How Do Voluntary Sojourners Adapt to New Cultures? : Common Challenges That Teachers and Students Face

Aycan Sayakci

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How Do Voluntary Sojourners Adapt to New Cultures?: Common Challenges That Teachers and Students Face

by

Aycan Sayakci

A Master's Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
Montclair State University

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Thesis Committee:

Christine Lemesianou, Ph.D.
Thesis Sponsor

Todd Kelshaw, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Philip Bakeliar, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Wayne Bond, Ph.D.
Department Chair
ABSTRACT

How Do Voluntary Sojourners Adapt to New Cultures? : Common Challenges That Teachers and Students Face

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Aycan Sayakci

Numerous people move from country to country and change homes each year by crossing cultural boundaries for various reasons and cultural adaptation is becoming a common experience for many, especially for students and teachers. In terms of theory, the present study employed Kim’s (2001) stress-adaptation-growth dynamic. Also, the study was grounded in the interpretive paradigm and the particular methods used were interviewing and textual analysis. The focus of this study was to investigate the central descriptors that students and teachers used to define themselves, the common challenges and opportunities that professors and students face when they are adapting to new cultures, and MSU’s preparation for its professors’ and students’ adaptation and professors’ and students’ perception of MSU in terms of cultural adaptation strategies and diversity. The key findings of the study indicated that for both student and teacher participants, personality, role, and interpersonal descriptors were central to the definitions of self. Neither students nor teachers focused on structural identity markers such as nationality, race, etc. Language, cultural differences, stereotypes, cultural literacy, patterns of thinking, and social support were the challenges that were identified by students. The challenges that were identified by teachers were, language, social support, differences in education system and learning, school success, cultural differences, and stereotypes. The opportunities that were stated by student and teacher participants were learning about one’s self and personal characteristics, finding out more about their native culture, and appreciating other cultures and diversity. The results of the study also showed that there is an explicit effort that MSU makes in terms of cultural diversity and MSU shows us its recognition of cultural diversity in various ways. Overall, on the surface level, MSU values cultural diversity. In addition, based on the interviews it can be stated that
participants also think that cultural diversity is recognized as important at MSU. Moreover, MSU has several programs, events, orientations, and publications that aim to prepare teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation. The major problem is that the existing programs are not publicized widely enough and they are not targeting the specific stakeholders.
HOW DO VOLUNTARY SOJOURNERS ADAPT TO NEW CULTURES?: COMMON CHALLENGES THAT TEACHERS AND STUDENTS FACE

A THESIS

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in
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AYCAN SAYAKCI
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Numerous people move from country to country and change homes each year by crossing cultural boundaries for various reasons and cultural adaptation is becoming a common experience for many, especially for students and teachers. In terms of theory, the present study employed Kim’s (2001) stress-adaptation-growth dynamic. Also, the study was grounded in the interpretive paradigm and the particular methods used were interviewing and textual analysis. The focus of this study was to investigate the central descriptors that students and teachers used to define themselves, the common challenges and opportunities that professors and students face when they are adapting to new cultures, and MSU’s preparation for its professors’ and students’ adaptation and professors’ and students’ perception of MSU in terms of cultural adaptation strategies and diversity. The key findings of the study indicated that for both student and teacher participants, personality, role, and interpersonal descriptors were central to the definitions of self. Neither students nor teachers focused on structural identity markers such as nationality, race, etc. Language, cultural differences, stereotypes, cultural literacy, patterns of thinking, and social support were the challenges that were identified by students. The challenges that were identified by teachers were, language, social support, differences in education system and learning, school success, cultural differences, and stereotypes. The opportunities that were stated by student and teacher participants were learning about one’s self and personal characteristics, finding out more about their native culture, and appreciating other cultures and diversity. The results of the study also showed that there is an explicit effort that MSU makes in terms of cultural diversity and MSU shows us its recognition of cultural diversity in various ways. Overall, on the surface level, MSU values cultural diversity. In addition, based on the interviews it can be stated that participants also think that cultural diversity is recognized as important at MSU. Moreover, MSU has several programs, events, orientations, and publications that aim to prepare teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation. The major problem is that the existing programs are not publicized widely enough and they are not targeting the specific stakeholders.
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independence through education and meaningful work. Her example has inspired me and always will.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>ii-iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Culture</td>
<td>3-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Intercultural Communication</td>
<td>6-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Stranger</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Adaptation</td>
<td>7-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication and Cultural Adaptation</td>
<td>9-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Study</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Approaches to Cultural Adaptation</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Based Approaches</td>
<td>12-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological and Socio-cultural Approaches</td>
<td>14-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem and Learning/Growth Oriented Approach</td>
<td>15-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context for Cultural Adaptation</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health and Cultural Adaptation</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity and Cultural Adaptation</td>
<td>21-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Environment and Cultural Adaptation</td>
<td>22-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Cultural Adaptation</td>
<td>23-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Theoretical Orientation to the Study</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Methodological Approaches

Theoretical Paradigm and Perspective

Methods of Collecting Material

Approval from the Institutional Review Board at MSU

Methodological Procedures

Description of the Method: Interviewing

Description of the Method: Textual Analysis

Conclusion

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSES/FINDINGS OF RQ1 AND RQ2

Participants’ Identities

Students’ Identities

Demographics for Students

Central Descriptors

Teachers’ Identities

Demographics for Teachers

Central Descriptors

Challenges

Students’ Challenges

Teachers’ Challenges

Opportunities

Students’ Opportunities

Teachers’ Opportunities

Stress-Adaptation-Growth
# LIST OF FIGURES

| Figure 1.1. | Cultural Iceberg | 4 |
| Figure 2.1. | Kim’s (2001) Stress-Adaptation-Growth Dynamic | 20 |
| Figure 4.1. | T1’s Stress for Language | 68 |
| Figure 4.2. | T1’s Stress for Learning Differences | 68 |
| Figure 4.3. | Different Stress Levels for the Same Issue | 69 |
| Figure 5.1. | MSU’s Perception | 79 |
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.1.</td>
<td>Demographics of Students</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.2.</td>
<td>Students' Descriptions of Self</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.3.</td>
<td>Demographics of Teachers</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.4.</td>
<td>Teachers' Descriptions of Self</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.5.</td>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.6.</td>
<td>Opportunities</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5.1.</td>
<td>Proclamations</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5.2.</td>
<td>MSU Programs, Events, Orientations, Publications</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5.3.</td>
<td>International Orientation Material for Teachers and Students</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5.4.</td>
<td>Newsletters</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

In the past human beings were born, lived, and died in a limited geographical area without meeting people from other races, nations, or cultures. Today, as a result of globalization, numerous people move from country to country and change homes each year by crossing cultural boundaries. With the rapid changes in economy, politics, technology, culture, civil society, transportation, work organization, immigration policies, etc. the world is getting smaller and increasingly becoming the “global village,” a term that McLuhan introduced a few decades ago. As Beck (2000, p. 20) states, with globalization borders become noticeably less relevant to everyday behavior. Globalization and living in each other’s backyards has consequences. In Featherstone’s (1995) words it “is not to produce homogeneity but to familiarize us with greater diversity, the extensive range of local cultures” (p. 86). According to Goldstein and Smith (1999) the movement of people across national and cultural boundaries is more active than ever before. Therefore, there is a growing need for people to increase their understanding of others that are from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

The movement of people can be on voluntary or involuntary bases. Workers from musicians, construction workers, nurses, employees of organizations, diplomats, government agency employees, military personnel, journalists, tourists, researchers, professors and students visiting, working, and studying at foreign academic institutions, etc. are people who voluntarily leave their country of origin. On the other hand, due to natural disasters, political oppression, wars, social and economic betterment, etc. immigrants and refugees uproot themselves from their country of origins involuntarily. This study focuses only on voluntary sojourners. In this paper I investigated the common challenges that professors and students face when they are adapting to new cultures. Also, I examined the institution’s preparation of professors and students during their adaptation period.
Rationale

An increasingly heterogeneous and global world began to discover that diversity of experience is exactly what is required. Today gradually more students and professors are looking for opportunities to study and work abroad. In today’s global sphere the skills that are needed for success are different than those needed in the past. College students need an education that provides them skills—such as a foreign language or knowledge of a new culture—that will allow them to compete in the global market with an increasingly educated population. I believe that in addition to developing skills which are directly related to one specific culture, students also learn to interact with people of different cultures. Professors are an important part of an educated population. To be successful, and to compete with their colleagues, they also need to do research and improve their skills. For research or employment purposes many professors work abroad. Furthermore, there is an increasing internationalization of universities and colleges. More and more colleges and universities in the United States are looking at international education in new ways. Hopkins (1999, p. 36) notes that today “in their goals and mission statements, most colleges and universities include some version of ‘knowledge of others’ as a component of liberal education.” Another fact is that, “in recent decades, the United States has attracted the largest number of students from all over the world” (Sandhu, 1995, cited in Yeh & Inose, 2003, p. 15). During the 2004/05 academic year, there were a total of 565,039 international students studying at academic institutions in the United States (Institute of International Education, 2006).

Since more students and professors are looking for opportunities to study and work abroad, they are experiencing cultural adaptation and the challenges of cultural adaptation. Before talking about cultural adaptation, I want to define the concepts of culture, intercultural communication, and stranger.
Definition of Culture

As Ting-Toomey (1999, p. 9) puts it “culture is an enigma.” Culture has been defined in multiple and different ways. Ting-Toomey (1999) defines culture as “a complex frame of reference that consists of patterns of traditions, beliefs, values, norms, symbols, and meanings that are shared to varying degrees by interacting members of a community” (p. 10). This study focuses on the “national” culture level rather than subcultures such as institutional culture, classroom culture, etc.

Ting-Toomey uses the “iceberg” metaphor to explain culture. She (1999) notes that “the deeper layers ‘e.g., traditions, beliefs, values’ are hidden from our view; we only see and hear the uppermost layers of cultural artifacts ‘e.g., fashion, trends, pop music’ and of verbal and nonverbal symbols” (p. 10).

Parker (1998, p. 165) also uses the metaphor of the cultural iceberg when discussing culture (see Figure 1). According to Parker (1998), the “cultural iceberg shows that much of what we think we know about the culture is rooted in “what” we see. When people are part of the same culture, usually they get the same meaning from the signs they read, or behaviors they see” (p. 165). But when cultures mix, for the newcomer the visible part of the iceberg may not explain the underlying motivations for behaviors, the why. According to Parker (1998) differences in cultural beliefs explain why many behavioral differences occur. The “why” part of the iceberg is less visible, and it explains language, behaviors, economic systems, political systems, relationships, and other ways of being.
All cultural groups influence the ways in which their members experience and perceive the world. Therefore, culture influences communication. According to Martin and Nakayama (2005) culture serves as a program of the mind that every individual carries within himself or herself. The program of the mind or pattern of thinking becomes part of our character or personality and is taken for granted. Often, we cannot identify our own cultural backgrounds and assumptions until we encounter people from other countries that give us a frame of reference. It is also crucial to recognize that culture is learned, not inherited.

Just as nations and ethnic groups have distinct cultures, so do organizations, colleges, and universities. These cultures, “created intentionally and unintentionally, form unique ways of thinking and implementing action that are manifested by the vision, symbols, heroes, rituals, activities, and mind-sets of its members” (Marquardt, 1999, p. 62). Since every school has its own

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Figure 1.1. Parker’s (1998) cultural iceberg.
culture, the culture of the school would have an effect on its teachers' and students' experiences, perceptions, and communication.

Hofstede also argues that there are different levels in a culture and there are differences between the cultures. Hofstede (1986) defines the differences of the cultures in four dimensions. His four principal dimensions of culture are individualism-collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity-femininity. As Hofstede (1986) puts it “individualist cultures assume that any person looks primarily after his/her own interest and the interest of his/her immediate family. Collectivist cultures assume that any person through birth and possible later events belongs to one or more tight in-groups. The in-group protects the interest of its members, but in turn expects their permanent loyalty” (p. 307). Hofstede (1986) defines power distance as a characteristic of a culture where “the less powerful persons in a society accept inequality in power and consider it as normal” (p. 307). Uncertainty avoidance focuses on the level of tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity within the society. Finally, masculinity focuses on the degree to which the society reinforces the traditional masculine work role model of male achievement, control, and power.

High contextualization and low contextualization (Hall, 1976) are also terms that differentiate cultures. In high context cultures there is minimum reliance on explicit verbal or written communication, whereas in low context cultures, there is high reliance on explicit verbal or written communication.

All these cultural differences outlined above affect the interaction process of the teacher/student, student/student, and teacher/teacher and can present potential challenges during the adaptation process. For example, a student from a collectivist culture and a student from an individualist culture would have different interaction patterns in the classroom. While the student from the collectivist culture would only speak up in class when called upon personally by the
teacher, the student from the individualist culture would speak up in class in response to a general invitation by the teacher.

*Definition of Intercultural Communication*

Intercultural communication is used to refer to the communication process between members of different cultural communities (Gudykunst, 2003; Jandt, 1995; Ting-Toomey, 1999). Ting-Toomey (1999) notes that in intercultural communication “the degree of difference that exists between individuals is derived primarily from cultural group membership factors such as beliefs, values, norms, and interaction scripts” (p. 16). Ting-Toomey (1999) defines intercultural communication as “the symbolic exchange process whereby individuals from two or more different cultural communities negotiate shared meanings in an interactive situation” (p. 16). The general goal of effective intercultural communication is to create shared meanings between different individuals in an interactive situation.

For teachers and students, who moved to another country, intercultural communication is vital. Teachers and students have to engage in intercultural communication in many ways with different subcultures. For example, teachers may communicate interculturally with their students in or out of the classroom, within the department or at committee meetings with their colleagues, with staff members for administrative work, with their assistants or colleagues for their research projects, with their friends, etc. Students may communicate interculturally with their teachers and classmates in and out of the classroom, with staff members in the school, with their friends and roommates in their daily lives, etc. Furthermore, on top of changing their national culture and learning the new culture’s language, rules of society, economic systems, political systems, relationships, etc., teachers and students have to learn about the educational system, and the rules of the school and classroom. Therefore, intercultural communication permeates both their professional and personal lives. This study focuses on the “national” culture and the communication process between the members of different national cultures, rather than
subcultures (institutional culture, classroom culture, etc.) and communication across different social groups or communities in the U.S. culture.

**Definition of Stranger**

According to Kim (2001) the term stranger combines and represents “a wide range of individuals crossing cultures and resettling in alien cultural environments” (p. 32). To Kim (2001), the term stranger is including various types of resettlers, from long term immigrants to short term sojourners. Gudykunst and Kim (1984) state that strangers are physically present and participating in situations and at the same time they are outside the situation because they are from a different place. When strangers cross cultures at the beginning they are outsiders and as they go through daily interactions with the new environment, over a period of time strangers start becoming insiders.

Just as any other re-settlers, teachers and students are outsiders to the new national culture at the beginning. Every culture has its own norms, rules, and behaviors. Therefore, a teacher or a student who is new to the national culture has to learn the new rules, norms and behaviors. Otherwise, the teacher or the student may be faced with unexpected situations. For example, a student or a teacher, who is new to the culture, may not know the greeting process or the degree of formality required in specific situations. Since greetings differ from culture to culture, the student or the teacher would need to learn the new way of greeting through daily interactions by observing and experiencing. As time goes by, like other strangers both the teacher and the student would become familiar with the new culture and start becoming insiders. It is this shift from stranger to insider status that signals the process of cultural adaptation.

**Cultural Adaptation**

Social changes such as economic globalization and international mobility have led to an increase in the number of people who spend significant periods of time in more than one cultural context. Therefore, in today’s increasingly integrated world intercultural adaptation has become a
central theme. "The intercultural adaptation process is defined as the degree of change that occurs when individuals move from a familiar environment to an unfamiliar one" (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 233). The intercultural adaptation process is a long and demanding journey and it is a gradual transformation process.

International migration, whether for long or short terms, represents a situation where the newly arrived strangers are required to deal with significant cultural change. Not surprisingly, abruptness of the transition makes a difference for the strangers, at least during the initial resettlement phase. Involuntary and sudden departures from their country affect the strangers psychologically. Even if the transition is voluntary, strangers differ in their motivation to adapt to their new environment. The adaptive experiences of long-term and short-term settlers are different in many ways. According to Kim (2001), long-term settlers are likely to be more committed to adapting than short-term settlers. Also, hosts may not expect culturally appropriate behavior from short-term sojourners in all situations. On the other hand, hosts are likely to expect greater cultural consistency and proficiency from long-termers. Despite their length of the stay, "all individuals crossing cultures face some common challenges..." (Kim, 2001, p. 4).

Eventually, everyone is challenged by the unfamiliar environment at some degree and they “face the dilemma of identity maintenance and cultural adaptation” (Boekestijn, 1988, p. 83).

Today, cultural diversity within nations is reflected in schools and classrooms where increasing numbers of students and teachers are from diverse cultural backgrounds. As a result of changing cultures, teachers and students are experiencing cultural adaptation and the challenges of cultural adaptation. Even though the transition of teachers and students is voluntary, facing challenges is still inevitable. Rigorous academic demands along with the challenges to adjust to a new culture may put both teachers and students at a greater risk than resettlers in general. Church (1982) suggests that in addition to problems similar to what domestic students may have, international students also experience other difficulties that are elicited by the new cultural
experiences. During the adjustment process to the new culture, apprehension in their language proficiency and academic performance (Hayes & Lin, 1994; Kagan & Cohen, 1990) is one of the challenges for international students. Similar to international students, teachers from different cultures also may experience apprehension in their language proficiency and academic performance.

According to Yamazaki (2005) particular cultures relate to certain learning styles or abilities. Therefore, different learning styles or abilities of cultures can be another challenge for both teachers and students from different countries during the adaptation process. Other factors that impact the adaptation process is whether the sojourners have American friends or friends from their own culture (Kagan & Cohen, 1990), individual differences, sex role differences, and stigma (Hayes & Lin, 1994). As Gudykunst and Kim (1984) emphasize, regardless of the circumstantial variations in the degree of necessary adaptation, every individual in a new culture must respond and adapt to environmental changes at least minimally. The multicultural world is improved by the experiences of sojourners, immigrants, and others who successfully make the transition from one culture to another.

Communication and Cultural Adaptation

All cultural groups influence their members’ experiences and perceptions of the world. Culture gives us a frame of reference. Layers of culture, the way of thinking, language, behaviors, norms, etc. become a part of the individual. The familiar culture becomes “home” for the individual.

When individuals cross boundaries, situations of cross-cultural adaptation bring profound changes to the strangers as they realize that many of their previously taken-for-granted practices, languages, behaviors, assumptions, priorities, beliefs, norms, etc., briefly all the life tools, are no longer relevant or appropriate. Similarly, the interaction scripts that have been learned previously may no longer be relied upon to guide individuals through everyday relational contexts.
Culture, and the differences of the culture, affect and make a difference in one’s communication and the interaction scripts. Every cultural pattern and all acts of social behavior involve communication. As Peterson, Jensen, and Rivers (1965) put it “communication is the carrier of the social process. It is the means man has for organizing, stabilizing, and modifying his social life…. The social process depends upon the accumulation and transformation of knowledge. Knowledge in time depends upon communication” (p. 16). Therefore, communication affects the stranger’s cultural adaptation and cultural adaptation affects the stranger’s ongoing communication.

Summary of Study

The focus of this study was to investigate the common challenges and opportunities that professors and students face when they are adapting to new cultures. Also, I examined the institution’s (MSU) preparation for its professors’ and students’ adaptation and professors’ and students’ perception of MSU in terms of cultural adaptation strategies and diversity. In this study I examined the following research questions:

RQ1: How do sojourners define themselves? Are national and cultural descriptors central to their definition of self?

RQ2: What are the common challenges and opportunities that teachers and students face when they have to adapt to new cultures?

RQ3: Is cultural diversity institutionally recognized as important at MSU?

RQ4: In what ways (e.g. programs, events, publications) does MSU prepare its teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation?

RQ5: Based on participants’ experiences, have existing strategies used by MSU to prepare its teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation been effective?
Conclusion

Chapter 1 introduced the theme of the study and provided grounds for it. The chapter also defined concepts such as culture, intercultural communication, stranger, and cultural adaptation and talked about the relationship between communication and cultural adaptation. Chapter 2 will focus on the previous literature, theoretical approaches to cultural adaptation, contexts for cultural adaptation, and the broader theoretical orientation of the study.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In chapter 1 I defined the concepts of culture, intercultural communication, stranger, cultural adaptation and talked about the relationship communication and cultural adaptation. This chapter reviews the previous literature, examines the theoretical approaches to cultural adaptation and the themes and concepts that emerge from research of the cultural adaptation process.

