

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Shalece L. Rains for the degree of Master of Science in College Student Services Administration presented on May 14, 2015.

Title: Supporting the Families of International Graduate Students with Accompanying Dependents

Abstract approved:

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Research universities in the United States recognize the importance of attracting graduate students from around the world to make global collaborations possible and to take advantage of the worldwide demand for higher education. Educational research has developed a large body of literature on the specialized supports that improve successful outcomes for international graduate students; however, accompanying spouses need more attention in research as well as in practice. The current case study is designed to explore how research universities support international graduate students with dependents, under the assumption that supporting student success includes welcoming and supporting the dependent spouses. The present multisite, embedded single case study is designed to determine the range of ecological levels present in the set of interventions—programs and policies that address (1) orientation, (2) social engagement, (3) skills training, (4) opportunities to serve, and (5) space for critical dialog—at each of the universities sampled. The study found emerging tendencies to include accompanying spouses in communications and programming, although the norm is still to address a student-only audience. Of the five critical services identified, programs and policies related to orientation and social engagement were more often inclusive of accompanying spouses

whereas sponsored opportunities for community engagement through volunteer service and for dialogue around critical issues were least likely to be available. This preliminary study is intended to encourage the application of ecological theory and environmental assessment (Schuh & Upcraft, 2001; Strange & Banning, 2001) of international student service units to promote the full engagement of international graduate students and accompanying spouses.

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Supporting the Families of International Graduate Students with Accompanying
Dependents

by
Shalece L. Rains

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APPROVED:

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Shalece L. Rains, Author

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	8
International Student Experience.....	8
Social Capital and Social Networking.....	9
Marriage and Graduate Study.....	11
International Graduate Student Spouses.....	12
General Struggles of International Students.....	13
Recommendations for Critical Student Services.....	14
Ecology.....	17
Community Psychology.....	19
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	22
Research Questions and Purpose of the Study.....	22
Worldview.....	23
Theoretical Perspective.....	24
Ecological Systems Theory.....	25
Methodology.....	26
Case Study Design.....	28
Data Collection and Analysis.....	31
Document Analysis.....	33
Interviews.....	34
Trustworthiness.....	35

TABLE OF CONTENTS, (continued)

	<u>Page</u>
Positionality.....	36
Chapter 4: Results.....	38
Data Sources.....	38
Approach to Data Analysis.....	38
Sources of Data.....	39
Phone Interviews.....	39
Document Analysis.....	40
Case Boundaries.....	40
Orientation.....	41
Audience and Content.....	41
Institution 1.....	42
Institution 2.....	43
Institution 3.....	43
Institution 4.....	44
Institution 5.....	44
Summary.....	45
Social Connectedness.....	45
Audience and Content.....	46
Institution 1.....	46
Institution 2.....	47
Institution 3.....	47

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

	<u>Page</u>
Institution 4.....	48
Institution 5.....	49
Summary.....	49
Skills Training.....	50
Audience and Content.....	51
Institution 1.....	51
Institution 2.....	52
Institution 3.....	52
Institution 4.....	52
Institution 5.....	53
Summary.....	53
Engagement through Service.....	53
Audience and Content.....	54
Institution 1.....	54
Institution 2.....	54
Institution 3.....	54
Institution 4.....	55
Institution 5.....	55
Summary.....	55
Critical Dialogue.....	56
Audience and Content.....	56

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

	<u>Page</u>
Institution 1.....	56
Institution 2.....	56
Institution 3.....	57
Institution 4.....	57
Institution 5.....	57
Summary.....	57
Broader themes.....	58
Institutional Organizational Charts.....	58
University Sponsorship.....	58
Reaching Students through Family.....	59
Knowledge of International Student Family Population.....	60
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	61
Summary of Results.....	62
Methodological Choices.....	64
Implications.....	65
Recommendations.....	67
Directions for Further Research.....	68
Conclusion.....	68

LIST OF APPENDICES

<u>Appendix</u>	<u>Page</u>
A. Invitation to Participate in the Study.....	81
B. Interview Questions.....	82
C. Document Search Procedure.....	83
D. Codebook.....	84

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Page</u>
Figure 1. Bronfenbrenner's Ecology Systems Theory	25

Chapter 1: Introduction

The continued internationalization of university campuses in the United States carries critical implications far outside the boundaries of the U.S. system of higher education itself, including state and national governments and economies because “a knowledge-driven economy is more productive if it has access to the best talent regardless of national origin” (Policy Implications, 2005, p. 15). United States citizens rarely study academic programs or earn degrees overseas, and the United States does not have a national policy on international education (Altbach, 1998; 2004); however, this country has been successful in recruiting students from other countries to pursue advanced degrees.

The importance of welcoming masters and doctoral level students to the United States can be understood by the numbers and economic impact on higher education as well as the overall national economy. NAFSA: Association of International Educators (2014) reported that international students and their families accounted for \$24 billion dollars in the U.S. economy for the 2012-2013 academic year and for the support or creation of 313,000 U.S. jobs. Hosting international students also brings diplomacy, innovation, and global perspectives to the United States and its colleges and universities (NAFSA, 2014).

International graduate and postdoctoral scholars help advance U.S. institutions and economy (Policy Implications, 2005). A policy paper studying the impact of international doctoral students in the United States found that they make contributions to advance development of scientific knowledge, have talents “integral” to scholarship, and innovate in ways that are “crucial” to the U.S. economy (Policy Implications, 2005, p.

129). The Committee on Policy Implications of International Graduate Students and Postdoctoral Scholars in the United States encouraged universities to continue to promote enrollments of these students.

Institutions are concerned with retaining international students; so much so that the “21st century research university” is characterized foremost for its transnational culture and operational reach (Mohrman, Ma, & Baker, 2008). These top-tier institutions, known as Emerging Global Model universities, developed in response to (1) the demand from countries around the world for access to higher levels of education, (2) privatization of enterprise driven by declining state and national funding, and (3) forces of globalization that encourage competing entities to expand their operating scope (Mohrman et al, 2008). For all of these reasons, the most productive research universities recognize the importance of drawing graduate-level students from around the world to make their global collaborations possible (Mohrman et al, 2008).

However, there are numerous obstacles to successful sojourns for work or study that is temporary, though it may last weeks, months, or years (Church, 1982). Altbach and Peterson (1998) commented on the lack of a national impetus for internationalization of higher education, stating that “the U.S. weakness in policy and strategies affecting higher education impacts the country’s ability to manage internationalization” (p. 38). The national immigration policies that do exist hinder rather than facilitate global competitiveness (Altbach & Peterson, 1998). Visa and immigration policies have “adverse effects” on the number of talented scholars choosing to study in the U.S. (Policy Implications, 2005, p. 139). Scholars with families may be even more reluctant to move to the United States because F-2 visas, designated for spouses of academic students,

prohibit holders from working and even enrolling in an academic program of study.

Knowing that an accomplished and productive family member will be relegated to

“avocational or recreational” activities is likely difficult

(<http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/study-exchange/student.html#spouse>).

Accompanying spouses of international graduate students are largely ignored in immigration law and institutional policy, yet impact the success of a sojourn (De Verthelyi, 1995; Martens & Grant, 2008). Many obstacles exist for the dependents who accompany students to the United States for graduate study; consistently identified obstacles include lack of purpose, destabilization of personal identity, and isolation from community (De Verthelyi, 1995; Martens & Grant, 2008; Schwartz & Kahne, 1993; Teshome & Osei-Kofi, 2012). The academic success of international graduate students is to some degree dependent on the wellbeing of their family members (Black & Gregersen, 1991; Teshome & Osei-Kofi, 2012). Therefore, these obstacles impact the scholars’ ability to participate fully in their program of study.

Given the political climate (Altbach, 1998; 2004), it is up to each institution to uphold the excellence and prestige that has attracted students from overseas for decades. In fact, the responsiveness universities have generally shown to the needs of international graduate students was one of the few positive findings of The Committee on Policy Implications of International Graduate Students and Postdoctoral Scholars in the United States: “Steps taken by educational...institutions have mitigated some of the adverse effects of visa and immigration policies by creating resources for international applicants” (Policy Implications, 2005, p. 140). For example, the report noted actions to make notifications early and even reimburse the cost of the Student and Exchange Visitor

Information System (SEVIS) fee if graduate students were admitted (Policy Implications, 2005).

Considering the proven effectiveness of responsive policies and practices, along with the realization that spouses need more attention in research as well as in practice, the current study is designed to explore the ways research universities support international graduate students with dependents, with the assumption that supporting student success includes welcoming and supporting the dependent spouse. This research question assumes that graduate students have academic responsibilities outside of class such as working, doing research, and attending conferences (Coulter, Goin & Gerard, 2004). Graduate students with dependent family members have additional responsibilities in their roles as partners and/or parents, and needs of the family often compete with academic responsibilities, creating stress that may impact successful completion of a master's or doctorate degree.

In the context of this study, international graduate students are defined as students enrolled in a master's or doctoral program in the United States whose immigration status is temporary and limited to student status. Individuals who are U.S. citizens or U.S. Permanent Residents are not considered. In this study, I have assumed that certain conditions, such as the visa and immigration status of a sojourner, will impact the dependents' environments. The child dependents are able to attend public school, where isolation is presumably lessened. The adult dependents, on the other hand, do not have the benefit of an organized community since the applicable visa categories restrict their participation in courses of study and/or employment. Therefore, this study focused primarily on these dependent spouses of international graduate students. 'Dependent

spouse' refers to an individual who has been granted F-2 (sponsor is a student) or J-2 (sponsor is a scholar) visa status to live in the United States. Again, U.S. citizens, Permanent Residents, or immigrants would experience different conditions not taken into account in this study.

The student support services within the scope of this study are those provided outside the normal scope of the classroom and designed to promote engagement with the institution. Academic support, financial aid, immigration counseling, and many other interventions are critical services, but are outside the scope of this project. Student support services include programming that takes place pre-arrival, upon-arrival, throughout the program of study, at graduation, and post-graduation (De Verthelyi, 1995). Finally, the data collection protocol, described in chapter three, distinguishes between programs and policies that are direct support to the international graduate student (no stated intent to support dependents), direct support to the international graduate student (with stated intent to support dependents), or direct support to the dependent spouse of the international graduate student.

A multisite case study methodology was designed to capture how up to twelve universities support married international graduate students by offering programming that recognizes their roles as parent or spouse to them and/or their dependents. Specifically, the study is interested in noting such programming that recognizes the students' intersecting roles as academics and family members. Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2013) and Merriam (2009) stated that data is usually collected in various forms for case studies due to the need to thoroughly investigate the setting and contextualize the study. Therefore, the methods for cataloging what services institutions offer married

international graduate students and their dependents are two-fold: interviews and document analysis.

Chapter two provides a review of the literature with a focus on the unique needs of international families. It establishes how ecological systems theory provides a useful framework to explore problems as well as effective remedies. Notions of person-environment interaction, the precursor to ecology systems theories, "...evaluates how the various elements and conditions of the college campus milieu affect student learning and growth" (Schuh & Upcraft, 2001, p. 167). Bronfenbrenner's (1977) developmental ecology theory aids in understanding student development in a social context, while campus ecology (Strange & Banning, 2001) considers the influence of the environment on the student. Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, and Renn (2009) relate the two theories: "recent uses of developmental ecology have drawn attention back to campus ecology as a potentially powerful perspective for understanding student development in college" (p. 168). Thus, the complement of these two ecological approaches, operationalized by environmental assessment "is a particularly useful technique when the goal is to gain a sense of the total experience of students and their interaction with the institution" leading to change and even improvement in the quality of life for students (Schuh & Upcraft, 2001, p. 173).

Literature in the areas of acculturation, adjustment strain, and sojourner theories provide a basis for understanding. Ideologically, framework for internationalization shifts from being a deficit in the sojourner that the sojourner alone is expected to overcome to being a shared responsibility among individuals, institutions, and communities to promote wellbeing (Lee & Rice, 2007; Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2010).

Another area of literature, community psychology, illustrates how ecology theory has been helpful in other fields. Most importantly, chapter two includes the descriptive literature documenting the thoughts and feelings of spouses from other countries. Ultimately, the literature review provides consensus on what practices need to be in place for students and their families to enjoy a successful sojourn.

Chapter three is a detailed account of the methodology used to conduct the single-case, multiple-site study of five model research institutions. Due to the variable nature of case study research, the researcher must determine the parameters of the investigation with intentionality. This chapter elaborates on the process of selecting the unit of analysis (the “case”), any relevant embedded units, and the sample of participant sites.

