



# Issues and Opportunities in Undergraduates’ Reintegration after Study Away

Frances Wu, Erin Thorp, & Chong Ho (Alex) Yu

Azusa Pacific University

## Introduction

The objective of this research is to discover how U.S. college students in study away programs experienced their intellectual, personal, and spiritual reintegration as a result of a reintegration course months after their return from overseas.

There is a need for study away programming that fosters personal transformations that lead to justice and sustainability in society. The role of post-experience guidance strongly impacts the degree of student learning from study away participation. Integration is one of the six salient dimensions in Fink’s Taxonomy of Significant Learning.



## Methods

The sample consists of 485 undergraduate students in a private university in southwestern U.S., who participated in a study away experience between 2017 and 2021 and subsequently completed a survey on their reintegration course experiences. Their textual responses to an open-ended survey question on “what have you done differently as a result of the reintegration course?” were analyzed with two tools: 1) text analytics in SPSS IBM Modeler, an automated text mining tool, and 2) MAXQDA, which utilizes human coding. Results were then triangulated to maximize inter-coder reliability and internal validity.

Handout Access:



## Results

Text mining using text analytics in IBM Modeler revealed major concepts reported by participants:

Table 1 Major Concepts from IBM Modeler	
Concept	Number of narratives carrying this concept
Life	106
People	100
Academics	69
Experience	66
God	64
Cultures	62
Relation	40
Community	35

The following concept maps show how various salient concepts are related to other concepts:

