

Eastern Illinois University The Keep

Masters Theses

Student Theses & Publications

1-1-2013

Perceptions Of International Orientation

Payge Schagemann-Jones

Eastern Illinois University

This research is a product of the graduate program in [Counseling and Student Development](#) at Eastern Illinois University. [Find out more](#) about the program.

Recommended Citation

Schagemann-Jones, Payge, "Perceptions Of International Orientation" (2013). *Masters Theses*. 1126.
<http://thekeep.eiu.edu/theses/1126>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Theses & Publications at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.

*******US Copyright Notice*******

No further reproduction or distribution of this copy is permitted by electronic transmission or any other means.

The user should review the copyright notice on the following scanned image(s) contained in the original work from which this electronic copy was made.

Section 108: United States Copyright Law

The copyright law of the United States [Title 17, United States Code] governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted materials.

Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the reproduction is not to be used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research. If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that use may be liable for copyright infringement.

This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law. No further reproduction and distribution of this copy is permitted by transmission or any other means.

THESIS MAINTENANCE AND REPRODUCTION CERTIFICATE

TO: Graduate Degree Candidates (who have written formal theses)

SUBJECT: Permission to Reproduce Theses

An important part of Booth Library at Eastern Illinois University's ongoing mission is to preserve and provide access to works of scholarship. In order to further this goal, Booth Library makes all theses produced at Eastern Illinois University available for personal study, research, and other not-for-profit educational purposes. Under 17 U.S.C. § 108, the library may reproduce and distribute a copy without infringing on copyright; however, professional courtesy dictates that permission be requested from the author before doing so.

By signing this form:

- You confirm your authorship of the thesis.
- You retain the copyright and intellectual property rights associated with the original research, creative activity, and intellectual or artistic content of the thesis.
- You certify your compliance with federal copyright law (Title 17 of the U.S. Code) and your right to authorize reproduction and distribution of all copyrighted material included in your thesis.
- You grant Booth Library the non-exclusive, perpetual right to make copies of your thesis, freely and publicly available without restriction, by means of any current or successive technology, including but not limited to photocopying, microfilm, digitization, or Internet.
- You acknowledge that by depositing your thesis with Booth Library, your work is available for viewing by the public and may be borrowed through the library's circulation and interlibrary department or accessed electronically.
- You waive the confidentiality provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) with respect to the contents of the thesis, including your name and status as a student at Eastern Illinois University.

Petition to Delay:

I respectfully petition that Booth Library delay maintenance and reproduction of my thesis until the date specified and for the reasons below. I understand that my degree will not be conferred until the thesis is available for maintenance and reproduction.

Date:

Reasons: _____

Payge Schreyer Jones May 7, 2013

Author's Signature

Date

This form must be submitted in duplicate.

Perceptions of International Orientation

(TITLE)

BY

Payge Schagemann-Jones

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Masters of Science in College Student Affairs

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

2013

YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE



THESIS COMMITTEE CHAIR

5-1-13

DATE



DEPARTMENT/SCHOOL CHAIR
OR CHAIR'S DESIGNEE

5-6-13

DATE



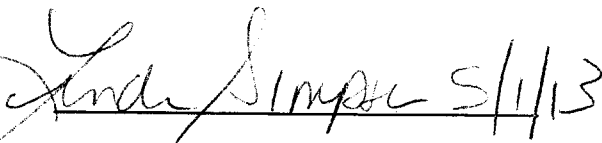
THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER

5/1/13

DATE

THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER

DATE



THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER

DATE

THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER

DATE

PERCEPTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL ORIENTATION

Payge Schagemann-Jones

Thesis

Department of Counseling & Student Development

Eastern Illinois University

Charleston, IL

May 2013

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my grandparents, Alvin and Judy Schagemann, who have watched my wonderful son while I work on my thesis and attend countless meetings, and pushed me to be my very best. To my loving husband, Sean Jones for putting up with my anxiety, frustration, and tears through the whole two-year process, for always being there for me when I needed him, and telling me that I can do it, when I thought that I could not. Finally, to my amazing son, Indy, for giving me a reason to complete this process, he is the joy of my life and always knows how to make his mommy smile. I love you all more than you will ever realize and I cannot thank you enough for the support you have given me over the years. It was a rough journey, but I made it, because of you. Thank you.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis committee for all of their help. To Dr. Simpson and Mr. Bill Elliot, thank you so much for what you have done. I know schedules are hectic; I truly appreciate the time you committed to my thesis. To Dr. Roberts, for the countless hours of proofreading and editing, thank you. You all made my thesis what it is today. I would also like to acknowledge the Office of International Students and Scholars, without Marilyn Thomas, Aimee Romack, Marilyn Holmes, and Kevin Vicker, this thesis would have not have been possible. Throughout the years you have helped in grow into the professional that I am today. Thank you for that and with all of your assistance in my thesis. To my Grandma, Grandpa, Sean, and Indy, thank you. You have been so motivating and encouraging and I could not have completed this without your support. I love you.

ABSTRACT

Using qualitative methodology, the researcher analyzed the perspectives of students attending a mandatory Office of International Students and Scholars, sponsored orientation. One week after classes started, four international students and one observer were interviewed on their perceptions regarding the orientation. Themes such as cultural adjustment, understanding professors, prejudice and discrimination, academic advising, and structured entry were presented.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
CHAPTER I- Introduction.....	1
Purpose of Study	3
Research Questions.....	3
Significance of Study.....	4
Limitations of Study.....	4
Definition of Terms.....	5
Summary.....	5
CHAPTER II- Literature Review.....	6
English Proficiency.....	6
Acculturation.....	7
Counseling.....	9
Discrimination and Prejudice.....	11
Other Research.....	12
Summary.....	13
CHAPTER III- Methodology.....	14
Design.....	14
Research Participants.....	16
Participant Demographics.....	17
Site.....	18
Instruments.....	18
Data Collection.....	18

Treatment of Data.....	18
CHAPTER IV- Findings.....	20
Research Question 1.....	20
Culture Adjustment.....	20
Research Question 2.....	25
Understanding Professors.....	25
Research Question 3.....	30
Perceived Discrimination and Prejudices.....	30
Research Question 4.....	33
Positive Relationship.....	33
Retention.....	35
Research Question 5.....	37
Structured Entry.....	37
Structured Engagement.....	38
Communication in Presentations.....	39
Additional Presentations.....	40
Communication between Staff Members.....	40
Housing.....	41
Assistant's Perception.....	41
Summary of Results.....	43
CHAPTER V- Discussion	45
Acculturation.....	45
English Language Acquisition.....	45
Discrimination and Prejudices.....	47
Advising.....	48

Orientation.....	49
Recommendations for International Orientation.....	51
Recommendations for Future Researchers.....	53
Conclusions.....	53
REFERENCES.....	55
APPENDICES.....	59
APPENDIX A: Table 1.....	59
APPENDIX B: Informed Consent Form	60
APPENDIX C: International Orientation Survey	62
APPENDIX D: Interview Protocol.....	64

CHAPTER I

Introduction

A growing number of universities are recruiting international students due to their positive economic impact for the university, the declining enrollment of American students, and the positive influence of adding diversity to the student population (Institute of International Education, 2010; Kwon, 2009; Smallwood, 2006). From a financial standpoint, international students represent an important funding stream for higher education institutions in the United States, while also benefiting the United States economy more broadly (Lee, E., Lee, & Rice, 2007; Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). International students and their dependents supply over \$13 billion dollars annually to the United States economy (Institute of International Education, 2005).

From 2000-2005 there was a 6% decline in United States citizens earning doctorates. At the same time, there was a 32% increase in degrees awarded to international students (Smallwood, 2006). The Institution for International Education (2007) reported 582,984 international students enrolled in United States colleges in 2006-2007 making up 4% of the total enrollment; in real numbers this represents a 3.2% increase from the previous year. By 2009, there were 671,616 international students enrolled in the United States institutions of higher education (Institute of International Education, 2010).

Lastly, international students represent a culturally heterogeneous group that significantly contributes to the growing diversity of United States colleges and universities as well as surrounding communities. International students increase tolerance

and appreciation of cultural differences among countries and bring fresh perspectives to the university educational experience (Lee et al., 2007).

However, the transitional process for international students, specifically acculturating into American culture, is not easily achieved. Students must first overcome barriers such as language, discrimination, prejudices, loneliness and homesickness. Sato and Hodge (2009) found that at the root of most transitional issues was language acquisition. Lack of adequate language skills increased the severity of secondary transitional problems such as academic success, developing supportive relationships and overcoming timidity to name a few.

Since English language acquisition plays a large part in the international students' acculturation to the United States, many such students struggling with their English language skills stand out among university students as a target for discrimination and prejudice. Hanasab (2006) indicated not all international students face the same levels of prejudice and discrimination from American students. Students who are originally from the Middle East and Africa are more likely to experience problems with prejudice and discrimination than other international students are; however, international students from countries other than the Middle East or Africa suffer from discrimination, which can result in loneliness and homesickness (Yakunina, Weigold, & McCarthy, 2011). Due to transitional barriers, international students must find multiple ways to cope with the adjustment to a new culture. For example, coping through homesickness is alleviated with the use of social media such as Facebook or Skype (Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Zhang, 2010). Unfortunately, for some international students, talking about issues such as homesickness is culturally discouraged. Depending on their culture, international

students believe speaking about these issues only leads to burdening the listener with their problems (Bonazzo & Wong, 2007).

