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Heather Mairi Irwin-Robinson

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INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE:

THE CANADIAN EXPERIENCE OF

AFRICAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

By

Heather Mairi Irwin-Robinson

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of**

Doctor of Education

**College of Education
Higher Adult and Lifelong Education
(H.A.L.E.)**

2002

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ABSTRACT

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE; THE CANADIAN EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

By

Heather Mairi Irwin-Robinson

This study addresses the following questions that pertain to the perceptions that International Students have about their community college experience in Canada with respect to 'culture shock' and what they expect for their futures upon their return home. The research questions focus on these impressions International Students have about their coming to Canada, stress (and distress) as identified and described by International Students, perceptions that these students identify in terms of their ability to manage their culture in Canada and future expectations upon their return home.

Students entering academic settings are subject to a variety of new experiences that can create stress and frustration. Students' ability to adapt to these new situations, are stressful. Incongruence of values and belief systems enhance the level of stress. The development of new skills is required to manage in the new environment.

Qualitative methods were used to collect the data and a semi-structured interview protocol was used to guide students' reflections about their study abroad experience. The phases of 'culture shock' were explored with respect to the 'in-and-out- of-class' experience of International Students. They were also asked to reflect on the changes in their lives, their futures and what changes they anticipated at home. Students identified

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many areas of 'culture shock' and stress. By reducing the impact of stress and culture shock,' the adjustment to college can be supported more effectively.

International Students faced many challenges. They stated that they had more responsibility than mainstream students. There are many attributes of college life that they find satisfying and even enjoyable, while others are stressful and distressful. International Students were very positive about the teaching and learning environment of the college, however, they found life in Canada and at the college very difficult. Several suggestions have been made to support changes within the college system that may be of benefit to International Students. Overall, this study of nine African International Students is a journey of discovery of Canada and themselves.

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HEATHER MAIRI IRWIN-ROBINSON

2002

Dedication

**In memory of my parents, Robert and Alice Irwin who
Inspired my love of life and learning about others.**

In memory of Dr. Cass Heilman.

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Acknowledgements

This has been an incredible journey and there are so many people to whom I am grateful. First of all, there are nine African International Students who willingly shared their perspectives on their journey of discovery about Canada and themselves. I was privileged to meet and speak with them. My sincere appreciation to a Canadian community college that without their support, this study would not have taken place.

To my advisors, Dr. Steve Weiland, Dr. Marylee Davis, Dr. L. Patrick Scheetz, Dr. Doug Campbell, and Dr. Rhonda Egidio for generously sharing their time, insights and expertise, my sincere thanks. Their contribution to the research study and my professional development has been profound. You challenged me to think in different ways and to grow.

To Alicia and Jay, for their wonderful and excellent assistance with transcription, my sincere thanks. To Karen, for her superb assistance with editing, my appreciation.

To my husband, Stanley, who has shared much of this journey while in Africa and whose love and strength made it possible.

To my children, Erin, Trevor, Tyrone and Shannon, life is a daring adventure so dare to dream. You can do it!

To my wonderful friends, Mary, Muriel, Barbara and Linda for all the way you encouraged me and helped me achieve my goal, my sincere thanks.

The past is not a hitching post but rather a guiding post.

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Written Consent for Heather Irwin-Robinson’s Research paper

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

One of the most significant challenges for the 21st century is the need for educational institutions to respond to changes in demographic trends. Post-secondary educators are examining ways to meet the current realities of global education. As boundaries of trade and travel expand to new and larger markets, educators will be required to interact with a more diverse student population. The ethnic and cultural constituency of the classrooms is changing significantly. In many cases, classes may be predominately people of 'other' cultures. International Education is an emerging market in Canadian community colleges. They have the potential for immense growth particularly if these colleges can respond to the many needs of International Students and reduce the 'culture shock' these students experience coming to Canada.

This study is about nine International Students and their perspectives of college adjustment while attending a Canadian community college. These students are enrolled in a variety of programs offered by a community college in southwestern Ontario and represent the region of Africa.

To obtain these perspectives of college adjustment, the study will address four major questions that pertain to International Students' perceptions about international study with reference to 'culture shock,' the stresses that they experience, their ability to maintain their culture and their expectations for the future.

In the adjustment to college life, students are likely to experience difficulty with academic pressures, financial problems, poor health, loneliness, interpersonal conflicts,

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difficulty in adjusting to change and problems with developing personal autonomy (Baker & Siryk, 1986; Bean, 1982; Hoffman, 1984). Like domestic students who are adjusting to changes in role demands in the transition to post-secondary education, this adjustment can be further complicated by cultural differences from previous educational settings and the demand to master changes quickly in the new culture. Making this adjustment and effectively dealing with 'culture shock' is critical to student success.

Background

For the past ten years I have been an International Student in the United States, studying in the states of New York and Michigan. For a variety of reasons, my time as a student has been that of a commuting student. I have been able to maintain a career and family while pursuing academia as my time away has never exceeded anything longer than 6 days. Even so, there have been challenges in terms of being an international student in terms of distance, lack of integration, social issues and 'culture shock.' In spite of this, I have become familiar with academic and social life in the United States.

In addition, I have substantial experience teaching International Students in community colleges in Canada and working in hospitals that have provided clinical experience for a variety of International Students studying some aspect of healthcare. This has peaked my interest in International Students. My work with International Students began in the mid 1970's and has continued throughout my work and academic experiences.

Being an International Student, myself, and with having contact with International Students and new Canadians in the academic setting, I have been very interested in the

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issues that concern this population. In addition, I have encountered a great number of diverse students, many of whom have only arrived in Canada a few days or weeks before starting college. It is evident that these students experience difficulties from many sources and I have been approached by them to help with problem-solving a variety of issues that relate to academic and non-academic concerns including issues that relate to 'culture shock.'

My goal is to consider 'culture shock' and stress from the students' perspective and learn from them what values, beliefs and cultural practices have significant meaning for them. For this purpose I want to explore International Students' experience in a community college, both in and outside the classroom.

Statement of the Problem

All students experience stress while attending college. There are many new aspects of this new environment that must be mastered. Students have many needs that must be met for them to be successful in the community college. It is considered to be a time of great stress. While attempting to deal with the academic concerns of the mainstream students, community colleges may have been limited in responding to student stress. With this new emerging market descending upon the campus and despite the fact that Canadian colleges have been accepting International Students for over 20 years, International Students' needs in terms of stress have been largely overlooked by community colleges.

International Students are a financial investment as well as evidence of an effort by colleges to internationalize their curriculum, the faculty and the student body. They

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offer diversity within the student body, new viewpoints and experiences, and they help offset declining enrollment and often come with full funding (Wan, Chapman, and Biggs, 1992). Furthermore they change the nature of any student's relationship with other people and do not become socially and politically insular (Goodwin and Nacht, 1983).

Even so, many colleges are not really ready for International Students. It is a challenge to accommodate so many differing needs. These students come from many diverse cultural, social, political and educational backgrounds.

International Students may be considered people in transition (Thomas & Althen, 1989). In a distant place, students may have difficulty establishing a sense of belonging. The demands of the host culture may be totally at odds with their own experiences (Orbay, 1994). These students may be required to make a number of personal, social, and environmental changes upon arrival in the host country. Students of the host culture have different needs and may have difficulty relating in this new environment. International Students have these needs and others as well. Students who are new to a country and college can encounter a number of adjustment difficulties adapting to the new environment. These stresses may include learning a new language, adjustment to the different educational system, social mores, values, relationships, foods, and other aspects of culture. These adjustments may be compounded by the loss of family, culture, familiar surroundings, primary language, and personal status (Grisbacher, 1991; Cho, 1988). "People are socialized within families and in communities where they learn the values, perspectives, attitudes, and behaviors of their primordial culture" (Banks, 1992). Furthermore, Astin's theory of involvement supports the notion that the more students learn more the more they are involved in both the academic and social aspects of the

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college experience. This theory has significant application to a diverse college population. This investment of energy in academic, relationships, and activities related to the college will depend on students' interests and goals as well as other commitments.

Brink and Saunders (1976) suggested five categories of stressors that included communication; mechanical, and/or environmental difficulties; isolation; customs; and attitudes and beliefs. Leong (1984) categorized the types of problems International Students experience as follows: problems common to all college students (autonomy), problems associated with being away from home for a long time (culture shock), and problems unique to International Students (immigration difficulties).

Sandhu (1994) described student problems in terms of two types. One type is that which includes a profound sense of loss, sense of inferiority, and sense of uncertainty as being intrapersonal that have roots within the self; and the other such as communication difficulties, culture shock, loss of social support systems, and further miscellaneous factors that relate to environment, cultural milieu or surroundings as interpersonal problems. It was important to note that both types in Sandhu's model interacted with each other. These changes can be difficult and even painful, resulting in feelings of depression, disorientation, isolation, powerlessness, loss of identity, fear, hostility and alienation. This may manifest itself in terms of poor academic adjustment.

Coping with this multi-dimensional stress is coupled with attempting to cope with academic work (Robinson, 1992). Educational institutions have had difficulty responding to students from 'other' cultures and this may result in lowered academic success and lead possibly to premature departure from the academic institution.

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But culture is not static, nor is life. Furthermore, people are more mobile in this generation than in previous ones. Many students come to educational institutions amid an array of transitions and expectations. “The likelihood that first time college students survive their initial year of college is not encouraging. Statistical data depict the grim story. Over half of all entering students will leave before they complete their first year of college” (Tinto, 1993). Many of these transitions and expectations create stress and even shock. Adapting to a new culture has been described as the phenomenon of culture shock and considered to be the transition from a familiar culture to an unfamiliar culture when old patterns of behavior are ineffective (Orberg, 1954).

Culture shock may result from “losing familiar signs and symbols of social interactions upon entering a situation that is greatly different from that which is known and familiar” (Norris, 1993). The culture of the educational institution may be very different from the students’ experience and perceptions. Furthermore, students may not be familiar or experienced with the attributes of their own education decision-making in their respective cultures. What motivated students to study abroad may not be only due to superior academic qualifications but because of the influence of local governments and sponsoring agencies. In addition, political and local conditions of war may encourage students or families of students to send them abroad. Although the tendency has been for International Students to represent the ‘cream of the crop’ in terms of academic abilities, there may have been little preparation for their out-of-country experience in terms of ‘culture shock.’ With the expanding opportunities to study abroad, other students may make this choice as well. Academic expectations combined with difficulty in coping with college life can be a source of stress for students. Also, developments in the political,

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economic and social arenas at home may lead to students being preoccupied with home countries and interfere with students academic success.

In Canada, and in particular, at institutions of higher learning, the responsibility of the educational choices a student makes lies with the student. This may augment the stress level of students as they may be ill-equipped to meet the demands of higher education successfully. Their expectations may not be in line with the students' level of academic preparation or capacity to adjust to foreign teaching methodology (Huxur et al, 1996). The threat, whether real or actual and returning home to face embarrassment of self, family or sponsors, coupled with financial implication can be immense for International Students. It is impossible to know all individuals and all cultures. Failure to recognize the intra-cultural variability of International Students perpetuates the marginalization of this group (Arthur, 1997). Students may present similar perspectives although from different cultural groups. The identification and the interpretation of the problem may vary across cultures (Zhang, 1995). It is important to understand what students understand and experience from their perspective. Cultural misunderstandings can exacerbate student difficulties (Pedersen, 1991).

Many factors can affect students' ability to adjust to college (Zitzow, 1984). In his research, it was reported that the ability to manage life, stress was strongly linked with the ability to handle the college environment. As a result, International Students may be potentially disadvantaged. They experience significant 'culture shock' that may contribute to performance in school and ultimately, school 'failure.' This has implications for future academic success (Rendon, 1994; Upcraft and Gardener, 1989; Tinto, 1987) as well as career success. "The retention of students from diverse cultures has been a major

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problem” in many educational institutions (Oliver, Rodriguez and Mickelson, 1985). Furthermore, “Baker and Siryk, (1984) demonstrated that a student’s ability to adjust to the college environment is correlated to attrition rates, academic performance, appeals for psychological services, social activities, and involvement in leadership roles on campus.” It is important to consider this phenomenon called 'culture shock' in terms of stress.

Purpose of the Study

In order to respond to the needs of International Students, community colleges need to understand the challenges and stresses faced by International Students. This perspective needs to be done, however, from the perspective of the International Students.

Although a fair amount of literature discusses the experience of International Students in universities, an in-depth study of the experience encountered by International Students at community college has yet to be explored. This study will achieve this objective.

‘Culture shock’ can refer to the emotional ups and downs experienced by International Students. Students entering academic settings are subject to a variety of new experiences that can create stress and frustration. Students’ ability to adapt to these new situations, are stressful. Incongruence of values and belief systems enhance the level of stress. Furthermore, family disappointment and disgrace may enhance stress. Affiliation with other cultures does impact the adjustment to the college environment (Fernandez-Bariallas & Morrison, 1984). First generation students had higher cultural adjustment difficulties and acculturative stress than students from second and third generation subgroups (Orozco, 1999). The development of bicultural competency may

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assist in the management of the stress of living in two cultures (La Framboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1991).

Therefore, the researcher's primary purpose in this study was to give voice to the experiences of International Students utilizing a framework of 'culture shock.' Secondly, the researcher described stress, the characteristics of stress and adaptation to a new environment as explained and experienced by a selected group of international community college students. The researcher elicited from a diverse African International Student group in a community college setting, their perceptions about their 'in-and out-of' class experiences and adjustments. How did they describe their transition to college?

A third purpose identified particular attributes of college life that International Students find stressful, distressful and conversely satisfying and dissatisfying. Was college life what they expected and how are they adjusting? A fourth purpose asked International Students to determine from the perspectives of these nine International Students changes in the community college system that might help International Students and reduce the stresses encountered.

Research Questions

This study addresses the following questions that pertain to the perceptions that International Students have about their community college experience in Canada with respect to 'culture shock' and what they expect for their future upon their return home. The research questions focus on these impressions International Students have about their coming to Canada, the characteristics of stress (and distress) as identified and described by International Students, perceptions that these students identify in terms of their ability

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1. What are the perceptions that International Students have about studying abroad, coming to community college and life in Canada?
2. How do International Students describe stress and what do they find stressful about life in Canada?
3. Are these perceptions and stresses (and distresses) consistent with the attributes of 'culture shock'?
4. What perceptions and opportunities do International Students' have about their ability to maintain their culture in Canada?
5. What are International Students' expectations in terms of their futures and return to home country and family?

Rationale for the Study and Potential Significance

Few studies have examined the impact of 'culture shock' on adjustment to college, particularly with respect to International Students. Even fewer studies report from the student perspective. Multiple studies have indicated that cultural change does, in fact, induce stress (Liu and Baker, 1993; Twibell et al., 1995; Weinstein, 1989). More specifically, prior research has found that the majority of students who participated in study abroad experiences, reported the experience to be stressful (Mallinckrodt and Leong, 1992; Miller, 1993). Stressors that have been identified by this group of students include shelter, food, sleep, elimination, health, money, communication, interpersonal

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relationships, climate, and academic performance (Carlson, Burn, Useem and Yachimowicz, 1990; Grove, 1989; Klineberg and Hull, 1979; Twibell et al., 1995).