Ch 2: Literature Review

Chapter two presents foundational and contemporary studies in various areas that can give insight to the experiences of international students, in particular those who are accompanied by dependents while studying in the United States. Not all of the studies were limited to this population. For example, the literature on social capital and general challenges studied international students including undergraduates and graduates, partnered and single, parents and non-parents. On the other hand, the study on marriage and graduate study was not specific to international populations. A number of reports specific to international graduate student spouses are reviewed in this chapter. Finally, applications of ecological frameworks in the field of community psychology are presented as a potential model for assessment and planning on college campuses.

International Student Experience

Students who leave their home country to pursue education in another country are considered part of a larger group called sojourners (Church, 1982). Sojourners are “relatively short term visitors to new cultures where permanent settlement is not the purpose of the sojourn,” (Church, 1982, p. 540). A large body of sojourner research exists, most of which focuses on adjustment and, more specifically, acculturation (Church, 1982; Ward, 1996). Much of the literature on the sojourner experience also centers on the psychological stress brought on by the process of acculturation (Lee, Koeske, & Sales, 2004; Myers-Walls, Frias, Kwon, Ko, & Lu, 2011; Poyrazli, 2006; Ward, 1996).

Ward’s (1996) synthesis of the acculturation literature took into account “behavioral, cognitive, and affective responses”, and contextualized them ecologically according to the individual’s interaction with their immediate, surrounding, and external

environment as “influenced by both societal-level and individual-level variables” (p.128). This approach is a significant departure from other attempts to define acculturation from a deficit orientation. The deficit stance assumes the sojourner to be lacking in necessary skills, hence the focus on culture shock and acculturative strain. Another emphasis has been cognitive orientation of acquiring social skills, emphasizing the identification and adoption of culturally appropriate social learning (Ward, 1996).

Social Capital and Social Networking

The importance of social interaction as the path to overcoming acculturative stress is emphasized throughout the literature (Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998; Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune, 2011; Martens & Grant, 2008). While some studies take for granted that the target of sojourner interaction would be host nationals, others have more carefully observed the actual interaction patterns that exist (Hendrickson et al, 2011; Martens & Grant, 2008). At least one study attempted to defy the assumption completely. Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood (2013) challenged the typical deficit view of acculturation, including the assumption that the host or dominant culture monopolizes social capital. They argued that international students, both undergraduate and graduate, on campuses across the United States are able to build social networks independent of the institution and of the host culture (see also, Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998; Hendrickson et al, 2011).

Their study organized international college students by social interaction tendencies, namely whether they formed friendship networks with people from their home country, people from other countries, people from the host country, or any combination (Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013). The support provided by social networks is well documented in the literature, and some have emphasized the relative

importance of host national friendships (Chavajay, 2013; Hendrickson et al, 2011; Lee, et al, 2004). However, in this study, the number of students who interacted almost exclusively with host nationals was by far the smallest percentage. Instead, nearly 40% of participants were “exclusive global mixers,” students who networked with co-nationals and other international students, but not with host nationals (Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013, p. 421). International graduate students especially fit into this group, meaning this population tended to exclude U.S. nationals from their social networks. The next largest group (28%) was “inclusive global mixers;” those students with the most heterogeneous social groups made up of co-nationals, other internationals, as well as host nationals (Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013, p. 423). “Self-segregators,” whose social interactions exclude both international students from other nations and host nation students, represented a group nearly as large as the inclusive mixers, 27% (Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013, p. 420). Based on these findings, the authors contended that “the American college campus has indeed provided an ideal setting for cross-cultural dialogue between students of different nationalities, yet such global mixing has largely occurred to the exclusion of, rather than the adjustment to, the dominant American culture” (Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013, p. 426).

The majority of international students in this study effectively bypassed the necessity to acculturate deeply into the host community by accessing social capital from other groups (Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013). This strategy, deemed very effective by the authors, “calls into question the long-held assumption that the problems associated with the international student experience can be solved by simply improving the quality of social adjustment programs sponsored by the host institution” (Rose-

Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013, p. 426). These authors favored shifting the assimilationist focus towards holistic engagement. Rather than pressing for interaction between ‘needy’ international visitors and American ‘helpers,’ engagement programming should strive to build authentic relationships “among the diverse ensemble of co-nationals, other internationals, and host nationals” (p. 426).

Marriage and graduate study

In an effort to survey a sufficient body of scholarship, this literature review includes broader populations that would include international graduate students with dependents, but is not necessarily limited to that population. For example, research on the stressors of marriage, discussed in this section, included diverse populations of married post-baccalaureate students, not just international scholars. Even without the strain of transnational adjustment, graduate study can be a taxing endeavor. For married graduate students, both international and domestic, pursuing higher education is not an individual task, but one that “confronts the family system” as a whole (Gold, 2006, p. 485).

Relationship conflict is common enough that Gold (2006) identified graduate study as a threat to the health of the relationship. Gold (2006) concluded that master’s and doctoral students of both genders experienced “significant levels of relationship conflict, frequent arguments, and difficulties in resolving differences” from findings of scaled measures as well as participant reporting (p. 492).

For international graduate students specifically, marriage seems to be a complex interplay of stressors and buffers to stress (Poyrazli, 2006). For example, the spousal relationship has been reported as a top concern of international graduate students (De Verthelyi, 1995), but an important source of comfort as well. Married international

students potentially must deal with even more social isolation than other international students due to lifestyle differences. Many programs emphasize the importance of social support “as an essential component in achieving successful adjustment outcomes,” yet too often ignore how significant spousal relationships can be in providing it (Poyrazli, 2006). As with social capital, there should be more focus on identifying resources students bring with them and maximizing their effectiveness. Understanding the complexity of this interdependence is an antidote to deficit thinking.

International graduate student spouses

Sojourner research on business expatriates recognized that accompanying dependents impact the success of the sojourn. Similarly, the academic success of international graduate students is to some degree dependent on the wellbeing of their family members (De Verthelyi, 1995; Teshome & Osei-Kofi, 2012). Teshome and Osei-Kofi’s (2012) interviews with 12 spouses of international students uncovered feelings of loss of identity and community that were not rebuilt in the new community. Despite educational and professional accomplishments in their home country, spouses of students suddenly found themselves not only without prestige, but without any means to contribute to the community, primarily due to the restrictions against working or studying for F-2 visa holders (Teshome & Osei-Kofi, 2012). Years earlier, De Verthelyi (1995) had found also that spouses were afforded little choice in making decisions; the “lack of purposeful activity” was difficult to deal with, especially when the spouse experienced the loss of professional identity they had enjoyed in their home country, and spouses felt compelled to seek a new purpose in order to feel personal fulfillment.

While the student's role was defined and validated by academic activity, a spouse may have felt as though they had no role to play as far as the institution was concerned. There is evidence that, despite the larger issue of national policy, a commitment from the institution can have a meaningful impact (Schwartz & Kahne, 1993; Teshome & Osei-Kofi, 2012). For instance, the participants in Teshome and Osei-Kofi's (2012) study all agreed on the positive outcomes they enjoyed thanks to a volunteer social network. Schwartz and Kahne (1993) described an even more comprehensive "self-help organization" that offers a wide array of activities such as exercise, crafting, English as a Second Language, or sight-seeing, depending on the interests of the organizing spouses. While these authors and their participants offer hopeful examples, they also clearly call for more intentional programming sponsored by the institutions hosting international graduate student families (Schwartz & Kahne, 1993; Springer et al, 2009; Teshome & Osei-Kofi, 2012). Institutional sponsorship lends stability, and, importantly, communicates to the spouses that they are recognized as part the university community.

General struggles of international students

Church's (1982) survey of the literature found that the difficulties faced by international students in the United States have changed very little over time. Unfamiliar language, pedagogy, and social norms combined with isolation, marital strain, and racial discrimination are consistent stressors (Church, 1982). These findings are not exclusive to graduate students from other countries, but the issues facing international students in general have a strong potential to impact graduate students with dependents even more. Loss of status affects many sojourners, and even more so, the spouses of sojourners (Church, 1982; De Verthelyi, 1995; Teshome & Osei-Kofi, 2012). For example, legal

restrictions for non-residents preclude studying or working, which impacts a spouse's sense of purpose or may add to financial strain (De Verthelyi, 1995; Myers-Walls, Frias, Kwon, Ko, & Lu, 2011).

Poyrazli and Grahame (2007) found concerns of international students consistent with other findings. These students need additional support in meeting basic needs such as housing, transportation, and food; legal counsel regarding immigration status; and social support systems that include co-nationals as well as host nationals (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). Specifically regarding the needs of international women students, Qin (2009) highlighted language difficulties, the need for a job or financial support, and a desire for cultural understanding and respect. A doctoral student expressed sensitivity to the attitudes of host nationals at U.S. universities: "If American faculty, staff, and students...could appreciate who we are and respect our unique cultural heritage, language, tradition and lifestyles, we will feel much better and encouraged. Their attitudes mean a lot to us!" (Qin, 2009, p. 165). This plea is not surprising given the incidence of perceived discrimination, which ranged from social exclusion and verbal insults to physical violence, as documented by Lee and Rice (2007).

Recommendations for Critical Student Services

The literature details these difficulties, but also provides direction for improvement. First, the entry and earliest stages of transition for sojourners are the most difficult and when most support is necessary (Ward, 1996). The U-curve theory asserted that sojourners' experiences were largely pleasant at the beginning and end of a sojourn, while the time of greatest trial was mid-sojourn; however, this model has been largely discounted (Church, 1982; Lee et al, 2004; Ward, 1996). Pre-arrival, upon-arrival, and

on-going orientation programming is a critical part of providing adequate support services around the sensitive time of entry. Because realistic expectations help smooth sojourner transitions, pre-arrival orientation should focus on providing thorough and accurate information about what to expect from the environment in terms of resources as well as lack of resources (Black & Gregersen, 1991; Ward, 1996).

Black and Gregersen (1991) investigated the factors contributing to the cross-cultural adjustment of expatriate spouses. They found that “the more the spouse was in favor of accepting the assignment, the more the spouse engaged in self-initiated pre-departure ...training” and after the transition, the spouse was more likely to take the initiative to engage the new environment. Gold (2006) recommended family-inclusive and family-focused orientation programs to assist all married students and their families with the transition into the institution. Poyrazli and Grahame (2007), after studying the concerns and issues of international students, advocated for orientation programs that predict the stressors identified for international students and then incorporate coping strategies into orientation offerings.

Martens and Grant (2008) found a common desire in accompanying spouses for professional or skills training as well as community involvement. Notably, a large majority of participants wanted to have active roles in creating and operating programming (Gold, 2006; Martens & Grant, 2008; Schwartz & Kahne, 1993; Teshome & Osei-Kofi, 2012). Active support groups that incorporate skills training and community service invite spouses to serve and to feel more autonomous (De Verthelyi, 1995; Schwartz & Kahne, 1993).

The literature is also consistent in calling for social support of interpersonal relationships to aid in wellbeing. This personal support should come from both co-nationals and host nationals (Chavajay, 2013; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Ward, 1996). Lee, Koeske, and Sales (2004) recommended that social support systems be facilitated well into the adjustment process, given their findings that social connections buffered stress for international students most when students were at the highest level of acculturation to the host culture. In other words, the students with the most interest and involvement with the U.S. culture and language benefited most from cross-cultural social networking. Other authors suggested “regular series of panel discussions that explore contemporary global issues from cross-cultural perspectives, ... [and] substantive engagement with the host community as part of the international student orientation” as representations of mutually inclusive engagement, which is more likely to “foster meaningful cross-cultural dialogue among different nationalities, including the host community” (Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013, p. 426).

In a broader context, Poyrazli and Grahame (2007) addressed the need for training to understand racism. Lee and Rice (2007) provided the evidence of “inadequacies within the host society” that confront international visitors with cultural and racial discrimination (p. 381). To foster diversity on another front, it is important to increase the visibility of international populations on campus and in the community through news media, public recognition, and public celebration (Sherry, Thomas & Chui, 2010).

Institutional responsibility for sponsorship is another repeated theme. Often, the services or policies put in place to support international graduate students’ families are informal and inconsistent. In a study of graduate student parents (not international),

Springer, Parker, and Leviten-Reid (2009) found “patchwork supports” and called for systemic responses from institutions (p. 440). While the flexibility of case-by-case accommodations seems appealing, it is actually problematic (Springer et al, 2006). Formal policies are preferred over informal norms, which can be seen as undeserved favors or special treatment (Springer et al, 2006). Schwartz and Kahne (1993) spoke to the need for institutional responsibility in the form of formal, centralized support programs even as the nature of the programs would encourage a sense of autonomy in the participants. Many universities do offer opportunities to connect through volunteer support networks, but institutions must take responsibility to make more concerted efforts to support them (Martens & Grant, 2008; Schwartz & Kahne, 1993; Teshome & Osei-Kofi, 2012).