Research has indicated effective orientation programs may be beneficial to mitigating the barrier experienced by incoming international students. For example, counseling interventions have been shown to have a positive impact on lessening acculturative stressors through the teaching of healthy coping skills (Pan, Wong, Joubert, & Chan, 2009). In addition, international students who attended orientation showed more interest in other International Office sponsored activities and were less homesick (Kwon, 2009). Lastly, orientation programs that targeted improving English proficiency were found to be beneficial by pairing international students with American peers (Andrade, 2006).

Purpose of Study

The current study is a qualitative approach designed to identify and describe the perceived experiences of the participants who attend a university-sponsored orientation program for international students. Through the use of this methodology, the researcher examined universal aspects of the experience on the overall orientation experience of the international student (Hays & Singh, 2012).

Research Questions

This study has five research questions:

1. What is the international students' perception of the orientation experience in relation to the issue of cultural differences (Mori, Inman, & Cask, 2009)?
2. What is the international students' perception of the orientation program in relation to English language acquisition?

3. What is international students' perception of the orientation experience in relation to issues of perceived discrimination and prejudices (Hanasab, 2006)?
4. What is international students' perception of the orientation experience in relation to advising (Rice, Choi, Zhang, Villegas, Ye, Anderson, Nesic, & Bigler (2009)?
5. What is the international students' perception of the overall orientation program?

Significance of Study

Quantitative studies have shown that when students participate in orientation programs, they acculturate better to the institution than students who did not participate in an orientation program (Andrade, 2006; Kwon 2009; Pan et al., 2009). However, there is a lack of qualitative research on programming related to international students' orientation program regarding satisfaction. It is important to explore potential untapped variables that may surface during an in-depth exploration of phenomenon related to the overall orientation experience. These variables may lead to making a better office-sponsored orientation for future students concerning their adjustments to the campus and community.

Limitations of Study

There are several limitations associated with the current study. Student perceptions were based on only one university-sponsored orientation program limited to one day, and the participants were first-time freshmen students. Undergraduates were selected as research participants since some graduate students have already acculturated during their undergraduate experience. Lastly, the number and variety of international

students may be limited due to the first-time freshmen international students at the mid-size midwestern university being used for this study.

Definition of Terms

Acculturation. The process of acculturation involves successfully adjusting from one culture to the next while still accepting the norms of one's own culture (Andrade, 2006).

International students. Students who are studying at an American university who are not from the United States (Zhang, 2010).

Sensation Seekers. People who are not satisfied with how life is and need to experience something that is outside of their comfort zone (Arasaratnam, 2005).

English language acquisition. How well one speaks or reads English (Khawaja & Stallman, 2011).

Summary

Acculturation is symptomatic of most international students who come to the United States to study. Research indicates that English language acquisition and other factors impact acculturation. Higher Education institutions are aware of this phenomenon and seek to assist international students with this transition through orientation programs which have been shown to assist this transition (Andrade, 2006). This study is designed to identify the overall perceptions of participants regarding the impact of an International Office sponsored orientation program.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

The purpose of the study was to examine the perceptions of international students participating in an orientation program at a mid-size midwestern comprehensive university. The review of literature is organized under the following headings: English Proficiency, Acculturation, Counseling, Discrimination and Prejudice, and Other Research.

English Proficiency

Some international students face difficulties with language acquisition and academic performance, especially attending an institution in a country where the native language is not the same as their country of origin. Previous research suggested that students who were learning in another language had trouble communicating clearly with their cohort, participating in class, or communicating with the professor (Andrade, 2006; Khajawa & Stallman, 2011; Sato & Hodge, 2009). Not being able to overcome these language/communication barriers led to a decline in overall academic performance. These barriers existed not only for international students who had passed the English language test, but also those who had come from an English as a Second Language (ESL) program (Khajawa & Stallman, 2011; Kwon, 2009).

International students who participated in the ESL program prior to coming to the university were significantly more likely to feel intimidated by classes where the language of instruction was English than those who did not take the English proficiency classes before matriculating (Kwon, 2009). Those students who participated in the English as a Second Language program knew limited English before entering the

program and thus lacked confidence to succeed in class, whereas students who did not take English proficiency classes were more fluent in the English language (Kwon, 2009).

Wei, Heppner, Mallen, Kelly, Liao, and Wu (2007) found that the longer international students studied in the United States, especially when they come from a country where English is not the primary language, the better they adjusted to academic life. The researchers concluded it takes time for transitional adjustments to occur but eventually language acquisition and academic performance improve. McLachlan and Justice (2009) found that international students' living situation improved after the first six to twelve months of living in their host country. In spite of the challenges they faced during their first year, many international students demonstrated resilience and remained goal-oriented by setting new goals for themselves, such as continuing their education.

Acculturation

Besides having to overcome the language barrier, international students also have to adjust to other issues when coming to the United States. Some of these issues are homesickness, financial stress, adjusting to the new culture in general, and cultural misunderstanding (Lee et al., 2010; McLachlan & Justice, 2009; Myers-Walls, Frias, Kwon, Ko, & Lu 2007; Tavakoli, Lumley, Hijazi, Slavin-Spenny, & Parris, 2009; Yakunina & Weigold, 2011; Zhang, 2010).

Homesickness is a prominent side effect of international students beginning their academic career in another country. Coping strategies that have been employed include keeping in contact with family via blogging, Skype, or Facebook, attending counseling groups with other international students, or participating in a program where the international student was able to speak with an American student or American family

(Lee et al., 2009; McLachlan & Justice, 2009, Yakunina & Weigold, 2011; Zhang, 2010). Zhang (2010) and Lee et al. (2010) agreed that when students were homesick, a useful coping strategy was to contact their family members via social media. Other researchers suggested that when international students spoke with faculty members, 95% of those found a support system and were able to deal with missing their family. This contact with faculty helped them recover from adjustment issues such as mild depression. This relationship is supportive because the international students thought of the faculty member as a mentor (McLachlan & Justice, 2009). Another coping strategy was attending a counseling group with other international students. This helps international students recognize they are not alone in their stress and learn that other international students had similar problems (Yakunina, Weigold, & McCarthy, 2011).

Financial stress was also an issue with international students. Many were dependent on scholarships they received upon entering the university or gaining them while they matriculated. The majority of the participants (95%) said they felt stress due to faculty expectations and maintaining a high GPA in order to retain their scholarship (Myers-Walls et al., 2007). For others, it was finding on-campus employment since international students are not allowed to work off-campus during their first year of their attendance at a U.S. institution of higher education. Even though international students documented they could pay for school by sending in financial affidavits and bank documents to gain admission, many of them wanted to have extra money for activities outside of campus life (Yakunina et al., 2011).

Finally, international students had difficulty acculturating into the United States and felt as if they were living in two different cultures at the same time (Meyers-Walls, et

al., 2007; Tavakoli et al., 2009). When international students came to study accompanied by their parents, they demonstrated a higher level of cultural misunderstanding and adjustment to living in two different cultures. The participants felt “off balance or out of place” (Myers-Walls et al., p. 457). Rules, expectations, tools, and resources available to the participants in their home country were no longer available and resulted in stress. Tavakoli et al. (2009) found that communication and emotional challenges were common barriers for international students. To help with this transition, the researchers utilized writing intensive interventions as part of overall assertiveness training. By the end of the study, the participants felt “a lot better about themselves and had emotional and stress-related benefits” (Tavakoli et al., 2009, p. 49).

Counseling

Yakunina et al. (2011) found counseling is viewed differently around the globe. With this in mind, when international students study in another country, they might avoid helpful services available through the campus counseling center because of potential stigma associated with counseling from their own country. However, when international students have acculturated to their new setting they are more likely to seek help. For those students who have not acculturated or maintain rigid identification with their heritage, researchers suggest alternative models of support (e.g. less individualistic) are necessary for helping (Dipeolu, Kang, & Cooper, 2007; Wei et al., 2012; Yakunina et al., 2011).

Researchers found that international students who have acculturated to the new setting are more likely to seek help by attending a therapy session than those who have a stronger identification with their heritage (Yakunina et al., 2011; Wei et al., 2012).

“Western models of psychological therapy often promote individualism, assertiveness, and open expression of emotion” (Yakunina et al., 2011, p. 223). The researchers indicated this may contradict certain cultural norms such as with Asian students and may result in negative attitudes toward the helping process. In some Asian cultures, it is common for people to avoid expressing problems they are having because they do not want to burden their family members (Lee et al., 2010). Wei et al. (2007) indicated that international students who acculturate have less difficulty seeking assistance. “Frequent use of coping results in weaker identification with culture and at risk for distress when high levels of acculturative stress” (Wei et al., 2012, p. 78).

Dipeolu et al. (2007) explored efforts to deliver support groups to international students. The researchers met with Residence Hall Directors, community advisors, and well-adjusted international students to distribute flyers about counseling services. When there was a lack of response, the researchers decided to change the location and personalize the flyers by changing the language from English to the international student’s primary language. The group met in the Women’s Resource Center and discussed topics such as marriage, dating, acculturation, homesickness, and everyday struggles. The international students became aware that others share similar problems and could then relate to each other and not feel alone. The conclusion was that by advertising a different location and in the primary language of the student, the turnout was enhanced and international students were able to openly discuss the challenges they were experiencing.

Discrimination and Prejudice

Another barrier faced by international students is the issue of discrimination and prejudice. The cause of discrimination varies and may result from limited English proficiency, physical appearance or dealing with stereotypes, which requires an equally varied coping mechanism (Bonazzo & Wong, 2007; Charles-Toussaint & Crowson, 2010; Constantine, Anderson, Berkel, Caldwell, & Utsey, 2005; Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007).

