

Exploring Students' Experiences of an Internationalized University Through a Person-in-Context Lens

Samantha Marangell*

The University of Melbourne, Australia

*Corresponding author: Email: samantha.marangell@unimelb.edu.au.

Address: The University of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

ABSTRACT

Reduced international student mobility has prompted Australian universities to reframe the way they provide intercultural and international learning experiences, with less dependence on the recruitment of international students. However, many related teaching and learning approaches are often met with perceived student resistance. The aim of this article is to provide better understanding of the challenges with university internationalization by exploring students' experiences of an internationalized university through a Person-in-Context lens. The article reports on a mixed methods study that took place at a metropolitan university in Australia and utilized a quantitative questionnaire

and qualitative individual interviews, both of which explored students' expectations and experiences of their internationalized university. Main findings have been applied to Volet's person-in-context adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development in order to address the research question, "What influences students' experiences of an internationalized university?" Findings highlight the considerable importance students placed on intercultural interaction. This article presents the application of findings to the person-in-context model and discusses implications that can be drawn about the student experience of internationalized universities.

Keywords: Australia, higher education, intercultural interaction, internationalization, student experience

For decades, Australian universities have adapted their practices and policies to an increasingly globalized world through a range of comprehensive internationalization approaches (Davis & Mackinstosh, 2011; Rizvi & Walsh, 1998). There are many types of and approaches to higher education internationalization in Australia, depending on a university's particular goals (Davis & Mackinstosh, 2011), including the development of overseas research networks, changes to learning outcomes and graduate attributes, recruitment of diverse staff and students, and adding global elements to curricular and extracurricular experiences. However, the predominant approach for much of the last decade comprised an association between internationalization practices and inward student mobility; that is, the presence and number of international students. The travel restrictions and economic uncertainty prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic have disrupted that association. This shift has prompted greater attention to internationalization approaches and strategies that do not depend on the presence of international students, such as greater international research collaborations, virtual exchange opportunities, and the inclusion of diverse contexts into the curriculum.

Experts have also suggested that the current state of flux in the higher education sector might be the ideal and/or necessary time to shift the way that the sector approaches internationalization, with particular attention to the social dimensions of internationalization. For example, Jones, Leask, Brandenburg, and de Wit (2021) recently argued that it was time to better align higher education internationalization agendas with considerations for global social responsibility.

Indeed, the entire special issue in which that argument appeared related to new ways of imagining internationalization (see Leask & de Gayardon, 2021). In Australia, specifically, scholars have also argued for a change in the way international higher education is perceived and discussed in a post-pandemic context, with suggestions to move beyond the commercial prospects (Rizvi, 2020), and to focus more on students engaging with and learning from diversity on the local campus (Uzhegova et al., 2021).

Importantly, however, the need for more attention to the social aspects of internationalization is not exclusive to the post- or mid-pandemic context. Brandenburg and colleagues (2019) argued pre-pandemic for higher education institutions to address social concerns within their internationalization approaches. A year prior, de Wit and Jones (2018) argued for a more inclusive approach to internationalization. These arguments have long existed in Australia as well. Twenty years ago, Welch (2002) critiqued the focus on financial incentives for internationalization in Australian higher education, and, before that, Rizvi and Walsh (1998) suggested that more attention was needed on helping students develop their intercultural understandings and sensitivities. The authors noted decades ago that the economic and social elements of internationalization are inherently intertwined, just as they are today.

This article contributes to the conversation around the need for expanded attention to the social dimension of internationalization by focusing on the student experience of internationalization. The student dimension is only one aspect of internationalization, but it is an important one. Many benchmarks of internationalization depend upon students (e.g., the number of international students or graduate attributes related to students' cultural understanding). Likewise, many internationalization-related aims depend upon students interacting with and learning from diverse peers, such as multicultural group work and others.

Yet, research over the last two decades has shown that many students resist the teaching and learning practices that are intended to promote the development of related skills, objectives, and attributes. For example, students often resist working in multicultural groups (Strauss, U, & Young, 2011) and it seems that students may be less likely to value diversity when that group work is assessed (Colvin, Fozdar, & Volet, 2015). More recent studies have indicated

that realities may be more nuanced, suggesting that multicultural group work can benefit students unequally (Héliot et al., 2020) and that a well sequenced task is key for positive attitudes and the development of students' perceived intercultural competence (Ferreira-Lopes et al., 2021).

In addition, some studies have suggested that there may be adverse effects of poorly facilitated student intercultural interaction. For example, discrimination can occur when culturally diverse student groups are brought together without proper preparation (Leask, 2009) and students' prior intercultural interactions may prompt them to avoid intercultural interaction in the future (Centola et al., 2007). Similarly, multiple studies have suggested that, after participating in multicultural group work, some students may be less willing to participate in multicultural group work in the future (e.g., Burdett, 2014; Strauss, U, & Young, 2011).