Although networks could and should extend beyond the campus, the significance of the institution as the home base is real in terms of fostering a sense of belonging. Terrazas-Carrillo, Hong & Pace (2014), in their research on place attachment, found that meaningful places were those which “facilitated social interaction, ...[were] experienced in congruence with the self, and...allowed expression of individual emotional experiences” (p. 698). When asked about spaces that were personally significant to them, student interviewees cited locations on campus, highlighting the importance of campus life for their experiences.

Ecology

Poyrazli and Grahame (2007) noted that “attention must be given to different parts of the social system” (p. 29) and applying an ecological framework facilitates this task by focusing on the “characteristics of a specific setting and the interaction of

individuals with that setting” (p. 32). Strange and Banning (2001) also explored “[t]he notion that human environments, such as schools, workplaces, hospitals, clubs, and churches, are often characterized by planned, systematic, and organized structures that affect [people’s] functioning” (p. 59). Organizations are “environments with a purpose” and decisions made about how to organize and allocate resources reveal the organization’s values (Strange & Banning, 2001, p. 61).

Kelly, Azelton, Burzette, and Mock (1994) formulated the concept of ecological pragmatism as a strategy for supporting social diversity. As an ecologically oriented concept, it recognizes the importance of setting in encouraging mutual understanding of differences as opposed to depending on individuals to generate diverse climates and blaming individual or personal characteristics when appreciation of diversity fails to occur. Ecological pragmatism fosters aspects of interdependence, use of resources, communication across settings, and space for reflection (Kelly et al, 1994).

According to Goodkind and Foster-Fishman (2002), the ecological orientation emphasizes “the extent to which particular settings are able to facilitate the participation of community members” as much or more so than individual traits (p. 389). Though Goodkind and Foster-Fishman (2002) studied a refugee population in a residential community, the barriers they identified—“language, time constraints [on participation], and discrimination”—are notably similar to findings in the literature dealing with the experiences of international students’ families in the “multiethnic communities” of the university campus (p. 389).

Community psychology

One query underlying this study's research questions is to what extent institutional practices are guided by a belief that engaging the spouses of international graduate students leads to their empowerment and efficacy. Therefore, scholarship on empowerment in the context of community psychology is explored. An ecological perspective has informed community psychology and empowerment theory (Speer & Hughey, 1995; Trickett, 1994; Trickett, Watts & Birman, 1993; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988), serving as an example to the study of ecology systems theory in the context of university communities. Speer and Hughey (1995) define empowerment "as the manifestation of social power at individual, organizational, and community levels of analysis" (p. 730).

Reflecting this ecological orientation, the authors understand social power and its outcomes to be organized around these levels of analysis. "As a process, individual empowerment is expressed through membership in an organization, relationship building with community members, and practice of an action-reflection dialectic..." (Speer & Hughey, 1995, p. 736). Belonging to an organization places individuals in a setting with access to social capital. At the organizational level, there are three instruments of power. The number of participants leverages the group's ability to reward and censure, the power to determine social dialog by cutting off or expanding on a topic, and the ability to shape how the group thinks about and acts on particular issues (Speer & Hughey, 1995).

Zimmerman and Rappaport (1988) performed three studies exploring the connection between empowerment and participation with participants who were either college students or residents involved in community activism. Psychological

empowerment was found to be positively and negatively correlated to leadership and alienation, respectively. The results of the three studies indicated that “greater participation in community activities and organizations is associated with psychological empowerment” though it does not establish a causal relationship between the two concepts (p. 745). Psychological empowerment is defined here as “personality, cognitive, and motivational aspects of personal control and competence” and described as “the connection between a sense of personal competence, a desire for, and a willingness to take action in, the public domain” (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988, p. 746). Involvement in community organization was higher for students reporting a greater sense of empowerment.

Citizen participation is another area of research closely related to social power and empowerment (Florin & Wandersman, 1990; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988). Citizen participation is the act of an individual taking part in the decisions that affect them in social realms, such as at program, institution, or community government levels (Florin & Wandersman, 1990). Florin and Wandersman (1990) found evidence that such participation offers benefits at all ecological levels—“national, community, interpersonal, and individual” (p. 43). Because colleges and universities form communities just as dynamic as any other, concepts of community psychology and ecology are useful in considering issues of human interaction with each other and the environment, in this case with particular interest in engagement and empowerment. One key motivation behind this research is to consider whether similar connections between empowerment and engagement among spouses of international graduate students guide institutions’ programs and policies for this population.

This review of the literature gathered insight as to the programs or recommendations for programs offered by institutions that host married international students. The recommendations presented are the outcome of several studies revealing the concerns and issues identified by the impacted parties, in more and more cases, the international students and dependents themselves. These concerns are both personal and social. Namely, international graduate student families must navigate personal issues of self-esteem and autonomy; covering basic needs for food, transportation, and housing; and social difference and distance.

In response to the expressed need for institutions to take responsibility for sponsorship of formalized support services for international graduate students' families, and with an emphasis on ecological systems' influence on wellbeing, the current study investigated how some model universities have approached the issue of welcoming dependent sojourners. The case under study is not an individual or even an institution. Rather, it is defined as the array of recommendations for critical student services addressing the personal, interpersonal, and social needs of sojourners to the United States in master's or doctoral programs. In chapter three, I detail the design of a multisite case study bound by these recommended practices.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The current chapter details the approach taken to first develop and then investigate the research questions. In order to properly describe my process, I had to first describe my relativistic worldview, which assumes knowledge and reality are constructed through the human experience. From here, ecological systems theory was established as the framework for this study. A case study method was chosen to explore each of the research questions, and within this context, data collection, and data analysis methods were implemented.

Research Questions and Purpose of the Study

The intent of this study was to identify support programs and policies implemented at research universities in the United States that directly or indirectly provide services to the dependents of international graduate students. Guided by the assertions in sojourner literature that the family system, and the dependent spouse in particular, impacts the successful completion of a sojourn (Church, 1982) together with the premise of ecology systems that lends importance to environmental factors (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Trickett et al, 1993), this study seeks to understand how institutions of higher education attend to the needs of international graduate student families by addressing the families' individual, interpersonal, community, and system-level environments. To that end, I pose the following research questions:

- How do research universities support international graduate students and their dependents?
- Are services offered directly to students with the intent to indirectly impact family members?

- Are services offered directly to family members?
- At what ecological levels do the services impact the dependents of international graduate students?
- How is an ecological perspective effective in planning support services for international graduate students and their dependents?

Worldview

Human behavior is well understood by accounting for an individual's environment and the interaction between person and environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). In an even broader sense, understanding and influencing human experience requires a holistic, multidimensional approach recognizing that both the individual and the environment consist of many dimensions (Hutchison, 2008).

A constructivist orientation allows for a deep exploration of these dimensions by arguing the validity of interpretive research methods based on the assertions that reality only exists as an interpretation, and that scientists should take interest in how individuals interpret, or construct, reality (Hutchison, 2008). The assertion that reality is interpretation rather than an absolute is referred to as a relativist ontology (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This worldview influences the theoretical framework, methodology, and methods I have selected to study the concerns and issues of international graduate students and their family members along with the services institutions currently provide in response to these concerns and issues.

Theoretical perspective

Merriam (2006) used the analogy of constructing the foundation for a building to state the importance of a theoretical framework upon which a research study is built. The

theoretical foundation is crucial because it “determines the problem to be investigated, the specific research questions asked, and, of key importance, how these data are analyzed/interpreted” (Merriam, 2006, p. 23). Reflecting on the experience of conducting research within the framework of a specific theory, Henstrand (2006) described how the study and subsequent application of a theory “provided a lens through which [the researcher] could observe and record” in a setting which was, before seeking the clarifying structure of theory, “a chaotic collection of actions and voices” (p. 18).

Ecological Systems Theory. “Ecology focuses on the interdependence of people and their physical and social environments” (Trickett, Watts & Birman, 1993, p. 273). Bronfenbrenner (1977) identified “discovery—the identification of those systems properties and processes that affect, and are affected by, the behavior and development of the human being” as opposed to hypothesis testing, as the main goal of ecological investigation (p. 518). Ecological systems theory acknowledges the interdependence between person and environment, making it necessary to clearly define what constitutes ones’ environment.

Bronfenbrenner (1977) defined four systems of the human environment. The microsystem is the immediate setting around and including the individual, such as the home or school. The mesosystem is the intersection of an individual’s various microsystems, such as family involvement with the school. An exosystem does not contain the individual, but does strongly influence the experiences of the individual. Examples of exosystems are media outlets, local (and other levels of) government, municipal facilities, and social networks. Governing all these systems are “economic, social, educational, legal, and political” ideologies, which represent the macro system in

the ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 515). Though this model is closely associated with the child development, reflecting one of the author's major areas of interest, it evolved over decades of research. *Environments in developmental perspective: Theoretical and operational models* (Bronfenbrenner, 1999) and *Examining lives in context: Perspectives on the ecology of human development* (Moen, Elder, Luscher, & Bronfenbrenner, 1995) provide a few examples of its extension to overall human development. As presented in the literature reviewed in this study, numerous studies in the field of community psychology also apply the model to adult populations (Florin & Wandersman, 1990) mixed-generation refugee communities (Goodkind & Foster-Fishman, 2002) and specifically to college students (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988).

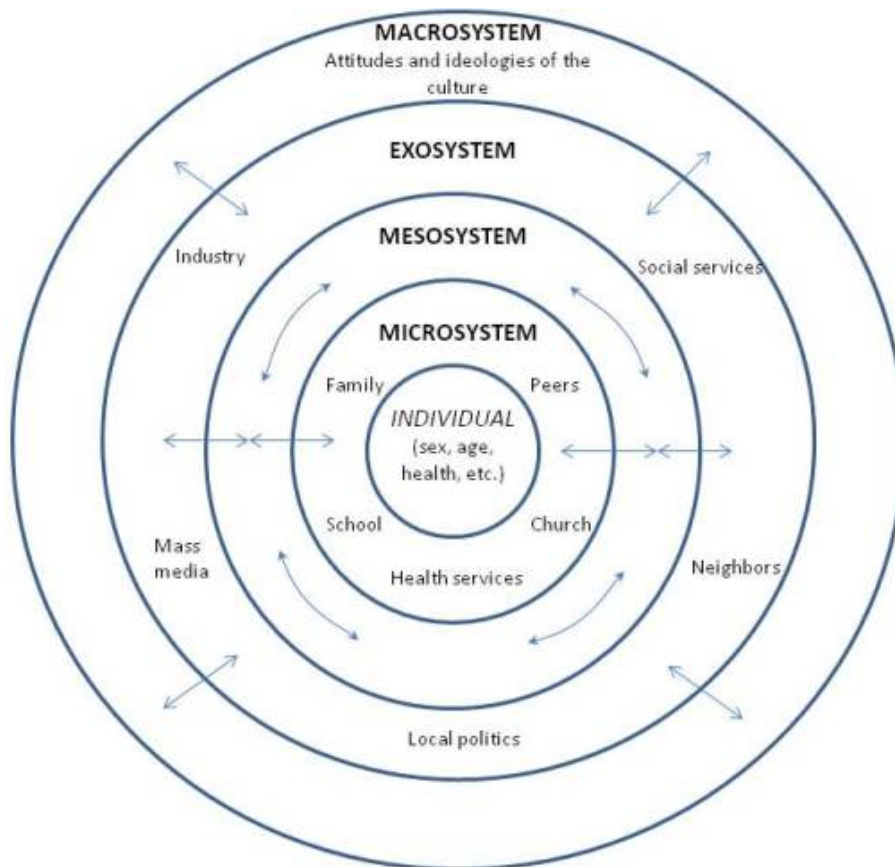


Figure 1. Bronfenbrenner's Ecology Systems Theory

I have chosen an ecological framework, drawing on the tenets of the community psychology movement, which are “cultural relativity, diversity, and an ecological perspective that respects, indeed fosters, differences among people” (Trickett et al, 1993, p. 264). Trickett et al (1993) described the advantages of applying an ecological framework to the field of community psychology. According to the authors, ecology addresses the impact of culture on individual behavior, including how social norms show up in practice and policy and affect groups differentially. The premise of ecological systems theory, along with the example of how community psychologists have employed the framework to promote diversity, causes an important shift away from emphasizing individuals’ ‘failure to adjust’ towards recognizing that “attention must be given to the different parts of the social system that foster or inhibit...students’ adjustment” (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007, p. 29).

