

**INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT ALBERTA
UNIVERSITIES: PERCEPTIONS AND LEVELS
OF SATISFACTION**

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ABSTRACT

International students in Canadian universities face an array of sometimes bewildering practical, cultural, academic, and social challenges. Many may not be fully prepared to cope with such challenges without some form of assistance from the university and surrounding community. Such students need assistance and support to face successfully the challenge of a new society and a new environment. It is therefore critical that the institutions admitting international students develop an understanding of what support and assistance can be offered that is most helpful and welcomed by the international student.

In this study, undergraduate men and women, from the University of Lethbridge, the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta responded to a questionnaire consisting of thirty-two questions on a five-point likert scale ("strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"). The questions were grouped into the following categories: first contact with Canada, arrival and orientation, assistance for international students, English language skills, housing and accommodation, academic assistance, and getting to know Canadians. An additional summative thirteen questions, some of which are open-ended, and eight demographic questions were also asked. Follow-up interviews were arranged with a subset of the questionnaire respondents.

A total of 131 returned questionnaires and 32 personal interviews were available for data analysis. The most notable

findings are as follows: (i) Higher levels (at or above 65%) of satisfaction were found in the areas of assistance requested from professors and fellow students, the teaching and content of their courses, fair treatment from professors, and making friends with and visiting in the homes of Canadians. (ii) Lower levels (at or below 45%) of satisfaction were found in the areas of assistance in obtaining suitable accommodation, the welcome and orientation at their university, time to discuss course work with professors, the lack of international content in their courses, the opportunity to get to know Canadian and other international students in a non-academic setting, and the experience of racism in Canada.

This inquiry found that overall, 52.5% (68 students) were satisfied by the welcome and assistance they had received by the university and community.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

International students at Canadian universities face the challenge of succeeding in their studies while dealing with numerous cross-cultural challenges. Each student comes with their own unique store of experience and inner resources to determine how best to face these challenges. However, it is also incumbent upon the universities which accept international students to recognize their responsibility to provide the appropriate assistance and support for these students.

It is important to recognize that in providing such assistance, significant benefits also accrue to the larger community. Inherent in the presence of international students are opportunities for the development of cross-cultural interchanges such as class discussions, panel participations, debates on issues of global perspectives, school and community presentations, and friendships with Canadian students through shared social and recreational activities which may include home stays. These may lead to the development of formal and informal long term relationships, educational and cultural exchanges, and become a basis for significant benefits in trade, research, and international diplomacy (Lewis,1990). Also, not to be over-looked is a significant welcome for individual Canadians traveling abroad, as well as the shaping of an overall international image of Canada.

Given the tremendous opportunities resident in the hosting of these international students, every opportunity to provide them with a satisfactory experience maximizes the benefits not only to the international student, but to the Canadian students with whom they study, the university and community they become part of, and the country as a whole. The opportunity to offer the best in Canadian hospitality is an imperative upon which more emphasis should be placed.

It is true that many institutions have on-going orientation and assistance programs aimed at effective integration of the international student (Cunningham 1991). However, there is a need for further assessment to determine if the students are satisfied with the level of support, service and consideration they are receiving at present. More needs to be known about what has met their needs most effectively, and what could be done to improve the present level of service.

Vigorous strides are being taken in Canada today to ensure the continued presence of international students in our educational institutions. For example, recent research has been undertaken by the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) resulting in the report The Integration of International Students on Canadian Post-Secondary Campuses (Cunningham 1991). The CBIE has undertaken the preparation of a code of ethics "in International Student Practice for the guidance of International Student Educators/Advisors, International Students and our

institutions" (Nandall, 1991).

Such efforts may be proving fruitful as Canada is experiencing a substantial and increasing number of international students (CBIE, 1991). The Chair of CBIE's board of directors, Mary Hofstetter, has stated "Canadians should be pleased to know that our educational system is receiving the international respect and recognition that it deserves." (University Affairs, 1992).

It is therefore useful and timely to investigate the levels of international student satisfaction at Canadian universities. A satisfactory experience, both personal and academic, for every international student in Canada should be the objective for every university in Canada hosting international students. It should no longer be acceptable for even one student to report, as was found in a 1977 CBIE study, of having no social contacts, and thinking that no one cared for them (Niece & Braun, 1977).

Impetus for the Study

The researcher spent 9 months in 1974/75 as a graduate international student at the American University of Beirut in Lebanon. Interest in studying internationally was first sparked by the presence of international students and a well-developed program for them at the researcher's Canadian undergraduate university. Their presence at the University of British Columbia was a definite factor in the decision to

undertake international study.

The resulting experience, though interrupted by the onset of the Lebanese civil war, was rich in cultural exposure and new friendships, some of which have continued to the present. The experience, though only 9 months in duration, served to spark a longstanding appreciation and interest in international affairs, and international students.

Nature of the Study

This study is an attempt to give voice to international students as they relate their perceptions on what has or has not contributed to a satisfactory personal and academic experience during their stay in Canada. By giving heed to their perspectives on what and who has been most helpful and supportive during their studies and residence in Canada, a clearer understanding may be gained as to how to better serve the new incoming international students. From this it is hoped a clearer understanding of how universities may better provide assistance and support to a vital element of the university community will become evident.

Significance and Context of the Study

As a member of the international community Canada has much to offer through its universities. Providing the best possible experience may be the best provision to assure future international student applications. The continued presence of international students at Canadian universities does imply a

number of significant benefits which should not be overlooked.

David Crombie, as Secretary of State in 1987, stated to the annual conference of the CBIE that;

There is no argument from anybody on the importance of international students. Everyone agrees that foreign students enrich all of our higher education: they benefit the economies of the communities in which they live: they strengthen Canada's relations with their home countries; they help Canada's competitive position in world trade; they represent a vital part of this country's development assistance. No one has any difficulty with understanding the importance of international students (cited in Cunningham 1991, p.3).

Enriching Canadian Higher Education

The presence of international students on Canadian campuses may encourage sensitivity of the majority to the minority, breaking down barriers of prejudice. Having within the university community people with very different ways of looking at issues, Canadian students may discover different ways of looking at culture, religion, and history (Sefa Dei, 1992).

For example, recently at the University of Lethbridge, in a class on International Education, students were introduced to three different education systems through a panel of international students who had been invited to speak. Following the presentations, the Canadian students asked a variety of wide-ranging questions which the international students fielded with refreshing openness. One particularly striking comment pointed out the differences in the justice system between Canada and one international student's home country. The comment was simply, "You

have too much freedom here." The Canadians soberly reflected on the student's statement and the comments leading up to it.

International students may also sometimes model a diligence in their studies that Canadian students absorb through studying and working on course material together. A young Canadian student was able to see a remarkable turnaround in his GPA simply by close association with a group of international students. His comment "They study all the time."

Having students from some of the very poorest countries of the world on the campus may also bring an awareness of the great "north south" disparity that now exists (Head 1991). As the polarization of wealth in the world continues, this issue may become critical in maintaining world stability. All Canadian students will benefit from an increased awareness of these issues.

Furthermore, international students who are willing to share information about their own families, their customs, and their country's educational system offer an informal opportunity for Canadian students to increase their knowledge of cultures outside their own. Such intimate opportunities can hardly be easily duplicated in formal classroom settings. Canadian students that are fortunate or perhaps astute enough to make friends with an international student may enter into a lifetime friendship that may develop an understanding and appreciation for other ways of living.

Strengthening Canada's Relations with Foreign Nations

A positive experience for a young international student can mean a lifetime of positive relations for Canada. Consider the example of Paul from Zambia as told by Stephen Lewis during his October 1990 visit to the University of Lethbridge. Mr. Lewis met Paul Lusaka at the United Nations whilst serving a term as Canadian Ambassador. He introduces this former international student by identifying him as the permanent representative Ambassador from Zambia and the President of the General Assembly. Paul wears a Zambian pin on one lapel and a McGill University pin on the other, and "it was often difficult to differentiate to which institution, his country or McGill, he owed greater loyalty" (Lewis 1990).

Mr. Lewis went on to describe Dame Neta Barrow, the permanent representative Ambassador from Barbados. During the course of her tenure at the United Nations she made it clear to everyone who would listen that she was a graduate of the Nursing Faculty at the University of Toronto. Dame Neta "is in love with Canada, and our collaboration as countries, largely by virtue of her feelings about this country, having studied here, were profound" (Lewis 1990).

Mr. Lewis concluded his reflections on individuals he had met at the United Nations who had once studied in Canada by stating:

For all of these people, and there were many others, the sense of Canada, the sense of a life-long loyalty, the sense of bonded internationalism by having been students at Canadian universities was really quite remarkable, quite overwhelming (Lewis, 1990).

Canada's Competitive Trade Position

The story of Peter Ng illustrates what can develop from a satisfactory university experience when a young international student returns home and enters into a professional career. Peter Ng came to Canada from Malaysia in 1980. He completed a year of high school in Thunderbay, Ontario and then entered Lakehead University in that same community.

Peter's 5 1/2 years in Canada spanned a very significant maturation period which saw him integrate well into the life of a Canadian university student. Peter recounts that he enjoyed his student days in Canada to the fullest. Upon completion of his Honours B.A. and B.Sc. degrees, he returned to his home in Malaysia.

Returning to his native land was a difficult cultural reentry period for Peter. Speaking the Chinese dialect which his parents spoke in the home was now difficult as he had little practice in Canada. Living with parents after almost 6 years of independence also required much understanding.

Never-the-less, after a period of about 6 to 8 months, Peter began to settle back into Malaysian life and culture. However, his desire to remain connected with Canada led him to pursue a

relationship between his fledgling Computer Studies College and the University of Winnipeg. Within 24 months he had negotiated the first twinning arrangement between a Canadian university and a Malaysian college. As Director of Studies for Sedaya College, Peter now oversees an arrangement whereby approximately 60 Malaysian students complete their first and second years of study in Malaysia, followed by the third and fourth years at the University of Winnipeg. As a result of Peter's positive experience in Canada, there developed a mutually beneficial relationship for both Malaysia and Canada. As a result of his professional links with the University of Winnipeg, Peter keeps in touch with many things Canadian. He returns to Canada once a year to maintain his academic linkage with the University of Winnipeg.

Peter's appreciation of all things Canadian as a result of his satisfying university experience has led to a promising career directing international student transfers between his home country and Canada.

The development of such a strong bond as is illustrated by Peter Ng's story could very well have long term significant effects for Canada in the area of trade relationships as a result of the good will that has been created. As one international student puts it:

There is a lot of good will in the Third world from students who have been here and gone back. They spread good words about Canada and that must be appreciated. It may not be a visible benefit but in fact, in the long run, it is very beneficial. For these students will always give preference to

Canadian companies or to Canadian individuals who visit those countries so there are ...benefits down the road (De Vries & Richler, 1988 p.28).

Great Britain has long recognized this. British sources have estimated the income earned from foreign student expenditures in that country total more than one billion pounds sterling a year. This is one sixth of the total tourist dollars and an important revenue source (Chandler, 1989). Similarly, the United States and Australia now undertake comprehensive marketing promotions to maintain and steadily increase the numbers of international students coming to their countries (Calderwood,1991). Japan has now recognized the value of such exchanges as a way of maintaining influence in the regions where it is increasing its economic dominance.

Economic Benefits to the Communities

Finally, the possibility of an alumni international student contributing to the financial assistance of his/her alma mater is much more likely if that student remembers that institution made significant efforts to provide a satisfying and successful experience for him/her. If a satisfied international student recommends to his/her family and friends a certain university and community, that institution and the larger community will benefit from the continued inflow of foreign exchange which the students bring. Local business should appreciate that a student entering Canada for the first time is required to bring \$8,500. plus

tuition, with more required for the cities of Toronto and Vancouver.

Beyond the basic costs of room and board, books, clothing and transportation, international students may also travel in the country during school breaks. As well, their families may come to visit while their son or daughter is a student in Canada. Foreign exchange, earned elsewhere, but spent in Canada, benefits all Canadians.

Development Assistance

The significance of international students on Canadian campuses and the central role of universities for all of the above reasons is well recognized by the Federal government. Canadian International Development Assistance is today placing more emphasis on human resource development. In the 1987 publication Sharing Our Future, the Canadian government recognizes that:

the developing countries need large numbers of competent, well-trained and educated people to carry their societies forward to reach their goals...and because (people must come first if the process is to make and sense (CIDA, 1987 p.).

Accordingly, CIDA proposed that the number of scholarships offered to developing nations to promote human resource development should over five years, double to 12,000 per year, with about half being tenable at Canadian universities (CIDA, 1987). As a privileged and wealthy member of the international community, and in the light of the severe restraints that many of the world's poorest nations find themselves in today, such a

contribution should be considered a moral imperative (Lewis, 1990). Finally, today's international students are tomorrow's international leaders. In an increasingly interdependent world, good relations begun with consideration of the needs of others will stand as an appropriate model for the international students' own choices in the future.

Summary

This chapter introduced the subject, and noted the (i) impetus for the study, (ii) the nature of the study, (iii) and the significance of the study. The latter included enriching higher education, strengthening Canada's relations with foreign nations, Canada's competitive trade position, economic benefits to all Canadians, and development assistance.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to define the key terms and review the recent literature which focuses on aspects of international student life at Canadian universities. This review will attempt to highlight previous research that may assist in the investigation into international student satisfaction.

Definitions

International Students

International students are non-immigrant, are in the country on student entry documents, are enrolled in full-time study at a Canadian educational institution, and are planning to return home on completion of their studies. Terms such as "foreign students", and "visa student" are commonly treated as synonymous.

Adjustment

Adjustment may be defined as the general process by which the international student passes through a series of cultural modifications as he/she adjusts to a culture different than their own.