Theoretical Approaches to Cultural Adaptation

The phenomenon of cultural adaptation has been investigated extensively in the United States and in other countries throughout the years (Adler, 1975; Berry, 2001; Bochner, 1982; Boekestijn, 1988; Church, 1982; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Gudykunst & Kim, 1984; Hayes & Lin, 1994; Kim, 1996; Kim 2001; Oberg, 1960; Ruben, 1976; Ward & Kennedy, 1993; Zaharna, 1989). Previous studies successfully identified the obstacles to cultural adjustment, however, as Kim (2001) states, although the field of communication benefited from rich information and insights, it suffers from increased disconnectedness and confusion because of various existing conceptions and definitions of cultural adaptation and unclear theoretical frameworks. Numerous approaches have been used to study strangers’ cultural adaptation. The existing theoretical approaches can be grouped into categories such as time based approaches (long-term and short-term adaptation), psychological and sociocultural approaches, and problem and learning/growth oriented approaches.

Time Based Approaches

Previous research suggests that there is a division between studies of short-term and long-term adaptation. In both short and long term adaptation studies, the main emphasis has been the problematic nature of cross-cultural experience. These two groups of studies have been carried out largely independent of each other. Kim (2001) notes that long-term adaptation has been investigated mainly in social psychology and in communication and these studies employed concepts such as acculturation, assimilation, and marginality to analyze individual adaptation.
experiences (Berry, 2001; Berry, 2005; Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987; Taft, 1977, as cited in Gudykunst & Kim, 1984). Berry (2005) defines acculturation as a dual process of cultural and psychological change that take place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members. On the other hand, the term assimilation has been used to emphasize the process of a more comprehensive change whereby immigrants become absorbed into the native population.

As Kim (2001) states, studies of short-term adaptation began to increase in number during the 1960s, stimulated by the founding of Peace Corps and by the increase in international student exchanges and multinational trade. Accordingly, short-term adaptation studies have been influenced mainly by practical concerns. Many researchers focused on culture shock (Adler, 1975; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Oberg, 1960). Oberg (1960) first defined culture shock as “the anxiety that results from losing all of our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse” (p. 18). Other researchers such as Ruben (1989), have examined factors associated with sojourner effectiveness and adaptive changes over time. The concept of reentry shock is an extension of culture shock. Reentry shock is the process of readjusting into one’s own home culture after living in a different culture for a period of time (e.g. Gaw, 2000; Sussman, 2002; Ward & Kennedy, 1993).

The adaptive experiences of long-term and short-term settlers are different in many ways. According to Kim (2001), long-term settlers are likely to be more committed to adapting than short-term settlers. Gudykunst and Kim (1984) state that when the move is a permanent one, since immigrants must make their living and attain social membership in the host society, they need to be concerned with their relationship to the new environment in the same way as the members of the native population. Besides, hosts may not expect culturally appropriate behavior from short-term sojourners in all situations but they are likely to expect greater cultural consistency and proficiency from long-termers. On the other hand, Gudykunst and Kim (1984)
note that situations of international migration vary in the abruptness of the transition. Sudden departures from the home country, give little chance to people to prepare themselves psychologically. Furthermore, voluntary and involuntary departures have an effect on the sojourners’ adaptation process.

Psychological and Sociocultural Approaches

Psychological adjustment refers to sojourners’ psychological well-being or satisfaction in their new cultural environments (Oguri & Gudykunst, 2002; Ward & Kennedy, 1993; Ward, Okura, Kennedy, & Kojima, 1998). Lack of mood disturbances or depression have been used as indicators of psychological adjustment (Ward, Okura, Kennedy, & Kojima, 1998). Psychological adjustment has been associated with sojourners’ emotional states, cognitive perceptions, and personal trait variables. The psychological approach also talks about cultural fit. The cultural fit model suggests that psychological adjustment is facilitated when there is a fit between individuals’ psychological personality traits and the host culture’s prototypical personality traits. That is, there is no universal personality that adjusts cross-culturally. Rather, it is a match of sojourner personalities to the host cultures that facilitate adjustment.

Sociocultural adjustment refers to sojourners’ ability to fit in or effectively interact with members of host cultures (Oguri & Gudykunst, 2002; Ward & Kennedy, 1993; Ward, Okura, Kennedy, & Kojima, 1998; Zlobina, Basabe, Paez, & Furnham, 2006). Ward et al. (e.g. Ward & Kennedy, 1993; Ward, Okura, Kennedy, & Kojima, 1998) argue that socioculturally adjusted sojourners are able to meet social demands in their host cultures. Oguri and Gudykunst (2002) note that sojourners’ perceptions of their behavioral competence and acquisition of social skills that are effective and appropriate in host cultures have been used as indices of sociocultural adjustment and what is common in the variables predicting sociocultural adjustment is that they facilitate and promote sojourners’ behavioral competence, culture learning, and acquisition of social skills. Any variables that help increase opportunities for culture learning, the acquisition of
cultural resources, or expand sojourners’ networks with host nationals are helpful in elevating sojourners’ sociocultural adjustment. Another point Oguri and Gudykunst (2002) state is that culturally different individuals have different styles of communication that are appropriate and effective in their own cultures. The more sojourners use communication behaviors that are appropriate in their host cultures, the more sojourners are able to communicate effectively with host nationals, and the greater their sociocultural adjustment.

**Problem and Learning/Growth Oriented Approach**

As mentioned earlier, in short and long term adaptation studies the main emphasis is the problematic nature of cross-cultural experience. This problem based standpoint views “the intercultural experiences of sojourners mainly as undesirable” and scholars are “justifying their studies as scientific efforts to find ways to help ease such predicaments” (Kim, 2001, p. 17). As Kim (2001) notes the problem based approach is “most apparent in studies of culture shock that focus almost exclusively on individual sojourners’ frustration reactions to the environment (Anderson, 1994) or on the lack of such reactions measured using global psychological indicators such as satisfaction and happiness” (p. 18). In her study, Anderson (1994) states that far from being culture specific, culture shock is simply a frustration reaction syndrome and adjustment is a cyclic process of overcoming obstacles and solving problems. According to Anderson (1994), the individual chooses how to respond and creates his or her own adjustment. Also, she argues that cultural adaptation is a continuum and sojourners exhibit a broad range of degrees, modes, and levels of adaptation. Taft (1977), has identified several common reactions to cultural dislocation: (a) cultural fatigue as manifested by irritability, insomnia, and other psychosomatic disorders; (b) a sense of loss arising from being uprooted from one’s familiar surroundings; (c) rejection by the individual of members of the new society; and (d) a feeling of impotence stemming from being unable to deal with an unfamiliar environment. Zaharna (1989) adds to the discussion by saying “confusion is no longer with the other (culture shock), but rather with the self (self shock)” (p.
Zaharna (1989) also presents three dimensions of self-shock: (a) loss of communication competence vis-à-vis the self, (b) distorted self-reflections in the responses of others, and (c) the challenge of changing identity-bound behavior. The problematic nature of cross-cultural adaptation has also been a motive for long-term adaptation studies of immigrants and many scholars have emphasized acculturative stress in the adaptation process (e.g. Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987; Berry, 2001; Berry 2005; Kim & Omizo, 2005; Yeh & Inose, 2003).

Contrary to the expressions of the problematic nature of the adaptation process is the work of researchers who emphasize the learning and growth nature of the process. As Kim (2001) noted, evidence for the learning and growth function of culture shock has been supported by other sojourner studies that have described the stages of the adaptation process.

Different scholars described various stages of the adaptation process. Oberg (1960), for instance, describes four stages of cross-cultural adaptation: (a) honeymoon stage characterized by fascination, elation, and optimism; (b) a stage of hostility and emotionally stereotyped attitudes toward the host society and increased association with fellow sojourners; (c) a recovery stage characterized by increased language knowledge and ability to get around in the new cultural environment; and (d) a final stage in which adjustment is about as complete as possible, anxiety is largely gone, and new customs are accepted and enjoyed.

Similarly, Adler (1975) described five phases of the adaptation process; (a) a contact phase, characterized by excitement and euphoria during which the individual views the new environment ethnocentrically, is more familiar to cultural similarities, (b) a disintegration phase, marked by tension, confusion, alienation, depression, and withdrawal, (c) a reintegration phase, characterized by a strong rejection of the second culture, (d) an autonomy phase, marked by increasing sensitivity, skill and understanding of the host culture, (e) a final independence phase, marked by a cherishing of cultural differences and relativism.
Bochner (1982), defines three phases of cultural adaptation: (a) the psychoanalytic phase stressing the venting of displaced aggression and “scapegoating” to an out-group; (b) the similarity attraction phase stressing the relational inhibitions of culturally different people; (c) the social learning phase “viewed as an all pervasive matrix of reinforcement schedules” (Guthrie, 1975, cited in Boekestijn, 1988).

The stage models of adjustment that are mentioned above conceptualize the process of adaptation and classify the individuals. Is the order of stages invariant? Must all stages be passed through or can some individuals skip some of the stages? These are the questions that the stage models of adjustment do not address.

The U-curve hypothesis (Church, 1982; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Kim, 2001; Ward, Okurama, Kennedy, & Kojima, 1998) is another model of adaptation. According to the U-curve hypothesis, sojourners typically begin their cross-cultural adaptation process with optimism and elation in the host culture, followed by a consequent dip or trough in satisfaction and a recovery. In the U-curve model, sojourners go through three phases in adapting to a new cultural situation. In the first phase, sojourners experience excitement and anticipation. In the second phase culture shock occurs. Culture shock is “a natural consequence of the state of a human organism’s inability to interact with the new and changed environment in an effective manner” (Bennett, 1977, as cited in Kim 1996, p. 18). During the culture shock phase, individuals experience disorientation. Because individuals’ identities are shaped and maintained by their cultural context, experiences in new cultural contexts often raise questions about identities. The third phase is adaptation, in which individuals gradually learn the rules and customs of the new cultural context. Not all investigators have confirmed the U curve hypothesis (Church, 1982; Kim 2001). Church (1982) argues that support for the U curve hypothesis must be considered weak, inconclusive, and over generalized. Agreeing with Church, Kim (2001) adds that sojourners do not always begin
their lives in new cultural environments with elation and optimism as described by the U curve hypothesis.

Another model called the stress-adaptation-growth dynamic is suggested by Kim (1996, 2001). Different than all the other scholars, Kim argues that all individuals that are experiencing cultural adaptation find the process both problematic and growth producing. In Kim’s (2001) words “cross-cultural adaptation is a double-edged process, one that is simultaneously troublesome and enriching” (p. 21).

According to Kim’s (1996, 2001) stress-adaptation-growth dynamic, individuals who face environmental changes experience stress. Stress is a conflict between the desire to maintain old customs and keep original identity and the desire to adopt new ways seek and harmony with the new environment. Stress pushes individuals to adjust and restructure their existing conditions to regain an internal balance. Kim argues that stress and adaptation lead the individual to personal growth. Kim also states that none of the three (stress-adaptation-growth) occurs without the others, and each occurs because of the others. Stress, in this regard, is intrinsic to open systems such as humans and essential in their transformation process.

Kim (2001) suggests that “the process of crossing cultures challenges the very basis of who we are as cultural beings. It offers opportunities for new learning and growth. Being uprooted from our home brings us understanding not only of people and their culture in our new environment, but of ourselves and our home culture” (p. 9). Learning about a new culture means more than learning about a foreign culture; it also means learning about one’s own culture (Kim, 1996; Kim, 2001; Parker, 1998). As newcomers face some issues and try to understand the new culture, they start thinking about and questioning their own culture.

According to Kim (2001), adapting to a new culture is more than survival; it is a life-changing journey. The process is a transformation and growth, but it doesn’t require that we abandon our former personalities and the cultures into which we were born. Instead, the process
is "to create new constructs- that is, constructs that did not exist previously" (Belay, 1993, as cited in Kim, 2001). Kim (2001) argues that cross cultural adaptation leads individuals into intercultural personhood and this describes a person who seeks to bridge the gaps between cultures, and whose "cognitive, affective, and behavioral characteristics are not limited, but are open to growth beyond the psychological parameters of his or her own culture" (Kim, 1994, p. 415). The concept of intercultural personhood focuses on "the expanded psychological orientation beyond national and ethnic boundaries, but it does not emphasize numerous sub-cultural groups within a society" (Kim, 2001, p. 196).

Kim’s focus is on the process of intercultural transformation and the development of intercultural identity. Identity plays a key role in intercultural communication, serving as a bridge between culture and communication. “Identity is our self-concept, who we think we are as a person” (Martin & Nakayama, 2005, p. 81). Identities are created and expressed through communication. Numerous people don’t have merely one identity but multiple identities. Immigrants, refugees, workers, diplomats, government agency employees, researchers, professors, students, military personnel on foreign duty, journalists, etc. may all develop multicultural identities. The singular identity of a person is shaped by his/her original cultural environment. The intercultural identity is “an acquired identity constructed after the early childhood through the individual’s communicative interactions with a new cultural environment” (Kim, 2001, p. 191).

Kim establishes an integrative theory by reviewing existing and contradictory models of cross-cultural adaptation. Kim’s stress-adaptation-growth dynamic “plays out not in a smooth linear progression, but a cyclic and continual ‘draw-back-to-leap’ representation of the present expression of the interrelationships among stress, adaptation, and growth” (Kim, 2001, p. 56).
As Kim (2001) explains, strangers react to each stressful experience by drawing back, which sequentially activates adaptive energy to help them recognize themselves and leap forward, as “growth of some units always occurs at the expense of others” (Kim, 2001, p. 57). The process is continuous as long as there are new environmental challenges. Kim (2001) also mentions that not all individuals are equally successful in making transitions and some may experience extreme panic.

The phenomenon of cultural adaptation has been investigated broadly. Various theoretical approaches have been used to study strangers’ cultural adaptation. This section discussed the existing theoretical approaches which are time based approaches (long-term and short-term adaptation), psychological and sociocultural approaches and problem and learning/growth oriented approaches. In the next section, cultural adaptation will be reviewed in different contexts.
Context for Cultural Adaptation

In addition to the raised theoretical approaches outlined in the previous section, scholars have studied cultural adaptation in a variety of contexts. Research of cultural adaptation has focused on diverse issues such as mental health, identity, work environment, education, age, gender, and relationships. Below, I explore some of these themes and contexts more explicitly.

Mental Health and Cultural Adaptation

Many scholars (e.g. Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987; Bhui, Mohamud, Warfa, Craig, & Stansfeld, 2003; Williams & Berry, 1991) have dealt with immigrants’ mental health related issues, looking for clinical implications of the cross-cultural experience and the extent to which the experience challenges the individual’s mental health. The central research interest in this issue is the assessment of immigrants’ mental health status. For example, Berry, Kim, Minde, and Mok (1987) compared a series of studies of acculturative stress (reduction in health status), involving immigrants, refugees, Native people, sojourners, and ethnic groups in Canada. The results indicated significant variation in stress phenomena across types of acculturating groups, across a number of individual difference variables (such as sex, age, education), and across a number of social variables (such as social support and status). In their study, Bhui, Mohamud, Warfa, Craig, and Stansfeld (2003) emphasized the need for accurate information about the mental health problems of multicultural communities which requires valid measures of mental health for use in a number of languages and cultural contexts. Also, authors summarized the main challenges in the cultural adaptation of such measures in their work with adults and adolescents of South Asian, African and Caribbean origin.

Identity and Cultural Adaptation

Identity and adaptation is another issue that received considerable attention in contemporary cross-cultural research (Hurtado, 1997; Kim, Lujan, & Dixon, 1998; Leong, & Ward, 2000). Despite the increasing number of studies on intercultural contact and change,
research on identity, and the relationship between identification with heritage and contact cultures remain controversial. Kim, Lujan, and Dixon (1998), analyzed the identity experience of American Indians in Oklahoma and their research focused on the different modes of identity experience and explaining the connection between the identity experience and other facets of cross-cultural adaptation. Results of the study showed that Oklahoma Indians largely share the integration identity orientation (minorities both retain their own cultural values and maintain contact with the larger society). Another study, Leong and Ward (2000) explored the prediction of identity conflict in Chinese sojourners in Singapore. The results indicated that greater tolerance of ambiguity, attributional complexity, co-national identification, and less perceived discrimination were significant predictors of identity conflict. Leong and Wang (2000) also found that increased quantity of contact with host nationals was associated with greater identity conflict.

Work Environment and Cultural Adaptation

Cultural adaptation in the work environment has been investigated in numerous studies (e.g. Alkhazraji, Gardner, Martin, & Paolillo, 1997; Francis, 1991; Lin, 2004; Stening & Hammer, 1992; Swierczek & Onishi, 2003; Thomas & Ravlin, 1995). Francis (1991) talks about the adaptive behaviors of American, Japanese, and Korean business people during intercultural buyer/seller negotiations. Francis concluded that moderate adaptation improves the adjudged attraction of the Japanese business people relative to no adaptation and substantial adaptation, however, this finding was not replicated with Korean business people. Thomas and Ravlin (1995) examined the effects of cultural adaptation by a Japanese manager on participants’ perceptions of similarity, causal attributions for behavior, perceptions of managerial effectiveness, and behavioral intentions. The results showed that cultural adaptation by the foreign manager was positively related to perceptions of similarity and managerial effectiveness and was negatively related to internal causal attributions for the manager's behavior. Attributions were directly
related to participants' intentions to trust and perceptions of managerial effectiveness and moderated the relationship between perceptions of similarity and intentions to associate.

Another study by Swierczek & Onishi (2003) investigated the application and adaptability of Japanese management practices in a different cultural context, Thailand, and assessed possible conflicts between the Japanese management and Thai staff based on the different perceptions of the Japanese management style. The results showed an interesting pattern of Japanese managers adapting more to Thai culture as well as Thai subordinates adapting to the Japanese style of management and human resource system. Alkhazraji, Gardner, Martin, and Paolillo’s (1997) research focused on acculturation of Muslim immigrants to U.S. organizations. The findings revealed that most of the immigrants were more inclined to retain their original culture for their private and/or social lives than to adopt the U.S. national culture. In contrast, these same immigrants mostly accepted U.S. organizational cultures.

*Education and Cultural Adaptation*

Cultural adaptation in education contexts is also a broadly investigated topic (e.g. Ernst-Slavit, Moore, & Maloney, 2002; Goldstein, 1995; Noorderhaven & Halman, 2003; Tomcho & Foels, 2002; Yamazaki, 2005; Zhang, 2006). These studies recognize the importance of educating students regarding cross-cultural issues. Goldstein (1995) showed that teaching students about cross-cultural issues is being increasingly recognized as an important aspect of the curriculum. Goldstein also made recommendations for more effective use of cross-cultural resources. By using a classroom exercise, Tomcho and Foels (2002) intended both to teach acculturation and to broaden students’ perspectives regarding current global issues. The results indicated that students believed it was helpful to learn about acculturation, and students reported that they developed empathy for those who are changing cultures. Yamazaki (2005) presents the relationship between typologies of cultural differences and learning styles. Yamazaki’s study addresses the question of which culture is related to which learning style or ability. The author suggests that particular
cultures relate to certain learning styles or abilities. Results showed that Japanese are linked with the diverging learning style (specializes in using feeling and sensitivities to people’s feelings and values, and employing reflective understanding to find out how and why things happen) and Americans with in the converging learning style (specializes on thinking, analyzing, and building conceptual models, and making practical applications and being pragmatic with what works actually). Zhang’s (2006) study focused on out-of-class communication (OCC) research by comparing OCC frequency, content, and satisfaction, and examining the influence of instructor immediacy on OCC in Chinese and U.S. college classrooms. Zhang (2006) reported five major findings: (a) Chinese students engage in more OCC than US students; (b) Chinese OCC is more personal problem oriented, but US OCC focuses on coursework; (c) US students have a significantly higher OCC satisfaction than Chinese counterparts; (d) Chinese and US students differ in OCC forms. Whereas, Chinese students visit their instructors’ office more often, US students email their instructors more; and (e) US instructor immediacy is not correlated significantly with OCC frequency and satisfaction, whereas Chinese instructor verbal immediacy is correlated significantly with OCC frequency and satisfaction.