Past research in this area has tended to focus on grades and socio-economic class (Oliver, Rodriguez and Mickelson, 1985). Cultural values and beliefs have great influence on the formation of self-concept. They will affect students in terms of adaptation to the academic environment as well as career development. Little research has addressed the phenomenon of 'culture shock' in community college students.

Goldberg (1980) noted that mobile families face increased stress, not only from the perspective of the students, but other family members experience increased stress as well. This may be further complicated by the fact that the students may have been less than voluntary participants in the decision to relocate.

Overall the measurement and discussion of coping responses and coping effectiveness has been neglected in the evaluation of study abroad programs. Few studies have examined stress and coping variables in the contexts of cultural adaptation.

This study assists in understanding the need for the integration and socialization of the student into the culture of the academic institution (Mehan, 1980). It also assists in the recognition of distinct cultures and values. Furthermore, this study supports the need for curriculum reform, multicultural awareness, and culturally sensitive classrooms to better prepare and orient International Students and improve student success.

This study was not designed to evaluate how well a school of higher learning is helping International Students deal with 'culture shock', however data will be obtained that will identify any issues that students' perceive as being difficult or stressful. The study was limited to a sample of subjects who were selected from a group of nine

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African International Students. The International Students who participated in this study did not necessarily represent students in the same type of situation in this or any other community colleges. Therefore, the ability to generalize these findings is limited. The students' desire to appear accepted in the new academic setting may have lead to inaccurate self-reporting and must be considered.

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Chapter Two

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Understanding the experience of new students in a community college setting is a complex undertaking. The potential for impact on academic performance and stress may influence decisions about remaining in college (Warner & Brown, 1995). In an attempt to make it more understandable, I have divided the literature review into several categories: Factors Affecting College Adjustment, Formation of Cultural Identity, The Phenomenon of Culture Shock and Definition of Terms.

Factors Affecting College Adjustment

Adjustment to college can be considered in terms of academic, social, emotional, and goal commitment (Baker & Siryk, 1986). International Students face the common problems of all students as well as unique ones. The stress of managing cultures can reduce personal efficacy and increase anxiety, confusion, and the risk of depression. Stress may even occur in the pre-migration phase (Tran, 1993). Sandu and Asrabadi (1994) discussed several recurring themes in acculturative stress including perceived discrimination, social isolation, threat to cultural identity, inferiority, homesickness, fear, anger, disappointments, mistrust, communication problems, culture shock, perceived hatred, and guilt. Academic demands, language barriers and relationship problems enhance stress and can create distress. Non-assertiveness, individualism and bicultural conflicts, stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination and paranoia may also be contributing factors. They may be worried about the political situations in their home country as well

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The participants in my study may have experienced more difficulty adjusting to the various accents of the instructors along with their different teaching styles. They may have difficulty understanding class lectures, making them feel reluctant to participate in class discussion. Test construction may be more difficult to comprehend. Those who have English as a second language often require extra time to read tests and often they are unable to articulate their knowledge on exams due to limitations in vocabulary. Language proficiency is not measured adequately by TOEFL testing and this lack has significant impact on the ability to learn and apply new knowledge. Furthermore, International Students have preferences in the teaching and learning environment with respect to how they learn (de Oliveira, 1999).

The Formation of Cultural Identity

Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) emphasize the intangible, symbolic and ideational aspects of human life, not the tangible objects. These attributes are conceptions of what is desirable and important to the culture including values and non-verbal communication. These are essential aspects to be considered with respect to adjusting to another culture.

Keeton and James (1992) state that colleges must not assume students need to assimilate into their existing culture. Particular areas of adjustment include language, academic performance, social adjustment and adjustment to support services. They continue by stating the adults have a tendency to manifest less flexibility than younger

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students. The important issue is how students perceive themselves and how they define the cultural dimensions of their circumstances.

The Phenomena of Culture Shock

The freshman year may be considered to be a process of socialization to a new cultural environment involving culture shock and internalization of academic, bureaucratic and social norms, values and expectations (Chaskes, 1996; Yook, 1995) reported 'culture shock' in students studying in Malaysia. These students experienced conflict with the norms and value systems of other cultures.

It has been generally accepted that there are a series of stages or phases of 'culture shock' and cultural adaptation that people experience when adapting to new environments (Adler, 1987; Orberg, 1960). Storti (1989) describes a multi-stage process as follows:

“Stage 1: The first reaction to the international living experience is characterized by the excitement and euphoria of foreign travel, known as the honeymoon phase. The individual sees new cultural surrounding through the eyes of a tourist. The individual discovers cultural similarities and differences and filters these through his/her own set of cultural values.

Stage 2: The second reaction begins when the differences (personal, social, cultural) intrude on an increasing basis into the individual's image of self. A period of disenchantment occurs where realization of the new setting occurs. The differences become more noticeable. The individual experiences a loss of cultural support and relies increasingly on fellow countrymen. At this stage, the individual can experience

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confusion, disorientation, apathy, loneliness and a feeling of isolation. He/she may take solace in complaining about the local customs and habits.

Stage 3: The differences are rejected and there is a preoccupation with the likes and dislikes. He/she feels anger, frustration, rage, rebellion, and hostility. This negative behavior is a form of self-assertion and reflects the development of self-esteem as well as working towards a resolution where individuals seek new patterns of behavior.

Stage 4: With time the individual becomes capable of surviving in the new surrounding. He/she begins to learn more about the local traditions and customs and begins to feel some comfort with communication. Friends are made with local people and he/she begins to exhibit more understanding and sensitivity. He/she becomes increasingly assured, controlled and confident. Individuals begin to function effectively as they become more comfortable in the new culture.

Stage 5: Finally in most cases, individuals achieve a new equilibrium. He/she is able to exercise choice and take on responsibility. He/she is able to derive pleasure from relationships with the local people and exhibits trust, humor, love and the full range of normal experiences.

In summary, there are many factors that affect college adjustment, the formation of cultural identity and the phenomena of 'culture shock.' With respect to 'culture shock,' is generally thought that an individual “moves through these stages more or less in the order they are given” (Norris, 1993). They may move at different rates, however.

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Definition of Terms

To develop the conceptual perspectives for this study, I consulted the work of many researchers. These definitions will serve as a guide for describing the specific aspects of culture and perceptions that these nine African International Students have of their college experience.

Bicultural Efficacy: This term is defined as an individual's expectation that they can or cannot manage the stress and conflict of living in two cultures at the same time without suffering negative psychological consequences or compromising their personal and cultural identities.

Cross-Cultural Adaptation: This phenomena refers to the dynamic interplay between stress-adaptation and growth (Kim, 1988).

Culture Shock: "Anthropologists define culture as a way of perceiving, believing, evaluating, and behaving (Goodenough, 1981)." When values are challenged or not shared by others, 'culture shock' occurs. They may be through language, thoughts, or actions. "The ebbing and flowing of exhilaration, anxiety, frustration, hostility, bewilderment, homesickness, denial, lethargy and other reactions to situational stress, are supposed to subside and eventually settle into a calming sea of relative adjustment to and acceptance of, the other culture as just another way of constructing reality. In other words, we voluntary or involuntarily confront an unfamiliar set of rules about how life should be lived, we eventually learn the rules and we go on living happily or maybe grudging ever after. That is until the next time" (Furnham & Bochner, 1986).

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Adaptation: A positive response to inner and outer demands: an individual's behavioral change to a new or modified culture and its surroundings (Lazarus, 1969).

Culture: An individual is not born with culture but only the capacity to learn and use it. The culture of any people is the product of history and built up over time, largely through process of which the individual is usually unaware (Orberg, 1). "Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments artifacts: the essential core of consists of tradition...ideas and especially their attached values" (Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952). The significance of culture is that it represents a storehouse of pooled learning and a way of thinking, feeling and believing giving meaning to behaviour. (Geertz, 1973).

International Student(s): International Students are college students who have come to Canada on a student visa for the intent of studying abroad and obtaining a college diploma. It is intended that these students return home after completing three years of study. Many of these students may never have been to Canada prior to their studies.

Stress: Academic, personal, and social stress with which students are able to cope successfully. This involves the demands of college life and the interpersonal experiences that accompany it (University of Iowa, 2000). This is usually considered positive stress.

Distress: Academic, personal and social stress that can become overpowering and unmanageable. Students may exhibit symptoms of sadness, depression, irritability, apathy, weight loss, and distractibility (University of Iowa, 2000). This is considered a negative type of stress.

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Summary of the Literature Review

While there may be variations in the nature of International Student experiences, it should not be assumed that all International Students will find cross-cultural educational experiences to be equally stressful (Wan, Chapman & Biggs, 1992). Pedersen (1992) states as a general rule, the greater the difference between the home culture and the host culture, the greater the complexity of adjustment issues and the likelihood of cultural misunderstandings.

This can be compounded by the notion that a student may not have had a choice in where they went to school. What motivated a student to accept one school over another is a consideration. Archibald (1996) discussed that notion of student choice, stating that parents and friends exerted the most influence. Cummings and others (1985) discussed student preference for certain locations citing political visibility and education and culture, interdependency on national economy, economy, immigration statistics. Glaser (1978) stated that Canada was perceived as having the most liberal immigration and language policies.

The students' adjustment in a new educational setting is paramount to achieving success. Bicultural efficacy or the ability to manage the stress of living in two cultures may be a factor in the adjustment to college. When educators fail to understand the perceptions that students have about their experiences, students may experience stress as 'culture shock.' There may be an overall lack of understanding about the phenomena of Bicultural efficacy and 'culture shock' by educators.

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Chapter Three

Methodology of Research

In any research study, it is important to describe the methods utilized to obtain data. This chapter will focus on the methods used in this study with respect to conceptual perspectives, research site and sample, selection criteria, instrumentation, protocols, procedures, and analysis.

Conceptual Perspectives

The study focused on the experience of nine African International Students attending a Canadian community college. The culture is different from the home culture and there are many social nuances that must be learned in addition to the academic ones. When an individual enters a strange culture, all or most of our familiar cues are removed.....when to shake hands;when and how to give tips;..... how to give orders to servants;..... how to make purchases;when to accept and when to refuse invitations;and when to take statements seriously or not. He or she is like a fish out of water. No matter how broad-minded or full of good will he may be, a series of props has been knocked out from under him (Orberg, 1960). For successful adaptation in new cultures, the notion of culture and 'culture shock' requires consideration. This chapter explains the methods and procedures used in this study.

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Methods Used in the Study

Qualitative research provides the tools for beginning to understand the complexities of campus life and student affairs, not only to describe a norm, but to gain meaning (Manning, 1992). According to Bogdan and Bilken (1982), “ethnographic or qualitative research is an umbrella term and refers to several strategies that share certain characteristics. It is used for processing data as words, emotions, and feelings. It is also utilized when perceptual data is required and it is less critical to elicit generalize results. It is complex and can be viewed at many different levels. Research questions are not framed by operationalizing variables: rather, they are formulated to investigate in all the complexity, in content. They are concerned with understanding behavior from the subject’s own frame of reference.” This research was a qualitative study.

This study involved interviews. Structured questions asked during the interviews did allow for concept identification and exploration with the students. It also assisted in the identification of relevant attitudes, motivations and behaviors that these International Students express. Through the dialogues, priorities for these students were established along with the opportunity of describing their perspectives more fully. Lastly, these interviews did assist in the formulation of research questions for further investigation.

Students were asked to participate in a study through the Coordinator of International Students. The length of time International Students had attended college ranged from one semester to third year. Information specific to the study was gathered initially by asking questions to the participants. Final sample size was limited to nine African International Students. During in-depth interviews with International Students,

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additional data was collected through participant observation. This included, but would not be limited to behaviors, gestures, and mannerism that the researcher observed.

The interviews attempted to elicit an understanding of what it is like for the International Student. By doing so, the researcher became part of the experience while also maintaining the stance of the observer describing the experience. Interviews provided data collection opportunities by asking specific, naturalistic and open-ended questions. Through interviews, information pertaining to participants' culture was obtained. From these interviews, themes emerged that assisted in determining the stresses that these students are experiencing as well as 'culture shock.'

Research Site and Sample

The registered number of International Students at this particular community college is over 700 students. This study, however, focused on providing a description of nine African International Students' experience at a Canadian community college. This particular community college is located in the culturally diverse city of Toronto, Canada. Established thirty-four years ago, the college is considered one of the fastest growing colleges in the province.

The sample for the study consisted of these nine International Students who had sojourned to Canada and had been in residence for varying periods of time. They represented a variety of countries and cultures from Africa. In order to select participants for the study, I contacted the International Students Program Coordinator who provided some assistance in locating the students. In addition, I contacted the Student Council

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President for her authorization as well. African International Students were asked to volunteer to participate in a study and provided written consent.

Selection Criteria

In order to obtain a sample for this study, I established the following attributes and criteria. I have a very strong interest in community colleges. Furthermore, I have had the pleasure of knowing fellow African International Students through my student experiences at Michigan State University. In addition, although it has been some time, I have traveled through a significant portion of Africa including South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, and Morocco. I also have a husband who works in Africa approximately nine to ten months a year and has gained experience obtained in Ghana, Burkina Faso, Mali, Cote D'Ivoire, and Tanzania.

African International Students represented a very small group within the college. Participants could be any International Students from Africa and at any stage of their studies. One of the reasons for selecting African International Students was to provide information about a group not well researched in Canada. In addition, English is taught in most African schools and communication could be enhanced by the English language abilities of African students. There was representation from first and second year students. Some perspectives about African culture as described by the International Students was also provided. Although my goal was not to compare International Students with respect to their origin, I was interested in the emerging similarities and differences as well.

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After obtaining permission from the Program Coordinator and President of the Student Council to conduct the study in the chosen school, the researcher obtained the consent from the students. In addition, approval to conduct the study was required from the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (Michigan State University) prior to any data collection. The Canadian Code of Ethics on Research (draft) was also reviewed.

The Survey Instrument

Davies' and Yoshida's (1981) research of a Study by the Metro Toronto Social Planning Council pointed out that many immigrant groups are not adequately served by the traditional agencies including education. This has implications for International Students as well. If immigrant groups who are permanent residents are not well served in the city, it is likely that International Students who are more transient and temporary residents are served even less well.

Responses from the students concerning their experience is invaluable first-hand documentation. The demographics portion of this survey included nine questions. As the interview questions were used for the first time in this study, the results cannot be compared to those from another sample to determine the validity of the interview questions. By administering the interview questions to another group of students, the results from this study could be tested for validity. Interview questions have been based upon the work of Zitzow (1984), Harris and Morgan (1994), Rao (1994) and the Bicultural Efficacy Scale (a sub-scale of the College Behavior Scale). Zitzow (1994) reported on the rank order of the most stressful items to affect college students. Harris

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and Morgan (1994) described the readiness of students to meet the challenges of change involved in the move from one area to another. Rao (1994) studied the attitudes of International Students. This information will also assist in the determination of 'culture shock.'