Adaptation

Adaptation occurs when the student begins to take on the patterns of living and acting that the majority in the community follow.

Integration

Integration has occurred when the student is able to function successfully and with confidence within the culture of the host community.

Satisfaction

Satisfaction results in the sense of ease and accomplishment arising from successfully overcoming cultural hurdles, achieving academic success, and developing a network of associations and friendships among the local Canadian community.

International Students in Canada: A Survey of the Literature Canadian educational institutions and government bodies

responsible for the presence of international students in Canada are demonstrating a heightened interest and consideration for the place and needs of the international student (Simard & Hockin, 1986; Holdaway, 1988). That attitude, however, is barely a decade old. As Ruth Groberman noted in 1982:

when even five or ten years ago, foreign students were viewed more as benefactors than contributors, today they are recognized as making a significant contribution, both economically and academically to our educational institutions. (p.7)

Recognizing this, a number of reports (for a summary see Von Zur-Muehlen & Paquet, 1987) have been written in Canada over the last decade redefining the place of international students and the lack of policy relating to their presence in Canada. They include:

- 1) The North-South Institute's Foreign Students in Canada: A Neglected Foreign Policy Issue,
- 2) The Council of Ministers of Education's Foreign Students in Canada : Statement of Issues for Policy Consideration,
- 3) The Canadian Bureau for International Education's (CBIE's) Closing the Doors?, and
- 4) Two Parliamentary reports including: The Special Joint Committee on Canada's International Relations Independence and Internationalism and the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance's Federal Policy on Post-Secondary Education.

All of these reports recognize value inherent in the presence of international students. Simard and Hockin (1986) speak to "improving trade opportunities, increasing cultural contacts, and more generally for foreign policy"(p.96). Symons and Page (1984) identify the "opportunity for Canadians to broaden their outlook and to enlarge their knowledge of themselves and of others" (p.216). The report recognizes that these people, upon returning to their home countries, may "comprise a kind of intangible global matrix of cultural, collegial, commercial and personal ties which produces enormous tangible benefits to Canada"(CBIE 1986,p.iii).

A number of articles and reports have in recent years also focused on the direct economic benefits to Canada from the presence of the international student. In a 1984 study at the University of Windsor, Green and Federico reported that the average visa student at the University of Windsor spent \$10,634 per year in Canada. De Vries and Richer (1988) estimated that in 1988 international students across the country spent an average of \$11,000 per year in Canada.

CBIE (1991) reports:

The Vancouver board of trade estimated that in academic year 1985-86 international students contributed over \$500 million to the Canadian economy, with \$400 million originating outside of Canada. Moreover, the contribution of international students after they graduate is exponentially greater, since many of them later occupy influential positions in government and business and turn to their former host country to purchase equipment and services.

Even while policy is still in the making, and issues of economics as related to the presence of international students continue to be debated, international students in increasing numbers continue to make Canada their choice for post-secondary education. In its latest national report CBIE states Canada experienced a 21% increase in the number of international students over the previous year (University Affairs 1991). Given this trend, an understanding of what constitutes a satisfactory experience for the international university student may assist all Canadian universities in the effective delivery of appropriate services for this important sector of the university community. As Groberman (1982) suggests, these institutions must also accept an "inherent responsibility to provide the services that will assist those students to meet their academic goals."

The Canadian literature pertaining to international student satisfaction largely focuses on issues such as adaptation, (Mickle & Chan, 1986; Ayeni, 1979; Heikinheimo, 1984; Heikinheimo & Shute, 1986) adjustment, (Ayeni 1979) and their integration (Cunningham, (1991).

De Vries and Richer (1988) reported in their 1988 student survey that 70% of all the respondents reported their experience in Canada as positive. However, the interviews Czewoja-Shaikh (1987) undertook with Third World women students do not report a positive experience for this group. The interviews with student leaders in De Vries and Richer (1988) also indicate problems.

Factors Affecting Satisfaction

The literature points to four major areas that may affect the international students' overall satisfaction during their stay in Canada. These include (i) the desired and appropriate amount of contact with host country nationals, (ii) the degree of ease in both academic and social language proficiency, (iii) the support and appropriate, timely, assistance of the university community, (iv) and the personal circumstances of the student.

Contact with Canadians

Contacts of an appropriate nature with citizens of the host country ranks high with international students in what contributes to a satisfying sojourn during their study away from home (Opper, Teichler, & Carlsen 1990). Such opportunities as living with a host family, learning about the local culture, making friends with host country students, and seeing the country do contribute to the overall satisfaction of international students.

The often cited "modified cultural contact hypothesis" identified by Hull (1981) does indicate that students who:

mix with people from the host country report greater satisfaction than do students who are withdrawn into their own national or ethnic group (Heikeneimo & Shute, 1986 p.2).

Consequently, for those students who have little contact with the host country citizens, satisfaction does not rate as high. Mickle and Chan (1986) made similar observations in their study of students from Hong Kong. Isolation, due to their commitment to their academic schedule is a reality for many of these students. Consequently, their level of dissatisfaction with problems relating to adjustment was found to be much higher (55% as opposed to 30%), than students "from the United States and other developed countries" (p.4). Mickle (1984) discovered that students from Hong Kong adapt to Canadian university life much more successfully if they have made a number of Canadian friends and participated in activities with Canadians.

Frustration with difficult inter-cultural experiences can be alleviated through social interaction with the host community (Mickle & Chan, 1986). Students' attitudes towards their host country are positively associated with the degree of contact with the host citizens. (Chang 1973 as cited in Mickle & Chan 1986). Heikinheimo (1984) noted in her study of foreign student adaptation at the University of Guelph that:

social interaction with Canadians is a factor that can help a foreign student in his language related cultural and academic problems (p.121).

This conclusion is based upon a series of interviews which

Heikinheimo conducted with international students at Guelph. Heikinheimo categorized the students in to four groups from "isolated and dissatisfied" to "merged" (p.140). Those students in the former group had very little or no contact with Canadians. Students in the merged group had the most contact with Canadians. Heikinheimo discovered a correlation between the merged students and:

1. a previous opportunity for the international student to stay in the home of a Canadian family,
2. a willingness on the part of the international student to adjust,
3. a desire on the part of the international student to learn about Canada.

For students tending to isolation, adjustment problems were greatest, and consequently they were reported as isolated and dissatisfied. If a student chooses to minimize contact with others for reasons such as academic studies, their level of satisfaction with their time in Canada as a student may be minimal. If they choose to become acquainted with and eventually become friends with Canadians, the literature indicates they will experience a much higher level of satisfaction.

Language Proficiency

In order to succeed and enjoy living in Canadian culture, an international student must learn both conversational and academic aspects of the language (Heikinheimo & Shute, 1986).

Smith (1955) as cited by Boonyawiroj (1982) states "good

communication provides the setting in which other problems of adjustment are more easily solved"(p.233).

For some this requires less effort than for others. Many non-Asian international students have studied in English prior to their time as international students in Canada. Though they may still need to acquire some further skills in understanding colloquialisms, and of making themselves understood, language fluency is not a difficulty (Heikinheimo, 1984).

For those students who do not have proficiency in the language, the lack of these skills can create significant problems. Mickle and Chan (1984) cite Wong (1977) in a study of University of Toronto Chinese students. In this group, 55% of these students had problems in "the areas of reading, comprehension, verbal expression of ideas, and writing"(p.5). Mickle and Chan (1984) point out the Chinese students may have the most difficult transition to make. There are radical differences between the Chinese and English languages.

All Chinese learners of English must adjust to a radically different stress and intonation system and a new orthography which is alphabetic instead of ideographic...the pronunciation of English words requires many facial contortions which are considered improper in traditional Chinese culture.(1984 p.6)

Students may enter their classes with basic English competence.They may have a TOEFL score of 600 or higher. Yet, the different style of teaching (Boonyawiroj, 1982; Mickle & Chan 1986; Heikinheimo 1984) along with colloquial language, idioms and

jokes which professors may infuse into the lecture may leave the student confused and on the other side of understanding.

Boonyawiroj (1982) quotes a student of Spanish origin:

sometimes when he (the professor) makes jokes in a class, you don't know how to laugh because you just don't understand the language enough to appreciate and to know where the humour is (p.94).

Heikinheimo and Shute (1986) report that at the University of Guelph among Asian students, there existed "serious problems in understanding lectures, taking notes, answering questions, and writing essays"(p.401). DeVries and Richer(1988) determined in their Canada wide survey of international students that "11% of the students attending an English-language university rated speaking English as a big problem" (p.19), yet were surprised that only 10% of the respondents rated writing English as a problem. Holdaway and Bryan (1988), when discussing the problems facing international students also noted that "speaking and writing English" (p.20) was a frequent problem.

A recent study in Britain has uncovered considerable concern over the language ability of incoming international students. In The Learning Experiences of Overseas Students (1990), a department head of a British University is quoted:

Language is the paramount problem in connection with overseas students in this department. Even the right paper qualifications still do not ensure that students can understand, discuss or exchange ideas. This leads to frustration for home students and staff as well as for overseas students themselves(p.31).

In the United States, language proficiency also ranks high

in effecting the degree of satisfaction among international students. Hamlin (1972) when referring to Duetsch and Won (1963) noted that:

English language facility was an important factor in determining the degree of satisfaction expressed by foreign students in terms of social experience in the United States (p.26).

Mastering English requires that international students spend some time with Canadians. For some, this is relatively easy. For others the pressure to maintain good grades and not disappoint their family precludes much time for social contact (Mickle & Chan 1986). Other reasons include the offensive characteristics in the host culture (Czewoja-Shaikh (1987) which the international student does not wish to become a part. For others, the degree of stress involved in stepping outside ones' circle of co-national, non-English speaking friends (Mickle & Chan 1986) may be deterrent enough to prevent some international students from having much opportunity to develop their English language in a social context.

For those students who do cultivate language proficiency through social contact there is a benefit. Heikinheimo (1984) determined that those students who demonstrated a willingness to learn about Canada, a desire to pursue social interaction with Canadians, and a demonstrated willingness to adjust, language fluency and cultural understanding improved measurably. This in turn, benefited students in their academic program.

University Assistance and Support

Universities that are attuned to the complexity of initial adjustments that must be made by a newly arrived international student, will find that much can be done to ease that student into Canadian university life.

Ruth Groberman (1989) notes that universities should provide support for the student in the areas of primary information which may include immigration regulations, cost of living estimates, total cost of tuition, books, and supplies, accomodation, medical insurance, arrival information, orientation programs, important dates and an emergency contact person as well as essential services, such as immigration liaison, official documentation, personal advising, financial assistance, and ongoing information on issues affecting international students.

If the university is able to offer a reasonable service to students, especially immediately prior to and upon arrival at their host country institution, positive feelings will be engendered which may in turn, positively colour the students' views for years to come. If on the contrary, there is little interest or effort made to extend a welcome and assistance, negative first impressions can linger. Third World international students were asked by Czwaja-Shaikh (1987) to describe their reception in Canada. The arrival of a women from Sri Lanka is described:

After a twenty-six hour flight, the Sri Lankan arrived in Ottawa at night in January. She had already had to wait in Zurich and Montreal before arriving in Ottawa, her destination being Waterloo. She was supposed to have been met by a CIDA official. This CIDA official had lost the telephone number and had simply not met her. After some initial problems she then left for Waterloo only to realize that no graduate rooms had been reserved for her at the university residence(p. 228).

Universities must also be aware of the needs of students when they organize activities for them. Czwaja-Shaikh (1987) interviewed Third World women international students at the University of Toronto. They commented that the organized events and scheduled activities didn't offer an attraction. They rather expressed a need for a more personal, human need for connection.

Adequate advice and assistance in the area of course selection rates high among international students as critical to their academic progress (Ayeni, 1979). Fulfilling this mandate may result in an 80% student satisfaction rate, as was the case among Nigerian students in Montreal (Ayeni, 1979). In Ayeni's view, for those areas in which the university is responsible for offering correct and timely information, and where students in Ayeni's (1979) study were not satisfied:

most aspects of foreign students dissatisfaction could be easily remedied if the appropriate information becomes available to the students concerning the administrative aspects of the university life at the institutions where they register (p. 74).

Elsey (1990) notes that the university has a moral responsibility "to teach effectively and and enable them (the

international student) to learn effectively"(p.47).

Boonyawiroz (1982) reports that among the supportive groups experienced by international students at OISE, the role professors play is significant in the academic satisfaction experienced by international students. When a supportive atmosphere is created, this gives the student much needed confidence.

Boonyawiroz (1982) quotes a student from Hong Kong:

the professors are very supportive and the class atmosphere is good. So I feel rather free to speak out my ungrammatical English. You won't take a risk (unless) the people won't laugh at you and the professor would not confront with you. That's very important. If you open your mouth and speak, then you experience and then you become more daring (p.101).

When a student makes the decision to study in another country he/she leaves behind all that is secure and familiar. Great risks are undertaken when choosing to study in a system quite different from that which the student has previously known. The uncertainty of it can sometimes be overwhelming. Kinnell (1990) reflects on this uncertainty as the student deals with feelings:

about their own knowledge and ability; and even as a person. The quality of their interaction with academics, as key gatekeepers in the higher education system, is crucial to their sense of security and motivation to succeed (p.56).

Personal Circumstances

A final theme which emerges from the literature centres upon the students' personal circumstances. Though this factor is one largely beyond the influence of the Canadian hosts, a recognition

of how an individual's personal circumstances may be affecting their study time in Canada is important when understanding what contributes to the overall satisfaction of international students in Canada.

