Demographics

American students' mean tolerance score (61.29) and quality of relationships score (82.06) were higher than international students' tolerance score (59.09) and quality of relationships score (76.38). Mean scores for females on tolerance and quality of relationships were 60.98 and 80.32 respectively. These were higher than the score for males (tolerance = 59.20 and quality of relationships = 77.83). Table 2 shows mean scores by demographics.

Table 2

Descriptive Means/Standard Deviations for Participants' Demographics

| Variable | Tolerance | | | Quality of Relationships | | |
|------------------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------------------|------------|------------|
| | Internatl | Am'can | Total | Internatl | Am'can | Total |
| Gender | | | | | | |
| Male | 58.48/5.48 | 61.05/7.33 | 59.20/6.09 | 76.37/6.09 | 81.58/8.25 | 77.83/7.11 |
| Female | 60.16/5.68 | 61.37/5.86 | 60.98/5.80 | 76.41/6.34 | 82.21/7.05 | 80.32/7.32 |
| Classification | | | | | | |
| Internatl | | | 59.09/5.58 | | | 76.38/6.14 |
| American | | | 61.29/6.18 | | | 82.06/7.32 |
| Education Level | | | | | | |
| Freshman | 55.80/5.12 | 61.14/4.75 | 58.17/5.43 | 76.80/3.56 | 83.50/7.55 | 79.78/6.34 |
| Soph. | 64.33/1.53 | 59.86/3.00 | 60.70/3.27 | 79.33/9.50 | 77.34/8.54 | 77.71/8.43 |
| Junior | 66.39/8.40 | 59.01/6.87 | 59.86/7.98 | 78.67/11.2 | 80.35/7.78 | 80.16/7.98 |
| Senior | 57.00/4.58 | 61.85/5.60 | 61.41/6.65 | 78.34/2.30 | 84.49/6.69 | 83.93/6.65 |
| Grad | 58.91/5.39 | 63.69/7.09 | 59.98/6.12 | 76.08/6.12 | 83.01/5.60 | 77.65/6.65 |
| Age Category | | | | | | |
| 18 – 22 | 59.87/7.20 | 60.25/5.36 | 60.18/5.70 | 79.57/6.04 | 81.54/8.17 | 81.16/7.81 |
| 23 – 28 | 59.23/4.98 | 62.66/7.86 | 60.41/6.29 | 75.88/6.15 | 83.49/6.17 | 78.49/7.12 |
| 29 – 33 | 58.20/6.25 | 62.00/7.39 | 58.83/6.44 | 76.70/5.42 | 82.72/5.50 | 77.71/5.79 |
| > 33 | 59.15/5.08 | 65.58/3.01 | 61.18/5.40 | 74.25/6.59 | 80.93/1.93 | 76.36/6.34 |
| GPA Range | | | | | | |
| < 2.0 | - | 57.51/7.76 | 57.51/7.76 | - | 70.50/2.12 | 70.50/2.12 |
| 2.0 – 2.49 | - | 59.88/5.95 | 59.88/5.95 | - | 81.00/10.2 | 81.00/10.3 |
| 2.5 – 2.99 | 59.33/4.04 | 59.34/6.01 | 59.34/5.74 | 76.67/5.86 | 81.70/7.05 | 81.10/7.21 |
| 3.0 – 3.49 | 59.03/4.58 | 63.43/6.17 | 61.56/5.93 | 75.16/6.12 | 81.42/6.84 | 78.77/7.21 |
| 3.5 – 4.0 | 59.20/6.07 | 60.54/5.70 | 59.53/5.97 | 76.95/6.29 | 85.39/5.50 | 79.06/7.09 |

Statistical Testing and Results

Two statistical tests were utilized to analyze the data for this study. A MANOVA was used to analyze Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3. Hypothesis 4 was tested using a multiple regression analysis.

Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 was stated as follows: There are significant differences in self-reported levels of tolerance and quality of relationships in college between international and American students.

A MANOVA was conducted to determine if there were statistically significant differences in the self-reported levels of tolerance and quality of relationships in college between international and American students. Table 2 above shows the mean for international students of $M = 50.09$ ($SD = 5.58$) and the mean for American students of $M = 61.29$ ($SD = 6.18$) on self-reported levels of tolerance. In addition, the table illustrates the mean for international students of $M = 76.38$ ($SD = 6.14$) and the mean for American students of $M = 82.06$ ($SD = 7.32$) on self-reported levels of quality of relationships.

The MANOVA identified significant differences in self-reported levels of tolerance and quality of relationships in college between international and American students, $F(2, 183) = 16.63, p = .001$. For this reason, the hypothesis was supported. The Univariate ANOVAS were also significant. Tolerance: $F(1, 184) = 6.48, p = .012$. Quality of Relationships: $F(1, 184) = 32.78, p = .001$.

Hypothesis 2 was stated as follows: There are significant differences in self-reported levels of tolerance and quality of relationships in college between female and male international students.

A MANOVA was used to determine if there were statistically significant differences in the self-reported levels of tolerance and quality of relationships in college between female and male international students. The MANOVA did not identify significant differences between the two groups, $F(2, 90) = 1.07, p = .347$. In this case, this hypothesis was not supported.

Hypothesis 3 was stated as follows: There are significant differences in self-reported levels of tolerance and quality of relationships in college between female and male American students. The MANOVA did not identify significant differences between the two groups, $F(2, 90) = .07, p = .932$. For this reason, the hypothesis was not supported.

Hypotheses 4 was stated as follows: There are significant relationships among academic achievement as measured by *GPA*, *educational level*, and *age* of students and self-reported scores on *tolerance* and *quality of relationships*.

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine whether the independent variables (GPA, Educational level, and Age) influence students' self-reported scores on tolerance and quality of relationships. With *tolerance* as the dependent variable, the following results were obtained: $F(11, 172) = .806, p = .634, R^2 = .049$. There were no statistically significant relationships between the independent variables and self-reported levels of tolerance (Table 3). For this reason, the hypothesis was not supported.

Table 3

Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis

| Model | β | b | t | Sig |
|----------------------|---------|-------|-------|------|
| Independent Variable | | | | |
| Freshman | .043 | .001 | .017 | .987 |
| Sophomore | 1.459 | .069 | .719 | .437 |
| Junior | .656 | .038 | .355 | .723 |
| Senior | 1.973 | .127 | 1.321 | .188 |
| Age 23 - 28 | .360 | .029 | .254 | .799 |
| Age 29 - 33 | -.815 | -.046 | .450 | .653 |
| Age Older than 33 | 1.280 | .066 | .641 | .523 |
| GPA Less than 2.0 | -2.187 | -.038 | -.490 | .625 |
| GPA 2.0 – 2.49 | -.320 | -.013 | -.159 | .874 |
| GPA 2.5 – 2.99 | -.868 | -.050 | -.580 | .562 |
| GPA 3.0 – 3.49 | 1.724 | -.139 | 1.699 | .091 |

Dependent Variable: Tolerance Score

With quality of relationships score as the dependent variable, the following results were obtained: $F(11, 172) = 2.72, p = .003, R^2 = .149$. Statistically significant relationships were exhibited by two of the predictors: *senior* status and *GPA less than 2.0* (Table 4). Being a senior was positively related to quality of relationships. But, GPA less than 2.0 was negatively related to quality of relationships.