Methodology

Onwuegbuzie, Collins & Frels (2013) “conceptualize[d] that the four levels comprising Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems model could be mapped onto the research process[es]” of social, behavior, and health sciences (p. 4). For example, a study of an individual or group’s immediate environment would be categorized as microsystems research. A study that considered participants within the intersection of their microsystems would be mesosystems research. Exosystems research studies would explore how systems of which the participant does not belong influence the participant, whereas macro systems research would study participants within the larger society (Onwuegbuzie et al, 2013). In a similar fashion, this study will map Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems onto practices and policies employed at a select number of

universities in the United States. This level of application is a key difference from Onwuegbuzie et al's concept. As opposed to situating the entire study within one ecological level, the present study is designed to determine the range of ecological levels present in the set of interventions—programs and policies that address (1) orientation, (2) social engagement, (3) skills training, (4) opportunities to serve, and (5) space for critical dialog—at each of the universities sampled. Below, I discuss the rationale for selecting these five criteria.

According to Yin (2009) “a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context” (p. 18). Yin (2009) defined four types of case study design: holistic, single-case; embedded, single-case; holistic, multiple-case; and embedded, multiple-case. Holistic refers to a case with one discrete unit of analysis, whereas embedded case studies have a unit of analysis with several components (Yin, 2009). To distinguish a single case from a multiple case, Yin (2009) used experimental replication logic. A single case is the conceptual equivalent to a single experiment. A multiple case study design is appropriate when the replication logic of repeated experimentation applies (Yin, 2009). As I am not attempting to replicate a phenomenon exactly or predict different outcomes by controlling variables, the case study design for this project is an embedded, single-case design.

To begin, I reviewed sojourner, acculturation, and cultural adjustment literature, community psychology, and most importantly, the literature detailing the experiences of international graduate students and their dependents in their own voices. The literature review allowed me to identify a 5-criteria set of recommended practices, which is the unit of analysis (also defined as the case) for the study. In the data collection phase, I

reviewed documents and interviewed administrators to determine which of these recommended practices occur and what policies exist at each site. The case is bound by the five recommended practices, so I only considered interventions that can be described in terms of these criteria. Data analysis will involve categorizing each practice and policy according to its ecological system level; in other words, whether it influences the individual on a micro-, meso-, exo-, or macro-level.

Case Study Design. In the existing literature on international student spouses, there is an emphasis on narratives of the students' and/or dependents' lived experiences (De Verthelyi, 1995; Frias, Kwon, Lu, Ko, & Myers-Walls, 2011; Teshome & Osei-Kofi, 2011). I rely on these contributions to the literature as much as possible. At the same time, I will seek to analyze the input of other stakeholders, the serving institutions, and create a framework for gathering information from the institutions about services rather than the perceptions of those who would use the services. Because the focus of this project is institutional policy and practice, students and their dependents will not be included as participants.

Herriott and Firestone (1983) noted issues to consider in designing multisite case studies, including tension between more or less structured data collection, inclusion of a greater or fewer number of sites, and reporting from a site-specific or issue-specific focus. Through careful performance of case selection, site selection, document analysis and administrator interviews, this study contributes to the field's understanding of programs and policies that impact international graduate students' dependent spouses. From the literature, I determined a set of criteria that represent the standards of service for international graduate students' and their families. An ecological lens influenced the

selection of the standards of practice to be included in the unit of analysis. This set of criteria, the unit of analysis for the case study, were then applied to each of the case study sites, resulting in data that can be analyzed to determine how doctoral/research universities are meeting the standard of service.

For case study research, sampling involves identification and selection of a finitely bound case (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2013). The unit of analysis, which is synonymous with the ‘case,’ (Yin, 2009) can be an educational program that is implemented at various sites throughout a school district or state, for example (Burgess, Pole, Evans, & Priestley, 1994; Stake, 2006; Sharp et al, 2011). This multisite case study requires sampling to construct the unit of analysis, or, in other words, to ‘identify and select’ the boundaries of the case. However, there is no uniform policy or law that applies to all research universities for the implementation of support services for dependents of international graduate students, so this case study does not define the unit of analysis as a formal policy. Rather, the unit of analysis is the set of recommended practices identified in the literature. Specifically, these are five areas of concern mentioned repeatedly and consistently in the literature by sojourning spouses as well as researchers. The standard of service that makes up the case includes these five criteria:

- Orientation (pre-arrival, upon-arrival, and on-going)
- Social engagement opportunities with co-nationals, other nationals, and host nationals
- Skills training
- Engagement through service
- Opportunities for critical dialog and reflection

Case study research often involves two or more levels of sampling- “selection of the case and selection of participants within the case” (Jones et al, 2013, p. 97). In addition to drawing the case from the literature, I conducted sampling to select which research universities to include as sites for the case study. The focus of this research is the institutional resources (human and other) invested in supporting the families of international graduate students, with a focus on ecology. Thus, the sample is non-random, including only institutions whose work relates to the student population of interest. The sample was purposely limited to Carnegie Classification’s RU/VH (Research University/Very High research activity) institutions to increase the likelihood of capturing populations of master’s and doctoral level students.

The site sample was further narrowed by selecting only RU/VH institutions that are also members of the Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU) based in the United States. The APRU is a transnational collaboration of 45 member universities in 16 countries (<https://apru.org>). All 12 U.S.-based APRU schools are also RU/VH classified, forming a sample of twelve potential participant universities. These institutions are California Institute of Technology, Stanford, University of California-Berkeley, University of California-Davis, University of California-Irvine, University of California-Los Angeles, University of California-San Diego, University of California-Santa Barbara, University of Hawaii at Manoa, University of Oregon, University of Southern California, and University of Washington.

Mohrman, Ma, & Baker (2008) identified APRU member institutions as Emerging Global Model institutions. The authors offered this description of a small set of research universities to explain the term Emerging Global Model (EGM) universities:

EGM universities are characterized by an intensity of research that far exceeds past experience. They are engaged in worldwide competition for students, faculty, staff, and funding; they operate in an environment in which traditional political, linguistic, and access boundaries are increasingly porous. These top universities look beyond the boundaries of the countries in which they are located to define their scope as transnational in nature. Their peers span the globe. (p. 6).

Mohrman et al (2008) identified eight characteristics that define an Emerging Global Model university. These are institutions whose missions transcend borders; research is intensive; faculty members are transitioning into transnational team leaders; funding is diversified through enterprise; connections with government and corporations are evolving; recruiting has become global; and whose infrastructure around research is integrated and complex (Mohrman et al, 2008). The final characteristic is global collaboration, and the authors noted the “growth of international university associations,” such as the Association of Pacific Rim Universities, as a demonstration of activity and interdependence across national borders (Mohrman et al, 2008, p. 14).

According to Sharp et al (2011), a purposeful, or criteria-based sampling strategy is useful for establishing generalizability. Sharp et al (2011), describing the methodology of their multisite case study, emphasized selecting sites most representative of the study area and sites that will tell the most about the complexities of the criteria. Site selection criteria may be based on “choosing sites that have high experience levels of the phenomenon under study” (Sharp et al, 2011, p. 39). Flyvbjerg (2006) refers to this as the “favorable case” (p. 9). By intentionally surveying the levels of international student services at institutions with relatively exceptional levels of service, I hope to increase the relevance of the findings for a wider audience of university administrators and international student affairs practitioners.

Data collection and analysis. The literature review also indicated the importance of identifying institutions that disburse resources on different levels (e.g., department level and campus-wide) (Springer et al, 2006). I take the position that effective programming is distributed across all ecological levels of an individual's environment. This theoretical proposition, according to Yin (2009), will lead me to attend more to certain data and to notice certain themes over others, yet leading with an explicitly stated proposition is critical to a well-designed study (Yin, 2009). The next steps involve developing a protocol for collecting data and organizing a case study database for raw data.

Case studies produce large amounts of data. Multiple-site case studies produce even more (Yin, 2009). It will be important set up a protocol and to use a case study database technique to keep collected data organized from the beginning in order to facilitate the subsequent writing of the case study report (Yin, 2009; Stake, 2006). This case study database consists of raw data including case study notes, digital copies of each document collected, checklists, and the researcher's journal (Yin, 2009). All the data from interviews and document analysis is also organized by topic and stored electronically in the case study database (Merriam, 2009).

"Data analysis is integral to the way in which questions are posed, sites are selected, and data collected" (Burgess, Pole, Evans, & Priestly, 1994, p. 143). Therefore, data analysis was considered along with designing the case study and data collection plan. Data analysis for multisite case studies requires two stages of analysis. Data is first analyzed within-site (data from one site is analyzed), and subsequently cross-site

(comparing one site to another) to formulate a more thematic report of the case overall (Burgess et al, 1994; Jones et al, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009).

Qualitative case study research is often recursive (Yin, 2009). Bryman and Burgess (1994) provided several examples of how “data from individual sites could subsequently be compared across sites” and how “themes that emerged from a case study...informed data collection...[and] the analysis of data across all...sites” (p. 142). The use of category matrices not only facilitates the organization of data, but helps draw out themes and patterns for analysis (Burgess et al, 1994; Yin, 2009).

Collecting multiple sources of evidence to document a phenomenon establishes a “convergence of evidence” (Yin, 2009, p. 117) and therefore adds to the reliability of triangulated data. Therefore, data was collected using two methods: interviews and document analysis. Because the intention is to collect the same evidence from multiple sources, the same set of questions was applied to the document search and the interviews.

Document analysis. To efficiently manage this multi-site case study, the document search and collection must be systematic to ensure that the same search criteria was applied across sites. To achieve this consistency, I developed a document collection checklist to serve as a control. For each institution, the procedure was to:

- Access the Internet home page;
- Review the organizational chart to determine the structure of services to international students (in a division, unit, department, center, etc.);
- Review the web page of the division, unit, department, or center that provides services to international students;

- Review any web pages for prospective graduate students, seeking specific references to international applicants and families;
- Review the web page of the graduate school or graduate division, seeking specific references to international students and families;
- Review the web pages of the Division of Student Affairs, seeking specific references to programs and services for international graduate student families;
- Review the web pages or links for student organizations and activities, seeking specific references to international graduate student families;
- Review the web pages or links for married student services, seeking specific references to international families.

On each of these pages, I searched for documents of interest, which may include policy statements, strategic plans, public announcements, and resource guides that refer to the unit of analysis: orientation, socializing, skills training, service opportunities, and critical dialog opportunities.

In the mode of analysis, each reference and document was first coded as a “direct” or “indirect” service to the student, conversely direct or indirect service to the dependent spouse, or whether the service was aimed at a mixed audience. The assumption is that direct or indirect communication provides an indication of an institution’s orientation towards the student exclusively or towards the family unit. Next, each reference and document was coded as “micro,” “meso,” “exo,” or “macro” to indicate where the intervention impacts dependent spouses’ environments.

For example, if a program is identified that implicitly or explicitly attends to the need of a graduate student's dependent to engage in and feel a sense of belonging to the community, it would be coded as an exosystem-level intervention.

Interviews. Sharp et al (2011) used on-site interviews and focus groups to validate data previously collected. In this study, phone consultations provide verification of document analysis. Student services or administrative professionals coordinating orientation and other programming that includes international graduate students' families were interviewed by phone to identify what specific services are offered at each institution. After first identifying professionals whose work involves serving international students and/or families on each campus, the following procedure guided recruitment and data collection for the interviews:

- Email a letter to two administrators at each institution requesting participation in the study;
- Follow up after two weeks with an email requesting participation (as necessary);
- Contact confirmed participants to set up the interview date and time;
- Conduct the 22-question recorded interview;
- Transcribe each interview;
- Share transcription with each participant and invite feedback;
- Incorporate clarifications as necessary;
- Code the transcripts.

The coding procedure is identical to that of the document collection, with the additional step of cross-referencing the information gathered with the collected documents.

In an effort to account for data outside of these preconceived parameters, I also used a few simple open coding techniques, organizing all data into analytical categories, which Mason (1994) described as “simply a list of the key substantive topics” of interest, as well as conceptual categories, which help the researcher identify issues that are relevant to the original research questions (Mason, 1994).

