

CROSS CULTURAL INTERACTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the cross cultural interactions of international students in college, and how those cross cultural interactions affect them as students. Specifically, this study focused on the ways in which international students interacted with cultures different than their own; their expectations of cultural interactions prior to attending college, and how cross cultural interactions at college impacted them as students. This study was exploratory in nature and sought to gather qualitative and quantitative information through group interviews, written narratives and an initial study survey.

The study was conducted on the campus of a Midwestern, medium-sized institution. Research participants were international students that had been enrolled at the institution for more than one semester. Results from the study indicated that cross cultural interactions of international students occur often, and are often surprising to the individual. Cross cultural interactions affected students academically, socially and psychologically.

Keywords: international students, culture shock, college students

Chapter One: Introduction

Statement of Problem

Higher education is often depicted as the realm in which our country sculpts its best to lead tomorrow (Piper, Dryden-Peterson, & Kim, 2006). Interestingly enough, students from countries all over the world make their way to the U.S. in order to be educated as well. Approximately 20,550,000 international students were enrolled in American institutions of higher education as of 2011 (Institute of International Education, 2011). The presence of international students on U.S. college campuses brings many benefits. Their “outside” perspectives broaden the marketplace of ideas, their cultural identities enrich the college community, and their academic ambition helps to increase the prestige of whatever institution to which they choose to belong (Piper et al., 2006). But beyond the benefits that international students bring to any university, they are people. In particular, they are a population of students with unique experiences, struggles, needs and desires that directly impact their success in college.

With international students, the advantage of being from a different country often goes hand in hand with a mysteriousness about their inner lives to the outside community. Connections to home countries, evolving perceptions of American culture, feelings of homesickness or internal struggles of identity often go unspoken due to cultural customs that tend to internalize personal issues for the sake of the community (Moore & Constantine, 2005). However, understanding the lives of international students

is imperative to moving towards a truly globalized outlook in education, and creating an environment that is conducive to positive and transformative learning for both domestic and international students (Kauffmann, Martin, & Weaver, 1992).

This research sought to discover the ways cross cultural interactions happen to international students in college, and how those cross cultural interactions affect them as students. Specifically, this study focused on the ways in which international students interacted with cultures different from their own; their expectations of cultural interactions prior to attending college, and how cross cultural interactions at college impacted them as students. This study was exploratory in nature and sought to gather qualitative and quantitative information through group interviews, written narratives and an initial study questionnaire.

Background of Research

The genesis of this research stems from my established connection to the international student population at the institution of study, and a continual curiosity to find out more about their experience as students. During the past three years as an Assistant Complex Director in the Office of Residence Life, I served as a voluntary liaison to the International Student's Association (ISA). This liaison position was a departmental initiative to make connections between the Office of Residence Life and students from traditionally unrepresented backgrounds. As a liaison, my duty was to build a rapport with the students involved with ISA, attend weekly ISA meetings, support ISA

events through attendance and promotion around campus, and to be a resource to both ISA general members and executive board members. Through this liaison position, I began building relationships with International Students, and becoming part of the international student community. Becoming familiar with the community allowed me to see that there was so much about these students I did not know. I did not know what life was like for them outside the comfort of the ISA community. I did not know how or what they were learning while attending college in the U.S. I did not know what life was like for them being surrounded by those who are culturally different from themselves. Although these thoughts always surfaced during my time in ISA, I never thought there was a way I could actually find answers to my questions about this unique population.

In the summer of 2011, I was asked by the university's Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs to participate in a project about the campus' international student population. College administrators desired to learn more about the lives of international students on campus, and more specifically how they connected their experiences as international students to their overall learning while in college. Through much collaborative planning, I designed an initial, institution specific exploratory research project to learn more about the lives of International Students. The research was to take place during the Spring 2012 academic semester. Students voluntarily choosing to participate in the research would take part in five group interviews throughout the semester, each session covering a specific area of student learning and engagement. The five areas are: 1) Cross Cultural Interactions 2) Sense of Community 3) Personal Identity

4) Expression of Culture and 5) Taking the University Home. This thesis aims to focus exclusively on the *first* area of student learning and engagement; thus the cross cultural interactions of college international students.

Purpose of Research

This research took a closer look into the sometimes “mysterious” lives of international students by learning about their cross cultural interactions. The review of literature illustrates that although there is much research about international students residing both in the United States and abroad, very little research pertains specifically to the cross cultural interactions of international students. Garrod and Davis (1999) pointed this out stating, “What has rarely been studied, is the developmental trajectory of the hybrid, multicultural self” (p. xiv). Cross cultural interactions are the vehicles in which an international student develops into a multicultural self (Garrod & Davis, 1999).

Understanding the student experience for any population is essential to discovering where, how and why true learning happens. What this study discovered was that the cross cultural interactions of international students was integrated into every facet of student life, and thus imperative to understand in order to better understand the international student experience.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

The first section of this review of literature explains development of international education in American higher education. The second section provides research findings on topics related to the current study including American students studying abroad and study abroad experiences when neither the student nor host country is connected to the United States.

The idea of international education has existed as long as nations themselves. The desire for knowledge from abroad has become formalized in the system of post-secondary education (Piper, Dryden-Peterson, & Kim, 2006). The concept of students coming to the United States to study have existed for centuries, but the formal development of curriculum, institutional departments and programs supporting international education are relatively new. The United States instituted its first globalized exchange program, the Fulbright Program in 1946. It was a merit-based scholarship program for international student exchange. The Fulbright Program was and continues to be a prestigious award, providing 8,000 government grants annually (Greenfield, 1990).

The concept of international higher education has evolved over the past 70 years. Greenfield (1990) explains the broadening of the term in his own study:

Today the concept of international education has been broadened to include government relations programs, promotion of mutual understanding between

nations, educational assistance to underdeveloped regions, cross cultural education and international communication (p. 5).

Greenfield (1990) included cross cultural education into the broadened definition of international education. This sets the stage to substantiate that cross cultural interactions are an important part of gaining a true international education. Cross cultural interactions in the context of international education can occur in a multitude of learning environments. Perhaps the most valuable to the individual and to the community of learners is studying abroad. Greenfield (2003) explains it best saying, “The experience of studying abroad is, quite simply, matchless. There are experiences that cannot be replicated or enhanced on the campuses of our most storied universities” (p.53).

The experiences of students who study abroad are unique to the individual and the institution. However, much research has been done to learn about the thoughts, experiences and outcomes of studying abroad. Success studying abroad depends greatly on the time spent abroad. Results from one study indicated that “when students stay abroad for only a short time, they experience minimal impact and few personal changes...optimal length of stay may be six to twelve months” (Kauffmann, Martin, & Weaver, 1992, p. 62). This implies that transformative student learning happens when extended time allows students to act, react and reflect on their accumulation of interactions.