The type and intensity of discrimination and prejudices varies according to the country and culture of origin. For example, African international students noticed “Whites occupy more of the power and that White Americans possessed most of the economic resources” (Constantine et al., 2005, p. 58). This was also reflected in the research of Charles-Toussaint et al., (2010) that some international students thought American individuals desire their group to dominate above the rest. When asked about their experiences with American students, participants in the Constantine et al. (2005) study indicated they experienced racial slurs and even discriminatory acts by African-American students who referred to African students as “white-washed” (p. 60). To cope with this, they turned to family and friends for support. The researchers noted that it is critical for African students to maintain social connections with “individuals who can validate their sense of self and ways of being” (Constantine et al., 2005, p. 148).

Bonazzo and Wang (2007) found that while Japanese students did not experience discriminatory slang, they did experience stereotyping from not only their peers, but professors as well. Participants gave examples of stereotyping such as 1) professors believe Asian students can master material quickly because they are smarter than Americans; 2) Americans thought that since Asians were so intelligent, they were

overachievers; and, that 3) American students thought all Asians owned samurais and swords. Participants indicated they utilized silence as a way of coping. They did not want to seek help, but would ignore the stereotyping in hopes that it would stop.

Other Research

Sato and Hodge (2009) found that international students want support from their advisor and may not receive it due to issues such as lack of guidance, excessive demands, mismatch of research interests, and interpersonal misunderstandings. This lack of support leads to increased feelings of anxiety for the international student. Researchers found that international students wanted more assistance from their advisor and retention was negatively impacted if the students felt neglected.

Plagiarism was another issue that certain international students, depending on their cultural norms, might find difficult to manage (Duff, Rogers, & Harris, 2011). For example, students from India and certain Asian cultures see no problem with plagiarism. The researchers found that international students lacked basic knowledge about the concept and mechanics of plagiarism. To solve this problem, those international students who plagiarized were put into multiple workshops to teach them about this issue. As a result, the researchers found a decrease in plagiarism.

Finally, Arasartnam (2007) defined international sensation seekers as those not satisfied with life in their home country and who wanted to experience something outside their comfort zone. It was suggested that high sensation seekers tended to gravitate toward socializing with students from other countries, such as American students. The sensation seekers were more apt to be involved with students that found overall satisfaction with the United States.

Summary

Studies indicated that when international students had problems communicating with peers and professors, their academics suffered and they had a loss of confidence in themselves, even though they had met the university requirements to be admitted (Andrade, 2010; Khajawa et al., 2011; Kwon, 2009; Sato & Hodge, 2009; McLachlan & Justice, 2009; Wei et al., 2007). Acculturation research indicated that when coming to the United States, some international students had language barrier issues and suffered from homesickness, financial stress, and cultural misunderstandings (Lee et al., 2010; McLachlan & Justice, 2009; Myers-Walls et al., 2007; Tavakoli et al., 2009; Yakunina et al., 2011; Zhang, 2010). Research regarding counseling showed that meeting in groups provided an opportunity to see they were not alone in dealing with acculturation issues (Dipeolu et al., 2007; Wei et al., 2012; Yakunina et al., 2011). Discrimination and prejudice research indicated that some international students deal with this in different ways such as staying silent or talking to family and friends (Bonazzo & Wong, 2007; Charles-Toussaint et al., 2010; Constantine et al., 2005; Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). Other findings suggested the following: 1) academic advisors could be more helpful to their international advisees which has a mitigating effect on retention (Sato & Hodge, 2009) 2) plagiarism workshops help certain international students who struggle with plagiarism (Duff et al., 2011), and 3) international students who were sensation seekers were more willing to study abroad and make friends with Americans (Arasartnam, 2007).

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The purpose of the present study was to investigate first-time freshmen international students' perception of orientation on different aspects of cultural differences, English language acquisition, perceived discrimination or prejudices, advising, and the overall orientation experience at a midwestern comprehensive institution. This chapter includes the study design, participant demographics, instrument, data collection, and treatment of data.

Design

The study examined student perceptions of the international orientation program as perceived by incoming international students at a comprehensive midsize midwestern university. International students participated in a three-day orientation. The orientation included watching a series of videos focusing on support services offered by the university such as Health Services, Payroll, Insurance, and Student Standards. The videos informed the students of how each office functions as well as the resources offered to the students. Previously, students have obtained this information by listening to a representative from each department; however, the Office of International Students and Scholars believe that the use of videos could shorten the structured "lecture" time which would allow more time for students to engage with the facilitators. Students then met face-to-face with the Directors of the Graduate School and the Office of International Students and Scholars. This interaction was designed as a general welcome to the students as well as an opportunity to cover topics such as discrimination and cultural differences. Students met with academic advisors as a follow-up to previous Skype

sessions that occurred while the students were in their home counties prior to arriving on campus. Students were informed about the “Friends and Family” and Conversation Partners programs offered by the institution. Finally, the international students met with representatives from Registered Student Organizations (RSO), such as the Association of International Students, Asian-American Association, and the African American Association. Other aspects of the orientation included field trips to local stores, banks, and other community businesses deemed important by the orientation committee. After the students completed the three-day orientation, four undergraduate students were selected to participate in this study and were individually interviewed about his/her orientation experience.

Four participants were selected from the new international orientation program and one additional student served as an assistant to the researcher throughout the orientation process. This student was asked to serve as an observational partner. He attended the orientation with the participants as a way of gaining additional insight into the overall program experience. His contribution to the study was to observe students during the video orientation and was later interviewed for his unique perspective of the students’ reactions to the videos. “Observing can be an invaluable way of collecting data because what you see with your own eyes and perceive with your own senses is not filtered by what others might have documented” (Yin, 2011, p. 141).

As well as using the observational partner, an International Students and Scholars survey was distributed and a follow-up interview was conducted with the research participants one week after orientation. The open-ended data was used and analyzed for themes. The use of the observational partner, international students, International Office

survey, and the face-to-face interviews approximated triangulation. Triangulation is a process where three sources all point to the same event (Yin, 2011).

This study utilized a qualitative research design to allow more personal involvement in the data collection. The interview allowed the participants to express their opinions about international orientation and to provide recommendations for improvement. The use of qualitative methodology “opens a window to greater understanding of these phenomena with an in-depth richness that otherwise may not be possible” (Cody & Mills, 2006, p. 22).

Research Participants

The international students were invited to an initial organizational meeting where they were provided information on upcoming events including the three-day orientation program. Sampling for the research participants came from this group and was both purposeful and convenient. First, the students were introduced to the research project and asked to volunteer when they first arrived on campus. Second, on the last day of orientation, those who qualified and were interested signed up for the project by using a sign-up sheet. In order to interview students with limited prior exposure to United States culture, only first-time freshmen undergraduate students were selected to participate. Third, these students who volunteered to participate were given a consent form to read and sign (see Appendix B). Of the 60 international students who participated in the orientation program, approximately 10 were freshmen. Four of those agreed to participate in the research project and completed the orientation survey at the end of orientation. An international student in his senior year volunteered to act as an observation partner and is referred to as the fifth participant.

participant demographics.

Participant 1 was a 21-year-old female from the United Kingdom majoring in Psychology. Her English language test (TOEFL) score was waived. She has visited the United States a few times for vacations, but has never stayed for long periods of time such as going to school.

Participant 2 was an 18-year-old female from Germany majoring in English Education. Her TOEFL was waived. She has never been to the United States.

Participant 3 was an 18-year-old female from Malaysia majoring in English Education. She has never been to the United States. The TOEFL score was waived.

Participant 4 was a 30-year-old female from China majoring in Psychology. She attended an English as a Second Language program in the United States and obtained the required level to gain admission to the University. She initially visited the United States to attend the English as a Second Language program to prepare for further English education. Because she attended an ESL center, her TOEFL was waived. She has not attended a university prior to this orientation.

Participant 5, the observational partner was a 21 year old male from Indonesia majoring in Biology and has lived in the United States for five years. He served as a research assistant to the researcher throughout the orientation. His contribution to the study was his unique perspective on the students' reaction to the orientation process specifically during the video portion of orientation. He was later interviewed for his unique perspective. Subjects were aware of his presence and made known he was there to assist the research project.

Site

This study was conducted at a mid-size, midwestern public university with enrollment at 11,178. Of those students, 152 were international students: 90 were graduate students and 62 were undergraduate students. Appendix A includes a summary of the international students' country of origins.

Instruments

The International Orientation survey (see Appendix C) and a series of open-ended questions developed by the researcher (see Appendix D) were used for data collection. The survey included questions addressing their perceptions of the program. The International Orientation survey contained one item that rated their overall evaluation of the program and five open-ended questions on the students' perceptions of the orientation. The face-to-face interview questions addressed the topics of orientation, acculturation, discrimination and prejudice, English acquisition, and advising. After the interviewing process, the researcher transcribed and coded the data into themes.

Data Collection

The qualitative data was collected in the form of individual interviews with the research participants. All interviews were conducted using a secure and private room in the university library. Interviewees were video and audio taped and their interviews were later transcribe and checked for accuracy by the research participants. Follow-up questions took place where clarification was needed.

Treatment of Data

The data were collected using individual interviews that were video and audio-taped for accuracy and completion of the survey. The researcher transcribed the

interviews using a personal computer that was password protected. Participant names were protected and replaced using “Participant 1”, “Participant 2” etc... Following the study, all data related to the research will be kept for three years and then destroyed. After completing the surveys, the participants allowed the researcher to code the survey for future reference and ensure the transcriptions and surveys matched each participant.