Table 4

Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis

| Model | β | b | t | Sig |
|----------------------|---------|-------|--------|-------|
| Independent Variable | | | | |
| Freshman | -.090 | -.003 | .031 | .976 |
| Sophomore | -2.658 | -.102 | -1.123 | .263 |
| Junior | .574 | .027 | .266 | .790 |
| Senior | 4.457 | .233 | 2.559 | .011* |
| Age 23 - 28 | -2.618 | -.173 | -1.588 | .114 |
| Age 29 - 33 | -3.515 | -.162 | 1.655 | .098 |
| Age Older than 33 | -4.093 | -.170 | 1.757 | .081 |
| GPA Less than 2.0 | -10.937 | -.155 | -2.102 | .037* |
| GPA 2.0 – 2.49 | .265 | .009 | .113 | .910 |
| GPA 2.5 – 2.99 | -.102 | -.005 | -.058 | .954 |
| GPA 3.0 – 3.49 | -.764 | -.050 | -.645 | .519 |

Dependent Variable: Quality of Relationships Score

* $p < .05$

Summary of Quantitative Results

Two main statistical tests were used to determine the results for the study. They were MANOVA and multiple regression analysis. The main hypothesis was supported because there were statistically significant differences between international and American college students regarding self-reported levels of tolerance and quality of relationships. The univariate ANOVAs also revealed the same. American students scored higher than international students on both of the two sub-scales. There were no gender differences so the hypotheses were not supported.

Using multiple regression analysis, there were no statistically significant relationships between each of the independent variable (GPA, educational level, age) and tolerance. In this regard, the hypothesis was not supported. In addition, two predictors revealed statistically significant relationships when quality of relationships score was the dependent variable. A GPA less than 2.0 was negatively related with students' self-reported levels of quality of relationships. Being a senior was positively related to quality of relationships.

Qualitative Data Results

Sample Description

Qualitative interviews were conducted to further investigate the mature interpersonal relationship skills among international and American students. Ten international students volunteered to take part in this study. The researcher made efforts to interview students from different countries. In the end, students from the following countries were selected: Turkey, Sri Lanka, India, Nigeria, and Lebanon. There were three (3) males and two (2) females. For the American student participants, three were from Mississippi while the other two were from Illinois and Michigan. The American students in this study included three (3) females and two (2) males. All participants were asked to provide pseudonyms. Some used names of their pets while others used popular names in their cultures. Brief background information about each research participant in this study is provided below.

International Students. Noir, a male master's student was from Lebanon and had been in the United States for one and half years. Ali was a man from Turkey who was a master's student and had been in the United States for one year. Bola was a male from

Nigeria, was a master's student and in his eighth month in the United States. Shrikama was a woman from India, and was in a Ph.D. program. She had been in the United States for the past three years. Finally, Mira, a woman in a Ph.D. program came from Sri Lanka and had been in the United States for four years.

American Students. Lily, a woman was a senior from Mississippi studied Spanish, Chemistry minor and wanted to go to medical school. John, a man was a senior from Mississippi and was a philosophy major. Bob was a man from Illinois. He was a graduate student majoring in music and entertainment industry. Lucy, a woman was from Mississippi. She was a Ph.D. student in Research Evaluation and Statistics. Lastly, Sheila, a woman was a junior from Michigan and her major was Health Policy and Administration.

Principal Findings from the Interviews

For each research question, international and American students' responses were noted and the emerging themes were grouped under category names at the discretion of the researcher. International and American students' responses were analyzed separately. The main category names were identified by the researcher based on the research questions and the emerging themes from participants were used to identify the sub-categories. Table 5 below shows the category names and their corresponding sub-category.

Table 5

Principal Findings of Qualitative Data

 Category names and sub-categories by classification

1. Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships
International and American Students
 - A) Recognizing differences in society
 - B) Stance towards diversity
 - C) Strategies for maintaining mature interpersonal relationships

 2. Enhancing Tolerance among Students
International Students
 - A) Collaborative Learning
 - B) The Study of other cultures/countries in the curriculum
 - C) Campus-Wide Education Programs
American Students
 - A) Sensitivity to other cultures
 - B) Encourage international student involvement
 - C) Americans learning about other cultures

 3. The Influence of the College Environment in Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships
International and American Students
 - A) Exposure to different people or cultures
-

Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships

Participants' statements revealed that they were aware of cultural differences. In view of this, they were ready to tolerate and adapt to these differences in order to promote harmony in the college environment. Responses regarding how international and American students were developing their mature interpersonal relationships in college

were quite similar. Thus, the researcher created the same sub-categories for both groups related to the research question. The results of the sub-categories are presented below.

International and American Students' Suggestions

Recognizing individual differences. The emerging themes from both groups revealed that an interaction with number of students from varied backgrounds attending the institution is helping them to recognize individual differences. There were recurring statements like: each person is unique, everyone is not the same, and people come from different background. This was exemplified by statements made by both international and American students.

Shrikama from India said “Definitely, people I met have different views or beliefs.” She went on to state that “based on what they’ve seen in life, they would have different views so I’m open to their ideas. I would say I am open to everything provided they don’t criticize other people’s views.” Mira from Sri Lanka also indicated “we have [a] lot of differences, which is okay because we are from different places [having different] religious views and cultural themes.” Lily, an American student, stated “I am very social so I am always willing to meet people. I always have on my mind that there are individual differences. Definitely, people I meet have different views or beliefs.” Another American student, John said “people are going to believe differently from what I believe.” International and American students acknowledged that dealing with individual differences is inevitable in our modern-day society.

Stance towards cultural differences. After recognizing individual differences in one’s environment, another important thing is to make efforts to know more about a particular culture which can be done in several ways such as exploring, being out-going,

being social, and sensation seeking . For example, Noir from Lebanon said “I know how to relate with people, because if I get to know the background of a person, where he is from, what is his religion, what is his political view etc. and based upon this information, I start dealing with them.” Shrikama from India also stated that “I have been always outgoing and social as I want to interact with people, know about their culture, food habits, so it [has] been [a] great experience interacting with students from different parts of the country.” In addition, Lily, an American student said “sometimes we don’t understand where people are coming from and what their culture is and what is needed versus ours and just give the leeway of understanding.” An American student, Lucy also said “I am not good at speaking other languages, but I do try to take [an] interest in it.”