Succeeding academically is essential to studying abroad. According to Speck and Carimical (2002), factors for academic success of international students include, "...language proficiency, learning strategies and classroom dynamics" (p. 18). Language proficiency is necessary especially when classes are not offered to be spoken in one's native language. This is more prominent in American schools, where it is rare for classes other than language learning are taught in anything but English (Kelly & Moogan, 2012). Learning strategies must often change when studying abroad because the classroom dynamics are different. In more collectivist countries, there is often a greater power distance between teacher and student that manifests less student participation. Depending on the classroom, students may be expected to work together or work alone. Cultural sensitivity to time affects length of class times, deadlines and academic rigor. Students studying abroad must adapt new learning strategies in order to be academically successful in a new learning environment (Piper, Dryden-Peterson, & Kim, 2006).

Academic success is just one aspect of learning while studying abroad. Students abroad no matter the destination or origin encounter similar experiences in terms of social exchanges, identity challenges, personal development and cross cultural interactions. Research suggests that students who have a positive experience possess an initial openness to learn (Speck & Carmical, 2002). In one qualitative study, an American student studying abroad in France had a negative experience. Researchers perceived her as being "Immature and suspicious, she resisted personal growth" (Kauffmann, Martin, & Weaver, 1992, p. 12). Upon arrival, many students experience a transition period from

one culture to the next. One study found that a transition period can be lengthy, up to one year depending on the student (Kelly & Moogan, 2012). This transition period comes from a student's inability to behave and learn in his or her new environment. Even after a typical transition period has passed, there are still adjustments that must be made internally and externally to navigate in a new cultural environment. Making social connections is essential to truly immersing in the host culture. A study done by Latif, Bhatti, Nazar, and Shaikh (2012) looking at international students in Australia and New Zealand spoke extensively about the difficulties Asian international students had interacting with Australian-New Zealanders. "These factors included language barriers, cultural clashes, their own pre-formed negative attitudes and perceptions, and their own tendency to feel more comfortable with people with whom they have things in common" (p. 38). These factors illustrate that students studying abroad do not come into the experience blindly or without bias. Negative preconceived notions or initial experiences can create an environment where cross cultural interactions are not wanted.

Difficulties from transitioning and cross-cultural interactions do not necessarily doom students to a joyless experience. Many students who study abroad found a strengthened sense of maturity. Another American student who travelled to France gained much from the experience stating, "I realized I was capable of doing more than I thought I was...I got more self-confidence" (Kauffmann, Martin, & Weaver, 1992, p. 22). Students also gained a greater understanding of cultural identity. When students truly immerse themselves into another culture, they enter into a new set of ideas, assumptions,

beliefs and values (Kauffmann et al., 1992). Studying abroad also adds value to the institution of which students choose to return. This cultural capital provides students with a competitive edge to enter into an increasingly globalized job market.

Despite research conducted on international students all around the world, studies specific to the cross cultural interactions of international students in the U.S. established a clearer picture of the context, importance and framework for the current study. A study from Garrod & Davis (1999) explored the experiences of 13 international students through written narratives. The cross cultural interactions of these students are intense and varied. Many students encountered struggles within their cross-cultural interactions. One student from Trinidad said that he encountered “this constant, oppressive expectation that I...should unquestionably embrace things American” (p. 238). Differences in cultural values and behavior customs were most prominent due to the fact that often times they are invisible until immersed in a new environment (Kelly & Moogan, 2012). Another student from India faced bigotry from roommates. He talks about being invisible to those he lived with stating “In the room...there was no human being, no feelings to hurt, no intellect that mattered” (Garrod & Davis, 1999, p. 113). However, another student from Malaysia found liberation in lack of traditional gender role customs unlike her home country. Another student from Bulgaria had generally positive experiences noting that he easily made friends upon entering college (Garrod & Davis, 1999). No matter the experiences, all students found that studying abroad was a transformative learning experience. One student explained that “by integrating two cultures, you learn more about yourself, about

the people that surround you, and about the world in general” (Garrod & Davis, 1999, p. 189). This shows that college students studying abroad understand the great impact that cross cultural interactions can have on their learning and overall experience as students.

Studies found pertaining to the cross cultural interactions of international students in the U.S. explored the psychological processing of students. Interestingly, many research articles were found in journals of psychology or counseling rather than education. One such study conducted by Wei, Liao, Heppner, Chao, and Ku (2012) looked at the forbearance coping mechanisms used by Chinese international students. According to the research, Chinese students use forbearance as a coping mechanism because in collectivistic cultures (like the Chinese), “people are often encouraged to sacrifice themselves, endure their distress, and put others’ needs first” (p. 98). Another study by Moore and Constantine (2005) about the coping mechanisms of international students shows that international students from more collectivistic cultures like that in Asian, African, and Latin American cultures use forbearance and seeking social support to try and mediate the shock of cross-cultural interactions. These studies are relevant because it confirms that international students are affected psychologically and developmentally by their cross cultural interactions.

The most related study to current research completed by Zhao, Kuh, and Carini (2005) explores the student engagement and educational practices of international students. The study results reported that most international students experience some

degree of culture shock when they arrive the the U.S., similar to the transitioning period found in other studies. Speaking of the types of cross cultural interactions, the study states that “international students may use technology instead of talking directly to peers or instructors to avoid embarrassing exchanges created by language barriers and unfamiliarity with cultural idioms” (p. 223). To confirm the great extent of growth that happens to students who study abroad, the study also reports that “...in the area of personal and social development and general education gains, international students report making more progres than American students do” (p. 224).

The review of literature illustrates that the study of international students in the United States is not new, but quite important to understanding a unique and valuable population of college students. The cross cultural interactions of international students is foundational to their experience as individuals in a new environment, and as learners. Understanding the types, frequency and outcomes of those experiences can only benefit those who educate college students.

Content Summary

Chapter two includes the review of literature for the current study. The review of literature explains the background of international education in the US, the experienes of students studying abroad, and previous research relating to cross cultural interactions of international students in the U.S.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Procedure

Design of Study

This is an exploratory research study with the primary goal of better understanding the cross cultural interactions of international students. Results of data analysis may also show colleges how they can collaborate with students, faculty and staff to help shape and maximize the international student learning experience.

The design of the study was created as collaboration between the researcher and the Division of Student Affairs. The researcher designed this research to be exploratory. It was not created to solve a problem within the international student community, but rather to get a better picture of what the international student community actually looked like. After searching previous research conducted about international students in the U.S., the researcher decided that the area of cross cultural interactions would be foundational to understanding of how international students live as members of the college community. From this theme of cross cultural interactions, research questions were created that would guide students to disclose varied experiences.

The data for this research was both qualitative and quantitative in nature. Research participants completed an initial two-page questionnaire to gain a foundational understanding of their perspective on cross cultural interactions. Then research participants were asked to answer four interview questions in writing. Lastly research participants engaged in a semi-structured group interview to answer the same four

questions verbally. Several methods of data collection were chosen to increase the likelihood of participation for such a diverse population of students.