Cultural adaptation of students is one of the broadest communication contexts that have been studied (Cemalcilar, Falbo, & Stapleton, 2005; Church, 1982; Greenland & Brown, 2005; Kim & Omizo, 2005; Nisson & Anderson, 2004; Spencer-Rodgers, 2001; Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002; Yeh & Inose, 2003). Church (1982) reviews the adjustment of relatively short term visitors where permanent settlement is not the purpose of the sojourn. Church’s review deals primarily with the adjustment of foreign students to their host cultures. In her study, Spencer-Rodgers (2001) examined the consensual stereotype of an extraordinarily heterogeneous social group, international students who are sojourning in the United States, among American host nationals. Spencer-Rodgers (2001) reported that in general, consensual and individual stereotypic representations of international students were somewhat favorable. The percentages of agreement
among participants concerning the attributes of foreign students were substantial, indicating that international students are regarded as a fairly homogenous out-group by domestic students, in spite of the extreme heterogeneity of the foreign student population. Individual stereotypic beliefs about international students were significantly correlated with overall attitudes and behaviors (social contact) toward the group. The negative evaluative content of participants’ individual stereotypic beliefs was strongly related to prejudicial attitudes and social avoidance of the group.

Yeh and Inose (2003) explored age, gender, and proposed that English fluency, social support satisfaction and social connectedness as predictors of acculturative stress among international students. Results showed that international students from Europe experienced less acculturative stress than their counterparts from Asia, Central/Latin America, and Africa. Kim and Omizo (2005) examined Asian American college students’ adherence to Asian and European American cultural values and their relations to collective self-esteem, acculturative stress, cognitive flexibility, and general self-efficacy. The results indicated that adherence to Asian and European American values are positive predictors of membership and private dimensions of collective self-esteem. However, the authors observed no relations between adherence to Asian and European American values.

Cemalcilar, Falbo, and Stapleton (2005) examined the role of computer-mediated communication (CMC) technologies in the early stages of cross-cultural transition for international students in the United States. The authors of the study concluded that internet-related technologies are used frequently by international students as communication tools to correspond with people and keep up with the daily life at home and this continuous contact has a positive effect on the sojourning individuals’ maintenance of home identity and perceptions of available social support, which combine to affect the student’s adaptation to the new culture.

Teachers’ cultural adaptation is another topic that has been investigated (Hofstede, 1986; Zhang 2006). Hofstede (1986) focuses on the interaction differences between teachers and
students. He associates the differences of teacher/student interaction with his four cultural dimensions (individualism vs. collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity vs. femininity). The results indicate that in collectivist societies individual students will only speak up in class when called upon personally by the teacher, individuals will only speak up in small groups, neither the teacher nor any student should ever be made to lose face, and formal harmony in learning situations should be maintained at all times. On the other hand, in individualistic societies, individual students will speak up in class in response to a general invitation by the teacher, individuals will speak up in large groups, confrontation in learning situations can be salutary and conflicts can be brought up into the open. In small power distance societies a teacher should respect the independence of his/her students, education is student centered, teacher expects students to initiate communication, teacher expects students to find their own paths, students may speak up spontaneously in class, students are allowed to contradict or criticize the teacher, and outside the class, teachers are treated as equals. Conversely, in large power distance societies a teacher merits the respect of his/her students, education is teacher-centered, students expect the teacher to initiate communication, students expect the teacher to outline paths to follow, students speak up in class only when invited by the teacher, the teacher is never contradicted, and respect for teachers is also shown outside the classroom. In weak uncertainty avoidance societies teachers are allowed to say “I don’t know,” and a good teacher uses plain language, whereas in strong uncertainty avoidance societies teachers are expected to have all the answers, and a good teacher uses academic language. Finally, in feminine societies teachers use average students as the norm, students admire friendliness in teachers, students choose academic subjects in view of intrinsic interest, and male students may choose traditionally feminine academic subjects. However, in masculine societies teachers use best students as the norm, students admire brilliance in teachers, students choose academic subjects in view of career opportunities, and male students avoid traditionally feminine academic subjects (pp. 312-315).
Cultural adaptation and age (Izura & Shibata, 2001), gender (Dion & Dion, 2001), and relationships (Frame, 2004) are some of the other issues that have been investigated. Research of cultural adaptation has focused on diverse issues. This section has provided a brief overview of the literature on cultural adaptation in different contexts (such as mental health, identity, work environment, education, age, gender, relationships).

Overall Theoretical Orientation to the Study

In the field of communication, there are different approaches that researchers use to study communication problems and practices. Craig (1999) identifies seven traditions of communication theory including the socio-psychological, cybernetic, rhetorical, semiotic, sociocultural, critical, and phenomenological traditions.

The present study is grounded in the socio-cultural tradition. According to the socio-cultural tradition the ways of our understandings, meanings, norms, and roles are worked out in communication. Also, a socio-cultural perspective advocates that realities and identities are constructed through a process of interaction in social groups and the cultures. Socio-cultural tradition is interested in behavioral patterns in interaction and processes of communication that occur in actual situations.

This study examines how culture and its different layers become a part of one’s character, and how this constitutive relationship between culture and identity affects and makes a difference in one’s communication and adaptation to other cultures. The socio-cultural tradition guides this research both theoretically and methodologically.

Direction of the Study

Various theoretical approaches (time based, psychological and socio-cultural, problem based and learning/ growth) have been used to study cultural adaptation. Time based approaches suggest that there is a division between studies of short-term and long-term adaptation. In both short and long term adaptation studies, the main emphasis has been the problematic nature of
cross-cultural experience. Psychological approaches focus on the adjustment of sojourners’ psychological well-being or satisfaction in their new cultural environments. Socio-cultural approaches emphasize the sojourners’ ability to fit in or effectively interact with members of host cultures. Problem based approaches view the intercultural experiences of sojourners mainly as undesirable and focus almost exclusively on individual sojourners’ frustration reactions to the environment.

The focus of the present study is not on the duration of the strangers’ stay, their psychological well being, their ability to fit in, or the problematic nature of the adaptation experience. In this study, I view cultural adaptation from a learning and growth approach and also I employ Kim’s (1996, 2001) stress-adaptation-growth model to explain the process. Kim establishes an integrative theory and model of cross-cultural adaptation which transcends problem and learning/growth oriented, psychological and socio-cultural approaches. I believe Kim’s approach to cultural adaptation is unique and different than the approaches of the other scholars because Kim argues that cross-cultural adaptation is a double-edged process, both problematic and enriching. Therefore, this study views cultural adaptation as both challenging and growth producing.

Cultural adaptation has been studied in variety of contexts such as mental health, identity, work environment, education, age, gender, relationships. In this thesis I studied cultural adaptation in the education context. Different than other studies, in the present study I focused on the challenges and the opportunities that teachers and students face during their adaptation process. Also, I only focused on voluntary strangers. Furthermore, I examined the institution’s (MSU) preparation of its professors’ and students’ adaptation and professors’ and students’ perception of MSU in terms of cultural adaptation strategies and diversity. In this study I examine the following research questions:
RQ1: How do sojourners define themselves? Are national and cultural descriptors central to their definition of self?

RQ2: What are the common challenges and opportunities that teachers and students face when they have to adapt to new cultures?

RQ3: Is cultural diversity institutionally recognized as important at MSU?

RQ4: In what ways (e.g. programs, events, publications) does MSU prepare its teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation?

RQ5: Based on participants’ experiences, have existing strategies used by MSU to prepare its teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation been effective?

Conclusion

Chapter 2 reviewed the previous literature, examined the theoretical approaches (time based, psychological and socio-cultural, and problem and learning/growth oriented approaches) to cultural adaptation and the themes and concepts (such as mental health, identity, work environment, education) that emerge from research of the cultural adaptation process. Finally the chapter talked about the overall theoretical orientation to this study. Chapter 3 will discuss the methodological approach and decisions for this study.
CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Chapter 2 focused on the previous literature, theoretical approaches to cultural adaptation, contexts for cultural adaptation, and the theoretical orientation of the study. This chapter will discuss the methodological approaches, research strategies, and procedures for the research.

Methodological Approaches

Theoretical Paradigm and Perspective

The net that contains the researcher’s arguments regarding his/her knowledge, framework, and methods can be termed as an “interpretive paradigm” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 19). Each interpretive paradigm makes particular demands on the researcher such as the questions he or she asks, the interpretations the researcher brings to them, etc. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) provide a model through which they categorize interpretive paradigms. They identify four major types: positivist and post-positivist, constructivist-interpretive, critical, and feminist-poststructural. This study works within the constructivist-interpretive paradigm.

“Constructivism assumes the relativism of multiple social realities, recognizes the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed, and aims toward interpretive understanding of subjects’ meanings” (Charmaz, 2000). A constructivist approach to research requires a relationship with respondents in which they can cast their stories in their terms. Therefore, researchers need to see social action from the actor’s point of view to understand what is happening.

In this study I tried to tell the story of cultural adaptation from the participants’ (MSU teachers and students) view points. I believe MSU’s understanding of cultural diversity, the challenges that the teachers and students of MSU face are not fixed, but constructed by the individual’s experiences of those issues. I accept that there are multiple realities on such issues and I will try to co-create an understanding.
Methods of Collecting Material

To get deeper insights and to increase the understanding of the phenomenon of interest, methodical triangulation “the use of multiple methods to study a single problem,” (Janesick, 2000, p. 391) will be used for the research. “One way to methodologically triangulate research findings is to combine quantitative and qualitative measurements” (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000, p. 85). Methodical triangulation is a method-appropriate strategy of founding the credibility of quantitative and qualitative analyses. By combining multiple methods and empirical materials, researchers hope to overcome the weakness or intrinsic biases and the problems that come from single method studies. The methods that are employed for this research are interviewing (qualitative) and textual analysis (qualitative and quantitative).

Justification of methods. Interviewing is one of the methods that I employed for this research. At the most basic level, interviewing has a referential purpose. Interviews provide rich and personalized information about people’s beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. The best way to gain information would be to ask people about their internal experiences. Interviews have various advantages. One of the advantages is that during the interview questions can be clarified if they are not understood by the respondents. Another advantage is that the interviewer can get deeper information by asking follow up questions. Researchers can gather information about things or processes that cannot be observed effectively by other means. Researchers can inquire about the occurrences in the past. Besides, researcher can verify, validate, or comment on information gained from other sources. To gather data and gain access into the interviewee’s experience regarding RQ1 (How do sojourners define themselves? Are national and cultural descriptors central to their definition of self?), RQ2 (What are the common challenges and opportunities that teachers and students face when they have to adapt to new cultures?), RQ3 (Is cultural diversity institutionally recognized as important at MSU?), RQ4 (In what ways (e.g. programs, events, publications) does MSU prepare its teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation?), and
RQ5 (Based on participants’ experiences, have existing strategies used by MSU to prepare its teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation been effective?) interviewing was used as the primary method. For each research question several interview questions were developed in order to allow participants to offer their stories and the researcher to prompt them to become reflexive about their experiences. For example for RQ2 (What are the common challenges and opportunities that teachers and students face when they have to adapt to new cultures?) participants were asked the following questions: When you first came to the U.S. what was challenging for you?; Did language have an effect on your adaptation?; Did you overcome those challenges? Or are you still experiencing the challenges?; Do you think that this experience changed you?; What have you learned from this experience?

In addition, since they have slightly different experiences, two different interview schedules were developed for students and teachers. For example while students were asked the following “Did you face challenges when communicating with your teachers?”, the teachers were asked “Did you face challenges when communicating with your students or colleagues?”

Textual analysis is the second method that was employed for the study. How a text is analyzed depends on the purposes of the research and the particular method used. One of the major approaches to textual analysis is content analysis. I used both quantitative (involves counting the particular instances of certain types of messages in texts) and qualitative content analysis (investigates meanings associated with messages rather than with the number of times message variables occur). Content analysis has several advantages. First, content analysis is able to handle massive amounts of data. Second, questionnaires or interviews often obtain data in settings far from the context in which communication occurs, but content analysis study the data as they appear in a context. Finally, content analysis is an unobtrusive technique because researchers study texts that already exist rather than asking people to produce texts. In this study by systematic and replicable examination of texts I investigated, RQ3 (Is cultural diversity
institutionally recognized as important at MSU?) and RQ4 (In what ways (e.g. programs, events, publications) does MSU prepare its teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation?)

Approval from the Institutional Review Board at MSU

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at MSU in May 2006. The data collection for the study began in September 2006 and ended in October 2006. The materials that were included in the IRB proposal were: (a) a description of the theoretical basis and the key references; (b) a description of the methodology; (c) completion certificate of Human Participants Protection Education for Research Teams online course; (d) consent form (see Appendix A); (e) interview guidelines for teachers and students (see Appendices B and C); and (f) the recruitment material (see Appendix D) including the text for e-mail solicitations and telephone calls, handouts, and flyers.

Methodological Procedures

Description of the Method: Interviewing

Qualitative researchers interview people to understand their perspectives on a scene, to retrieve their experiences from the past, and to gain expert insight or information (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p.173). Therefore, in this study interviews helped the researcher to have a better understanding of MSU professors’ and students’ perception of cultural adaptation and experiences, and to gain inside information about the challenges and the opportunities that the teachers and students of MSU face during their adaptation process.

The research site for the interviews was Montclair State University (MSU). The advantages of the research site were that first MSU is a culturally diverse school. According to the MSU website 3% of undergraduate and 3% of graduate students of MSU are international students that are from various countries. In terms of ethnicity, 62% of the students are white, 20% of the students are Hispanic, 11% are African American, and 6% percent are Asian. Therefore, MSU was a suitable site for such research. Second, MSU was a convenient site for the researcher
and since she was also a member it would be easier to get accepted as a researcher. The disadvantages of the site might be that MSU is limited to a particular cohort of students and teachers who can be called privileged. Also, MSU is in a cosmopolitan geographic area, therefore this could make it harder to generalize the results to other schools in different areas or states. However, generalizing the results was not the aim of the current research project. Interviews were conducted at the respondents' convenience. Considering that respondents would seek a space safe from interruptions or the presence of others who might listen in, interviews took place in an office at MSU. Also, participants were asked about the meeting place.

*Data gathering and organizing.* The data was gathered from interviews. The interview discourses was recorded both by tape recording and note taking. Tape recording the interview enabled the researcher to capture the interview exactly as it was spoken. Therefore, tape recording prevented data loss and freed up the researcher to participate fully in the interview. Note taking during the interview would help to retrieve the highlights of the interviews. Interviews were transcribed after they were conducted. Major themes I covered in the interviews were the common adaptive experiences and challenges of the students and teachers during their adaptation process and the participants' point of view of MSU's understanding of cultural diversity. Complete lists of interview questions are in Appendix B and Appendix C.

*Participants.* Participants of this study were foreign born teachers and students of MSU who came to the United States voluntarily. In order to qualify for this study, participants must have entered to the United States after graduating from high school and should be at least 18 years old. This research excluded teachers and students who were born in the USA but have foreign born parents. The participant sample also excluded teachers and students who were born in another country but raised in the USA. For the study, I conducted interviews with 7 students and 10 teachers of MSU. Participants of the research were recruited through active recruitment and the snowballing methods. For active recruitment, individuals who were likely to meet the
criteria for the study were contacted by e-mail solicitations and telephone calls. The text that was used for the recruitment material can be found in Appendix D. Through the snowballing method, students and teachers who participated in the study were asked to refer the researcher to other potential participants.

Before conducting the interviews, potential participants were informed about my intent to audio tape the interviews. At the beginning of the interviews, consent was asked from all participants and interviews were conducted and audio taped after getting the consent from the participants (see Appendix A). All participants were given the option to listen to their audiotapes and request to be removed from the research sample or exclude some part of the interview. To protect the privacy of the participants, anonymity was maintained and each participant was identified by number in transcribed data and the subsequent analyses and reports. T signification represents the teacher participants and S signification represents the student participants.

Instrument. In terms of interview protocol, all conducted interviews were face-to-face and semi-structured. In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer asks a set of basic questions on the interview schedule, but the interviewer is free to ask follow-up questions as well, usually to gather specific details or more complete answers. Semi-structured interviewing “can provide a greater breadth of data that the other types, given its qualitative nature” (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 652). For the current research project the important issue is determining fully what particular individuals think rather than making generalizations, therefore semi-structured interview is appropriate for the study purposes. Interview type was “respondent interview” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p.178). Therefore, respondents only spoke for themselves, instead of commenting on the world surrounding them. Each respondent was interviewed once and each session took twenty five to thirty minutes. Complete lists of interview questions are in Appendix B and Appendix C.

Approach to analysis and interpretation. An interpretive approach was used as a strategy of inquiry in this study. Analyzing began early. Interviews were transcribed after they were
conducted and data were organized through emerging categories. The categories identified were based on the common adaptive experiences and challenges of the students and teachers during their adaptation process and participants' point of view of MSU's understanding of cultural diversity. Following the descriptive analysis of the data through categorizing, the data were interpreted by producing thick descriptions. Thick descriptions provided details and deeper understanding of the experiences and their context.

As Lindlof and Taylor (2002, p. 232) put it “interpretation involves the translation of an object of analysis from one frame of meaning into another.” Interpreting cultural meanings requires producing a “thick description” (Geertz, 1973). A thick description of a human behavior is one that explains not just the behavior, but its context as well, such that the behavior becomes meaningful to an outsider. “The more detail that goes into the description, the richer our understanding” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 16).

Description of the Method: Textual Analysis

Textual analysis is used “to describe and interpret the characteristics of recorded or visual message” (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000, p.225). Textual analysts describe the content, structure, and functions of the messages contained in texts. Also, by using textual analysis relationships between the communication embedded in the text and various outcomes can be studied. Content analysis is used “to identify, enumerate, and analyze occurrences of specific messages and message characteristics embedded in the text” (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000, p.236). The research site for the textual analysis was Montclair State University (MSU).

Data gathering and organizing. The data for the textual analysis were gathered from the institutional website of MSU and selected MSU administrative and academic offices and were organized into different categories. The broad categories that guided my selection of specific texts were curriculum issues, MSU’s identity, and programs offered by MSU.
Texts. For the current study, the texts was analyzed to examine if cultural diversity is recognized as important at MSU and in what ways (e.g. programs, events, publications) does MSU prepare its teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation. The texts included;

1. MSU curriculum and culture
   a. The list of MAR courses

2. MSU and identity
   a. MSU Mission Statement
   b. MSU Strategic Plan
   c. MSU president’s statement
   d. MSU president’s proclamations

3. MSU: Teacher and students preparation
   a. Orientation materials for international student orientation
   b. Orientation materials for international scholar orientation
   c. Newsletter for international students
   d. Newsletter for international scholars

Approach to analysis. Once the key texts were selected, some texts were examined through qualitative analysis whereas some were examined through quantitative analysis depending on the data. For instance, the curriculum issue was explored quantitatively and the number of MAR courses and the percentages were calculated. On the other hand, MSU’s broader identity was explored qualitatively by looking at references acknowledging the importance of cultural diversity in such documents as the MSU mission statement and strategic plan.

Conclusion

Chapter 3 discussed the methodological approaches for the study. Theoretical perspective for the methods, research strategies, methods that were used, data gathering, research site, participants, texts, instruments, and approach to analysis were clarified in this chapter.
Chapter 4 will analyze RQ1 (How do sojourners define themselves? Are national and cultural descriptors central to their definition of self?), RQ2 (What are the common challenges and opportunities that teachers and students face when they have to adapt to new cultures?) and reveal the findings for them.
CHAPTER 4: ANALYSES/FINDINGS OF RQ1 AND RQ2

Chapter 3 discussed the methods for the study. This chapter presents the findings for RQ1 (How do sojourners define themselves? Are national and cultural descriptors central to their definition of self?) and RQ2 (What are the common challenges and opportunities that teachers and students face when they have to adapt to new cultures?). The key issues that I address are: (a) the identity of the participants; (b) the challenges and the opportunities that the participants faced; (c) Kim's stress-adaptation-growth dynamic and how it comes alive in the participants' experiences; and (d) how participants become reflexive when asked about intercultural issues such as similarities and differences between two cultures with which they are familiar.

Participants' Identities

Students' Identities

In this section, I introduce the findings to the following questions from the interview schedule for students (see Appendix C):

1. How would you describe yourself?
   a. Where are you from?
2. What is your major?
3. What year are you in?
4. How old are you?
5. Where were you born?
6. Have you been in the United States before?
7. How old were you when you first came to the U.S?
8. How long have you been here?
9. Do you work?
10. Who do you live with?
11. Do you have family members in the U.S.?
Each student participants’ responses to the above questions are presented in the form of a short narrative profile of identity.

S1. S1 is a student in the Department of Communication Studies and she is in her 2nd year. S1 is from Taiwan and 26 years old. She had visited the United States twice before coming to U.S. to study. S1 was in junior high school (around 8 years old) when she first visited the U.S. It has been 2 years since she came here for studying purposes. S1 is presently doing an internship. S1 doesn’t have family members in the U.S. and she is living with her roommates.

S2. S2 is pursuing her master’s degree on Business Administration with a concentration in marketing. She is in her 3rd year in the school. S2 is from Taiwan and she is 26 years old. S2 visited the U.S. once and stayed 5 days when she was 12 years old. It has been almost 3 years since she came here for studying purposes. S2 is a graduate assistant at her department. She has an aunt in the U.S. and she is living alone in an apartment outside the campus.