Other studies have also hinted at the presence of negative attitudes among the student body that would directly contradict efforts to improve the social dimensions of internationalization, whether global or local. For example, Harrison and Peacock (2010) found indications that domestic students "perceive threats to their academic success and group identity from the presence of international students on the campus and in the classroom" (p. 877). Barron (2006) found similar feelings of threat and resentment among a small but notable minority of domestic students. Likewise, studies have indicated that international students may feel that domestic students exclude them, talk to them as if they were children, or have an overall lack of patience or respect for them (Bianchi, 2013; Gareis, 2012; Hellstén & Prescott, 2004; Pham & Tran, 2015). The potential for increased resentment or intolerance would seem to oppose one common intended outcome of internationalization in particular: increasing students' cross-cultural awareness, tolerance, and skills (Beelen & Jones, 2015b; De Vita, 2000).

However, there is currently limited research that explores the extent to which these sentiments occur in recent contexts, outside of studies that demonstrate mixed responses toward multicultural group work (e.g., Héliot et al., 2020) or students' perspectives on related curricular internationalization strategies (e.g., Mittelmeier et al., 2021). In Australia, specifically, researchers suggest that more still needs to be done to better support international students

and to improve their relationships with the local community (e.g., Arkoudis et al., 2019; Marangell et al., 2018). However, missing seems to be recent exploration of domestic students' attitudes in particular. Thus, this study explored both domestic and international students' recent attitudes in the context of internationalization of higher education in Australia.

This article aims to provide universities with better understanding around the challenges facing internationalization by exploring both domestic and international students' experiences of an internationalized university. It presents findings from a study which took place at one large, metropolitan university in Australia and which was guided by the research question, "What influences students' experience of an internationalized university?" It considers both international and domestic students' experiences across three different faculties. Findings from a quantitative student survey and qualitative interviews are then mapped onto Volet's (2001) person-in-context adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1986, 2005) ecological model of human development in order to provide a holistic picture of students' experiences.

Background

Challenges with Internationalization of Higher Education

There are numerous challenges to higher education internationalization in Australia, including disagreement and ambiguity about the term "internationalization" itself. Internationalization has been used to describe a variety of strategies and approaches that might make a university more global, international, or intercultural in its policies or practices (Arkoudis et al., 2012; Leask, 2009). Ambiguity over the term and differences in definitions can make it difficult to synthesize research that explores its implementation and effects. In addition, some scholars, such as Sperdutti (2019) have critiqued the name and practice of internationalization, noting that it is often associated with the assumption that advancement of Western pedagogies is preferable. "Internationalization" is used in this article to describe, broadly, changes to the educational experience at a university intended to make that experience more international or intercultural. It focuses on Australian higher education more specifically, rather than the "internationalization" of non-Western universities.

In Australia, internationalization practices that influence students' learning experiences often include incorporation of international or intercultural material within the curriculum, changes to intended graduate attributes, and increasing opportunities for international learning experiences, among other practices (Rizvi & Walsh, 1998). However, despite the numerous definitions of and approaches to higher education internationalization, student mobility has remained “king” in the internationalization conversation (Rumbley, 2015, p. 16). Challenges with this emphasis on mobility have been well-documented, from both a practical standpoint and a duty-of-care position.

First, from the practical side, mobility is inherently limited as an avenue for internationalization primarily because it reaches only the students who are privileged enough to study overseas (Beelen & Jones, 2015b; de Wit & Jones, 2018; Harrison, 2015). In addition, it can further privilege that already privileged cohort. For example, Universities UK found that undergraduate students who had studied abroad during their studies were more likely to find a job after graduation and to earn higher starting salaries than their non-mobile peers (Universities UK, 2019).

Secondly, from a duty-of-care position, there have been challenges around the way that international students are positioned. They have previously been positioned as sources of income and have not necessarily been given due attention or support as individual students (Choudaha, 2017). This circumstance may derive from the fact that most tertiary students who study abroad are self-funded and pay much higher fees than domestic students (OECD, 2019). In many countries, international students' fees subsidize domestic higher education (Altbach & de Wit, 2018) and university research efforts (Norton, 2018). This financial dependence relates to the third challenge, which the recent pandemic has brought to the forefront: that such dependence on inward student mobility is not sustainable for many Australian universities (Marshman & Larkins, 2020).

The financial realities may influence the way that international students are treated, cared for, or viewed; however, universities' responsibilities to care for their international students extends beyond the way these students may be positioned within the conversation about internationalization. International students in Australian universities often face a range of challenges specific to moving overseas for their studies, such as loneliness, difficulty finding housing,

separation from their support networks, and adjustment to a new academic system (Marginson et al., 2010; Ryan et al., 2016). Research has also suggested that international students are at high risk of facing mental health difficulties while studying at Australian universities (Orygen, 2017; Shadowen et al., 2019; Veness, 2016). This is especially notable as Sawir and colleagues (2008) found that the institutional context may heighten feelings of loneliness. Although mental health challenges are not exclusive to international students, scholars have noted that there is more that Australian universities can do to better support the emotional, social, and academic needs of their international students (e.g., Arkoudis et al., 2019; Marangell et al., 2018), especially after recruiting them and bringing them to Australia for their studies.