Interview Protocol

In order to understand the perceptions of International Students, all participants were asked to reflect on their experiences at a Canadian community college. They responded to sixteen questions that addressed their experience, stress and culture.

The questions below will be asked of all students:

- 1. Describe the factors that were instrumental in your coming to study in Canada?*
- 2. Describe your first impressions of your college experience in Canada?*
- 3. What does the word 'stress' mean to you?*
- 4. What have been some of your greatest challenges since coming to college?*
- 5. Would you describe these situations as stressful?*
- 6. Are there many expectations placed on you while studying here?*
- 7. Describe what it is that like for you (having or not having expectations placed on you)?*
- 8. Describe how you make decisions here and how you make decisions at home?*
- 9. Describe what it has been like for you in terms of distance to pursue academic work in a different country.*
- 10. How has your culture played a role in college experience?*
- 11. What is the most significant difference you have experienced here?*

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- 12. How has this challenged you or created problems for you?*
- 13. Describe how you have maintained cultural values and beliefs (even when they are not supported around you).*
- 14. How have you changed since you came to college?*
- 15. How will this experience affect you and your family upon your return home?*
- 16. If you could change one thing about the college and/or your experience here, what would that be?*

In addition, participants were asked some demographic information about their coming abroad experience.

Data-Collection Procedures

Trust and rapport were essential components of this research. The research study was conducted through voluntary participation and may be reported in the college newsletter at the discretion of the Dean of International Students' Programs. Through the interviews, the most significant stresses for these nine African International Students were determined. Interviews were conducted with selected voluntary participants. The researcher met individually with each participant to explain the purpose of the study and the methods that will be employed to obtain data. A packet containing the letter of explanation of the study and consent forms was provided to the subjects.

Interviews and participant-observation were then conducted. To obtain a more in-depth perspective of International Students' experiences, data for this study was gathered through a semi-structured interview method. Interviews are intended to gather descriptive data in the participant's own words (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Utilizing this

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The nine participated selected for this study were asked to reflect on their Canadian community college experience as it relates to culture. The interviews focused on fourteen aspects of community college life: (1) rationale for choosing Canada; (2) first impressions; (3) challenges; (4) stress; (5) expectations on self and by others; (6) differences in social and academic life; (7) decision-making; (8) life in Canada; (9) impact of own culture; (10) maintaining own culture of others; (11) significant differences in Canada and in education; (12) perceptions of self change; (13) returning home; and (14) what could be better about college and life here in Canada.

Nine interviews were conducted and ranged from about one hour to almost two hours. These interviews were tape recorded with the consent of the participants. After the interviews, tapes were transcribed by an experienced team of transcribers who have done a substantial number of transcriptions with research data. In addition, I listened to all nine tapes to make corrections on transcripts in which there were errors. I wished to establish credibility to the data. Tapes, consents, and transcripts, are secured in a locked drawer of my personal home office. I am the only person having access to the tapes and transcripts.

Data Analysis

Nine interviews have been tape-recorded and transcribed into a word document. Data has been analyzed according to specific questions. The transcripts were printed and each interview read in its entirety. While reading the data, I began to make annotations

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about what International Students said about their experiences and perceptions in a Canadian community college. It became evident using this process that many student experiences and perceptions could be classified as being consistent with the 'Culture Shock' model as presented earlier. Themes are identified with an emphasis on identifying common characteristics. Through this, identification of where students can be 'staged' in 'culture shock' may be determined.

Ongoing analysis of the field notes, observations, and the interview transcripts took place throughout the investigation. Short notes were taken for each interview. Triangulation of the data will offer a richer picture of the stress and 'culture shock' experienced by these students (Stage & Russell, 1992).

This section has focused on the methodology of this study with specific reference to subject selection, sample size, methodology, survey instrumentation, data collection procedures and data analysis.

Setting the Stage: The Place and The People

Interviews were held with nine International Students. These students were enrolled in different programs. Interviews were conducted at three sites on the community college campus including the new residence that had opened in 1999. Two students had at least one year of Canadian high school prior to attending community college. Others had been in Canada only 6 months while yet others had been here two years. The age range of students was from 18 to 34 years. Interviews with five males and four females are reported in this study. These International Students were at various stages of assuming adult roles and responsibilities and had varying support systems with

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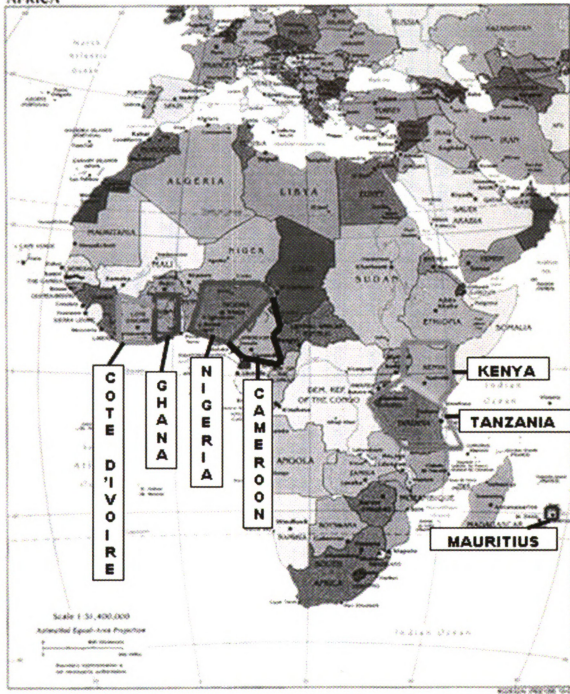
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respect to family and friends in Toronto. All students interviewed were full-time students and pursuing certificate programs. Seven African countries were represented by these International Students. International Students came from Kenya, Tanzania, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria and Mauritius. (See Map 1).

Some of these International Students were in Canada as little as 4 months at the time of interviews. Other had been in Canada from one and a half years to 4 years. Five male International Students and four female International Students participated in the study. Seven students were in the 18 to 24 years of age group with the remaining 2 students in the 25 to 34 years of age range. All but one had a language other than English as his first language. Students spoke a minimum of two languages, with most speaking three or four. Programs of study included Mechanical Engineering, Computers and Networking, Business Administration, Accounting, General Arts and Science, Auto Technology, and Nursing. Table 1 provides an overview of the demographic characteristics of the participants.

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Map 1. Home Countries of International Students.

Table 1.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS										
Participant	Identifier	Gender	Age	Country of Origin	Ethnic Group	Length of Time In Canada	Length of Time Attending College	First Language	Other Languages	Program of Study
#1	R	Male	18-24	Marishsh	Indian	1.5 years	1.5 years	English	French, Creole	Mechanical Engineering
#2	A	Female	18-24	Ivory Coast	Nigerian	2 years	4 months	French	English, Ibo	Computers
#3	O	Male	25-34	Tanzania (Zanzibar)	Bantu	1.5 years	1.5 years	Swahili Bantu	English, Arabic	Business Administration
#4	N	Female	25-34	Tanzania	Ismaili	1.5 years	1.5 years	Kutchi	English, Swahili, Urdu	Accounting Programming Analyst
#5	S	Male	18-24	Ghana	Akan	1 year, 3 months	4 months	Two	English, aFante	Auto Technician
#6	B	Male	18-24	Nigeria	Yoruba	2 years, 3 months	4 months	Yoruba	English	Network Professional
#7	M	Female	18-24	Cameroon	Bibian	4 months	4 months	Mejjaka	English, French	General Arts and Science
#8	K	Male	18-24	Kenya	Luhya	6 months	5 months	Luhya	Swahili, English, Arabic	Marketing
#9	O	Female	18-24	Kenya	Luhya	4 years	2 years	Swahili	English Luhya, Luo	Nursing

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I felt that these students would have some critical perspectives of the community college experience, as they may be more sensitive to educational processes as they have been progressing through an educational continuum for some time.

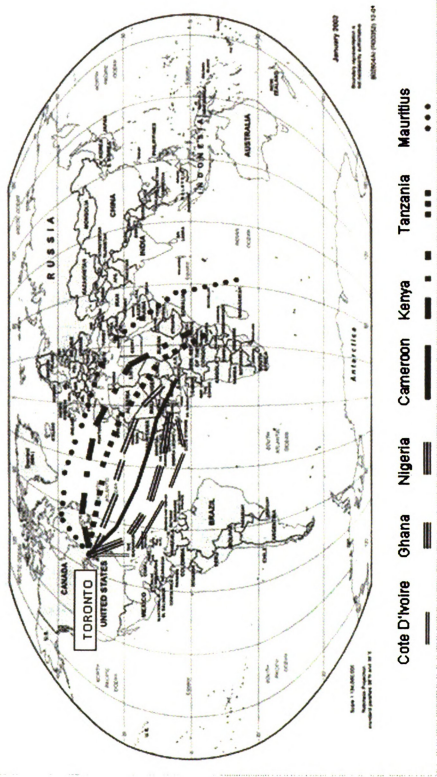
Chapter Four

Coming to Canada

This chapter focuses on the first impressions students had of the community college, some the challenges that they encountered and family expectations. In particular, I explored their perceptions of why they chose Canada as a place to study as well as their first impressions of Canada and the community college. I utilized the demographic information to ascertain how long some of these students had been in Canada and then asked them to recall what their first impressions were of the college.

While it is impossible to know the academic, personal, and social backgrounds of all these students, it is important to know that they have significant and meaningful experiences that have shaped their personalities, behaviors, and interests. These nine African International Students traveled a great distance to get their place of schooling in Canada. My longest travel experience for formal educational purposes has been about a five-hour drive without any time zone changes and support essentially a phone call away. These students traveled often up to almost 48 hours to arrive here with stops in major cities in Europe and traversing several time zones and often with little or no support. These are long flights and uncertain times.

Map 2 gives an appreciation of the distance these students had to travel to come to Canada.



These International Students had varying lengths of time to get used to Canada prior to starting school. Some arrived a couple days prior to the start of the semester. Some had a few weeks. In addition, they had varying degrees of support and orientation to Canada and the college. They encountered several challenges. They were also very aware that they had goals to achieve and that their families had expectations. Table 2 provides information about the length of time students were in Canada before starting college and support and orientation that was available to them.

Table 2.

Participants Time in Canada Prior To Starting College and Social Supports			
Participant	Identifier	Time in Canada Prior to Starting College	Social Supports/orientation
#1	R	One week	Aunt in Montreal, two in Toronto Given a map of Toronto, shown how to use the transit system
#2	A	2 years	No family in Canada, one contact Attended high school in another city in Ontario
#3	O	A few days	Uncle in Ottawa Uncle showed him around briefly
#4	N	Spent the summer here	Family, I sister who also attends college Family and sister showed her around
#5	S	A few days	Family friend Made his own way
#6	B	A few days	No family/friends/contacts Made his own way/contacts
#7	M	Two weeks	No family/friends/contacts Made her own way
#8	K	A few days	No family/friends/contacts Prior attendance another college in another country
#9	Q	3 years	Family friend Attended high school in another city in Ontario

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International Students accounts of their perceived experience could be separated basically into two categories that could be considered in support of 'culture shock' theory. Overall, it is felt that students were very open to dialogue and expressing what was positive and negative about their experiences. Enough emphasis cannot be made on letting students know that what was said to me would have no impact on them personally. I have endeavored to put into writing the words and voices of these nine International Students in the following pages.

To illustrate the phenomena of 'culture shock'; I have provided excerpts from interviews with the participants to illustrate this phenomena. The text is the standard size for this type of document but does not diminish the significance of their voices. In addition, I have presented the dialogue verbatim as to preserve the integrity of the responses. As all but one of these student do not speak English as a first language, there may be some variances in English grammar in the excerpts.

Why Canada?

International Students have many reasons for selecting a place to study. They are primarily interested in getting a degree, certification, or professional training. They acknowledge wanting to learning about other cultures, improve language skills, and opportunities for personal growth as well as maintaining a focus on higher education. For some, the possibility of career training is highly desirable. Some International Students have families here that helped influenced coming here. For others, the perceptions of Canada as a good and financially viable place to study were factors. Community college can assist them achieve their goals.

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“R” described Canada as a “magical choice” and as a place of culture and esteem. It was also helpful that he had family here. He found his parents very encouraging in his decisions to study abroad and have other opportunities. He commented:

“Like here it is not for me to wonder. It’s a magical choice. You have lots of culture, esteem. In fact I have family here. So there will be like room. It’s great for me to be with other people...The same that I got from my cousin when he came. I was fascinated with Canada. I wanted to come here to learn the culture, to learn something like I am, academically, and see those at work...at least take a chance...I wanted something more, to learn language. I wondered what kind of program there was there. ...My parent told me whatever you wish to take, make sure you do it.”

“A” has a different experience. She had no knowledge that her parents and, in particular, her father, were making these arrangements and then she was informed about it. She felt very excited. She explained:

“What can I say? As I said in the beginning it was just like a surprise for me coming to Canada so it was no big deal. It was my dad who did everything. So I did not know about it. Just when brought the papers at home he said this is where you are going and I am going to take care of everything. So when they sent any papers about the school he just showed me everything so they keep me aware of what is going on. My family basically said that this is where you are gonna go to school... But I was quite excited. I was really excited like Canada, like second United States, you know. I was so excited.”

Canada was not the first choice for some students. This student wanted an international education, possibly the United Kingdom so it would be closer to home but the study abroad policies of the United Kingdom did not approve his application. He

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talked about the history of his country in terms of political strife and how many of his country's people fled to the United Kingdom. Since then, there had been difficulty in getting student visas. "O" began to consider other options and started to investigate studying in the United States. "O" talked about why he came to Canada:

Then I thinking of United States but somebody told me that it going to be more expensive down there. And then I decided to come here because I have one of my uncle who came to study here in ____ (an Ontario city). So I decided to come to Canada so I got somebody who know about what is going on in Canada. But to get this college, I was searching for Internet and I get three colleges that I can apply. So because ____ (community college) was the first time to see so I picked ____ (community college).

"O" also commented on gaining work experience and the implications that this experience may have for him back home. He elaborated:

"He (my uncle) is really finishing to study in the University of _____. But he want to have some job experience so that he can have a good job in Kenya. So the same apply to me. If I have a working experience here, then back home people are going to have some impression. They are going to believe me because I worked in a 'real' world maybe."

"N" also has family here and this certainly affected her choosing Canada. Her cousin attends the same community college. She described her reasons for coming to Canada primarily for family reasons, healthcare and a quality education. She explained:

"As I told you I have a big, big family over here. My mother side is all here. So if I chose India, Pakistan or maybe America. There is no one over there. As I told I don't have problems. I have uncles, cousins are here that's why I chose Canada...Actually the education standard

over there (at home) is a bit low. Here you are very far, far already compared there. So they told me to come here. The life is good. Medical life is good, this and that. I said okay Canada is good for me. So I left my parents and just came here.”