Trustworthiness

Yin (2009) emphasized the obligation to design a study with rigor to achieve trustworthiness. According to Herriott and Firestone (1983), multisite case studies expand on the in-depth description that is the strength of case study research by “address[ing] the same research question in a number of settings using similar data collection and analysis procedures in each setting” (Herriott & Firestone, 1983, p. 14).

The case study method also lends well to maximum variation. Flyvbjerg (2006), arguing the generalizability of case studies, claimed case studies are excellent for testing hypotheses. The reason lies in the ability of the researcher to intentionally add variability through the strategic selection of the case (Flyvbjerg, 2006). In a multisite case study, the researcher also has the ability to control variability through site selection. Sharp et al (2011) described the key aim of maximizing variability among the sites selected in their study of school policy implementation. As discussed in the section on designing the case study, this investigation also included multiple sites, allowing for more variation, and thus, generalizability.

Positionality. I have never experienced navigating a system of education at its highest levels in a foreign country, in a non-native language, all on top of the responsibilities of maintaining a family life. However, in my home country, I am a full-

time graduate student with two dependent family members. I experience the strain of meeting expectations within the academic sphere while managing consistently high demands as a member of my small family. I place strong value on acknowledgement of personal circumstances, and feel that individuals as well as institutions are responsible for conscious awareness of their influence and impact on others.

I believe students' personal development and academic success is influenced by student services that attend to all aspects of an individual. It is not possible to fully compartmentalize one's life into separate identities such as student, parent, or spouse. By extension, student success is a family matter.

Chapter 4: Results

Chapter four presents the findings of the current multisite case study, which explores the interactions between the campus, specifically the efforts of international student support services, and international graduate students as well as their dependent spouses. After a brief review of the case study design, the chapter contains a detailed narrative of findings organized by the five critical student services extracted from recommendation in the literature and accompanied by an analysis grounded in ecology systems theories. This analysis is intended to address the stated research questions through the principles of ecology theories. Throughout this chapter, the different sites responsible for international student affairs are referred to under the umbrella term “international student services office.”

Data Sources

Through purposive selection, a sample of twelve schools within the parameters of United States-based Research University/Very High research activity (RU/VH) universities that were also members of the Association of Pacific Rim Universities were originally identified. Four institutions declined participation, leaving eight. Of the eight remaining schools, six were located in the same state, indeed primarily in the same university system. Thus, considerations of geographic diversity led to selective pursuit of interviews with the two schools left in the sample that were located in other states. In the end, five institutions were included as sites for this case study.

Approach to Data Analysis

The organization of qualitative data analysis necessarily relies on the theoretical propositions of the researcher (Yin, 2009). In the present study, much effort is invested in

noticing whether services are directly or indirectly targeted to students and, conversely, directly or indirectly targeted to family members. This preoccupation with audience and intent is due to an understanding of ecological frameworks, in which the subject's environment is designed to foster (or not) a greater sense of belonging (Strange & Banning, 2001; Trickett et al, 1993; Terrazas-Carrillo et al, 2014). Locating data in a subject's macro, exo, meso, or micro environment was also based on the theoretical propositions of ecological theory, specifically Bronfenbrenner's Ecology Systems theory. The case was the set of critical support services for international graduate students: orientation, social networking & transition assistance, skills training, engagement through service, and space for critical dialog. The study aimed to document in which of these areas students' dependents have been included.

The analytic technique is cross-site analysis, similar to cross-case analysis (Yin, 2009). Data from each institution is presented to provide a full, detailed narration of the findings. However, the intent is not to compare one institution to another, but rather to create a compilation of high impact practices and illustrate the ways each of these practices can impact subjects' individual, interpersonal, social, and societal spheres.

Sources of data

Phone interviews. The five interviewees held a variety of positions within their site's international student services office. Their titles ranged from International Student and Scholar Advisor, Assistant Director of International Student Services, Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) Coordinator and Liaison for a non-profit foundation, Coordinator for a program dedicated to student families (the only part-time position among the informants), and Manager of Community Programs.

The fact that only one interviewee per institution was interviewed and that each participant shared a perspective limited by the scope of their work means that these same limited perspectives are represented in the data collected. However, the differences in how each informant approached their work based on professional positionality was also informative to understanding how responsibility for international student services are distributed in an organization and what organizational structures seemed to reach students and dependent spouses effectively. To respect the participants' anonymity, quotes from the interviews are denoted with coded citations.

Document analysis. Web page content as well as downloadable documents were collected based on the same criteria as information solicited during the interviews. Thus, document analysis triangulated findings from the interviews and served to fill in areas beyond the personal knowledge of the informants, to provide a clearer picture of each institution's activities involving international student support services.

Case boundaries

The following sections of this chapter are organized around the original themes derived from the literature review: orientation, social connectedness, skills training, engagement through service, and opportunities for critical dialogue. These five themes then became the unit of analysis of this multisite case study. Within each of the five themes, I have used Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecology spheres to situate orientation activities, social networking and transition assistance, skills training, engagement in service, and space for critical dialogue in the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro systems of students and their dependent spouses. Related theories including campus ecology (Strange & Banning, 2001) and community psychology (Florin & Wandersman, 1990;

Speer & Hughey, 1995; Trickett et al, 1993; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988) informed the analysis as well.

Coding was performed with the following systems in mind (see Bronfenbrenner, 1977). An individual's microsystem, in which they participate, encompasses the immediate environment. The person has a specific role in this intimate space, which may include one's home or office space. The mesosystem describes areas of crossover within a person's various microsystems. For example, in the context of a university-sponsored social club, there is overlap between the microsystems of family, friends, and the institution. The individual is not embedded in the exosystem, though this sphere influences their life experience greatly. Often, the implementation of policy or the state of public services are part of a person's exosystem. The macro systems are forces that influence the individual on a structural level, and one may not even be aware of them. Laws, societal values, and religious traditions are examples of the forces that impact individuals at the macro level.

Orientation

Every institution offered substantive orientation programming for international graduate students, spanning from pre-arrival handbooks or communications through to comprehensive on-campus events involving both campus and community partners and often extending over several days. Orientation was sponsored by International Student Services, the school's Graduate Division or Graduate School, or both.

Audience and content. One layer of data analysis was to survey the orientation programming and determine the extent to which students' potential roles as partners and/or parents was taken into account. Attention to this aspect of student life was

considered by determining which elements provided information only to students, information about partner or family resources given to the student, information about partner or family resources given to both students and dependents, and information given directly to dependent family members. Not surprisingly, all institutions focused orientation around issues related directly to student life. Analysis did reveal, however, a number of ways these activities acknowledged dependent family members by providing information and offering community to them directly and indirectly. Family-inclusive orientation is a useful way to assist newcomers in their transition to campus (Gold, 2006).

Institution 1. At the first institution, orientation was led by the Graduate Division and consisted of a published International Graduate Student Arrival Guide, a half-day on-campus program and International Student Resource Fair. The arrival guide, a tab on the web page for “International Families,” and International Bulletins, which included announcements for student family housing and childcare, for instance, evidenced a desire to reach dependent family members through students. Intention to do so is clear from the interview, “we...relate information...to the graduate students to make sure they get that information to their spouses” (BCACB). Here, services were also offered directly to family members in the form of an international spouse and partner welcome reception as well as a spouse and partner campus tour. During the interview, the informant emphasized the importance of a tour for dependents: “the students get affiliated and get used to campus right off the bat, but their spouses don’t always. So we also offer that” (BCACB). Connecting the dependent spouses to campus in this way makes sense considering the feelings of isolation reported by dependent spouses (de Verthelyi, 1995) and the impact place can have on personal wellbeing (Terrazas-Carrillo et al, 2014).

Institution 2. At institution 2, a pre-arrival checklist was followed by International Graduate Student Orientation sessions for students. There was clear acknowledgement that some students are accompanied by family members, as recommended by Gold (2006). Orientation information consistently referred to orientation for “students and families,” socials explicitly invite family members, and several sessions address transition into the community (such as banking, transportation, and housing options) rather than just academic transitions. At orientation, staff were conscientious to provide students with “handouts...for their spouse to have upon arrival” if they plan to come to the United States later (DCATS). Finally, there was a session specifically for partners called “Navigating Life in the U.S. for J2 Spouses” and another session of the same name for F2 spouses.

Institution 3. In contrast, orientation at institution 3 offered no direct programming for dependent family members. The orientation organized by international student services included a pre-arrival handbook and week-long, on-campus events for undergraduate and graduate international students. This study was not able to identify any programming that could be construed as directly or indirectly targeting family members of new students. However, a separate orientation organized by the Graduate School did feature a family-friendly museum trip as a social option. In addition, the web page of the international student service office included a long list of resources about F2/J2 visas. A pre-arrival email provided links to resources for families of students. Pre-arrival contact, particularly when it is addressed to the dependent spouse, may ease the transition by providing information that empowers the sojourner confidently navigate the campus upon arrival (Black & Gregersen, 1991).

Institution 4. The fourth site in this study is unique in that the university's international student service office sponsors a program specifically designed for international graduate students' dependents. The program, which has a decade-long history, is supported by a paid coordinator. This level of acknowledgement and commitment is reflected in an orientation program that is evenly targeted at the student audience as well as their dependents. The graduate student orientation guide states: "The [Center] also extends a warm welcome to the families and partners of international students and scholars at [university]. It is our hope that your time at [university] will be an enriching experience for every member of your family."

Online information as well as orientation sessions explained immigration facts for spouses, families, and domestic partners such as who can be authorized to work, how to change status, travel rules, and FAQs for J2 and F2 spouses. A welcome letter, available in seventeen languages other than English, was addressed directly to the F2 or J2 spouse. Throughout the month of September, there were resource tables and speaker panels meant specifically for dependent family members. This special orientation continued in an on-going fashion throughout the year with a weekly informal gathering for newcomers.

Institution 5. International student orientation at the final site in the study is coordinated exclusively by the affiliated non-profit organization that partners with the university to provide international student services. All international students, graduate and undergraduate, are invited but not obligated to attend the 10-day on-campus orientation program. Pre-arrival and upon-arrival checklists preceded orientation events, and virtually all information and programming targeted students only as the direct

audience. The exception would be the organization's web page targeting both students and dependents with detailed general visa information, a summary of F2 and J2 requirements, and forms for requesting permission to sponsor dependents in the United States.

Summary. Considering the data in aggregate, orientation programming was targeted primarily towards the student, though every institution made at least some effort to welcome accompanying spouses and/or address concerns they may have. Each institution had pre-arrival contact with students, but only one made direct pre-arrival contact with family members. Likewise, every institution offered in-depth orientation programming (from a half-day up to one month long) specifically for international students.

Orientation programming for international graduate students, overall, related primarily to the subjects' exosystems. For example, the communication techniques of the institutions were external but significant to the students and families. There was consideration of the subjects' various roles on campus, and some events targeted their mesosystem at the intersection of roles as graduate student + family member or spouse + housing resident. Additionally, United States immigration law, situated in the macro system, was diligently addressed in orientation programming at each institution.

Social Connectedness

The second element of critical service is social connectedness, or opportunities to interact meaningfully with a diversity of people in the new community (Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013). The ways in which international student service professionals extended transition assistance to newcomers was also included as a key aspect of social

integration and personal agency. “A spouse...can’t study and they can’t work, we will match them with a local volunteer in the community...and it gives them something to do; they make a new friend” (OORRM).

Audience and content. The data analyzed for the present study reveal that the selected sites were more focused on targeting programs and information directly to dependents, or to a mixed audience consisting of enrolled students together with their dependents compared to orientation programming described in the previous paragraphs. Still, some offerings were for the exclusive benefit of enrolled students.

Institution 1. Institution 1 included cultural adjustment workshops exclusively for students, but many more workshops and webinars on topics such as relocation and city resources were designed for a mixed audience. This university targeted family members directly in a number of ways to support families’ transitions. There was a welcome reception, robust activity calendar, social group, Spouse and Partner Association, as well as a non-profit organization that held weekly discussions about community-building issues. The website also addressed family members on pages that link to school district information, banking, and shopping information. It was also the only institution to offer programming-opportunities to learn about family health insurance and visa requirements-*indirectly* to students; that is, the information was provided to the dependent family members in the hopes that it would indirectly inform the enrolled student. Black and Gregersen (1991) suggested that direct education for sojourning spouses was an empowering practice.