The challenges of internationalization, however, are more comprehensive than the perceived quality of support for international students or criticism of the terminology. Internationalizing curricula, for example through changes to teaching practices, content, or intended learning outcomes, can be challenging for teaching staff with large workloads and content-heavy courses (Arkoudis et al., 2010; Arkoudis & Baik, 2014). Likewise, some teaching staff might not see the relevance of internationalization within their field (Leask, 2013), nor might they find it easy to incorporate intercultural learning practices into their discipline (Arkoudis & Baik, 2014).

There are challenges, too, to the efficacy of such teaching and learning approaches, such as perceived student resistance, as described above. Simultaneously, there are sociological and cultural reasons why intercultural interactions between students might be limited or difficult. Effective intercultural communication depends on each party's knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Deardorff, 2006). Students in various contexts have noted the large amount of time and effort required when communicating with peers from cultures other than their own (e.g., Arkoudis et al., 2010; Dunne, 2009; Peacock & Harrison, 2009). It can also be risky, especially for international students' interactions with teachers and classmates, during which misunderstanding of non-verbal signals can have "dire consequences" for the international student (Hellstén, 2007, p. 83). This is because intercultural communication comprises more than straightforward language translation; it often involves different ideas about space, humor, familiarity, and touch (Straker, 2016). Domestic students, too, have noted

the risks involved during intercultural communication and their worries over causing accidental offense (Dunne, 2009). Perceived English-language proficiency is also a well-documented limitation of interactions between international and domestic students in Australian universities specifically (see, for example, Arkoudis et al., 2018; Arkoudis & Baik, 2014). Importantly, however, researchers suggest that there is a need to improve both international and domestic students' communication skills while studying in Australian universities (Arkoudis et al., 2016).

Although other aspects of internationalization, such as research collaborations, may not depend as strongly upon the recruitment of international students or on student responses to intercultural teaching and learning practices, this article is concerned with the student experience of internationalization. The student experience is an aspect that has changed considerably as student mobility remains uncertain in Australia. In addition, as mentioned above, many aims of internationalization are student centered and, simultaneously, many identified challenges pertain to students' resistance to certain internationalization practices, including but not exclusively intercultural interaction and multicultural learning activities. Understanding what influences students' experiences can therefore illuminate a path forward for higher education internationalization.

Limited Understanding of the Student Experience of Internationalization

Literature that explores the student experience of internationalization tends to focus on the experiences of particular student groups (e.g., international or domestic students) and their interactions with each other. As a result, what is known about the student experience is constrained by the predominance of these topics in the related literature.

For example, the literature pertaining to students' experiences of internationalization in Australian higher education is first limited by the participant groups from which data is drawn. Specifically, literature relating to the student experience of internationalization has tended to consider international students' experiences almost exclusively. An increasing collection of Australian research has considered international students' adjustment to university, ways to support their transitions, and their experiences with domestic students (e.g., Arkoudis et al., 2019; Marginson et al., 2010; Matsunaga et al., 2021). Likewise,

the growing but limited attention to domestic students' experiences has tended to focus on their relationships with international students or their attitudes towards multicultural group work (e.g., Arkoudis & Baik, 2014). As domestic students comprise the majority of the Australian higher education student population (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2020b), they are a critical component of the learning environment, and their experiences and attitudes deserve more exploration. As Leask (2009) explained, "the attitude of home students to international students is of critical importance in improving interactions between them" (p. 218).

In addition, research often perpetuates a dichotomy between international and domestic students that Jones (2017) has identified as a flawed dichotomy. Despite considerable linguistic and cultural diversity within the student population in Australia, literature rarely considers the heterogeneity of either population. Exceptions tend to consider other distinctions between groups, such as differences between first-language English speakers and additional-language English speakers (e.g., Tananuraksakul, 2012). Recent literature has explored the experiences of students from specific backgrounds and within specific contexts; for example, of Chinese students in America (Ruble & Zhang, 2013) or Muslim students in New Zealand (Gardner, Krägeloh, & Henning, 2014). Further attention to the range of unique experience should continue in research into the student experience.

A second gap in the literature relates to limitations in the researched contexts, as a predominance of studies comes from business-related subjects (Chan, 2011). Yet, pedagogies utilized in business subjects are not necessarily reflective of those used in other disciplines. Furthermore, the composition of the student population in business programs tends to differ greatly from those in the Arts and Humanities, for example.

Another limitation of existing literature on the student experience of internationalization relates to the aspects of internationalization that are studied. Literature that considers students' perspectives tends to be limited to investigations of group work, multicultural or otherwise (Héliot et al., 2020; Matsunaga et al., 2021; Teo et al., 2012), peer mentoring (Ragavan, 2104; Shigaki & Smith, 1997) or students' intercultural interactions (Arkoudis & Baik, 2014). Even so, the effect that these practices may have on changing students'

attitudes and skills is also underexplored. As Leask (2009) explains, this gap exists partly because it can be especially difficult to measure subjective responses to interventions. However, Leask continues that “it is vitally important that we find ways to do this” (p. 218).