Site

The study was conducted at a Midwestern medium-sized institution. The institution is a residential and coeducational university. There are 41 countries represented at the institution.

Participants

The criteria for participants excluded international students who have been enrolled at the institution for less than two semesters. Participants were a voluntary subset of students who are affiliated with university's Center for Global Education through their admission, enrollment and acclimation process on campus. Choosing not to participate or withdrawing from this study did not make any difference in their involvement with a campus department as a student worker, organizational leader, or any other capacity in your university affiliation.

Ninety-nine International undergraduate and graduate students were contacted via e-mail to participate in the study. Thirty students responded. Twenty-four students completed the Cultural Immersions Initial Survey. A total of four students participated in the qualitative portion of the study. All four participated in the group interview, and one of the four participated through written narrative in addition to group interviews. The four students who were interviewed in person created pseudonyms to protect their identity.

Their names are John, Brisky, Ariadne and C.D. John is a one-year exchange student from Tokyo Japan. He has been at the current institution since August 2011. He is involved on campus with International Students' Association (ISA). John has a mix of American and International friends. He has travelled to other places in the United States during his stay, which has expanded his understanding of American culture. Throughout the interview, John seems to have an overall positive experience as an Exchange student. Brisky is a degree seeking student from Hong Kong in the Republic of China. Brisky came to the United States in high school as an international student and attended the a larger state institution before transferring to the current institution. Because of this, Brisky shares many of his observations of Americans and experiences acclimating to America. The third student interviewed is Ariadne. Ariadne is a junior status student from Ecuador. She is heavily involved on campus in a paid student leadership position and as an ISA executive board member. She came to the university as a degree seeking student, attending a college in Ecuador before coming to the United States. Ariadne speaks of many struggles interacting with domestic students, especially in her roles as a student leader on campus. Ariadne shows a high level of academic motivation and shows much pride about being Ecuadorian. The last student that participated in the group interviews is C.D. She is a degree seeking junior from Venezuela. C.D. She came to the United States to live with her father in Chicago during high school. C.D. transferred to the university from another state university within the state. C.D. has had an overall positive experience at college, but shares many stories of culture shock in the United States in general. In the

past, C.D. has visited Venezuela often, but has been unable to in the recent past due to political unrest in the country.

The Researcher's Role

I had three primary functions throughout the collection of the data. I designed the study including the interview questions and questionnaire. The researcher recruited all research participants. I coordinated and communicated all small discussion group times and locations. And I recorded, analyzed and reported data. In order to recruit research participants, I had to explain the many benefits of participating in the study. I created a rapport with students in order for them to feel comfortable enough to share their true opinions and experiences. I needed to learn the personal schedules of participants and create meeting times that were accessible to all participants. I followed up with students before and after group interviews in order to check availability and insure participation. I needed to secure instruments for data collection, storing and analyzing. Then I served as the sole reporter of the study results.

Instrument

Two instruments were used for data collection. The first is the Cultural Immersions Initial Survey (see Appendix A). The survey was created by the researcher. The Cultural Immersions Initial Survey contained four demographic questions and 26 questions related to students' personal opinions. The 26 questions are formatted to a multiple choice five-point Likert-type scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to

“Strongly Agree”. Participants were not required to answer all questionnaire questions. The second instrument was the compilation of questions used for the group interviews. This included four open ended questions that can be seen in Appendix B.

Data Collection

An e-mail was sent out to approximately ninety-nine international students currently enrolled at the university inviting them to participate in the study. Thirty students responded to the e-mail seeking interest in the study. An initial group session was held to introduce everyone, explain the study, gather availability times for meetings, sign consent forms, and complete the Cultural Immersions Initial Survey. Six students attended this initial group session. Four additional students that were not able to attend the initial group session turned in consent forms and the Cultural Immersions Initial Survey on their own.

Two separate group interviews were created to accommodate the research participants' schedule. Two male students attended the first small group discussion. These students were John and Brisky. A digital voice recorder was used to capture the conversation, and the researcher was taking paper notes of observations. The first group session lasted approximately one hour, two minutes. The second discussion group had two students as well, Ariadne and C.D. No digital voice recorder was available due to financial constraints, so the researcher transcribed the conversation by hand. This second group discussion lasted approximately one hour and twenty minutes. The collection of

data included many correspondences with research participants via e-mail, in person and through Facebook. These correspondences included questions people had about the time length of the study, communication from participants that they would not be able to attend, and questions from participants about the time and place of group interviews. The following is the list of questions asked during the group interviews:

1. At this institution students have the opportunity to meet different kinds of people from all over the world. What kind of cross cultural immersions were you looking for when you came to this university (if any at all?)
2. In what ways have you engaged with other cultures different from yourself?
3. What experience(s) was most powerful to you and why?
4. Are there any experiences that were unexpected? If so, please explain.

Although the questions are the essential questions for the interview, follow-up questions were permissible to gather further clarification.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data collection from interviews and written answers were coded into different themes that surfaced throughout the narrative or interview. The frequency of different themes were added to show the percentage of a particular theme in relation to the entire conversation. Quantitative data was coded as well. Questions were coded into different themes and analyzed to find various comparisons, correlations and outliers in the findings.

Definition of Terms

There are several terms that need to be defined in order to truly understand the nature of the study. *International Student(s)* has several different meanings throughout this paper. When speaking of International Students in general (at the institution and around U.S.) the term refers to any individual enrolled at an American college or university who is not originally from the United States. This includes undergraduate, graduate and doctoral students, exchange students, degree seeking students, students who may have attended an American middle or high school before entering higher education, students who have attended more than one American college, or students who have dual citizenship. This does not include American students who have studied abroad. Research Participants criteria excluded international students who have been enrolled at the institution for less than two semesters; mostly new transfer students. This study requires reflection from students who have had elongated experience at this university; thus a stay of two semesters or more at the institution is desired for participation. *International Students Association* is a student organization at the institution welcome to all International Students and American students with an interest in international affairs. *Cross Cultural Interaction* is any interface with a person(s) that has a different culture from one's own. In the context of the research this can relate closely to national identity such as common behaviors, mannerisms, cultural assumptions and relationships.

Content Summary

This chapter explains the methodology and the procedures for the thesis research. The design of the study is explained. Background about the research site is provided. Participants of the research are introduced in detail to provide context for the results of the qualitative portion. Data instruments, collection and analysis are clarified.

Chapter Four: Results

The Results for this study are both Qualitative and Quantitative. For the qualitative portion, the results will show the ways students have cross cultural interactions on campus, and how those cross cultural interactions affect them as students. The quantitative results will display the analysis of the Cultural Immersions Initial Survey. Specific results can be found in Appendix C.

Qualitative Results

Four interview questions were asked of all participants. Questions were posed to participants during interviews. However, follow-up questions were often times asked to clarify an idea or a story. Both answers to interview questions as well as commentary not directly answering interview questions but still relevant to the research are displayed.