The researcher utilized the Five-Phased Cycle of compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding to code the data (Yin, 2011). Compiling consists of putting the data in some order and took place after transcribing the data. Disassembling requires the researcher to break the data into smaller pieces and were given initial codes. These codes were closely related to the actual words used by the participant. The researcher then coded all of the interviews and surveys together into different themes or level 2 codes. The third phase of reassembling required taking the initial codes and arranging them into larger themes. From there the fourth phase or interpreting phase required the themes were to be organized into final categories of meaning. The final phase resulted in making a concluding interpretation of the entire data (Yin, 2011).

CHAPTER IV

Findings

The purpose of the qualitative study was to describe the perceived experiences of the participants who attend international orientation. The participants completed a survey, were interviewed by the primary researcher and were observed during orientation by the observational partner. The themes that emerged from this process are as follows: cultural differences, English language acquisition, prejudices and discriminations, academic advising, and the overall orientation experience.

Research Question 1: What is international students' perception of the orientation experience in relation to the issues of cultural differences?

Cultural Adjustment

The first theme that emerged through interviewing the participants was the cultural adjustment that the students faced when they first arrived in the United States. Culture adjustments varied among participants. Participants from the United Kingdom and Germany where English is either the primary language or utilized frequently among the citizens experienced minimal culture adjustment. Participants from China and Malaysia that did not speak English, or utilized it infrequently, experienced more cultural adjustment. In other words, participants from primary English speaking countries had an easier adjustment than those coming from a country where English was not the primary language. Participant 2 stated,

The [name of country] and America are very similar so it wasn't a big shock. I have been to New York a couple of times and there are little things that are different, like the towns such between my country and this one, but I don't think I

had to adjust too much from what I'm used to. I quickly got used to America and the people. They are nothing too different.

Likewise, the participant who came from a country where English is often utilized also had less difficulty adjusting. Participant 1 stated, "I'm from [name of country], so it's sort of the same here. We have the American lifestyle and television shows that are here in America. The culture is pretty similar." Both participants with adequate English acquisition skills saw little value to this aspect of the orientation. Participant 2 stated, "Yeah, I just zoned out. It didn't affect me because our countries are so similar that I wouldn't have any problems adjusting. So I didn't pay attention at all to that portion of orientation."

Participants on the other end of the continuum of English acquisition experienced more adjustment. Because some countries are culturally different from the United States, participants expressed a harder time adjusting, not only to the language, but to the culture as well. Participant 4 stated,

Since we're at a university instead of a college, classes might be harder and I was stressed about not being able to keep up my grades because I'm not confident in my English and me and my roommates not making friends. I think that has affected us and it's been a little hard.

Even though the participant had some English language training and was accepted into the university, she was not confident in her ability to keep up with class assignments and she worried about making friends. She paid particular attention to adjusting to the United States at orientation. Participant 4 said,

I loved the part about Friends and Families and Conversation Partners. You guys let us know how helpful the program could be, to have a support system in America. It made me feel more comfortable knowing people wanted me here and are interested in me.

The Family and Friends and Conversation Partners programs are voluntary programs offered to international students who attend orientation. Family and Friends offers the international student an opportunity to experience American family life. The International Office encourages the American family to meet with the international student at least once a month for things such as a meal, a cultural event, a movie, or just to visit. Conversation Partners is a program designed to connect the international student with an American “talking” partner. This provides the international student an opportunity to practice English. Both of these programs are designed to give the students a sense of belonging and ease adjustment into a new culture. Participant 4 had said this about the program:

I am very excited to participate and I’m very glad this was included in orientation. If it was not, I don’t think I would have known about it. I’ve met with my family already and they are wonderful. We’ve already planned our next gathering. I think that it’s really helped me with understanding the culture and what a typical American family is like.

Because the participant was able to hear about the program through orientation, she was able to quickly take advantage of the opportunity and ease her transitional stress.

Participant 4 stated:

They are really great. They want to know all about my culture and what I eat and what my city is like. The next time they are going to help me buy ingredients for a traditional dish I would eat in my home country and I get to teach them how to make it.

The participant was very excited about this experience and looked forward to future interacting with the American family.

The participants offered recommendations that might modify the cultural difference section of the orientation. For those students who expressed minimal English acquisition skills, more attention to differences was needed. As Participant 3 said,

In [name of country], tips are not given at restaurants. After you are done eating, you pay for your food and that's it, you don't tip the waiter. It is seen as offensive. Here though, I had to have someone explain that to me because when I went out to eat, I did not tip the waiter.

As part of a successful transition, this participant wanted more examples of what to expect from the culture and avoid cultural misunderstandings.

Those participants with strong English acquisition skills saw less value to cultural differences. Participant 2 said, "Coming from the [name of country], I don't see any big differences...I think we have different laws, but that's about it." This participant believed the cultural differences were less noticeable and thus less of a concern.

Cultural differences were addressed in the orientation during the welcome from the Dean of the Graduate School as well from the Director of the Office of International Students and Scholars. The Dean discussed general culture differences, the weather change, the different phrases and slang people in the midwest use, as well as what the

culture is like in the community and on the campus. Cultural differences were also addressed when the Director of the International Students and Scholars Office made his welcome. He elaborated more on what was expected of the international students and those even though cultures are different, people in this community are very understanding and will help the students adjust to the community. These tips were meant to provide some suggestions on adjusting to the new culture and minimize negative experiences.

Participant 2 stated:

The welcome from the Dean and Director was good. They told us what to expect and how things could be different for us. It was nice to hear that because I'm from a completely different country and I wasn't sure what to expect.

Participant 4 also had this to say,

The welcome was very useful because I was able to learn about the community and how great it was and how people are different. It was nice to know how welcoming people can be. It was great. I think if the welcome had not included what to expect here, I would have been scared when talking to people, like how they might react to me or how they talk, but the Dean told us stuff we needed to know.

The orientation also helped this participant anticipate what the communities were like, both on and off campus. However, participants also made suggestions on how to adapt to cultural adjustment better.

Participant 3 said,

It would have been more helpful to hear from an international student because they know what we're going through, they have been where we are and they have adjusted well. They could give us tips.

Two out of the four participants thought current international students could present on what they have learned during the time at the university and what new arrivals might expect. Participants also thought using current international students might be a less intimidating group to ask difficult or perceived embarrassing questions. Participant 4 stated,

We would be able to relate more to the current international students rather than the Dean or the Director because people our age socialize a bit differently and do things differently than older adults. If I was an international student, they would have experience and it would be interesting to hear.

Participant 3 also thought that having viewpoints from current international students would be useful because they are around the same age as the incoming students. The current international students know where people their age socialize and know more about cultural adjustments.

Research Question 2: What is the international students' perception of the orientation program in relation to English language acquisition?

The first theme that emerged through interviews with participants was understanding their professors. This section addresses perceptions of English acquisition, including their level of English, how they cope with the new teaching style, and communication between the professor and student.

Understanding Professors

Because the interview took place one week after the new international student orientation, the participants were able to share about their first week in class. Some of the participants had difficulty comprehending certain professor's lectures. As with cultural differences, language acquisition was a key variable in this experience. Some of the participants had learned to speak English during high school or at an English as a Second Language program. On the other hand, some participants had little trouble understanding their professors because they grew up speaking English or they came from a primarily English speaking country.

Participant 3 was not confident with her English acquisition skills. During the interview, her body language communicated anxiety. She fidgeted when speaking about her English and even though the researcher could understand what she was saying, she did not seem confident during our interview. She said this regarding the professors,

Sometimes I have trouble understanding them and when we speak one on one I did not have enough courage to ask them what they said so I just end up shaking my head and leaving the room. This then caused a lot of confusing when it came to assignments and stuff.

This participant started learning English when she was in high school. Even though she had four years of class work before coming to the current university and passed her English Language test to be accepted into the university, she was still not confident enough to ask professors to repeat themselves or explain the subject matter further. This caused the participant to go to other students for help in clarifying what the professor said. Participant 3 further commented: "I can understand the students a little bit better

than the professor. Maybe it's because they are, I don't know, speaking at a different level? The students aren't as confusing." The professor's formal teaching style of communicating became a barrier for this participant. When interacting with students, they spoke in a more informal manner.

Participant 4 also had the same problem, "I am from a very different country, we do not speak English. So I had to attend an ESL center because my English was not good enough. I still don't think it is."

This participant had enrolled in an English as a Second Language program before coming to the university and was accepted into the university. Participant 4 went on to say, "I have trouble sometimes, so I have to take my time with homework and re-read a lot of instructions. I know I'm good enough to be here, but it's frustrating." The participant was frustrated when she was talking about her struggles. Even though she passed her English acquisition program, she still had trouble with her homework. She had to take her time, read instructions carefully and review it multiple times to complete the assignments.

Students with strong English acquisition skills had a different experience. Participant 1 said, "The professors have all been really nice to me and of course, I understand them, English is my first and only language, so I don't see any problems that I'll have with them." Adjustment in the classroom was very easy for this participant because English was her first language. She also felt comfortable going up to her professors and introducing herself. This was a positive experience for her. Participant 1 went on to say, "They all said that if I needed anything that I shouldn't hesitate to ask and that they were all very excited to have me in their class." Because of this reaction from

her professors, she felt excited to attend class and confident her studies would be manageable.

Some coping strategies were suggested by the Dean of the Graduate School when he made his welcome speech. He told the international students about how to talk to their professors when attending class and encouraged them to make introductions with the professors. The Dean stated, “not only do the professors like meeting international students, but they also like to help.” He also recommended going to other people in the classroom and asking for assistance. This would not only help the participants better understand what was going on, but also assists them with making friends. By introducing themselves to the professors, a relationship would be established making it easier for the students to ask for help. Participant 2 talked about having professors speak at orientation. Participant 2 said,

It was nice to hear the Dean talk about professors, but I would have liked to hear one [professor] talk and what they suggest we do if we are struggling. I know what the Dean said was useful and nice, but if we had a professor come and talk to us, I think it would have made some of us feel better. Even though I don't think I'll struggle, just having that reassurance of us being able to come to them if we have trouble understanding what's going on in the classroom would be nice.