Strategies for maintaining mature interpersonal relationships. All of the participants realized that individual differences exist in society, thus they expressed the need to adopt some strategies that would enable them to nurture or maintain healthy interpersonal relationships. International student, Ali stated “of course all of them have different beliefs and views. Because, I am from Turkey and they are from United States so the thing is that I try to adapt myself and accept each other making dialogue so I don’t have any problem with them. I always emphasize on the similarities instead of the differences. I emphasize on common beliefs, ideals and enjoy and have fun.” Bola from Nigeria also has this to say “I find a way to approach every other person differently. I would not talk to an American the same way I would talk to a Chinese person.” He went on to say that “I don’t show my irritation to any culture. I understand we are different.” American students also spoke about the need to be open-minded. For example, Sheila

stated “The number one quality is that you must be open-minded when you are building your interpersonal relationships.”

Enhancing Tolerance among Students

Tolerance has been noted to be crucial in the development of mature interpersonal relationships skills of students (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Responses revealed different opinions among international and American students. This may be as a result of the fact that international students’ college experiences could be different from their American counterparts. But their statements showed how they wanted to interact and learn from other cultures in order to enhance tolerance. Consequently, different sub-categories were created separately for international and American students.

International Students’ Suggestions

Collaborative learning. Collaborative learning was mentioned in most of the responses but participants did not elaborate on this as their statements were short, but it showed how much they attached importance to this. Shrikama suggested that “professors for example, engaging students in group activities in the classrooms. Apart from contributions to class activities, students would be able to learn about each member’s ways of life.” Mira also stated “I think [having] regular small group activities involving students from different backgrounds in the classroom would work”

The Study of other Cultures or Countries in the Curriculum. Most of the participants, both international and American students, believed that knowledge of other cultures would make them competent in the global workforce in future. Bola from Nigeria has this concern: “in my first semester that was fall last year when I started my class, I was like, [are we] studying [about] America alone? Are we not seeing other

countries? American curriculum is all about America. It should be broadened, because when I was in Nigeria, I studied a lot of stuff about U.K., U.S.A., Asia and lots of places. That is why sometimes when we talked in class, they usually think I know a lot of stuff.” Consequently, the researcher was not surprised at an American student, Lucy’s comments about international students “one thing I really learned about people that come to the United States from other countries for school, most international students that I have met are very well-travelled. Most of them are well-educated and they have strong beliefs about who they are.”

Campus-Wide Education Programs. Most international students suggested that both international and American students should be encouraged to participate in diversity related meetings and events. Bola from Nigeria said “probably the international student day [and] festival encompassing all the campus so that everybody would be invited so that we could all come together and experience different kinds of cultures, dressing [and] food from other cultures.” Shrikama from India also said ‘they could have several cultural activities involving teachers and students. There should be icebreaking ceremonies on the first day of school so that students get to know each other and feel comfortable in the surroundings [and] about the class.’ Ali from Turkey stated “[there should be] cultural meetings, events, and invite students from different countries, [including Americans], help each other and communicate [among themselves].”

American Students’ Suggestions

Sensitivity to other Cultures. Most of the participants asserted that lack of sensitivity may lead to negative stereotypes and discrimination which can affect interpersonal relationships. In this case, people need to know that others may be coming

from different backgrounds so appropriate measures need to be taken to appreciate these differences. American students expressed concern about this during the interviews. For example, Lily said “The only thing I can think of is small but just to not make assumptions about the students in the class so instead of saying I know all you come from families like this, you know express the differences between people [and] say I know some of you are from cultures that do this. And I think just acknowledging the differences.” Lucy, a graduate teaching assistant, also said “one thing I was trying to do with all my students, not specifically from other countries, but for all my students [is] always trying to make them feel comfortable and I always try to make them feel special in their own, because of their differences and their uniqueness that make them who they are.”

Encourage International Students Involvement. Most American students may be willing to have cross-cultural relationships with international students in order to learn about their culture. In view of this, Bob indicated that “I think at first, getting international students more involved in the experiences here. Not just saying hey, come to the football games, or hey, come to the pep rally. Encourage them to join student organizations. Encourage them to explore the traditions of the campus, explore how to get involved because I feel international students [would] get a really good feeling about American life here. I feel that, if they interact a little bit more and take a little more ownership with the university.”

Americans Learning about other Cultures. At first, the fear of the unknown has made it difficult for most American students to initiate relationships with international students and this was intensified after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the

United States. Ali from Turkey expressed this concern during the interview. He used the Muslim population as an example. But after frequent interactions on campuses with foreign cultures, most American students have realized that it is appropriate to learn norms in other cultures if they want to relate with people in the American college environment, which is increasingly becoming diverse. Consequently, most American students in this study want to learn something about other cultures. In supporting this, Lily stated “I think there should be classes that should be just open for some students to take because I feel like students would take them. For example, a class each semester that talks about cultures each week, like different cultures. And give the students opportunities to do hands-on things and be able to use their imaginations to actually be there because everyone [doesn’t] get the chance to actually go out [to other countries] and see.” Bob also said “but at the same time, educating our students on the different cultures making them common space to expect someone from different culture and really move the bar from just tolerance and accepting to just another way of life.”

The Influence of the College Environment in Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships

Preparing students to function in a diverse world has become an important indicator of a quality education. Most higher education institutions have responded to this by increasing the numerical representation of students from different cultural backgrounds. Most of the students noted that the college environment has expanded their perspectives about the world. It has also caused them to become aware of the implications of cultural differences. Analysis of the interviews revealed that international and American students asserted the college environment has changed or influenced them

with regard to how to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds. One sub-category was identified under this category.

Exposure to Different People or Culture

It was realized that participants have engaged in numerous interactions with people from different backgrounds. For example, Shrikama from India said “I have been exposed to new things outside the world. I got exposed to the world. I have met people from different countries and states in the United States. Unless you get an exposure, you would be slightly narrow-minded and once you get the exposure, you get to see what is happening in the outside world. Your ideas [would be] broadened. You would be more open to accepting things [because] you are seeing things in different ways.” Bob an American student stated “Before I came to this university, I was not exposed to as broad of the international view. When I came to this university, I met international students from different countries, which was an eye-opening and getting to know them. That has really changed my outlook on certain issues that I was kind of closed-minded on. This [has] extended my horizon.”

Summary of Qualitative Findings

Responses on how international and American students are developing their mature interpersonal relationships were quite similar. Three sub-categories were identified under the development of mature interpersonal relationships: recognizing differences, stance towards cultural differences, and strategies for maintaining mature interpersonal relationships. Some of the strategies raised most often by participants were as follows: ability to accept/respect others, tolerance, being open-minded, adaptability and appreciation of commonalities. Research participant’s responses indicated that they

are willing to tolerate ambiguous situations which they considered to be inevitable in society.