Perhaps most importantly, the attitude which students may bring with them to Canada will ultimately colour their experience and therefore affect their satisfaction. Hiekinheimo and Shute (1986) identify, among Asian international students, an unwillingness to advance their language ability. A student responds:

If I don't have a reason I don't speak(English). I find it easier to speak Chinese. I don't want to take the hard way and start talking English.(p.401).

Among the same group of Asians, an opposing perspective is identified:

I would say it is essential for a foreign student to know English, both for education and for cultural learning. (p. 401).

Though attitude plays a significant part, many students must cope with stress as a result of family expectations. Mickle and Chan (1986) report that some Hong Kong students are supported financially by a group of family and friends, and "this situation puts a great deal of pressure on the student to perform well" (p.3). Some may come as an eldest son, into whom all the family's resources have been invested. The expectation that this son will complete his studies as quickly as possible and return home in order to begin giving financial assistance to younger

brothers and sisters places considerable stress on the student (Mickle & Chan, 1986).

Students may find it much less stressful to remain almost totally within their own national subgroup. Mickle and Chan (1986) report on why this applies to the Hong Kong students in particular:

Complete adjustment to life in North America requires new social behavior and patterns of conduct which are often at odds with the social structure at home. Often students find it less stressful to remain within their own sub-group because it provides the security and support needed in a new environment (p.4).

Students coming from the least developed countries may have greater levels of adjustment to make. There may be few if any of their fellow country men/women present on the campus. The cultural and social adjustment required is much greater than for a student from Australia, the U.S.A. or Britain (Czwoja-Shaikh, 1987).

Women international students indicate "their single marital status caused additional pressures for them (Czwoja-Shaikh 1987 p.234). Women recognize that pursuing studies means either juggling studies and family or delaying marriage until a later date than most of their peers at home. Czwoja-Shaikh (1987) quotes a Chilean female international student:

They (family) think that I am a stranger because I am not married, I am more aware of the constraints women have of being a woman...and not just in the case of being a human being...its completely different for a woman...I think it's in almost every field...because I didn't marry I realize that life for me was going to be different and I wanted to have an academic life,I wanted to be a very good professional.(p. 235).

International students' concerns regarding the political instability of their country can create an anxious preoccupation with the concern for the safety of their family. Such circumstance may in turn leave the students in Canada mid-way through their studies without financial support. The students must then scramble to find enough support to complete their studies.(CBIE 1990).

Summary

This chapter included definitions of the terms international student, adjustment, adaptation, integration, and satisfaction. It then went on to identify some of the recent documents sponsored by government and institutions which speak to the value of the presence of international students in Canada and of the need for policy development. Finally, four major factors were identified which affect the satisfaction of international students. These factors are contact with Canadians, language proficiency, university assistance and support, and personal circumstances. The literature revealed that while there can be considerable variation in the experiences of individual international students never-the-less some patterns do emerge.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to (i) outline the research design, (ii) put forward the relevant ethical considerations, (iii) describe the sample and data gathering, (iv) note the timing and setting.

The Questionnaire

A questionnaire (APPENDIX B) was administered to undergraduate international students at the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary, and the University of Lethbridge.

There are forty-five items in the questionnaire. The items were generated from the research literature and in part evolved out of the researcher's own experience as an international student in both Lebanon and Malaysia, and as a volunteer International Student Advisor, assisting the international students at the University of Lethbridge. The questions identified areas that are most frequently recognized as being significant in affecting the satisfaction of the international student (Groberman 1982).

Questions one to thirty-three contain five response options; strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree. Questions thirty-four to thirty-eight contain 3 response options (yes, no, and does not apply) relating to specific areas in which the universities responded to the international students' personal circumstances. Questions thirty-nine to forty-one ask the respondent to identify first contact preferences, the single friendship most appreciated and the source of greatest help for the international student. Questions forty-two to forty-five are open ended. A final

eight questions gather basic demographic data.

Items in the questionnaire fall into the following categories examining the international student's experience at Canadian Universities; (i) pre-arrival information and assistance, (ii) arrival assistance and orientation, (iii) academic progress and ongoing advising, (iv) English language proficiency, (v) friendships and community life, (vi) housing, and (vii) university recognition.

The questionnaire was originally meant for 3rd and 4th year undergraduate international students only. However, since there was no mention of that restriction on the form, it was impossible to limit those who wished to complete the form to just students at that level. Consequently, the 131 students who completed the questionnaire include undergraduate international students at all levels and stages of the program.

International student respondents, making comments on the questionnaire suggested that for the agree/disagree and satisfactory/unsatisfactory questions, a "why" space should have been included "so we have an option to explain our choices and to give you a clearer, more detailed picture". Also, they requested more in-depth questions such as items 42 through 45. (Appendix B)

The Interview

Interviews were conducted with approximately 12 students from each of the three universities. These students were randomly selected from the questionnaire respondents.

The interviews were begun with a brief introduction and expression of thanks to the student for being willing to participate in the study. The researcher explained the purpose of the interview and then

began by briefly explaining her experience as an international student.

The interviewer then asked the student what their first encounters with their present institution were like. Discussion followed along the themes of the questionnaire, giving opportunity for the students to detail any aspect of their experiences to date which he/she may have wished to discuss. The interview lasted between 40 and 60 minutes. Notes were taken during the interview and immediately following the discussion.

A collection of personal memories did present certain patterns of experience which became evident. For some students, first impressions remained vivid and tended to colour their views even into their third and fourth year of study.

Ethical Considerations

The study proposal was submitted to the Faculty of Education Human Subjects Research Committee of the University of Lethbridge for approval. Students who agreed to participate in either the questionnaire, the interview, or both were asked to sign a consent form which briefly explains the study and assured them that their participation will in no way affect their standing at the university or their status as visa students. Their response will remain confidential and their identities hidden. The international students were informed that their participation is completely voluntary and that they may withdraw at any time.

Sample and Data Gathering

The researcher contacted the International Centre at the University of Alberta, the Student Resource Center at the University

of Calgary and the International Student Advisor at the University of Lethbridge. Information on the purpose of the study was provided. At the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary a list of international student clubs and associations were provided for the researcher, usually with a contact person, address and phone number. These groups were subsequently contacted by letter (Appendix C) with an explanation of the purpose of the reearch, in advance of the researcher's arrival on campus. At the University of Lethbridge the reearcher made contact with international students through her previous association with these students on the campus, as well as through the Malaysia/Singapore Club, and the Student's Union.

The night prior to arrival at the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta the researcher made contact with the student leaders by phone to confirm her intent and again to request their assistance. Most were very willing to distribute the questionnaire to their group and some agreed to ask one of their members if they would sit for an interview. The staff at both the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta were very good about providing a room, when available, for the interview.

At each institution a box was placed at a convenient location for the international students to return the completed questionnaires. This location was identified on the front of each questionnaire, specific to each university. The questionnaires were colour coded according to each university.

Approximately three weeks to one month after they were distributed, the returned questionnaires were sent in the mail by the staff at the University of Alberta International Centre, and the

University of Calgary Student Resource Center. At the University of Lethbridge the questionnaires were collected and held for pick-up by the secretary to the Dean of Student Affairs.

The above procedures virtually guaranteed that a random sample would not be accessed for the study. However, the researcher believes that the advantages of using the above procedure outweigh the disadvantages of a blanket, large scale, mailing out of questionnaires.

First, there are financial constraints. The high cost of mailing made it prohibitively expensive to mail questionnaires to all undergraduate international students at the three Alberta universities. Secondly, it is unlikely that a smaller mailing list could have been successfully employed. As well, some international students, may for reasons of a political or social nature be unwilling to complete the form. Furthermore, the widely known indifference to mail out questionnaires is a major problem in all questionnaire type research. There is no reason to suspect that international students would differ from their Canadian counterparts in this respect. Finally, a very low return rate is a major concern and this of course mitigates against the ideal of a representative sample.

An illustration of the above danger was recently encountered by the researcher during her conversations with the International Student Advisor at the University of Calgary. At this institution they had recently polled the international students via a mail out and had experienced an approximate return of ten percent on their questionnaires (see other sources).

Consequently, this researcher made contact with many students by

simply approaching them on campus, wherever they might be found. This included club rooms, residence units, Student Union centres, and cafeterias, as well as the International Centre at the University of Alberta and the Student Resource Centre at the University of Calgary. Each time contact was made, a brief explanation was provided and a request made to give one or two questionnaires to their international student friends. In almost every case the students were more than willing to take the questionnaires and consider completing them.

Thus by employing what might be called a "personal touch," working with on-campus agencies trusted by international students and personally ensuring as many of these students that their responses would be confidential the researcher was able to obtain a respectable participation rate. One hundred and thirty-one responses were obtained from a total undergraduate international student population at all three universities of approximately 1300 students.

Finally, in noting that the responses which the researcher received may not reflect the experience and attitude of all international students in Alberta, it is equally important to recognize that Alberta represents a distinctly western Canadian cultural context. Students in other parts of the country might have responded differently to the questionnaires and interviews.

The researcher intentionally did not contact graduate international students. It is the researcher's contention that the experience of graduate international students can be markedly different. They may come with a much greater command of English, they may have a job as a research assistant, they may receive considerable personal assistance from their faculty supervisor, and they may be

introduced to other graduate students in their department with whom they may have immediate common goals and aspirations.

Timing and Setting

The questionnaire was distributed to students in early to mid-March of 1992 at the three participating universities. The students completed the questionnaires on their own time and returned the forms to the designated location either on their own or through the assistance of a club leader or residence supervisor. In the case of the exchange students from Western Europe at the University of Alberta, their forms were completed during an informal get-together at the International Centre.

The researcher spent approximately four days in mid-March of 1992 at the International Centre at the University of Alberta. Contacts with student groups were made, questionnaires were distributed and interviews conducted. The staff at the Centre were very good about providing a room for the interviews. Interviews were conducted on a strictly volunteer basis and at the students' own time preference.

Approximately five days in the latter part of March 1992, were spent at the University of Calgary, with the Student Resource Centre in MacEwan Hall. Questionnaires were distributed and interviews were conducted in a similar manner as at the University of Alberta. However, as space for interviews was not so readily available, some interviews were conducted in the open seating area of MacEwan hall. Whether in this area or in an office of the Student Resource Centre, the students seemed to be equally forthright and at ease in responding to the questions.

At the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta, almost

all the interviews were conducted with students totally unfamiliar to the researcher. At the University of Calgary, two students had transferred from the University of Lethbridge and were briefly acquainted with the researcher.

At the University of Lethbridge interviews were conducted from early April, 1992 through mid-May 1992. As students were busy with final exams and papers it was more difficult to find those willing to take time to sit for an interview. Several of those interviewed were known to the researcher prior to the interview.

Almost all those who volunteered to be interviewed at each university showed a genuine interest in the study and responded with thoughtfulness and in detail to each question.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS OF DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study is to determine the level of satisfaction experienced by international students at three Alberta universities. Results of the data analysis for the survey and interviews include: (i) a description of the sample, (ii) a discussion of the degree of satisfaction expressed by international students.

Description of the Sample

One hundred and thirty-one students responded to the survey. Of these, 39 were University of Alberta students, 33 were University of Calgary students, and 59 were University of Lethbridge students. Not all students completed every question in the survey. Therefore the percentages and totals do not always come to 100% or 131 students.

Men accounted for 52% (n=68) of the respondents, women, 47% (n=61). The largest group of students were 20-22 years (38%, n=50), followed by 31% (n=41) who were 23 to 25 years. Seventeen percent (n=22) were 26 to 29 years of age. (see figure 1)

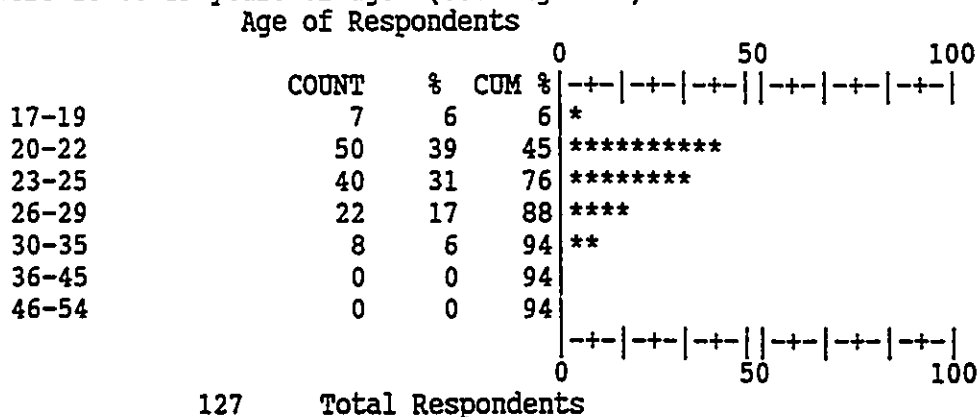


Figure - 1

The students indicated that 62% (n=81) had completed 30 courses or less at their present institution followed by 24% (N=32) that had completed 40 courses or less.

Of the total sample, 77% indicated the region of origin to be Asia, including Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Japan. This large majority was followed by 10% (n=13) from Western Europe, primarily Great Britain, and a third group of 6% (N=8) from Africa. (see figure 2).