Even though the participant does not think she will have problems in the classroom or with assignments, she still would have preferred to meet a professor in orientation. This would allow the students to speak with the professor regarding class and hopefully model a welcoming attitude.

Participant 4 talked about taking notes and how she struggled with that: “English is not my first language so when I sit in the classroom taking notes, it’s hard for me to understand the professor and I get confused easily. This participant spoke with students after class regarding the notes that were taken. Sometimes, the participant would borrow others students’ notes to make sure everything was understood in the lecture. Participant 4 went on to say, “Because I was not able to understand what was going on, I had to ask other people for their notes. I could understand it a little better than my own.” The participant developed a coping skill beyond what was mentioned in orientation, of going to other students for help.

The Writing Center was introduced to the international students via a video presentation that is given during orientation. This video introduces students to a resource where they can find assistance on homework and papers and where they can practice and improve their writing skills. Participant 4 said, “I am very excited about the Writing Center, I have been there already and they have helped me with my English. I think I will improve as I continue to attend the workshops.” The Writing Center, in addition to the orientation, offers follow-up workshops during the international students’ second semester. Participant 4 reacted by stating, “I know there is more next semester and I can’t wait to take them. They are more advanced, but I love that. I can be helped while I am here and not struggle.”

Participant 4 was very enthusiastic about access to the Writing Center and knowing it was an available resource. Earlier in the interview she was not confident about her English and appeared frustrated. She was encouraged to find a resource that would be able to assist her.

Research Question 3: What is international students' perception of the orientation experience in relation to issues of perceived discrimination and prejudices?

The first theme that emerged in research question 3 was discrimination and prejudice. This section addresses the treatment of participants by other students with two opposing views.

Perceived Discrimination and Prejudice

As with other aspects of orientation, the reaction to discrimination and prejudice was perceived along the English acquisition continuum. While attending classes a week after orientation, the participants experienced two different reactions from interacting with American students on campus. For example, the participant from the English speaking country experienced no problems with discrimination and prejudice.

However, Participant 3 experienced some perceived mild discrimination by other students in her class. She felt they treated her differently because of the way she looked.

Participant 3 said,

People notice me, they look at me and pay attention to me...but it does bother me that I stand out and it's insulting when people are shocked that my English is so good. It's like they are shocked all Asians speak English.

This participant had trouble getting people to see past her physical appearance, but stated a mixed reaction to this experience:

I kind of get it, they are from America and it doesn't look like there are a lot of Asian students here and it's probably because they haven't been to other countries. They probably think that people can only speak one language there.

Even though the participant tried to rationalize what was happening, she was hurt by the experience. She continued,

I think in classes, when everyone is new, they want to talk to people who are like them, like their roommates or friends they have already made, but not to me. I think it's because I don't know them or I don't look like them.

This participant was asking about coping. She stated, "I've made friends since then, it just took them some time to get to know me and I have my roommates. They understand me and don't treat me like that." The participants were asked how orientation might address this differently. Participant 3 said,

I think there should be a video about it. I think the Director talked a little bit about it in between videos, but it was mostly about what to do, like report it, but not what to expect or how to deal with it. I wish there was something because I was shocked when this happened.

Participant 3 elaborated on the importance of the Office of Civil Rights and the information given:

I think this was a very important issue. I think they could've warned us about it. And explain to us that sometimes some Americans don't dislike you or anything, they just don't know how to relate... They should encourage us to talk to them nevertheless, and if someone is rude, well, there are rude people everywhere. We shouldn't be prejudice either by saying all Americans are racist, just because one was. I think it would help us not feel as bad or think they're rude and racist, if we understand what they're thinking someone who could give us examples of what happened to her/him. I'd listen and feel more prepared. If someone comes in and

doesn't give examples, I wouldn't find it very helpful because there's discrimination and prejudice everywhere and we know what it is. I feel like if it has happened to someone and they tell us how they learned to deal or think about it, it would be really helpful.

She became more intense in discussing this issue and would like to see someone provide more examples of discrimination and how to cope or prepare for it. The participant also commented on how a video would have been useful, but not by the Office of Civil Rights. Participant 3 continued, "I think the Civil Right Office would have just told us to go there and be processed. I don't think that would have been very useful." The participant was not interested in taking her issue to an authority. Rather, she wanted concrete suggestions on how to deal with it on a more personal basis.

Participant 3 also wanted to hear from a counselor on dealing with discrimination issues. She thought this would offer a different perspective on how to handle discrimination. She seemed happy that she had people to talk to about this subject and had healthy ways of dealing with this situation.

On the other hand, Participant 1 had the opposite reaction when attending classes. She stated, "People have been really nice to me so far. I think they find it interesting to know where I'm from." She experienced no discrimination and had adjusted quickly, even making friends on the first day of classes. The same question was answered regarding having a video about discrimination and prejudices. Participant 1 said,

I don't think we need one. I think people are pretty friendly here and I think if we addressed it, the international students might think it's a problem. I think leaving it out is more beneficial because people won't think it's a problem.

The participant insinuated if orientation does not talk about it, it will not happen to the students. Conversely, she felt a video on the topic would make it appear as though the university had a problem with discrimination. She thought it might make the participants feel like the university was not a friendly place in which to study.

Research Question 4: What is international students' perception of the orientation experience in relation to advising?

The themes that emerged through interviews with participants were a positive relationship with their advisor and retention. This section addresses their reaction to interacting with the advisor during the pre-orientation period, during orientation, and post orientation.

Positive Relationship

The participants who were interviewed were all first-time undergraduate students, therefore, giving them the opportunity for early registration. This meant they could contact their academic advisor via Skype and register for classes prior to arriving to orientation. This gave the students the ability to ask questions about what classes to take, how they would be set up, and an opportunity for the advisor to answer any questions students might have regarding what to expect when attending classes. Participant 1 said, "I was very happy with her because she researched what I needed to take. We even Skyped about my schedule before coming here." The participant also liked that the advisor paid attention to her scheduling needs. She had questions for the advisor and they were answered without hesitation. Throughout this part of the interview she seemed very excited and stated, "If I came here without her help, I would have been very confused. I was glad we had this opportunity to meet [virtually] early on."

Participant 2 shared a similar attitude to this aspect of orientation. She stated, “She was very helpful. She Skyped with me and set up my classes for me. She really prepared me for my classes.” This participant also appreciated the attention she was given and she was not worried about problems in this area.

Even though the academic schedule and registration is in orientation, the participants were able to have questions answered and set up a schedule before arriving. Their positive reviews reflected that early intervention reduced their anxiety concerning academic coursework. Participant 3 stated,

I had a lot of questions regarding my classes and how I would do in them. I am not in secondary school anymore, this is a university and I was very nervous about coming to a university, but after Skyping with her, she eased my nerves and I was very thrilled to come here.

Participant 4 said this regarding the orientation and registration, “I think it would be hard if I didn’t talk to her first, like I did. I think other students wouldn’t form a relationship with her, like I did and I think this should be for everyone.” The participant thought this aspect of orientation was useful and suggested it should also be available for international transfer students who normally would not receive this pre-orientation assistance.

After orientation, Participant 2 needed to make adjustments to her academic schedule. She had the following to say about her post-orientation visit with her advisor:

She was really helpful because I wanted to take upper level classes, but I’m only a freshmen. So we had to speak with other people to see if I could even take those

courses. We spoke with the coordinator of the International Office and my professors about the classes that I wanted. She really tried to help me out.

The academic advisor had already established a relationship with Participant 2 so making adjustments after classes began was not a perceived barrier to this student. Because she formed a bond with her academic advisor, it was easier for her to ask for help and attend the classes she wanted. Participant 2 went on to say, "I think if we didn't talk with each other before hand, I would have been afraid to confront her about my problem and wanting to take advanced classes."

An advantage of having virtual registration via Skype is not only helpful to the International Office when setting up appointments for the 60-80 students who attend the university, but it also assists the students with adjusting to a new life in a new country. The participants are freshmen and had no prior attendance at a university in their country, so they had many questions regarding what classes were like as well as how to register. With early registration, the students were able to meet their advisor before other students and form a relationship. This helped the students adjust to the idea of coming to a university, getting to know how the classes worked, and how to adjust to college life.

Retention

The International Student Orientation Program did not include a video on academic advising. Rather, students with a GPA level of 3.5 or higher were contacted prior to arriving on campus for Skype facilitated virtual advisement sessions. Those international students who did not have a GPA level of 3.5 or higher were required to attend three on site meetings. The first meeting was in a group format where students were told how to register for classes. This was followed by an individual meeting with

assigned academic advisors to select their class schedule, and finally a placement testing for math and science. All of the participants of the study or who had attended orientation had adequate GPA's and did not participate in the three meetings.

The students were told that they would not meet more than twice a year with their advisor, usually around the time of class registration. None of the participants thought the advisement portion of orientation would impact their retention. Participant 3 said, "No, because I won't see her that often, just when I need to sign up for classes." Participant 2 also said, "I think she will help me with my classes in the future and help me graduate on time, but that's the only way I see her affect my stay here." This participant did not see any other reason why the advisor would need to be seen during the year other than for occasional academic advice; once or twice a semester would suffice.

Participants appreciated the academic help and understood its value. Participant 1 said, "I only need her for classes. She is very helpful, but as long as I take what I need, I don't see the reason why it would affect me." Because the participant only dealt with course- work, the academic advisor would not interfere with her life at college. Participant 1 continued, "I think that she knows what classes are the best for me and she wants to see me succeed."