Figure 1. Life

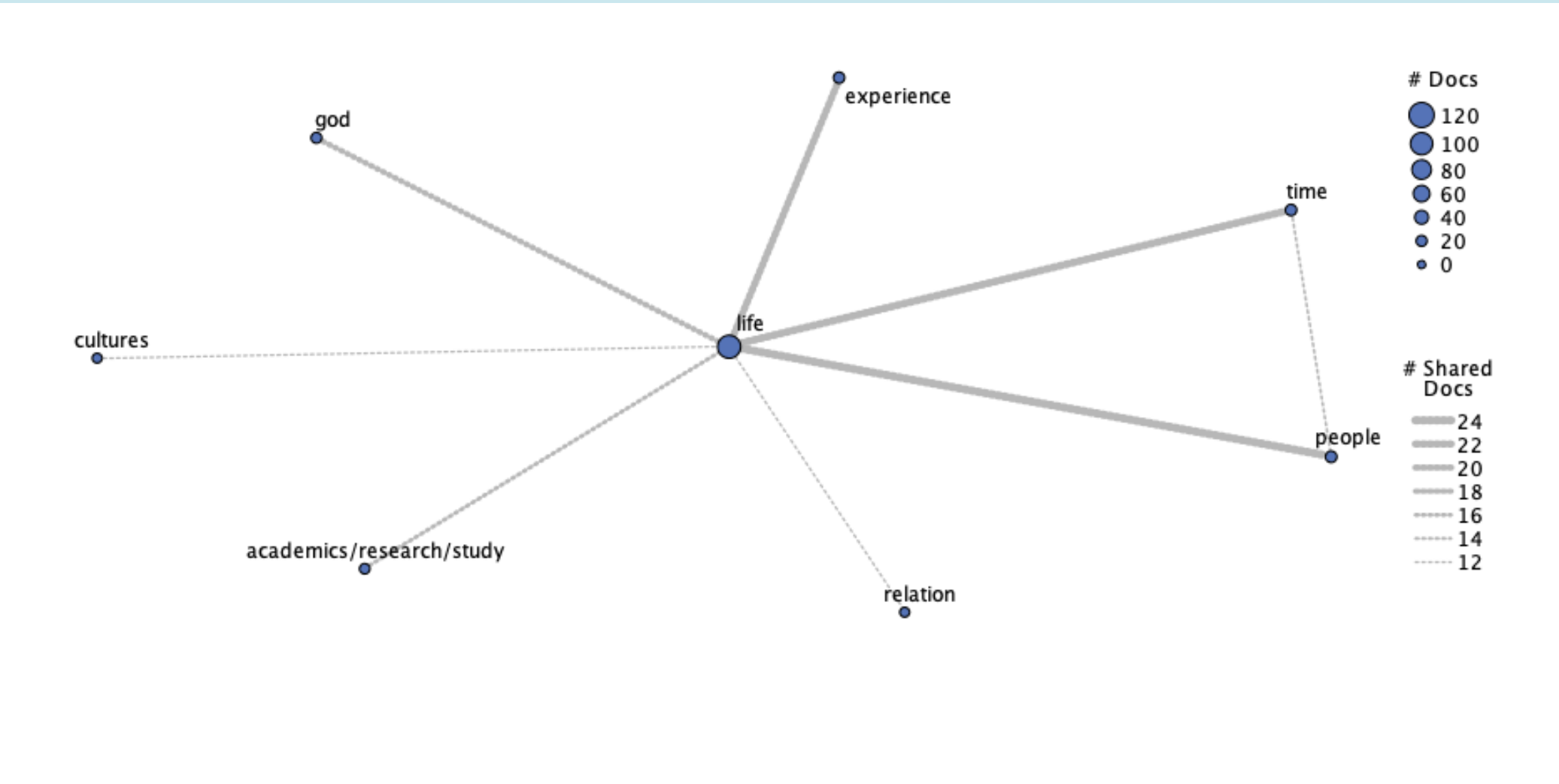


Figure 2. People

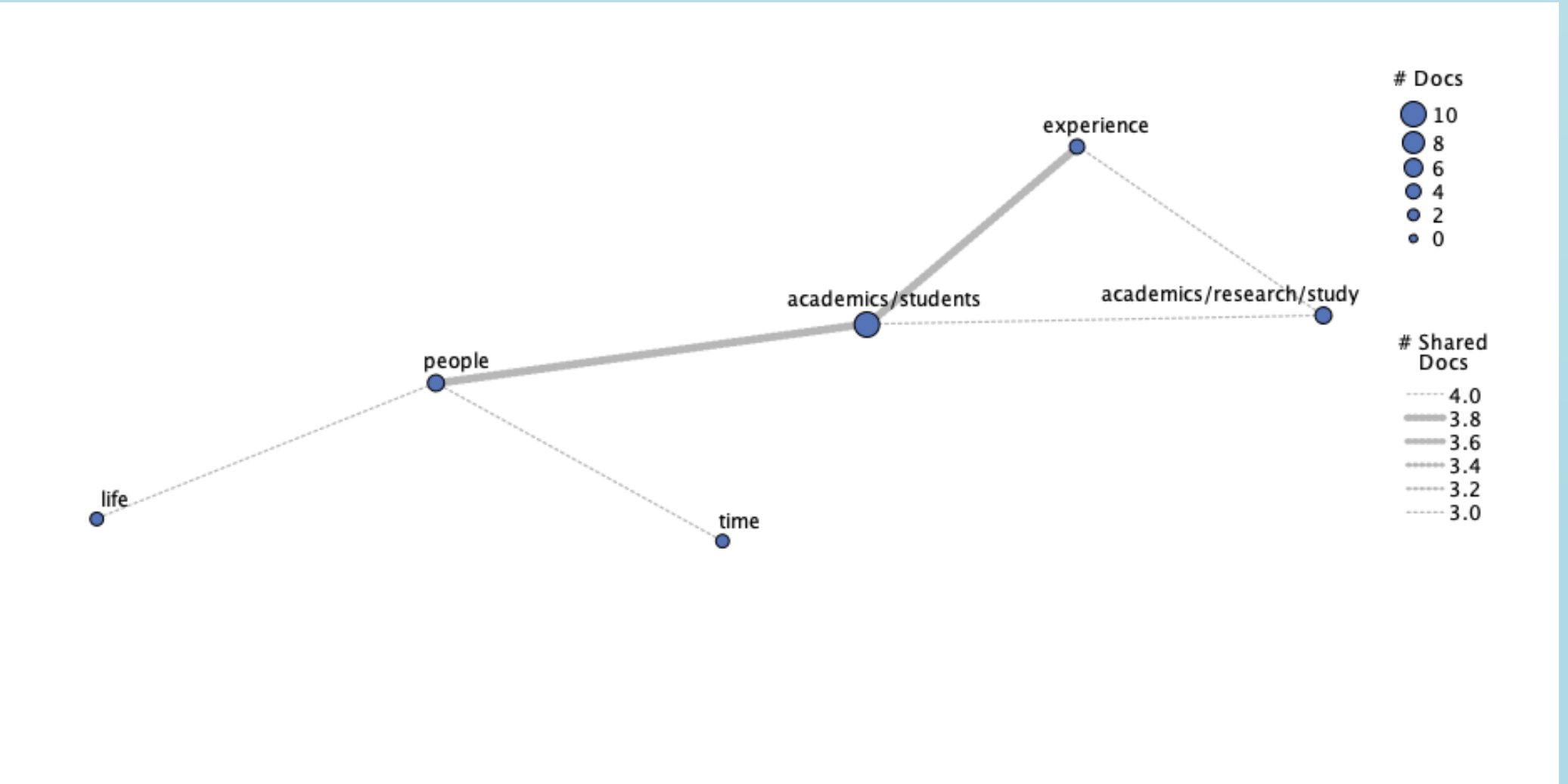


Figure 3. Academics

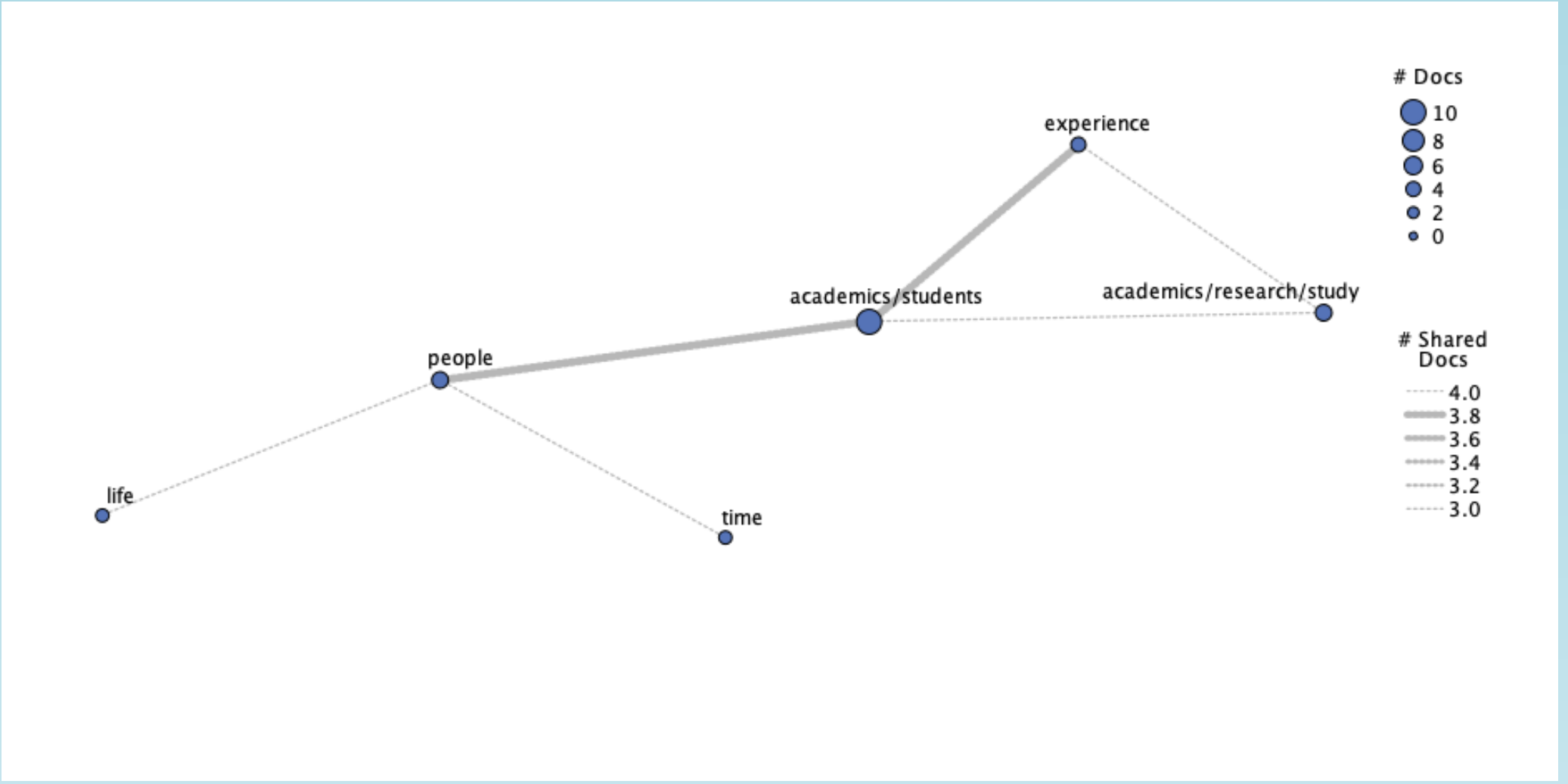


Figure 4. Experience

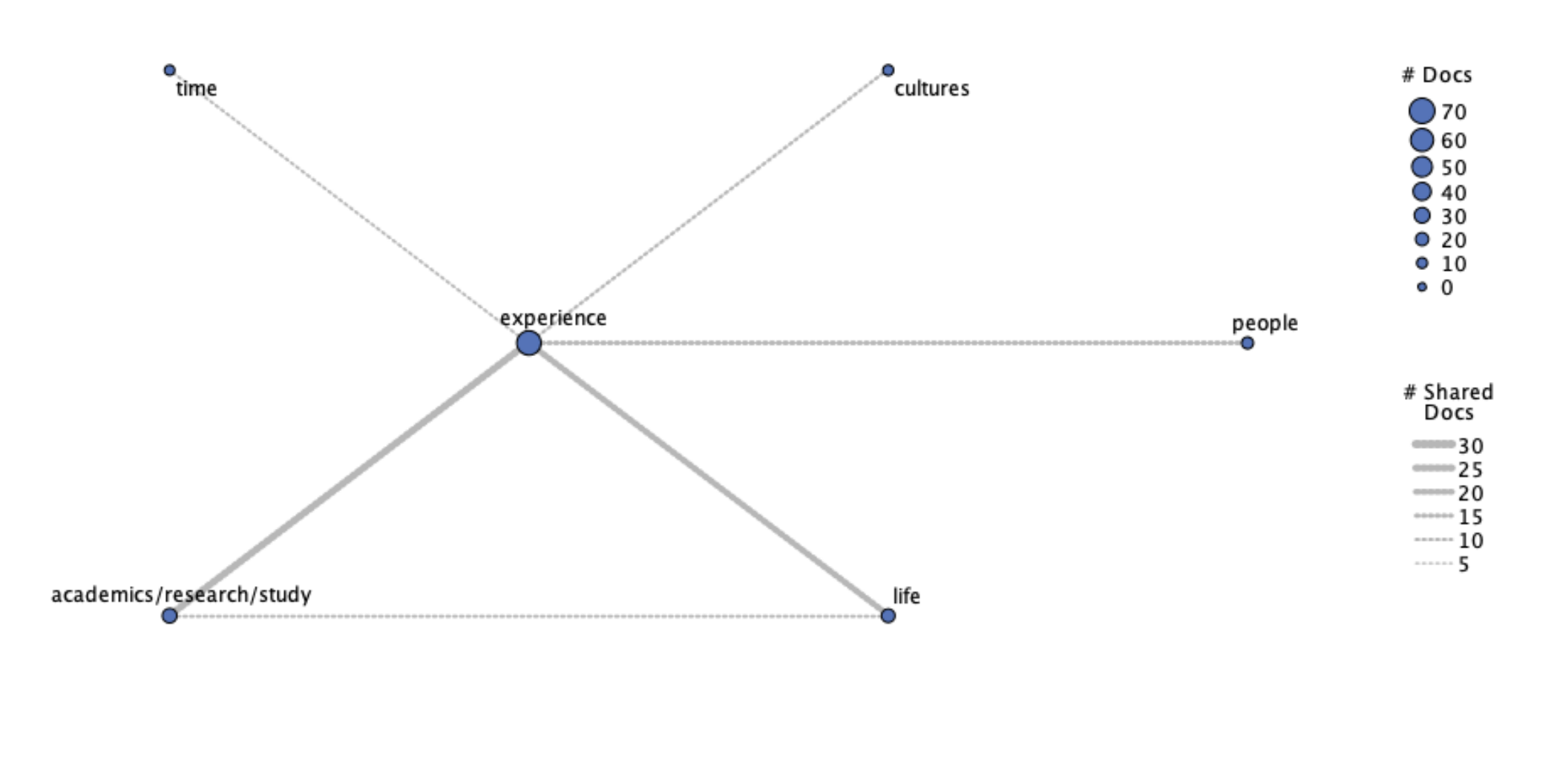


Figure 5. Cultures

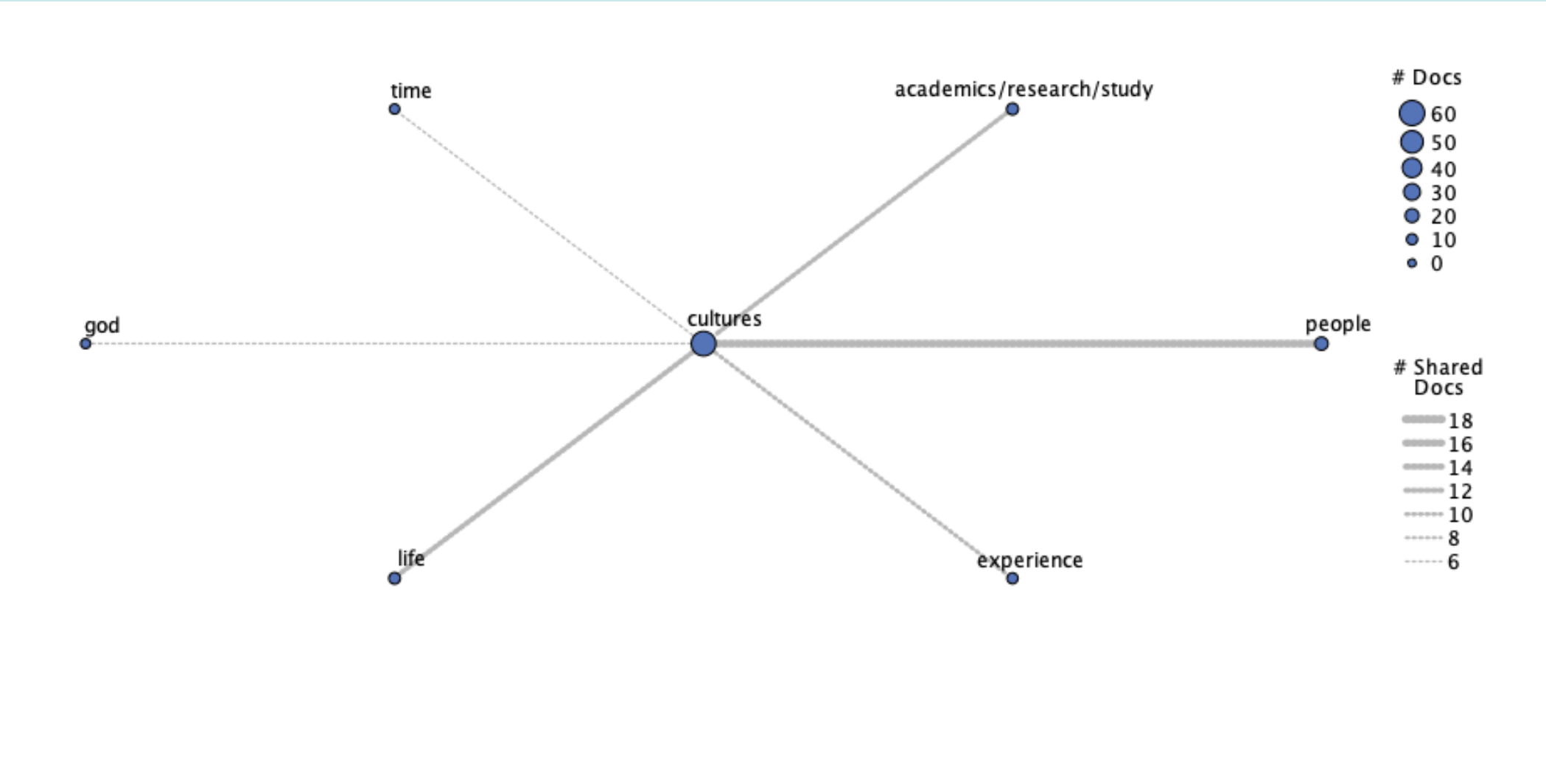


Figure 6. God

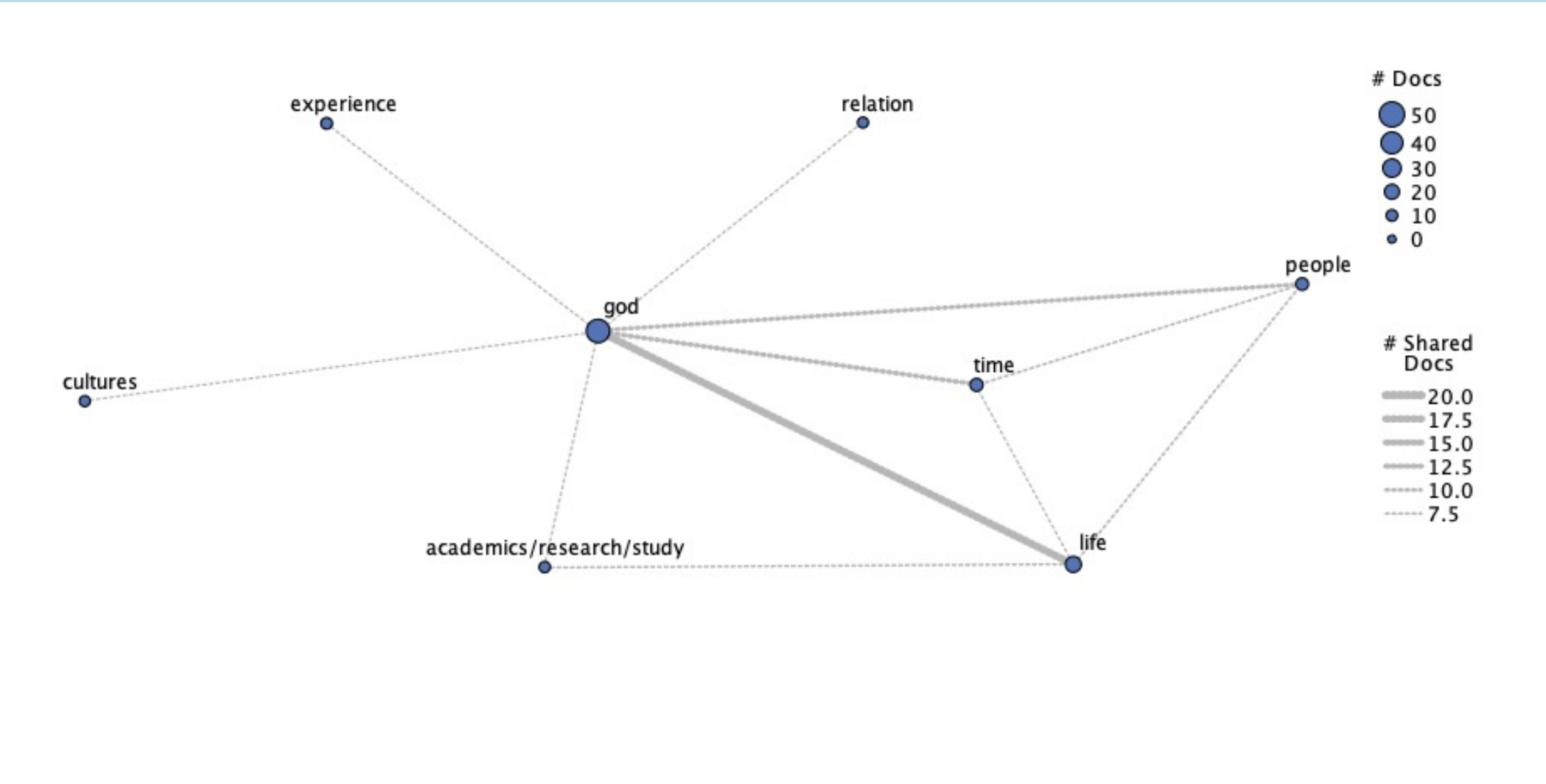


Figure 7. Psychology

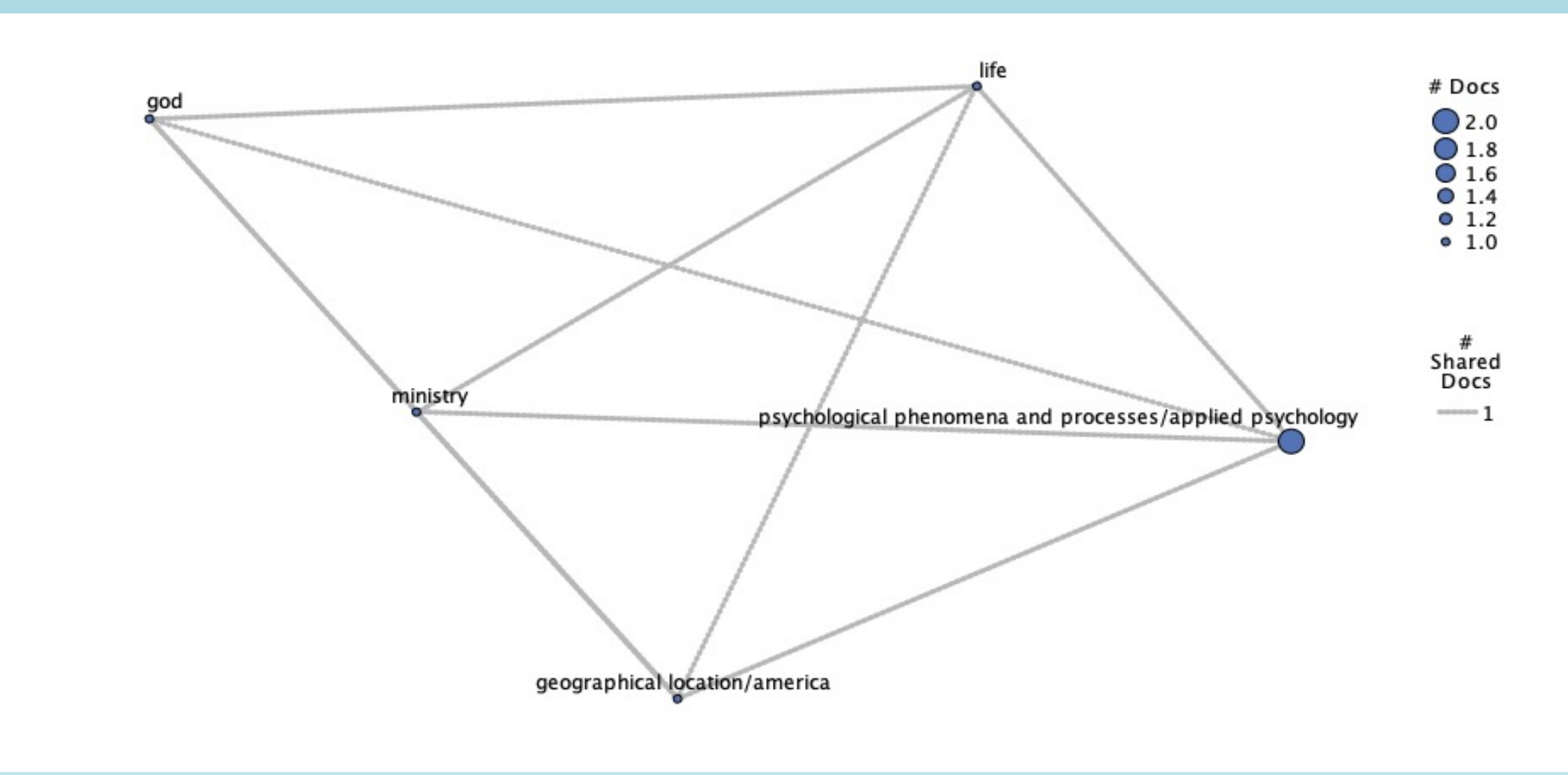