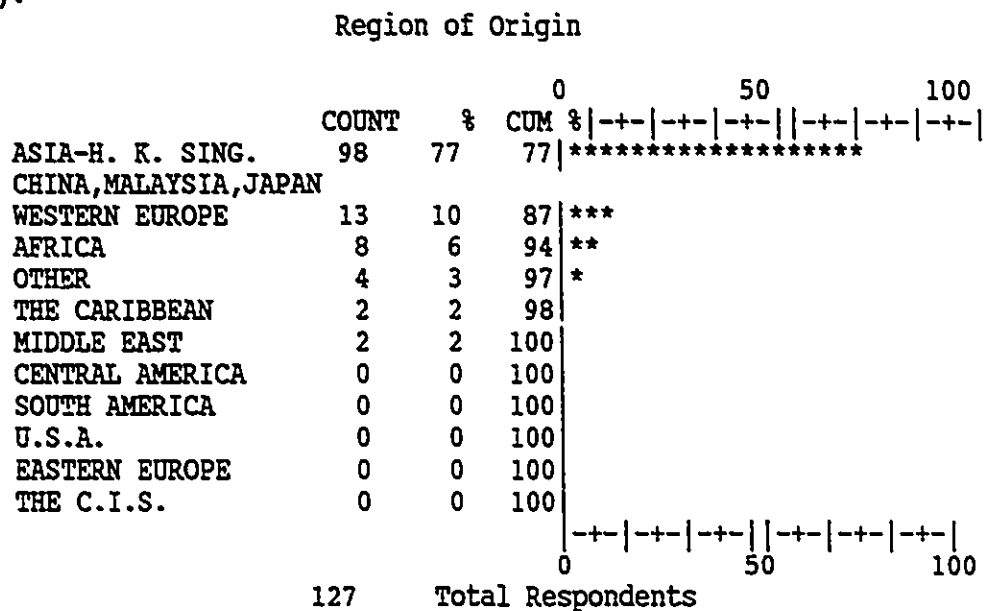


Figure - 2

Students were asked to indicate their educational preparation prior to entering their present program of study (Appendix B question 5). Forty-three percent (n=56) began their present studies with a high school diploma. Twenty-one percent (n=27) entered after a college transfer program, eleven percent (n=15) following a college or university degree, another 8% (n=10) upon completing a college or university diploma program.

Twenty three percent (n=30) of the students have resided in Canada for 3 years or more. This was followed by 20% (n=26) who have been here two years or more, and 18% (n=23) who reported residing in Canada 4 years or more. (see figure 3)

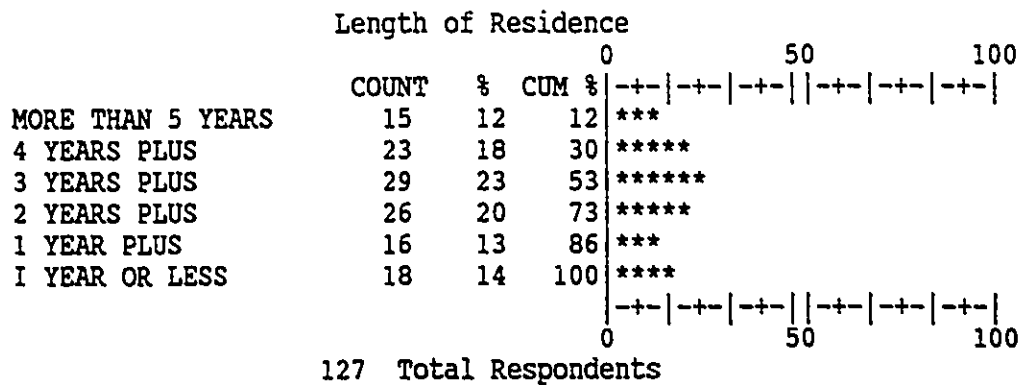


Figure - 3

When indicating their present course of study (Appendix B question 7), the largest majority, 32% (n=39) indicated business management as their chosen field of study. This was followed by economics at 12% (n=15), engineering at 10% (n=12), and science at 9% (n=11). Among those who indicated other, (15%) the greatest number indicated social sciences (n=8) as their area of study. Others gave occupational therapy (n=2), leisure and recreation studies (n=3), biochemistry(n=2), finance(n=1), physical education (n=1), pre-management (n=1), and statistics (n=1). (see figure 4)

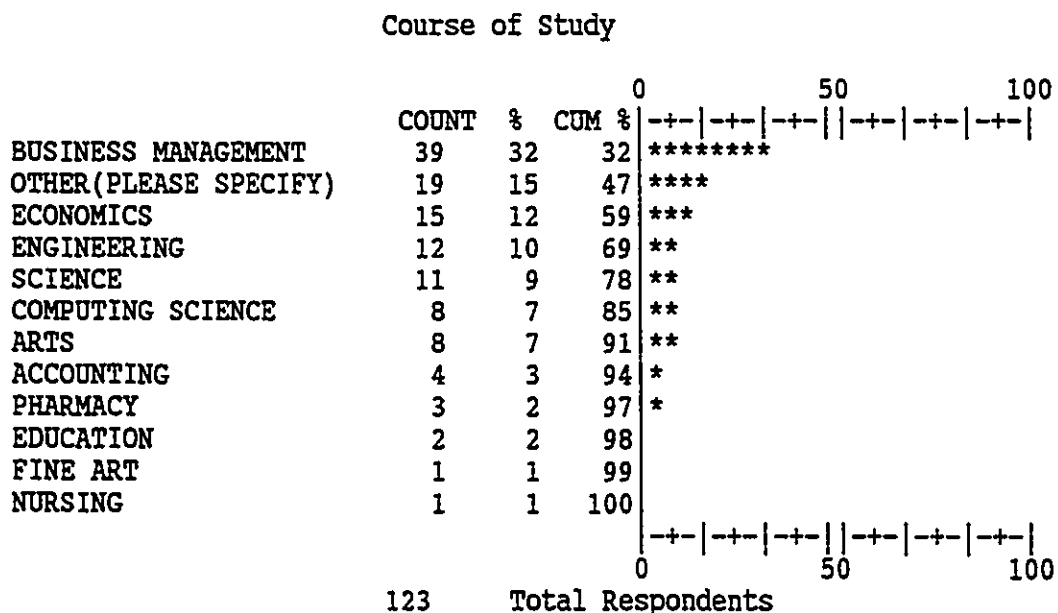


Figure 4
39

Finally, students were asked to indicate their principle means of support (Appendix B question 8). Fifty-seven percent (n=71) indicated that parents alone provided their support, followed by parents and self-support at 16% (n=20). Other relatives along with parents contributed to the support of 10% (n=12) of the students. Ten percent (n=12) of the students were supported by scholarship only, 6% (n=8) by self support only and 1 student by self support and scholarship only. (see figure 5)

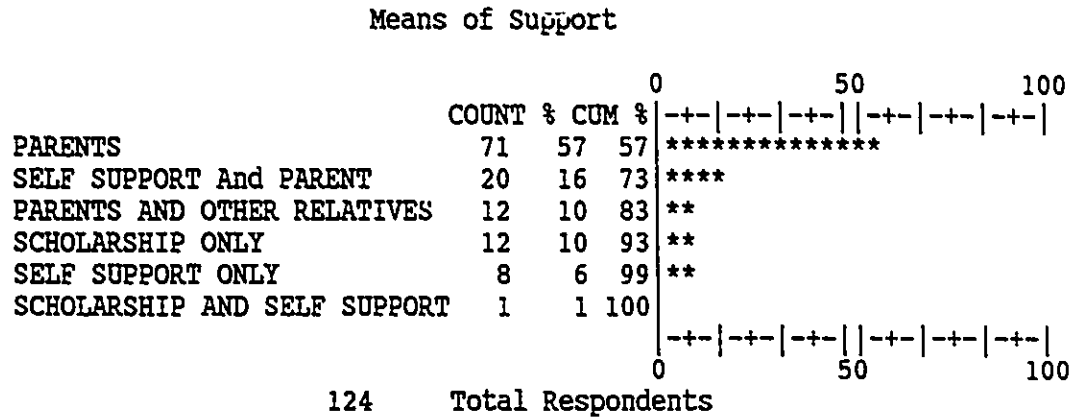


Figure - 5

Discussion of Factors Affecting Satisfaction

The factors most effecting satisfaction as reported by the students include relationships with Canadians and assistance in achieving academic success. Others include English language proficiency, their contact with Canadians outside of Canada and when they first arrive, arrival and orientation assistance and finding suitable accommodation. The findings are presented in the following section.

First Contact with Canada

The first three questions of the survey focused on the students' initial experiences with Canadians. They are:

1. My initial contact with Canadian authorities outside of Canada was friendly and positive.
2. The information I received from the university was clear and easily understood.
3. I did not have any difficulty in obtaining all the documentation that Canada Immigration required before coming to Canada as an international student.
(Appendix B)

A majority of the students, 63% (N=85) responded positively to these 3 questions regarding their first contact with Canada. In response to question #1, 56% (n=74) agreed or strongly agreed that their initial contact with Canadian authorities outside of Canada was friendly and positive, 16% (n=21) were undecided and 28% (n=36) disagreed. At the University of Lethbridge 64% (n=38) were in agreement, with 17% disagreeing. While at the University of Calgary there were 54% agreeing (n=18) with 36% disagreeing, and at the U of Alberta 47% (N=18) agreed with 34% (N=13) disagreeing.

Question # 2 inquired into the clarity of information received from their university. Overall, 65% (n=85) found the material easily understood but 20% (n=26) did not. There was very little

difference among the universities on this question.

Obtaining proper documentation can be a problem for some international students. In response to the survey, 68% (n=90) did not have any difficulty but 23% (n=29) indicated by their disagreement that did. Differences were pronounced in the reporting of the three institutions. University of Lethbridge students gave an 81% (n=48) agreement, University of Calgary reported a 69% (n=23) agreement and the University of Alberta indicated a 48% (n=19) with as many as 38% (n=15) in disagreement.

Initial contact with Canadians outside of the country can colour the student's impression of how the student is treated for a long time to come. Interview comments from some of the students reflect these lasting impressions. They include:

...one is made to feel a supplicant by the Canadian High Commission.

Another related her experience on behalf of her sister:

I had a bad experience with a woman at the Canadian High Commission...when I was trying to get my sister into.... College, she started screaming at us and really lost her cool.

Students also commented on the nationals of their country working as clerks in the Canadian High Commission.

I was made to feel like a clown. They look down on anyone they don't think has money or education.

In conclusion, a majority of students (63% for #1, 65% for #2, and 68% for #3) were satisfied with their first contact with Canada.

Arrival and Orientation

Students were asked about the assistance and orientation offered to them upon their arrival in the following three questions:

4. I feel that the university made adequate arrangements to ensure that I was met upon arrival.
 5. Overall, the welcome I received when I arrived at the university made me feel glad I chose to come here.
 6. The international student orientation at my university was adequate in explaining Canadian university life.
- (Appendix B)

Their responses indicate a disappointing assessment of the Canadian welcome. Overall, only 38%, (n=50) agreed or strongly agreed that the university had made adequate arrangements to ensure they were met upon arrival. At the University of Calgary 33% (n= 11) agreed, at the University of Lethbridge 38% (n=22) agreed, and at the University of Alberta 43% (n=17) responded positively.

When asked if the welcome the students received when they arrived at the university made them feel glad they chose to come to that institution, the overall positive response stood at 40% (n=52). University of Alberta students agreed or strongly agreed at 48%, (n=19), University of Lethbridge students agreed or strongly agreed at 36% (n=21), as did the University of Calgary students agree at 36% (n=12).

The majority of students did not respond positively to inquires as to whether the international student orientation at their university was adequate in explaining Canadian university life. Overall, 35%(n=45) agreed or strongly agreed, 32%(n=42) were undecided and 32% (n=42) disagreed or strongly disagreed. The university in least agreement is the University of Lethbridge at 26% (n=15), the University of Calgary garnered 39% (n=13) in agreement, and finally the University of Alberta reported a 43% (n=17) level of agreement. Large numbers of students were undecided on this issue. At the University of Alberta 44% (n=17) were undecided, as were 27% (n=9) at the University of Calgary, and at the University of

Lethbridge, also 27% (n=16) were undecided. Forty-seven percent (n=28) of the students at the University of Lethbridge chose to say they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

Comments regarding the orientation during the interviews indicate significant differences among the universities. For the students attending the University of Lethbridge their only choice is to attend the orientation for all new incoming students. However, a city tour has been offered by the International Student Advisor, and guided by a senior international student. Others first attended in the English Language Program where they reported participation in a walking tour. Another was invited to join a small group of new and senior international students for lunch where informal discussion provided some initial assistance. A very few were given one-on-one assistance by the International Student Advisor and the researcher as time permitted.

At the University of Calgary, of the students interviewed, five reported attending the orientation for new international students. A student from Kenya said:

It's helpful in that it makes you feel welcome.

Another student from Singapore noted:

The most interesting thing was the different cultures represented.

Finally, a third student expressed this sentiment.

We could have had more time just to sit and visit but the leader did all the talking.

Some felt their particular concerns were not being met, and left the orientations after a short while. A Singaporean was hoping to be shown how "to do the course work" and came away unsatisfied.

The University of Alberta welcomes over 100 students to its orientation for new international students each year. A Japanese student commented in the interview that the orientation was helpful because she met a lot of other international student who became her friends. However, she indicated she also thought:

there were too many students, it was quite scary... five or six (students) would have been better than 100. You tend to lose yourself in a big group.

Another student from Indonesia indicated that for him the orientation:

gave us an introduction to university society, and eased the culture shock.

International students reported a low-level of satisfaction in response to questions 4 through 6. Then reported a 38% rate of satisfaction for #4, a 40% rate of agreement to #5, and a 35% positive response to #6.

Assistance for International Students

The following questions inquired as to the on-going assistance and availability of support staff and the helpfulness of faculty and fellow students:

7. The services offered to me by the International Centre/International Student Advisor have met my needs and expectations.
8. The faculty and staff at this university are helpful and friendly when I ask a question.
9. The students at my university are helpful and friendly when I ask a question.
10. The people who offered the initial orientation for international students are still readily available for assistance. (Appendix B).

Asked whether faculty, staff, and students are helpful when asked a question a very positive response was reported by the students.