Overall, the participants in the study thought the advisor was very helpful with assisting them and no changes were necessary in terms of how orientation managed the introduction of the academic advising process.

Research Question 5: What is the international students' perception of the overall orientation program?

Several themes emerged under this research question. These themes include: structured entry, structured engagement, communication in presentations, adding presentations, communication between staff members, housing, and observational partner's perceptions.

Structured Entry

Upon early arrival for orientation, the students were shuttled from the airport to the university by staff members from the Office of International Students and Scholars. Once on campus, the students were met by two graduate assistants, volunteers, and current international students. When the new students arrived, they were assigned rooms for temporary housing, given instructions regarding the usage of residence hall keys and instructions for the following week of orientation, and finally provided food and snacks for their stay in the residence halls. The graduate assistants spent numerous hours with the new international students to make them feel comfortable. Because of this preparation, the participants felt welcomed. Participant 1 said "I really liked when we arrived because there were people waiting for us and welcomed us." Participant 1 had positive things to say about the orientation and the welcome was one of them. In the survey distributed at the end of the orientation, Participant 1 wrote, "I loved the warm welcome, it was very nice."

Participant 2 said "It was pretty good because you really welcomed us and the current students as well. It made us feel special and that we weren't the only ones going through this." Current international students were able to connect with the new students

making the adjustment process easier. Participant 4 said this regarding the international students,

Americans are already here, they are in America. They know the culture, they know other people. We are coming from all over the place and we have to make friends. It's nice to speak and meet other international students because they are going through the same thing. They have traveled very far; they know what we are going through. They experienced it.

Other activities were planned to ease the transition. Some churches in the area provided meals for the students and this gave them a chance to meet the community. Participant 4 said that "I think the churches were very nice and I felt welcomed at the event. It was nice to see community members and I was able to see what the community offered." This meeting was provided for the students to see that there is more to do than just the activities on campus. Not only did the students become aware of what is in the community, but they were introduced to various activities they could become involved at while attending the university. The international orientation gives them an opportunity to experience what is available in the community.

Structured Engagement

Orientation also provided a place for the new international students to meet people from different countries as well as their own. Many of the current international students participated in past orientations and were able to meet and form lasting friendships with other participants. Participant 4 stated, "I think it was fun and I met a bunch of students. One girl I met is now my roommate and we are great friends." Without orientation, these students may not have even met each other let alone room together.

Orientation helps foster relationships that assist the students in coping with transitional issues; they bond with fellow students who are struggling with the same issues.

Participant 3 reflected that in her statement, “My closest friends are international students and without orientation, I don’t think I would have met them.” Even though there are 162 international students currently on campus, many are not in the same classes.

International orientation gives them an advantage by meeting other international students and forming bonds.

Communication in presentations

Previously, the International Orientations had presenters from different university departments discuss the resources that are available, however, currently, the presenters were videotaped and did not appear in person. A total of twelve video presentations were viewed by the participants and each presenter spoke at a different speed. The differences in the speed of presentation resulted in 2 of the 4 international students having trouble comprehending the message. Participant 4 reported, “It went really fast and all and it was confusing because it was too fast. They did try and tell us about it though.” After each presentation, the Director of the Office of International Students and Scholars would go more in depth with the video presentation and then ask the international students if they had any questions regarding the presentation. Some students did raise their hands, however, most did not. This could have been a result of cultural differences. Participant 2 said, “It wasn’t clear if they were telling us about it or they were trying to sell it, such as the insurance. It was confusing.” The participant was not able to understand what the university insurance covered and where it could be used. Participant 2 stated “they were good and I think for some because some of them are not good at English, it’s hard to

understand it in a video because they talk differently.” The purpose of switching to video presentations was so that the international students could review the videos at a later time.

Additional presentations

The international students would have also preferred more presentations. Even though there were topics covered such as immigration, judicial affairs, and counseling, the students would have liked more information about the local community services.

Participant 1 said,

I thought there was something missing because I would have liked to know at this time how to pull up a bank account and I think it would have been good to know how to make one and know where the banks are...Also, the mobile thing, like where to get one and what is the best one maybe.

Participant 1 wrote: “Everything was covered well, but more could be added, like banking.” Even though banking was not addressed in the video presentation, the Director did try to cover the topic. Participant 4 said the same thing, “Maybe schedule a trip to the bank or to get a phone or to the post office that we may use later or different restaurants to know the area. I think that information would help me.” Participant 4 also wrote, “Information about eating, shopping, entertaining and more would be useful and would help me know the surroundings.” Even though the bank and post office are available on campus, some of the participants did not know where they were located.

Communication between staff members

Communication between staff members is also an important item to keep in mind while setting up and operating orientation. The staff members need to be in constant

communication to know what is going on and where the students are, not only for safety, but also so everyone knows what has already been covered. Schedules were made not only for the students, but also for the staff so everyone knew what was happening. This creates consistency for the students and makes them feel like the staff knows what they are doing. Participant 4 stated:

Yes, some of the schedule was very confusing. People didn't know what was going on because different staff said two different things, like when we went to Wal-mart. One staff member said we were going and another said it was cancelled. I did not like that.

This was also reflected in participants 4's survey, "It was not super organized and it was very confusing for us."

Housing

Another concern expressed by the participants was housing arrangements. A graduate assistant was supposed to help a student get off-campus housing, but after helping the student, the graduate assistant decided that all the international students could be assisted. Students broke from the schedule and this caused confusion between the orientation office and the housing office. Participant 1 then stated, "It was the housing...we woke up early and it was planned for 1:00 or 2:00 in the afternoon. There was a girl still in her sleeping suit and she thought it was going to be a quick trip, but after housing, we went onto another activity."

Observational Partner's Perception

During the international orientation, participant 5 was utilized to observe the presentations and record his own thoughts and the student's reactions to the videos. This

was an attempt to provide triangulation of the data. He noticed that more interaction was needed. He stated:

The presentations cover what the students need to hear, it covers what students need to know while they are in America, to stay in status (maintain visa status) or safe. Stuff was missing though, like the bank, the Director covered it, but not very well. I found myself talking to some students afterwards about it.

Even though he thought some of the topics were helpful for the students to know, he still thought there could be more information. The observational partner even had to fill in some information for the students who wanted to know more about bank accounts. Students were curious about practical matters such as how to open an account, receive money from home, and pay bills.

After hearing this information, I asked what could have been done to improve the lack of information. Participant 5 replied,

You need to have more information. The students need to know how to open accounts and more information, but you don't want to overload them because if you give them too much information they are going to stop paying attention. I would suggest just making it short, like the other videos and maybe making it a game, like review the information, jeopardy style. I think that would keep them open to hearing more information and they would remember it more.

Another way to keep the participants engaged would be to incorporate fun activities related to the topic. Participant 5 thought the students would pay closer attention and the information would be reinforced.

He also addressed how the presentations assist the students with adjustment to a new place. He said,

In the presentations, we gave them the general idea of what to expect, this is what you are going to be exposed to. Orientation does help, especially when the Dean and the Director are giving their welcomes and talking about the culture of the community and the university. This gives the students an idea of what to expect and how welcoming it is.

My assistant also confirmed there was a breakdown in communication between the office staff. He stated,

The international office is the heart of this program and while I was observing the students, I also noticed that the office was not communicating very well. I wasn't just here for the presentations, but for the whole week. One staff member said one thing and then another staff member would say another. I think that the communication needs to be better because I was even asked what was next and I wasn't sure what to tell them because I felt like I was giving the wrong information because it just wasn't consistent. I guess you guys just need to sit down before and talk about what is going on at all times. I think it seems simple, like here's the schedule, now follow it, but I guess not.

Because the staff was telling the students two different things, not only were the students confused, but the assistant was confused as well.

Summary of Results

The participants in this study described different reactions to the orientation often based on level of English acquisition. English acquisition was also stated by the

participants as a reason for differences in perceived discrimination, prejudices and difficulty understanding lectures.

All of the participants perceived academic advisors to be helpful, especially the pre-orientation Skype sessions. They did not think it would impact their retention and saw advising as an opportunity to register for classes.

Finally, when it came to the overall orientation, participants perceived the experience as welcoming. Positive factors included partnering new arrivals with existing international students and the opportunity to connect with other new arrivals.

Negative perceptions of orientation included the need for more information on things such as banking, the mailing process, and how to purchase a phone. These presentations could assist the students with keeping in touch with their family members or paying for their college tuition and fees. Lastly, communication problems via the International Office were noticed and the participants indicated confusion. The assistant's perspective also confirmed that additional information and better communication was important during the orientation process.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the international students' perception of orientation regarding cultural differences, English language acquisition, perceived discrimination or prejudices, advising, and the overall orientation experience. The present chapter includes the discussion, recommendations for international orientation, suggestions for future researchers, and conclusions.

Acculturation

International students face difficult cultural adjustment when beginning their academic matriculation. Researchers have found that by connecting with people on campus and through support groups, international students adjust easier (Dipeolu et al., 2007; McLachlan & Justice, 2009; Yakunina et al., 2011).

McLachlan and Justice (2009) found that by setting up a program to meet American students and families, the international students were able to make a smoother transition into the university and community. Likewise, the current research project supported this idea. Participant 5 said "I've meet with my family already and they are wonderful. We've already planned our next gathering. I think that it's really helped me with understanding the culture and what a typical American family is like."