“S” had several reasons for coming to Canada. He first mentioned the diversity in Canada and about how people in his country think Canada is a peaceful place. He is interested in culture and about learning the different behaviors. Canada is considered a clean country and this was important to him. He described his perceptions:

“Why Canada? What most people know in my country, (Canada) is very peaceful. The country is made up of different people from different places. So in a way you are like ...being in Canada is like being in the whole world because eventually you get to meet everybody from or somebody from different country or something like that. So in a way you get to know how people behave from different places and different countries like that. Canada is like in terms of like talking about it was several rated to be one of the first countries to be leading in terms of cleanliness and a whole lot.”

“S” also discussed the difference in tuition fees as compared with other countries to be more advantageous for him. In addition, people seemed to hold Canada in positive regard. He and his family both felt he would receive a better education if he studied abroad. He had tried for the United Kingdom, but was having difficulty with the documents. “S” also had a friend that had received information from Canadian colleges that gave him optimistic feelings. He shared his reasons:

“...When I compare the tuition fees and other stuff, I found Canada is much better. But for me Canada is way better like, it's good. Everybody likes Canada so it's good...It's worthless studying in my country because the education

system is very poor or something like that... And then my friend, who is my close friend, he applied for landed in Canada that kind of stuff. And they sent him a whole lot of brochures about school. So I look at them. So I was doing both at the same time. But at that time I had a hard time with the other documents in England and beside that I had feeling in me, and the impression like being in Canada. So I choose that.”

“B” discussed the fact that he really knew very little about Canada. He talked about going to the library to learn more about this country. He wrote to several colleges and universities and did hear back from some of them. His perceptions of Canada as being very quiet and peaceful as contrasted with other countries made him further explore the educational system in Canada. The prospect of seeing snow attracted him as well. He explained:

“I never knew so much about Canada. It was the funniest thing. I never knew so much about Canada. Very Quiet...I never heard so much about Canada...I only got reply for like seven of them...I think I wrote to like 49 schools remember right now, and I had to choose. I filled out everything I returned but actually I was so interested in _____(university in another province) because I have never seen snow before. It was like this, it was snowing and like, all year round it was winter... I don't basically like cold but it was like it's gonna be interesting just to go to a place like that and see the way things go down there. “

“B” also commented that another reason was consideration for the program he wanted to study. He appreciated the communication from the college. Then he had to change his areas of study due to having to wait for access to the program. Other students had priority over his application to a particular program and that resulted in his coming to this particular college. He explained:

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“...that's the first thing you noticed. It had a large agricultural department. I thought I would love this and I apply to them and they would communicate to me for some time and then they stopped, and I was so sure like I was gonna get admission there. ...People that took the exam that year they have priority over you, you understand. So it was like that. Admission is like two years, three after but then like I was still trying to contact schools.”

“B” also commented that the good word of others was a factor in his choosing Canada. He is alone in Canada, but had assistance from a person he met in his home country of Nigeria who described Canada as a good place to be. “B” was able to obtain help with admission forms and handing them in. He shared his reasons:

“All along I never had a friend or whatever here. Why I think it was in 99 when I met a man in Nigeria. He told me he came from Canada. Wow, how was the place and he said ‘good. And the schools there and the universities and ya, and it’s even help with admission in the school.’ ‘Like are you serious?’ ‘Yeah, I can get the admission forms for you. I can get there to pass it down, take it back for you.’ ‘Cool.’ So I did that.”

“B” also talked about financial considerations as being instrumental in his decision to study in Canada. It would have been more expensive for him to study in England. He also had to consider the fact that there were other children in the family even though he is the first son. He discussed conflicting value systems with his family and others as well as how he gained support the decision to come to Canada. He elaborated:

“...It was gonna be like more expensive for her because the British pound was...well, it's more to study in England...like I am the second child in the family but I was

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the first born (male), so and where I come from, they take it so high, my family doesn't take it so high. So basically I told them how I love to come to Canada and they say, 'it's not bad as US. It's not like it's violent as the United States. If you can get a school there, fine, we will support you.'

"M" talked about having family here. One of the important factors is that "M" had familiar people with whom to stay. Her brother was a big influence in this, but said no one really forced her to come here. She had the opportunity to do some of her own research prior to coming to Canada:

"I also came because my brother was in Canada. I have somebody to stay with. Ya. For them they could not come because they don't have anybody to stay with. Ya. So it's just my brother and wife. Ya. Ya. My brother was one and it was like...Ya. And I read a lot about it and I read about the school but I know what pushed me here... my brother...no one pushed me. My parents would accept for me to go somehow...."

"K" also talked about the financial issues as being a factor in selecting Canada as a place to study. Proof of finances was considerably different within the three countries where he had chosen to apply. In addition, visas were problematic particularly for studying the United States. It was important to him to have something credible. Distance was another factor. He felt Australia was so far away from the rest of the world. It would be easier for him to travel home from North America. He explained:

"...Back home, I was thinking of going to the States, two or three countries.... States Canada and Australia. The only thing in the States there, the American embassy can ask... Okay, the Canadian embassy asked actually \$2,000 Canadian in your account. The American embassy asked about \$15,000 plus. Australia asked about the same

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\$20,000. The only problem with the US is that you might not get a visa...you might have everything but because there are so many Kenyans students who are going to the States and haven't gone in school it has made getting a visa a bit tricky, you know. So the only sure bet if you are going to do something credible is, go to Canada. So what happened was I got admissions to Australia before I got to Canada. But I looked at Australia and Australia is so far from everywhere. In Canada the other is the States is right there. I can travel to Europe and I can go back home. So I looked at the option and I thought this should be a better option and they agreed to take me to post-graduate degree course."

"K" also had some other reasons for choosing Canada. He also felt that Canada was a peaceful country. He had heard of Toronto and was interested in the opportunities that a city like Toronto could offer even though he was looking at other cities. The word of a friend was also instrumental in his coming here. He elaborated:

"Those are big reasons why I chose Canada. And also you got this country that is peaceful. There isn't too much happening in the large towns, like Toronto. But it's good. Okay. Well, with Canada, I first like ah, I knew a little bit about Toronto and I need to experience everything diverse. And to live in India and spending some time, I wanted to go, the next place I wanted to go was London but London was too expensive, then I looked at New York but New York was too fast for me. I looked at other places but Toronto seem to have the part of me. And a friend of mine, a former roommate, he had a fun time here so he went in Poland. He stayed in Poland for a while and then he came here. But I decided okay and it seems okay."

"Q" talked about Canada not being her first choice for studying abroad. She was particularly interested in studying in the United States. She felt it would be easier there. She was quite excited at the prospect of studying abroad. Even so, her parents needed to send her out of the country to a safe place and at least where they knew of some people.

The explicit reasons are not overly clear, but have political overtones. Finances were also an issue as it was felt that it would be cheaper to study in Canada. Also, the potential to get a degree because of the college partnerships were influential in the decision. She explained:

“Personally, I wanted to go to the US so much because you now the way they say in the US you go there, you walk like, you know, life is easier. But my parents believe that Canada is safer, like the reputation Canada has and that my Daddy did not know anyone in the US at all. Unlike here he had a friend... I really, really wanted to study abroad so I can go. My Dad said what if I could find a place in Canada. Okay, I would go... Ya. That's why. But it was not really my first pick. It was my Dad because of his main concern. Just for safety reasons. And my parents thought actually it was cheaper because of the dollar.... I chose this college because they say the degree, they have partnership with____, University of _____, now we just have to go for four years instead of five. That was the only thing that pulled me there. So when I go there, I was happy the first time. I told them. The time when I just begun my parents were still financially. My dad had not lost his job and things were okay.”

It is noted through the perceptions of these students, there were many factors cited as reasons for choosing Canada as a place to study. These included family ties and families supporting their children's choice. One family even surprised their daughter with the opportunity to study abroad. Some International Students considered it a 'magical' choice and others, 'not a big deal.' These perceptions also considered the quality of education for which Canada has gained recognition. The potential for specific programs and the opportunity to gain work experience was important for some of these students in terms of increasing the potential for success upon returning home.

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Non-withstanding, the financial aspects are an important consideration. Several International Students cited lower tuition fees than the American, Australian, and British counterparts were a factor. In addition, a substantially less sum of money in the bank at home was required as proof of finances. There seemed to be fewer hurdles for students to obtain permission to study in Canada as well. One International Student particularly appreciated the communication that was received from the college. In addition, there were countries that were perceived to be further away from home than Canada. Other factors included that Canada is part of the 'real world' and the diversity is one of Canada's special attributes. The opportunity to gain work experience here was also considered to make Canada a favorable choice and for some, the only choice. A good healthcare plan was also mentioned.

Canada was clearly not all International Students first choice in this study. However, the perception that Canada is a clean, beautiful, peaceful, safe country was clearly evident and sends a powerful message. The excitement of snow is certainly a wonder. Providing a safe haven, free from political undertones seemed to a very important factor for one International Student and her family.

In addition, the word of others is a powerful influence. People who have visited here and or studied here were instrumental in affirming students' interest in studying here.

This chapter has focused on the reasons students chose to study in Canada. Overall, International Students discussed in the study were excited to come here to study and experience Canada, much like tourists. Their strong value systems are evident in terms of safety, finances and education. The over-riding reason is the fact that these students wanted to prepare for their futures and be successful.

Impressions of Canada

Many of the nine African International Students had led privileged lives. They were accustomed to having things done for them. This included managing money and having servants. Coming to Canada where this is not a usual way of life for most students, may have had impact on their initial impressions and created stress. It is recalled that the first reaction to the international living experience is distinguished excitement and the euphoria of foreign travel. Again, this is known as the honeymoon phase. There are no definitive time lines as to the length or duration of the phase of 'culture shock.' This chapter focuses on the statements made by International Students as they recall their impressions of coming to Canada. Many of the following statements made by the International Students support Stage 1 of 'culture shock':

For many students there was a furor of activity preceding the starting of school. Student "R" described his first few days here as a big thing, learning to get around the city with a map and the help of his uncle. He had to accomplish this with a few days of starting school. He described this experience as a positive one. He explained:

“Coming to this country and I was so excited. It would be a big thing for me to make myself adapt to a big country. So before I came, I made some research like to know how it goes here, like know the climate, the temperature, how it goes...snow! Like my first few days here, I was getting to know the country. Like traveling inside Toronto. Plus when I came where I only had one week before I get to start school. So I had to adjust myself and I have to know the transport system,..How to use a map and so on. Like everywhere, my uncle was starting to tell me and told me this. He would show me places where to take the bus, how

to take the bus, if I am taking the subway, I should go there. It was a good experience. I learned.”

Student "A" described her feelings of “being scared” and not quite believing what was happening. She also was very much aware that she had an opportunity as well as a responsibility to do well. She shared her feelings:

“At the beginning, I was quite scared because I cannot believe it that I was actually in Canada. I always had that dream of going to the States...California. And this just came to my face, like I was set up for this project for telling me that I was going to Canada for high school, just like that. I couldn't imagine. It is a new beginning for you and a new life. So I have to make the level.”

Student “O” was looking forward to coming here. He anticipated having a good time and enjoying a more developed part of the world. He was looking forward to the potential opportunities his education and work experience could give him in what he considered the ‘real’ world. He believes that the Co-op experience will be significant in advancing his career. He elaborated:

“Coming from Africa to Canada, I thought that I would have a good time because I am coming all the way from Africa where the country is less developed. Because that one, is as we call it a third-world country. And coming to the 'real-world', I can learn about the 'real' thing about doing my business and real education and practicing. But right now, I am waiting for a call for Co-op, that's the only reason to get real education is to get real practicing about my future career.”

“K” who spent three and a half years in India as an International Student noticed *differences* very early after his arrival here. Although he anticipated difficulty, some of

his enthusiasm waned quickly due to some early problems and spending too much time inside the house where he was staying after he arrived. There was some initial difficulty with housing. He did admit that he did think that life here would be difficult. “K” has been impressed with the infrastructure and the fact that things usually run on time in Toronto. He feels he has a safety net here because people are so helpful. He admitted to finding life here very different and felt that he is still learning. He explained:

“...Actually I had trouble there on at the housing agent. So when I came here, I wasn't really surprised. I knew it was going to be difficult. I thought country good infrastructure. Everything seems to be working on time. Those were the things I see the difference. Besides the rest, there wasn't anything. My impression was the good infrastructure and everything seems to be working. The college is clean. There are always professional people you can talk to. You can ask for feedback. That's what we don't have back home is feedback. You have this kind of life in a safety net. People couldn't talk to you. But the Canadian lifestyle in Canada itself, I am still learning and there things that are very different from what I have experienced. Those are the things I find different. My first couple of days were pretty laid back. I was in the house for sometime. And I guess I was wondering about the town. But I spent most of my time in the house. Of course I was trying to get some stuff ready so I spent quite a while in the house. So when I came out, I had lost all the enthusiasm because I was spending too much time in the house.”

“K” also commented on how he feels he is more at home in Canada than with his previous international education experience and stated that he has not fully integrated yet. He has found the college more ethnically diverse than in his last college experience. He said that he doesn't feel like he stands out. There are more people with whom to talk and he has been less concerned with his accent. He explained:

“So I haven't been in like you know the expression, the expression because I am not actually living in Canada. I am just starting here. I haven't fully integrated in Canada. The first couple of days in college, if I can compare it to college back home or India, it feels different because there are more people to talk. If there is one thing I noticed the college because kids much more racially or ethnically diversified in community college. You don't feel like you stand out. But in India, you apparently know from the first day that there is a difference in class. I had a different accent. But here, I feel more at home. You have a sense of feeling that you are home and walking in the corridors. You don't feel that people are staring at you. It is easier I have to say. It is almost as close as being at home.”

“N” described coming here for a while before starting college and seeing some of Canada. She was getting used to things and having a good time. She missed her family and has made the adjustment. She described it as “Wow!” She elaborated:

“I have a big family over here. So you know, during the summer, we just enjoy holidays and you know, we went for camping and wow! Of, course I miss my parents but it was a good feeling over here. And then I started college. I got used to it. Now I like Canada.”

International Student “B” saw coming here as an adventure and enjoyed the new scenery. He described meeting with another passenger on the plane and the positive information he received about Toronto. He has continued to be impressed by Toronto's landscape and in particular, the skyscrapers. He expressed his perceptions:

“I was surprised, like an adventure, coming all the way going over the Atlantic ocean, right, first time abroad, like wow, the skyscrapers, it's amazing... it was like wow. I was amazed. Actually I met an old man. We were coming

from the plane together and 'like is this your first time'...It was like 'yes.' 'Oh you gonna enjoy Toronto a lot.' 'Yeah.' It was like surprising. It was very impressive and I wake up everyday as still look at those skyscrapers."

"B" talked about anticipating college through the help of friends. Although these friends are Canadian born, he states that they have helped him understand what college might be all about. He explained:

"At _____(college), I kinda have the feeling of what's gonna be, cause I have friends, right, from the same place but they were born in Canada, so they were just coming back from Nigeria to Canada, so they were the first who got to college from them, I knew what is like to come to college. It was not bad, it was okay."

Positive themes that reflect the first stage of the 'culture shock' model were characterized by acceptance, surprise, excitement for you by others, and excitement for yourself. Three additional students were not able to share the same enthusiasm.