Overall, they reported 71% (n=93) and 79% (n=104) agreeing or strongly agreeing to questions 8 and 9 respectively. There were no marked differences among the three reporting institutions.

Comments from the interviews regarding the helpfulness of professors reflect the high level of satisfaction indicated by the response to these questions. At the University of Alberta, an Indonesian student in the Faculty of Rehabilitative Medicine volunteered:

I always talk to my professors. They set up special courses to mix Indonesian knowledge and Western methods.

At the University of Lethbridge a student from Kenya stated:

The Faculty of Education people are very open minded.

Also from the University of Lethbridge a Malaysian student gave this accolade:

The profs are great. I have never felt any intimidation.

University of Calgary students were also positive but four students commented on the huge class sizes they had to endure in their first year at the University of Calgary. A Kenyan put it this way:

Yes (they are helpful) but 400 people in the classroom is ridiculous. If 30 or 40 people follow the Prof out of the class at the end of the lecture, what chance will we to have our questions answered.

When asked whether the services offered specifically for International students have met their expectation and if the people who gave the initial orientation for international students are still readily available, the agreement of students was less notable. Both question #7 and #10 gained less than 50% agreement. In response to #7, students reported 44% (n=57) in agreement, with 35%(n=36) undecided. Question #10 received 47%(n=62) agreement with 40% undecided.

Pronounced differences appear in the reporting of the three universities. At the University of Lethbridge only 27%(n=16) agreed or strongly agreed to question 7, and 41%(n=24) agreed or strongly agreed with question 10. Fifty-one percent (n=17) of the University of Calgary students agreed to question 7, and 39% (n=13) agreed to question 10. University of Alberta students reported a 62%(n=24) agreement with question 7, and 64% (n=25) to question 10.

To conclude, 71% of international students agreed that faculty are helpful and friendly when asked a question, as are the Canadian students who garnered a 79% rate of approval. Questions #7 and #10, referring to the availability and assistance of support staff, received an agreement rating of 44% and 47% respectively.

English Language Skills

International students whose first language is not English must provide evidence of their fluency before being admitted to an Alberta university. The most widely used measure is the Test of English as a Foreign Language. However, it provides for a minimum level of proficiency in the language. After the students are admitted to a university it is then largely up to them to gain the added ease in the language which will provide the widest possible understanding for their studies and social life.

The questions in the survey which inquired into their language proficiency are:

11. I feel I have sufficient language skills in English to cope with my course requirements.
12. When I first arrived it would have been helpful for me to practice my English in small group conversation.
13. I find it difficult to speak up in class when my professor calls upon me.
14. I do not speak English when I get together with my closest friends.(Appendix B)

In response to the inquiries regarding English language proficiency for course requirements, 69% (n=91) of all the students agreed or strongly agreed that their level of proficiency was sufficient to cope with course requirements. Variations among the universities exist. University of Lethbridge reported 56% (n=33) in agreement, the University of Calgary reported 88%(n=29), and the University of Alberta reports 75% (n=29).

There appears to be a relationship between students' negative assessment of their language skills and a positive response to the suggestion that small group conversation in English would have been helpful when they first arrived.

The University of Lethbridge students reporting the lowest response to their assessment of language skills, conversely gave the most positive response to question 12, at 66% (n=39). The University of Alberta students were 49% (n=19) in favour, and University of Calgary students at 33% (n=12).

Students indicated that the majority do not find it difficult to speak up in class when called upon by their professor.(question 13). Fifty-eight percent (n=75) have no problem when called upon, 17% (n=22) were undecided, and 21% (n=27) agreed.

When students get together with friends they will often use the language which is still most familiar to them. Question 14 inquired as to whether if they spoke English when they were together with their closest friends. Overall, 28% agreed this was true. Again, a relationship appears to exist between their assessment of their English language skills and using a language other than English when in conversation with friends. Fifty-one percent (n=30) of the

University of Lethbridge students indicated they speak another language, 36% (n=14) of the University of Alberta students and 18% (n=6) of the University of Calgary students indicated this was also so.

Language proficiency gives entry into culture, business, and academic life. Students proficient in English appear most confident in all aspects of their life as students in Canada. The sooner students begin studies in English, the more confident they appear in English as international university students. Singaporeans and Africans are notable in that they begin all English academic studies at an early age. Others, such as students from Hong Kong and Japan, though having studied English as a subject for many years, do not have the same degree of proficiency.

During the interviews, all Singaporeans reported confidence in the language, but one did comment that "sometimes the cultural context is surprising." An Indonesian student indicated:

...it is quite difficult to speak up because my English skills were quite passive...an opportunity to speak in class makes me more confident.

A Kenyan with many years of study in a British system school in his country protested that having to take an effective writing requirement was "terribly insulting." A student from Hong Kong offered these comments:

I can understand but I have some difficulty in expressing myself. I seldom use English in social life, only when I go out shopping.

To reiterate, 69% of all respondents agree they have sufficient language skills in English to cope with course requirements. An inverse relationship exists between the students' confidence in the

language and a positive agreement to #12. 58% of students indicate they have no language problems when called upon in class, and 28% agreed they did not speak English when they were together with their closest friends.

Housing and Accommodation

The response to questions 15 through 17, all relating to issues of housing and accommodation reflect a decided lack of support and assistance for International students. The questions are:

15. The university and/or the community provided sufficient assistance to me in finding a place to live.
16. Procedures for renting an apartment, and such regulations as damage deposits and notice of departure were carefully explained in my university orientation.
17. I have always been treated fairly when renting an apartment, suite or room from Canadians. (Appendix B)

In response to question 15, 41% (n=54) of the total respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the university and or the community provided sufficient assistance to them in finding a place to live. This left 27% (n=35) undecided and 30% (n=39) in disagreement. In response to question 16, only 19% (n=24) agreed that procedures for renting an apartment and such regulations as damage deposits and notice of departure were carefully explained in the university orientation. This left 40% (n=52) undecided and 39% (n=50) in disagreement.

Finally, 22% (n=30) of the students disagreed or strongly disagreed when asked if they had always been fairly treated when renting an apartment, suite or room from Canadians, 25% (n=33) were undecided, and 50% (n=65) agreed. During the interviews 2 students commented on not receiving their damage deposit back, or on being required to pay for cleaning when they understood their damage deposit

would pay for it. The University of Alberta received a commendation when a student from Hong Kong declared:

The housing registry is very well run. They find a number of selections for you which you can then inquire.

Academic Assistance

Questions 18 through 24 inquired about the students academic experience in areas of course advisement, adequate time to discuss course work with professors, their estimation of fair treatment, their understanding of the grading system, and course content and usefulness to them upon graduation. They are:

18. I have received adequate academic advising from the university advisors to correctly choose the courses that are what I wish to study.
19. I would like to have more opportunity to discuss course work with my professors.
20. I have always been fairly treated in class by my professors.
21. I have a good understanding of the grading system at my university.
22. I would appreciate more assistance in giving in-class oral presentation in classes which require such presentations.
23. More effort should be made to internationalize the content of university courses.
24. My courses will be useful to me when I return to my country of origin and begin to look for a job.
(Appendix B).

Overall, students gave academic advisors a 49% (n=63) approval rate for providing sufficient assistance to them that they might correctly choose the courses they wish to study. Thirty-two percent (n=42) of the students did not feel they had received adequate academic assistance and 18% (n=23) were undecided. In the interviews several students declared they used a "judicious mix" of information from older students and university advisement.

Question 19 garnered a high rate of agreement as 74% (n=97) indicated they would like to have more opportunity to discuss

course work with their professors. Even so the students did give professors a positive rating when 97 (74%) agreed they have been fairly treated by their professors. As well, 77% indicated they understood the grading system at their university.

A notable variation is evident in the students' perceptions of fair treatment among the universities. University of Alberta professors garnered an 82% (n=32) approval, the University of Lethbridge profs received a 72% (n=43) commendation, whilst University of Calgary profs garnered a 67% (n=22) approval.

Students were more mixed in their response to question 22 with only 54% (n=71) in agreement as to the need for more assistance in giving in-class oral presentation. Thirty-seven students (29%) were undecided and 17% (n=21) students did not feel they need more assistance.

Seventy-three percent (n=96) agreed or strongly agreed that more effort should be made to internationalize the content of university courses. Out of the total of 131 students, only 6 disagreed and 1 strongly disagreed.

Noticeable differences were apparent among the universities. At the University of Lethbridge, 83% (n=49) were in agreement, with only 1 student in disagreement. At the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta, 69% (n=23) and 62% (n=24) respectively responded in agreement. As well, more students at these two universities responded as undecided, 30% (n=10) and 21% (n=8) respectively, than at the University of Lethbridge, which reported a 14% (n=8) undecided rate.

Finally, 94 students (72%) out of the total of 131 agreed their

present course of study will be useful to them when returning home to look for a job. University of Lethbridge students scored the highest with 80% (n=47) in agreement, whereas University of Calgary and University of Alberta students were not so positive. Those in agreement at the University of Calgary gave a positive response of 66% (n=22) and at the University of Alberta 64% (n=25) which also registered a greater number of undecided. Twenty-four percent (n=8) of University of Calgary students and 28% (n=11) of University of Alberta chose that option whereas only 14% (n=8) of University of Lethbridge students were undecided.

To reiterate, academic advisors received a 49% approval rating in their provision of assistance to the international students. Though students would like more help from their professors, they are reasonably pleased (74%), with the treatment they have received from them.

A substantial majority (73%) agree that universities should make more attempt to internationalize the content of their courses, with the University of Lethbridge students most strongly in agreement at 83%. Again, a majority (72%), agreed their present course of study will be useful to them when looking for a job and again the University of Lethbridge students at 80% were most likely to agree.

Getting to Know Canadians

These questions attempted to discern whether the international students had found relationships with Canadians to be positive, and if they felt a sense of recognition by their Canadian university hosts. The questions in this section include:

25. Making friends with Canadian has been a positive experience for me.
26. The university has provided enough opportunities, through social events and off-campus trips for me to meet and get to know Canadians and other International students.
27. In my experience Canadian students tend to avoid making contacts with international students.
28. The best friends I have made at my university are other students from my own country.
29. I have experienced some form of racism as an International student in Canada.
30. I have enjoyed visiting in the homes of Canadians.
31. There are regularly scheduled events at my university which have an International theme and are of interest for me.
32. My university does not do enough to recognize the presence of international students on this campus.
(Appendix B)

A majority of students, 77% (n=101) agreed that making friends with Canadians has been a positive experience. Variations within universities should be noted. University of Lethbridge students mirrored the overall assessment at 77% (n=45), while University of Alberta students responded at 90% (n=35). University of Calgary registered the least positive response at 63% (n=21) with as much as 21% (n=7) in disagreement.

Within the interviews students were asked to relate their experiences of getting to know Canadians. An Indonesian student in the faculty of Rehabilitative Medicine at the University of Alberta commented:

All my classmates realize I have a different culture...getting to know Canadians means an exchange of ideas on religion. They, the Canadians, respect those differences.

A student from Kenya at the University of Lethbridge says of her Canadian friends:

Most of them are from church and the Faculty of Education...when people get to know you they become good friends.

Few, however, indicated they had not made even one good Canadian friend. Some difficulties include:

Canadians talk to us during the classroom time ...we do projects together, but in the halls they ignore me...the immigrant and international student are different in their caring...they will ask how I am.

Item number twenty-six recognizes that university life is not just academics, but may offer an opportunity for international students to become better acquainted with the host country and the Canadian and other international students they study along side. Response indicates the students feel their universities are not doing enough in this area. Overall, forty percent (n=53) agreed, 31% (n=40) were undecided and 28% disagreed. Variations among the universities are pronounced.

The University of Calgary and the University of Alberta garnered a 59% (n=18) and 57% (n=23) positive response respectively, whilst the University of Lethbridge students gave their university a 19% (n=11) agreement with 39% (n=23) in disagreement and 41% (n=24) were undecided.

Students expressed mixed feelings when assessing whether Canadian students in their experience tend to avoid making contacts with international students. Overall, 33% (n=44) agreed with the statement, 27% (n=35) were undecided, and 38% (n=50) disagreed. The University of Lethbridge and University of Alberta students closely mirrored the overall response but fully 51% (n=17) of University of Calgary students agreed with the statement.

Question #28 was seeking any indication of friendships outside

the students' own cultural group. Fully 39% of all the students did not agree with this statement, therefore some of their friends must be from cultural groups outside their own. Sixty-seven students (51%) were in agreement and 8% (n=11) were undecided. The University of Alberta was the only one of the three universities with a marked variation from the total score. There, 49% (n=18) indicated they did not agree, 13% (n= 5) were undecided, and 36% (n=14) were in agreement.

Racism was the issue that Question #29 addressed. Students in agreement with having experienced some form of racism as an international student in Canada numbered 82 (63%) out of a total of 131 students. Sixteen percent (n=21) were undecided and 20% (n=26) disagreed.

Variations among universities were pronounced. University of Alberta students, with 28% of their participants from Western Europe, had the lowest reported agreement at 41% (n=16). University of Calgary students, with 3% (n=1) of the reporting group from Western Europe reported a 63% agreement(n=21), and the University of Lethbridge with 2% from Western Europe (n=1) reported a 77% (n=45) agreement.

Comments regarding racism indicate that students find it surprising, yet do find ways to deal with it. They reveal that:

We always think before we talk to a Canadian,...is he a racist?...we should get to know each other beyond the classroom.

Another reflects a frequently mentioned experience:

Some Canadian students just don't care about international students. They approach you when they need you but they forget about you the next day when you say hi to him or her.