Research participants were asked how to enhance tolerance among students by student affairs professionals. International and American students have different ideas on this. International students mentioned issues related to collaborative learning, the study of other cultures in the curriculum, and participation in campus-wide programs. American students also mentioned issues related to sensitivity to other cultures, encouraging international students' involvement, and American students learning about other cultures. International and American students asserted that the college environment has influenced them regarding how to relate with others from different backgrounds.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Introduction

Cultural understanding has become an important ingredient for maintaining mature or harmonious interpersonal relationships with others in society. Current trends reveal that every society including the higher education environment is increasingly becoming diverse. In view of this, students frequently encounter several personal challenges such as resolving differences, developing interpersonal skills, and maintaining harmonious relationships which may result from the fear of the unknown. Since higher education can involve preparation for life in the future, student affairs professionals have consistently advocated programs that would help students to allay the fears that they encounter when interacting with others from different cultural backgrounds. Consequently, most college student development models regard students' interaction with peers as very influential in their psychosocial changes in areas such as interpersonal relations, cross-cultural understanding, leadership skills, autonomy and general personal development.

The goal of this study was to assess international and American students' self-reported levels of tolerance and quality of relationships in college. The study employed concurrent, nested-mixed methods, thus offering the opportunity for the researcher to collect both quantitative (survey) and qualitative (interviews) data simultaneously. The major constructs measured in the study were tolerance and quality of relationships. Qualitative interview questions were developed (Appendix E) in order to gain deeper or broader perspectives of participants' mature interpersonal relationship experiences in

college The main quantitative research findings in this study revealed significant differences between international and American students regarding their self-reported levels of *tolerance* and *quality of relationships*. Four predictors: senior, graduate, students with GPA less than 2.0 significantly predicted self-reported levels of quality of relationships.

Discussion of Descriptive Results

Equal samples were used to represent international and American students. There were more females (55.9%) than males (44.1%). This came from the American population, because most of the classes visited had more females than males. The majority of students for both groups were within the age of 18-28 years. This shows that the population was young even though there were three times as many graduate students (54.8%) in this study than seniors (17.7%) who were next in terms of percentage ratings. This may be because most international students come to the United States to pursue graduate degrees. Also, as a result of this, the majority of the students were within the GPA range of 3.5-4.0. In addition, there are more than triple as many females American students in this study than males American students whereas there are more male international students than females.

Discussion of Quantitative Results

American students' self-reported levels of *tolerance* and *quality of relationships* were higher than that of international students. These findings may be as a result cultural differences. According to Hofstede's (2001) classification of world cultures, most international students come from collective cultures where the orientation of interdependence prevails whereas the American culture is classified as bearing

independence orientation. The researcher also acknowledges the possibility that questions in the instrument may have been related to the American cultural orientations. In this case, international students may not be comfortable with some of the issues raised in the questionnaire. Also, international students are considered to be unique individuals, and exhibit their own culturally-perceived or culturally-conditioned understandings that may influence their interpersonal relationships. Some of the international students may still be in the transition process and have not yet assimilated the American cultural perspectives. Transition periods may result in change in roles and assumptions, thus affecting individuals' behaviors in their immediate environment (Schlossberg et al., 1995). Consequently, international students may be experiencing difficulties establishing quality interpersonal and social support networks with host nationals (Cigularova, 2005). For example, in previous research concerning issues related to establishing interpersonal relationships, using the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire, it was found that the Social Adjustment and Institutional Attachment subscales for international students were significantly lower than American students (Kaczmarek, Matlock, Merta, Ames, & Ross, 1994).

Even though international students may strive to integrate their lives into the social-cultural aspects of the America society, they also want to maintain their cultural aspirations. Thus, most international students may experience ethnocentric ideas which can hinder them from forming intercultural interactions or adapting to the ideas of other cultures. This can affect their personality characteristics and during the cross-cultural interactions or transition experiences.

There are multiple reasons drawn from the literature that would help to explain the psychosocial adjustment of international students in the United States that are affecting their cross-cultural experiences with host nationals. For example, four major categories of adjustment problems are encountered by international students: 1) academic, 2) general living, 3) socio-cultural, and 4) personal psychological adjustment (Tseng & Newton, 2002).

The researcher placed emphasis on social-cultural (discrimination, cultural shock, new socio-cultural norms, custom and regulations) and personal psychological adjustment (loneliness, isolation, and frustration) aspects as they are related to this study. First, it may be as a result of *cultural distance*, that is the discrepancies between the culture of origin (international) and the culture of contact (American), thus affecting the interaction process. Cultural distance results from the dissimilarities between international and American students (Ward & Searle, 1991). Lack of acceptance or understanding between dissimilar cultures may often lead to *competition* which can also ruin cross-cultural relationships (Allport, 1954). According to Bennett's (1986) developmental model of intercultural tolerance, cultural dissimilarities may often lead to a stage of *denial of differences*. This stage is characterized by negative stereotypes and preconceived attitudes related to other cultures. In addition, increasing the numerical representation of students from different cultural backgrounds (structural diversity) does not automatically improve intergroup relations.

Harmonious cross-cultural relationships can be achieved depending on the rate at which diverse interactions and diversity-related initiatives occur. Problems related to the cultural distance theory can be alleviated if there are structured activities initiated by

institutions for dissimilar cultures to interact harmoniously in order to allay the fear of rejection.

Cross-cultural interactions of international students are facilitated by greater language competence. Fluency in the host language is not only advantageous for academic adjustment, but also for social contact. Lack of fluency in the local language may encourage international students to engage in interactions with other international students from their country. This can inhibit their knowledge of the American culture, norms, and traditions. In this case, the host nationals may recognize their culture of origin as distant (Spencer-Rodgers, 2001).

Because of the different socialization processes that girls and boys experience, several studies have investigated how they relate with people in society. It has been noted that women exhibit care orientation in dealing with others (Gilligan, 1982) while men exhibit justice orientation (Kohlberg, 1971). Most studies done in the past used samples mainly made up of Americans. In this regard, in addition to comparing American males to females, international males and females were also compared. There was no gender difference in the development of mature interpersonal relationships. This could be as a result of changes going on recently in society. This study supports Martin's (2000) findings who also found no gender difference in the development of mature interpersonal relationships.

The other subsidiary question sought to identify significant relationships among the independent variables (e.g. educational level, age, GPA) of participants and their development of mature interpersonal relationships (tolerance and quality of

relationships). There were no significant relationships among the independent variables and the dependent variable, *tolerance*.