The first question asked was, “At this university students have the opportunity to meet different kinds of people from all over the world. What kind of cross cultural immersion were you looking for when you came to this university (if any at all)?” John spoke of his expectations of immersing in American culture. His unfamiliarity with the ethnic diversity in America changed his expectation of experiencing what he perceived to be typical American culture. John states, “before I came here I was not familiar with the fact that like America is a multicultural country...I expected to experience American culture”. John stated that to his surprise there were people from all over the world living in this town. He noted that it was a “big difference from my expectation”.

Brisky's answer expressed more hesitance towards moving to his current institution due to his previous experience at more diverse institutions. He was not looking forward to encountering a strong American culture stating, "I was not looking forward to cross cultural [interactions] because Americans were dominant". This illustrated that Brisky's initial resistance towards cross cultural interactions were because of his preconceived notions of the culture of the current institution. He added later that he liked having a super diverse community and did not want to encounter a dominant American culture.

Ariadne's answer was quite brief stating her educational focus. She said, "I didn't think of culture, only educative side. I was 20 years old when I came here. I was already in college back home. This was a big life changing decision. I was pursuing an engineering degree in Ecuador." Ariadne was unique compared to the other three participants due to the fact that she expressed no expectation of cross cultural interactions prior to attending college in America. The fact that she did not think about cross cultural interactions at all may very well have had just as strong of an impact as someone who did think about cross cultural interactions.

C.D. answered the question indirectly and spoke more of her arrival to the United States rather than her entrance into college specifically. She also expresses hesitance and negative thoughts towards her expectation of interacting in America. This is due in large part to her strong emotional connection to Venezuela.

I was living with my dad in the U.S., coming [to America] wasn't my decision. I didn't like it at all. Now I understand why I was sent here, but I don't have the same things as I did back home. I can't have all I want here, and I think about it when I get overwhelmed. I always had everything back home.

C.D. referred to the comfort she had back in Venezuela. She continued to speak about the friends, the family, and financial security that were taken away when she moved to America. However, C.D. was able to reflect on her experience and state that she understood why she was sent to America.

The second question asked in what ways have you engaged with cultures different from yourself. This question created multiple and varied responses from each individual. Both John and Brisky stated that they have had “tons” of cross cultural interactions. John first confirmed that he has in fact engaged with cultures different from his own including “people from all over the world. Not just people from like South America but Europe, then some other Asia[n] [countries] like India and Middle Eastern [countries]”. Then John continued to explain a specific experience he had with a culture he initially perceived to be different than his own.

I found Finnish people similar to Japanese people in terms of personality and behavior so it was like [an] eye opening experience to me...we were always hanging out...they are different than typical European people... they are always

aware of how other people think. They are not only expressing their opinion. They think about others feel. That's a big similarity to my country.

John's experience with the Finnish students showed that the cross cultural interactions of international students do not just occur with American students. Cross cultural interactions with other international students have the potential to be transformative and positive experience for international students. Brisky also spoke of several experiences engaging with cultures different than his own. He first interacted with a population of Hmong people living in the nearby area. Brisky stated, "the first summer I stayed with Hmong people. They're like super community based and everybody lived there. And they speak Hmong to each other." Brisky has interacted with more Asian cultures different than his own. Throughout his college experience, Brisky interacted with many Thai people. He said:

I lived with a lot of Thai people because I like them. I have a Thai roommate and every day we hang out. They are very cool. [They are] very very nice people, never hurt anyone. Super polite. [Thai people are] very different than all other cultures.

Brisky expressed that his most prominent memories of cross cultural interactions often occurred with people of non-American cultures.

Ariadne spoke of her experiences as a student leader to express interacting with cultures different from her. Interestingly, both she and C.D. verbalized their interactions with different cultures through comparing and contrasting other cultures to their own. Unlike John or Brisky, Ariadne spoke exclusively about her cross cultural interactions with Americans.

Americans feel like that you need to belong. We don't need that reassurance. Here people really try hard to be a part of the group. According to this study, Ecuador is the number 2 most collectivist country. We don't feel the need to belong because we already do. For example, plagiarism is not a big deal in Ecuador. It is here very much. We don't care about clothing brands or copyright so we can buy brands that are really the real things and it's not a big deal. Plagiarism, we don't have that at all. Another thing is personal space, that doesn't exist in our vocabulary. People have personal space, I can't violate people's personal space, and it's a problem if they invade my personal space. I should be concerned about that person if they do.

Ariadne's response illustrated the many differences that she discovered through cross cultural interactions. She understood that the sense of community in America was completely different from Ecuador, and this created cross cultural interactions that were difficult for her deal with.

C.D. explained her interactions with other cultures through showing the difference between a Venezuelan and American cultural custom. Like Ariadne, C.D.'s cross cultural interactions are exclusive to American culture.

[in Venezuela] we kiss to greet people, but it's not like that here. Here you just say "hey" [puts up hand], "what's up". It's less personal. In Venezuela, you look people in the eye when they're walking and they say hi. Here people look down to the ground.

Ariadne added to C.D.'s comments about American culture by saying:

Americans are 'nice people', but they avoid conflict not for the other person, but to not complicate their own lives. In Ecuador, there's more loyalty.

Both Ariadne and C.D. explained that their past interactions with Americans have led them to shy away from building real relationships with American students. C.D. states that "Relationships here are really superficial. Friends here in America are more individualistic, friends don't follow through. They are really into themselves." Ariadne explains why it is difficult to have relationships with Americans saying, "I am friends with other people from Latin America or Latin Americans. It's very difficult to have relationships because of things that seem irrelevant, but they're important." Cultural differences that seem difficult to overcome have directly affected their perceptions of Americans as well as their willingness to engage in further cross cultural interactions.

Ariadne expressed another struggle in cross cultural interactions in her role as a student leader. Despite negative experiences with her American peers, Ariadne expresses that she wants their interactions with her to be educational for them as students.

People will ride you off because you have an accent. That's what happened to ...but I told my [students] you should be happy I have an accent. That way you know I can help you with something that you don't know.

The third question asked "What experience(s) was most powerful to you and why?" All four participants had very different answers, some positive experiences and some negative. John recalled a more negative experience that has impacted his stay at college in America. John explains:

My biggest experience is when I promise[d] something with American friends I feel a difference in the sense of community. In my culture the community comes first. We don't want to break relationships with others. We are kind of afraid of that. But people here, if they don't want to do that they just don't [even] if it harms the relationship with others...last week I promised my American friends to go to Madison to see a band and I was really looking forward to it. But he cancelled it on the day last minute...the reason why was just he didn't feel like it. So with him I'm too afraid to do that because it would harm the relationship but he did that so it's the biggest experience.

When John was asked if this kind of experience occurred often he answered “Yeah, yeah I experience it often. A couple of times.” When asked if he had ever told his American friend that he felt this way, John laughed and replied “No”. John noted that this experience was the most powerful for him, yet he did not disclose it to anyone before this time. However, John says these differences in cultural values have not changed his values stating, “In terms of that I don’t really change. I still think community is more important.” John’s experience is a cultural shock that affected him socially, but did not affect his own cultural identity. This powerful experience showed him how vastly different cultures can be.