S3. S3 is a student who majors in Business Management and he is in his senior year. He is from Saint Lucia and he is 28 years old. S3 hasn’t visited the U.S. before. He was 25 years old when he first came to the U.S. and it has been 3 years since he came. S3 is working part time. He has a cousin in New Jersey, in terms of relatives and he is living alone.

S4. S4 is a graduate student in the Department of Communication Studies and she is in her second semester. S4 was born in Russia and raised in Hungary. She is 27 years old. Previously, S4 came to the U.S. to study for one year. When she first came she was about 22 years old. It has been almost a year since she came to the U.S. for her graduate studies. S4 is not working. She doesn’t have family members in the U.S. and she is living with roommates.

S5. S5 is an undergraduate student and majors in business. He is in his senior year. S5 came to the U.S. with a government scholarship. Therefore, he will be studying in the U.S. only for one year. S5 is from Armenia and he is 20 years old. This is his first visit to the U.S. It has
been 3 months since he came from Armenia. S5 is not working. Besides he is not allowed to work because of the regulations of his scholarship. S5 doesn’t have any family members in the U.S. and he is living in the dorm with roommates.

S6. S6 is a graduate student in the Department of Communication Studies and he is in his 1st year. S6 is from Saint Lucia and he is 29 years old. He visited the U.S. before when he was around 20 years old. It has been 5 years since he came to the U.S. for studying purposes. S6 is a graduate assistant. He has family members in the U.S. including his aunt, cousin, and brother. S6 is also living with his aunt, cousin, and brother.

S7. S7 is a graduate student who majors in educational administration. She is in her 3rd year. S7 is from Estonia and she is 29 years old. S7 didn’t visit the U.S. previously. She was 24 years old when she came and it has been 5 years since then. S7 is not working. She doesn’t have family members in the U.S and she lives with her roommates.

Demographics of Students

There were 7 student participants in this study. The majority of the participants were graduate students (71%, 5 students) of MSU, followed by undergraduate students (28%, 2 students) of MSU. The majority of the graduate students (60%, 3 students) were from the department of communication studies, followed by business administration (20%, 1 student), and educational administration (20%, 1 student). Both of the undergraduate students (28%, 2 students) were from department of business administration.

The ages of the student participants ranged from 20 to 29 years of age with a mean age of 26.4. Students are from different backgrounds and countries such as Taiwan (2 students), Saint Lucia (2 students), Hungary (1 student), Armenia (1 student), and Estonia (1 student). Except for participant S4 who was raised in Hungary but born in Russia, all the student participants were both born and raised in the same country.
The greater number of the student participants (57%, 4 students) had been to the U.S. at least once previously and the rest of the students (42%, 3 students) had never visited the U.S. before coming here to study. Participants' ages when they first came to the U.S. ranged from 7 to 25 years old with a mean age of 18.5 years. The length of the participants' presence in the U.S. also ranged from 3 months to 5 years.

In terms of work, students work as graduate assistants (2 students), interns (1 student), and part-time employees (1 student). 3 of the participants do not work. The majority of the students (4 students) don't have any family members and other students (3 students) have 1 to 3 family members in the U.S. Most of the students (5 students) live with their roommates, one of the students lives alone and one of them lives with his family members.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Year in Major</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Who do you live with?</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Birth place</th>
<th>Where from?</th>
<th>Been in the U.S. before?</th>
<th>The age when first came to U.S.</th>
<th>Reside in U.S.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>Communication graduate student</td>
<td>2. year</td>
<td>Yes, intern</td>
<td>Roommates</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Junior high (7-9)</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>Business Administration graduate student</td>
<td>2. year</td>
<td>Yes, GA</td>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>Yes (an aunt)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2 and a half</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3</td>
<td>Business Management undergraduate student</td>
<td>4. year</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Roommates</td>
<td>Yes (one cousin)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>St. Lucia</td>
<td>St. Lucia</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4</td>
<td>Communication Graduate student</td>
<td>1. year</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Roommates</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5</td>
<td>Business Undergraduate student</td>
<td>4. year in college (1. year in U.S.)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Roommates</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S6</td>
<td>Communication graduate student</td>
<td>1. year</td>
<td>Yes, GA</td>
<td>Aunt, cousin, and brother</td>
<td>Yes (aunt, cousin, brother)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>St. Lucia</td>
<td>St. Lucia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S7</td>
<td>Educational Administration graduate student</td>
<td>3. year</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Roommates</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Central Descriptors

During the interview, student participants were asked to describe themselves. 6 of 7 student participants (S1, S2, S3, S5, S6, S7) described themselves with their personal characteristics. For example, when asked to describe herself S1 provided the following:

I would say I am optimistic, I like to talk with my friends and sometimes outgoing but it depends on the situation. Most of the time I talk a lot while in a group because I want to make people feel relaxed. I want to break the ice.

S2 described herself as follows:

I will say I am a very easy going person. I like to help others when they needed help. And I will do my best to try to be a friend of others. I really like to be like family with other people.

Similarly S6 stated:

I am smart, athletic, I like computers, not a very outgoing person, more introverted than anything, but still can be very social.

In addition participant S7 stated:

I think in general I would define myself by my personal characteristics, but if you didn’t know me and I have to describe myself with general things like, I am from St. Lucia, I have dark skin, short hair, etc.

Besides personal characteristics, S7 pointed out that if he wasn’t known to the investigator he would also describe himself with nationality, and personal appearance. On the other hand, S4 preferred to describe herself with her nationality. In her own words:

It depends on the content. You already told me that this is a cultural study. So if you ask me this question I am going to connect and I am going to explain my self as half Hungarian half Russian, I was raised in Hungary, so I am more like Hungarian than Russian. In America I am a Hungarian but if we go to a bar and if you ask me the same question than I might give you a different answer.

S4 stated that the description may change depending on the context and the situation, the description may vary.
Table 4.2.

*Students’ Descriptions of Self*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>How do participants define themselves?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>Personality characteristics (e.g. optimistic, outgoing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>Personality characteristics (e.g. easy going)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3</td>
<td>Personality characteristics (e.g. open, outgoing, funny)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4</td>
<td>Nationality (half Hungarian half Russian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5</td>
<td>Personality characteristics (e.g. a person who tries to reach his aims)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S6</td>
<td>Personality characteristics (e.g. smart, athletic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S7</td>
<td>Personality characteristics (e.g. very goal oriented and hard working)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Teachers’ Identities*

In this section, I introduce the findings of the following questions that are from the interview schedule for teachers (see Appendix B):

1. How would you describe yourself?
   a. Where are you from?

2. How old are you?

3. Where were you born?

4. Have you been in the United States before?

5. How old were you when you first came to the U.S?

6. How long have you been here?

7. Who do you live with?

8. Do you have family members in the U.S.?

Each teacher participants’ responses to the above questions are presented in the form of a short narrative profile of identity.

*TI.* T1 is from Mexico and she is 34 years old. Since she lived at the border of the United States, she crossed the border numerous times. She has been visiting the U.S. since she was 2 or 3 years old. T1 has been living in the U.S. since 2001. T1 lives with her husband and daughter. She doesn’t have any other relatives in the U.S.
T2. T2 is from France and she is 29 years old. T2 previously visited the U.S. 10 years ago when she was 19 years old. It has been a month since she came to the U.S. T2 doesn’t have family members in the U.S. and she lives in the dorm with roommates.

T3. T3 is from China and she is 50 years old. T3 never visited the U.S. before she moved here. She was 33 years old when she first came to the U.S. and she has been living here since then. T3 is living with her husband and two children. She doesn’t have any other relatives in the U.S.

T4. T4 is from South Korea and she is 36 years old. T4 visited the U.S. previously when she was 15 years old. She has been living in the U.S. for 15 years. T4 doesn’t have family members in the U.S. and she lives alone.

T5. T5 is from Chile and he is 55 years old. T5 visited the U.S. twice before he moved to the country. He was 25 years old when he first came to the U.S. T5 has been living in the U.S. since 1980. T5 lives with his wife. He also has his two daughters in the U.S. in terms of family members.

T6. T6 is from Turkey and she is 31 years old. She has been in the U.S. previously for visiting purposes. T6 was 8 years old when she first came to the U.S. She has been living in the U.S. since 1997. T6 doesn’t have family members in the U.S. and she is living with her girlfriend.

T7. T7 is from India and he is 43 years old. T7 didn’t visit the U.S. before he moved to the country. He was 23 years old when he first came to the U.S. and has been living here for 23 years. T7 lives with his wife. He has a couple of first cousins who are also living in the U.S.

T8. T8 is from Israel and he is 40 years old. T8 didn’t visit the U.S. before he moved to the country. He was 33 years old when he first came to the U.S. It has been 7 years since he moved to the U.S. T8 lives with his wife and kids. He has distant family members in the U.S.

T9. T9 is from Liberia and he is 44 years old. T9 had been in the U.S. for one year for education purposes before he moved to the U.S. When he first came to the U.S. he was 19 years old.
old. T9 has been living in the U.S. for 16 years. He lives with his fiancé. In terms of family, T9
has a brother and a foster brother in the U.S.

T10. T10 is from Turkey and she is 34 years old. T10 had not visited the U.S. before she
moved to the country. She was 22 years old when she first came to the U.S. T10 has been living
in the U.S. for 12 years. T10 lives alone and she doesn’t have any immediate family members in
the U.S.

Demographics of Teachers

There were 10 teacher participants in this study. Teacher participants were from different
backgrounds and countries such as Mexico (1 teacher), France (1 teacher), China (1 teacher),
South Korea (1 teacher), Chile (1 teacher), Turkey (2 teachers), India (1 teacher), Israel (1
teacher), and Liberia (1 teacher). Except T6 who was born in Turkey but grew up in Turkey,
Saudi Arabia, and Canada, all teacher participants were born and raised in the same country. The
ages of the teacher participants ranged from 29 to 55 years of age with a mean age of 39.6 years.

The majority of the teacher participants (60%, 6 teachers) had previously been to the
U.S. at least once. The rest of the teachers (40%, 4 teachers) had never been to the U.S. before
they came to the country to study, teach, or live. Participants’ ages when they first came to the
U.S. ranged from 2 to 33 years old. The length of the participants’ presence in the U.S. also
ranged from 1 month to 26 years.

Most of the teacher participants (6 teachers) live with their husband, wife, fiancé, or
girlfriend. 2 of the participants live alone and 1 teacher participant lives with roommates. 2 of the
teacher participants don’t have any family members in the U.S. 5 of the participants have their
partners and children as family members and 3 of the participants have either distant or
immediate family members in the U.S.
### Table 4.3.

*Demographics of Teachers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Where is the participant from?</th>
<th>Birth place</th>
<th>Have you been in U.S. before?</th>
<th>How old were you when you first came to U.S.?</th>
<th>How long have you been in U.S.?</th>
<th>Do you have family members in U.S.?</th>
<th>Who do you live with?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2 or 3 years old</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Husband and daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19 months</td>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Roommates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>17 years</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Yes (husband and two children)</td>
<td>Husband and two children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>26 years</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>25 years</td>
<td>2. wife and 2 daughters</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Girlfriend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T7</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>19 years</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes, wife and couple of first cousins</td>
<td>Wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T8</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>33 years</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>Yes, distant relatives</td>
<td>Wife and kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T9</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes (brother)</td>
<td>Fiancé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T10</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>immediate family, some distant relatives</td>
<td>Alone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Central Descriptors

During the interviews, teacher participants were asked to describe themselves. T1, T2, T5, T9 described themselves only with personality characteristics. T3 described herself professionally and as a parent in addition to using personal characteristic descriptors. T6 described herself both professionally and personally. T7 described himself with personality characteristics and nationality. T4 described herself only professionally. T10 described herself both professionally and nationally. T8 described himself only as a parent.

7 of the teacher participants mentioned personality characteristics in their descriptions.

When T3 was asked to describe herself she provided the following:

I am an active person. I have a lot of interests personally or academically. I am an athlete in gymnastics. I also do several things at the same time. For the bigger picture, I would say that I am kind of successful in my career as a professor, as a teacher and also for my family life I produced two children. I play several types of sports. I like music, I sing in a chorus. I enjoy listening classical music. So I have a lot of interests.

T1 described herself as:

... I am relatively easygoing. I like to take challenges but at the same time I like to find simple ways of taking challenges. I consider myself pretty much as a problem solver, enjoy solving problems and I try to do it without getting too worked up about it. I try to have fun with it rather than getting too stressed about it. I am a bit of a perfectionist in that regard too. I try to think of myself as a good observer, I like to observe. Not too talkative, if I don’t need to I don’t like to talk. But I do like to have fun conversations, I don’t like chitchat but I do like conversations that I am having fun or getting something out of it.

The next most used type of descriptors came from the professional realm and 4 of the participants used profession while describing themselves. For example T10 described herself as:

I am an associate professor of finance at Montclair State University...

Similarly T6 describes herself as:

...I am a professional woman who is in academia...

Being a parent (by 2 participants) and nationality (by 2 participants) were also used to describe one’s self. T8 provided the following:

If you want me to describe myself the first thing I will say is that I am a father, parent.
### Teachers' Descriptions of Self

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>How do participants define themselves?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>Personality characteristics (e.g. easy going, problem solver)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>Personality characteristics (e.g. patient. if the researcher didn’t know, she would describe with her nationality first)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td>Personality characteristics (e.g. active person), occupation (e.g. successful professor), parent/provider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td>Professional (professor in the department of mathematics at MSU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5</td>
<td>Personality characteristics (e.g. lucky, self determined)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6</td>
<td>Professional (professional in academia) and personality (e.g. happy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T7</td>
<td>National (American-Indian) and personality characteristics (e.g. enjoys interacting)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T8</td>
<td>Parent/provider (father, parent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T9</td>
<td>Personality characteristics (e.g. fair minded person)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T10</td>
<td>Professional (associate professor of finance) and national</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A major difference between students and teachers is that the identity narratives offered by teachers tend to be more complex and multi dimensional. Student identity narratives by contrast, are a bit more simplistic and unidimensional. A marked similarity between students and teachers on the other hand is that both defined themselves on the micro level instead of the macro level. Therefore, instead of focusing on structural identity markers (such as nationality, race, etc.) they focused on personality identity markers, their professional roles and relational circumstances. Face-to-face interviews might have had an effect on this situation. Since several of the structural identity markers (such as age, gender, race, etc.) were apparent to the investigator, participants might have not felt the need to identify themselves through them. Therefore, the circumstances of research made a difference when participants were defining themselves.

**Challenges**

**Students' Challenges**

As Kim suggests in her model on cultural adaptation, the experiences can be a source of both frustration and growth. In order to investigate those two aspects of the cultural adaptation
process I asked participants to talk about the challenges they faced by using the following questions from the interview schedule for students (see Appendix C).

13. When you first came to the U.S. what was challenging for you?
   a. Why was it hard?
   b. Did you face challenges in relationships?
   c. Did you face challenges while you were making friends?
   d. Did you face challenges when communicating with your teachers?

14. Did language have an effect on your adaptation?

15. Did you overcome those challenges? Or are you still experiencing the challenges?

Throughout the interviews, students revealed different kinds of challenges that they faced since they arrived to the U.S. Challenges that were identified in the interviews fall into 6 categories including, language, cultural differences (including relationships and communication styles), stereotypes, cultural literacy, patterns of thinking, and social support.

*Language.* Language was the most common challenge that was mentioned by students.

Lack of English skills (such as issues with grammar, not having enough vocabulary, not knowing jargon or expressions), having an accent or trying to comprehend others' accents were challenges in terms of language.

In her own words S1 explains her difficulty with grammar and using a different alphabet:

"My mother language is Chinese and it is totally different from English because we are not using the same alphabet and the grammar, so it's hard."

S3 talks about his challenge with accents:

"Few times they wouldn't understand my accent. I may have to repeat myself second time... There were some professors who were from foreign countries and I couldn't understand the dialect, the accent pretty much. I was always challenged. Instead of thinking about the material I was trying to interpret what they were saying."
Challenges with language affects students’ academic performance and cause academic difficulties. S5 explains:

"Actually the only problem was my English. Because the first two midterms I didn’t do so well. I know myself I can do better but it was my English. I was reading the questions and I didn’t understand the question so how can I answer it. So that was the problem...."

S2 states in the interview that:

"It is hard when you are in the class that instructors try to say something important. You know that’s important but somehow some word is technical, based on only the business field not daily language. So you are not familiar with that word, even though the instructor might not try to explain, he or she assumes that everybody knows that, and keeps going on and on. So that would be hard for me to catch up and that time it makes me nervous but I know that it is not that hard to skip some word."

In addition to their effects on academic performance, challenges with language cause overall discomfort for the students. S4 points out her challenges with language:

"When you just have to speak in public in front of the whole class, you feel like they are all native speakers and what if they don’t understand my accent; what if I cannot find the word, what if I freeze. Sometimes I can’t express myself properly, it’s not your first language so it’s much harder. Especially in the first semester, I didn’t even speak, because I felt like I can’t, I can’t express myself. Then I thought that they will think I am stupid which is not true."

Similar to S4’s experience S7 also talks about not being able to express herself:

"I feel that I was doing much more effectively when I was in Estonia in my own language. People tell me that the language is not a problem but I feel it, I would express myself in a different way."

*Cultural differences.* Cultural differences in relationships and communication styles were challenges for students. Faced with different levels of individualism or interpreting communication in context caused confusion for some participants.

Relationships were one of the common challenges that students faced. In terms of relationships, making friends and the concept of friendship were the shared challenges by the student participants. The cultural differences in social interaction were challenging and at times..."
confusing for the students. Especially students who were from collectivist cultural backgrounds prioritized close relationships and they were confused when interacting with American students who tend to emphasize aspects of individualism. As a result, some students identified their American friends as superficial by using expressions such as “not warm”, “not close”, “not real friends”. During the interview S1 stated that:

I wouldn’t say it is difficult but I would say it is not easy. I have several friends here, my best friend is an American and I have several American friends that are ordinary friends; I would call them friends but not really good friends. And for teachers it is the same thing. What I want to say about Americans is it is not easy to make a friend or build a relationship with them because they are very friendly at the beginning but if you want to go deep and dig in the relationship it is hard. They don’t want to be real good friends or inside friends.

S5 said that:

... But maybe it comes from culture, people in Armenia are warmer, in relations when you have friends, you can do everything for him. Here I don’t think so. That is some problem I guess. It is good everyone supports himself but there is something unnatural. Americans are very warm here, they are very friendly, I don’t know maybe it’s a matter of time but it is different.

S7 stated:

I realized that the concept of friendship is different here. The Americans don’t really meet friends that often as Estonians do. . . . That was a challenge for me.

Students are also challenged by variations in communication styles. Students who are from high context cultural backgrounds feel confused while interacting with others who are from low context cultural backgrounds. For example S4 stated that:

...you write like 5 sentences before you say what you actually want to say and it is hard for me because I will tell it straight forward. And I don’t know how they perceive me. They may just think that this girl is so rude... Also Americans seem much more polite than us. There were some situations and after that I learned that they don’t really think what they say ...

In her interview S7 also expressed her confusion:
People are still the same but the way they talk to you is different. If you go to a bank, how to behave there, it is the same thing and the same concept but you use different language and you use different words, things like that.

Stereotypes. The assumptions and the expectations of members of the host culture was another challenge that was mentioned in the interviews. S6 expressed his feelings:

I think the most difficult thing is people’s expectations, they don’t know how to deal with you; they have their own prejudices. You have to explain yourself, your culture.

Cultural literacy. Cultural literacy requires more than language skills. It requires a shared body of knowledge of the culture of the country. During the interviews S4 expressed her challenges in terms of cultural literacy.

...for example, people were saying that I would take her to Jerry Springer. I was like who is Jerry Springer, what is it all about? You know there are little signs, loser sign for example, they just show the sign, and I was like ok...

Patterns of thinking. Individuals in divergent cultures perceive the environment differently. S1 stated her challenge with the pattern of thinking during the interview:

It is different not just because of the language but also because of the thinking. The American thinking style is different than our style. They have the system of thinking, everything is a rule, they have to follow that rule but in Taiwan we have many exceptions.

Social support. The last challenged that was mentioned in the interviews was lack of social support. During the interview S3 states “...just the way of life, different people, being away from what I am used to, family, friends, that was a little bit of a challenge.”

To sum up, students revealed different kinds of challenges that they faced since they arrived to the U.S. Challenges that were identified in the interviews fall into 6 categories including, language, cultural differences, host’s assumptions, cultural literacy, patterns of thinking, and social support. Language was the most common challenge that was mentioned. Lack of English skills or issues of accent challenged students in their daily lives and academic performances and caused discomfort. Students faced challenges in relationships and
communication styles. These challenges occurred due to cultural differences in individualism-collectivism and high context and low context. Students felt confused meeting with different levels of individualism and context.