Though the students may experience these attitudes on their campus, many do concur with this statement by a student at the University of Calgary:

On the whole my experience with Canadians has been good, except for certain unfortunate incidents. Those unhappy incidents are wholly due to ignorance and narrow mindedness caused by a blinkered view of the world.

Another reflects this view that racist attitudes are limited to a minority of Canadians:

Only a few Canadians have racism. Generally Canadians are nice and open. They are willing to help others.

The response to item 30 would indicate that students do enjoy visiting in the homes of Canadians. Overall, 73% (n=96) agreed, 21% (n=28) were undecided and 5% (n=6) disagreed. There were no pronounced variations among the three reporting institutions.

Within the interviews students were asked to relate their experiences of getting to know Canadians and if they had been invited into their homes. Twenty-two of the total of 31 interviewed spoke in positive terms when relating their visits to Canadian homes.

A Singaporean was pleased to be invited to her host family's home on a regular basis.

I have been able to look into the family structure.

Another student commented:

I have learned about the Canadian culture and the difference between American culture...how Canadians celebrate their parties, holidays and festivals.

However, for some students the door to a Canadian home, especially a Canadian students' family home, has yet to be opened. They report:

I know one (Canadian) classmate but have not been to any homes in yet.

A Hong Kong student, with a degree from the University of Manitoba and another from the University of Lethbridge said:

I have been in Canada 8 years, and though I have learned about Canadian life through my landlords (the student lived with a Canadian family in a room and board situation) I have never been invited to a Canadian student's home.

Question thirty-one sought the students' knowledge and awareness of any events on their campus which have an international theme and are of interest to them. Forty-five students (35%) agreed, 48 (37%) were undecided and 37 (29%) disagreed. The results from the universities vary.

In this case, the University of Alberta gains the highest agreement with 48% (n=19) of students aware of regularly scheduled events at the university which have an international theme. The numbers begin to slide when University of Calgary students report a 42% (n=14) agreement, and finally the University of Lethbridge students report a 21% (n=12) agreement.

Students' perceptions of whether they feel their university does not do enough to recognize the presence of international students was sought in item #32. Overall, 49% (n=65) were in agreement, 28% (n=37) were undecided, and 22% (n=28) disagreed. Those most in agreement were found at the University of Lethbridge, where 63% (n=37) agreed, followed by 45% (n=15) at the University of Calgary, and finally the University of Alberta students reported a 33% (n=13) agreement.

In conclusion, 77% agreed that making friends with Canadians has been a positive experience. However, they would still like more opportunities to get to know Canadians in a non-academic setting. Racism is part of the experience of 63% of the students, though they agree it is often only an isolated incident. A majority of students

(73%) do enjoy visiting in the homes of Canadians.

If there are events on their campus which have an international theme, few students are aware of them (35%). The University of Alberta gains the highest recognition for its students awareness of regularly scheduled events (48%). The University of Lethbridge gains least recognition with 21% in agreement. 49% of all students felt their university did not do enough to recognize the presence of international students.

Overall level of Satisfaction

In question #33 the students overall level of satisfaction was asked in five areas. The question reads:

How would you rate your overall level of satisfaction with:

- a. the welcome and orientation by the university and community
- b. your fluency in English for academic purposes
- c. your fluency in English for social conversation
- d. the teaching and content in your courses
- e. your relationship with Canadian students
- f. your knowledge and experience of Canada as a nation
(Appendix B)

In response to question 33a, 68 (52%) students, were satisfied or very satisfied with the welcome they received by the university and community. At the University of Lethbridge, 44% (n=26) agreed they were satisfied, at the University of Calgary 51% (n=17) agreed they were satisfied, and finally at the University of Alberta, 65% (n=25) agreed.

With 96% of the students responding to question 33b, the figures indicate 73% (n=96) of all students report they are satisfied with their fluency in English for academic purposes. The University of Calgary reports the highest satisfaction with 97% (n=32) in agreement. University of Lethbridge students report a 67% (n=39), and the

University of Alberta reports 64% (n=25) in agreement.

Responses to question 33c indicate a similar pattern, with 71% of students overall, reporting satisfaction with their fluency in English for social conversation.

Students satisfied with the teaching and content of their courses numbered 98 (74%). The most satisfied students to respond to this question reside at the University of Lethbridge, where 79% (n=47) said they were satisfied, the next group was found at the University of Calgary where 76% (n=25) agreed, and finally, 67% (n=26) at the University of Alberta agreed.

Question 33e asked students to rate their satisfaction with their relationships with Canadian students. Overall, 61% (n=79) reported being satisfied or very satisfied. Fifteen percent (n=20) remained undecided and 23% (n=30) reported relationships to be unsatisfactory. Pronounced differences emerge among the universities.

The University of Alberta students reported an 82% (n=32) level of satisfaction, University of Calgary reported a 54% (n=18) level of satisfaction and the University of Lethbridge reported a 49% (n=29) level of satisfaction. The University of Lethbridge reported a 19% (n=17) level of dissatisfaction, and the University of Calgary reported 27% (n=9) of students were unsatisfied with their relationship with Canadians.

Finally, students were asked if they were satisfied with their knowledge and experience of Canada as a nation. Sixty-five percent (n=85) of all the respondents said they were either satisfied or very satisfied, 16% (n=21) were undecided and 18% (n=24) reported a lack of satisfaction.

Students were asked to respond with a yes, no, or does not apply response to questions 34 through 38 (Appendix B). Fifty-one percent (n=65) indicated they were met upon arrival in Canada by a friend or family member. Forty-eight students (37%) said they were not. Thirty-six students (27%) indicated they were met upon arrival at the university by a member of the university community. Once again, the University of Alberta produced the positive response with 46% (n=18) responding in the affirmative, 24% (n=18) responding positively for the University of Calgary, and a 20% (n=12) positive response from the University of Lethbridge.

Forty-six percent overall (n=61) said that when they arrived they had to make their own way to the university. Fewer students, on a percentage basis had to do this at the University of Alberta, with 33% (n=13) than at the University of Calgary, 39% (n=13) and the University of Lethbridge, at 59% (n=35). Equal percentages of students at each university 75% (n=98) have had an opportunity to share a meal with a Canadian family in their home.

Question 38 (Appendix B) inquired into, the students' perceptions as to whether the university responded in a helpful when manner when difficulties arose for the student. In response to question 38a (Appendix B) students' overall response varied little among the universities. Overall, 15% (n=20) said yes, 8% (n=11) said no, and 76% (n=99) indicated this concern did not apply to them.

Going on to Question 38b, the University of Calgary earned a higher percentage of no's than was reported overall. Whereas 16% (n=21) of students overall said their university was not helpful when they wished to challenge a final grade on a course, 27% (n=9) of the

University of Calgary students said their university was not helpful.

Students were next asked as to whether the university responded in a helpful manner when they requested extra time to complete an exam due to language difficulties (Appendix B question 38c). The overall response reported a yes at 8% (n=10) and a no at 21% (n=28). The University of Lethbridge students however, gave a 31% (n=18) negative response.

Finally, if the students experienced a financial crisis they reported that the university was helpful for 18% (n=24) of the respondents, but was not for 21% (n=27) of all the students. Sixty percent indicated this did not apply to them. The university of Lethbridge reported that 27% (n=12) did not receive any help when they experienced financial difficulties. The University of Calgary students reported an 18% (n=6) negative response, as did the University of Alberta a 15% negative response.

Students indicated in response to question 39 (Appendix B) that the most likely person they would recommend to a newcomer would be firstly the International Student Advisor, 42% (n=55), followed by themselves at 30% (n=39) and lastly, a helpful community person at 14% (n=18).

Not surprisingly, the students indicated the one friendship they most appreciate with Canadians (Appendix B question 40) is a student of the same sex, similar age at 35% (n=46) followed by a family at 29% (n=38). The Canadian that has been most helpful to them thus far (Appendix B question 41) is first of all a friend at 42% (n=55), followed by a professor at 15% (n=20).

Open-ended Responses to Contact with Canadians

In providing short answers to questions 42 through 45 (Appendix B) students provided further insight into their experience as an international student at an Alberta university. Certain themes or topics dominated their responses. These will be identified.

Attitudes of the Canadian students that surprised, confused or were difficult to cope with for the international student include the general indifference of the Canadian students toward them, or the Canadians seeming desire to develop only superficial friendships. They appear, to the international student, to be "unwilling to open up or take initiative to make friends with people from another culture."

In the interviews, at least five (5) students commented on the Canadians willingness to be friendly in class, to work cooperatively on group projects, but afterwards, in the halls and in subsequent semesters, they would hardly be acknowledged by these same Canadians, and sometimes, completely ignored. One student wrote this telling statement on her questionnaire ... "many of them cannot even remember my face once the term is over and that makes me feel very insignificant."

Repeated comments emphasize the surprise of the international student at the lack of knowledge about the world beyond North America. This is sometimes manifested in a condescending attitude which the international students are quick to pick up on. Comments such as:

I find it annoying when certain individuals assume you have no sense just because you happen to come from a Third World country. Some of them try to take advantage of you or are friendly only if they need something and then once they get what they want they ignore you completely.

Another indicated her experience in these terms; :

When the Canadian students thought because I don't speak English very well that they talked to me like a small child.

International students are surprised by the Canadians conservative regional world views as opposed to a global world view. When they indicate as did this students that:

Some Canadian students are surprised that there is a country called Malaysia. Therefore, courses like general studies, world issues, (culture) or geography should be emphasized in highschool.

They reflect the experience of many International students. Others wrote that they struggled with Canadian student assumptions that " Third World countries are all dependent monoliths whose contributions to science and technology are negligible." During the interviews, students repeatedly indicated the need to encourage a more international perspective among Canadian students. They identified such events as International week at the University of Alberta as being a very positive action to this end.

Cultural clashes are another aspect of frustration international students frequently mentioned in response to question 42. Canadian casualness in all levels of relationships finds them struggling with calling a professor by their first name, students putting their feet up on the furniture in class, eating in class, and finally leaving before the professor is finished speaking. (Perhaps some Canadians would also struggle with the appropriateness of some these behaviors).

In summing up the comments pertaining to this section of the questionnaire, the following two comments are offered which do seem to reflect the majority of attitudes among the international students regarding their stay in Canada. The first comes from a student about to graduate. She says:

Overall, Canada is a safe and peaceful country. I do like the place and certainly have enjoyed my stay here despite some unfair treatment and homesickness.

The second comment:

Most Canadians wouldn't mind to befriend foreigners. But very little Canadians would actually make the first move.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the results of the data analysis. It included a description of the sample and a review of students' responses to the areas identified in the questionnaire as affecting the satisfaction of international students on Alberta universities. The review included both quantitative and qualitative data. Assistance in achieving academic success, friendship with Canadians, and language proficiency were found to be three areas most effecting satisfaction. Other areas include first contact with Canadian authorities outside Canada, arrival and orientation assistance, and assistance in finding suitable accommodation.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The majority of students had little difficulty and generally felt very positive about their initial contact with Canada before they entered the country. However, a significant minority differ (28%), and in spite of the passage of possibly a two to four year lapse the memory is still very clear. First impressions at the Canadian High Commission are very long lasting. First negative impressions which include a feeling of distance, superiority, lack of sensitivity, and loss of patience on the part of those representing Canada do remain in the memory of the student. One obvious consideration arising from this finding is that personnel who make the initial contact with potential international students outside Canada, may benefit from appropriate training. Attitudes of front line staff at the Canadian High Commissions could be assessed, policies given a certain flexibility, and individuals' interpersonal skills improved. Only people with a demonstrated ability to meet the people of the region, with an understanding of the region's language and culture and who possess maturity infused with a demonstrated attitude of fairness for all should be dealing with inquiries from students. These qualities cannot be understated as they convey the significant first impressions to an inquiring student.

The universities for their part seem to be doing a very good job of providing necessary and readily comprehensible information. Never-the-less 20% of the respondents did not find the information about their university clear and easily understood and thus the universities may wish to assess their promotional and information material with the assistance of a cross-section of senior

international students on their campus. Such input could prove beneficial in suggesting changes appropriate to these target groups of students.

Obtaining documentation may be a problem for students from certain regions of the world. However, where there is a steady flow of students coming to Canada, as in the case of students from Hong Kong, the process seems to operate to the satisfaction of the student. This can be seen by the exceptionally high agreement (81%) for question #3 (Appendix B) by students at the University of Lethbridge, the largest majority of whom are from Hong Kong.

Agreement was not nearly so pronounced at the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta. This may in part be due to the more diverse group of students attending these institutions. Where some may have to travel long distances to reach a Canadian government office, others may have had difficulty obtaining the required approved medical examination. Though efforts have been made to streamline the acceptance procedure, Canada has not yet organized the speedy systems which the British and Australians now use with good results (Calderwood, 1991).

Arrival and Orientation

Substantial efforts are made at the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta to meet, welcome, and provide an orientation to the newly arriving international students. At the University of Lethbridge a reception service will, if notified in advance, be available to meet newly arriving international students. However, in spite of these efforts, the best that could be garnered when students were asked if the welcome they received made them feel glad they

selected that particular university was a 48% granted to the University of Alberta. The University of Calgary and the University of Lethbridge both received 36%. If these institutions feel they are going to considerable effort to welcome new students, obviously either significant numbers of students are not benefiting from their efforts or they are not appreciating what is offered. It may be useful to make further inquiries into the question of what would constitute a welcome in order to increase the likelihood of students reporting they felt glad of their choice of university.

Orientation sessions at the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary are not compulsory. The University of Lethbridge has not undertaken an orientation specific to international students but encourages them to attend the one offered to all new incoming students. With such low approval ratings as 26% at the University of Lethbridge, 39% at the University of Calgary, and 43% at the University of Alberta perhaps the universities should reconsider these orientations.