Brisky’s most powerful experience was much more of an internal struggle, not dependent on how others treated him on campus. Brisky stated his most powerful experience was the personal transition of becoming independent. America’s individualistic culture caused Brisky to need to adjust his behavior in order to be successful at school. Brisky explained as follows:

In my culture we always depend on our parents, depend on our teachers. If you want to join a club the teacher will persuade you to join the club. You don’t have to do anything. Here if you want to join the club you have to find the information, you have to do it. It’s very independent.

The independence that Brisky needed to develop was not limited to extracurricular activities. Brisky explained that everything in his life was more difficult because he had to do it himself.

Like Brisky, Ariadne's most powerful experience was internal. However, what was most powerful to Ariadne seemed a belief rather than an experience. She explained her hope in the promise America held for her future.

I know in my heart that back home I wouldn't use my degree. Here I have hope of a good job. There are people back home that have degrees and are taxi drivers... We don't have enough [resources] for Ecuadorians.

C.D. spoke of a very similar mindset about America that was most powerful to her. C.D. stated:

No matter how low you are, if you work hard you can do anything. In Venezuela, some people can do well, but you have to know people. Poor people have to work really really hard, and some still don't ever not be poor.

C.D. believed that in America, people could have a better life if they worked hard. She did not see this as a possibility in Venezuela. When C.D. was asked if she would ever return to Venezuela she explains the dangers that don't allow her to return.

No, it's not worth it [to go back home]. I have money but my daughters, my children wouldn't be safe. It's really bad because of elections in December. My

mom has money but she can't enjoy it. She can't have a nice car because people kill for shoes, it's not worth it. I go every year and it's not the same as when I was growing up. Everyone hates each other.

C.D. knows that although she may struggle in America, returning home to Venezuela would be much worse. She later stated that all of this really made her sad, and was not an easy reality to live with.

The last interview question asked what experiences were unexpected in the midst of cross cultural interactions. This question exhibited the most numerous answers, from large impactful stories to small cultural cues and mishaps. John provided two experiences that were unexpected for him. The first dealt with his discovery of Japan's image outside of Japan. John said:

For me the people's image towards Japan was so much different than I thought. I thought [people would see] Japan through the economy because Japan is a wealthy country and not really...When I first meet people, people ask about Anime. Almost everyone talks about that.

John was not expecting that people would recognize Japan for its animated cartoons. John's understanding of how Japan is perceived outside of the country shows that culture shock can come from a greater understanding of one's own culture in addition to interfacing with another culture. John's second experience was his own perception of the ethnic diversity in America. John explained:

I thought Hispanic people were more a minority here but I found [the] Hispanic [population to be] bigger than I thought. In terms of language people are bilingual. I thought America was English dominated so I was just surprised by that.

Brisky's unexpected experiences were mixed in tone and emotion. The first experience he spoke of was other's knowledge of his home, Hong Kong. Brisky said, "people don't know where I'm from. I'll tell people I'm from Hong Kong and they'll be like, Hong Kong I know where that is. It's Japan". To further explain himself, Brisky was asked how he felt about people not knowing where he was from. He shared strong feelings as he states:

Annoyed. The first time it was in high school...I said I was from Hong Kong ...my teacher thinks I'm from Japan. Another teacher thinks I'm from Singapore. I was helping with the volleyball team and they gave me a thank you card saying "please bring the Volleyball team spirit to Korea". So that is very unexpected. That's harsh. That's offensive. So when people ask me where I 'm from I like to ask them where they think I'm from first. If you guess wrong it's not that offensive.

Brisky's interactions with people unfamiliar with his culture were shocking and hurtful at first. However, Brisky demonstrated that those experiences changed how he interacted with others in the future. Instead of letting people offend him, he gave them the

opportunity to learn where he is from by guessing. Brisky also expressed his surprise with American cuisine. He said, “I wasn’t expecting that [in] America everything is deep fried. The food culture here is so unexpected...I don’t know what American people eat. I have no idea.” This cultural difference was a shock, but did not have a negative effect on Brisky. He simply noted it as something he had no knowledge of prior to coming to America.

Ariadne spoke of a couple of cultural norms that came as a shock to her when she came to America. First she talked about differences in gender roles. Ariadne said, “Another thing that shocked me was the difference in gender. People fight so hard to be equal here. In Ecuador we fight to be equal intellectually.” She also talked about the paradoxes in American heritage. Ariadne said:

African American people are defensive about their history. They will always ask “are you saying it because I’m black?” Africans have a sense of pride about their history. I suppose it stems from the different histories. People talk about their ethnic heritage. If you ask an American what they are...they will say “I’m 1/8 Polish, 1/4 Irish, 1/4 French and all of that.” But as soon as you say something bad about Irish people or whatever, they don’t claim to be that anymore. They’re not Irish anymore because you have you’re 1/8 French side. They don’t stick up for it.

Ariadne found this cultural difference to be frustrating. She further expressed her whole confusion with Americans’ cultural identity. Ariadne’s recognition of the

differences between American and Ecuadorian cultural identities showed a great deal of insight on her part, and exhibited how deep cultural identity is ingrained in an individual's character.

C.D.'s answer to this question dealt more with cultural customs that she was not used to. Her first response states:

I have a funny one. [In Venezuela] We dress nice every day. But people here wear pajamas in high school and on campus. I have seen someone brush their teeth in the bathroom. It was a HUGE SHOCK to see people blowing their noses in public. You DON'T blow your nose in public.

C.D.'s second response explained her discomfort with the openness of American peers and their private lives. She stated that she was able to know much more about the sexual behaviors of her peers than she would in Venezuela. She explained as follows:

What shocked me was that people were so open about a lot of things. I knew people in Venezuela were gay, but they weren't open about it. I think it's a plus here....and people have sex with a lot of people and they don't care. Americans think of it as a sport. There's no feeling about it.

Ariadne replied with an interesting insight as to why multiple sexual partners in Ecuador is less tolerated. She states that "In Ecuador, people are getting pregnant younger. But we don't have birth control so you *know* who's having sex. But here you

can hide it.” Both Ariadne and C.D. express their perception of Americans by interpreting the various cross cultural interactions they experience.

Quantitative Data

Twenty-four surveys were completed out of 99 that were asked to complete the survey. Contained within this section are the data collected from the 24 completed surveys. The survey instrument utilized in the present study can be found in Appendix A.

Demographic Data. The first four questions of the survey pertain to demographic data about the research participants. Responses to question one indicate that none of the participants were under the age of 18, 33.3% of the participants are between the ages of 18-21, 33.3% of the participants are between the ages of 21-24, and 33.3% of participants are either 24 years old or older. Table 1 displays the responses to demographic question number two that addressed the primary activity of participants prior to attending college. It displays that the majority of participants were in schooling of some kind before attending the current institution.