**Teachers' Challenges**

In order to investigate the challenges that teachers faced I asked the following questions from the interview schedule for teachers (see Appendix B).

11. When you first came to the U.S. what was challenging for you?
   
   e. Why was it hard?
   
   f. Did you face challenges at work?
   
   g. Did you face challenges in relationships?
   
   h. Did you face challenges while you were making friends?
   
   i. Did you face challenges when communicating with your students or colleagues?

12. Did language have an effect on your adaptation?

13. Did you overcome those challenges? Or are you still experiencing the challenges?

Throughout the interviews, teachers revealed different kinds of challenges that they faced since they arrived to the U.S. Challenges that were identified in the interviews fall into 6 major categories including, language, social support, differences in education system and learning, school success, cultural differences, and stereotypes.

**Language.** As it was with students, for the teachers language was the most common challenge that was mentioned in the interviews. Lack of English skills and difficulties with accents were challenges in terms of language. In her interview T1 talks about the effect of language on her adaptation:

I think it always had. Even until the present I feel... when I am tired my mind just... I forget my English, I forget words. I think it has more to do when I arrived in England. By the time I came to the US my English was already pretty good but my first years in England were tough. I used to go to school, I understood very well English, I didn’t spoke it very well and I used to have this feeling of having this really great idea, raising my hand and saying it and having this feeling oh my god that sounded stupid. It didn’t...
sounded stupid in my head but it sounded stupid when I said it. So that always made me very sort of aware of subconscious about my language skills. Also I remember, the first year it was interesting because I was away from Mexico, I wanted to read everything that I read in Spanish. I would read my course work in English but I wanted to read everything in Spanish, until one of my professors made me realize that if I wanted to improve my English I need to start to read in English, so I did that.

For the teachers, challenges in language caused difficulties during the lecturing or while interacting with students during the lectures. T3 also states her struggle with language:

... the first summer I started teaching for the first time in this country so that was another struggle in language. After teaching that class my English improved a lot. That was really really hard... You feel that. At the beginning the biggest problems was when I was teaching. The good thing was I teach mathematics only. And that is kind of an international language, the symbols, mathematic formulas, so mathematics was easier that the other subjects. Actually my speaking is ok, if I didn’t know that many words I would use the same one again and again. My problem was when they asked questions, I had a problem the first several classes... Some other problem was I didn’t understand their question. So sometimes I ask them to come to the board and write down the question for me, it helped. I did that at the beginning... And also for me the biggest challenge was writing. Other people struggled at other things mine was writing, it was really hard.

Having an accent was also a challenge for the teachers. Teachers also mentioned that students take advantage of a teacher's accent and use it as an excuse. T3 stated that:

...But still the accent, it is so hard to get rid of it. We will always have accent and even you don’t they will take advantage of that. Somebody from other country, they almost have no accent, but they just know that person is from another country, they take advantage of that, I noticed that even if you don’t have an accent.

T7 also mentions his challenge in terms of having an accent:

Constant challenge was making sure that students don’t blame your accent for their lack of learning. My English was decent, I took some courses as an assistant and pass exams and the university said I can go and teach. I went to a low level class which is not pervasive and students were not interested. In the public schools math and the fear of math. The first thing they said was his accent that’s why I don’t understand. Which is an excuse on their part but I have to work to make sure. It took a while.
Social support. Lack of social support and being away from family and friends were also challenges that the teachers mentioned. During the interview T8 noted that “…we are here without family and you are responsible for everything…”

T10 also states:

…but just living away from your immediate family is a challenge. I don’t think it would be different for an American who is living away from their family, I think challenges are similar.

Difference in education system and learning. Teachers mentioned challenges about the difference in education system and learning. T1 stated that:

Because I came from an academic system that was very different. It wasn’t so structured. Where I studied you basically were own your own. You had 30 books you need to read and if you do the work fine, if you didn’t do the work too bad. There were no tutors, there was nothing. Doing your work was completely up to you, and to improve and to learn. and in a way I always had to learn how to be self-sufficient and when I came here I had some expectations that my students were in college and they were self-sufficient and they could take care themselves and it wasn’t like that. So I had to change. it was hard because you know when you are a teacher you are trying to think how your students learn. The first thing you ask yourself is how did I learn and I couldn’t apply how I learn because it was completely different. That was hard, I had to rethink my whole pedagogical approach.

T3 stated that:

…the semester already started for two weeks when I came here, so I had to immediately adjust to a new apartment and text books and catch up with the classes the course work. It was not like what I thought it would be. Because I already had a master degree in my school in china but it was still very difficult for me the first semester. Because we had a language is a part, also it was different something we didn’t learn in china, it is just the different aspect of the mathematics. So it was kind of struggling academically, I had to drop one class and change it to another before the deadline that was one thing…

T7 stated that:

… Here in every course you are sort of asked to think independently every week and that was a big challenge. I was just not here and it took me quite a while before I was able to say, you know what I will be able to do this. But it was not easy, it was a struggle, I was a very good student. And I was pretty lost for a while. I didn’t know what to do… I was at a large state university and I was teaching a lot of students who are not math majors. I was used to the students who are at the top colleges back when I was in India, and this
was a wide gap. What my expectations were and what these students were. There were students who were good but only 20 percent, 80 percent was not too good. There was a time period that I had to adjust to that, it took a little while but you have to conscious.

*School success.* Another challenged that was mentioned by teachers was school success.

Majority of teachers came to the U.S. for education. Therefore, they started as graduate students.

Teachers expressed that school work was difficult and they were afraid to fail. T7 stated that:

> The most important thing when I came was obviously my graduate study. I was being paid a scholarship, I was very afraid that I was going to fail and go home and look stupid...

T9 explains:

In graduate school, the first semester my experience was very tough, very challenging. Not only that I was coming from a different country but also for higher education. When I was coming the university offered me assistantship. The expectation was I will be teaching one of the courses. I said ok. So when I came for the first semester, they gave me a whole class to teach but I was working with a professor who was teaching a course 5 times a week. It was a media course, practically I was taking care of the course, I was doing the exercises and the questions of the students, and that class was at 8 o’clock in the morning. So everyday of the week, I had to be up late at night to read all the materials, do all the exercises, and do my homework, so I wasn’t sleeping enough. So that was a challenge for me. That intensity, the expectation that you have to do your work. In addition to that I was taking my courses.

T5 stated:

> As I said I came here for my graduate study, so my challenge was to do that. I wanted to do well in my program. It was very important for me, the idea was going back to Chile in those days, getting my degree as soon as possible, go there and start the doctoral program down there. That was the idea.

*Cultural differences.* Cultural differences in interactions were challenging for teachers.

Facing with different levels of power distance, individualism or context caused confusion in participants. T6 explains her challenges about power distance:

> Because I was brought up with the Turkish culture even though I wasn’t brought up in Turkey, it was very difficult to call my advisor by her first name, or I wasn’t American, I wasn’t upright and forthcoming, if I was told to do something if I disagreed with it I still did it because they were my elders and I had to do what they told me to do. And so whatever cultural thing come with the Turkish culture, the respect and all that kind of stuff, I think it gave me a disadvantage because people would say do me a favor and do this and I would feel like I had to do it and American people would just say no. I didn’t know how to do that. I didn’t know how to say no.
T9 notes his challenges with power distance and individualism:

We also always called professors professors, but here they used first names. And that’s ok. It is ok because I got used to it, after I started Ph.d I was calling my professor dr., and he was telling me to call him with his first name. I had to overcome that. That took time. Even now sometimes I call my advisor professor, that was something that took a while to get used to. Now the challenge is culturally, one thing in this society is Americans are more individualistic, even if you live in a community or neighborhood, there may people right next door to you, but you only see them in a few occasions... People tend to depend on themselves, in a certain degree people only concerned about themselves and their immediate family. In my society it is more about the extended family, so if one member of the family succeeds and capable of taking care of other people, you are expected to do that. I have been doing that since I have been here and when I went home I was talking to family and friends and it brought joy to me. So I wouldn’t want to let that go. I like to help as much as I can.

T7 talks about his challenge with different levels of context:

... Because my professor wanted his students to be independent and it was 4 years before I found a new problem. I have wasted 2 years period because he was waiting and I was waiting and it was basically the difference in culture. So these were serious challenges that I had to struggle to.

Stereotypes. Being stereotyped by the host was a challenge for teachers. T4 states that:

... sometimes men especially all not all but a lot of Caucasian men, they would perceive me as if some kind of a stereotyped Asian woman, butterfly type but I am not, and they expect certain type of reaction which I didn’t give them so...

T7 tells his experience about being stereotyped:

You come from conservative country where a lot of your peers don’t know much about. The only thing they know is there are cows on the street. Why do women wear the red thing on their head as a mark of the marriage? What’s with that? Every Wednesday graduate students would go for a beer. I would say, yes sure. Is it true that non of the Indians don’t drink. I would say why wouldn’t they drink? Aren’t you very religious? No I am not very religious... a lot of people are who they were thinking and a lot of it was not. Not that everyone is like that. India has a very diverse population. There are different people. So that was a challenge.

Although they were shared rarely by teachers, culture shock for long term stay, host receptivity, host’ conformity pressure, cultural literacy, patterns of thinking were other challenges that emerged from the interviews.
Table 4.5.

Challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- lack of English skills (grammar, vocabulary, jargon, expressions)</td>
<td>- lack of English skills (grammar, vocabulary, jargon, expressions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- accent (having an accent or comprehending other accents)</td>
<td>- accent (having an accent or comprehending other accents)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural differences</td>
<td>Cultural differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Relationships</td>
<td>- faced with different levels of power distance, individualism, context in interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- making friends</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- the concept of friendship</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Differences in communication style</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- coming from a high or low context culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotypes</td>
<td>Stereotypes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural literacy</td>
<td>Cultural literacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patterns of thinking</td>
<td>Patterns of thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of social support</td>
<td>Lack of social support</td>
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<tr>
<td>- being away from family and friends</td>
<td>- being away from family and friends</td>
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<tr>
<td>Differences in education system and learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>- system structure</td>
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<td>- curriculum differences</td>
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<tr>
<td>School success</td>
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<td>- school work as a student</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culture shock for long term stay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Host’s conformity pressure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Host receptivity</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

As it can be seen from the table, there are some categories that show overlap between students and teachers. But what can also be seen from the table is that teachers present a more complex picture regarding the challenges faced which may impact the process of adaptation.

Opportunities

Students’ Opportunities

In the interviews students were also asked to talk about the opportunities they faced throughout their adaptation. The following questions from the interview schedule for students were asked (see Appendix C).
23. Do you think that this experience changed you?

24. What have you learned from this experience?
   
   a. What have you learned about yourself?
   
   b. Have you learned about your own culture or values?

The opportunities students face include learning about one’s self and personal characteristics, finding out more about their native culture, and appreciating other cultures and diversity.

*Learning about one’s self.* Participants stated that they learned more about themselves and their characteristics. T2 states that:

I learned that I am really good person, I am an easy going person and I want to learn more in terms of mix cultures, and I try to ask people more, try to learn from them of the things they are doing daily. And it makes me more patient...

Several participants stated that they became more confident after this experience. S4 said:

Well, you have to become much stronger to just survive, I mean not survive but you are in a foreign country you have to fight, you have to establish a whole new life, you have to find friends. You have to go to the supermarket, everything is new, you don’t know what is what or what brand you should choose. Everything is different, everything. You have to be very strong, many times you are lonely, because you don’t have that supporting network, you don’t have your family here so its harder to deal with yourself with your feelings. I think it made me much stronger and after you live alone in a country, I think you can live everywhere. And you feel like I did it here, so I can go to Denmark or Italy and I can do the same.

*Learning about native culture.* Living in another country gave the participants the chance to compare their own culture with the host culture. Throughout the interviews student participants stated that they have learned about their own culture by comparing it with the host culture.

S1 said:

I would compare, compare the different people and cultures. I started noticing the cultural differences, this American style this is.. and I notice flaws about my culture what our culture should improve and what our weaknesses.
S3 stated:

Sometimes you need to step away from the picture, to really realize the detail of the picture and I think that's what happened with me. I had to take a step away from my country to realize that what I had and now I am realizing, not that I would change anything, it is a good learning experience because I met a wide diversity of people, I get to experience something new and different. It has advantages as well as disadvantages.

Participants also find out what aspect of their native culture they appreciated the most. S2 stated:

When you are in that culture you feel nothing. When you have a chance to do the comparison, we try to be kind to people in Taiwan, we try to not to embarrass people in terms of our language, we won't say something directly, we trying to imply and let them know that it might do some improvement for example your job. And I really appreciate that, we won't just point out that you are doing something wrong, you cannot do it anymore something like that.

Appreciating other cultures and diversity. According to the student participants, this experience exposed them to other cultures. Participants reported that they became aware of different people and different ideas and they became more open minded. S2 states:

There is other people in this world, and use different thinking, they might be not wrong in terms of different cultures that you should know more before you really jump to the conclusion, I really think that is really important to me, not only your way of thinking or your culture that teachers teach you when you are a little boy or a girl, other things could be right too in terms of other cultures, that is one thing I really make great friends for me in this mixed culture. And second you try and you will try to be more kind to people, because you have different cultures, you don’t even know what is right what is wrong in their culture, did I do ok, is that offensive in your culture, sometimes it happens, so I learned to be more cautious, more kind, more nice to people, to try know their need, it might be you are doing something good for them, they may say why you are doing this to me, it is offensive you aren’t respecting to me.

Teachers’ Opportunities

During the interviews teachers also revealed the opportunities they faced throughout their adaptation. The following questions from the interview schedule for teachers were asked to teacher participants (see Appendix B).

20. Do you think that this experience changed you?

21. What have you learned from this experience?

   a. What have you learned about yourself?
b. Have you learned about your own culture or values?

The opportunities teachers faced include learning about one’s self and personal characteristics, finding out more about their native culture, and appreciating other cultures.

_**Learning about one’s self.**_ Participants expressed that they became more aware of their characteristics. Facing various situations and managing to live successfully in another culture both taught participants new qualities about themselves and made them see some qualities that they had but weren’t aware of. T10 said that “in general I know myself better than I did then.” Several participants stated that they become more confident after this experience. T1 states:

>You know I always thought that, again I consider myself as being very self-sufficient and trying to find solutions for everyday problems and caring for myself. I think this made me more aware of that, the need to develop the ability and pursue it and try to be very self-sufficient. And it gave me a lot of confidence because if I could deal with moving here and changing things and trying to adopt. If I can do it in other places I can do it you know.

T9 also states “It taught me that I can do many things that I want to do if I set my mind. I also tell it to my students, if you really want to do something you can.”

The experience also gave the participants the chance to compare and learn. T4 states that:

>What I can confidently say that I am designed by nature with more and more like a western type of thinking. Because the Asian people are less rationale, they are too much emotional, but I was never like that… I was thinking but I wasn’t quite sure, but now I can say I am.

_**Learning about native culture.**_ Living in another country gave the participants the chance to compare their own culture with the host culture. Throughout the interviews teacher participants stated that they have learned about their own culture. T7 states:

>I think I am much more interested in India’s history than I would have if I stayed there. I read Indian culture books even though they are coffee table books. I don’t know how much of that I would have read if I stayed in India. Because now I read those and I try to look at the western civilization and I try to always go and compare different things. This comparative idea would not have come. It has actually helped me to look at things. Other thing is a lot of Indian origin authors write books, when I go home I talk to my friends not too many of them are aware of those or read those. I knew more than them and I could talk about things.
Participants also find out what aspect of their native culture they appreciated the most. T6 explains:

…now I look at Turkey and look at what they value and what they don’t value and how much more Turkish culture is focused on making sure everyone else is ok before you are ok. Especially for females, from a Turkish female perspective. Here you have to first make sure that you are ok to be able to help others. Whereas in turkey I don’t think that you are ok to help others is ever an issue, you always help others regardless of yourself.

Appreciating other cultures. According to the teacher participants this experience also exposed them to other cultures. Participants reported that they become open to different cultures, became open minded, and learned to accept diversity. T5 states:

… like the acceptance of diversity. Not everyone but in general people are more willing to accept diversity, gays, gender equalities. In Chile although we have a female president these days, there is still chauvinism. And if you are gay in Chile it is very difficult to be open. The is very strong influence from Catholic Church. Chile is one of the fewest countries that doesn’t have legalized abortion. Abortion is still illegal at any stage in any situation even there is risk for the life of the mother.

T7 also states “Living in India I wouldn’t be as open to different cultures, cultures are different but the basic ideas are the same, I broaden my horizons I think…”

Table 4.6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Learning about one’s self and characteristics</td>
<td>Learning about one’s self and characteristics</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Learning about the native culture</td>
<td>Learning about the native culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciating other cultures</td>
<td>Appreciating other cultures</td>
<td>Appreciating other cultures</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from the table, regarding the opportunities for growth there is a huge overlap in the type of opportunities identified. There are also fewer categories in opportunities
compared to the challenges, which shows us that participants tend to notice the challenges more than the opportunities.

**Stress-Adaptation-Growth**

According to Kim's (1996, 2001) stress-adaptation-growth dynamic, individuals who face environmental changes experience stress. Stress is a conflict between the desire to maintain old customs and keep original identity, and the desire to adopt new ways and seek harmony with the new environment. Stress pushes individuals to adjust and restructure their existing conditions to regain an internal balance. Kim argues that stress and adaptation lead the individual to personal growth. Kim also states that none of the three (stress-adaptation-growth) occurs without the others, and each occurs because of the others.

Kim’s stress-adaptation-growth dynamic comes alive in the experiences of the participants.

**Students’ Stress-Adaptation-Growth**

In this section I present the findings for the following questions from the interview schedule for students (see Appendix C).

14. Did language have an effect on your adaptation?

15. Did you overcome those challenges? Or are you still experiencing the challenges?

16. What strategies did you use when you were adapting?

Throughout the interview, participant S4 revealed her experiences. We can observe how S4 faced stress and how stress lead her to adaptation and growth.

**Stress.** S4 reported that when she faced the environmental change, she experienced stress. S4 said:

...when you just have to speak in public in front of the whole class, you feel like they are all native speakers and what if they don’t understand my accent, what if I cannot find the word, what if I freeze... Especially in the first semester, I didn’t even speak, because I felt like I can’t, I can’t express my self...
Adaptation. The stress S4 experienced pushed her to make adjustments for the existing circumstances. S4 stated:

...Then I thought that they will think I am stupid which is not true... I asked questions. And the teachers know that you are an international student and they help you and my group is so supportive, they ask me do you what we are talking about? They explain me.

Growth. Finally, S4 works out ways of handling the stress and she says:

I learned that I have to speak anyway. It doesn’t matter. They will understand you. My group is really great, my professor is the best teacher I have ever had. If you know people you feel it is much easier to work with them.

Teachers’ Stress-Adaptation-Growth

Similarly, Kim’s stress-adaptation-growth dynamic is revealed when a teacher, T7, talks about his experiences in the interview while answering question 11 (When you first came to the U.S., what was challenging for you?) (see Appendix B).

Stress. T7 indicated that when he faced the environmental change, he experienced stress. T7 stated:

Here in every course you are sort of asked to think independently every week and that was a big challenge... it was not easy, it was a struggle, I was a very good student. And I was pretty lost for a while. I didn’t know what to do. Moreover may be couple of years in to my graduate study, I started doing my PhD and I knew things weren’t working in the process. I was waiting for my professor to tell me to change my problem...

Adaptation. The stress T7 experienced pushed him to adjust to the existing circumstances. T7 notes “… it took me quite a while before I was able to say, you know what I will be able to do this…”

Growth. When the stress was managed, it presented T7 an opportunity for learning. T7 said:

... my professor wanted his students to be independent and it was 4 years before I found a new problem. I have wasted 2 years period because he was waiting and I was waiting and it was basically the difference in culture.
Kim's stress-adaptation-growth dynamic is applicable but it can still be expanded. According to Kim's dynamic, a person aims to maintain his/her internal balance. If the individual is exposed to stress (such as other cultural values, norms, practices, etc.) the process starts. The individual tries to regain the internal balance and when the stress level reaches a certain point adaptation takes place.

My statement is that the process won't be parallel with different kinds of challenges. An individual can experience different levels of stress for different issues and the process may take longer or shorter for various matters. For example, in the course of the interview T1 reveals the challenges she faced. The stress T1 experiences in terms of language and the stress she experiences in terms of learning differences are divergent. While T1's stress level for language becomes almost paralyzing at times, her stress level for learning differences is moderate. In her own words T1 states:

I picked up a book in Spanish and said I am going to make my peace with it but I couldn't. I couldn't read in Spanish without feeling an enormous sense of nostalgia, I mean almost paralyzing. So I decided not to do it and to what extend that prevented my adaptation.. I don't know. But I know that it was one of those weird things, but language itself was keeping me somewhere else and I didn't want that to happen.