What is noticeably absent is literature that explores students’ perceptions of internationalization practices other than multicultural groups, such as the incorporation of diverse perspectives into the curricula. Two notable exceptions are recent studies by Mittelmeier and colleagues which explored the influence of internationalized content on student participation (Mittelmeier et al., 2017) and students’ perceptions of the relevance of curriculum internationalization policies (Mittelmeier, Slof, & Rienties, 2021). The former study found that internationalized content encouraged greater student participation and that the inclusion of content relating to students’ own cultural backgrounds was particularly important for encouraging participation. In the latter, the researchers emphasized that different students perceived the relevance of the internationalization policies differently and that internationalization “may be experienced differently by students from different backgrounds” (Mittelmeier, Slof, & Rienties, 2021, p. 116). While these two studies were Netherlands-specific, the findings have clear implications for Australia as well where the student population (domestic and international) comprises students from hundreds of cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2020a). However, the direct applicability is unknown due to the lack of Australia-specific research that considers students’ attitudes to a wider range of internationalization-related practices.

This article aims to reduce this gap in the literature by considering students’ perspectives of internationalized universities more broadly. It will do so by exploring multiple layers of influences on students’ experiences at an internationalized university as considered through a person-in-context lens.

Volet’s Person-in-Context Lens

The student experience of an internationalized university can be better understood by considering students’ experiences in relation to established frameworks and theories. This article takes a social-constructive approach and applies research findings to Volet’s (2001) person-in-context (PiC) model. The

PiC model is an adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1986, 2005) ecological model which considers micro, meso, and macro spheres of influence on human development. In Bronfenbrenner's model, each sphere influences the subsequent spheres within it and, ultimately, the individual. Similarly, the PiC model not only considers multiple layers and multi-directional influences, but it also focuses on the outcomes for motivation and learning in context. As such, it considers the attributes of each sphere as they pertain to the learning context. For example, at the individual level, attributes include one's motives, attitudes, and appraisals of the learning tasks (Volet, 2001).

Another key characteristic of the PiC model is identification and understanding of the "experiential interface" (Volet, 2001, p. 57), the place where the individual and environmental dimensions interact. For example, a student's personal attributes, such as their expectations and appraisals of the environment, and their interpersonal variables (e.g., their intercultural interactions with other students) would likely interact with any influences within the situational, institutional, and sociocultural levels of the learning environment. These environmental variables might be the specific classroom task, assessment type, or the university's sociocultural context. Volet (2001) suggests that congruence, or alignment, between the individual and environmental dimensions leads to motivated and productive learning.

On the other hand, incongruence, or mismatch, at the environmental interface would exist when "students are unwilling or unable to benefit from the opportunities provided by the learning environment" or "when the instructional approach does not support the special needs or circumstances, and ends up inhibiting their motivation, engagement and learning" (Volet, 2001, p. 62). Application of this framework would suggest that literature that describes examples of student disengagement, resistance, or ambiguity, as presented in the previous section, could be indications of incongruence at the experiential interface.

Previous applications of this model have investigated specific aspects of the situational layer (e.g., assessment group format) and associations with certain individual variables, such as students' attitudes towards their intercultural interactions (e.g., Kimmel & Volet, 2010; 2012a; 2012b; Kudo, Volet, & Whitsed, 2019). This article, however, reports on a study that considered

students' intercultural interactions as one component of students' university experiences. In addition, one aim of the study was to explore influences, both known and unknown, rather than to investigate the influence of only specific variables. As such, this article expands upon those previous studies by considering a holistic picture of students' experiences within the internationalized learning environment.

A Study of Students' Experiences

Based on a review of existing literature and insight from Volet's (2001) PiC framework, this study was designed to (a) investigate both domestic and international students' experiences and (b) consider multiple aspects of both the individual and environmental dimensions. To do so, it considered students' experiences within a defined context, which allowed for better understanding of the relationship between environment and experience. The study aimed to address the question, "What influences students' experience of an internationalized university?"

The study also explored how students conceptualize an internationalized university and, for that reason, no pre-determined definition of an "internationalized university" was presented. However, the university at which this study took place has a comprehensive approach to internationalization (Hudzik, 2011), which includes, among other objectives, providing intercultural interactions for students, incorporating global perspectives and contexts into the curriculum, and expanding overseas research collaborations. For the purposes of the conversation in this article, a similarly internationalized university would be a large, metropolitan English-medium university with a large presence of international students and a comprehensive approach to internationalization. More information about the study context is provided below.