Two significant relationships were identified in the analysis. It was found in this study that being a senior was positively related to higher levels of quality of relationships. This is in line with the notion that the college environment helps to enhance the psychosocial development of students. In several of the older studies, it was concluded that on the average, seniors would be more likely to mature interpersonally than freshmen (Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Perry, 1970). In supporting this, Vogt (1997) asserted that the college environment serves as a platform for cognitive sophistication. Maybe their four years school has exposed them to myriad of experiences. Over the last three decades, many authors have asserted that this notion is not true. Several of these authors explained that students' development of harmonious interpersonal relationships in college depends on their views about civil liberties before entering the college environment (Rich, 1980). In this case, students with previous good relationships with people from different cultures may be willing to continue these trends while others may not. Thus, in Martin's (2000) study, there was very little support for the college experience promoting mature interpersonal relationships.

The development of interpersonal relationships with peers has been noted to be a major contribution to students' psychosocial development in college (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Through social interactions, students can engage in diverse knowledge construction which may help in their academic achievements. Students can work together as peers collaboratively such as in learning communities and small-group activities. In this current study, students with GPA less than 2.0 was

negatively related to the development of quality of relationships among students. This may be as a result the sample used. Only two participants had grade point average of less than 2.0 and this came from the American sample.

Discussion of Qualitative Results

Responses of international and American students about the development of mature interpersonal relationships were similar. Their responses about how to develop mature interpersonal relationships revealed that participants have experienced the three types or concepts of diversity identified by Milem and Hakuta in 2000. First, it could be that the numerical representation of students from different cultural backgrounds in the institution may be encouraging (*structural diversity*). This supports Humphrey's (2000) assertion that about 62% of institutions had diversity perspectives reflected in their mission statements. This is because multicultural issues are been ranked high among the factors that describe educational quality (Dixon, 2001). According to Milem and Hakuta (2000), all the three concepts of diversity need to be given due attention if institutions want to achieve positive results. The second type is *diversity-related initiatives* which include activities incorporated into the curriculum and in other campus program. *Diverse interaction* is the third one and this refers to the rate at which students from different cultural backgrounds interact in order to foster intercultural exchange. The next section discusses the sub-categories identified from the responses of participants regarding how to develop mature interpersonal relationships.

Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships

International and American Students' Suggestions

Recognizing Individual Differences. International and American students exemplified that there are individual differences in society. Thus, people are going to have different views or beliefs as a result of their culture. Their assertions reflect Hoopes and Pusch's (1979) definition of culture which states that "Culture...includes values, beliefs, linguistic expression, patterns of thinking, behavioral norms, and styles of communication which a group of people has developed to assure its survival in a particular physical and human environment" (p.3). Even though culture normally helps in classifying individuals who share similar characteristics, many cultural researchers have indicated that each individual is culturally diverse (Allport, 1954; Newton & Ender, 2010; Singer, 1987; Vogt, 1997). Being able to recognize and understand individual differences is regarded as one of the important characteristics of a multiculturally competent person. With this competency, students may be able to understand how a person's cultural beliefs can influence his or her social behavior or interactions (Pope & Reynolds, 1997).

International and American students in this study indicated that individual differences are inevitable in society. This perception may help curtail intergroup tensions, strains or conflicts during cross-cultural interpersonal relationships (Ellsberg, 1961; Vogt, 1997). Awareness of individual differences may help students to develop the necessary interpersonal and intercultural competencies that would be vital for cross-cultural interaction (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; McGaha & Fitzpartrick, 2005). Also, recognition of individual differences may be a stepping stone for a person to tolerate

ambiguities (Vogt, 1997). People would encounter ambiguities once there is diversity in society (Afdal, 2006). Consequently, the building of harmonious cross-cultural relationships may depend on how people are able to deal with ambiguities that are portrayed by individuals in society.

Stance towards Cultural Differences. Through explorations, people begin to identify the similarities they share with others (Bennett, 1986). This information may make people to identify the reasons for appreciating these differences (Afdal, 2006). In this regard, the individual needs to exhibit intercultural competence and this can occur in a process. Deardorff's (2009) definition is related to the process of exploration. He defined intercultural competence as "the process of learning a new culture and its language and behaviors in an effort to understand and empathize with the people of the culture and live among and interact successfully with them" (p. 6). In view of this, those who exhibit greater sensation seeking are more competent in dealing with diversity than low sensation seekers (Arasaratnam & Banerjee, 2010).

These explorations can help individuals build competencies that would enable them to interact with different cultures. One of the explorations identified in this study by most American students is the learning of a different language. This is related to Graf's (2004) findings comparing American and German MBA students with international experiences. The most vital competency was the ability to learn or speak the language of the one you are interacting with, followed by one's knowledge of other cultures, traditions, norm, and customs. Language skills have been noted to be vital not only for academic purposes, but also for the social and cultural adjustment of international

students in the United States. Language fluency may enhance their cultural knowledge of American norms (Spencer-Rodgers, 2001; Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002; Ying, 2002).

Strategies for Maintaining Mature Interpersonal Relationships. Judging from the responses of research participants, the most important concept related to these is *tolerance*. According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), in developing tolerance, students need “communication skills to initiate dialogue, the courage to challenge prejudice, and the commitment to reach across barriers created by unfamiliarity” (p. 146). Tolerance may help individuals to adapt and also become sensitive to other cultures. Experiencing ambiguities is inevitable in this modern society because of individual differences. With the American higher education environment becoming increasingly diverse most students are developing appropriate ways to deal with people from different cultural backgrounds (Milem & Hakuta, 2000).

The strategies mostly adopted by participants in this study are related to Bowen’s (1997) three specific goals of education (adaptability, accepting people for who they are, and tolerating other perspectives, etc.) These goals may help in the development of healthy relationships among college students. His propositions consist of *intellectual tolerance*, *human understanding*, and *adaptability*. According to Bowen (1997), intellectual tolerance means “freedom of the mind” (p. 78). Freedom of the mind is related to Vogt’s (1997) concept of cognitive sophistication. This can be achieved through frequent interactions with people from different cultures during campus-wide education programs, classroom activities and extracurricular activities. Students may develop qualities such as: appreciation of cultural diversity as well as intellectual diversity, being open-minded to appreciate new perspectives, and the willingness to

question ambiguous situations etc. The second goal, *human understating* is related to Astin's (1993) recommendation of affective programs that would help in the development of students. Human understanding can help students to develop skills in cooperation, empathy, and compassion. The third goal is *adaptability* which consists of ability to compromise, adapt to changes, tolerating new ideas, and being versatile.