We can observe the change of T1's stress level when she is talking about learning differences:

... it was hard because you know when you are a teacher you are trying to think how your students learn. The first thing you ask yourself is how did I learn and I couldn't apply how I learn because it was completely different. That was hard, I had to rethink my whole pedagogical approach.

We can visualize this with the following graph.
Figure 4.1. T1’s stress for language.

Figure 4.2. T1’s stress for learning differences.
Also, the individual can experience different levels of stress for the same issue at different times. In many of the interviews we can notice that the stress level in language and accent in teachers differs for the period that they were students and for the period that they were teachers. In this case, the change in the identity markers causes stress levels to increase. During the interview T3 reveals the challenges she faced in terms of language and portrays how the stress level diverged at different times of her life:

... I think I adjusted very well in a few months, the first summer I started teaching for the first time in this country so that was another struggle in language. After teaching that class my English improved a lot. That was really, really hard.

Kim states “the stress-adaptation growth dynamic plays out not in a smooth linear progression, but a cyclic and continual draw back to leap representation of the present articulation of the interrelationships among stress, adaptation, and growth....” (p. 56). I agree that Kim’s dynamic plays out a cyclic and continual draw back to leap but I also want to add that the draw backs and leaps don’t always occur in standard time frames. As we can see in the following graph at different stages in an individual’s life the stress, adaptation, and growth can occur at different paces.

![Figure 4.3. Different stress levels for the same issue.](image)
The Emergence of Intercultural Reflexivity

Students and teachers talked about their experiences and observations in the course of interviews. Participants made comparisons and asserted their thoughts about the similarities and differences of the cultures, and reentry shock.

Students' Intercultural Reflexivity

In this part I introduce the findings for the following questions that are from the interview schedule for students (see Appendix C).

17. What did you find surprising in classroom, with teachers or classmates?

20. Do you on occasion visit your home country?
   a. Does anything surprise you when you go back?

21. If an American student comes to your country, what kind of challenges do you think he/she might experience?

22. What are the similarities between your national culture and the U.S. culture?

Similarities. In general, student participants had difficulty finding similarities between their national culture and the U.S. culture. There are two reasons for this: the first reason is that strangers tend to focus on differences and the problematic parts of the new culture since they are facing it constantly. The second reason is that some cultures do not have much in common.

When asked, students didn’t focus on the deeper levels of the culture such as traditions, beliefs, values, etc. Instead students focused on the uppermost levels of cultural artifacts such as dress, music or point the finger at globalization which reminds us that we are living in each other’s backyards.

S1 talks about how globalization affects culture:

Culture is changing, they are compromising. People are getting more open, like about the sexual relationships, man and woman sleep together before they get married. So everything is changing... I would say the life style is very similar now, like the sexual relationships, the only thing is people might feel guilty and they have the pressure from the society but they would still do the same thing. It is hard to say the similarity because
we have different backgrounds but because of the globalization people have the similar thinking.
S3 also states “A lot of similarities. We are placed on the same side of the world. We share a lot of the same eastern world habits, a lot of same food, music and clothes, entertainment, the way we view life on the broader spectrum...”

On the other hand, some of the students couldn’t think of similarities. For example, S5 replied “Similarities? I don’t know. I can think about differences.”

Differences. Students didn’t have difficulties while listing the differences between their national culture and the U.S. culture. The differences that the students pointed out include differences in the classroom environment, such as teacher-student interaction, teachers’ classroom management, teaching style of teachers, differences in the education system in general, differences in relationships, language, communication style, norms. For instance, S1 talks about the difference in student-teacher interaction and power distance;

...students here like to talk and most of the time they don’t stop because once they start talking about one question they can talk about half an hour, until the teacher stops them. This is the difference. And I think students here want to make/show themselves as knowledgeable or I don’t know, they just talk so much, they are sometimes aggressive, sometimes if the professor says something opposing their opinion, they would just stand for themselves... most of the time we don’t answer the question that often unless the teacher points at you and say you answer this question. And students usually don’t argue. Even though we(students) have different opinions but if the teacher doesn’t agree with your opinion we compromise on the table but under the table it’s a different story. We don’t want to break the relationship with the teacher because we know the teacher controls our grade, and you don’t want to fight with that.

S6 states:

When I was an undergrad, even it was 5 minutes to the hour everyone pack up their bags, pack up their books and stuff, and they are done, and then the professor has to stop. They tell the professor, we are done with you, they almost force the professor to finish the class. Back home even when the bell rings you don’t pack, the professor tells you, you get ready when I tell to you to get ready.

S7 states “I guess it is everything being informal that is something that surprises me. The professor is not somebody who lectures all the time, it is more in discussions.”
S2 talks about communication style differences:

But a lot of people from American are self centered but not that self centered that you might think. I will say they will try to show their opinions and they want to show opinions by saying it and so in our culture it is better for you to be silent first and than come up with your opinions. Most people in America they try to interrupt you before you finish your sentence or your word. I think that would be in our culture, one of the problems they would face that people will think that you are too self centered and you might be cocky and the person with this behavior is not appreciated in our culture, we want to listen ours first and say yours later, that will be one thing.

S7 also talks about communication style differences:

The communication style is different, that is the biggest issue. The communication is very formal and people don’t seem friendly. They don’t seem friendly, they are friendly but it is the way they behave. When somebody step on your feet they wouldn’t say I am sorry, it would be very rude here, but in Estonia it is quite fine to do that.

Reentry shock. In addition, students stated that they experienced confusion when they returned to their home countries. S4 states:

Well, when I first came here I loved it, I didn’t want to go home. When I went home I was depressed for 6 months. I was crying everyday, everything irritated me, I saw my country differently. America was the country, that is the best.

S7 states “People. They seem so different than that I am used to, they are cold and calm. It is sort of the nature of the Estonians are. Even if I am born here, it is now different”

In the course of interviews students constantly made comparisons between their national culture and the U.S. culture. Pointing out similarities was difficult for the students. There are two reasons for this: the first reason is that students tend to focus on differences and problematic parts of the culture since they are facing it constantly. If we think in terms of the stress-adaptation-growth dynamic, students are experiencing various kinds of stress and we can say that they are at the beginning of the process. At this time, they are experiencing stress more than adaptation and growth. Therefore, stress pushes them to think and compare so the first cases they can think of are differences rather than similarities. Secondly, some cultures do not have much in common. As a result, it can be difficulty to figure out similarities between them.
As mentioned in the first chapter, cultures have layers. When asked, students didn’t focus on the similarities of the deeper levels of the culture such as traditions, beliefs, values, etc. Instead students focused on the uppermost levels of cultural artifacts such as dress codes or music or pointed the finger at globalization. This is another sign that the students are at the beginning of the adaptation process. Strangers first meet with the visible, uppermost levels of the culture and they may not explain the underlying motivations for behaviors, practices, etc. Therefore, students tend to compare the layers that they are familiar with.

Students didn’t have difficulty listing the differences between their national culture and the U.S. culture. The differences that the students pointed out include differences in the classroom environment such as teacher-student interaction, teachers’ classroom management, teaching style of teachers, differences in the education system in general, differences in relationships, language, communication style, norms. Students easily coming up with the differences, again brings us to the point that, students are at the beginning of the adaptation process and experiencing stress. Therefore, they are making comparisons and trying the figure out the deeper layers of the culture.

_Teachers’ Intercultural Reflexivity_

In this section I present the findings for the following questions that are from the interview schedule for teachers (see Appendix B).

10. What was surprising for you when you first came to the U.S.?

17. Do you on occasion visit your home country?
   a. Does anything surprise you when you go back?

18. If an American professor/student comes to your country, what kind of challenges do you think he/she might experience?

19. What are the similarities between your national culture and the U.S. culture?

_Similarities._ In terms of pointing out the similarities between cultures, close to students, teacher participants also had difficulties with finding similarities between their national culture
and the U.S. culture. The motives for this were also similar to students’ motives; tending to focus on differences and problematic part of the culture or cultures not having much in common.

Furthermore, again similar to students, instead of focusing on the deeper levels of the culture such as traditions, beliefs, values, etc., most of the teacher participants tend to focus on the uppermost levels of the cultural artifacts such as dress, food, sports or globalization. S5 talks about the similarities and focuses on the uppermost level of the culture:

There are lots of similarities. If you go there and turn on the TV, what you are going to see are the same movies that we are watching here, the same shows. There some Chilean shows too of course. But for example pro basketball is very popular there. I was surprised when I go there 4 or 5 years ago, it is everywhere, the music is the same, the hits are the same.

S10 talks about how globalization affects the cultures by pushing them closer together: “I think with globalization, everybody is getting so similar to one another. Life style, comparing with New York, New Jersey area to Istanbul, the life style is similar, big city, very busy, hard work…”

Although, some teachers reported the similarities between cultures, some teachers couldn’t think of similarities. For example T6 said “I don’t think that the culture I grew up with have common things…I can’t think of anything”

*Differences.* Teachers didn’t have difficulties while identifying the differences between their national culture and the U.S. culture. The differences that the teachers pointed out include cultural differences in terms of individualism-collectivism and power distance, political and economic systems, education system, unwritten rules of the cultures, local traditions, and language. For example, T3 talks about the difference in power distance: “in china students respect professors more, much more than here. Here, in the classroom you are eating, drinking, in Chinese classrooms we don’t have that. That’s one difference.”

T9 also states the difference in power distance:

how professors interact with students, in the classroom in Liberia, from elementary school to university, you sit in the classroom, you are expected be obedient to the professor and you be quiet, sometimes you can raise your hand and say things, but you
don't challenge the professor. That was something that I found surprising here. Because students are open here, and in some cases they try to do whatever they can to slow the professor down, they even say they know better than the professor. We also always called professors professors, but here they used first names. And that’s ok. It is ok because I got used to it, after I started phd I was calling my professor dr. , and he was telling me to call him with his first name. I had to overcome that. That took time. Even now sometimes I call my advisor professor, that was something that took a while to get used to.

T8 brings up the issue of individualism by stating that the “only difference I see is here people are distant and reserved in the relationships, otherwise I would same it is similar.”

T5 also talks about the difference in relationships and individualism:

there is very important difference in terms of how here people maintain social relationships, we are very good friends but we see each other in a very programmed way, let's get together, Americans will get their book and start saying in the month which day is available. And then they will pencil you, oh 3 months from now. In chile you just walk into the house of your friend. You ring the bell, you go in, they invite you to have drinks, they invite you to have dinner with them, there is no major preparation in how interactions occur. The other thing, there people will be on top of you, asking if you are ok, if you need any help, if there is something they can do for you. Here if you don’t ask you can die by yourself. Colleagues from Spain came, they really needed help here, but the first couple of weeks they didn’t realize that they had to ask. They had a very bad time during those weeks.

T7 notes the differences in education and the power distance:

In terms of the education, one of the things that was surprising was how less structured the education was that in India. There we were thought there is this course and that course and that course if you want to major in mathematics. Do not worry about anything else. You study for 2 years you take an exam, if you fail you come back in a year. Then I came here and I said I can actually chose courses, I can actually call professors by their first name which is interesting, I can actually go in and talk a professor and the professor is not afraid to say I don’t know the answer. That was a big surprise. And how this led to research and participation. Education was a big change.

*Reentry shock.* Teachers also reported instances where they experience confusion when they returned to their home countries. T1 reveals her confusion “Everything is changing. You want to keep that place the same, things the same way that you left it and now everything is different.” T8 states that “It surprised me that how people are loud and less polite in Israel.
Things that I forgot. How crowded is the country, how hot it is weather is and impolite the people are."

In the course of interviews teachers also constantly made comparisons between their national culture and the U.S. culture. In terms of pointing out the similarities between cultures, close to students, teacher participants also had difficulties with finding similarities between their national culture and the U.S. culture.

The motives for this were also similar to students’ motives; first, tending to focus on differences and problematic part of the culture. Second, some cultures do not have much in common. Furthermore, again similar to students, instead of focusing on the deeper levels of the culture such as traditions, beliefs, values, etc., most of the teacher participants tend to focus on the uppermost levels of the cultural artifacts such as dress, food, sports or globalization.

Teachers didn’t have difficulties while identifying the differences between their national culture and the U.S. culture. The differences that the teachers pointed out are cultural differences in terms of individualism-collectivism and power distance, political and economic systems, education system, unwritten rules of the cultures, local traditions, and language. Like students, teachers continue comparing the cultures. But since they are faced with different issues in their lives, some of the differences they listed are not the same as those listed by students. Also, while listing the differences teachers tend to focus not only the uppermost layers of the culture but some of the deeper layers of the culture, such as the political and economic systems, the education system, unwritten rules of the cultures and traditions. This indicates that teachers are at a different stage in the adaptation process compared to the students who are at the beginning of the adaptation process and tend to focus on only the uppermost levels of the culture.

Conclusion

Chapter 4 analyzed RQ1 (How do sojourners define themselves? Are national and cultural descriptors central to their definition of self?) and RQ2 (What are the common challenges
and opportunities that teachers and students face when they have to adapt to new cultures?). The key issues were: (a) the identity of the participants; (b) the challenges and the opportunities that the participants faced; (c) Kim’s stress-adaptation-growth dynamic and how it comes alive in the participants’ experiences; and (d) how participants become reflexive when asked about intercultural issues such as similarities and differences between two cultures with which they are familiar.

The key findings indicated that for both student and teacher participants, personality, role, and interpersonal descriptors were central to the definitions of self. Neither students nor teachers focused on structural identity markers such as nationality, race, etc. Language, cultural differences, stereotypes, cultural literacy, patterns of thinking, and social support were the challenges that were identified by students. The challenges that were identified by teachers were language, social support, differences in education system and learning, school success, cultural differences, and stereotypes. The opportunities that were stated by student and teacher participants were learning about one’s self and personal characteristics, finding out more about their native culture, and appreciating other cultures and diversity.

Chapter 5 will analyze RQ3 (Is cultural diversity institutionally recognized as important at MSU?), RQ4 (In what ways (e.g. programs, events, publications) does MSU prepare its teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation?), and RQ5 (Based on participants’ experiences, have existing strategies used by MSU to prepare its teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation been effective?).
CHAPTER 5: ANALYSES/FINDINGS OF RQ3, RQ4, AND RQ5

Chapter 4 analyzed RQ1 (How do sojourners define themselves? Are national and cultural descriptors central to their definition of self?) and RQ2 (What are the common challenges and opportunities that teachers and students face when they have to adapt to new cultures?). This chapter analyzes RQ3 (Is cultural diversity institutionally recognized as important at MSU?), RQ4 (In what ways (e.g. programs, events, publications) does MSU prepare its teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation?), and RQ5 (Based on participants’ experiences, have existing strategies used by MSU to prepare its teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation been effective?). The key issues I address are: (a) MSU’s recognition of cultural diversity and participants’ impressions regarding cultural diversity at MSU; (b) MSU’s programs to prepare teachers and students for cultural adaptation and participants’ experiences with MSU programs for cultural adaptation; and (c) participants’ assessment of MSU programs’ effectiveness.

Recognition of cultural diversity at MSU and participants’ impressions

RQ3 (Is cultural diversity institutionally recognized as important at MSU?) was investigated by using two methods, including textual analysis and interviewing. In this part, first, by employing the textual analysis method I analyzed MSU’s mission statement, MSU’s strategic plan, the proclamations by the president of MSU, the president’s statement, and the list of MAR courses to observe if MSU as an institution recognizes cultural diversity as important. Second, by employing the interviewing method, I examined if students and teachers of MSU think cultural diversity is recognized as important at MSU.

MSU’s Recognition of Cultural Diversity

MSU mission statement. In the MSU mission statement, there are two parts that mention cultural issues.
Recognizing the increasing connectedness of the world, the University will ensure that all students develop an understanding of global issues and of their responsibilities as citizens of the world. (MSU Mission Statement, 2006)

The University will play a role beyond the campus community, partnering and collaborating at the local, state, national and international levels to make positive contributions to addressing issues of importance to society, to enable students to experience their ability to use knowledge in constructive ways in the world, and to share the rich array of intellectual and cultural resources of the University with the people of New Jersey. (MSU Mission Statement, 2006)

Although the MSU mission statement speaks about MSU making contributions to different geographic levels such as local, state, national, or international and mentions the increasing connectedness of the world and developing an understanding of global issues, it lacks important points. The mission statement doesn’t mention cultural diversity or cultural diversity of the student body, faculty, or staff. The MSU mission statement also doesn’t state recruitment of students or teachers that are international. The statement doesn’t talk about enriching the curriculum in terms of culture, diversity, or developing an understanding on those issues.

Furthermore, the mission statement doesn’t express how cultural diversity and various experiences from all around the globe would contribute to the institution.

Therefore, according to the MSU mission statement, the institution is positioned in a one way communication process:

![Figure 5.1. MSU's perception.](image)
Montclair State has developed a rich array of global initiatives and partnerships in education and research and counts representatives from more than 135 countries among the members of the campus community. (MSU Strategic Plan, p. 1)

A commitment to maintaining a campus community that reflects the diversity of New Jersey. (p. 1)

An understanding that the University has an important role to play beyond the campus community, interacting and collaborating at the local, State, national and international levels to extend the horizons of students and to create positive change in society; and a commitment to providing a dynamic living-learning community that involves students in a multitude of diverse and enriching experiences. (p. 2)

Not only is the pool of potential undergraduate and graduate students in New Jersey getting larger; it is becoming racially, ethnically, and linguistically more diverse, encompassing both the traditional college-age population and the increasing number of older students seeking admission to the University. As the student body becomes more diverse, so, too, do the needs and aspirations of students. Many of these changes are driven, in turn, by the changing needs of the organizations and agencies that employ the University’s graduates. (p. 2)

Finally, the University must recognize the necessity of providing a global perspective to its students. Isolation is not an option in the 21st century. In keeping with the University’s commitment to a strong liberal arts and science tradition, Montclair State’s students must be prepared to be citizens of the world, to recognize and understand cultures and societies different from their own, and to be ready to participate in an economy that knows no boundaries. (p. 2)

The infusion of all programs with a global perspective. (p. 3)

Recent events have highlighted the need to move beyond language familiarity to language proficiency, and, concurrently, to a deeper understanding of cultures other than our own. The need to develop new approaches to language acquisition and cross-cultural understandings and to establish programs in global area studies provides opportunities for programs in world languages and linguistics and other programs in the humanities and social sciences. Finally, given our location adjacent to a major center of international economic activity, our experience in sponsoring highly regarded conferences focusing on issues related to international business, and the breadth of international expertise represented on our faculty, the University is well positioned to become a major resource supporting the international business community in the region we serve. With a mix of vision, initiative, external resources, and University support, these and similar programs, as well as new programs that evolve over time, can yield programs that make a discernable difference both in the region we serve and beyond. (p. 5)
Ensure that the University population, including students, faculty, and staff, are reflective of the richly diverse population in New Jersey; diversify the experiences and perspectives of the student population by increasing recruitment efforts for out-of-state students and international students. (p. 6)

The University will become a center for global study and understanding. The University has made great strides in recent years in introducing a global perspective into its programs. The accelerating pressures of globalization underscore the need for students to gain a fuller understanding of the world from historical, socio-economic, political, and cultural perspectives; to be conversant with current events around the globe and their impact at home and abroad; and to gain additional facility in communicating in languages other than English. In order to achieve this goal the University will: Continue to expand opportunities for both faculty and student exchanges; Develop partnerships with selected institutions, where partnership would offer significant advantages to Montclair State students, faculty, and staff and where Montclair State has the potential to have a significant impact on the partner institution; Utilize technology to expand the number of students, faculty, and staff able to interact directly with their counterparts across the globe, recognizing that many students will not have an opportunity to participate directly in an overseas experience; Expand the teaching of languages with a deepened focus on the ability to communicate effectively in a language other than English; and Develop a consortial approach to instruction in strategic, but low-demand, languages and area studies. (p. 7)

Enabling undergraduate students to complete required basic skills courses prior to, or during, their first semester at the University; and -Providing effective ESL testing, instruction, and continuing support for non-native speakers of English as appropriate and needed. (p. 8)

In summary, the MSU strategic plan presents a more complex understanding of issues of cultural diversity and recognizes the reciprocal relationship between the institution and the outside world. The strategic plan talks about the institution being culturally diverse, MSU reflecting the diversity of New Jersey, MSU’s contribution to society and involving its students into diverse experience, the increased diversity in the student pool and the changing needs of MSU, providing global perspectives to its students and the necessity for students to recognize and understand cultures other than theirs, ensuring that the MSU population (student, faculty, staff) reflects the diverse population of NJ, diversifying experiences and perspectives of the student population by increasing efforts for out of state and international students, expanding opportunities for faculty and student exchanges, infusing all undergraduate programs with a
global perspective and proving ESL classes to undergraduate students. Therefore, we can say that the MSU strategic plan takes cultural diversity in consideration. However, the strategic plan focuses on the undergraduate student body. The plan mentions “the infusion of all programs with a global perspective” in the goals of the University at the undergraduate level and offering ESL classes and support to undergraduate students specifically. Although 3% of the graduate students are international students at MSU, either at the master's level or the doctoral level, the plan doesn’t mention any issues such as cultural diversity, global perspective, developing understanding cross-cultural understanding, etc. Also, the strategic plan doesn’t mention that they offer ESL courses or support for graduate students.