Table 2 Major Concepts by manual coding using MAXQDA		
	Frequency	Percentage
relationship	108	22.5
faith	90	18.75
slowing down	75	15.63
attitudes	59	12.29
reflection	50	10.42
passion for people	48	10
culture	43	8.96
mission and advocacy	37	7.71
vocational impact	33	6.88
integration	32	6.67

## Discussion

Through analysis of student responses using the two analytical tools, we discovered the various impacts of the reintegration course on student development. “Relationship” proves to be a salient concept in both analyses. Students reported how living in their respective study away contexts (e.g., Ecuador and South Africa) has allowed them to value and be intentional in cultivating relationships with people, whether people they already know or strangers. They would like to sustain this new value and behavior in their university context back in the U.S.

Another concept has to do with the Christian faith. Students reported how the course allowed them to process how their faiths have been challenged, strengthened, and affirmed as a result of their study away experiences as they encountered new cultures and new people.

Through human coding in MAXQDA, we observe that over 16% of the students described how studying away has caused them to appreciate the value of a slower life pace and of valuing people more than tasks. Although this concept did not emerge in text analytics in SPSS IBM Modeler as one of the most frequently mentioned concepts, concepts closely related to it like “time,” “people,” and “relationship” all illustrate its importance. Finally, not surprisingly, “culture” emerged as an important concept in both analyses. Students reflected on the importance of experiencing, understanding, and respecting other cultures. Although not a frequently mentioned idea, students also articulated how deeply experiencing another culture caused them to respect the U.S. culture.

## Limitations

This research intends to discover the impact of a reintegration course on study away students’ development in multiple dimensions. However, in their responses, because study away was such an impactful and memorable experience, most students inevitably mixed the study away experience and the re-integration course experience. Therefore, it is difficult to conclude definitively that any student development was a result of the course. Exceptions do exist, where some students specifically articulated that without the re-integration course, they would not have processed or integrated the new ideas or behaviors the way they did.