One student expressed disappointment in his program. He understood he was in a degree program. He has now realized that it is not impossible to transfer to a degree program and feels that he has little choice to do anything else. He had thought about going home but he feared that he would have a loss of face if he does so. Things have not gone the way he would have expected and he really did not know what he was going to do. He also commented on the whole environment, even the classroom being very different. He talked about the program preparing him for work rather than a degree. "S" shared the following:

“Well, like, I did not know what was going to happen. I did not know what I was gonna do. Basically I did not know anything. And then, like my expectations were in a way that did not go the way I expected because I thought I was going to do really something hard. I realized everything I was in a very different environment all together...how mates behave in class, you talk to the master anytime you want you ask question. It was quick. Now what I am do now...I thought that this was some kind of program that would prepare you towards a degree program or something like that. Because you know they do that. But I realize that it is not like that...This course is not to prepare me towards a degree program. Here the program prepares me for work. So actually it is not my expectation. So what I decided was that I actually wanted to go back before. But I realize that people will say they will make fun of me when I go back home. He wanted to study but he couldn't make it...I talked to my parent. My dad asked me to come home and stay home. Then he said stay and do what you want to do.”

“M” described how her initial reactions quickly changed. She knew she was coming to a cold country, but a more developed country. She had a goal to achieve. She arrived in Canada after the start of the semester due to some difficulties with the visa. Her first contact with other students did not seem to go well. She, too, thought about going home but persevered. A change in campuses with the start of a new semester, change in program and making a friend has helped her overcome her desire to return home and work toward achieving her goal. Changing her program has helped as well. She explained:

“I know it s a cold place but I just wanted my goal and to achieve it here. Compared with my country.... the climates. I was going to a developed world, more than my country...When I arrived in Canada, it was a nice place. Because I came late when school started, it was two weeks. To get my visa was so hard. I had some small problems. ...I just went to studies right away. It's cold here. The environment for the first week I was in school, I did not like

it because I met a lot of Chinese and Indians and they were not friendly. Somehow it made me want to go back. I am two weeks and I did not like the environment. They mostly speak in their dialects and they are not friendly...So I had a nice friend and talk together, study together. Few weeks later we came to know an Indian girl, a girl from India. She wasn't so rude and she helped me like in schoolwork. Yes, especially when I came in, I was taking programming in last semester in ____ (campus.) It was not really my goal...I just wanted to see what I can do. As time goes on, I will do what I came here for."

"Q" arrived in Canada and experienced a tremendous load of difficulties. She experienced loneliness, racism and found the weather disagreeable. She had difficulty being part of a group and with changes in the situations of her parents, she worried about finances as well. She wanted to go home, but her parents told her that she needed to stay no matter how difficult it was. She travels quite a distance to the college and lives on the outskirts of Toronto in an effort to try to save money. She said she feels depressed, has lost weight and would like the opportunity to work but the legislation prevents it. She shared her Canadian educational experience:

"...I went to high school first, it was terrible because I was the only black in the whole school and it was small white town, people not very sociable but I had a few friends from Kenya. It was just loneliness, you missed your family and the weather, culture in school at times, you need to do work in group. No one wants to be in your group, so it was really rough in ____ (small town in Ontario). I hated it. It was terrible... My dad had job, everything was stable, so as much as I was lonely like financially I wasn't that bad because they would send me money, things were not bad. Then I came to college...and it was tough like finding housing and no money being send from home and it's hard to keep up with paying your tuition and all the bills, so things like stand out. For my dad like political reasons, like people plotted and so he lost his job, so it became really,

really hard to survive financially. It's just tough and unfortunately people not as social here. Friends, during tough times like you hardly have like the true friends so it is horrible. By 2000, I was really I think I was going to depression because I was so slim, I just said I can take this anymore, so my parents were like, 'no, you can't come home' because they didn't have the money and if you go home, you are gonna get stuck. There's no money to pay my bills but like during the time they used to send me money. I used to try to budget, try to find babysitting job because you're not allowed to work and things were really hard. It got to a point I just took plane and went...I pull myself together and I'm still pushing on. It's not any easier. I got to finish this because I started school already and my parents have invested so much...I wish they give us a chance to work as foreign students as far as I understand in Britain, they enforce working visa to make life easier That's why I am living in ____ (small Ontario town). My parents can't keep up. It's tough...."

She states she has felt a little different at the community college however. It is something of an improvement in some ways. She described:

"So it was bad coming to ____ (a small Ontario town), everyone just kind of pull themselves away, it was just hard. At ____ (college) it is much nicer."

International Students had an abundance of feelings en route to college. They experienced excitement, fears, feeling like they were in a dream, expecting to have a good time, an adventure, enjoying the scenery and some enjoyed the help of others. One International Student found things very different and in particular, felt that he was still learning. There were many activities to take place to get ready to come to college. These included finding a place to live and finding the way to the college via public transit. This is much like being a tourist.

Other events and feelings overshadowed some of the experiences of these nine African International Students. Many students felt that they had to find their own way and were not being able to experience Canada due to other commitments, difficulty with visas and as a result, arriving late. Some also felt that they have to make the level so the emphasis is on education, not learning about Canada as a country and its people and changes in the family situation at home. One International Student has been particularly disappointed with his program. It is evident that he is still processing and coming to terms with this disappointment. Another International Student commented that integration is still ongoing. Not all International Students found Canada to be a friendly place. There commented that they experienced racism and isolation here.

One International Student commented on have a 'safety net' because people here were so helpful. Others were impressed with the infrastructure including the skyscrapers and transit system. For one student in particular, this feeling has not worn off. Another International Student stated that he felt like he blended in more in Canada than in another international experience because of the diversity here, even in spite of his accent.

Some International Students expressed that they felt like going home. One student, in particular felt there would be loss of face if he returned home so he, too, has persevered. Another International Student feels depressed and obliged to stay and finish her program. Yet other International Students thought the challenge of coming here would be more difficult.

This section describes the first reactions to the international living experience as described by nine International Students. Some students have clearly experienced the honeymoon phase of 'culture shock.' Not all students share the same euphoria and

enthusiasm. For some of the International Students in particular, they have been disappointed in the program of study in terms of academic fulfillment and possible outcome. These students may have been very excited to come to study abroad, but their experiences may have superceded their excitement. It is difficult to tell how excited and euphoric these students were initially and it is easy to understand their frustration. Most the International Students have enjoyed their first Canadian experience and had positive thoughts and perceptions about coming to Canada. Circumstances have impacted the first stage of 'culture shock' and as a result, many International Students have progressed rapidly to the second stage of 'culture shock.'

Challenges Faced by International Students

International Students have faced challenges in an alien culture where there are so many differences. This has lead to the second stage of 'culture shock' that is characterized by a period of disenchantment. International Students have experienced a loss of support, confusion, apathy, loneliness and isolation. There are many personal, social, and cultural differences that intrude on a person's image. This chapter describes the many challenges as described by International Students. Many of theses students' comments demonstrate this period of disenchantment.

"R" did not have any computer skills when he came to Canada and describes having to learn the computer as a challenge. He was used to completing his work without the use of technology. It was a very noticeable difference for him and he is pleased with the results. He explained:

"Like my course is Autocad. I had to learn the computer. Because when I was still in Mauritius I did not do it,

computers. I did drawing like taking such square, pencil and so on. But here you have to do it on the computer. So it was kind of time for me to learn this thing. And like I said I went to a friend who helped me a lot. So like I was surprised when I received my result in Autocad. For someone who never know the computer, I was surprised.”

“A” described her greatest challenge was an English test that she had to write to be successful in being accepted at the community college. Passing the English assessment test was a requirement to be successful in completing the application to study abroad. She was not comfortable with her English and in particular essay writing, however she was successful. She explained:

“...The skill assessment test. It was the English part. Like I am not that good in English and essays. That is my weakest point. Just like if you don't pass English it will screw everything. I was kinda scared but my mark did everything so it was okay.”

“O” commented on his challenges with respect to language skills. He felt that the teachers cannot help everyone in the class. He has had difficulty in understanding spoken English because of the speed at which it is spoken and also the slang. He said he has been reluctant to speak in class because it made him feel “ugly.” He elaborated:

“I thought it gonna be easy way to study in North America but actually it is very hard especially in this kind of college, community college where there are many students inside the class. So the teacher cannot help individuals but he has to do only his job. Sometimes it's getting difficult to understand about the teaching and everything. That's the only problem. The difficulty is understanding the English language when some of the students try to discuss, try to argue with the teacher. They speak too fast that's why I cannot understand what is going on. So when I am speaking, because I am speaking very slowly, then I feel

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ugly to speak in front of the class. That's the problem. They would like to speak because of most them speak like idioms and street-spoken language. But I am oriented in writing language so it is getting hard for me to express my opinion in front of many people at the time that the class is going on.”

“O” also talked about a lack of assistance from teachers. He was not able to resolve a question that seemed to be a potential dispute. He felt that this teacher was not willing to discuss different viewpoints. Teachers seemed to be always rushing somewhere else. He felt he could go nowhere with his issue. He shares his experience:

“Some teacher, they cannot help you each and every body in the class but they have to accomplish their job as well. They teach and write everything in the blackboard. I get some problem with the teachers when I try to ask them because for my opinion I think I am right in writing English. I found myself I am right but that teacher don't want to speak to me that you are wrong in this and this point of view. But she did not want to speak to me. She always says she is on the rush so that's the problem.”

“O” further commented on the difference in behaviors of students although he tried to minimize it. He said:

“There are some drawbacks, but maybe how young people behave. But that is not a problem for me...”

Student “N” had concerns with workload and amount of study time. It is so different from home and she complained of stress. She explained:

“Actually everything. Back home I was studying an English major in school so I did not have problems out here. About the teachers, you know, there the students, they spoonfeed

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us. Here we use to look to at everything, all the text books this and that so this was a bit hard for me. But then I was used to teachers who help us very much. If I didn't have good support I would have gone back. You know back home we did not have this. We go to school, come back, eat, sleep and then study for two hours. We study for almost 2 hours. That's it. But here we get loads of homework and loads of assignment, quizzes and this is the stress."

"N" is also concerned about finances and the lack of opportunity to work in Canada even for what she considered 'pocket money.' She has found it expensive to live in Canada. She explained:

"As I said we can't work, us International Students. So money is not there. It is a major issue. How can you spend? You have to have money, right? So if they give us this chance to work here in school or anywhere else if there is more space for working for International Students, then that's good. So we can get our pocket money, at least. Everything here is a bit expensive."

"N" also found the location of writing exams at the college very different from home. She lost a familiar process in this. This made her nervous. She elaborated:

"I was not used to doing the gyms (writing exams in the gyms). Oh, my God, it is so big gym and there are so many people. I was nervous and this. Because we would be at classes like this when we do the exams...And here we use to do it all together and it was something. I got very nervous, you know."

"S" made the following comments, expressing his loss of support, confusion, loneliness, and feeling helpless and overwhelmed with several problems. He has been disappointed with the program. It was not what he thought it was going to be. He wanted

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to go home but felt that people would make fun of him. He said he is more settled now, but at the time he did not know what to do. He explained:

“So what I have decided was that I actually wanted to go back before. But I realize in a way, people will say they will make fun of me when I go back home. ‘He wanted to study but he couldn't make it.’... I talked to my parent. My Dad asked me to come home and stay home. Then he said ‘stay and do what you want to do.’ So that's it...I'm kinda settled somehow. To me like sometimes you get helpless. You realize you even though you have more than two problems at the same time. You try to have them done. You really don't know what to do. When I came in the early days like last year. I am not complaining of stress but of loneliness and other kind of stuff.”

“S” also talked about the differences in what he perceived Canada to be in terms of work and cost of living. He thought of developed countries in a very idyllic manner and in terms of having a good time. The realities of the cost of living and having others pay for it was not something he had really considered. He stated:

“People back home like you know when we talk of other like countries, developed countries and other kind of stuff, we don't even imagine that people would be different. They even work, we don't even think of that. All we think of is just about that good time in that and that's it. So like here...and one thing is back home, we don't pay that much rent like we do here. And I didn't pay rent myself because I was living with my parents back home. I had everything for free. I did not have to pay one thing. I did not have to work. But here it is not like that. Here I do everything by myself.”

“S” talked about the disenchantment he has had with his financial situation and the subsequent effect it has had on his life. He is planning to go home for the holiday, but has found it difficult because of the lack of funds. Bank transfers are difficult from home.

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He has managed to obtain employment, although he is only supposed to have limited work at the college. He comments on the impact this has on his studies and his life. He elaborated:

“...I need money. I am waiting for my money and I have to go. So sometimes when you don't have anything with you, you don't have any job and you don't have any money with you and that's it. You can't leave...And at the same time I have to give myself a job to support. Basically I can only work at the college so all I can do is work at the college. I had a job. I study from 10 to 6 in the morning. I don't have any choice. I have to do it. If I don't do it so I go to work. Sometime even if I leave home I don't get home until two or three days, something like that. I have to finish school. I have something to study and do that. Take a short sleep then go back to work. Just like that. It's tough.”

Student “B” states his biggest challenge is dealing with government bureaucracy. He really did not want to spend a great deal of time discussing it. It was evident from his mannerism and his voice that it was indeed a source of frustration for him ever since he left Nigeria. For this student, school was supposed to be frustration. He does, however, state:

“Immigration.. That's it, cause, well normally, supposed to be like my school work or something like that but it's really immigration right from even when I left Nigeria though, so big hassle even until today.”

“B” faced disappointment shortly after he arrived here as he was in another type of educational facility and it was not what he expected either. It was more of a commercial college and not what he expected. He did not want to let his family know either. The work wasn't hard, but all the same it was not the program for which he was

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searching. He also could not change programs due to restrictions imposed by immigration. Although he followed a very winding trail to get to college, “B” was successful in obtaining admission to the college after his certification in Microsoft. He explained:

“It was not like a college life...like you were in the high school. Go in the morning, do the same class until around two o'clock and that's it for the day. It's okay. It's not bad because what I was expecting was like school, something like in the college... like it took me back, like I was not gonna call my mom and say it was not what I expected. I had to finish what I came to do. By immigration law I have to...The market there was so good so I took it for five months and I did my Microsoft certification exam after. I just applied after then to come here.”

“M” identified a loss of support and this, likely has cultural undertones. She seemed to feel very alone. She stated that there is a lack of interest in and importance attached to International Students. There has been no one to facilitate meetings or getting to know other International Students or create specialized activities for them. She stated that she felt that as far as other students are concerned, she doesn't even exist. She explained:

“...International Student don't really have importance over here. There is not campus that really involves International Students. I don't any get any to real, like any activities you see we would like to do, no notice boards. I have not got anything like talking space...to know you guys exist in the school, I mean there is nothing. We are not recognized. It's not recognized like encouraging.”

“M” also had difficulty with the government regulations. Her friends went to Europe where they could work to support themselves. She is dependent upon her parents for any money. People wondered how she was going to cope. She elaborated:

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Like when I came here most of my friends, they don't want me to come here...they went to Europe for studies also because they went to Europe for working...I had my papers I said that I cannot do work in Canada...nobody wanted to come because everybody was saying how are you going to cope all the years because the program was three years. I mean I have to. My parents have to deposit money for me for a year. At least I also have to try to see I have something to do while I am here and I can also help myself."