**President’s proclamations.** The President’s proclamations is a long established practice at MSU. The President reads the proclamations during flag raising ceremonies that occur across the calendar year. Although the MSU website is not updated, proclamations for African American Heritage month, Days of Remembrance of Victims of the Holocaust, National Coming Out Day, Affirmative Action Day, Women’s History Month, Latin Pride Month are delivered on a yearly basis. Proclamations celebrate diversity and they are a way of showing that diversity is recognized at MSU.
Table 5.1.

Proclamations

Proclamations (Spring 06-Fall 05)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>January</th>
<th>In Recognition of African American Heritage Month - January 2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>In Recognition of Affirmative Action Day - February 15, 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>In Recognition of Women's History Month - March 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>World's Fair Day - April 27, 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In Recognition of &quot;Earth Week&quot; - April 17-22, 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>In Recognition of Hispanic American Heritage Month - September 15 - October 15, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>In Recognition of National Coming Out Day - October 11, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

President's statement. The president’s statement was analyzed. No explicit mention on cultural issues was found.

The curriculum at MSU: MAR courses. The idea behind the MAR (Multicultural Awareness Requirement) courses is to familiarize all the students with the life, history, and contributions of Africans, African-Americans, Asian/Pacific Islanders, Latinos, Women and Native Americans and enhance the students’ understanding and appreciation of the nation’s heritage. Some of the MAR courses that are offered are Anthropology of Multicultural America, Reading Asian Cultures, Afro-American Art, The Legal Rights of Women, Early Latin American Civilization, Introduction to Indian Civilization, Buddhism, Introduction to Jazz.
There are 45 departments that offer undergraduate courses at MSU in total. Out of 45 departments, 25 (55.5%) departments are involved in offering MAR courses. There are 101 MAR courses in total that are offered for undergraduate students at MSU. For the complete list of MAR courses by department see Appendix E.

MAR courses are a big part of the curriculum. There are 101 courses offered by 25 departments at MSU. MAR courses familiarize all the students with the life, history, and contributions of various cultures and increase students' understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity. MAR courses address the students who may have little or no awareness of the issues related to cultures other than their own and emphasizes issues of race, gender, etc. Moreover, MAR courses are offered at varied levels of difficulty although the majority of the courses tend to fall in the 100 (25 out 101 courses) to 200 (46 out of 101 courses) level, encouraging the students to explore multicultural issues in the freshman and sophomore years of their program of study (see Appendix E). MAR courses are the most significant curriculum effort that MSU makes in terms of recognizing the cultural diversity.

Cultural Diversity at MSU: Participants' Impressions

In addition to examining these primary texts, in the course of the interviews, students and teachers were asked if cultural diversity is recognized as important at MSU.

Students' impressions. This analysis includes question 27 (Do you think cultural diversity is recognized as important at MSU?) from the interview schedule for students (see Appendix C). Out of 7 students, 4 students were positive that cultural diversity is recognized as important at MSU.

S3 stated:

I think it is, I think it is very culturally diverse. That was one of the first differences I realized. I think it is recognized and encouraged in here, there are so many more international students.
S4 reported:

Well, yes. There are many students. At international student orientation I have met a lot of people from all over the world and the school has good connections with other universities from different countries. For example, last semester Hungarian culture and catering came for a week. They also provide us international student orientation.

On the other hand, 3 out of 7 students gave negative responses. S7 stated:

I don’t see that. I guess professors don’t really have much contact with people from different nationalities. I mean once you are a professor you have to take a different attitude may be sometimes. You can’t treat all the students as same, they have to change. In my department I am the only international student so may be they need some experience.

Teachers’ impressions. This analysis includes question 24 (Do you think cultural diversity is recognized as important at MSU?) from the interview schedule for teachers (see Appendix B). Out of 10 teachers, 8 teachers were positive that cultural diversity is recognized as important at MSU. T5 states:

I think there is a very important and honest effort on the part of the leadership of the university to recognize a diverse population of students, diverse faculty. I run the new faculty program for the past 5 years, we viewed 60 percent of the faculty, and a good number of that faculty 80 - 90 percent of the faculty come from different parts of the world, people from Africa, from Israel, from Turkey, from Europe, Latin America, Asia. If you go around the campus, you will hear lot of different accents. This is very interesting, so these kids are being exposed to different accents, different cultural backgrounds. I think that is important. There is an initiative by student groups and the administration to make sure that cultural diversity is an important part of the equation. There are Gen-Ed courses, they are precisely designed to encourage that cultural diversity.

T9 reported:

I hear a lot about it and even in our Gen-Ed courses we emphasize cultural diversity. The university understands that it is important and I don’t think we had this in Texas. Montclair is one of the schools that says it is important; they try to make courses available.

Some of the teachers indicated that they think MSU is culturally diverse but what drives such initiatives is not only an explicit effort by MSU, but also the location of the school. T7 stated:
Yes. It is recognized as important. We actually have cultural diversity and I think we don’t need to make that much of an effort to have it because of our location... I think it is partly both. Naturally there is a population and there is an effort to encourage that, so it is both.

On the other hand, 2 out of 10 teachers gave negative responses. T1 noted:

...I guess there are many ways to answer the question but in my opinion the more evident ways in which MSU tries to argue that they do care about diversity are not the right ways. Because they are sort of the surface ways, they don’t look at the depth of the problem. So I guess the answer is no, I don’t think MSU cares for diversity.

In summary, I examined if students and teachers of MSU think cultural diversity is recognized as important at MSU. Most of the participants (12 out of 17) were positive that cultural diversity is recognized as important at MSU. The cultural diversity of the student body and faculty and MSU offering Gen-ed courses are participants’ major motives that lead them to believe that cultural diversity is recognized at MSU. This is relevant because participants reach this conclusion based on their reality and the experiences that they face daily in the school environment.

MSU’s Preparation for Cultural Adaptation

RQ4 (In what ways (e.g. programs, events, publications) does MSU prepare its teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation?) was also investigated by using two methods, including textual analysis and interviewing. In this section, first by employing the textual analysis method I analyzed the materials that are used for international student and international scholar orientations and the newsletters that are published by MSU for international students and international scholars. Second, by employing the interviewing method, I examined if students and teachers of MSU are aware of any of these programs.

The following table lists the programs, events, orientations, etc. that are offered at MSU that aim to prepare teachers and students for cultural adaptation.
Table 5.2.

MSU Programs, Events, Orientations, Publications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Culture and cookie</strong> (casual weekly discussion group where International and American students meet and talk about any concerns or topics that might interest them)</td>
<td><strong>Teacher Training Project &amp; Opportunities for MSU Faculty in China</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International student orientation (provides information on immigration regulations, social opportunities, academic issues, intercultural adjustment assistance)</td>
<td><strong>International scholars orientation</strong> (provides information on immigration regulations, social opportunities, academic issues, intercultural adjustment assistance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>U.S. immigration regulatory advising</strong></td>
<td><strong>U.S. immigration regulatory advising</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive counseling and programming and adjustment assistance to the U.S.</td>
<td>Supportive counseling and programming and adjustment assistance to the U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Workshops</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Employment in the U.S (opt and cpt)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Adjustment to U.S. culture both in social and academic settings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Visa concerns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- income tax issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>International buddy system</strong> (pairs up many new international students with Montclair State University student leaders in order to make their transition to campus easier and more enjoyable)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>International living community</strong> (is a program in which American and international students live together in the Village residence halls)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Crossroads</strong> (newsletter for international students)</td>
<td><strong>Global News</strong> (newsletter for international scholars)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Orientations for Students and Teachers

MSU offers orientations for both international students and scholars. Conducted on regular basis, these programs provide information on immigration regulations, social
opportunities, academic issues, intercultural adjustment assistance. The following table lists the orientation materials that teachers and students are given during the orientations.

Table 5.3.

*International Orientation Material for Teachers and Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Description of the document</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is an U.S. American?</td>
<td>Prepared to increase the understanding of the behavior that one may observe in the U.S. Describes some characteristics of American culture. Other topics that are included; developing a network of support and adjustment to a new culture</td>
<td>Available</td>
<td>Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. classroom culture</td>
<td>Addresses different aspects of U.S. culture and provides an overview of the classroom in U.S. colleges and universities. Topics included such as an overview of U.S. higher education, its academic structure, and faculty roles, learning environment in the U.S. classroom.</td>
<td>Available</td>
<td>Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to American life</td>
<td>designed to be used in preparing students for successful cultural adjustment. Topics included are time, communication, status and hierarchy, rule of law, regional differences in the U.S., family and friends.</td>
<td>Available</td>
<td>Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International student handbook</td>
<td>Provides information about visa, immigration status, travel procedures, employment options, school transfer, program extension, academic life, medical care, driving in NJ, on-campus activities, etc.</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-arrival information for international students</td>
<td>Provides information about visa</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International student orientation schedule</td>
<td>Timetable of the events and activities for the orientation</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International scholar orientation agenda</td>
<td>The schedule of the orientation</td>
<td>Available</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Publications for Students and Teachers

The publication for international students is called *Crossroads*. *Crossroads* is the official newsletter of the Office of International Services at MSU and it is published once each semester since the fall semester of 2003. International Services distribute the newsletter by mail to international students. Newsletters also can be found online at the International Services website.

The publication for international scholars is called *Global News*. *Global News* is published by the Global Education Center bi-annually since the spring semester of 2000. The newsletter can be found online at the Global Education Center’s website.

The following table lists the categories of the news that are included in the newsletters.

Table 5.4,

*Newsletters*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Newsletters for international students and scholars</th>
<th>Crossroads for international students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Global News for international scholars</td>
<td>(categories of the news)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(categories of the news)</td>
<td>(categories of the news)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2006</td>
<td>International collaborations, visiting scholars and events, visiting international scholars and events, global education grants, international travel photography, study abroad news</td>
<td>Issues of immigration, employment options, events and programs for international students, demographic profile of international students at MSU, communication, network, financial resources for international students; scholarships and waivers, new staff at international services office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2006</td>
<td>Taxes, new staff members at international services, issues of immigration, opt workshops, demographics of Mexico</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2005</td>
<td>International collaborations, exchange programs, events, abroad training, international trips, global education grants, visiting international scholars at MSU, global education events, international travel photography, MSU faculty abroad, study abroad programs,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants’ Awareness of MSU Programs

In the course of the interviews, students and teachers were asked if they are aware of any of the programs, classes, orientations, etc. at MSU that aim to prepare them for cultural change.

Students’ awareness. This analysis includes question 28 (Are you aware of any programs, classes, orientations, etc. at MSU that prepare you for cultural change?) from the interview schedule for students (see Appendix C). Out of 7 students, 6 students were aware of some type of programs, classes, orientations, etc. at MSU that prepare them for cultural change. The International student orientation was the most mentioned item by 5 of the students. The newsletter from the international student association, the opt workshop, cookie and culture time, trips and festivals which the international student association organizes were the other items that were noted by some of the students.

Teachers’ awareness. This analysis includes question 25 (Are you aware of any programs, classes, orientations, etc. at MSU that prepare you for cultural change?) from the interview schedule for teachers (see Appendix B). In contrast to the students, teachers in general were not aware of any programs, classes, orientations, etc. at MSU that prepare them for cultural change. 8 out of 10 teachers reported that they weren’t aware of any programs, classes, orientations for teachers. 2 out of 10 teachers were aware of an orientation called international scholars orientation.

In summary, although there are several programs, events, orientations, and publications at MSU that aim to prepare teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation, participants are not aware of many of them and this seems to be particularly the case for teachers.

Students are more aware of the programs. One reason might be that they are offered more programs, events, etc. Another reason is that international students are easy to track down by the school because of the visa procedure they have to go through. On the other hand, if a teacher doesn’t come to school as a visiting scholar or as an international scholar with a visa, that means
they are not in the system as international faculty or scholars, even though they may be from a
different culture and may have come to the U.S. recently. Therefore, they are not informed about
such programs, events, etc.

MSU Programs’ Effectiveness

RQ5 (Based on participants’ experiences, have existing strategies used by MSU to
prepare its teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation been effective?) was examined
by using the interviewing method. Interviewing with the students and teachers of MSU, I
investigated their perception of the effectiveness of the various MSU programs.

Students and teachers were asked if they had the opportunity to participate in any of the
programs, classes, orientations, etc. at MSU that prepare them for cultural change and if they
were effective.

Students’ Point of View

This analysis includes question 29 (Did you have the opportunity to participate any of
them? Do you think these programs that prepare MSU teachers and students to deal with cultural
adaptation/diversity, were effective or not?) from the interview schedule for students (see
Appendix C). 6 out of 7 students reported that they participated in at least one of the programs.
Out of 6 students who participated in the programs, only 1 student thought that the program was
effective for her.

The other 5 students stated that the programs weren’t effective for them and they offered
different reasons for the programs’ not being effective. S4 states that the programs made her feel
like an outsider and, also, that she found some aspects of them offensive:

...they tried to prepare. But I told my professor, it was more like made us feel like
outsiders. They told us about the program, about international students, international
students do this, do that, but like stay away from others. They also tried to be polite but
for example they told us, you know what we Americans are a little funny, we don’t like
the smell of the body, we take a shower everyday. We were like, wow that’s really new
for us, why take a shower if it is not Christmas. So that was weird.
2 of the students indicated that they already knew the information that had been provided at the orientation. S2 stated:

Even though I didn’t attend that often or much, I think that it is necessary for some that international student might face a lot of problems. I am just a lucky girl, everybody around me is great. I am ok with the new environment, but those who cannot really adapt the new environment so fast they really need a place that can help them, or tell them what they should do…

Teachers’ Point of View

This analysis includes question 26 (Did you have the opportunity to participate any of them? Do you think these programs that prepare MSU teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation/diversity, were effective or not?) from the interview schedule for teachers (see Appendix B). Out of 10 teachers that participated in this study, only 1 teacher participated in a program. S2 states that she knew most of the information that was provided at the orientation. Therefore, it wasn’t effective in terms of information but it was a good occasion to meet other scholars. S2 stated:

Not really the teaching thing because I already knew what they told me, because I received papers from them, I checked the website, I knew most of the things. What was interesting was the gathering, meet the others, people like me, the room I have is on the campus, so I live with students so that was good to meet others, other scholars, older people.

In summary, overall students don’t think that the programs they participated were effective. Students showed different reasons for the programs’ not being effective, such as programs making the student feel like an outsider, programs being offensive, or information not being new to the student. In terms of teachers, most of them (8 of 10) weren’t aware of the programs and out of 10 teachers only 1 professor participated.

MSU’s Positioning

In this chapter I analyzed the MSU mission statement, the MSU strategic plan, the MSU president’s proclamations, the president’s statement, and the list of MAR courses to observe if MSU, as an institution, recognizes cultural diversity as important.
The MSU mission statement speaks about MSU making contributions to different levels such as local, state, national, or international and mentions increasing connectedness of the world and developing an understanding of global issues.

The MSU strategic plan talks about the institution being culturally diverse, MSU reflecting the diversity of New Jersey, MSU's contribution to society and involving its students into diverse experience, student pool getting diverse and changing needs of MSU, providing global perspective to its students and students necessity to recognize and understand cultures other than theirs, ensuring MSU population (student, faculty, staff) to reflect the diverse population of NJ, diversifying experiences and perspectives of student population by increasing efforts for out of state and international students, expanding opportunities for faculty and student exchanges, infusing all undergraduate programs with global perspective and proving ESL classes to undergraduate students.

The MAR courses that are offered by MSU, familiarize all the students with the life, history, and contributions of various cultures and increase students' understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity. The MSU President celebrates diversity by delivering proclamations.

Therefore, we can state that there is an explicit effort that MSU makes in terms of cultural diversity and MSU shows us its recognition of cultural diversity in various ways. Overall, on the surface level, MSU values cultural diversity. In addition, based on the interviews we can state that participants also think that cultural diversity is recognized as important at MSU.

Moreover, MSU has several programs, events, orientations, and publications that aim to prepare teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation. The major problem is that these programs are not well publicized. Therefore, participants are not aware of the programs and they cannot take advantage of what is being offered. Updating the website information and distributing
more publications, flyers, handouts, emails about the programs may help increase the exposure and subsequent participation in these programs.

Another issue I want to point out is the effectiveness of these programs. Participants revealed their dissatisfaction over the interviews, specifically for the orientations. For some participants, the reason for feeling dissatisfied was already being familiar with the information that had been provided. The orientations give the basic, essential information to the newcomers. For someone who was exposed to the culture in some ways, the basics may not be effective because they oversimplify issues. But this doesn’t mean that these individuals who had already been exposed to the culture before will not experience any difficulties or stress. They will still go through the adaptation process and they would still need information and advising. To solve this problem MSU can provide orientations for students who have different levels of information about the culture or MSU and can further support these students and faculty with ongoing advising and other relevant workshops or brownbag discussion sessions which have to be well publicized.

Conclusion

Chapter 5 analyzed RQ3 (Is cultural diversity institutionally recognized as important at MSU?), RQ4 (In what ways (e.g. programs, events, publications) does MSU prepare its teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation?), and RQ5 (Based on participants’ experiences, have existing strategies used by MSU to prepare its teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation been effective?). The key issues were: (a) MSU’s recognition of cultural diversity and participants’ impressions regarding cultural diversity at MSU; (b) MSU’s programs to prepare teachers and students for cultural adaptation and participants’ experiences with MSU programs for cultural adaptation; (c) participants’ assessment of MSU programs’ effectiveness; and (d) MSU’s positioning.
Chapter 6 will summarize the findings of the research questions. The chapter will also discuss cultural adaptation in today’s world, the directions for future research, and suggestions for MSU.
CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings by Research Question

The focus of this study was to investigate the common challenges and opportunities that professors and students face when they are adapting to new cultures. Also, I examined the institution's (MSU) preparation for its professors' and students' adaptation and professors' and students' perception of MSU in terms of cultural adaptation strategies and diversity. In this study I examined the following research questions:

RQ1: How do sojourners define themselves? Are national and cultural descriptors central to their definition of self?

RQ2: What are the common challenges and opportunities that teachers and students face when they have to adapt to new cultures?

RQ3: Is cultural diversity institutionally recognized as important at MSU?

RQ4: In what ways (e.g. programs, events, publications) does MSU prepare its teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation?

RQ5: Based on participants' experiences, have existing strategies used by MSU to prepare its teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation been effective?

RQ1: Issues of Identity

The first research question examined how sojourners define themselves and if national and cultural descriptors are central to their definition of self. The results showed that for student participants personal descriptors were central to the definition of self. 6 of 7 students described themselves with their personal characteristics and only one student participant described herself with her nationality. Similarly, for teacher participants personality and role descriptors were central to the definition of self. 7 out of 10 teachers mentioned personal characteristics. 4 teachers described themselves professionally and 2 teachers described themselves as parents. Therefore, for both student and teacher participants, personality, role, and interpersonal descriptors were
central to the definitions of self and national and cultural descriptors weren’t central to their definitions.

*RQ2: Challenges and Opportunities*

The second research question investigated the common challenges and opportunities that teachers and students face when they have to adapt to new cultures.

Challenges that were identified by the student participants were language, cultural differences (including relationships and communication styles), stereotypes, cultural literacy, patterns of thinking, and social support. Language was the most common challenge that was mentioned. Lack of English skills or issues of accent challenged students in their daily lives and academic performance and caused discomfort. Students faced challenges in relationships and communication styles. These challenges occurred due to cultural differences in individualism-collectivism and high context and low context. Students felt confused meeting with different levels of individualism and context.

Common challenges that were identified by the teacher participants were language, social support, differences in education system and learning, school success, cultural differences, and stereotypes. Similar to students, language was the most common challenge for the teacher participants. Different than the student participants, teacher participants mentioned differences in the education system and learning and school success as challenges.