Yakunina, et al., (2011) and Dipeolu et al. (2007) found that counseling assisted in helping with cultural adjustment. When international students attended counseling groups with other international students, they could not only hear similar issues being addressed, but also see that others were struggling to cope. In the current research, international students were not asked to participate in counseling as part of orientation;

however, they were able to interact with current international students. During this scheduled interaction, current international students were able to convey the message that transitional issues are normal and suggest ways to cope. Participant 4 said, “It’s nice to speak and meet other international students because they are going through the same thing. They have traveled very far; they know what we are going through. They experienced it.”

English Language Acquisition

When coming to the United States from a different country, some international students may struggle with a language barrier. This barrier can affect the students in various ways, such as communication with professors or other students (Andrade, 2010; Khajawa & Justice, 2011; Sato & Hodge, 2009). The current research also identified language acquisition as a barrier to overcome. Participant 1 stated: “Sometimes I have trouble understanding them (professors) and when we speak one on one, I did not have enough courage to ask them what they said...” Participant 4 also indicated struggling with academics: “I have trouble sometimes, so I have to take my time with homework and re-read a lot of instructions. I know I’m good enough to be here, but it’s frustrating.” Even though she has passed an ESL program, language acquisition was an issue.

When coming to the university, some international students will have to take an English language test or attend an English as a Second Language program (ESL). Previous research indicated that even students who completed an ESL program had problems with confidence concerning speaking English (Khajawa & Stallman, 2011; Kwon, 2009). The current research also reflected this finding. As Participant 4 stated “I am from a very different country, we do not speak English. So I had to attend an ESL

center because my English was not good enough. I still don't think it is." This participant chose to attend the ESL program because she did not have enough background in English to take the English language test. Even though she passed the level the university required and was accepted into the university, she was still not confident with her English.

However, other participants did not have trouble with English since their home country either had English as a primary language or had opportunities to utilize English on a regular basis. These participants did not experience language acquisition as a barrier or problems with understanding their professors or peers. Participant 3 said, "The professors have all been really nice to me and of course, I understand them. English is my first and only language, so I don't see any problems that I'll have with them."

Discrimination and Prejudices

When coming to the United States, some international students may experience discrimination and prejudice. The cause of this is varied and may result from poor language acquisition, physical appearance or as a result of cultural stereotyping. Coping skills vary as well (Bonazzo & Wong, 2007; Charles-Toussaint et al., 2010; Constantine et al., 2005; Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). The present research supported earlier research as some of the international students reported incidents of discrimination and prejudice. Participant 2 experienced some perceived mild discrimination by other students in her class. She felt they treated her differently because of the way she looked. She stated:

People notice me, they look at me and pay attention to me...but it does bother me that I stand out and it's insulting when people are shocked that my English is so good. It's like they are shocked all Asians speak English.

Participant 2 was able to cope with this by ignoring the situation. Likewise, participants in an earlier study (Charles-Toussaint & Crownson, 2010) utilized avoiding confrontation as a coping mechanism.

Not all students in the present study experienced prejudice and discrimination. Participants from countries that were most similar to the United States in both language and culture expressed no discrimination. Participant 3 stated: "People have been really nice to me so far. I think they find it interesting to know where I'm from." She had not experienced discrimination or prejudices and felt her overall adjustment was going well.

Advising

Sato and Hodge (2009) showed that international graduate students had a strained relationship with their advisors because they did not agree on research, did not meet regularly with their advisors and were not supported financially. However, the participants in the current study were pleased with their advisor. Two reasons may contribute to this finding. First, the participants were undergraduates and so the advisory relationship would be different. Second, the orientation program set up virtual internet meetings with the advisors prior to the students arriving in person on campus. Participant 1 said, "I was very happy with her because she researched what I needed to take. We even Skyped before about my schedule before coming here." The participant also liked that the advisor paid attention to her scheduling needs. She said she had many questions for her and the academic advisor answered them without hesitation.

While this study did not address retention, the participants said that the relationship with their advisors would not affect their stay because they only had to see their advisor twice a year. Participant 3 said, "No, because I won't see her that often, just

when I need to sign up for classes.” Participant 2 also said, “I think she will help me with my classes in the future and help me graduate on time, but that’s the only way I see her affect my stay here.” This participant did not see any other reason why the advisor would need to be seen during the year other than for occasional academic advice; once or twice a semester would suffice.

Orientation

Some of the findings that came out of this research project were not addressed in previous research. Results of the interviews indicated that a welcoming environment and structured interaction with other international students were important.

Overall, the participants perceived orientation as a positive experience. Many of the participants said their initial contact with the staff was positive because they experienced a welcoming environment. Current international students, graduate assistants, and volunteers were available for the students as they arrived. Participant 1 said, “I really liked when we arrived because there were people waiting for us and welcomed us.”

Current international students were brought in to help ease the transition to a new environment. Participant 2 said “It was pretty good because you really welcomed us and the current students as well. It made us feel special and that we weren’t the only ones going through this.” Finally, activities outside of orientation were planned so the new international students could see what the community had to offer. Participant 4 also said that “I think the churches were very nice and I felt welcomed at the event. It was nice to see community members and I was able to see what the community offered.” This was provided for the students to see that there is more to do than just the activities on campus.

Orientation also provided structured opportunities to interact with other new international students. Participant 4 stated, “I think it was fun and I met a bunch of students. One girl I met is my now my roommate and we are great friends.” Without this structured time to interact, students may have missed the opportunity to get to know each other. This interaction assisted students with accepting their new environment and easing transitional issues. Participant 2 reflected that in her statement, “My closest friends are international and without orientation, I don’t think I would have met them.”

Unlike previous research, participants in this project discussed problems with certain aspects of orientation. Participants indicated that some presenters spoke too quickly and it was hard to understand the intended message on the video. Participant 4 reported, “It went really fast and all and it was confusing because it was too fast. They did try and tell us about it though.” After each presentation, the Director of the Office of International Students and Scholars would try to go more in depth with the video presentation and then ask the international students if they had any questions regarding the presentation. Some students raised their hands but many did not, perhaps because they were coming from countries where asking question of an authority figure was viewed as insult (Andrade, 2006). Participant 2 also said, “It wasn’t clear if they were telling us about it or they were trying to sell it, the insurance, and then there were different kinds, like what the insurance covers. It was confusing” One way to improve this would be to have speakers interact with a current international student so they could be video-taped. This would force the speaker to slow down and better explain the purpose of the information.

The participants also wanted additional presentations covering practical matters related to mailing packages, obtaining cell phones, and banking. Participant 4 stated, “Maybe schedule a trip to the bank or to get a phone or to the post office that we may use later or different restaurants to know the area. I think that information would help me.”

Communication within the Office of Orientation and with other university personnel was also a problem for the participants. Staff from the Office of International Students and Scholars was providing international students with different explanations about some topics, which led to confusion. Participant 1 reflects this in the following statement:

Participant 1 then stated, “It was the housing...we woke up early and it was planned for 1:00 or 2:00 in the afternoon. There was a girl still in her sleeping suit and she thought it was going to be a quick trip, but after housing, we went onto another activity.”

Having concluded this section of the discussion, some recommendations will be offered based on the findings. Following are a list of ideas that might help future orientation leaders had better prepare international students for the transition to an American university.

Recommendations for International Orientation

Based on the data, organizers of orientation should offer similar programs like Friends and Family to students before they arrive. With new technologies like Skype, American families may be willing to meet with entering international students on a virtual basis pre-departure. Like the academic advisors who were paired early through

virtual internet meetings, international students could also be paired with friends and families and have contact prior to arriving.

Additional information on American culture and university life could be provided during the orientation. Perhaps a group of current international students could be interviewed and videotaped discussing their transitional issues and how American culture may differ from their home culture. This would also assure incoming international students they are not alone and their issues are universal.

Additional emphasis should also be placed on addressing discrimination and prejudice. Although the topic was discussed, more detail could be provided and role-played. Videotaping examples of how to manage this issue via negotiation rather than confrontation could also be utilized. This would reinforce the notion that the university cares about this topic and wants to provide immediate solutions beyond referring student complaints to the Office of Civil Rights.

The participants noted that some of the guests spoke too quickly making it difficult to understand the topic. As was mentioned in the discussion, it might help to have current international students assist the speakers in preparing the video tape. This would force the speakers to slow down and explain their topics in more detail. Additional presentations were needed to improve the overall orientation process. The participants in this study expressed a desire for more information on topics such as banking, how to mail packages and cell phone options.

Finally, the participants thought communication within orientation and between orientation staff and other university offices could be coordinated better. Having a pre-orientation retreat where staff could “iron out” policy and agree on answers would cut

down on misunderstandings. Likewise, meeting with other university staff involved would provide an opportunity to discuss schedules and goals.

Recommendations for Future Researchers

Increasing the number of participants would increase the reliability of the data. Because of the small number of incoming students, the number of eligible participants was reduced. The semester that the data was collected, there were more transfer students and graduate students than new incoming freshman. Even though the information gained was useful, it would have been helpful to interview a more diverse international population.

Increasing the number of male participants would have better approximated the population in this study. Due to the limited number of incoming students eligible for this study, only females participated. The male perception of orientation might reflect a different perspective.

Finally, future researchers may want to avoid interviewing students from countries where English is the primary language as many of the issues raised in this study were impacted by language acquisition.

Conclusions

Overall, the participants were divided on the topic of orientation, primarily based on level of English acquisition skills and level of similar cultural norms. Students with less English acquisition skills and more cultural differences expressed more difficulty with discrimination, adjustment, and beginning their college experience.

Some orientation programs mitigated transitional problems such as the Friends and Family program and utilizing academic advisors prior to arrival. The participants

were able to speak before orientation via Skype to register for classes. The academic advisor was able to answer many of the participants' questions regarding classes and what to expect.