"M" talked about her family having high expectations of wanting her to do something with her life now that she is older. She was encouraged to continue her education and achieve something. As she has family here, she was able to come but her friends could not come because they didn't have any family here. She elaborated:

"You are twenty. You are older than twenty. You have go to school and do something. My friends, they know and then they won't come and go to school.... I also came because my brother was in Canada, I have somebody to stay with, for them they could not come because they don't have anybody, so it's just my brother and wife."

"M" also discussed difficulties about obtaining the visa. She considered not coming. She found the exams too much work. She was surprised at the amount of money required for financial verification. She also has financial issues. She explained:

Just like the visa issue, cause it was somehow very difficult because at one point, I wanted to drop it because it was so hard. I had to take the exams, because I have to write the exams, so back home in school, I really want doing all those stuff, for school like so that you can write, take care of the exams, everything It was too much. I went to the embassy and the amount of money they want me to deposit before coming, it was so much.

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“M” expressed the problem of taking a course in which she may not be successful. She does not want to fail. She had to seek out help to change programs and keep her options open. The college was able to accommodate the request in order for her to be successful in her studies. She shared:

“I was taking programming. It's a challenge, I could not make it, so I kept on like coming so I went to see the lady in charge of International Students so I wanted to change the program and that's why from the beginning of the semester, I made up my mind, just maybe keep the ball working. I switched to this.... They don't want to think anything is difficult for you.”

Student “K” discussed his challenges. The first one he said was just coming here and getting used to the weather. Then there were the financial aspects. He does not want to ask his parents for more money. Yet International Students are not supposed to work in Canada. He has been able to secure some employment, but this has affected his attendance in class. In addition, he has been concerned about his grades. He wanted to do well, but he has been dealing with conflicting priorities. He shared his experience:

“The biggest challenge probably just trying to acclimatize to the weather. Okay, there is also the financial aspect. You know with International Students they pay higher fees. And sometime if you run out of money, it is stress. When you come to college, you think of how you can make some money but you are not allowed to work. So it's kinda like a vicious circle. You don't want to call your parents all the time and ask them for money. You end up getting night shift job working in the factory. It becomes hard to study for school. Sometimes you miss class if you are too tired....But my money will finish before schedule so I had to do some work. When I was working I did not pay too much attention, although I had a B average. Although I

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think I should have gotten higher if I was in a position just to concentrate on my school. So I think it is the aspect of what you are trying to work while you are still at school. That really counts a lot.”

“Q” stated that she had not been happy for the longest time. She has had a great deal of concern regarding finances and maintaining her grades. She has been worried about failing and having to repeat the semester. The school has wanted her to buy more books for her courses that she cannot afford. Her comments follow:

“It was terrible. Like it was the end of last year, like it was towards the end of the semester. I really don't have the money to go like studies are tough, like failing by 2%, you can repeat the whole semester and there is no money... And in my account, I don't have any money like I don't have any money to you know...they want these books...I don't have money and I am worried about I have to pass, I have to raise my grades.”

“Q” said she felt very alone and very isolated. She has had to move because she had run out of money for rent. She didn't even know how she would move her belongings. Then another tragedy struck. Her brother died around the time of her father losing his job. She was experiencing physical symptoms. She managed to go home and her family did not recognize her when she got off the plane. To date, she is not able to recommend to anyone coming to Canada. She stated she is aware of other students in the same situation. She elaborated:

“I have to move because the landlord, I did not have money for rent so I was thinking of going to my aunt, I don't know how I am going to move. Who was going to give me a ride to carry my stuff. I know that my drug book is so important I cannot even afford that. I think that was toughest time for me. The other one was when I was really stressed because my brother passed away. I did not get a chance to go homeMy brother passed away two months, my Dad lost his

job and everything just ...that's why I was getting depressed and I had to go home just to take a breath a bit. I was so small. You know when I got home even my family cannot recognize me. I was too... you know, when now you are going to meet your family. I could see them there but they can't see because I was worn out because it was bad. For me it's like, personally if they ask me can you recommend to come to Canada as an International Student I would say no. Considering what I have gone through....”

International Students have presented a variety of challenges that they have faced. They have expressed disenchantment with the new environment. These included loneliness, apathy, isolation, not being recognized, and not happy with the regulations of the college and the country. Not being prepared for the weather also seemed to be an issue. In addition, a concern that could be best termed fairness was indicated several times in regards to not being able to work in Canada.

Many students had extremely difficult times to come study in Canada. They were required to complete and be successful in a multitude of tests and other paperwork. Some International Students felt that it was just too much work. They had to deal with a variety of government officials from both host and home countries. Proof of finances created a hardship for some International Students.

Learning new technology was a great challenge. Computer skills required development and enhancement. The difference in English was very apparent. Some International Students were not comfortable with English and very reluctant to speak in class. One student in particular felt “ugly.” Teaching styles and teacher availability were other great challenges. Many students commented favourably on the amount of classroom help and the ability to teach as well. One student did, however, comment

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otherwise as he felt that his views were not considered. Most International Students felt teachers were willing to listen to them and discuss concerns and issues.

Observing student behavior also provided more of a difference in the environment. Some International Students were stated that they had to adjust to other student behaviors. Even locations of exams presented some stress as discussed by one student. Writing an exam in a gymnasium was considered to be upsetting and made one student nervous.

Academic workload required adjustment, given the different emphasis on quizzes, assignments and exams. The demand on their time has changed. They are worried about failing courses.

Enrollment in a program that may not have been what was understood or what was expected created disappointment. International Students experienced conflicting feelings considering whether to go home want to and lose face or stay in a program that was not what they anticipated. Families and friends have expectations of them.

International Students are realizing what sacrifices their parents are making for them. They do not want to keep asking for money and other things. The costs of living and tuition are higher in Canada. Several International Students have been trying to balance academics and work. Some students thought this aspect of life in Canada would be easier. Inability to work in Canada to provide funds for living expenses, even just 'pocket money,' were issues for most students.

Some International Students have and are continuing to experience loneliness. Family issues such as job loss, illness, and death also enhanced feeling of isolation and loss. One International Student expressed having physical symptoms as a result of her

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experiences whereas another student identified herself as having 'stress.' Yet another student complained of loneliness.

There seemed to be no real space or opportunity for International Students. One student talked about not feeling valued or recognized. A sense of loss of support from family, friends, and those familiar things has emerged. They have had to do many tasks on their own.

This section has elaborated on what are the greatest challenges faced by International Students since coming to community college, as they perceive them. All International Students have experienced some disappointment, disenchantment and disenchantment. Some are expressing loneliness and apathy. They have started to identify some personal, social and cultural differences. These perceptions are consistent with the second stage of 'culture shock.'

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Family Expectations

International Students have tremendous pressure placed on them by families to succeed. They are considered the “cream of the crop”, particularly if they get accepted to come study abroad. In addition, there is a significant financial burden borne by the family. International Students seem to have expectations of themselves as well. Academics are a top priority for them in community college. They feel the necessity to succeed and not return home a failure.

“R” described what his family expects but his own goals as well. He does not consider what his family expects to be any less than what he expects of himself. He, too, wants to be proud of his accomplishment. He explained:

“They want me to do my best. I came here to do things. The exam we went through is not to make myself ashamed of. And this is my main goal. I want to do something and say I did it. Like I said, they want me to do my best and just be successful academically. I think for me it is not a big deal. So other expectations are based on me but this is the main objective. It is my objective too. You will do your best to do it because you also want it. You want to be someone. You have to do so you will have a good career. It’s part of life. I like what I am doing here.”

“A” talked about having responsibility, alluding to some personal conflict with the priority and she says she has realized that she came here to accomplish something. Her parents want to feel that she putting forth a solid academic effort in community college. She has had to put some of her friendships ‘on hold’ and has felt that there is too much work. She made the following statements:

“It’s a big responsibility. Like I have to reach that it’s like that kind of goal. You have to reach that point to make it, like acting mature and being responsible. Independent. Staying away from the boys for a while...But what can I

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do...It is like you came here for something...It is quite fun and it is kind of hard. I have to work hard everyday to get what I want, my marks and everything to learn. There is too much work."

"O" talked about family and girlfriend pressures from home. His girlfriend has expected gifts from Canada while his mother is wanting him to obtain a PhD. His friends think he is well off in Canada and he has stated that in some ways he feels he is. He has found life expensive here and that building a future is difficult. He has accepted that he had accomplished something by getting this far. He has also realized that to be really successful at home, he needs a degree. Achieving that will give "O" more options in his career. He explained:

"Like friends they see. Like my brother, they see he's at a good condition now. He is living in a good way. But that's true...Like my girlfriend, she expect when I send a gift for her fantastic stuff like that. She'll want something different from back home. And that is really expensive. I found the life here is very expensive. Although people get money but they don't have no future. Like when you are back home, without much money you can have a house. But here, to expect that one day you are going to have your own house, that's impossible. I hope one day...well since I came here my expectation is one day I am going to graduate PhD but being back home, I did not have that hope. Back home, it is hard to get in high school level, that A level because there are many people...But getting a degree when you are back home is rarely. Ya, very special and many people say "Oh that one has university degree" and they respect you much. So for me to come here then for my future, I have an alternative to choose which job I need to stay in my own profession or to do my own business. But back home, I did not have a hope like that. The only expectation for me is one day and this is according to my mother, one day I have to, if God wish, to finish my Ph.D. before I get the age of 40."

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“N” shared that her family is expecting her to study. She stated that she is afraid to go out over the upcoming holidays because she feels pressured to study. She has also been looking for work as part of her Co-op credit. She wants to be successful, but she stated that she does feel ‘stress.’ She elaborated:

“Of course, I have to study, study and study. That's it. Study and look for a job. I have to look for a job and that's it. Sometimes I feel I have to relax. But sometimes I feel I don't want to go back home. I am afraid that you go out on holidays and not study all the time. Because here if you do these things, I don't think you cannot cope up with things. Right? So this is also a big stress.”

“S” talked about the expectations placed on him by his family in terms of completing his program of study. He described how knowledge has become part of him. Even more significant are the expectations he has placed on himself:

“Oh well, all I can say they, my family only like hope that I finish my course, something like that. Basically, that's what I know they expect but to me something more than that. I intend like to study to like highest point I could because the reason I could take like free from this country. I can't go with anything. I can't go with my apartment. I can't go with money to buy a house, a car or something. Maybe a car, fine. But if you have the money to buy a house, I can go buy a house. But if you acquire the knowledge here, take it with me anywhere I go it and it becomes a part of me.”

“B” explained what his parents desire in terms of academic achievement. He states they expect a return on their investment. His parents considered “B” to be very much able to handle the academics of higher education. He realized that he could have

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done better with grades, but acknowledges that extra-curricular activities distracted him. Although his parents are far away, they expect him to maintain a certain level of personal conduct as well, in a manner similar to how he behaved at home. He believes that he is able to meet these expectations easily. He discussed the notion of compliance and independence. He elaborated:

“They paid for my paper work Yup, I, yes, obviously, if you are investing in the TSE or NASDAQ, you pay \$10,000 every year, yes you expect something back... I was expecting myself to do well but not as well as my parents know I will do. Then I knew along, I was bright,. They call me brilliant. I don't call myself that...If I tell them all the courses so hard, they will tell, you can do it, and I'm like I can do it, well last semester my GP was 3.1. Well to me, I can do better, as a student...Ah, they don't live here, so, they expect me to be a good boy, they have always known a good boy all their life and they expect to always see a good boy. Well you know in life, a lot of things happens. Like parents don't even know what their kids are doing. Like in my languages, something they say, know the kids of who you are, so you have that at the back of your mind. You may go out of line but not too much, like, if you remember where you come from, who your parents are, you don't like wanna mess-up. So basically, I have that impression, so my parents are expecting like a good boy. Yeah, okay, they got a good boy back. I'm not a bad kid, and social life is not so bad at all.”

“M” talked about what her family expects in terms of achieving a goal and also refers to this goal as ‘her’ goal. She has been working towards getting into another program in the same community college. To accomplish this, she has had to put extra effort into trying to improve her grade in math. By doing this, she has been able to make a new friend. She explained:

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“I just have to think good and work. I have to achieve my goal. That's my major thing. It should happen...I just do my goal...That why I had to stay. I am not that good in math so I stayed to work on it. I don't have any expectations on that because from school I don't think of anything else... just go home. But at times, they show me around and show me places. And since I came here (to this campus) I have a new friend.”

“K” talked about the burden he has borne in terms of family expectations. His family has been making some long-range plans for the education of their children. To manage expenses, he was expected to establish a home while he is attending community college. Then, after his sister has come to study and is settled and he has completed his program, he will return home to allow for other family members to pursue their academics abroad. He talked about the expectations of children in terms of gender. “Sons have more responsibility.” His older brother should have been the one to pave the road, but circumstance deemed otherwise. He explained:

“They are looking at me to stay here and open a house. I have a sister who is just third year in the University. So they are looking at me to probably stay here and so when she comes probably next year all they have to worry about is \$10,000 fees. So they can pay that and she can stay with me. Admission in Canada is too expensive. So she can probably come here. Once she starts with the foundation ...then I can go back home. So they are looking at me not as a one-time investment but a long-term investment. Ya. I can handle it... In Africa the sons should have more responsibility. And my older brother, well, he should have been the one to do this but he, well you don't have the right relationship with your parents and follow your own ways and you fall from grace. So all that responsibility was given to me. They also expect me to do well.”

“K” also discussed not sharing concerns with his family because he does not want them to worry. He has been concerned about the amount of money that has been spent on his education. He has felt that their expectations are high, but thinks he will be able to cope with them, indicating that there may be an end to this in a couple of years. He has admitted to sometimes feeling envy for students whose only responsibility is just to go to school. He explained:

“But you know they don't know what I go through. They don't know that I'd have to work sometimes, what I have to go through sometimes. I can't tell them that because my mother will be worried. I also don't want to ask them for more money. \$40,000 Canadian they have laid out already in the span of 5 years. so I think there are expectations are quite high, there's no denying it. I think I can manage....I am kinda getting used to it. I just feel like will it probably bear fruit in a couple of years. But sometimes you feel like you look at people going to school and their only worry is coming here and then going back home. I kind of envy them sometimes but you know you have to know the way you come from. We are a family of six so I would say coming from a large family we really have to struggle. It is what I identify myself with, the struggle. But undoubtedly, I envy some people who just have to come to school...who just to do their assignments and then go back home...have their Saturdays free or their Sundays free.”