Institution 2. At the second institution, social networking and transition assistance was similarly distributed between information provided to students and

dependent family members, with most support directed at both simultaneously. Students were informed that dependents usually qualify for health insurance. The housing brochure included a section for international students, but made no mention of married student or family housing. However, family members were directly invited to take part in numerous English classes offered in the area. Students' partners also had access to advising office hours, where, for example, help obtaining a social security card or driver's license was accessible (DCATS). Again, more transitional resources were directed towards both the students and family together. Examples of social networking and transition assistance at Institution 2 included on- and off-campus daycare; a Spouse, Partner, and Family Newsletter; Thursday concerts; morning socials; holiday parties; and an international café with craft activities and a guided topic discussion. The family resources menu on the international student services office webpage included topics such as visa guidelines, childcare options, local school profiles, English classes, insurance coverage, and work authorization criteria.

Institution 3. Understanding of the importance of social connectedness and transition assistance was also evident at this university. Cultural programs included an international women's support group, access to a language center, and a walking group. However, all except for the walking group were restricted to students. A full activity calendar did not indicate whether non-students are invited to participate, but given restrictions in other areas, this programming was categorized as direct to students only. Important resources, though, were provided directly to family members in the form of a dependent ID card for limited access to certain campus services, housing, and community resources. At a local church, a weekly international women's morning offered

togetherness, while an affiliated international center was open to the entire community with resources and facilities. A sponsored conversation partner program explicitly invited the partners of students to participate. Family members were explicitly welcomed to campus. Opportunities for community involvement were quite often presented to students and family members. These included a listserv for student families, a home stay program, meal sharing, and outings. All community members were welcomed to mixers, coffee socials, and language circles. This university appeared to place the most emphasis on creating space for the student body to interact with the community at large; for example, by hosting a fall picnic with high involvement from the school as well as the community.

Institution 4. This university's fully developed program for international families meant that most transition assistance was directed either towards a mixed audience (whole family) or directly to family members. A large "welcome reception in October specifically for... family members—for spouses and partners" established the sense that family members are considered part of the campus community (Schwartz & Kahne, 1993), a sentiment reinforced by the policy to issue institutional ID cards to family members. Additionally, the Center's website included nine well-developed subsections including links to visa regulations, dependent work permits, and traveling with and without the sponsor. Families with children had access to childcare, play groups, expectant parent resources, and parenting classes. Graduate family housing was located on campus and featured active graduate housing resident assistants. A Spouse Programs newsletter supplemented email updates for international family-related news.

Institution 5. The fifth institution fostered community belonging through housing and other resources along with many opportunities to connect socially. No opportunities

were identified to target dependent family members directly, but most information was shared inclusively to students and family members. The campus boasted five facilities for family housing and a specific web page for International Student Housing Resources that cross-referenced the university Family Housing page. The resource center for student parents included eligibility for international students under their childcare assistance program. Beyond these provisions for basic needs, the institution, through international student services, offered an activity and engagement calendar, where “many [but not all] events...[were] open to non-students as well” (WWAEF). Other programs such as a friendship connection program, home stay program, Wednesday lunch, and Thanksgiving dinner program wholeheartedly included dependent family members.

Summary. Helping to familiarize newcomers to campus and the wider community was an area where each institution accounted more for the possibility that incoming students often enough arrive with other family members. Student services were frequently directed towards students and dependents and, in some cases, directly and exclusively designed to support and welcome family members. The extent to which dependent spouses are assisted in developing social networks determines the quantity and quality of mesosystem intersections. Thus, students and spouses truly benefit from efforts such as the ones expressed by one informant:

We always kind of hope that the programming we offer is a jumping off point for people making more meaningful connections. [The intention] is that there will be community building and an opportunity for the people to connect with each other beyond just the activity itself (WWAEF).

The institutions’ efforts towards social networking and transition assistance for international graduate students and their families centered, perhaps logically, in the

spheres of meso- and exosystems. A number of institutional policies, presumably designed to enrich the subjects' experiences, were situated at the level of the subjects' exosystems. Some examples include providing ID cards for students' dependents, graduate family housing, and childcare subsidies.

Skills Training

International students and scholars are granted permission to enter the United States for educational purposes by the provision of F1 and J1 visas, respectively. Accompanying spouses and dependents may be granted F2 or J2 visas. These dependent visa categories are quite restrictive, precluding the visa holder from degree-seeking studies or paid employment (although J2 visa holders can apply for work permits) (<http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/study-exchange/student.html#spouse>). In this context, it is not surprising that the literature speaks clearly about accompanying spouses' loss of the stimulation of learning or, more profoundly, professional identity (de Verthelyi, 1995; Teshome & Osei-Kofi, 2012).

This study's findings were congruent with literature. One interviewee revealed, "it can be very difficult...J2 [visa holders] who come who are highly qualified, often are PhDs themselves and they are finding it very, very difficult to have credibility" (SCAMB). Considering this inability to pursue skills or exercise one's profession, skills training was included as another critical aspect of student service for international student communities.

Audience and content. Skills training or access to professional expression and development is an area of international student service at all five of the institutions in this study that was notably less developed than orientation or transition assistance. Because

the activity of academic departments or students' programs of study are not within the scope of this study, only educational opportunities offered through the international student services office or other student affairs office were considered. Thus, the data collected regarding these co-curricular opportunities skewed towards dependent-focused or mixed audience-focused service.

Institution 1. Adult dependents of students, primarily spouses, have direct access to the university training center as well as access to the international student services office drop-in office hours. According to the interviewee from this university, "spouses and partners can utilize those office hours...to come in and talk to us about any questions about work or volunteer that they might have." Additionally, language classes and conversation meetings were easily accessible by dependents as they were hosted through the campus family housing community. A way that institution 1 indirectly served dependents was by counseling enrolled students pre-arrival regarding which visa category would best benefit a spouse. For instance, if a prospective student were eligible for either an F1 or J1 visa, the student may be advised that the accompanying J visa (J2) would leave the dependent with an option to apply for a work permit whereas the accompanying F visa (F2) has no provision for dependents to obtain a permit (BCACB).

Institution 2. Attending to students' and dependents' extra-academic learning goals was managed similarly at Institution 2. All services were categorized as targeted indirectly or simultaneously for dependent family members. The non-profit international center hosted free conversation classes for members, where student and family memberships were available. The international program web page also provided

information about J2 dependent employment authorization, including detailed explanations of J2 employment criteria.

Institution 3. No programming for professional skills training or work opportunities for dependent family members was found or reported.

Institution 4. Despite the fact that U.S. visa policies strongly impact the experience of dependents of international students in the United States as part of their exosystem, this university demonstrated many ways international student services offices could directly serve these individuals, impacting other environmental levels. The Center included a roster of 50-60 classes, with other options for adult education, particularly for learning or practicing English. Beyond informing dependents of the options available, an education fund was maintained so that financial grants could be made to spouses interested in taking continuing education courses as the institution.

Career planning and education around professional opportunities specifically and creatively addressed spouses without work authorization. Family members are frequently referred to a local non-profit dedicated to creating professional networks for women in transition to the area. In addition, family members were invited to volunteer teach classes, and the program often offered references for such volunteer service. A professional liaisons program helped dependents connect to work or volunteer options. Finally, work panels were frequently coordinated to encourage those interested to maintain their professional identity in creative ways: “we invite spouses who have successfully found work...[to] come in and share some of their strategies” (SCAMB).

Institution 5. This institution supports professional skills and experiences for students only through a ‘world to work’ program. Students and family members alike were welcomed to conversation workshops.

Summary. Opportunities for skills training inclusive of dependent spouses were fewer overall, though this study collected some inspiring examples. In these cases, subjects were put in the desired position for increased participation (Gold, 2006; Martens & Grant, 2008; Schwartz & Kahne, 1993; Teshome & Osei-Kofi, 2012). Florin and Wandersman (1990) pointed out how community participation spans across ecological systems from individual efficacy to the collective social fabric of the community. Beyond that, according to Zimmerman and Rappaport (1988), participation fosters empowerment, and, in turn, empowerment “was positively correlated with leadership and negatively correlated with alienation” (p. 725-726). It was encouraging, then, to note that the efforts to provide skills training were concentrated in the subjects’ micro- and mesosystems. Especially for a dependent spouse, an environment in which one belongs in an active role-as learner, teacher, or professional-would be highly impactful.

Engagement through Service

Volunteer service is also recognized as an outlet for personal fulfillment that allows participants to nurture their own identities as well as engage as contributing members of the community, especially when employment is not permitted. Agency and autonomy need to be reinforced as much as possible during a sojourn, as this is a time of transition that is naturally unstable (Black & Gregersen, 1991). Options to make active contributions to the community were frequently sought out according to several studies

(Gold, 2006; Martens & Grant, 2008; Schwartz & Kahne, 1993; Teshome & Osei-Kofi, 2012).

Audience and content. Despite great breadth across many ecological levels from personal to social potential impact, little programming has been developed among the universities studied. Some infrastructure existed for student leadership, but there were few opportunities for dependent spouses to contribute.

Institution 1. Though there were few opportunities to find fulfillment and community connections through giving to others, the institution did focus on students' adult dependents in planning such opportunities; both of the reported 'engagement through service' opportunities were offered directly or simultaneously to family members. Individuals could become active in the association of spouses and partners. The office also maintained links to numerous volunteer opportunities on a web page.

Institution 2. No opportunities for service were found or reported.

Institution 3. A small number of service opportunities were available, but limited to students at institution 3. For example, students were invited to participate in a service learning program as well as the International Students Association, which organized social events during orientation such as dances, restaurant hops, sports, and other activities. The institution's informant highlighted the mutual benefit gained when subjects have the chance to engage through volunteer service: "Our orientation program is also run by volunteer students who have been through the orientation before, so we use it as a leadership development program" (OORRM). Dependent family members were invited to contribute through participation or leadership in language circles hosted by the

non-profit international center. Leading a language circle is one way dependents might feel more belonging within a community as a result of their service to others.

Institution 4. The mutual value of service engagement to the individual and community were acknowledged by the fourth institution in a number of ways. Through the work/life office, lists of volunteer options were available for everyone in the university community. Within the international center's programming, there was an established culture of engagement through service. According to the site informant, for example, many guests to the ongoing weekly orientations ended up becoming volunteers. As members of the community, students' family members often taught some of the classes offered through the Center such as cooking, language, and yoga. Indeed, the Center's family newsletter included an invitation not just to participate, but to consider teaching a class.

In another notable example of designing the environment for engagement, the Center made a film "about the lives of four [international] families" to address the challenges of transition (SCAMB). In a unique service opportunity, screenings were followed by discussion guided by one of the spouses who is a trained family therapist (SCAMB).

Institution 5. At Institution 5, engagement through service appeared to be focused exclusively on enrolled students. Opportunities for international students included the student board organization, a leadership program, and a Cultural Fest Expo, which was staffed by student volunteers.

Summary. Overall, international student services offices had cultivated few opportunities for dependent spouses to engage and grow a sense of attachment to the

community by volunteer experiences. One notable exception is the culture of engagement that had been fostered at one institution and was present in the exosystem of each community member. Membership in the spouses association or participation in a language circle might be elements within an individual's mesosystem, while a volunteer site or language circle meeting place would represent microsystem spheres.

Critical Dialogue

International students, particularly those with identities that are minoritized in the United States, face discrimination and racism in addition to other stressors experienced when entering a new societal context (Lee & Rice, 2007; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). On the other hand, the sojourner perspective is a unique experience ripe for transformational insights and reflections (Singh, 2005). Therefore, the opportunity for critical dialogue is another vital element in the proposed service plan.

Audience and content. The sites presented in this study were found not to offer sufficient opportunity to address pressing issues that require more visibility; however, for the most part, the opportunities for critical dialogue were organized as public forums that welcomed students, their dependents, and citizens at large.

Institution 1. Access to counseling and psychological services on campus was offered directly to dependent spouses. This inclusivity is necessary considering the variety of critical issues sojourning spouses must cope with. Additionally, both students and their families had access to a film and speakers' series on international/global issues.

Institution 2. This university hosted weekly a series of guided discussions on specific topics, to which adult dependents were explicitly invited. The program that perhaps addressed critical issues most directly was reserved for participation by enrolled

students only. This international community retreat was described as a social justice conference for domestic and international students.

Institution 3. No spaces for critical dialogue were found or reported.

Institution 4. As mentioned earlier, the international center at this university made use of a film to address the transition challenges faced by sojourning students and their families. While the structure of the program, involving spouses as actors and educators, was seen as relevant service to the community, the actual content of the film and guided discussion that took place afterwards fell under critical dialogue aimed at both students and family members.

