

Efficacy and Impact of a Cultural Transition Course for First-Year International Students

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WAKE FOREST
UNIVERSITY

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Liberal arts university

- 7700+ students
- 4800+ undergraduate students
- 9% international undergraduate students
China, South Korea, Brazil top three countries of origin



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- **Introduce the challenge**
 - **Examine the research literature**
 - **Create the research question**
 - **Outline the method**
 - **Interpret results**
 - **Discuss limitations, conclusion, and future research**
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- **First-year college students make multiple transitions**
 - All have a cultural component
 - More transitions = greater cognitive and emotional load
- **Cognitive/emotional load from transitions can lead to:**
 - Lower academic achievement (Martinez, DeGarmo, & Eddy, 2004)
 - Illness, depression, and hopelessness (Wang et al., 2013)



What are colleges doing?

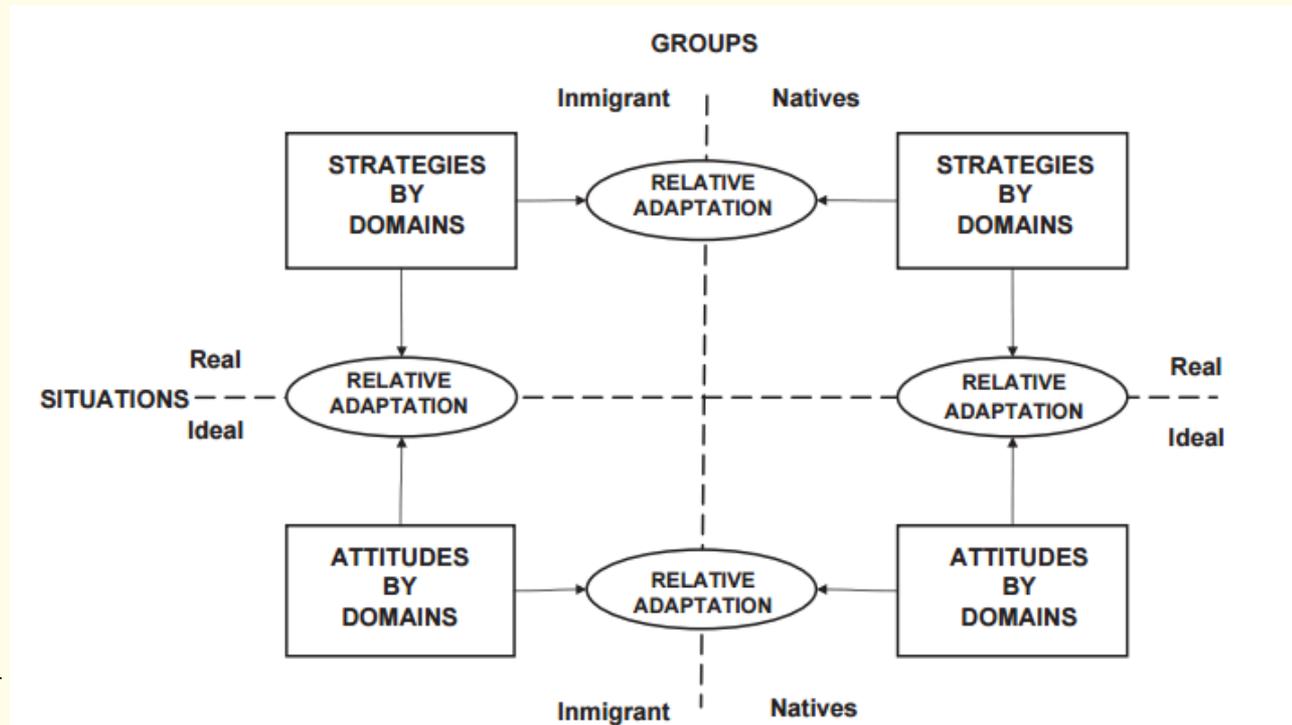
- Pre-orientation programs
- Bridging programs
- International students housing
- Transition courses (credit and non-credit options)
- First-year programming