Table 1

Prior to attending the university, what was your main activity?

Activity	n	%
Studying at secondary school	10	34.5
Full time employment	5	17.2
Studying in graduate school	3	10.3
Preparing in English Learning Program	6	20.7
Studying in undergraduate school at home	3	10.3
Computer training program for one year	1	3.4
Transfer from another U.S. University	1	3.4

*Participants could answer all that apply, so total 'n' does not equal number of participants that completed the survey.

Responses to the third demographic question indicated that 75% of participants had been outside of their home country more than two times prior to attending the university, 4.2% had travelled twice, 8.3% had only travelled once, and 12.5% had never travelled outside their home country. The responses to demographic question number four address the length of time students had been at the institution. Students the completed the survey had a range from seven months to five years. Specific results can be found in Appendix B.

Social interactions. Questions one, two, six, 13, 18, 22 and 23 addressed the social interactions of international students on campus. The responses to question one showed that 54.2% of international students that took the survey claimed to have several American students as friends. The responses to question two displayed that 41.7% of international students that took the survey say that people from their home country are their closest friends and acquaintances. The responses to question six indicate that 70.8% of international students that took the survey are involved in social activities on campus. Responses to question thirteen showed that 33.3% of international students disagree that American students are curious about their home country and culture. Responses to question twenty-two display that 41.7% of international students express that the greatest amount of personal support during their transition to this university has come from students from their home country. Responses to question twenty-three show that 22.7% students either disagree or strongly disagree that American students make them feel welcomed on this campus.

Knowledge of the U.S. Questions 3-5, 14 and 24 addresses knowledge of the U.S. held by international students. Question three indicates that 66.7% of international students that took the survey felt comfortable navigating the U.S. culture. Question four shows that 37.5% either disagree or strongly disagree that they had a strong knowledge of American culture prior to arriving in the U.S. Responses to question five indicate that 41.7% of international students either agree or strongly agree that their ability to communicate in English challenges them when attempting to acclimate to U.S. culture.

Responses to question fourteen indicate that 37.5% disagree that they were familiar with the U.S. higher education system upon arriving to this institution. Responses to question twenty-four indicate that 65.2% of international students that completed the survey either agreed or strongly agreed that they have taken opportunities to experience the entire state beyond the campus.

Academic Life. Survey questions seven and 15-19 address the area of academic life of international students. The responses to question seven indicate that 60.9% of international students that completed this question either agreed or strongly agreed that faculty or staff members helped them with their adjustment and transition to the U.S. The responses to question 15 indicate that 83.3% of international students felt academically prepared when they arrived to the university. The responses to question sixteen indicate that 70.8% of international students expressed facing challenges when adjusting to academics in the U.S. that they did not anticipate. The responses to question 17 exhibit that 87.5% of international students believed the style of teaching American college is different from what they experienced in their home country. Responses to question 18 indicate that 52.9% of international students believed that their level of interaction with instructors at the institution was higher than what they experienced with instructors in their home country. Responses to question 19 indicate that 30.4% of international students that completed the survey either disagree or strongly disagree that faculty and staff have sought out their cultural perspective on issues.

Psychological. Questions nine, 20, 25-26 address the psychological effects of cross cultural interactions for international students. Responses to question nine indicate that 45.9% of international students feel a sense of belonging at the institution. Responses to question twenty indicate that 43.5% of international students either disagree or strongly disagree that they felt isolated at the institution. Responses to question 25 display that 78.3% of international students either agree or strongly agree that their college experience has increased their understanding of their own culture. Responses to question 26 shows that 78.3% of international students believed their college experience increased their self-confidence.

Campus Perceptions. Questions 8,11,12, and 21 address the perceptions of campus held by international students. The responses to question eight indicate that 62.5% (n=15) of international students have used campus resources or programs for personal support. Responses to question 11 indicate that 37.5% (n= 9) of international students either disagreed or strongly disagreed that there is strong commitment to racial/ethnic harmony on campus. Responses to question 12 indicate that only 33.3% of international students either agreed or strongly agreed that the university shows concern for international students as individuals. Responses to question 21 indicate that 77.3% of international students expressed that they could easily get involved in campus organizations.

Content Summary

Contained within Chapter four are the results of the study. This includes demographic data of participants and responses to each question from the initial questionnaire. Qualitative data is included from the group interview sessions.

Chapter Five: Conclusion, Discussion, and Suggestions for Future

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the cross cultural interactions of international students on a college campus, and how these interactions have impacted their lives as students. The factors studied were level of peer interaction, knowledge of U.S. prior to arriving at the university, frequency of travelling outside home country and motivation for attending the university. Using the data obtained from 24 questionnaires, four group interviews and two written narratives, results have been categorized by theme to provide a holistic view of the research findings. This chapter includes the significance of the study, discussion of results, limitations of the study, conclusions of the research, and suggestions for future research.

Discussion

According to the data, international students have a preconceived notion of their experience at college before arriving to the U.S. These expectations prior to attending college are relevant to their cross cultural interactions while at college because it foreshadows students' willingness and ability to interact before they actually arrive. As seen in the qualitative data, their reason for coming to college in the U.S. greatly impacted their expectations. Ariadne, Brisky and C.D. all expressed some type of hesitation towards immersing themselves culturally in the U.S. Ariadne's interests were strictly academic. She said, "I didn't think of culture, only educative side." Ariadne's exclusively academic mindset could be shared by many international students, as all but

five international students were in school of some type before attending college. C.D. had a unique circumstance because although it was not her choice to come to America, it was very much her choice to attend this specific institution. Because of this she expressed positive expectations about attending college, but more negative comments about her immersions in American life. Perceptions of American people also influenced what students thought their experience would be like in college. Both Brisky and John shared that much of their own perceptions of Americans came from the media. John explains his understanding of the American population saying “Before I came here I was not familiar with the fact that like America is a multicultural country, like many ethnicities people...” Brisky jokingly explained that he thought “Every guy is like six feet tall and white and blonde”. A third issue that determined what students expected before attending college was their level of knowledge about the U.S. Although the majority of international students had travelled outside of their home country more than twice before attending the university, less than 40% of claimed to have a strong knowledge of U.S. culture prior to entering the U.S. During group interviews, more than one student spoke about their ignorance of U.S. culture. Some, like Ariadne did not think of culture. Others like John spoke of their unfamiliarity with it. John stated “I expected to experience American culture, but I don’t know...what is American culture exactly?” Despite uncertainties students expressed about attending college, most students felt very academically prepared to attend this institution. In fact, over 80% of students responded on the questionnaire that they felt academically prepared upon arriving to the U.S.