Enhancing Tolerance among Students

Higher education has been tasked with preparing students who will be capable of thriving in this modern day's diverse environment (Smith & Schonfeld, 2000). In this case, higher education students should be able to appreciate differences among people of different cultures in their environment. Thus, the development of tolerance has become an important issue in education. Chickering and Reisser (1993) stated "Now that multicultural communities are growing, academic institutions have a responsibility to equip their graduates with tolerance and empathy skills" (p. 150). Student affairs professionals frequently make efforts to create tolerance among diverse students through various programs. Tolerance, empathy, and compassion enable individuals to be sensitive to different beliefs they encounter in society (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Responses of international and American students regarding how to enhance tolerance among students by faculty and staff revealed different sub-categories for both groups:

International Students' Suggestions

Collaborative Learning. International students are eager to adjust into the academic programs as quickly as possible (Althen, 1995). Althen also noted that international students may have difficulties adjusting into the academic community in United States' higher education institutions no matter what their educational

backgrounds. In order to reduce this discrepancy, international students may be willing to interact with American peers through collaborative learning activities. This is congruent with the fact that many international students originate from collectivist cultures where interdependence with others is crucial for the maintenance of quality interpersonal relationships (Gelfand & Realo, 1999; Hofstede, 2001; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Through these, international students may be able to learn how to adjust to the American cultural ways of learning and social interactions. Cooperative or collaborative learning environments can also promote the sharing of experiences from different cultures (Pandit, 2007).

In this regard, Jonassen and Grabowski (1993) indicated that tolerant people may excel in the collaborative learning environments. This is supported by Vogt (1997) who found that collaborative learning enhances tolerance among students because it is normally solution-oriented, noncompetitive, and egalitarian. Peer interaction has been noted to have greater influence in the development of students; leadership abilities, academic development, and interpersonal relationship skills (Astin, 1993). The contributions of collaborative learning to student development made Chickering and Reisser (1993) to state “When students are encouraged to form friendships and to participate in communities that become meaningful subcultures, and when diversity of backgrounds and attitudes as well as significant exchanges and shared interest exist, development along all seven vectors is fostered” (p. 275).

The Study of Other Cultures or Countries in the Curriculum. One of the major goals of American higher education is to prepare students who would be able to participate in the country’s civic democratic ideals (Boyer, 1987). But current trends have

shown that there are frequent calls for American students to possess *cross-cultural* or *global competence* skills if they want to function in the increasingly multicultural society (Brustein, 2007). Learning about other cultures or countries may enable students to adopt varied strategies when interacting with diverse individuals. Negative attitudes toward international students' culture or country may have been expressed by American students during interactions, thus culminating in this concern during the interview. Also, international students advocated for the inclusion of the knowledge about other countries or cultures in the curriculum which may help American students to appreciate the behaviors of international students in the college environment. This is what Gurin (1999) calls "classroom diversity." Boyer (1987) supported this idea by noting that students can contribute to the larger society if they are able to move beyond private interests and learn about the world around them.

Campus-Wide Education Programs. Campus-wide out-of-class experiences which offer opportunities for interaction between international and American students can foster interdependence, understanding, and cultural sensitivity among people from different cultural backgrounds. Diversity-related programs should provide opportunities for students to interact meaningfully among themselves. This is what Pettigrew (1998) referred to as *true integration*. Astin (1985) advocated that these programs contribute to the affective development of students which include "emotional maturity, tolerance, empathy, and leadership ability" (p. 67).

American Students' Suggestions

American students in this sample advocated the need for students to become aware of the different cultural behaviors they encounter on campus. This is because

students become part of the higher education community comprising of several constituents from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Sensitivity to Other Cultures. The number of international students in various United States' higher education institutions has continued to increase every academic year. This group cannot be considered as homogenous as they come from different countries with varied cultural beliefs. In view of this, American students in this study have realized that they have to take the stance to invest greater efforts in understanding these cultural contexts. Accepting differences may help in the development of mature interpersonal relationships and this can be achieved when we are sensitive to other cultures. In supporting this, Chickering and Reisser (1993) stated "sensitivity to people from other cultures needs to move beyond intellectual understanding" (p. 146).

Insensitivity to other students' cultures can affect their adjustment in the higher education environment. This can also affect their social and academic development (Hurtado et al., 1996; Tinto, 1993).

Encourage International Student Involvement. The main aim of most international students is to finish their degree and return to their home countries. As a result of this, most of them may normally invest much time on academic success as compared to American students (Althen, 1995; Wehrly, 1988). This may limit their social interaction in the institution. American students expressed concern about this during the interview. Other issue that may affect international students' social contact is lack of language fluency, the use of colloquialisms, and the American accent (Althen, 1995).

International students' involvement can be boosted through programs that would encourage them to participate in out-of-class or co-curricular activities. The importance

of co-curricular or involvement in out-of-class activities has also been noted in several studies (Astin, 1993; Boyer, 1987; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). For example, Boyer (1987) stated “the effectiveness of the undergraduate experience relates to the quality of campus life and is directly linked to the time students spend on campus and the quality of their involvement in activities” (p. 180). Involvement of international students in campus activities may help them to learn about the American way of initiating interactions. The knowledge acquired can be used to foster harmonious relationships with their American counterparts. This would also offer the chance for Americans to learn about international students.

American Students Learning about Other Cultures. The international student population has become an integral of the American higher education environment. This population cannot be considered as a homogenous group because they come from different countries exhibiting varied cultures. According to current trends, there were about 723,277 international students studying in the United States. This makes United States’ higher education system to be the most diverse in the world (Institute of International Education, 2011). Collaborative learning has been noted to promote tolerance among students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Jonassen & Grabowski, 1993; Vogt, 1997). In this case, the only means that would enable American students to interact in this increasingly multicultural environment is to learn about other cultures. Becoming familiar with the norms of other cultures can enhance accurate views of diverse individuals, thus helping to improve intergroup relations.

The Influence of the College Environment in Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships

International and American Students

Exposure to different people or cultures. Higher education has been tasked to educate students who would be capable of working in today's diverse American societies (Smith & Schonfeld, 2000). As a result of this, many institutions are making efforts to enroll students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Diversity-related initiatives are implemented on various campuses in order to promote diverse interactions among students. Because the student's peer group has been noted to be the most influential factor on psychosocial development (Astin, 1993), the higher setting education serves as a liberalizing environment for this to occur (Vogt, 1997). Research participants in this sample noted that the college environment has had a positive impact on how they relate with people from diverse backgrounds. Their experiences are congruent with the above assertions. This means that the social and academic self-images of international and American students in this study have been boosted through their involvement in various formal and informal programs (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The current state of development of international and American students in this study have been challenged as a result of their interactions with a diverse spectrum of campus constituents who exhibit varied beliefs and ideas (Evans, Forney, Guido, Renn, & Patton, 2009; Pascarella, 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) refer to this as a within-college effect which includes three general perspectives. First, psychosocial development can be achieved through the diversity-related initiatives incorporated into various curricula. The second perspectives focus on the nature of the living or residence

arrangements and the third perspectives examine the levels of social and academic integration and the rate at which students interact with peers in order to exchange ideas.