Case Study Approach

The study adopted a single-institution case study design which allowed for the exploration of both known and unknown variables and provided a bounded context within which students' experiences could be explored. As Yin (2003) explains, the case study approach is suitable when deliberately considering contextual conditions. The case study institution is a large,

metropolitan university in Australia. It is internationally ranked and attracts students and scholars from around the world. In 2019, pre-pandemic, the case study university had a larger percentage of international students studying on campus (32.6%) than the national average (21.9%) (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2020b). It also had one of the largest numbers of international students onshore compared with other Australian universities, with over 23,000 international students in 2019 (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2020b). The three selected faculties within the university, referred to as Arts, Design, and Business, comprise different teaching practices, cohort sizes, and proportions of international students (see Table 1).

Table 1.

Overview of Faculty Enrolment, with Proportions of International and Domestic Students in 2018

Degree	Faculty undergraduate enrolment		Cohort size ^a
	Domestic	International	
Arts	80%	20%	2,300
Design	53%	47%	700
Business	47%	53%	2,200

Note. ^a Cohort size has been rounded to the nearest 100

Methods

To keep the context constrained, the global level of the PiC framework was considered out of scope. The methods below, therefore, were designed to gather information on the levels from personal to sociocultural, which would provide a bounded context and retain elements of both the individual and environmental dimensions.

A mixed-methods approach was utilized, and two collections of data provided a picture of students' expectations and experiences within the constrained context of the institution. Quantitative data were collected from an electronic questionnaire and qualitative data were collected from individual student interviews. This provided a comprehensive picture of students'

experiences and beliefs because data collected from each provided a different perspective on the same phenomena. The design, collection, and analysis of the two methods were concurrent (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011); meaning that, although the student interviews took place after the student survey, the interviews were not used to elaborate on the survey data, but, rather, to provide a distinct set of data. The quantitative data collected in the surveys provided measurable information on students' attitudes about known variables, and the qualitative data collected in the student interviews allowed for exploration of "individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation" (Creswell, 2009, p. 4).

Participants

Ethics approval was granted from the case study institution, and students from one core subject per selected faculty were invited to complete the electronic survey. Of the 1,211 students who received invitations, 170 students completed the survey, which comprised a 14% response rate. Participants gave explicit consent on the first page of the survey.

Survey participants self-identified as being enrolled as either an international or domestic student. As shown in Table 2, 58% of survey participants identified as international students compared with 42% who identified as domestic students.

At the end of the survey, students were invited to express interest in participating in an individual interview. Of the 170 final survey participants, 42 expressed interest in participating in an individual interview. Of these, 17 were eventually interviewed, either in person or over the phone. The profile of interview participants can be found in Table 3.

Table 2
Survey Participant Profile by Residency Status

	International students	Domestic students	All
No. of students	99	71	170
Gender			
Female	75.8%	56.3%	67.6%
Male	23.2%	42.3%	31.2%
Non-binary/Third gender	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Prefer not to answer	1.0%	1.4%	1.2%
Faculty			
Arts	40.4%	28.2%	35.3%
Design	15.2%	29.6%	21.2%
Business	42.4%	40.9%	41.8%
Other	2.0%	1.3%	1.7%
First language ^a			
English	11.1%	83.1%	41.2%
Mandarin	62.6%	5.6%	38.8%
Cantonese	8.1%	5.6%	7.1%
Vietnamese	4.0%	0.0%	2.4%
Other	14.2%	5.7%	10.5%

Note. ^a Participants selected from a list of the 21 most common languages in the state, plus a 22nd choice of “Other, not listed”. These are the answer choices that were selected by 2 or more participants, with the others combined into the percentage for “Other”.

Table 3
Overview of Interview Participants

Students ^a	Gender	Age	Residency status	Faculty	Nationality
Abigail	Female	18	Domestic	Arts	Australian
Adele	Female	18	International	Arts	Singaporean
Alice	Female	18	Domestic	Arts	Australian
Amanda	Female	22	Domestic	Arts	Australian
Amy	Female	20	International	Arts	Chinese
Anh	Male	18	International	Arts	Vietnamese
Annie	Female	19	International	Arts	Vietnamese
Beatrice	Female	19	International	Business	Indonesian
Bela	Female	20	International	Business	Russian
Ben	Male	22	International	Business	Vietnamese
Bhavini	Female	20	Domestic	Business	Australian
Brian	Male	20	Domestic	Business	Australian
Bruce	Male	22	International	Business	Singaporean
Dahlia	Female	18	International	Design	Myanma
David	Male	22	Domestic	Design	Australian
Diana	Female	21	Domestic	Design	New Zealander
Oliver	Male	19	International	Business ^c	Belgian

Note.^a Pseudonyms are used; ^b As indicated on the Interview Interest Form; ^c On exchange

Analysis

In alignment with the concurrent research design (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011), each data set was analyzed independently. Key findings were identified separately from the survey and interviews.

The survey responses were analyzed first using primarily descriptive statistics to create a broad picture of students' attitudes and experiences. Descriptive analysis (including frequencies, medians, and means) was conducted for overall responses as well as for aggregated responses by faculty, residency status, language background, and gender. Chi-squared tests were then conducted

to explore the presence of statistically significant associations between students' survey responses and certain other variables, including their faculty, residency status, language background, or gender.