Culture shock was a theme that surfaced when researching about the cross cultural interactions of International Students. All four group interview participants spoke of one or more experiences in which they were surprised by the cultural interaction. Cultural customs and values were an area of much culture shock. C.D. speaks of personal hygiene explaining, “It was a HUGE SHOCK to see people blowing their noses in public. You DON’T blow your nose in public!” She and Ariadne went on further to explain that anything having to do with bodily grooming is taboo in their homes of Ecuador and Venezuela. Food was another area of culture shock. Students did not anticipate the “fried foods” or the amount of “Mexican food” that was common in America. Culture shock also came from startling differences in national values. Three out of the four interview participants expressed the very individualistic nature of American culture comparative to their own culture. Ariadne expressed that the individualism of Americans causes them to starve for community, stating, “Americans feel like that you need to belong. We don’t need that reassurance. Here people really try to be part of the group. We don’t feel the need to belong because we already do.” John speaks the stark difference between Japanese and American culture saying “In my culture community comes first....But people here if they don’t want to do that they just don’t.” As inferred through results of the data, experiences of culture shock a unique phenomenon because it permeates all areas of campus life and can occur without warning.

The cross cultural interactions of international students have affected them psychologically in many ways. These experiences have challenged their identity, sense of

self and ability to adapt in a foreign environment. Participants of the study expressed an increased sense of independence from being an international student in college. As stated in the results, this transition into independent living was most powerful for Brisky. C.D. expresses a similar viewpoint explaining that “I don’t have the same things as I did back home.” Ariadne expresses that her independent lifestyle has made her more cautious. She says that she has to be more careful “Especially if you are here for a long time.” Fortunately, the sense of independence has not developed into a sense of isolation for most students. Responses to questionnaire question 20 indicated that only 17.5% of international students felt isolated in college. The sense of independence that comes from being an international student may actually cause a boost in self-esteem. Responses to question 25 show that 87% of international students reported that their college experience has increased their self-confidence. Cross cultural interactions have also challenged their sense of identity. Some students although faced with an opposing viewpoint chose to stick with the values of their home country. John explains that in terms of a sense of community “I haven’t really changed.” Ariadne and C.D. both expressed a sense of favor for the ways of their home country as opposed to American customs. Questionnaire results support a heightened self-awareness by showing that 78.3% of international students expressed that their college experience has increased their understanding of their own culture.

The qualitative results were completed by twenty four of the ninety nine international students eligible to participate in this study. These twenty four students may

not be representative of the entire population of international students enrolled for at least two semesters for a number of reasons. First, not all countries are represented with just the twenty four respondents. There are 41 countries represented at the institution, so at maximum only a little more than half of the countries represented on campus are included in the survey results. This leaves out the perspectives of many different educational systems, cultural identities, cultural customs and experiences unique to a particular nationality. The results may not be representative because of nature of voluntary participation. Many students who took the survey had a connection to the International Student's Association (ISA), and were thus involved on campus in some capacity. This could skew the results and make international students seem more satisfied with the institution than what may actually be the case if all ninety-nine students completed the survey.

Conclusions

The cross cultural interactions of international students are not a series of isolated incidents, but a culmination of interpersonal exchanges that create an entire collegiate experience. However, concrete conclusions can be drawn from the results of this study. First, international students often come to college for the educational experience. Their cross cultural interactions are often seen as an uncalculated yet beneficial byproduct of studying in America. Students do interact with American students, but most often their closest friends and acquaintances are not American students. They are either students from their home country, or other international students. The cross cultural interactions

that international students experience are often times difficult and marginalizing. However, this does not mean that they feel isolated at the university. The cross cultural interactions of international students on campus although difficult, can often be beneficial in the long run. Students are more aware of their own nationality, and have greater self-confidence. Lastly, international students understand that they can learn from cross cultural interactions. Many preconceived notions they had of American life and culture have been changed as they expand their experiential pool while at college.

Limitations

There were several limitations of the study that affected the outcome of the research. The greatest limitation was the number of participants in all three data sources. A larger participant pool would have given a more holistic view of campus life in group interviews, and made the questionnaire results more generalizable to the entire institution's international student population. Another limitation in relation to the number of participants were the number of countries represented from data results. Participants from four continents including North America, Europe, Africa and Australia were missing. This leaves a large gap of unknown information from many countries represented at the university. Another limitation was the fact that not all 24 participants that took the questionnaire completed every question. There are seven questions that only 23 participants answered, and two questions that only 22 participants answered. The last limitation was the transcribing of one group interview session. One of the group interview sessions was recorded by hand rather than a digital recorder. This increases the

influence of human error, and kept the researcher from interacting with the research participants during the interview for the sake of dictation. Solutions to these limitations are addressed in the suggestions for the future.

Recommendations

For Higher Education Institution. The first recommendation for institutions of higher education would be to provide more information to incoming International Students about the higher education system and academic expectations in America. This includes grading system, academic calendar, classroom organization and level of professor interaction. Institutions should provide more information to incoming International Students about campus life. This includes residence life, dining and how to access various campus resources. Institutions of higher education should find ways to increase awareness of the unique experience of international students to various student affairs and academic affairs offices. Lastly, institutions of higher education need to create or continue to improve upon institutional initiatives that foster cross cultural interactions in an inclusive and positive manner. This is especially important in terms of interacting with American students.

For Further Research. Researchers should find funding for any further research to provide a monetary incentive for participants. If gathering more quantitative data through a questionnaire, create one to be taken online for easier distribution and result analysis. Future research should specifically target particular countries of origin for

recruitment to get a diverse population of international students. Also, researchers should conduct further research into some of themes that surfaced in results and discussion such as culture shock, academic life, interactions Americans and motivations for attending college in the U.S. For broader research, expand beyond one institution to find potential national patterns and/or trends in the international student experience. Lastly, purchase a digital voice recorder with voice transcribing technology to save time and resources in data collection.

Significance of Study

This study had many beneficiaries including the students participating, the professional staff facilitators, the researcher and the institution at large. For students, this study can provide them with the opportunity to reflect on their own cultural immersions and that of their peers. Moreover, by creating space and time for them to reflect on their learning experiences, they had the opportunity to pull together disparate learning to make meaning of it.

For professional staff facilitators, their participation in this study allowed for professional development through facilitating and capturing these conversations. Additionally, by gaining student feedback on their experience in the discussion groups, it may make university staff more agile in addressing issues of international student experiences and meaning making in their respective professional roles.

For the university, this project adds a depth of understanding of how international students interpret their experiences while attending college, and may contribute to future efforts in bolstering students' liberal learning and personal growth and development.

For the researcher, this study served as an extraordinary learning experience. This study opened the researcher's eyes to the many ways in which international students interact with cultures different from their own. It allowed the researcher to see not only the results of the research, but also a more intimate look into the lives of students on campus. And lastly, this research served as a sharpening tool for the researcher to become a better researcher, a better educator, and a better learner.