Institution 5. Likewise, the conversation groups organized by the international student services office at Institution 5 can be seen to have a dual purpose. Whereas the language shared was intended to fulfill a desire for cognitive challenge or skill building, the fact that groups addressed the challenges of transition and a number of cultural issues also made this a space for critical dialogue where students as well as dependents were welcomed.

Summary. As a whole, sufficient resources were lacking considering what an important aspect of wellbeing it is to feel safe and respected and how important it is to make systemic inequities visible. Adjusting to a new environment is stressful in many ways, and sojourners confront many issues that need to be processed. At the same time, it is a privileged space to have a more complex and evolving perspective that would be of value to an entire community.

The elements that were identified were often coded for targeting both meso- and exosystems. For instance, access to counseling resources fell in the exosystem sphere

because it is a practice that results from a policy. In counseling, though, a subject's interdependent roles as a member of the campus community, as a partner, and as an outgroup member, for example, would interact.

Broader themes: Organization of International Student Services

Institutional organization charts. Recognizing the relevance of organizational structure and its potential impact on the operations of any given department (Strange & Banning, 2001), I have noted the organizational arrangements at each site. At three of the five institutions, the office serving international students has a reporting line through Student Affairs. One institution has a Senior Vice Provost of Student & Academic Affairs. The fifth office has a reporting line through Academic Affairs.

University sponsorship. Student affairs issues such as orientation, leadership, and engagement were often relegated to community-based, non-profit organizations. This was the case at four of the five schools. At one institution, the main international student services office played a significant role in student life activities for international students, although a non-profit organization does exist to supplement its activities. At another, many critical student services were the responsibility of an independent non-profit organization. At one institution, the non-profit support organization “[did] not have any paid staff...they are completely volunteer. The university’s commitment ... is to provide that administrative support” (OORRM). There is a very similar structure at another site in the study:

We also have an international student services office which handles immigration and visas...we are separate and we handle the orientation, transition support, cultural, and educational and leadership programming throughout the year...[the foundation is] an independent non-profit organization, but really closely affiliated with the university and based on campus (WWAEF).

The SCAMB interviewee recognized the situation when they commented, “the fact that I have a title and that I’m in a paid position is huge” considering the work is dedicated to a population that is technically non-student. At the same time, it was obvious that “it’s also a very, very low priority program in comparison to other programs because we are supporting family members rather than those who are directly...studying or researching. We’re not necessarily generating any funding or any money” (SACMB). Forbes-Mewitt and Nyland (2013) noted the same dynamics in an Australian university case study, concluding,

despite the importance of this core human requirement [of student safety and wellbeing], the functional capacity of university support staff is continuously challenged by a need to compete for resources against university divisions that generate outcomes more highly prized by senior managers (p. 182).

Finding this competition to be especially prevalent in research universities and disproportionately disadvantaging international student services, Forbes-Mewitt and Nyland (2013) related this issue to fields of influence that departments have to draw in resources due to the type of capital they possess. Perhaps there is a word of caution against resting internationalization strategies and international student services upon a neoliberal rationale.

Reaching students through family. One major rationale for extending support services to students’ spouses is likely to be whether or not doing so contributes positively to the success and retention of the enrolled student. In asserting the importance of committing support for accompanying spouses, Schwartz and Kahne (1993) pointed to the United States Department of Defense model as demonstrating strong support for personnel and doing so by committing resources to their spouses and families.

“Successful pursuit of a military career clearly is understood to depend on fully integrated personal and professional living” (Schwartz & Kahne, 1993, p. 453).

During at least one phone interview, the international student support provider seemed to recognize the same connection:

My role would be primarily be...affecting the families, partners, and spouses. But obviously the things that I do will indirectly be affecting the graduate students as well because any provisions that we have that will support the family members will in some way affect the student as well...It is absolutely recognized that supporting family members is making a huge difference to the students and the scholars in their lives here (SCAMB).

Knowledge of international student family population. Only one of the informants seemed to feel immediately confident (knowledgeable) about reporting how many dependent spouses accompanied students at their institution. Every institution hosting international students must maintain certain information for immigration purposes, and if a dependent visa were granted, this would certainly be on file. One informant mentioned that the information is available but is not easily accessible because it has never been requested/queried (DCATS). Not only have students' spouses been neglected in the literature, but ignored in their own university communities.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to create a snapshot of what international student service offices provide not only to enrolled students, but their accompanying spouses. It was an attempt also to capture the extent to which top-tier research institutions with strong commitments to internationalization consider accompanying spouses to be an integral part of the educational sojourn. Using an ecological framework to get a sense of campus climate and how the dependent spouses of international graduate students might interact with that environment, I posed the questions: How do Emerging Global Model universities on the U.S. side of the Pacific Rim support international graduate students and their dependents?; What services are offered only to students, directly to spouses, or are delivered simultaneously to both?; and, How is an ecological perspective effective in planning these services?

A multisite, embedded single case study design was selected as an effective framework for exploring the research questions. The case study design was particularly appropriate for achieving the objective of describing the context defined in the study (Yin, 2009). Since replication is not an objective of this descriptive study, the design is defined as a single case (Yin, 2009). Further, Yin (2009) labeled cases in which the unit of analysis consists of multiple components as embedded case studies. The unit of analysis that bounds this case consists of five critical services drawn from themes in the literature; thus the single case is said to be embedded.

This chapter begins by synthesizing the findings as presented in chapter 4 and acknowledging the ways methodological choices have impacted data collection . Chapter

5 continues with an overview of implications, followed by recommendations for action and directions for future research.

Summary of the Results

The basic assumption underlying this inquiry is the necessity to explore and assess the elements of a subject's environment and the mutual impact of the person and environment (Bronfenbrenner), recognizing how this interplay promotes or inhibits engagement rather than any personal failure to thrive on the part of the individual (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). Therefore, this research shifted the focus from the behaviors and coping mechanisms of educational sojourners (which, I assert, includes dependent spouses) and attempts instead to take inventory of the capacity of higher education institutions to provide well-designed environments.

To establish relevant parameters, themes from the literature were grouped to determine a set of critically important services for international graduate students and their spouses. In-depth orientation programming, social networking and transition assistance, skills training, engagement through service, and opportunities for critical dialogue were identified as a set of essential supports for this population of sojourners. Data related to each support was collected through phone interviews with international student services administrators at five distinguished Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU) institutions as well as from documents available online from the same schools.

The collected data was coded for analysis in two ways. First, the programming offered in each of the five service areas was coded direct to student, direct to spouse, indirect to student, indirect to spouse, or mixed (targeting the student and spouse

together). Both the content of the information and the intended audience revealed the institution's awareness and capacity around welcoming international spouses. A quote from one administrator's phone interview reveals that the institution is becoming more cognizant of language that is inclusive of non-student community members: "I mean, '*families*'-it's right there in the first sentence" of the department's mission statement (DCATS).

The institutions were much more likely to address information to spouses-either directly, mixed, or indirectly with intent-related to orientation programming and transition assistance. Institutions often actively excluded spouses from campus-based engagement through volunteer service. In the other two areas, skills training and space for critical dialogue, the five institutions generally offered the same limited scope of programming to students and spouses.

The second layer of analysis consisted of situating the programming within Bronfenbrenner's (1977) micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems, which represent the levels of interaction between an individual and their environment. Cross-site analysis indicated that less programming aligns with the microsystem. However, there are some salient examples, such as a person's apartment in graduate housing. Programming aligned with the mesosystem and exosystem were much more prevalent in the data collected. With opportunities to access resources on campus, attend classes or social events, and occasionally join an association, the individual's intersecting microsystems would be more activated. These instances were often co-coded with exosystems because institutional policy or practice are included as exosystem influences. United States immigration law, mentioned in every interview and present on every web site, is a

strongly influential element in the macrosystem of international scholars. The relevance of these findings is explored in the discussion of implications below. First, implications related to the design of this study itself are addressed in the next section.

Methodological choices

To begin, the vast majority of documents were collected from institutional web pages available through the Internet. These pages, of course, can be edited, moved, or deleted at any time. This fact negatively affects the replicability of the present study. Screenshots were collected in the case study database to mitigate any potential loss of data. The value of case study research is the telling of typical, or, conversely, atypical stories (Stake, 2004; Yin, 2009). This snapshot of existing services still serves the intent of the study in identifying leading universities' practices at the time of the research.

Similarly, there is potential for information on any of the web pages accessed to be outdated or otherwise inaccurate. For this reason, the same information was collected by interviewing current administrators and student service providers and cross-referencing information so that validity would be increased through a convergence of evidence (Yin, 2009).

Due to an unfortunate oversight, I failed to collect data on opportunities for critical dialogue during the phone interview phase. Data for this element still came out in some interviews and was also gathered through the document collection. The convergence of data is perhaps weaker because it was collected in a limited way.

Finally, it is perfectly reasonable to assume that international graduate students and their family members might enjoy support from a number of different sources, both on- and off-campus. To cite just one example, the work of academic departments arose in

several of the interviews for this study. It is in no way my intention to imply that students cannot be supported in other ways; however, because the scope of the study was limited to international student services, I intentionally did not investigate what academic departments may or may not offer to care for their students by attending to non-academic responsibilities. Rather, I included the international student services offices, the appropriate office serving prospective graduate students, the Graduate School or Division, the Division of Student Affairs, student organizations, and offices serving married and/or parenting students.

Implications

According to Merriam (1988) research involves the ability to “transcend the ‘merely descriptive’” and offer an interpretation of the data (p. 131). The campus ecology model (Evans et al, 2009; Strange & Banning, 2001) accepts that “the campus should be intentionally designed to offer opportunities, incentives, and reinforcements for growth and development” of students (Strange & Banning, 2001, p. 201). Further, students are “active, choice-making agents” as they interact with environmental influences (Strange & Banning, 2001, p. 201). This study explores the usefulness of extending theories of ecology systems and campus ecology to other members of the university community, in this case the dependent spouses of international graduate students. This study also affirms the usefulness of assessing the campus design through an ecological lens, whether that design was planned with intentionality or not. In 1973, the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education recognized the value of ecological frameworks: “from an ecological systems approach, the question of whether the campus environment is supportive of learning becomes very important. The environment becomes an important

element in obtaining educational objectives” while the approach “can provide a means to design a variety of environments to meet these needs” (p. 5).

Ecology theories are powerful because they highlight the ways environments are constructed to include or exclude. The current study points out both strengths and areas needing improvement in the construction of places of belonging for the accompanying spouses of international graduate students. Physical space interacts in complex ways with human behavior. Manzo (2005) described how:

the places that people deemed important enabled them to sort out their thoughts and feelings, to work out their identity, to dream and to grow. In this way, relationships to places represent people’s ever-evolving identity and self-awareness because they provide opportunities for self-development (p. 82).

In turn, a well-developed sense of belonging leads to participation, leverage and agency, and finally, to empowerment (Speer & Hughey, 1995; Trickett, 1994). Psychological empowerment has a positive connection to leadership and a negative connection to alienation (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988). Therefore, when holistic engagement is achieved through authentic and mutually beneficial relationships in diversified (international-international, international-host national) social networks, students are better prepared to thrive (Hendrickson et al, 2011; Martens & Grant, 2008; Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013).

When spaces are designed to be inclusive of sojourning spouses, the power of human resources that can be leveraged towards supporting student success are multiplied given that family members can contribute importantly to the student’s wellbeing and thus the likelihood of full and successful participation in their studies (Black & Gregersen, 1991; Teshome & Osei-Kofi, 2012). All these elements ultimately create dynamic and productive communities overall.

Recommendations

There are several actions institutions should take towards challenging the notion that they are in relationship only with enrolled students. Accompanying spouses are educational sojourners as well, and should be acknowledged as such. However, it is not possible to understand how an individual or group functions in a given constructed context without knowledge of that individual or group. I hope this study serves, minimally, to encourage universities to take an interest in the number and demographics of international graduate students' partners. Institutions should continually assess international families' needs and assets.

Universities should also evaluate the audience and content of their communications, which are an essential aspect of creating campus culture and an indicator of their values and perspectives. As institutions move towards recognizing students' whole selves, it is important to take into account their roles not only as students, but as partners and parents as well. Establishing direct relationships with student spouses, beginning with inclusive communications, is consistent with international educators' professional responsibility to promote student wellbeing.

Beyond that, service providers must take steps to ensure that the entire community, including accompanying dependents, is represented in strategic planning and policy. In each interview, participants identified their roles on committees and other opportunities they have to advocate for international graduate students. This influence can be directed towards advocating for policies that acknowledge spouses' roles as an important part of the learning community. For instance, student spouses and dependents should be eligible for institutional identification cards that give faculty, staff, and students

access to campus facilities and services. Transportation and other services that are available to students should be extended to their family members.