Study	Course Content	Outcomes
Andrade (2006a; 2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University and ESL Program policy • Campus Resources • Time Management • American Regional Culture • Appreciation for Diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students found most useful: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host culture norms and expectations • Group-work experience
Kovtun (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anderson's (1994) Cross-cultural Adaptation Model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence in writing and presenting in English increased • Confidence in understanding diversity increased • Students engaged with university resources and instructor more
Smith & Khawaja (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STAR Intervention (8-week) • Introduction and focus on well-being • Making Friends • Feeling Good • Being Proactive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases in coping self-efficacy and psychological adaptation

Relative Acculturation Extended Model

(Navas et al., 2005)



Challenges/stressors for international students

- Language (Andrade, 2006b)
- Group-work (Kovtun, 2011)
- Participating in discussion (Kim, 2006)
- Communicating with faculty (Reinders, Moore, & Lewis, 2008)
- Communicating with other students (Andrade, 2006b)
- Cultural literacy in host culture (Yuan, 2011)
- Roommate issues (Yao, 2016)

Sense of belonging to college/university facilitates well-being for international students (Rosenthal, Russell, & Thompson, 2007)

- 1. Increase students' understanding of US university culture**
 - 2. Develop three intercultural skills critical for succeeding in different cultures**
 - Suspending judgment
 - Shifting perspectives
 - Tolerating ambiguity
 - 3. Implement these skills in typical academic and social contexts**
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1 credit hour (12.5 contact hours, 50min/wk, 1 semester)

Day	Content	Day	Content
1	Introduction	8	Communicating with Faculty
2	Identity and Interaction with Others	9	US News Media
3	Levels of Culture and the US Profile	10	US Politics
4	Culture “shock” and cultural transitions	11	Social Class and Cultural Awareness
5	Working in Groups	12	Research and the Library
6	Navigating Roommate Issues	13	US College Sports
7	Social Interaction in the US	14	Wrap-up

1. Do students report increases in perceived knowledge, confidence in using, and usefulness of the focal concepts taught in the course?
 2. Do increases in students' perceived knowledge, confidence, and usefulness of course concepts predict student campus belonging at the end of the course?
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**KEEP
CALM
AND USE THE
SCIENTIFIC
METHOD**

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	%	Length of time in the US	<i>n</i>	%
Gender			Less than 2 months	7	25.0
Male	18	64.3	2-5 months	14	50.0
Female	10	35.7	6-11 months	1	3.6
Age			1-3 years	1	3.6
18	23	82.1	4+ years	5	17.9
19	5	17.9	Completed High School	<i>n</i>	%
Citizenship			China	20	71.4
China	24	85.7	Egypt	1	3.6
Egypt	1	3.6	Germany	1	3.6
Germany	1	3.6	Russia, UK	1	3.6
Russia	1	3.6	U.S.	4	14.3
Uzbekistan	1	3.6	Uzbekistan, Spain	1	3.6

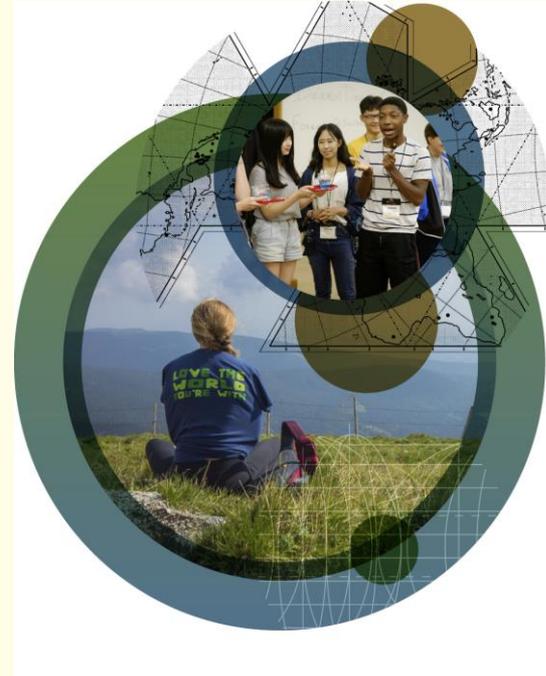
*Response rate for completion of both surveys was 87.50% (28 of 32)

Survey Administration

- T1: Beginning fall semester
- T2: End of fall semester
- T3: End of 2nd fall semester

Measures

- Adapted KCU Form (Lane, Menzies, Bruhn, & Crnobori, 2011)
- Campus Belonging (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990)
- Campus Social Support (Sarason, Sarason, Shearin, & Pierce, 1993)



Directions

Please rate the concepts or skills in terms of how knowledgeable you are about them, how confident you are in your ability to implement them, and how useful each concept or skill is for you. **CIRCLE** the number that best represents your rating for **EACH** concept or skill.