Content Summary

This chapter contains the discussion, conclusions, limitations and suggestions for future. This chapter provided an interpretation of all data collected from group interviews, written narratives and questionnaire responses. Suggestions for the future were made to both the institution but also to any future researcher wanting to expand upon this study.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A

CULTURAL IMMERSIONS INITIAL SURVEY

Cultural Immersions Initial Survey

We are interested in learning more about your experiences at college and within state and the surrounding areas. Our hope is that we will learn more about international students' experiences, and to apply this knowledge in helping future students to gain a deeper immersion in this institution and U.S. cultures.

Your honest and thoughtful responses are very important and much appreciated. In accordance with University policy, your responses are treated as confidential and only group responses will be shared publically — not individual responses.

Please respond to the following questions by placing a check [x] in the parenthesis:

1. What is your age?

Under 18 years []

18 -21 years []

22 -24 years []

24 years + []

2. Prior to attending this institution, what was your main activity?

Studying at secondary school []

Full time employment []

Studying in graduate school []

Preparing in English Language Program []

Other (please describe):

-
3. Prior to attending this institution, how many times have you been outside of your home country?

Never []

Once []

Twice []

More than 2 times []

4. How long have you been at this university? Please state in Years and/or months:
-

5. Please answer the following statements using the scale to the right.	Strongly	Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly	Disagree
I have several American students as friends.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My closest friends and acquaintances are students from my home country.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel comfortable in navigating the U.S. culture.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had a strong knowledge of American cultures prior to arriving in the U.S.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel that my ability to communicate in the English language challenges me when attempting to acclimate to U.S. culture.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm involved in social activities on campus.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Faculty/staff helped me with my adjustment and transition to U.S. culture.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have used campus resources or programs for personal support.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel a sense of belonging here.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Faculty and staff are approachable to me and other international students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is a strong commitment to racial/ethnic harmony on campus.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This institution shows concern for international students as individuals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
American students are curious about my home country and culture.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was familiar with the United States higher education system upon my arrival to the U.S.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
When I arrived to this university, I felt academically prepared.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have faced challenges when adjusting to academics in the U.S. that I did not anticipate.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The style of teaching at this institution is different from what I experienced in my home country.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My level of interaction with instructors at this institution is higher than what I experienced with instructors in my home country.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Faculty and staff seek out my cultural perspectives on issues.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel isolated at this institution.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can easily get involved in campus organizations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In my transition to college, I have received the greatest amount of personal support from students from my home country.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
American students make me feel welcomed on this campus.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Beyond campus, I have had/taken opportunities to experience the state.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My college experience has increased my understanding of my own culture.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My college experience has increased my self-confidence.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

APPENDIX B
GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. At this institution students have the opportunity to meet different kinds of people from all over the world. What kind of cross cultural immersions were you looking for when you came to this university (if any at all?)
2. In what ways have you engaged with other cultures different from yourself?
3. What experience(s) was most powerful to you and why?
4. Are there any experiences that were unexpected? If so, please explain.

APPENDIX C

DATA RESULTS

Table 1
Frequency and Percentage of Opinion
Responses of Initial Questionnaire

	Question		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I have several American students as friends.	f	8	5	7	3	1
		%	33.3%	20.8%	29.2%	12.5%	4.2%
2	My closest friends and acquaintances are students from my home country.	f	5	5	5	5	4
		%	20.8%	20.8%	20.8%	20.8%	16.7%
3	I feel comfortable in navigating the U.S. culture.	f	5	11	6	1	1
		%	20.8%	45.8%	25.0%	4.2%	4.2%
4	I had a strong knowledge of American cultures prior to arriving in the U.S.	f	1	8	6	6	3
		%	4.2%	33.3%	25.0%	25.0%	12.5%
5	I feel that my ability to communicate in the English language challenges me when attempting to acclimate to U.S. culture.	f	4	6	3	3	8
		%	16.7%	25.0%	12.5%	12.5%	33.3%
6	I'm involved in social activities on campus.	f	8	9	4	3	0
		%	33.3%	37.5%	16.7%	12.5%	0.0%
7	Faculty/staff helped me with my adjustment and transition to U.S. culture.	f	3	11	2	3	4
		%	13.0%	47.8%	8.7%	13.0%	17.4%
8	I have used campus resources or programs for personal support.	f	6	9	6	2	1
		%	25.0%	37.5%	25.0%	8.3%	4.2%
9	I feel a sense of belonging here.	f	4	7	9	2	2

		%	16.7%	29.2%	37.5%	8.3%	8.3%
10	Faculty and staff are approachable to me and other international students.	f	4	5	1	0	0
		%	40.0%	50.0%	10.0%	0.0%	0.0%
11	There is a strong commitment to racial/ethnic harmony on campus.	f	1	6	8	6	3
		%	4.2%	25.0%	33.3%	25.0%	12.5%
12	This university shows concern for international students as individuals.	f	2	6	8	6	2
		%	8.3%	25.0%	33.3%	25.0%	8.3%
13	American students are curious about my home country and culture.	f	2	7	7	6	2
		%	8.3%	25.0%	33.3%	25.0%	8.3%
14	I was familiar with the United States higher education system upon my arrival to the U.S.	f	2	5	8	9	0
		%	8.3%	20.8%	33.3%	37.5%	0.0%
15	When I arrived at this institution, I felt academically prepared.	f	9	11	2	2	0
		%	37.5%	45.8%	8.3%	8.3%	0.0%
16	I have faced challenges when adjusting to academics in the U.S. that I did not anticipate.	f	5	12	3	3	1
		%	20.8%	50.0%	12.5%	12.5%	4.2%
17	The style of teaching at this institution is different from what I experienced in my home country.	f	12	9	1	2	0
		%	50.0%	37.5%	4.2%	8.3%	0.0%
18	My level of interaction with instructors at this institution is higher than what I experienced with instructors in my home country.	f	9	5	5	3	1
		%	39.1%	21.7%	21.7%	13.0%	4.3%

19	Faculty and staff seek out my cultural perspectives on issues.	f	2	7	7	3	4
		%	8.7%	30.4%	30.4%	13.0%	17.4%
20	I feel isolated at this institution.	f	2	2	9	6	4
		%	8.7%	8.7%	39.1%	26.1%	17.4%
21	I can easily get involved in campus organizations.	f	8	9	4	1	0
		%	36.4%	40.9%	18.2%	4.5%	0.0%
22	In my transition to college, I have received the greatest amount of personal support from students from my home country.	f	6	4	6	2	5
		%	26.1%	17.4%	26.1%	8.7%	21.7%
23	American students make me feel welcomed on this campus.	f	2	5	10	3	2
		%	9.1%	22.7%	45.5%	13.6%	9.1%
24	Beyond campus, I have had/taken opportunities to experience the state.	f	8	7	4	4	0
		%	34.8%	30.4%	17.4%	17.4%	0.0%
25	My college experience has increased my understanding of my own culture.	f	9	9	3	1	1
		%	39.1%	39.1%	13.0%	4.3%	4.3%
26	My college experience has increased my self-confidence.	f	9	11	2	0	1
		%	39.1%	47.8%	8.7%	0.0%	4.3%