Limitations

1. This study has limited generalizability due to population concerns. This is because the researcher collected data about the experiences of students attending only one mid-size comprehensive research university located in a small city in the United States. As a result of this, the results may not accurately reflect the experiences of students from various large institutions located in urban areas.
2. Lack of consistency on how the two groups completed the questionnaire may affect the quantitative results of the study. International students completed the questionnaires mostly at various meetings and workshops organized by the International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) office while American students completed theirs before the beginning of class.
3. Lack of clarity on questions representing the tolerance scale may have reduced its reliability. The tolerance sub-scale revealed reliability concerns, given that a Cronbach's alpha of .56 is low.
4. International students come from different countries with varied beliefs so they cannot be classified as a homogenous group. They may have different belief systems rooted in their country of origin.

Recommendations for Future Research

The researcher offers the following recommendations for future research within this topic:

1. Similar research can be done across the different states in the United States and should include a variety of higher education institutions types (e.g. community colleges, four-year colleges, etc.).
2. It may be appropriate to use longitudinal studies for this kind of research to see how students are developing throughout their college years. Multiple follow-up for a longer period of time may give better information about students' cross-cultural interpersonal relationships patterns.
3. International students are from various countries with different cultural backgrounds. It would be appropriate to use continent of origin as group of reference or restrict the sample to fewer countries and compare them with the American culture.

Recommendations for Policy or Practice

This study can be used by student affairs professionals to create a campus environment conducive for harmonious interactions between international and American students. The following are the recommendations for maintaining amicable cross-cultural relationships among students. These recommendations reflect what research participants said during the interviews and the results of the quantitative research:

1. Various initial social supports need to be extended to international students during the first week of their stay in the United States. Social supports such as peer-pairing (international students with an American student), providing

intensive pre-arrival information, and also pairing international students with American individuals in the community who want to volunteer. All these may help international students to reduce their levels of cultural shock, increase their English language proficiency, and also to adjust to the new environment. Americans can also learn about other international cultures during these processes.

2. Professors can pair international and American students to work on different class projects. Activities must be structured in cooperative fashion while continually stressing the importance of interdependence in the achievement of group goals. This may lead to frequent interactions in and outside the classroom. In this case, students from different cultural backgrounds can learn from each other, thus encouraging them to develop harmonious friendships
3. Campus organizations play an important role in cross-cultural interactions among students. In this case, the International Students Service office should involve campus student organizations in the orientation process for international students. Incoming international students would have the opportunity to interact with experienced campus organization members. Campus organization members would brief international students about the importance of joining an organization. Some of these experienced campus members can be paired with international students to begin the intercultural dialogue process.
4. A day could be set aside every month for cultural awareness in the institution for all students to display their culture orientations. This would make all

students feel that their culture is appreciated in the institution. During that day, since international students are the minority group, international speakers should be invited to speak and share issues about their countries. Students could be encouraged to be volunteers at these events.

5. Institutions need to expand their general education curriculum by incorporating varied cultural issues. Course requirements must be related to issues concerning diversity in American society and why there is the need for students to take advantage of this. These can help students to understand the basic factors related the formation of intercultural relations.

APPENDIX A

PERMISSION LETTER TO USE INSTRUMENT

Robert A. Mines ramines@minesandassociates.com

4/29/11

to **WillBarratt** me

Dear Mr. Bona Aidoo,

You have my permission to use the Mines-Jensen Interpersonal Relationship Inventory. My request is that you send me a pdf copy of your research when its completed.

I cannot give permission on the Developing Purpose Inventory. Dr. Will Barratt would be your contact.

Will Barratt willbarratt@gmail.com

I wish you the best with your research.

Remember! I like you.

Bob

Robert A. Mines, Ph.D.

CEO & Psychologist

Mines and Associates, P.C.

[303-832-1068](tel:303-832-1068) x4982



Cell: [303-520-1068](tel:303-520-1068)

Website: www.minesandassociates.com

Website2: www.BizPsych.com

APPENDIX B

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <p>THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI.</p> <hr/> <p>INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD 118 College Drive #5147 Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001 Phone: 601.266.6820 Fax: 601.266.4377 www.usm.edu/irb</p> |
| NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION | |
| <p>The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:</p> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The risks to subjects are minimized. • The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits. • The selection of subjects is equitable. • Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented. • Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects. • Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data. • Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects. • Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form". • If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months. Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation. | |
| <p>PROTOCOL NUMBER: 11080906 PROJECT TITLE: The Development of Mature Interpersonal Relationships among International and American College Students PROJECT TYPE: Dissertation RESEARCHER/S: Bona Aidoo COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Education & Psychology DEPARTMENT: Educational Studies & Research FUNDING AGENCY: N/A IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval PERIOD OF PROJECT APPROVAL: 08/18/2011 to 08/17/2012</p> | |
| <p> Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D. Institutional Review Board Chair</p> | <p><u>8-22-2011</u> Date</p> |

APPENDIX C

MINES-JENSEN INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS INVENTORY

I am currently conducting a study to assess the development of mature interpersonal relationships among American and international college students. Two primary variables, tolerance and quality of relationships will be measured in this survey. Participation is completely voluntary and may be discontinued at any time, if you feel uncomfortable without any penalty. By completing and returning this survey, you are indicating your consent to participate in the study. All responses will be anonymous.

Please Check where appropriate

1. Gender: Male _____ Female _____
2. Classification: International Student _____ American Student _____
3. Educational Level: Freshman _____ Sophomore _____ Junior _____ Senior _____ Graduate _____
4. Age Category: 18-22 _____ 23-28 _____ 29-33 _____ Older than 33 _____
5. GPA Range: Less than 2.0 _____ 2.0-2.49 _____ 2.5-2.99 _____ 3.0-3.49 _____ 3.5-4.0 _____

| For each of the item identified below, circle the number to the right that best reflects your level of agreement from strongly agree (SA) to strongly disagree (SD). | STRONGLY AGREE | AGREE | DISAGREE | STRONGLY DISAGREE |
|--|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| 1. I accept my friends as they are | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. I would feel uncomfortable criticizing, to their face, someone I had dated for a long time | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. In my classes, I met two kinds of people: those who are for the truth and those who are against the truth | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. The instructors here do not treat the students like they are adults | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. As I have talked with faculty and adults about their different philosophies, there is probably only one which is correct | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. I relate to most students as an equal | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. It would not matter to me if someone I was going to marry had sexual relations with another person before I met them | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. I can enjoy myself without needing to have someone with me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9. When I talk to my friends about my religious beliefs, I am very careful not to compromise with those who believe differently than I do. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. I have to go out on a day every weekend. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 11. My roommate has some habits that bother and annoy me very much | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 12. I get nervous when an instructor criticizes my work. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

| | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 13. Most adults need to change their values and attitudes. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 14. Sometimes I feel I have to make unnecessary apologies for my appearance or conduct to the person(s) I live with. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 15. Students who live together before they are married definitely should be made to realize what they are doing is wrong. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 16. I can tell my friends just about anything that is on my mind and know they would accept me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 17. I would discontinue my friendship with a person(s) I am close to if I found out my friend(s) was a homosexual or bisexual. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 18. My social life is satisfying to me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 19. One of the problems with my fellow students is they were not dealt with firmly when they were younger. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 20. I relate with my parents on an adult-to-adult basis. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 21. I do not disapprove of faculty or other adults getting drunk or high at parties. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 22. My relationship with my roommate(s) is stagnating my growth and potential. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 23. I would not discontinue a love relationship if my partner did something I disapproved of. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 24. I feel comfortable about telling a friend of the same sex "I love you," without worrying they might got the wrong idea. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 25. Most instructors teach as if there is just one right way to obtain a solution to a problem. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 26. My relationships with members of the opposite sex have allowed me to explore some behaviors that I had not felt comfortable with before. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 27. I personally find it sickening to be around my friends when they do not act in a mature manner. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 28. My parents do not try to run my life. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 29. Freedom of speech can be carried too far in terms of the ideal because some students and their organizations should have their freedom of speech restricted. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 30. My friends view me as an independent , outgoing person in my relationship with them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 31. I'm glad to see most of my friends are not dressing like "bums" anymore. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 32. I always hold back when I am at a party which consists of a diverse group of people. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 33. I do not get irritated when parents cannot accept their children's friends or values | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 34. I encourage friends to drop in informally. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 35. I only date people who are of the same religious background as me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 36. My roommate(s) and I feel free to come and go as we please. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 37. I think the person I'm dating or "going with" should have friends outside of "our crowd." | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 38. I have gotten to know some instructors as people not just as faculty members. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 39. I think students that get "high" and are caught should be treated like the lawbreakers they are. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 40. I worry about not dating enough. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 41. I can just be with my friends without having to be doing anything in particular. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 42. I do not view myself as an independent, outgoing person with my friends | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM FOR SURVEY

You are being asked to participate in a research project examining the development of interpersonal relationships among international and American college students. You will be asked to complete a survey instrument consisting of 42 questions which may last for no more than 15 minutes. The researcher is quite aware of the demands on your time and would greatly appreciate your efforts for completing this survey.

Participation is completely voluntary and you are also assured that no personally identifiable information should be noted on the questionnaire (e.g., name social security number, and address). All information and responses to the questions will remain strictly confidential and will be used only for the purposes of this study. Data will be kept at a safe place and only the researcher and my committee chair will have access to it. Following data analysis, all questionnaires will be destroyed. Risks are minimal as participation is not likely to cause any major physical, financial or psychological risks. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time if you feel uncomfortable and this will not adversely affect your relationship with the researcher or The University of Southern Mississippi.

By participating in this study you will help the researcher to better gain broader perspectives about the how students are relating with others from different cultural backgrounds. The literature reveals that development of mature interpersonal relationships in college may help in the total development of students. The results of this study could also be used to guide faculty in designing their teaching and learning environments to help students develop their interpersonal relationships skills. The researcher anticipates presenting the aggregated results of this study at a professional conference and publishing it in a peer-reviewed journal. Neither you, nor the university will be identifiable within these published findings.

If you have any question relating to this study, please feel free to contact the researcher at the following address: **Bona Aidoo, 118 College Drive #5522, Hattiesburg, MS 39401. Phone (601) 874-0019 or E-mail: bona.aidoo@eagles.usm.edu.**

By completing and returning this questionnaire, you are indicating you consent to participate in the study.

This project has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research subject should be directed to the chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-6820.

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe your overall interpersonal relationships experiences with students from different backgrounds as a student at this university?
2. Describe the quality of your interpersonal relationships in general.
3. Have you had opportunities to engage in meaningful interactions with other students or faculty on campus with different beliefs, views, etc. than you?
4. In what way has being a student of The University of Southern Mississippi played a role in your development of interpersonal relationships with students from different cultural backgrounds? Both positively and/or negatively
5. What does it mean to you to be tolerant of others?
6. Do you think your level of tolerance has increased or decreased since being a student in this institution? In what ways? Why? or why not?
7. Can you give some of the specific examples that reflect your level of tolerance?
8. Are you a member of a student organization on campus? What type of organization?
9. Do you think students in this institution are developing tolerance for other students who are different from their cultures?
10. How would you compare what you observed on campus to what you've observed in Hattiesburg and other locations in the state?
11. How confident are you about heading into a workforce that is considered "global" where you may have daily interactions with some who located in another country, or a job that requires travel abroad?
12. What could staff and faculty of USM do to enhance tolerance among students?

APPENDIX F

CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEW

You are being asked to participate in a research projects about the development of mature interpersonal relationships among international and American college students. The interview session will last for no more than one hour. The interview protocol is made up of 10 open-ended questions (Appendix D) in order to gain deeper perspectives of your interpersonal relationship experiences in college. The researcher is quite aware of the demands on your time and would greatly appreciate your efforts for participation in the interview process.

Participation in completely voluntary and you are also assured that no personally identifiable information will be collected (e.g., name, social security number, and address). The interview process will be recorded and transcribed for data analysis purposes. Anonymous numbering (i.e. international student 1, American student 2) will be used to identify participants. All information and responses to the questions will remain strictly confidential and will be used only for the purposes of this study. Data will be kept at a safe place and only the researcher my committee chair will have access to it. Following data analysis, all audio tapes and notes will be destroyed. Risks are minimal as participation is not likely to cause major physical, financial or psychological risks. You are free to decide not to participate in this interview or to withdraw at any time if you feel uncomfortable and this will not adversely affect your relationship with the researcher or The University of Southern Mississippi.

By participating in this study you will help the researcher to better gain broader perspectives about the how students are relating with others from different cultural backgrounds. The literature reveals that development of mature interpersonal relationships in college may help in the *total* development of students. The researcher anticipates presenting the aggregated results of this study at a professional conference and publishing it in a peer-reviewed journal. Neither you, nor the university will be identifiable within these published findings.

If you have any question relating to this study, please feel free to contact the researcher at the following address: Bona Aidoo, 118 College Drive #5522, Hattiesburg, MS 39401. Phone: 601-874-0019 or E-mail: bona.aidoo@eagles.us.edu

I herewith give my consent to participate in this study.

This project has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research subject should be directed to the chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-6820.

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