

Transition Shock: A home away from home

By Paige Walters



What is transition shock?

- **Culture Shock:** “The feeling of disorientation experienced by someone who is suddenly subjected to an unfamiliar culture, way of life, or set of attitudes.” (Google Dictionary)
- **Transition Shock:** Encompasses culture shock and also includes food, language, academic, weather, and social differences as well as loneliness, homesickness, and other barriers (McLachlan 2009).
- Focusing on the transition shock of International University students

Goals

- Investigate student adaptation to University culture
 - Specifically focus on international students who might be struggling with their transition and adaptation.
- To understand how participation in this community helps students to adjust to life at SIUE and if their experiences within the student community are different from non-international students.
 - What do students do to facilitate their transition and adaptation?
 - What does the university do to facilitate student transition and adaptation?
 - What is the role of “community” in transition and adaptation?
 - What is important for feeling like a part of the “community”?

Theoretical Approach

- **Interactionism:** Looking at individuals and how they interact with one another. Interactionism specifically looks at dynamic individuals and their interactions that make up a group (Evens 2009).
- This theory acknowledges that groups are made up of people who change and can play different roles at different times
 - Focusing on the “groups,” or in this case the “communities”



Community

- **Community:** “A feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals.” (Google Dictionary)
- SIUE is a learning community with students and teachers but there are also smaller communities within the larger community.
- According to a study by Davidson and Cotter being involved in a community meant being a part of the group, being able to influence the group, having needs fulfilled and bonding with the other members (1991).

Previously Noted Effects

- **Lack of a Sense of Community:**
 - **In extreme cases:** Depression, loneliness, lack of motivation or hopelessness (Davidson & Cotter 1991)
 - Hope and Motivation are important for academic success (Snyder et al. 2002)
- **Transition Shock:** Negative effects on grades (McLachlan 2009)
- If the host community cannot provide a way for the newcomers to transition smoothly they may not survive in their new environment (Newman 1965).



What does SIUE have to offer?

- Numerous Clubs (whether sports or academic)
- Special Events (Speakers, Showcases, Cultural Events, etc.)
- Performances (theater productions, bands, comedians, etc.)
- Volunteer opportunities
- Study Groups in housing areas



Connect with your peers at SIUE

Methods

- Conducted at SIUE
- Questionnaire – 39
 - 12 International – Bermuda, India, Turkey, Pakistan, Ireland
 - 27 American
- Interviews- American, Turkish, Armenian, Chinese, Pakistani
 - Individual 3
 - Group (3 each) 2



Methods Continued

- Participant Observation
 - Personal experience with international students
 - Many friends
 - Home gathering with many international students
- Electronic Repeated Survey
 - only returned by 1



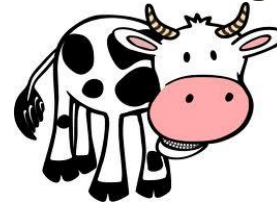
Results

- Across the board, students agreed that making friends is important for transitioning and is helpful.
- Part of the community?
 - Non-International – 19/27 said yes
 - International – 6/12 said yes
 - For both groups, even less felt like a part of the larger student community
 - Students who didn't feel like a part of a smaller community also didn't feel like a part of the larger student community.
- **Role of social events:**
 - Were successful for non-International students
 - Not so much for International students

International Students

- Social events- not as effective for International students
 - Investment of time (will be leaving soon)
 - “It is hard because of the society. Everyone is so individualistic here and just wants to drink all the time. And plus it’s hard to try to find somewhere to belong when you are going back home soon.” (Turkish Student 22)
 - Other issues to deal with:
 - *Homesickness/Loneliness
 - Language/miscommunication
 - Food
 - Weather
 - *Academics

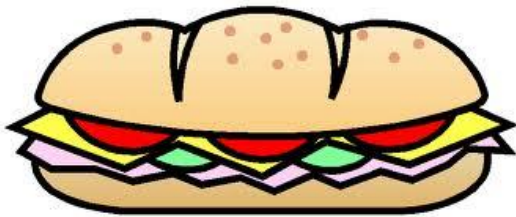
(most challenging)



(least challenging)

Results (cont.)

- What does the University do to facilitate the students?
 - Mostly social and academic opportunities
 - Does not account for issues faced particularly by International students



“Community”

- Various communities within SIUE
 - Helpful regarding social support, trust, belonging
- Trends on defining community:
 - “A group of people who are all connected somehow.”
 - “The people need to be caring and helpful.”
 - “It’s a socially active group that shares similar values.”
 - “Outreach programs, support, most importantly trust.”

Positives: helpful, opportunities, diversity

Negatives: segregated, exclusivity, events aren’t advertised enough

Conflicts With Transitioning

- Fraternities/Sororities
 - Close knit vs. Exclusive
- Int. Students – some forced to form communities with fellow students from the same country just because of background.
 - Miss out on full experience
 - Limits access
- Seeing diversity vs. embracing it

Conclusion

- The transition is harder for International students.
- School should continue to focus on embracing diversity.
- The University needs to address the other issues as well.
- Future studies could explore how to go about addressing these issues if possible.

Self Reflection

- Interest in other cultures
- Allowed me to work with International students and to explore their cultures
- Also allowed me to expand my experience in Anthropology

Acknowledgements

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