Transcripts from the student interviews were analyzed using NVivo software so that patterns across responses could be identified. The transcripts were first coded into prior categories consistent with the interview protocol (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011), levels of the PiC framework, and existing concepts in the literature. Then, a combination of inductive and deductive codes was used to allow for both (a) relating findings to existing concepts in the literature and (b) exploring new ideas which emerged in the data.

After the iterative coding process was completed, patterns were identified and summaries written up separately for each prior category (Bazeley, 2009). Matrix coding and cross tabulations were then utilized to establish relationships between codes and respondents (Bazeley, 2009). Overarching patterns and findings across the interview data were then identified.

A merged analysis was then conducted, using key findings from both data sets to address the main research question, "What influences students' experience of an internationalized university?" Patterns were explored and findings across all data were explored to determine whether different pieces of evidence corroborated, complemented, or conflicted each other (Yin, 2009). The key findings from the survey and the interviews were collated and then mapped onto Volet's person-in-context framework, which is discussed below.

Students' Experiences as Seen Through a Person-in-Context Lens

The recurring patterns, themes, and key findings from both the survey and interview analyses were applied to the PiC framework; meaning, they were listed under the respective levels or placed into the space for the experiential interface. Figure 1 shows how the findings were applied. The discussion below focuses on the key features of each level and descriptions of the experiential interface.

Personal	Individual dimension	<p>Examples of congruence, ambivalence, difficulty, or incongruence:</p> <p>lack of intercultural interaction in class</p> <p>lack of interpersonal interaction with staff</p> <p>difficulty making friends</p> <p>lack of motivation and engagement</p> <p>unproductive group work</p>
Conceptualizations of internationalization as equating to diversity		
Expectations for intercultural interaction with peers, within the classroom and on the university campus		
Expectations for high-quality education, exhibited as interactive learning and personal relationships with classmates and staff		
Sense of agency and initiative, confidence, and personality		
Linguistic challenges, level of comfort with one's own accent and language ability		
Interpersonal		
Intercultural interactions in class are limited		
There is less interaction with teachers than expected		
Interactions with peers outside of class are limited		
Interactions with peers seem superficial or rushed		
	Experiential interface	
Situational	Environmental dimension	<p>difficulty communicating or working with classmates</p> <p>uneven participation in</p>
Classroom activities do not often include interaction		
Assessment types can either exacerbate tensions between students or encourage inclusion of additional perspectives		
Tutors may or may not be good facilitators of in-class discussion		

Classmates' behavior seen to influence learning experience		class discussion
Presence of international students seen to reduce quality of learning experience		frustration with classmates'
Learning is not as practical, innovative, or interactive		level of engagement
Institutional		surprise over autonomous nature of study
No opportunity for cohort-based learning		
Little overlaps with other students' subjects		
Timetables inhibit opportunity for interaction between classes		surprise over lack of relationships with teachers
Sociocultural		feeling unwelcomed and unvalued
Racial stereotypes of Asian students and conflating of all international students with Asian students		
Cultural capital preferences White, European, domestic students, and those with previous experience in Australian or Western educational settings		
Differences in humor, cultural references, and lifestyle		

Figure 1. Application of Main Findings to the Person-in-Context Framework

The Individual Dimension

The individual dimension includes findings related to the personal and interpersonal levels. Specifically, the personal level comprised results relating to how students conceptualized the internationalized university, what they expected of their internationalized learning experience, the personal attributes that emerged as notable, and other motivational influences that were present in the data.

The main findings relating to the personal level included the finding that students expected high-quality, highly frequent intercultural interaction. For

example, 86% of participants expected “a lot of opportunity to interact with students from different backgrounds” (compared with 14% who expected “not a lot”), and 74% expected “a lot of classroom discussion”.

In addition, interview responses suggested that most participants associated an internationalized university with diversity—specifically, with the presence of students from many linguistic, cultural, and national backgrounds. Similarly, they seemed to expect that an internationalized university with a diverse student body would inherently foster frequent and abundant intercultural interactions with peers, as demonstrated in the quote below:

I'll explain what I thought of [the university] before I came. So, I would imagine people mingling together despite their language differences, culture differences, and they would be having fun, they would be sharing ideas, reading books together, on the courtyard or something. (Dahlia)

Specifically, students also seemed to expect that this frequent, intercultural interaction would take place both inside and outside the learning environment.

In addition to students' expectations, the personal level included the finding that a student's own sense of agency (including their confidence and level of extraversion) seemed to play a significant role in how they approached and then interpreted their experiences within the learning environment. This idea was present in both survey and interview responses, with 75% of survey participants indicating that “personality” might be a barrier to interacting with one's classmates. A related finding was that a student's perceived language ability influenced how they approached their learning experiences, as did how they perceived others' language abilities, a finding which supports previous research (e.g., Arkoudis et al., 2010).