Knowledge

- 0 = I have no knowledge of this concept or skill.
- 1 = I have some knowledge of this concept or skill.
- 2 = I have more than average knowledge of this concept or skill.
- 3 = I have a substantial amount of knowledge about this concept or skill.

Confidence

- 0 = I am not confident in my ability to use this concept or skill.
- 1 = I am a little confident in my ability to use this concept or skill.
- 2 = I am confident in my ability to use this concept or skill.
- 3 = I am very confident in my ability to use this concept or skill.

Usefulness

- 0 = I do not believe this concept or skill is useful.
- 1 = I believe this concept or skill is somewhat useful.
- 2 = I believe this concept or skill is more useful than average.
- 3 = I believe this concept or skill is very useful.

Concept or Skill	Knowledge	Confidence	Usefulness
Intercultural competence	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Self-advocacy	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Communicating with students from other cultures	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Interacting in class with students from other cultures	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Solving problems with roommates	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Making friends with students from other cultures	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Communicating with professors	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3

KCU Pre-post Difference

Item	Knowledge	Confidence	Usefulness
Intercultural competence	.50**	.50***	.37*
Shifting perspectives		.42**	.27*
Suspending judgment	.39*		
Solving problems with roommates			.21*
Communicating with students of other cultures	.47***	.36*	
Interacting in class with students from other cultures	.30*		
Making friends with students from other cultures	.26*	.26*	
Communicating with faculty			
Self-advocacy	.29*	.36*	.36*

Student campus belonging at T2 predicted by change in skills from T1 to T2

Skill	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Intercultural competence	1.53	.46	3.35	.00*
Self-advocacy	-1.27	.53	-2.41	.03
Communicating with students OOC	-.02	.60	-.04	.97
Interacting with students OOC in classroom	.80	.54	1.48	.16
Solving issues with roommates	-.92	.65	-1.42	.18
Making friends with students OOC	.55	.69	.81	.43
Communicating with professors	-1.61	.53	-3.05	.01
Shifting perspective	-.47	.50	-.94	.36
Suspending judgment	.94	.41	2.3	.04

*Bonferroni correction used to set the significance level at .006 (.05/9). OOC = of other cultures

What was the most important idea or concept you learned?

“Culture can be analyzed through different lenses. To know more about culture will help me interact with others”

“From this course I learned how to get along well with my roommates”

“How to interact with other people and get to know the culture to understand the reactions of people better”

- No control group
 - Small sample size
 - KCU measures perceived knowledge, not actual
 - Others?
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- Students in cultural transitions course perceive gains in both intercultural skills and in using skills in certain challenging situations
 - Even a one-hour course can be effective
 - Intercultural competence and shifting perspectives may impact campus belonging
 - Connection with students on campus may be more important than connection with faculty for campus belonging
 - Others?
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- Increase sample size and obtain control group
 - Test new relationships
 - Student gains x GPA, Social Support, Social Ties, Friendship
 - Long-term outcomes
 - Course content changes:
 - Integration with academic writing
 - Potential for a follow-up course
 - Mixed (domestic and international) transition course
 - Others?
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Work mainly with domestic students?

- They share many of the same challenges
- Aim for universal design to be inclusive of international students
- Consider the how certain skillsets vary by university context (e.g., lecture hall, seminar class, dorm room, etc.)

Working with limited resources?

- Consider offering a condensed pre-orientation workshop
 - Leverage your current students' experience (with guidance)
 - I am willing to share the current curriculum and work with you to implement the course (though I will need course outcome data from you)
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Questions?

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