Strengths and areas of improvement were discussed and the participants indicated an overall positive experience. In addition to the strengths, others positive areas included structured entry, interaction with current and newly arrived international peers, and an overall welcoming experience. Areas of improvement included increasing the number and detail of video presentations, communicating more slowly on video presentations, and improving communication within and between university offices.

REFERENCES

- Andrade, M. (2006). International students in English-speaking universities: Adjustment factors . *Journal of Research in International Education*, 5(131), 131-154.
- Arasaratnam, L. (2007). Sensation seeking students and international students' satisfaction of experiences in the United States. *Journal Intercultural Communication Research*, 34(3), 184-194.
- Bonazzo, C., & Wong, J. (2007). Japanese international female students' experiences of discrimination, prejudice, and stereotypes. *College Student Journal*, 41(3), 64-75.
- Charles-Toussaint, G., & Crowson, M. (2010). Prejudice against international students: The role of threat perceptions and authoritarian dispositions in U.S. students. *The Journal of Psychology*, 144(5), 413-428.
- Cody , L. R., & Mills, G. (2006). *Qualitative research: A personal skills approach* . (2nd ed.). United States of America: Pearson.
- Constantine, M., Anderson, G., Berkel, L., Caldwell, L., & Utsey, S. (2005). Examining the cultural adjustment experiences of African international college students: A qualitative study. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52(1), 57-66.
- Dipeolu, A., Kang, J., & Cooper, C. (2007). Support group for international students: A counseling center's experience. *Journal of College Student Psychtherapy*, 22(1), 63-74.
- Duff, A., Rogers, D., & Harris, M. (2011). International engineering students-avoiding plagiarism through understanding the western academic context of scholarship. *European Journal of Engineering Education*, 316(6), 673-681.

- Hanasab, S. (2006). Diversity, international students, and perceived discrimination: Implications for educators and counselors. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 10*, 157-172.
- Hays, D., & Singh, A. (2011). *Qualitative inquiry in clinical & educational settings*. (1st ed.). NY: Guilford Press.
- Institute of International Education. (2005). Foreign students and total US enrollment. Retrieved from <http://www.iie.org/en/research-and-publicationsopendoors>
- Institute of International Education. (2010). Open doors 2010 fast facts: International students in the United States. Retrieved from <http://www.iie.org/en/research-and-publications/opendoors>
- Khawaja, N., & Stallman, H. (2011). Understanding the coping strategies of international students: A qualitative approach. *Australian Journal of Guidance and Counseling, 21*(2), 203-224.
- Kwon, Y. (2009). Factors affecting international students' transition to higher education institutions in the United States: From the perspective of Office of International Students. *College Student Journal, 43*(4), 20-40.
- Lee, E., Lee, L., & Jang, J. (2010). Internet for the internationals: Effects of internet use motivations on international students' college adjustment. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 14*(7), 433-437.
- McLachlan, D., & Justice, J. (2009). A grounded theory of international student well-being. *The Journal of Theory Construction and Testing, 13*(1), 27-32.
- Mori, Y., Inman, G., & Cask, G. (2009). Supervising international students: Relationship between acculturation, supervisor multicultural competence, cultural discussions,

- and supervision satisfaction. *Training and Education in Professional Psychology*, 3(1), 10-18.
- Myers-Walls J., Frias L., Kwon, K., Ko, M., & Lu, T. (2007) Living in two worlds: Acculturative stress among Asian international graduate student parents and spouses. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 455-478.
- Pan, J., Wong, D., Joubert, L., & Chan, C. (2007). Acculturative and meaning of life as predictors of negative affect in acculturation: A cross-cultural comparative study between Chinese international students in Australia and Hong Kong. *The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists*, 740-753.
- Poyrazli, S., & Lopez, M. (2007). An exploratory study of perceived discrimination and homesickness: A comparison of international students and American students. *The Journal of Psychology*, 141(3), 263-280.
- Rice, K., Choi, C., Zhang, Y., Villegas, J., Ye, H., Anderson, D., Nestic, A., & Bigler, M. (2009). International student perception on graduate advising relationships. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 56(3), 376-391.
- Sato, T., & Hodge, S. (2009). Asian international doctoral students' expectations at two American universities: Assimilation, accommodation, and resistance. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 2(3), 136-148.
- Smallwood, S. (2006). Driven by foreign students, doctoral degrees are up 2.9% in 2005. *Professional Development Collection*, 53(15).
- Tavakoli, S., Lumley, A., Hijazi, A., Slavin-Spenny, O., & Parris, G. (2009). Effective assertiveness training and expressive writing on acculturative stress in

- international students: A randomized trial. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 56(4), 590-596.
- Wei, M., Heppner, P., Mallen, M., Ku, T., & Wu, T. (2007). Acculturative stress, perfectionism, years in the United States, and depression among Chinese international students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 54(4), 385-394.
- Wei, M., Heppner, P., Chao, R., & Ku, T. (2012). Forbearance coping, identification with heritage culture, acculturative stress, and psychological distress among Chinese international students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 59(1), 97-106.
- Yakunina, E., & Weigold, I. (2011). Asian international students' intentions to seek counseling: Integrating cognitive and cultural predictors. *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, 2(3), 219-224.
- Yakunina, E., Weigold, I., & McCarthy, A. (2011). Group counseling with international students: Practical, ethical, and cultural considerations. *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy*, 10(25), 67-78.
- Yin, R. (2011). *Case study research: Design and methods*. (4th ed., Vol. 5). United States of America: Sage.
- Zhang, L. (2010). Virtual story, real life: An examination of Chinese students' acculturation in the United States through blogs. *Department of Media, Culture and Communication at New York University*, 1-19.

APPENDIX A

Table 1
International Student's Country of Origin

Countries	Number of Students
Australia	1
Bahrain	2
Bangladesh	1
Belgium	1
Brazil	1
Cameroon	1
Canada	6
China	13
Czech Republic	2
Ethiopia	2
Germany	3
Ghana	1
India	48
Indonesia	2
Iraq	1
Ireland	1
Israel	1
Japan	1
Malaysia	1
Mexico	1
Nepal	7
Nigeria	8
Pakistan	5
Philippians	1
Saudi Arabia	1
Slovakia	1
South Africa	3
South Korea	8
Sri Lanka	5
Switzerland	1
Trinidad and Tobago	1
Turkey	1
United Kingdom	2
Uzbekistan	1
Vietnam	3
Zambia	1
Zimbabwe	1

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Payge Schagemann-Jones and Dr. Robert, from the College Student Affairs department at Eastern Illinois University. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

If you decide to participate, I will be interviewing you for between 60-90 minutes where you will be discussing topics about orientation. The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of international students participating in an orientation program. The questions will cover the participants' perception of cultural differences, English language acquisition, discrimination and prejudices, and the overall orientation program. You will be asked a series of open-ended questions during the interview and will be encouraged to respond with honest and open answers on the topic. Risks associated with this study are no greater than those associated with daily life.

Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential and will be viewed only by the researcher and the thesis advisor for this study.

Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University or any other organization sponsoring the research project. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits or services to which you are otherwise entitled. There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. Describe the anticipated circumstances under which the subject's participation may be terminated by the investigator without regard to the subject's consent.

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write the researcher, Payge Schagemann-Jones at plschagemann@eiu.edu or the Institutional Review Board, Eastern Illinois University, 600 Lincoln Ave, Charleston, IL 61920, (217) 581-8576

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time. I have been given a copy of this form.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

I hereby consent to the participation of _____, a minor/subject in the investigation herein described. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my child's participation at any time.

Signature

Date

I, the undersigned, have defined and fully explained the investigation to the above subject.

Signature of Investigator

Date

Faculty Supervisor:
Richard Roberts, PhD.
Counseling and Student Development
(217) 581-2400

APPENDIX C

International Orientation Survey

International Programs

Orientation Survey

Division of the Graduate School

1170 Blair Hall

Charleston, IL 61920

Phone: 217-581-2321

Fax: 217-581-7207



Name: _____ **Country of Origin:** _____

Date: _____ **Status:** Undergraduate ___ Graduate ___ Exchange ___

1. How did you first learn of Eastern Illinois University?
 Recruiting officer ___ Internet ___ Relative ___ Friend ___ Alumni ___
 Other (please specify):
2. Why did you choose to attend EIU?
3. Did you know anyone affiliated with EIU before you came here? If so, who?
4. Do you know prospective students who might like more information about attending EIU at a later date?
 If so, please notify us of their name and any contact information (email).
5. What is your overall ranking of the orientation process at EIU?
 Excellent ___ Good ___ Satisfactory ___ Poor ___

6. What were the strong points of the orientation week?

7. What were the weak points of the orientation week?

8. What topics would you like to see covered during orientation?

9. How would you rate the arrival assistance?
Excellent ____ Good ____ Satisfactory ____ Poor ____

Recommendations:

Please return this form to the International Programs Office at the above address.

APPENDIX D

Interview Protocol

The following questions will guide the interview:

Orientation

1. What did you think of orientation as a whole?
2. What did you think of the prezis?
3. Since you attended orientation, do you think you would be more likely to attend an OISS sponsored event?

Acculturation

1. How do you think the orientation assisted with acculturation?
2. Do you think acculturation was addressed with the presentations?
3. How were cultural differences and acculturation addressed?
4. How do you think acculturation and life stressors were presented?

Discrimination and Prejudices

1. How do you think discrimination and prejudices were addressed?
2. Because of going through orientation, do you think discrimination and prejudices will happen to you?

English Acquisition

1. How do you think English acquisition was presented?
2. How do you feel your English level will affect your studies?

Advising

1. How will it affect your relationships with friends, staff, and professors?
2. Can you tell me about your experience with your advisor?