At the interpersonal level, students' descriptions of their interpersonal interactions with teachers and peers were included, as were their evaluations of the quantity or quality of those interactions. The themes and patterns that fell into the interpersonal level focused predominantly on the limited opportunity for interaction, both with classmates and with teachers, and the perceived superficiality of their interactions. While these sentiments are consistent with those found in previous studies (e.g., Arkoudis et al., 2010), what was significant for the application to the PiC model was that they focused on the negative (e.g.,

the lack of or limitations of such interactions). The following quote provides one example of commentary about the absence of expected interaction:

During tutorials, it's very quiet. Like nobody talks at all, so it's really awkward when you want to ask a question because you don't know if you're like lagging behind or sometimes you don't want to ask questions because you think they might be stupid. (Bhavini)

It seemed that interpersonal interaction predominated the personal level by comprising not only the interpersonal level itself, but also by predominating students' expectations and appraisals of the internationalized university environment.

The Environmental Dimension

Attention to interaction and the quality of interaction also arose in students' descriptions of the environmental dimension; specifically, in the situational and institutional layers. In regard to the situational layer, for example, students commented on the way that assessment design may increase social tensions. For example, Brian mentioned that an assignment which required "a binary, yes-or-no, right-or-wrong kind of assignment" would be less likely to encourage collaboration than one in which different perspectives would be valuable in the quality of the task.

Other students elaborated on environmental factors which would influence the quality of classroom discussion, such as the number of assignments or readings:

Sometimes the discussion is a little bit useless, because maybe, for example, in the assignment week, there's too many assignments to do; none of us in the group do the readings, so it will be really embarrassing, and we just won't say anything. (Amy)

The institutional elements that were mentioned seemed primarily to be those that inhibited interaction. An overarching theme among these was that there was little opportunity for students to learn together or to build a strong cohort. Specifically, this included observations that most students do not take the same classes with the same peers each semester and that, if two students did have a class together one semester, they might not see each other again after the semester finished.

You meet people 12 times [the number of weeks in the semester] and then you kind of never see each other again. So, you don't really have time to make friends. (Bhavini)

Other students echoed this comment. For example, Ben believed that his lack of close friends was “inevitable” because students have different schedules and do not go from class to class together.

For reference, the student participants in this study were not enrolled in cohort-based programs (i.e., those in which the same students attended the same classes as each other); however, some students were in program or majors with smaller cohorts of students (see Table 1). Even among those with some consistency in their classmates, there was frequent commentary that the structure of the program inhibited students from getting to know each other. For example, students mentioned that there was too little time between classes to build upon in-class discussions.

There were also sentiments which emerged that touched upon elements of the sociocultural level. In alignment with previous studies (e.g., Arkoudis et al., 2010; Dunne 2019; Peacock & Harrison, 2009), key findings included the idea that differences in humor, cultural references, or lifestyle inhibited student interaction. There were also observations that the experiences of students from certain cultural backgrounds were given more value in the classroom than others, an idea that was previously discussed by Jon (2012) and Colvin, Fozdar, and Volet (2013). In this study, the students whose experiences were mentioned as being most valuable were the domestic, European, or White/Caucasian students, and those with previous experience studying in educational settings in the U.S., Australia, or the U.K.

Descriptions of the Experiential Interface

In addition to considering how students described elements of each layer, it is also important to consider the ways students described what takes place at the experiential interface, which would exemplify the relationship between the individual and the environment. In relation to the research aim, students' descriptions of the experiential interface would provide insight into potential challenges and perceived student resistance to teaching and learning approaches aimed at fostering international or intercultural understanding. In addition, they

address the research question by identifying what influences how students experience and perceive their learning experiences.

In this study, students' descriptions of their learning were often characterized by aspects that were missing; namely, interaction, engagement, and participation. These characterizations suggest that there might be a lack of alignment at the experiential interface. Students' descriptions also reiterate that many of the well-established challenges identified in previous literature persist, such as frustration with group work, difficulty in cross-cultural communication, the presence of stereotypes, and the perception of a barrier between student groups.

When viewing the main findings through the lens of the PiC framework, the student experience of an internationalized university seems to be exemplified by a lack of alignment between the individual and environmental dimensions, with particular misalignment in the interactional elements of the learning environment. In other words, students' expectations for high-frequency interaction, intercultural and interpersonal, do not seem to align with how students perceive their learning environment.

Discussion

The findings from this study support and expand upon much previous literature that has explored students' intercultural interactions or experiences within multicultural learning environments. Previous literature from Australia specifically has long established the limited nature of students' intercultural interactions, the apparent divide between students from different backgrounds, and the challenges of implementing related teaching and learning strategies within the classroom (e.g., Arkoudis et al., 2010; Arkoudis & Baik, 2014; Barron, 2006; Bianchi, 2013). Research from outside Australia has also identified similar sentiments among the student body, including research from the United Kingdom (e.g., Dunne, 2009; Peacock & Harrison, 2009), the United States (Halualani, 2010), and New Zealand (Strauss et al., 2011). It is therefore not surprising that the student participants in this Australian study mentioned the lack of intercultural interaction that they perceived at their university. What is notable, instead, is that these students seemed to view their learning experiences through the lens of those intercultural interactions; their perceptions of their interactions

influenced their perceptions of their learning experiences as a whole. This suggests that interaction may play a more predominant role in students' experiences of universities that may have been considered "internationalized".