The opportunities that were stated by student and teacher participants were learning about one’s self and personal characteristics, finding out more about their native culture, and appreciating other cultures and diversity. Participants expressed that they became more aware of their characteristics. Facing various situations and managing to live successfully in another culture both taught participants new qualities about themselves and made them see of some qualities that they had but weren’t aware of. Living in another country gave the participants the chance to compare their own culture with the host culture. Therefore, they had the opportunity to
learn about their home culture. Also, participants were exposed to the other culture during their adaptation process. Participants reported that they become open to different cultures, more open minded, and learn to accept diversity.

Furthermore, throughout the interviews participants made comparisons and asserted their thoughts about the similarities and differences of the cultures, and reentry shock.

In general, student participants had difficulties with finding similarities between their national culture and the U.S. culture. When asked students didn’t focus on the deeper levels of the culture such as traditions, beliefs, values, etc. Instead students focused on the uppermost levels of cultural artifacts such as dress, music or point the finger at globalization.

In terms of pointing out the similarities between cultures, like students, teacher participants also had difficulties with finding similarities between their national culture and the U.S. culture. In addition, again similar to students, instead of focusing on the deeper levels of the culture such as traditions, beliefs, values, etc., most of the teacher participants tend to focus on the uppermost levels of the cultural artifacts such as dress, food, sports or globalization.

Students didn’t have difficulties while listing the differences between their national culture and the U.S. culture. The differences that the students pointed out include differences in the classroom environment, such as teacher-student interaction, teachers’ classroom management, teaching style of teachers, differences in the education system in general, differences in relationships, language, communication style, norms.

Teachers didn’t have difficulties while identifying the differences between their national culture and the U.S. culture. The differences that the teachers pointed out include cultural differences in terms of individualism-collectivism and power distance, political and economic systems, education system, unwritten rules of the cultures, local traditions, and language.

Student and teacher participants also stated that they experienced confusion when they returned to their home countries.
In this study, I also observed Kim’s stress-adaptation-growth dynamic coming alive in the experiences of the participants. Kim’s stress-adaptation-growth dynamic is applicable but it can still be extended. According to Kim’s dynamic, a person aims to maintain his/her internal balance. If the individual is exposed to stress (such as other cultural values, norms, practices, etc.) the process starts. The individual tries to regain the internal balance and when the stress level reaches a certain point adaptation takes place. My suggestion is the process won’t be parallel with different kinds of challenges. An individual can experience different levels of stress for different issues and the process may take longer or shorter for various matters. The stress level that an individual experiences regarding language and the stress level that an individual experiences regarding learning differences may vary. The difference in stress levels can be caused by personal characteristics and experiences or the program of mind that is provided by one’s culture.

Also, the individual can experience different levels of stress for the same issue at different times. In the interviews one of the significant findings was that the stress level in language and accent in teachers differs for the period that they were students and for the period that they were teachers. In this situation, changing their role from student to teacher caused the difference in stress level. Kim states “the stress-adaptation growth dynamic plays out not in a smooth linear progression, but a cyclic and continual draw back to leap representation of the present articulation of the interrelationships among stress, adaptation, and growth....” (p. 56). I agree that Kim’s dynamic plays out a cyclic and continual draw back to leap but I also want to add that the draw backs and leaps don’t always occur in standard time frames. According to the challenges that are faced, at different stages in an individual’s life the stress, adaptation, and growth can occur at different paces.

RQ3: Recognition of Cultural Diversity at MSU

The third research question investigated if cultural diversity is institutionally recognized as important at MSU. To answer this question I used both textual analysis and interviewing as
methods. First, by employing the textual analysis method I analyzed MSU's mission statement, MSU's strategic plan, the proclamations by the president of MSU, the president's statement, and the list of MAR courses to observe if MSU as an institution recognizes cultural diversity as important. Second, by employing the interviewing method, I examined if students and teachers of MSU think cultural diversity is recognized as important at MSU.

The findings indicate that there is an explicit effort that MSU makes in terms of cultural diversity and MSU shows us its recognition of cultural diversity in various ways. Generally, on the surface level, MSU values cultural diversity. In addition, based on the interviews we can state that overall, participants also think that cultural diversity is recognized as important at MSU.

**RQ4: MSU's Preparation for Cultural Adaptation**

The fourth research question examined the ways (e.g. programs, events, publications) that MSU prepare its teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation.

MSU offers orientations for both international students and scholars. Conducted on a regular basis, these programs provide information on immigration regulations, social opportunities, academic issues, and intercultural adjustment assistance.

MSU has publications for both international students and scholars. The publication for international students is called *Crossroads*. *Crossroads* is the official newsletter of the Office of International Services at MSU and it is published once each semester since the fall semester of 2003. International Services distribute the newsletter by mail to international students. Newsletters also can be found online at the International Services website. The publication for international scholars is called *Global News*. *Global News* is published by the Global Education Center bi-annually since the spring semester of 2000. The newsletter can be found online at the Global Education Center's website.
In addition to orientations and publications, MSU offers events such as “culture and cookie”, U.S. immigration regulatory advising, supportive counseling and programming and adjustment assistance to the U.S., workshops (deployment in the U.S, adjustment to U.S. culture both in social and academic settings, visa concerns, income tax issues), and programs such as the international buddy system and the international living community for international students.

For teachers, MSU offers trainings for scholars, U.S. immigration regulatory advising, and supportive counseling and programming and adjustment assistance to the U.S.

RQ5: MSU Programs’ Effectiveness

Finally, the fifth research question investigated if existing strategies used by MSU to prepare its teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation have been effective.

Although, there are several programs, events, orientations, and publications at MSU that aim to prepare teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation, in general participants were not aware of many of them. Students were more aware of the programs that have been offered than teachers. Out of 7 students, 6 students were aware of some type of programs, classes, orientations, etc. at MSU that prepare them for cultural change. Students were mainly aware of the international student orientation. The newsletter from the international student association, the opt workshop, cookie and culture time, trips and festivals were also mentioned in the interviews. On the other hand, 8 out of 10 teachers reported that they weren’t aware of any programs, classes, orientations for teachers and only 1 teacher participated in a program.

Since the teachers weren’t aware of the programs in general, they couldn’t assess the MSU programs’ effectiveness. Overall, students didn’t think that the programs they participated were effective. Students offered different reasons for the programs’ not being effective, such as the programs making the student feel like an outsider, programs being offensive, or information not being new to the student.
Cultural Adaptation in Today’s World

Globalization has touched all areas of life including education, business, and politics. As a result of globalization, many people move from country to country and cross cultural boundaries. People are more mobile than ever.

In the world we are living in the skills that are needed are different that those needed in the past. To get a job in the increasingly competitive global market of a qualified candidate, to have a more peaceful world, to understand and solve the vast misunderstandings and conflicts across borders, basically to communicate with our backyard neighbors, we need to increase cultural understanding. In order to do that, it is very important for sojourners to experience a successful term abroad. Cultural adaptation is a key element for international sojourn. We also have to keep in mind that, adaptation is a double-edge process, because not only do the individuals who cross cultures adapt but also hosts who encounter individuals from various countries have to adapt at some level as well.

Studying or teaching abroad is one of the best ways to increase cultural understanding. Education is an important context for intercultural communication and cultural adaptation, as students and teachers come from a variety of cultural backgrounds and bring a variety of expectations with them. Having cultural understanding and learning the artifacts of a culture in one context can be applied to other contexts as well. For instance, learning about the interaction differences in the education context can be applied to business contexts. A student, who discovers the differences in student-teacher interaction and power distance, can easily apply this knowledge to business contexts after graduating and can simply figure out the interaction pattern in the workplace among members of staff and supervisors. Therefore, in this global world whatever is learned in the adaptation process is a gain and investment for the future.
Directions for Future Research

Research Directions Emerging from Thesis Findings

The unique contributions that this present study made to the field of communication are the emerging typology of identity markers, the taxonomy of challenges and opportunities, an extension of Kim's (2001) stress-adaptation-growth-dynamic, and methodological triangulation which provided the opportunity to explore the cultural adaptation process from both the institutional and the stakeholders' perspectives.

The findings of the study indicated that for both student and teacher participants, personality, role, and interpersonal descriptors were central to the definitions of self. Neither students nor teachers focused on structural identity markers such as nationality, race, etc. which are key issues for definition of self. For the future research the question of why national or cultural descriptors are not central to the definition of self should be further investigated.

The present study also introduced a new taxonomy of challenges and opportunities to the field of communication. By replicating this research in alternative educational contexts and in other context as well, the taxonomy of challenges and opportunities can be further developed. Therefore, the taxonomy can be extended through studies in other contexts such as business, where we can observe if the challenges and opportunities are applicable when applied to different contexts.

In addition, this study made contributions to the field by extending Kim's (2001) stress-adaptation-growth dynamic. For the future research, scholars can explore what other extensions can be added to this dynamic, particularly through more longitudinal research studies.

The final suggestion for future research directions is to continue to use methodological triangulation. In this present study two methods (interviewing and textual analysis) were used. By using those two methods the realities of both MSU and stakeholders were captured and results showed that there is no consistency between the two realities. By using methodological
triangulation, researchers can further explore areas of consistency and inconsistency and how institutional structures, of all kinds, can facilitate or hinder the lived experiences and cultural adaptation of sojourners.

Broader Research Directions

The conclusion of this study is really the beginning of others. Results from this study point in any number of directions for future research in the areas of cultural adjustment, communication, and identity. However, in this section I have narrowed it down to what I think are the three most important directions future research could take. The following future directions are suggested as a means for theory development in an abductive, multi-methodological, and longitudinal manner.

The first and perhaps most obvious direction for future research is to continue a series of similar studies in different schools with different groups of students and teachers. Continuing this research in other sites would offer insight into the transferability of these findings and answer questions about whether similar patterns would emerge from different pools of students and teachers. An increased number of cases across a variety of settings would assist researchers in the development of a learning-growth approach of cross-cultural adaptation among student and teacher sojourners.

The results from this study point in a secondary, but similar direction. In addition to increased cases, there is evidence from this research that future scholars could significantly increase the participant pool and test these findings in a larger population. Specifically, researchers could generate hypotheses based on the findings from this study and test them in the context of Kim’s (2001) integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation. Such testing would not only generate more knowledge about sojourner adaptation, but would also contribute to the strengthening of the theory.
The third and final direction for future research is to continue to “study” the participants of such investigations at different intervals through time. In the future, by interviewing and/or soliciting narratives from all the students and teachers longitudinally, we can test if challenges, opportunities, and reentry experiences they face change over time or not, as well as their daily life in general. Such examinations would help us to better understand and account for the much-anticipated outcomes of cultural adaptation in different stages.

Suggestions for MSU

We can state that there is an explicit effort that MSU makes in terms of cultural diversity and MSU shows us its recognition of cultural diversity in various ways. Overall, on the surface level, MSU values cultural diversity. In addition, based on the interviews we can state that participants also think that cultural diversity is recognized as important at MSU.

Moreover, MSU has several programs, events, orientations, and publications that aim to prepare teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation. The major problem is that these programs are not well publicized. MSU has to increase the publicity of its programs.

Another issue I want to point out is the effectiveness of these programs. Participants revealed their dissatisfaction with these programs in the interviews, specifically for the orientations. For some participants, the reason for feeling dissatisfied was already being familiar with the information that had been provided. The orientations give the basic, essential information to the newcomers. For someone who was exposed to the culture in some ways, the basics may not be effective because they oversimplify issues. But this doesn’t mean that these individuals who had already been exposed to the culture before will not experience any difficulties or stress. They will still go through the adaptation process and they would still need information and advising. To solve this problem, MSU can provide orientations for students who have different levels of information about the culture or MSU. Besides, MSU can further support these students and faculty with ongoing advising and other relevant workshops or brownbag
discussion sessions which have to be well publicized and the themes of which can be elicited from the students and teachers themselves. MSU can also benefit from ongoing assessments of its own programs that aim to prepare its teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation. Assessment of the programs would give an idea of their effectiveness and necessary action can be taken. Furthermore, keeping open dialogue with the stakeholders and generating ideas based on their needs, instead of making predetermined assumptions about their needs, would be beneficial for the institution.

One last suggestion for MSU is to develop more programs which would create interaction among international and local students and expand the existing programs such as the International Buddy System and International Living Community. Although, international students benefit from meeting other international students, coming into contact with local students and peers would make their adaptation more successful and effective, since they would have the chance to learn the language, practices, norms, traditions, etc. of the U.S. culture first hand.
REFERENCES


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classroom and role playing the acculturation process. *Teaching of Psychology, 29,* 226-229.


APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Consent Form for Adults

Please read below with care. You can ask questions at any time, now or later. You can talk to other people before you fill in this form.

Study’s Title:
How do voluntary sojourners adapt to new cultures? : Common challenges that teachers and students face.

Why is this study being done?
This study is about teachers and students who voluntarily came to the United States. The purpose of the study is to find out the common challenges and opportunities that teachers and students face when they were adapting to a new and different culture.

What will happen while you are in the study?
Before the interview starts, the researcher will remind the participants that the interview will be audio taped. Interviews will be conducted after getting the consent from the participants. Your participation will involve answering questions about your experiences of when you first came to the U.S. and more recent experiences that are relevant. The information gathered during this time will be used only for research purposes. Audiotapes will be erased after the interviews are transcribed.

Time:
The interview will last about 20-30 minutes.

Risks:
You may feel as an outsider, or experience embarrassment or homesickness. The risks are no greater than those in ordinary life. If you experience any of above you may call MSU’s Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at (973) 655-5211.

Benefits:
You may benefit from this study because you will be learning about yourself while you are talking about your experiences. Others may benefit from this study because this study will increase our understanding of cultural adaptation.

Who will know that you are in this study?
You will not be linked to any presentations. We will keep who you are confidential according to the law. You will be given a made up name and at no time will your identity be revealed in writing or orally.

Do you have to be in the study?
You do not have to be in this study. You are a volunteer! It is okay if you want to stop at any time and not be in the study. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Nothing will happen to you.
Do you have any questions about this study?  
Call or email  Aycan Sayakci (sayakcia1@mail.montclair.edu, 908- 351 6437)

Department of Communication Studies  
050 Life Hall  
Montclair State University  
Montclair, New Jersey 07043  

Do you have any questions about your rights? Phone or email the IRB chair, Debra Zellner (zellnerd@mail.montclair.edu, 973-655-4327) or the IRB Administrator, Fitzgerald Edwards (edwardsf@mail.montclair.edu, 973-655-7781).”

It is okay to audiotape me while I am in this study:

Please initial:  _____ Yes  _____ No

I would like to get a summary of this study:

Please initial:  _____ Yes  _____ No

The copy of this consent form is for you to keep.

If you choose to be in this study, please fill in your lines below.

_________________________________________________________  ______________________________________________________  
Print your name here  Sign your name here  Date

_________________________________________________________  ______________________________________________________  
Name of Principal Investigator  Signature  Date

_________________________________________________________  ______________________________________________________  
Name of Faculty Sponsor  Signature  Date
APPENDIX B
Interview Schedule for Teachers

1. How would you describe yourself?
   a. Where are you from?

2. How old are you?

3. Where were you born?

4. Have you been in the United States before?

5. How old were you when you first came to the U.S.?

6. How long have you been here?

7. Who do you live with?

8. Do you have family members in the U.S.?

9. What were your expectations when you came to the U.S.?

10. What was surprising for you when you first came to the U.S.?

11. When you first came to the U.S. what was challenging for you?
   a. Why was it hard?
   b. Did you face challenges at work?
   c. Did you face challenges in relationships?
   d. Did you face challenges while you were making friends?
   e. Did you face challenges when communicating with your students or colleagues?

12. Did language have an effect on your adaptation?

13. Did you overcome those challenges? Or are you still experiencing the challenges?

14. What strategies did you use when you were adapting?
   a. How did you overcome the challenges?

15. Do you think you adapted to American culture? Why? Why not?
16. What changes would you be unwilling to make to completely adapt to the American culture?

17. Do you on occasion visit your home country?
   a. Does anything surprise you when you go back?

18. If an American professor/student comes to your country, what kind of challenges do you think he/she might experience?

19. What are the similarities between your national culture and the U.S. culture?

20. Do you think that this experience changed you?

21. What have you learned from this experience?
   a. What have you learned about yourself?
   b. Have you learned about your own culture or values?

22. What were your expectations when you came to MSU?

23. When you first came to MSU what was challenging for you?
   a. Why was it hard?
   b. Did you face challenges at work?
   c. Did you face challenges in relationships?
   d. Did you face challenges while you were making friends?
   e. Did you face challenges when communicating with your students or colleagues?

24. Do you think cultural diversity is recognized as important at MSU?

25. Are you aware of any programs, classes, orientations, etc. at MSU that prepare you for cultural change?

26. Did you have the opportunity to participate any of them?
   a. Do you think these programs that prepare MSU teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation/diversity, were effective or not? Explain.
APPENDIX C

Interview Schedule for Students

1. How would you describe yourself?
   a. Where are you from?

2. What is your major?

3. What year are you in?

4. How old are you?

5. Where were you born?

6. Have you been in the United States before?

7. How old were you when you first came to the U.S.?

8. How long have you been here?

9. Do you work?

10. Who do you live with?

11. Do you have family members in the U.S.?

12. What were your expectations when you came to the U.S.?

13. When you first came to the U.S. what was challenging for you?
   a. Why was it hard?
   b. Did you face challenges in relationships?
   c. Did you face challenges while you were making friends?
   d. Did you face challenges when communicating with your teachers?

14. Did language have an effect on your adaptation?

15. Did you overcome those challenges? Or are you still experiencing the challenges?

16. What strategies did you use when you were adapting?
   a. How did you overcome the challenges?

17. What did you find surprising in classroom, with teachers or classmates?
18. Do you think you adapted to American culture? Why? Why not?

19. What changes would you be unwilling to make to completely adapt to the American culture?

20. Do you on occasion visit your home country?
   a. Does anything surprise you when you go back?

21. If an American student comes to your country, what kind of challenges do you think he/she might experience?

22. What are the similarities between your national culture and the U.S. culture?

23. Do you think that this experience changed you?

24. What have you learned from this experience?
   a. What have you learned about yourself?
   b. Have you learned about your own culture or values?

25. What were your expectations when you came to MSU?

26. When you first came to MSU what was challenging for you?
   a. Why was it hard?
   b. Did you face challenges in relationships?
   c. Did you face challenges while you were making friends?
   d. Did you face challenges when communicating with your teachers?

27. Do you think cultural diversity is recognized as important at MSU?

28. Are you aware of any programs, classes, orientations, etc. at MSU that prepare you for cultural change?

29. Did you have the opportunity to participate any of them?
   a. Do you think these programs that prepare MSU teachers and students to deal with cultural adaptation/diversity, were effective or not? Explain.
APPENDIX D

Recruitment Material

Text for e-mail solicitations

Dear Ms/Mr.,

My name is Aycan Sayakci and I am a graduate student at Communication Studies Department at Montclair State University. I am doing research on cultural adaptability of students and teachers. My goal is to find out the common challenges that teachers and students face when they change cultures and if MSU prepares teachers and students well for this cultural shift. For this research I need to interview my participants. The interview will take between 20 to 30 minutes. If you would like to participate in this research project, please reply to sayakcia1@mail.montclair.edu or call at 908-351-6437.

Thank you for your time and help

Best regards

Aycan Sayakci

Graduate Student and Assistant

Communication Studies Department

Montclair State University

Sayakcia1@mail.montclair.edu

Tel: 908-351-6437
Text for telephone solicitations

My name is Aycan Sayakci and I am a graduate student in the Department of Communication Studies at Montclair State University. I am working on my thesis which examines how students and teachers that are born and raised in other countries, adapt to the new culture in the USA. My goal is to find out the common challenges that teachers and students face when they change cultures and if MSU prepares teachers and students well for this cultural shift. For this research I need to interview my participants. The interview will take between 20 to 30 minutes. Would you like to participate in this study?
LOOKING FOR PARTICIPANTS FOR A RESEARCH PROJECT!!

I f you are;

- Studying or teaching at MSU
- at least 18 years old
- foreign born and have entered to the U.S. voluntarily after graduating from high school

Come and be part of my study!!

Share your experiences during an interview

If you are interested, please call Aycan Sayakci at 908-351 6437 or e-mail sayakcial@mail.montclair.edu
LOOKING FOR
RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS!!

If you are studying or teaching at MSU and coming from a different country or culture come and be part of my study!!

Share your experiences during an interview

If you are interested, please call Aycan at 908-351 6437 or e-mail sayakcia1@mail.montclair.edu
### APPENDIX E

**List of MAR Courses**

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<th>Course number</th>
<th>Title of the Course</th>
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