“Q” talked about owing her parents and becoming more independent because she is aware that her parents have troubles of their own. She again mentioned finances and the fact that there are six other children to consider. Her parents have not been in the best of health. She has been also blaming herself for wanting to study abroad. Although she has appreciated the effort her parents have made, she has felt tremendous pressure. Her goal was to complete her nursing education and open a clinic at home. She expressed that her

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family may be expecting too much from her, but she feels she is obliged to finish what she has started. She has not felt good about being so dependent upon her parents. She explained:

“Personally I feel like I owe my parents that, you know, to succeed. To succeed well and try to support, like that's what I feel. In coming to this culture I feel like, okay, I don't have to depend on my parents, you know, on sending me out. I have to be independent. I have to do things like because I know they are really struggling hard to raise the money and I am not the only kid, they have seven. So also I am putting too much pressure on myself. Sometimes I blame myself. But I say "Hey, you cannot blame me because I blame myself." If I never pushed my parents to come here in the first place, they wouldn't be so sick. My mom just got hypertension and my Dad is also kinda getting depressed and this is killing me. I blame myself thinking myself it's my fault, so it stresses me. Like my dad, he wants me to come out with this degree, go back, like you know build a clinic or something, like they have to, they are expecting too much of me and for me personally I think like I have to finish this and try to support my younger brothers, simply because they have done so much for me already and they have to educate the little ones and support financially from what I look at it with four years, I'm still dependent on them and I just don't feel it's right. Ya, I don't feel it's right.”

International Students are focused on their academics for many reasons. Achievement was a high priority for both female and male Internationals Students. In addition, birth order did not seem to make a difference in expectations. They expressed willingness to comply with their parents' expectations, although some admitted that the independence was tempting. They don't always have the same concerns and have conflict with the priorities.

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Yet they have accepted their parents' advice on their academic pursuits. They do their best and often their parents' objective became their own objective as well. Maintaining grades and being able to gain admission to particular programs are expectations. International Students expressed a significant degree of concern for their parents' expectations of their achievement. Sometimes what families expect may seem too much.

There are additional responsibilities that International Students have. Some International Students are paving the way for other family members by getting to know Canada and setting up a home. Managing finances is a great expectation placed upon students who have never had to manage money prior to coming abroad.

Staying out of trouble is a concern as is maintaining conduct similar to what would be expected at home. The desire to socialize is very important for some students, but they manage to keep it in check. Stress has been also identified as an issue.

International Students have high aspirations in the area of academic achievement and expect the opportunity to gain Canadian work experience. They want a variety of career options at the end of their studies that will allow them to be successful in their work and even own their own business. The importance of knowledge is very evident.

This section has discussed what International Students perceived to be the expectations families have of them. Families expect these students to be successful in their studies and in life. These International Students have accepted responsibility and are working to live up to these expectations not only for themselves, but for their families as well. To achieve this, International Students have many faced many challenges to that end.

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Anger, Frustration and Stress

The nine African International Students that were interviewed expressed a great deal of anger, frustration, and stress. They felt that they were under extreme pressure to do things and be successful. They have experienced dissonance between life here and at home. Sometimes they felt life was out of control and they have struggled to maintain a balance. At times, there had been hostility towards their college experience. These feelings are characteristic of the third stage of 'culture shock.' This section describes the accounts of this anger, frustration, and stress as experienced by International Students.

Students were first asked to describe stress. Student "B" described as having too many pressures and life not working out as planned. He described it in this way:

"If you have overload.... Sometimes things don't go the way you wanted it."

Student "A" described it in terms of depression that affects her mental wellness and not being able to have balance. She explained:

"Being in a depression anything that can drive you crazy. I just have to do what I have to do...not to have any pleasures when you want them."

Another International Student, "O" described stress as conflicting priorities and how stress takes you away from other activities. He is worried about finances and what is going on at home to the point of being afraid. He elaborated:

"Having some tension and you don't look like you are free to do something. You have a lot in your head and it can stop your daily activity. If you plan to study, then you mess up your study because you get to think about the other thing

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that make you stressed. For example, you get stress when you don't have a job, you don't have enough money, you think about back home people, how the election is going down there, people make the demonstration and picketing and riot the government. So it always happen stress like this. You are afraid of something and make tension on your mind. So this thing is very hard."

Another student "N" described stress as being non-existent at home and very existent in Canada. There was a lot less schoolwork to be done in the evenings at home. She explained:

"You know back home we do not have this. We go to school, come back, eat, sleep and study for 2 hours. We study for almost 2 hours. But here we get loads of homework and loads of assignments, quizzes and this is the stress...."

Student "S" talked about stress in terms of having more than one problem to deal with at a time. This has been compounded by feelings of loneliness, wanting to giving up and a sense of overload. As he mentioned earlier, it is not the stress that has bothered him, but loneliness and depression. He elaborated:

"To me sometimes you get helpless. You realize, even though, you have more than two problems at the same time you try to have them done, simultaneously. You really don't know what to do. Sometimes you begin to give up. Sometimes it is tough because personally like when I came in the early days, like last year...To me stress could be anything relating to depression whatever."

Student "K" described stress with respect to finances. He has realized that being an International Student is something to be taken seriously. The opportunity must be taken seriously or it can cost and that can create stress. Grades are important as well, but

he has felt that International Students do not understand the important of getting good grades. He explained:

“Not being fine. Financial...I think stress is finances. After staying this thing on my own in this country I have come to realize that for an International Student, you have to take things seriously because if you do anything like erratic or fast, activities that will cost you money. Then you bring stress. Also there is quite a bit of stress on grades but mostly International Students don't come to understand this. Not a much as they should be.”

Student “Q” shared her stress. Things have been getting worse for her. She has not been happy where she is living. Other colleges have permitted International Student pay on an installment plan, but this particular college does not permit this arrangement. She, too, described feelings of loneliness, emptiness, and hopelessness. These feeling have developed into physical symptoms as well. Also, she has been worried about not accomplishing her goal. She has felt that she has not moved ahead. She doesn't want to share her problems with her family because of the impact it may have on their well-being. “Q” wants to do her best for her family and admits to being very stressed. She shared the following:

“They getting worse by the day...I don't like where I live with my best friend, I don't know where I get money for rent and phone bill. But then for my parents to send tuition, I also don't like. But, you know I have a friend at _____ (another community college) and they allow them to pay tuition if you know, their problems, they allow you to pay slowly or give you job in school. Here they can't...Ya, legally, so I don't know why they make it so hard for us. Ya, it's just tough. What it means? I can't eat. I can't sleep. I sometimes, I feel weak, so like I just go small and cry. So maybe I don't have food. What can I do? Just think about

home, think like you know, that I have feeling inside and just feel emptiness, hopelessness, all that. It's terrible. Ya, like last Christmas, I was alone, you know people when they have their friends, they go by themselves. You're left alone, maybe don't have money for food, nothing. It's just terrible and when you talk to people at home, they feel bad like they are not happy to know I'm having it tough and I can't really tell them because my mom will have a heart attack and she knows I'm having it tough but if I tell her the real thing, I don't think she should be like okay, just forget this. Ya, but it's really hard. You don't even have the idea. It is like constant worry. .”

“B” talked about stress as being a place you don’t want to even visit. His stresses have not just been with the school, although he considered school stress to be the greatest stress. He experienced difficulties when changing his college. There were difficulties with government regulations as well. He mentioned that in Canada, one must obey the laws. He has found some conflict with this concept and he was reluctant to share any more information on this subject. Even doing what is right can be stressful. He elaborated:

“You don't wanna go there. Like a lot of things, everything, school, everything and the way things are set up, like, a lot of place. Basically school, school stress is the worst and sometimes problems with the government that can be stressing. Whatever, that can give you stress or basically school and sometimes with the government. Cause when I was trying to change my school over to _____college, It was very difficult. It's like you have to look to play by the rules to do a lot of things, where you are living, Canada is a place where they go by law, you understand and even if you are doing something right and it's not by law, you still not by the law, so everything has to be done like, and that could be very big stress...”

“O” talked about his fear of not being successful. He has been also concerned about his grades and how they will show up on his final transcript. He doesn’t want to drop a course because that will be expensive and he will be behind in his schedule. He has been also worried because his parents do not know what has happened. He has already dropped two courses. He has found some of the work too advanced and the workload very heavy, particularly when reference materials are not readily available. He has also been worried about Co-op as he requires a certain number of courses to be eligible for the program. Even students who have met the requirements have had difficulty in getting into a Co-op program. He has worried about not getting a placement. He explained:

“...I am afraid to get a ‘U’, a failed mark. So I got to drop and I lose my money, I mean a \$1,000 of Canadian. That’s a lot of money. I am too scared about that. If my parent know about that... So to be safe of getting a mess in my final certificate I decide to drop like other students...and end up losing my time. So of the teachers, they teach you like you are taking Master of something. They don’t use the exact book that the community college give them. But they want you to find a reference maybe you have to go to the _____ (a specific university) or _____ (another specific university). . So that’s getting hard. Five courses is not just like cup of tea...I try to memorize everything that’s why I can get to pass. It’s hard. ..And I have already dropped two courses and I lose a \$2,000. Ouch....a drawback maybe about this Co-op. The Co-op many people have already have life in the Co-op but the they did not get that job and I am afraid because I hope to go Co-op next semester and I am afraid if I am gonna get or not...And the other thing is I am supposed to go to Co-op this semester, I mean this winter. But the problem is I did not complete one course because they need 8 courses but I only completed 7 courses. So they stop me because of only one course. That’s heartening.”

He continued with the fact that he has found the school day stressful. He does not care for evening classes, as it does not allow him to participate in other activities. He has continued to be worried about getting work experience as he wants to be successful at home. He did, however, state that his biggest challenge is not disappointing his parents. He continued:

“...we are starting our day late maybe in Canada. It is different from back home. Back home we start our day, we go to school at about the class start from 8 o'clock and it goes until 1 o'clock, even 4. And that's it. But here sometimes I get some class even at nighttime and I can't be active and go to the gymnasium or something like that. It's hard. The biggest challenge in this actually I don't wanna let down my parent because they sponsored me so I want to make sure that I finish this course on time and because they want to get working experience so I have to make sure that for one year I go to the workplace and I do the proper way of working so that when I go back, I can do what they want me to do. My parent, whatever they want me to do.”

“N” shared her thoughts on stress. She has been unsuccessfully trying to get work through the Co-op Department and has not found the staff in that department very approachable or helpful. Getting a placement will help her financial situation and she doesn't want to drop the course either. She does not know what next steps she should take. She described feeling like she has bad luck and stated that she is depressed. She shared her experience:

“Actually, I want to say something about the Co-op department. There are some people in the Co-op they are so rude...I went two - three times today. You know what they do? They talk to you for 2 seconds and then they stand up. So it is the same with you since you have to stand up and leave the office...At least I should be able to get a job in the school and you come to a Co-op job and they say no. Simply no...If I get my Co-op money I can put it in my

semester because you only have money for one semester...And my marks are good and I am telling you that. This is a headache. It is something to get depressed because you don't have...because I can't seem to know what do next. I can't stop my semester right now. She is saying that if you stop the semester then you drop the course. And I can't drop the course because I need the money, right?... I think I have bad luck this time. Sometimes I just wonder on what will happen because I don't get the job. All I have is one or two weeks left because then the new semester is starting for the Co-op."

"M" also defined stress as something you don't want. She also described it in terms of pleasures and getting what you want, when you want it. She elaborated:

"Stress, ah, what stress means to me, when you find something, really you can't really get something, you can't really get what you want at a time or like need a pleasure for now, I think, when you want with like pleasure and you can't have it at that time.Ya. stress you don't want.

Feeling of anger and frustration are evident in several students. Some have experienced an overall lack of recognition as well as racism and prejudice. People have equated culture and race with country of origin and this is not the case. It also shows a significant lack of knowledge about the world. "R" described his frustration in terms of identity and place of origin. He displayed ambivalent feelings and gestures when he talked about this concern to me. He tried to laugh, but it is evident that this treatment is of great concern to him. He explained:

"They think I am from India. The main thing is that some one thinks I am Indian but I not Indian. I have to explain I am from Mauritius. Where is that? I show that and they see where I am from."

“A” described her frustration in terms of her residence experience. Her previous experience was friendlier and more cooperative. She realized she was able to work more easily with the other students. She has found residence life very unfriendly and was afraid and sad despite encouragement from her mother. She explained:

“When I moved into residence, I did not know what to do. I kind of felt that everyone was cold, really cold, like no one to talk to me. Because I came here with my mom, she said talk to somebody. ‘You just can’t stay alone like that.’ But where I was in ____ (another Ontario city), we really, really work together even if you are International Student. In here, I don’t see that. I guess that was the thing that made me uneasy. That brought me down at the beginning of the semester. So that is like why I am kind of afraid of the people here.”

“N” continued with her frustration with the college in terms of the Co-op department and school resources. She also commented on the lack of discipline and enforcement of the rules particularly in regards to computers. She wants people fined for disobeying the rules. “N” is also upset with changing textbooks throughout the program and because books are changed, used texts are not available. Money continues to be a significant issue She does not like relying on her family for additional funds. She also thinks Canadian students are in a better position to afford this. She elaborated:

“The Co-op department. I would change that. And the second thing I would change is that I don't think computers are not enough. They are enough but other people, they chat. When we want to do our assignments the others will chat. Of course there is a notice over there that they shouldn't chat and they don't have to play games on the Internet but they do it. What happens is that we don't get

the computers...There should be a fine...One other thing, the textbooks. We use three or four semesters we use the same textbook then the fifth semester they change. That's not good because some people cannot afford, especially us, International Students. We can't afford. It's \$4,500 and plus insurance they give. And then on top of that you buy books. So for example for a basic book I had to use last semester. And this semester they'll change the book. So we can't afford to buy everything since we are not working. We cannot expect from our uncles and aunts. They cannot help us too much. Everyone here is hand to mouth. So maybe if they give us work over here or they don't change the books every time. And I don't know what they can do. Maybe the Canadian can afford. It's a tension to us because we have to think of the book. How can we buy the books? And there are no used books because they have changed the books so we cannot buy the used books."

"S" talked about his frustration at not being in the right program but has resigned himself to his fate. He is trying to minimize his frustration by stating that people can't always get what they want. He has recognized the positive aspects as well, but overall his disappointment is evident. He explained:

"About college, I don't have much to complain except that sometimes it just never goes the way you want it to go. You can't always get everything. It goes that way. It can be nice too...Well with mine, what I realized was I was not in the right course. Not what I was expecting. If there is something that I have to change from now then that would be it. But since there is no point I don't think I can. There is nothing to do with it Basically I am okay."

"B" discussed his main frustration in terms of missing home, not being able to do familiar things. He misses driving and had left his papers at home so he cannot obtain an International license. He has been annoyed with the bureaucracy of getting a license in Canada particularly in view of his qualifications as a driver at home. He shared:

“Ah, yup, I miss home all the time, when you got bad experiences, like oh my God, this will never happen to me in my country. Like when I took my G1 exam, like this is so, please.... I have a professional driver's license back there. All this just to drive. I haven't gone back for my license to today. I drive with my friends. My friend has a G license, can't even drive, like the way they drive. I drive standard and they drive auto, and they still have G license so it's ridiculous, now like you just sit there, I'll drive.”