In addition to the findings related to interaction, the application of the PiC model in this exploratory study expands the scope of the model to consider the various ecological layers as they inform the student experience of an internationalized university. As mentioned above, previous applications (e.g., Kimmel & Volet, 2010; 2012a; 2012b) have explored the relationships between pre-defined variables or have investigated the influence of specific contextual factors. By exploring students' perceptions of each layer, the underlining importance of interpersonal interaction becomes more visible as a through-line between the various layers.

This is not to say that interaction was not already identified as important to the student experience. Instead, these findings build upon existing understanding of the important influence that interaction has on students' experiences. For example, loneliness and isolation can negatively impact students' academic adjustment, achievement, and mental wellbeing (Baik et al., 2017; Thomas, 2012; Tinto, 1993). In addition, intercultural interaction, specifically, can improve students' cross-cultural skills, understanding of diverse perspectives, and preparedness for employment in a global society (Arkoudis et al., 2010; Beelen & Jones 2015a; 2015b). Furthermore, the findings presented in this article expand upon our understanding of the importance of interaction by identifying its influence in how students perceive multiple ecological layers of their experiences at an internationalized university. Much previous research has explored students' experiences of intercultural learning. What this study contributes specifically is the understanding that students' experiences of intercultural interaction are related to not only the way they perceive their classmates, but also their perceptions of their learning experiences more broadly.

Importantly, however, the multiple ecological layers of such models are interdependent (Nolen & Warn, 2008), and the nested nature of the PiC model emphasizes the complexity of creating learning environments that will align with students' expectations and attitudes. A change to either the learning environment or the learner's approach might lead to an entirely different experiential interface, and, consequently, could lead to either more or less alignment. Based on Volet's

(2001) description of such incongruence, an environment that conflicted with a student's expectations for and ideas of an internationalized university may result in a student experience that is characterized by limited motivation and/or engagement. Learning environments that more effectively encourage student interaction, or that better incorporate students' diverse perspectives into the classroom, might better align with many students' individual approaches to the internationalized university. Conversely, this incongruence may help illuminate why students have tended to resist certain practices associated with internationalization.

Importantly, though, the importance of individual students' impressions is heightened by both the structure of the PiC model and the methodology of the study. Critics (e.g., Wosnitza & Beltman, 2012) have commented on the framework's emphasis on students' subjective interpretations of the learning environment. While the attention to students' subjective impressions suited the aim of this study, future research that utilized different methodologies (e.g., observation) would expand our understanding further. In addition, utilizing students' subjective responses means that generalizability and reliability were limited in favor of detail and exploration.

It is also important to acknowledge that, because each learner is different, congruence with the learning environment will likely vary "across groups and individuals, task purposes and subject matter" (Volet, 2001, p. 62). Likewise, the alignment experienced by each individual student would vary "over time and across situations, although some consistency is expected overall" (Volet, 2001, p. 62). This variation, along with the exploratory nature of the study, means that it is not possible to draw conclusions about environmental variables that would ensure an aligned experience for all students. Instead, what this article offers is observation of patterns among students' descriptions as a starting point for guiding future practice at internationalized universities. One specific example seems to be the importance of providing frequent, well-facilitated opportunities for interaction within the learning environment.

Conclusion

Findings from this study suggest a more ubiquitous and fundamental role for intercultural interaction in shaping students' expectations and experiences of universities that had been previously termed "internationalized" universities. Conclusions and implications that derived from mapping findings onto the PiC model have implications for universities that would seek to improve the experiences of all students at their institutions. Findings would be particularly relevant for institutions that would like to develop or revise their "internationalization" strategies to emphasize curriculum-based or "at-home" approaches, such as providing intercultural and/or international learning experiences for all students.

However, this was a small-scale study that took place at a single institution in Australia. As such, the conclusions drawn can only be directly applied to that specific university context and to the three programs from which participants were drawn. Furthermore, the beliefs and experiences discussed by the participants cannot be said to represent those of all students at the institution or in other Australian universities. With these limitations in mind, the findings and implications might additionally be helpful for universities that would like to adapt their internationalization approach, to establish more comprehensive forms of internationalization, or that would like to better understand how students approach the internationalized university.

As international student mobility returns, these findings might be helpful for universities trying to navigate new directions with internationalization. They suggest that a focus on elevating students' diverse perspectives and prioritizing opportunities for interaction, virtually or otherwise, might be helpful ways for further developing internationalized learning environments that might align with students' expectations of the internationalized university.

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SAMANTHA MARANGELL, PhD, is Lecturer in Higher Education at the Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education at The University of Melbourne in Australia. Her major research interests comprise the student experience of higher education, university internationalization, and the intersections of the two. She can be contacted at samantha.marangell@unimelb.edu.au.