Universities which do not already have formalized Spouse and Family programs should restructure the administrative organization and sponsorship of inclusive international student support services. Why is there a tendency for these exceptional universities to outsource student affairs issues for international populations when they directly manage the same for other student populations? A direct commitment from the university sends an important message about the priorities and values of the institution (Schwartz & Kahne, 1993). Campus-based, formalized sponsorship not only lends more stability than a “patchwork” of outsourced students services (Springer et al, 2009), but influences community members to interact with their environment, confident that they belong.

In addition to these administrative recommendations, programmatic gaps also challenge international student service professionals. This study has identified areas where even model universities should address weaknesses in the programs offered. First, opportunities for engagement through service need to be introduced or expanded. Other studies have found that international student spouses are eager for the responsibility of volunteering to organize social programming or share their skill sets with others. It is also known how impactful engagement is towards increasing a sense of empowerment and avoiding feelings of isolation. The field of student affairs is rich with student leadership development practices, which can and should be extended to accompanying spouses. Creating a culture in which this group’s assets are valued and sought-out contributions is a practical and powerful way to build community.

International student affairs professionals must also open spaces for critical dialogue to take place. What conditions are likely to exist in this population's exosystems and macrosystems that limit expression or that privilege or oppress their identities? What strengths do individuals possess or have the potential to develop that create buffers against these conditions? Opportunities for critical dialogue may very well take the form of conversation groups, intergroup dialogues, or guided discussions. Many universities already offer faculty and student groups research-based retreat programs for more intensive experiences, which could be adapted for accompanying spouses. However, practitioners can also imagine creative outlets such as writing or poetry workshops, crafting, or even theatre performance as a space to critically reflect, challenge, and understand their transformative experiences and maximize potential for growth.

Directions for Further Research

The present study is very preliminary in terms of the design of the study and scope of data collection. The following three recommendations for continued investigation highlight the richness of opportunity in this path of research.

Initially, quantitative methods would be useful in testing the implied assumption that new ways of supporting international graduate students are needed due to unequal outcomes for this population compared to the graduate student population as a whole (D. Craig, personal communication, May 14, 2015). The literature on international students and dependents clearly describes their unique experiences; however, this study does not establish as fact that there is any differential in completion rates between international graduate students and other groups of graduate students.

Another critical question that remains from this study is whether or not creating a welcoming and engaging campus climate for accompanying spouses actually contributes to the success and retention of the enrolled student. In the future, success outcomes for students who attend institutions with a measureable investment in holistic student services should be evaluated. Do outcomes change when a welcoming and engaging campus climate exists for accompanying spouses? Do spouses enjoy higher levels of wellbeing than their counterparts at less active campuses? How does the institution benefit, if at all? Perhaps most important, is student success and retention impacted and how?

The final suggestion for continued research is to perform complete case study observations of dependent spouses' daily lives in the tradition of responsive evaluation (Stake, 2004). This methodology would place the researcher in the context of the study, interdependent with the subjects, and committed to continuous building and rebuilding of knowledge. Logically aligned with relativist ontology, a subjective epistemology does not pretend to remove the researcher from the investigation, and instead integrates the researcher into the construction of knowledge (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). These methods are called hermeneutic because they are designed to construct a better understanding of what is known (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Assuming that knowledge is constructed, it is relevant to ask who participates in its construction. Responsive evaluation places those who are affected by questions or evaluations as a priority in having a voice in how questions are asked and what variables are evaluated (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Stake, 2004). Responsive evaluation presupposes that "any evaluation process must begin with a method for determining what questions

are to be raised and what information is to be gathered” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 39). Further, the framework for determining the boundaries of the evaluation are determined with input from the stakeholders (Stake, 2004). Responsive evaluation would involve designing the project from the beginning in full partnership with the subjects themselves. The collaborative effort of developing the project and conducting the investigation itself has the potential to be a personally transformative as well as being a useful contribution to scholarship.

Conclusion

In designing and carrying out this study, I hope to offer a starting point to building effective frameworks for institutions to consider high impact practices. Ecology Systems and campus ecology are theoretical frames that have been in the literature for nearly four decades (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Banning, 1978 in Strange & Banning, 2001; Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 1973). Ecology theory has impacted the field of community psychology for just as long (Florin & Wandersman, 1990; Goodkind & Foster-Fishman, 2002; Speer & Hughey, 1995; Trickett et al, 1993; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988). Despite being proven as a meaningful framework in community psychology, ecology theory has not received the same attention in the field of college student development (Evans et al, 2009).

This case study demonstrates a need to focus attention on the constructed environments of university campuses. How are these environments constructed through acknowledgement (or lack of acknowledgement) of community members? How is communication framed, and what does that say about organizational values? How is programming and physical space used to include or exclude members of the community?

Environmental assessment allows student affairs professionals to seek answers to these questions. Environmental assessment, a manifestation of ecology theory, “is designed to lead to change. When it is done effectively, the quality of student life can improve as a result of this form of assessment” (Schuh & Upcraft, 2001, p. 173-174).

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Note: Documents obtained from the institutions are not included in the references list for the purpose of maintaining anonymity.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Invitation to Participate in the Study

Greetings Colleague,

My name is Shalece Rains and I am a graduate student with a concentration in International Education in the College Student Services Administration program at Oregon State University. My master's thesis is a multisite case study titled "Supporting the Families of International Graduate Students with Dependents." The purpose is to investigate the programs and services that top research universities extend to international graduate students with dependents, and through sampling I have identified your institution as an ideal site for this case study. My methodology relies on document analysis as well as direct interviews.

I am seeking the participation of student services professionals knowledgeable about and actively involved in the institution's orientation, transition assistance, community building, and/or institutional policy related to international students. As an interviewee, you would be asked to participate in a thirty-minute interview by phone or video conference. Interviews will be conducted in October 2014.

This study has been exempted from IRB review, as interviewees are not considered subjects of the research. You will be asked about existing programs and policies, but not your experience or opinion of them. Though responses will not be collected anonymously, the handling of all data will be confidential. While there is unlikely to be any direct benefit to you as a result of participation in an interview, the potential for risk or harm is also minimal.

I have created a Google spreadsheet with prearranged interview times in October (alternate times are certainly available):
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1BnHAaXbRsKdXxESdgq6CDVpARnCot5IoDMNWy3-aAew/edit#gid=0> To confirm your participation, please simply add your initials to the spreadsheet to indicate the day and time most convenient for you. Your preferred email and phone number will be confirmed prior to the date of the interview. Participation is voluntary, and you may opt out at any time.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have (shalece.rains@oregonstate.edu).

Regards,
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Appendix B: Interview Questions

Supporting the families of international graduate students
Questions for university administrators
(video-recorded phone interview)

What is your role, if any, in delivering programming to international graduate students (IGS)?
What is your role, if any, in recommending policy changes that affect international graduate students?

How many IGS does your institution/department/unit serve?

How many of these IGS are accompanied by dependents?

ORIENTATION

What, if any, **pre-arrival** orientation programming is offered *directly* to family members of IGS?

What, if any, **pre-arrival** orientation programming is offered *indirectly* to family members of IGS (i.e. providing information to the IGS, rather than the family member, about programming)?

In other words, what programming is offered to the students with the intention that it would serve family members?

What, if any, **upon-arrival** orientation programming is offered *directly* to family members of IGS?

What, if any, **upon-arrival** orientation programming is offered *indirectly* to family members of IGS (i.e. providing information to the IGS, rather than the family member, about programming)?

Who delivers this programming?

Are these programs offered in any language other than English? Which language(s)?

TRANSITION ASSISTANCE (support managing cultural and/or relocation adjustment)

What, if any, transition assistance is offered *directly* to family members of IGS?

What, if any, transition assistance is offered *indirectly* to family members of IGS (i.e. providing information to the IGS, rather than the family member, about assistance)?

Who delivers this assistance?

Are these programs offered in any language other than English? Which language(s)?

COMMUNITY BUILDING

What, if any, social or community networking opportunities are offered *directly* to family members of IGS?

What, if any, social or community networking opportunities are offered *indirectly* to family members of IGS (i.e. providing information to the IGS, rather than the family member, about opportunities)?

Who delivers this assistance?

Are these programs offered in any language other than English? Which language(s)?

POLICY

What, if any, institutional policies address the needs of IGS with dependents, or the dependents themselves?

What, if any, policies external to the institution address the needs of IGS with dependents, or the dependents themselves?

Does your institution/unit/department have a statement of strategic goals?

If so, what, if any, strategic goals have been established with the intent to address the needs of IGS with dependents?

Appendix C: Document Search Procedure

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1. Access the Web home page of the first (and each subsequent) institution.
 2. Review the organizational chart to determine the structure of services to international students (in a division, unit, department, center, etc.).
 3. Review the page for that division, unit, department or center that provides services to international graduate students.
 4. Review the page for prospective graduate students, seeking specific references to international applicants and international applicants with families.
 5. Review the page for the graduate school or graduate division, seeking specific references to international applicants and international applicants with families.
 6. Review the page for the Division of Student Affairs, seeking specific references to international applicants and international applicants with families.
 7. Review pages or links for student organizations and activities, seeking specific references to international applicants and international applicants with families.
 8. Review pages or links for married student services, seeking specific references to international applicants and international applicants with families.
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Documents of Interest: On each of these pages, I sought documentation of policies, strategic plans, public announcements, and resource guides that refer to the unit of analysis: orientation, socializing, skills training, service opportunities, or critical dialog opportunities.

Appendix D: Codebook

Code	Direct to Student, Service Target
Definition	Service is delivered to the student and intended for the student
Applicable	Information published online or discussed by an informant addressed to or directed to only the enrolled student.
Not applicable	Information published online or discussed by an informant addressed to or directed to only the enrolled student's dependents.
Example	<i>International Graduate Student Handbook written for students, with no mention of services for dependents, accompanying spouses, or families.</i>

Code	Direct to Family Member, Service Target
Definition	Service is delivered to the family member and intended for the family member
Applicable	Information published online or discussed by an informant addressed to or directed to only the dependent family member.
Not applicable	Information published online or discussed by an informant addressed to or directed to only the enrolled student OR to <u>both</u> the student and dependent family member.
Example	<i>A welcome letter written for and addressed directly to the dependent family member.</i>

Code	Indirect to Student, Service Target
Definition	Service is intended for the student but delivered to the family member.
Applicable	Information published online or discussed by an informant addressed to only the enrolled student's dependents, but with clear intent to serve the enrolled student.
Not applicable	Information published online or discussed by an informant addressed to only the enrolled student's dependents, and with the intent to serve the dependent.
Example	<i>A workshop for students' spouses pertaining to campus resources for families.</i>

Code	Indirect to Family Member or Mixed, Service Target
Definition	Service is intended for the family member but delivered to the student. Service is intended for both the student and family member and is delivered to both the student and family member.
Applicable	Information published online or discussed by an informant addressed to both student and dependent family members, and intended to serve both.
Not applicable	Information published online or discussed by an informant explicitly addressed to one target and not the other; expressed intent to exclude the other.

Example	<i>A webpage detailing how a student sponsor's must go about obtaining/maintaining visas for dependent family members.</i>
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Code	Microsystem, Human Environment
Definition	Individual's immediate environment, including the individual as a participant
Applicable	Home, classroom, office, etc.
Not applicable	Environments excluding the individual or more distant settings
Example	<i>Individual's apartment</i>

Code	Mesosystem, Human Environment
Definition	Areas of crossover within an individual's various Microsystems, including the individual
Applicable	Community interactions in which individual has various roles
Not applicable	Single microsystem; environments excluding the individual
Example	<i>University-sponsored dinner club (family + friends + institution)</i>

Code	Exosystem, Human Environment
Definition	Systems close and influential to the individual, excluding the individual
Applicable	Institutional policy or practice, neighborhood development, local media, etc.
Not applicable	Settings in which the individual has an immediate role (micro or meso); broadest structures of society (macro)
Example	<i>Existence of a university-sponsored and funded program to engage students' dependent family members</i>

Code	Macro system, Human Environment
Definition	Larger, broader systems influential to the individual, excluding the individual
Applicable	The customs, laws, educational system, etc. of the society
Not applicable	Contextual settings of (micro and meso) or surrounding (exo) the individual's life
Example	<i>Immigration laws of the host country</i>