It should be noted first of all that many students choose not to attend and consequently miss the potential benefit. It may prove beneficial to make these orientations compulsory for the new incoming student. Second, it may be valuable to investigate the work of people with many years experience in this field. (See Althen 1984.) Finally, a detailed assessment of the present orientation sessions by the students may give insight into what was helpful and what was not.

Assistance for International Students

It is obvious from the positive response to questions 8 and 9 (Appendix B) that faculty, staff and students do respond in a

helpful manner when asked questions by the international students. It would appear that when the initiative is taken by the international student, Canadians are very willing to respond in a helpful manner.

However, when students were asked whether the people at their university responsible for their welcome and orientation were still readily available, the response was not positive. Students at the University of Lethbridge (41%) and the University of Calgary (39%) indicate by their response that they have not found the people responsible for welcome and orientation available on an ongoing basis. At the University of Alberta (64%) there seems to be a more consistent presence. Looking at these percentages (41%, 39%, 64%) though, there still seems to be a shortfall in what the students consider readily available assistance. Possibly, universities may not be able to satisfy every expectation no matter what they offer. If however, the International Student Advisor or those designated with the responsibility of offering on going assistance should make an attempt to be present at as many informal gatherings of international students as feasible, their presence and thus availability may provide greater satisfaction for the student.

English Language skills

Satisfaction could be increased for students if they were given opportunity to practice their English in small groups when they first arrive. The University of Lethbridge students were most likely to agree to this option, at 66%, with the University of Alberta following at 49% and the University of Calgary at 33%.

Housing and Accommodation

It is clear from the response to questions 15-17 (Appendix B)

that international students do not feel they are receiving adequate assistance in acquiring suitable accommodation. Neither, in their perception, is enough time and attention taken in explaining the procedures for renting an apartment.

As this is one of the first major hurdles a newly arrived international students face, assistance in this area is always appreciated. Having looked for accommodation as an international student in two very different countries, the researcher is personally aware of how daunting the task can be.

Universities should assess what they offer as assistance in this area, and consider providing more effective assistance. Obviously, increased assistance will decrease student anxiety and increase satisfaction.

Academic Assistance

No doubt all the universities in this study attempt to provide the best possible assistance to international students in the area of academic advisement. However, less than half (49%) of the international student respondents in this study felt they had received sufficient assistance in correctly choosing the most appropriate courses. Why the positive response is so low, and what could be done to improve this area of service are important questions.

When international students find themselves in large classes, they may be discouraged from trying to talk with the professor individually. Nevertheless, if more instructors would regularly encourage the students to come with any questions and follow this up with an open door and warm welcome, this may further satisfy the expressed need (74%) of the international students to have more time

to discuss course work with their professor.

In response to question 22 (Appendix B), Alberta university instructors teaching international students should be cognizant of the differences between their perceptions of student roles and norms and those of international students. Many international student find speaking up in class very difficult and some, in particular women, may refuse. Beginning a course with a request for a class presentation without offering assistance and guidance may create unnecessary anxiety for the new international student.

International students soon become aware of the lack of international content in many of their courses. They would like to see that changed (Sefa Dei, 1992). Internationalizing the course content would provide both Canadian and international students with a greater understanding of current global issues, providing a more conversant understanding of their common future.

Getting to Know Canadians

International students able to make friends with Canadians, as reported by Hull (1981), report the highest degree of satisfaction with their stay in Canada in this survey.

Out of the total of 131 students reporting , 101, or 77% agreed that making friends with Canadians has been a positive experience.

On the other hand, a number of students reported, both in the interviews and in the short answers, (question 42-45 Appendix B) of the casualness, to the point of all too quickly forgetting, with which Canadian students may relate to them in class and afterward. They may be required to do projects together, and consequently communicate and spend time together, but when that project and class are completed,

the relationship is never acknowledged again. This is very disturbing to the international student. Having put out considerable effort to acquire an identity with a fellow Canadian classmate, to be acknowledged and have their name remembered, and then consequently seemingly to be forgotten, ignored in the halls, and once again relegated to the place of stranger, is very discouraging.

The Canadian students, primarily focused on successfully completing their courses and obtaining that next summer job or first permanent job, may not have any idea what their actions convey to the student. With their casual network of fellow Canadian student friends, making a point of continuing to befriend the international student may simply not be a priority.

University of Calgary students are judged by their international students to be most likely to avoid contact with them (51%) (question 27 Appendix B). At the University of Alberta and the University of Lethbridge students' responses more closely mirrored the overall average of 33%.

If 39% of students have been able to make friends outside their own cultural group, then 61% remain confined to their own group. With the opportunity to study abroad, one might assume automatic opportunities for cross-cultural friendships. This is obviously not the case.

The term racism was not defined for the students. Therefore they responded to question 29 with only their personal view on this sensitive issue. Canada is considered to be a country of tolerance and racial equality. However, the students in this survey indicated overall that 82 students (63%) had experienced some form of racism,

with as high as 77% in agreement at the University of Lethbridge. The only counter to this very high rate can be offered by those students pointing out that these incidents do arise from a relatively small percentage of the Canadian community. Nevertheless, Canadians should recognize that Canada does not offer a fair and respectful face to every student who may choose Canada for their university studies.

It may be debated by some in the university community as to whether it is the responsibility of the university directly to encourage the mixing of Canadian and international students through non-academic events. Some support for these activities is offered at the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta. The International Centre at the University of Alberta contributes significantly to this end. With only 19% responding positively to question 26 (Appendix B) at the University of Lethbridge, this institution should consider its present role.

International students enjoy visiting in the homes of Canadians. This gesture of hospitality, for a student far from family, perhaps living alone in a basement suite or university residence room can mean a great deal. However, at the same time, they may find the differing values evident in Canadian families strange and sometimes disconcerting.

When events of an international nature are scheduled at universities these may tend to encourage the international students into a wider participation in university life. The University of Alberta and the University of Calgary are fairly active in this area. The University of Lethbridge less active, consequently reported a very low 21% of students satisfied with the present level of activities of an

international nature.

In balance to this inquiry, the universities which were seen by the students as doing a fair job in this area also rated the highest in recognizing the presence of international students. Conversely at the University of Lethbridge, 63% of the students were presently not satisfied with the universities recognition of their presence.

Possibilities for Further Study

This study suggests several directions for further research.

1. Further investigation into the role friendships play in providing the long lasting positive relationships that engender the kind of loyalty as expressed by Steven Lewis. (Lewis 1991)
2. Further investigation into what the international students themselves would deem an appropriate and useful welcome and orientation.
3. Further study into international students' perceptions of how universities could improve their academic advising service to this sector of the student population.

Concluding Comments

The researcher is somewhat surprised with the low approval ratings given in some aspects of this study. University life for both Canadian and international students is a time of growth and maturity. It is an experience that is multifaceted, and filled with challenge and opportunity. Today's students are increasingly career focused in an ever more competitive job market. Taking time to foster relationships with fellow students, especially international students may appear an unnecessary extra. Yet fostering good relationships, at a time of early career development can offer a wealth of mutual

benefits for those willing to make the effort. This fact should not be overlooked by those giving direction to university policy. Every opportunity should be taken to encourage Canadian students to become acquainted with, befriend, and offer assistance to the international students in their midst.

Given the low ratings for welcome and orientation, the universities may want to assess whether they wish to extend a warmer and more organized welcome to the new students entering their institutions. How can students be made to feel welcome in a large busy institution where staff are always very busy? The answer, already undertaken to a certain degree by the universities, may be to train and organize a highly motivated group of student and community volunteers. As well, all support staff and faculty could become more knowledgeable on how to make the new international student feel welcome and assisted.

Because of the large number of respondents who did feel that small group conversation would have assisted their English upon first entering the university, this is an area the universities may wish to consider in more detail. Such opportunities may speed the adjustment of new students as well as provide much needed confidence in the language for academic as well as social purposes.

It has been noted that international students were not satisfied with the academic advising they had received. Therefore it may be timely for the universities to undertake internal studies including interviews with international students, to determine how they might better serve this segment of their clientele.

Interpretation of Findings

Friendship with Canadians

The study revealed that 77% of international students indicated making friends with Canadians had been a positive experience. Yet, even as they indicated this, when responding to the open-ended questions at the end of the questionnaire (#42 through #45, AppendixB) many students indicated they had not yet made one good Canadian friend. Some indicated that several attempts to initiate friendship had failed. These comments reflected loneliness and dissatisfaction.

There are several elements to this dilemma. Canadians with little exposure to other cultures may carry a natural reticence to reach across the cultural gulph to be-friend an international student. If the action has never been modeled for either student, hesitancy is understandable. The international student is away from all that is familiar including family, friends, home turf, and language. The Canadian may also be away from home and adjusting to a variety of life changes. However, their adjustment period is not nearly so profound. Encouraging the Canadian to appreciate the loneliness of the international student and the mutual value of friendship may alleviate some of the isolation the international student may experience.

Therefore, every effort should be made by the universities to inform the Canadian student of the presence of the international student on campus. An informed, motivated Canadian student population could offer an entirely different experience for the new incoming international student.

To initiate a move to inform the Canadian students, university recruitment officers should include in their description of campus

life, the opportunity and availability of making friendships across cultures through contact with international students. As well, at the orientation for new Canadian students on the university campuses, a session should be given over to informing them of the many different aspects of the international community in which they are to become a part. Examples of the benefits which can accrue to a Canadian student who makes the effort to befriend an international student should be cited. Specific examples may be offered.

Though international students do think most Canadians are friendly they note "many are not willing to make the first move." Canadian students must be encouraged to take the initiative in speaking to a new international student, in class, in the registrar's line-up, at the bus-stop, and at the lunch counter.

Equally so, all university instructors must be encouraged by their deans and department heads to model a welcome to the international students in their classes. All instructors should be thoroughly informed of the varying cultural expectations which international students may bring to the classroom. An appreciation of the process of integration should be understood by all instructors. Students will fare better when consideration is offered in this area. Conversely, condescending attitudes are readily detected by the international students. It might be useful to give generic examples, as stated by the students, of occasions when the students felt Canadian faculty or students were speaking down to them. Without examples, it may be difficult for some Canadian instructors or students to realize how their actions are interpreted by the international students.

Finally, Canadians, from the time they enter elementary school, should be taught more with the view of developing world minded citizens, well informed of the differing geographic regions and pressing global concerns. Canadian students must be encouraged to develop an appreciation for the contributions, the history, and the current struggles of the regions from which the international students originate. In doing so, Canadians recognize their inter-dependence in an age when global cooperation is critical to everyone's future.

University Action

Universities received mixed results in the questions relating to their part in the overall satisfaction of the international student. A 40% approval rating of the welcome offered by these institutions should be cause to ask the question "How can we do better?"

Firstly, everyone, from senior administration to maintenance staff should be encouraged to see themselves as hosts, welcoming newcomers into their home, as it were. Everyone should be encouraged to recognize that the international student has travelled a long way and may be adjusting to a time change. They should appreciate that the student may not know even one person and the place is totally new, perhaps very confusing. Front line staff, such as those at the registrar's desk, or the student housing office, should be trained to take time with international students who may not understand during a first explanation, to be ready to listen when the accent is heavy, and to offer a ready smile.

University administrators must realize that arranging for even short term accomodation, to be available on arrival for new incoming

international student would go a great deal towards improving the welcome and approval rating these students have offered. If only 41% of the total respondents agreed the university had provided sufficient assistance to them in finding a place to live, then the majority of respondents would like more help. The sooner a student gets settled, the better they will feel about their choice of university.

Careful screening of possible rental units, assistance in using the telephone, a brief explanation of what they can expect for certain rates, and an explanation of rental procedures, would work to alleviate some of the stress involved for a new international student when looking for a place to live.

Though faculty and students received positive ratings for their willingness to help, those who may be specifically designated with helping the international student did not. This may not necessarily suggest they are not doing their job. International students are in contact with their professors, and sit side by side fellow Canadian students everyday. These people are readily available for help should the international student ask. However, the International Student Advisor, for example, may be located in a building far distant from the international students' classroom locations. As well, in order to see the ISA, the international student may have to make an appointment, may have to go through front desk personnel, and may find that the ISA cannot see them now, or tomorrow, and perhaps not until next week.

In a large university the problem may not be easily resolved. Small universities have certain advantages in that the ISA may be able to take time to get out into the campus activities, attend functions

which international students frequent and become a familiar and readily available figure for the international students.

Universities should develop umbrella policies that encourage the mixing of Canadian and international students. This might take the form of encouraging international student representatives on Student Council, and having a seat on various university committees. Sports involvement on a recreational level ought to see faculty, staff, Canadian, and international students joining in the pleasure of all types of sports but in particular such Canadian winter sports as hockey, curling, skating and skiing.

Opportunities to demonstrate Canadian hospitality to international students could be encouraged by the deans, of their faculty. Are students invited for a festive dinner (Thanksgiving, Christmas, a summer picnic), are they encouraged to attend a course field trip, do the faculty take time to show even a brief interest in the students's overall satisfaction in their university studies?

Such events as International week and International dinners should see the involvement of many international students. Such events should be patronized by senior administration, faculty and staff. Students should be given opportunities to show case aspects of their culture, history, and business.

Finally, effective interaction between Canadian and international students should be encouraged formally through courses in Inter-cultural communication, focusing on both theory and practice. Such courses would offer exceptional opportunity for Canadian who may be planning to work and/or study abroad.

Racism

There was considerable variation among the universities in response to the question of international students experiencing racism. (See #29, Appendix B). Overall, the international students reported a 63% positive response. However, looking at the individual universities, for example the University of Alberta where a large percentage of reporting students (28%) were from Western Europe (all were caucasian) the rate drops to 41%. Moving on to the University of Calgary, where the numbers of reporting students from Western Europe drops to 3%, the experience of racism rises to 63%. Thirdly, at the University of Lethbridge, where 2% originate from Western Europe, the rate increaes again to 77%.

There are 2 obvious reasons for these responses. Firstly, the students from Western Europe would automatically fit into the majority of caucasians on the campus. They would be virtually indistinguishable from the mainstream of students. Secondly, Edmonton in particular has for many years been a recipient of new immigrants to Alberta from many different countries and regions of the world. The city celebrates it's varied ethnic mix. As well, the University of Alberta has been receiving substantial numbers of international students for many years. Their presence on campus is taken as a matter of course. Through the International Centre in particular they are encouraged to take an active role in university life.

The University of Calgary, a somewhat smaller and newer institution than the University of Alberta, resides in a city that though becoming more ethnically diverse does take its image from the "wild west" and Calgary stampede. It may be argued that this

university may not be quite as "at ease" with its' ethnically diverse student population.

Finally, the University of Lethbridge, smallest and newest of the three institutions, has only recently (in the last 7 to 10 years) experienced a rapid increase in the number of international students. As well, as many as 75% of this group may originate from Hong Kong. This university resides in a smaller city of 70,000 people, which until fairly recently was almost entirely, with the exception of a group of Canadian born Japanese, almost entirely caucasian. The city serves the surrounding rural community and many students attending the University of Lethbridge have only lived in rural or small town Southern Alberta. Their opportunity for exposure to differing cultures may be fairly limited. This may account in part, for the 77% rate of racism reported by international students at this institution.

To add a final note to the question of how universities may achieve international student satisfaction, cultural expectations must be taken into account. It is probable that should the universities undertake every recommendation, and do their utmost to accomodate the international student, it is not likely they would be able to garner 100% satisfaction from every student. Cultural expectations, inherent in the thinking and expectations of these students may mitage against complete satisfaction. This should simply be appreciated by all involved with serving the international community.

Never-the-less, every resonable effort should be taken to address issues that have been raised in this study. As was stated in Chapter One, the benefits available to Canada and all Canadians

through the considerate hosting of international students in our midst
are of major significance both now and increasingly so in the future.

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APPENDIX A

STUDENT CONSENT FORM

International Student Survey

Consent Form

Dear Student,

As an M. Ed. student at the University of Lethbridge I am currently undertaking a research study regarding the factors that effect international student satisfaction at Alberta universities. You are invited to participate in this study. I will ask questions relating to different aspects of your experience as an international student in Alberta. The information you provide may assist all those involved in the assistance and support of international students in the university setting.

Please read the following carefully and sign below if you are willing to participate in this study.

I understand that I am participating in a study about international student views on factors that effect their satisfaction at Alberta Universities. I may choose not to participate in this study simply by not completing the questionnaire or participating in the interview.

By completing the questionnaire and/or participating in the interview I grant permission to the researcher to use the information which I report in the study. I understand that the information I provide will remain strictly confidential. Reports made as a result of the study will remain completely anonymous. I understand I may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions regarding the study please direct them to me or any of the following people from the faculty of Education, University of Lethbridge, 4401 University Drive, Lethbridge, Alberta, T1K 3M4

Dr. Kaz Mazurek (Thesis Supervisor) Phone: 329-2737

Dr. Brian Titley (Committee Member) Phone: 329-2185

Dr. Cynthia Chambers (Committee Member) Phone: 329-2271

Dr. Jane O'Dea (Chairperson, Human Subjects Research Committee) Phone: 329-2458

Sincerely,

Denise Calderwood
(M.Ed. Candidate)

I _____ consent to participate as a subject
in this study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Lethbridge Alberta
March 1992

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

International Student Survey

Questionnaire

For the following items, please show the extent of your agreement or disagreement by checking the following:

SD = S trongly D isagree
D = D isagree
U = U ndecided
A = A gree
SA = S trongly A gree

First Contact with Canada

1. My initial contact with Canadian authorities outside of Canada was friendly and positive.
2. The information I received from the university was clear and easily understand.
3. I did not have any difficulty in obtaining all the documentation that Canada Immigration required before coming to Canada as an international student.

	SD	D	U	A	SA
1					
2					
3					

Arrival and Orientation

4. I feel that the university made adequate arrangements to ensure that I was met upon arrival.
5. Overall, the welcome I received when I arrived at the university made me feel glad I choose to come here.
6. The international student orientation at my university was adequate in explaining Canadian university life.

	SD	D	U	A	SA
4					
5					
6					

International Student Survey

Assistance for International Students

7. The services offered to me by the International Centre/ International Student Advisor have met my needs and expectations.
8. The faculty and staff at this university are helpful and friendly when I ask a question.
9. The students at my university are helpful and friendly when I ask a question.
10. The people who offered the initial orientation for international students are still readily available if I need to ask for assistance.

	SD	D	U	A	SA
7					
8					
9					
10					

English Language Skills

11. I feel I have sufficient language skills in English to cope with my course requirements.
12. When I first arrived it would have been helpful for me to practice my English in small group conversation.
13. I still find it difficult to speak up in class when my professor calls upon me.
14. I do not speak English when I get together with my closest friends.

	SD	D	U	A	SA
11					
12					
13					
14					

Housing Accommodation

15. The University and / or the community provided sufficient assistance to me in finding a place to live.
16. Procedures for renting an apartment, and such regulations as damage deposits and notice of departure were carefully explained in my university orientation.
17. I have always been treated fairly when renting an apartment, suite or room from Canadians.

	SD	D	U	A	SA
15					
16					
17					

*Lethbridge Alberta
March 1992*

International Student Survey

Academic Assistance

18. I have received adequate academic advising from the university advisors to correctly choose the courses that are what I wish to study.
19. I would like to have more opportunity to discuss course work with my professors.
20. I have always been fairly treated in class by my professors.
21. I have a good understanding of the grading system at my university.
22. I would appreciate more assistance in giving an in-class oral presentation in classes which require such presentations
23. More effort should be made to internationalize the content of university courses.
24. My courses will be useful to me when I return to my country of origin and begin to look for a job.

	SD	D	U	A	SA
18					
19					
20					
21					
22					
23					
24					

Getting to Know Canadians

25. Making friends with Canadian students have been a positive experience to me.
26. The university has provided enough opportunities, through social events and off-campus trips for me to meet and get to know Canadian students and other international students.
27. In my experience Canadian students tend to avoid making contacts with international students.
28. The best friends I have made at my university are other students from my own culture.

	SD	D	U	A	SA
25					
26					
27					
28					

International Student Survey

- 29. I have experienced some form of racism as an International student in Canada.
- 30. I have enjoyed visiting in the homes of Canadians.
- 31. There are regularly scheduled events at my university which have an international theme and are of interest to me.
- 32. My university does not do enough to recognize the presence of international students on this campus.

	SD	D	U	A	SA
29					
30					
31					
32					

Overall Level of Satisfaction

Checking the following to show your overall level of satisfaction:

VU = V ery U nsatisfactory
U = U nsatisfactory
UD = U n D ecided
S = S atisfactory
VS = V ery S atisfactory

- 33. How would you rate your overall level of satisfaction with:
 - a. the welcome and orientation by the university and community
 - b. your fluency in English for academic purposes
 - c. your fluency in English for social conversation
 - d. the teaching and content in your courses
 - e. your relationship with Canadian students
 - f. your knowledge and experience of Canada as a nation

33	VU	U	UD	S	VS
a					
b					
c					
d					
e					
f					

International Student Survey

Please circle yes, no or does not apply in response to the following questions:

34. I was met upon arrival in Canada by a friend or family member.
yes no does not apply
35. I was met upon arrival at the university by a member of the university community.
yes no does not apply
36. When I arrived I had to make my own way to the university.
yes no does not apply
37. I have had an opportunity to share a meal with a Canadian family in their home. *yes no does not apply*
38. The university responded in a helpful manner when I:
- a. was unable to complete a course due to illness.
yes no does not apply
 - b. wished to challenge a final grade on a course.
yes no does not apply
 - c. requested extra time in taking an exam in order to compensate for language difficulties.
yes no does not apply
 - d. experienced a personal financial crisis
yes no does not apply

Please circle one of the following:

39. If a friend or relative of mine is coming to this university I would recommend the first person they contact is
- a. the International Student Advisor
 - b. the president of an international club
 - c. helpful community person
 - d. pastor of a local church
 - e. other (please specify)

*Lethbridge Alberta
March 1992*

International Student Survey

Contact with Canadians

40. The one friendship I most appreciate with Canadians is with
(please circle one)
- a. a family
 - b. a student of same sex, similar age
 - c. an instructor/advisor
 - d. a student of opposite sex, similar age
 - e. other (please specify)
41. Which Canadian individual or group of people has been most helpful in your success so far?
- a. a friend
 - b. a family
 - c. a faculty advisor
 - d. the International Student Advisor
 - e. a professor
 - f. campus club
 - g. other

Please provide short answers to the following:

42. Among Canadian students what attitudes do you find most surprising, confusing, or difficult to cope with:
Please give examples.

International Student Survey

43. What has been the most satisfying aspect of your stay in Canada so far?

44. What has been the most troubling aspect so far?

45. Please feel free to offer any further comments.

Your assistance in completing this questionnaire is greatly appreciated. Please complete the following background information.

Please circle your response to the following questions.

1. How many courses have you completed at this university?
 - a. 20 to 30 courses
 - b. 30 to 40 courses
 - c. 40 to 50 courses

2. Please indicate your gender.
 - a. female
 - b. male

*Lethbridge Alberta
March 1992*

International Student Survey

3. What is your age?
- a. 17 - 19
 - b. 20 - 22
 - c. 23 - 25
 - d. 26 - 29
 - e. 30 - 35
 - f. 36 - 45
 - g. 46 - 54
4. What region are you from?
- a. Central America
 - b. South America
 - c. U. S. A.
 - d. Western Europe
 - e. Eastern Europe
 - f. The C. I. S.
 - g. Africa
 - h. The Caribbean
 - i. The Middle East
 - j. Asia - Hong Kong, Singapore, China, Malaysia, Japan.
 - k. other
5. What was your educational preparation prior to entering your present program of studies?
- a. high school diploma
 - b. college transfer program
 - c. college/university degree
 - d. college/university diploma
 - e. other
6. How many years have you been in Canada?
- a. 1 year or less
 - b. 1 year plus
 - c. 2 years plus
 - d. 3 years plus
 - e. 4 years plus
 - f. more than 5 years

*Lethbridge Alberta
March 1992*

International Student Survey

7. What is your present course of study?

- a. accounting
- b. business management
- c. computing science
- d. engineering
- e. economics
- f. science
- g. arts
- h. education
- i. fine art
- j. nursing
- k. pharmacy
- l. other (please specify)

8. What is your principle means of financial support?

- a. parents
- b. parents and other relatives
- c. self support and parents
- d. self support only
- e. scholarship and self support
- f. scholarship only

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APPENDIX C

LETTER TO STUDENT LEADERS

The Faculty of Education,
The University of Lethbridge,
4401 University Drive,
Lethbridge, Alta. T1K 3M4

Dear

As part of my Master's of Education thesis at the University of Lethbridge, I am conducting a survey of factors effecting the satisfaction of international students at Alberta universities.

My survey is directed at undergraduate international students at the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary, and the University of Lethbridge.

As a student leader at the University of Calgary, I am requesting your support in the distribution of my questionnaire. I will be at the Student Resource Centre/ International Students Advisor Office on Monday, March 23rd, all day. Would it be possible for you, or one of your executive to drop by and pick up a packet of questionnaires to distribute to your members?

Beyond requesting what region or country the student is from, there are no identifying marks on the questionnaire. Therefore the replies of the student will remain completely anonymous. Participation is voluntary.

When handing out the questionnaires to your members and other international student friends, would you mention that I would like to interview a number of students who have had a chance to go through the questionnaire. I will be at the Student Resource Centre for Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, March 23rd, 24th 25th and 26th. Day or evening, anytime that would suit the student would be fine with me.

Finally, a clearly marked box will be located at the Student Resource Centre over the next 3 weeks to receive the completed questionnaires.

Thankyou very much for your cooperation. I will arrive in Calgary on Sunday evening, March 22nd, and will call you that evening to confirm these details.

Sincerely,

M.Ed. Candidate.

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

These questions are to be proceeded with a few minutes of introductions and confirmation that the student has had the opportunity to respond to the questionnaire. Thanks will be expressed to the student for their willingness to participate. If the student does seem sufficiently relaxed the interview will begin. If not, I may take a few more minutes to relate to the student my two experiences as an International student in order to provide a bridge of identification with the student.

Can you tell me about the first information you were given about study in Canada? Was someone available to help you understand the material?

Can you tell me about your arrival in Canada?

Was any one there to meet you?

Did you make your own way to the university?

Was there any one on the campus who was able to help you when you first arrived?

Did you attend the university orientation for international students?

What part of it was especially useful?

What part was the least useful?

Have you been able to get good advice on what courses to take?

Have your professors been helpful?

Have you received help from other international students? From Canadian students?

Do you feel you now have sufficient language skills to take advantage of every aspect of your academic studies?

Your non-academic, community, social life?

How long did it take for you to reach this point in your language skill level?

Have you had any problems with accommodation?

Has any one person been particularly helpful in assisting you in finding a place to live.?

Does your university make an effort to recognize the presence of international students.? If so, how?

Do you think they should do more? What would you suggest?

Have you been invited to a Canadian's home? once, a few times, many times?

Has getting to know Canadians been a valuable experience for you? Can you tell me how ?In what way?

What suggestions do you have that Canada as a country, the individual universities, and the respective surrounding communities should consider in trying to provide the best possible experience for future international student?