“B” has been also concerned with tuition fees that International Students have to pay as contrasted with Canadian students. He has felt that it is far too much. The workload does not seem to be an issue for him as he realizes he should expect more work in college. He stated that he enjoyed the lectures and the lessons. He commented on his own behavior in class. He elaborates:

“When I came in, I need my tuition to pay and everything and that's one of the examples that I will give you because, like, I have to pay like \$10,000 as a International Student...they pay maybe \$2000, \$2500 per year...It's a lot of money...You are restricted by the laws of the land...like international like double what normal students pay, it would be okay. But triple quadruple, not okay. Like I said it's my second semester, basically from now everything has been okay. I can't lie to you...Lectures, lessons are very nice. Be a good boy in class. You don't make noises or disturb the class...Ya, and the workload, it's normal because, you're not high-school anymore. It's college, so, you expect to work more to get better.”

“M” described some of her frustrations just with respect to getting to come to Canada. The visa was problematic and she found the exams too much work. She was also surprised how much funds the embassy required her to have in her account as proof of finances. In addition, she did not enjoy the program in which she was enrolled. She

did not want to stay in a program that was not going to help her achieve her goal. “M” explained:

“Just like the visa issue, cause it was somehow very difficult. It was very difficult and the exams, because I have to write the exams, so back home in school, I really want doing all those stuff, for school like so that you can write, take care of the exams, everything.....It was too much. I went to the embassy and the amount of money they want me to deposit before coming, it was wow. It was so much...Ya, like before I was taking programming. It’s a challenge, I could not make it...I think if something not is really your goal. It is not good. Because like a friend use to say, I mean it’s easy if it is your goal, if it isn’t, it is just work.”

Gaining experience very important for “M” and this created some difficulties with all her friends going to Europe. “M” was aware she could not work in Canada and that her friends that went to Europe were able to work. Parental expectations were an important issue for her as they wanted her to accomplish something. She needed to find her way. She liked working in addition to school at home. She has found life here boring and has felt very alone. Living with her brother and going to school is really all she knows. She commented:

“I have friends who went to Europe for studies also because they went to Europe and like working and I had my papers I said that I cannot do working in Canada so everybody, or nobody wanted to come because everybody was saying how are you going to cope all the years. I mean I have to. My parents have to deposit money for me for a year...My parents tell me I have something to do while you are there and you can also help. You are twenty. You are older than twenty. You also have go to school and do something. At time I really hated it...two weeks, three weeks it was sometimes I go to school with it and I had no friends, and it's like wow. I just keep on. Sometimes it’s just boring at home, I mean, I use to like go to work, just go to school here, home, that’s it.”

“K” demonstrated a sense of community concern. Through meeting people at the place that he works, “K” feels Canada has been unfair to immigrants and particular has not done a good job informing them about their status in relation to work and what they will require to achieve their goals. He has felt that he had had an easier time than immigrants because his responsibilities are different. He shared frustrations and his concerns for other students:

“There was a time that I felt it was kind of unfair but not to me. I felt it was unfair to people working who are immigrants. People who probably have a lot of experience, top knowledge experience and in the factory where I work I met people who have Masters, I met people from China who have PhDs. They should be given a transitional period or something like do some certification course. They are being asked to start over essentially. Because there is no point to start all over again and then compared to here they sold their houses, they sold everything and came here. And they finally get here and all they are friends but they don't have any income...So for me because I am young and I did not come here with a family it is easy, I would say. But for people who come like International Students and landed immigrants who want to come and study, it becomes hard if they were to become an immigrant. It becomes hard. I think that the Canadian immigration should do a better job of briefing people.”

“K” has been also worried for his sister who is due to come later this year. He wants students to be able to work legally and has been concerned about being deported. He stated this creates a great deal of stress for him. He has suggested a better screening process for International Students and more follow-up once they are here. He discussed, however, that in his home country this screening process could be perceived as a violation of students' rights, but in the end would assist students to maintain officially sanctioned

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activities within the country and not be so dependent upon the parents to provide funds for them. He explained:

“My sister, she is also coming. She already has an application... I think they should allow us to work during the day for a limited amount of hours. Just like they are doing in Britain. I think that would eliminate a whole lot of stress. It’s hard to look for jobs. And the jobs that are there are really hard to do. They need to ensure that the right students come. Hard it is from the other end I think they should follow-up students once they come here and what they do. Although, some would say it is intrusion of their rights but it allows us to stay in the legal. I don't have to go to work in a factory and I am scared that I can get, in fact, deported at any time. That would be a great deal and alleviate stress on us...The thing is just letting people to work. All the time you have to ask you parents for money Sometimes you don't feel good, like you ask for money just last week and then expense comes up again. It becomes hard because you know they struggle.”

He also commented on the lack of sports and how this has been a good medium in the past for dealing with stress. “K,” too, has had problems with access to computers, but stated that there really is not very much about which to complain. He elaborated:

“And I wish they kinda have a lot of sports. Ya. I wish they are more interested in sports. College is like more interesting. But besides that I think everything is going okay. That is one thing that people have to share computers. So this are really not too much to think about. That is my observation.”

“Q” shared her frustrations with her living arrangements in Toronto and regrets even coming here. Despite the problems in school prejudice and other difficulties in the small Ontario town where she lived, she felt she had more social support. This is not the

case in Toronto. She stated that things are getting worse and that if she mentioned this to her family, they would just tell her to come home. Finances are a major concern even to go home as her parents have spent a great deal of money for her to be here. Even so, finances are still required to reside in Toronto. She talked about being unhappy:

“I didn't know them apparently but one of my dad's friend, she was here so she knew some people in _____(small Ontario town). They were the ones that made my life easier, so weekend I have a place to go chit-chatting...At times I regret really coming here, I regret so, so much but I look at it right now, my parents financial debt it's the only thing that's holding me back. Like they have already spent so much. I just keep me going but if things aren't okay, they get to a point like they are going to this depression and my parents will say, 'Oh no come back.' I have this. I have never been happy for the longest time. Just tough. It's getting worst by the day. I just kind of come home because right now I don't like where I live...I don't know where I get money for rent and phone bill but then, my parents for them to send me tuition and I also don't like, you know.”

“Q” also talked about the discrepancies among colleges and with her community college. International Students attending other colleges seem to get more work as well as some accommodation around finances. She has felt like she is begging and that the college is not sensitive to her situation. She explained:

I have a friend at _____ (another college) and they allow them tuition. If there are problems, they allow you to pay slowly or give you a job in school or something....Here, they say it's only for OSAP (Ontario Student Assistance Plan) student...So when it gets really bad, it's like your begging...I talked to _____(the International Student Coordinator). I said I won't be able to pay my tuition. Like I already told them my problem. My dad is really, really struggling, so he can't just pay anything. Please try and just wait to tell him. As hard as it is, they try. Then come this

semester, they just gave me a hard time to register. It's just breaks me down."

Finances are a big issue in every aspect of "Q"'s life. She has had many other worries and complaints. She stated she is extremely stressed and worried about failing. She even considering moving in with her aunt, but she doesn't know how she can do it. She shared the following:

"Like it was the end of last year, like it was towards the end of the semester. I really don't have the money to go...Like studies are tough, like failing by 2% you can one course, you can repeat the whole semester and there is no money so I am lying there. And in my account, I don't have any money. Like I don't have any money to you know...they want these books and then by the end of the semester you have to read it and I don't have \$5 or \$10. You know when they give the books for you need like projects in such a course. Ya I don't have money and I am worried about I have to pass. I have to raise my grades. I have to move because of the landlord. I did not have money for rent so I was thinking of going to my aunt. I don't know how I am going to move. Who was going to give me a ride to carry my stuff? I know that my drug book is so important. I cannot even afford that. I think that was toughest time for me. I hated it so, so much. It's unbelievable. Because I know I have friends in ____ (another city in Ontario) and they work in University. They work. So I ask myself "What is this ____ (community college)? What is so special about the ____ College that they just don't allow us. Then you have to cry, cry, plead like at times. I leave it to God now. You just leave it."

Family tragedies are yet other events with which "Q" has had to deal. The toll had physical manifestations as well. He brother died and her father lost his job. Home has been so far away for her. There have been multiple sad events that have affected her. She continued:

“The other one was when I was really stressed because my brother passed away. I did not get a chance to go home. My brother passed away two months, my Dad lost his job and everything just (she gestures)...I was worn out because it was bad.”

International Students have experienced anger, frustration, stress and distress. It is important to note that some of these stresses and distresses have been a result of the expectations International Students have of themselves. They have tended to consider their stress in terms of distress. It is a place you don't want to visit. They talked about overload both academically and emotionally. Grades are a big issue. Fear of failing and not being successful is a great source of stress and worry. They are worried about dropping a course and the financial and time costs that doing so will incur. They don't want to disappoint their families. They are worried about their final transcripts. Even the school routine with respect to scheduling classes is a concern. They do not like evening classes. International Students want to have their Co-op experience to get Canadian work experience. For one student, “school is the biggest stress.”

International Students also discussed distress in terms of depression, not having any pleasures and being taken away from other things. There are many conflicting priorities. They miss their families and are worried about them as well. Loneliness is mentioned and one student in particular cites physical symptoms. In addition, depression, distractibility weight loss and sad expressions as well as apathy and nervousness are mentioned.

International Students have experienced a great deal of fear. They are worried about their success in college, what is going on at home, and workload of school and at times, have felt like giving up. They are all very concerned about money. For the few

that are able to work, they worry about getting into trouble with the legal system. Visas have also not been easy to obtain.

For most International Students, the impact of academic life and finances is critical. The significance is that their adjustment is so multi-dimensional as they encounter so many problems. They were able, in some instances, to utilize problem-solving techniques. In others, they identified it as an emotionally charged and anxious approach in dealing with their frustrations. In addition, these several of these International Students noted that anger, frustration, and stress could interfere with their studies.

One International Student felt he could have been better prepared to come to college. All International Students realized that they have to take school and life seriously. They are trying to do that and some have experienced frustration with one of the college departments. Some are disappointed with their program. They have observed what happens to other college students and find it difficult to understand and accept. This has affected their ability to cope.

They are not allowed to do the things they used to do. This has been partly due to workload, resources, and laws. They can't always go to the gymnasium or drive a car. Family members have imposed expectations. There are always restrictions. Having a co-op semester would pay tuition for the next semester. They have not found this department overly helpful and they are worried. Changing books during the program adds to their frustration in terms of finances as well. There are discrepancies with other academic institutions and their policies. Even living arrangements have been problematic.

At times, they have found the people cold, unfair, unfriendly and even racist. Behaviors are different. They have been concerned about the assumptions of others in terms of culture and place of origin. One student in particular displays a sense of community as he expresses his view on Canadian immigration policy. They are experiencing decreased social support, loneliness, and stress. They miss home and are not doing many of their familiar activities. Sometimes they are even bored.

Resilience is starting to be evident in these students. The great variation in their length of stays in Canada must be noted as well with respect to this resilience. In spite of their challenges and stresses, most International Students remain optimistic. They are developing self-esteem by virtue of the fact that they are able to express their likes and dislikes as well as their anger, frustration, and stress. They are also learning to see some of their learning as positive stress and there is the potential for significant carry over to new challenges and experiences. International Students are working towards new patterns of behavior in which to be successful in their endeavours in Canada. Up until this point, the phases of 'culture shock' have seemed to occur in sequence.

This section has focused on the anger, frustration, and stress as described by International Students. It is evident that life for them in Canada is a very complex dimension and a place where they are struggling to come to terms with the many differences and changes that they encounter.

Chapter Five

Impressions of College Life and Change

International Students were asked to share their thoughts on college life. Even though they are facing so many obstacles in this alien culture, they maintain a level of optimism that is very evident. Value systems and behaviors are very different. They have become aware of differences in resources. For some, they have built on previous knowledge while learning new things. They talked about the many differences between community college and their studies at home and what they have been learning. Some International Students have learned to make decisions while others have changed their approach to decision-making.

International Students have demonstrated their ability to survive in these new surroundings by learning new skills. They have learned the customs of the college, expectations of students and have begun to feel some comfort with communication. Some friendships have emerged. This is consistent with the fourth stage of 'culture shock.' This chapter will focus on what impressions International Students have about their college experience, their abilities to make decisions and survive academia.

The College Experience

“R” shared his thought in regards to what he has noticed. He talks about his math course and about his learning. He has been building on previous knowledge. He talked about having more reports to complete and although they are not hard, he stated he must

spend more time on his work. This is an aspect of college life he would like changed. He explained:

“...There is something new I am learning with most of them. It's like I'm growing. I am making research a bit. Three quarter like I am revising a bit. In one quarter I am learning new and everything. The thing I learned when I was in high school at home, and the thing I am learning here is helping me to understand the course...The only thing is like here we have more report to do. It's like there are some subject like you have to make report. There you don't have that kind and there is not much report to write. So here you have to write report. It's not hard. But here, you just have to spend more time on it.”

“R” also talked about student responsibility in terms of learning. In reality, however, he felt that it is all up to the students to do it. He talked about having more occasions for social interaction. There are more opportunities here for students as compared to colleges at home but here you don't have your friends. He explained:

“... it's up to you to understand the teacher and you can learn. You can when you go to college it's up to you. ...if you want to learn or you don't want to learn. So this is a way and this it the thing I have to do. Ya. Like here you have more opportunity. You have more activities in the college, you have students and they can sit down and can go out with friends. Like you in the cafeteria and you want music and so on...Here, you have a student center but there we don't have it...Here is more open, vaster. But there you have to go to the University to have this kind of thing. Then, we have friends....”

“A” described the work as being much easier here than compared with home. She talked about the fact that there is more discipline at home and strict rules are imposed. Students cannot do just whatever they want. She has expressed disappointment in her fellow students because of their behavior. She cannot behave in the same manner as they

do. They think she is shy, but she is respecting her upbringing. She stated she has self-discipline. She would like people to be more open to her experiences in life. She shared:

“Back home is much harder. Much, much harder. Like the Math is like way back home crazy level in college. I don't know how to say it...There is more discipline back home. You are not allowed to do whatever you want. You are not allowed to do whatever you want in school. Like follow the rules. Like high school, you have to wear uniform, cut your hair and make sure you wear long skirt and everything and all that stuff. Very strict and they make you cry even. Sometimes it's okay. But no freedom. I find it okay here. Ya. Not much discipline here. That's what I have noticed. When I see some students in school, it was kind of disappointing. They think I am shy but that was how I was brought up. I am not shy. It is just that I am disciplined and discipline has made me feel like this and it is not everything I can do in front of people. I think discipline is something that is in me.”

“A” continued to talk about the differences here and admitted to not socializing much with other International Students. She said she doesn't know how to locate them and there does not seem to be a formal mechanism for accomplishing this. She talked about college being more practical and she has been able to apply her new knowledge more quickly. Initially, she was unable to express herself on topics where she had some knowledge. She has learned to rely on others. “A” elaborated:

“I don't mix that much with International Students, only those who are in my class. I want to meet somebody but I don't know where to find them. Like things here are more practical. More modern. You learn something and do it right away. We do it until we get it. Like when you get a job and you don't know what you are doing because you had a terrible fault. Like you cannot remember to how it was done. You have to learn how it's done hand by hand. Here is more practical. College is more practical.

Getting to know other people presented a challenge for “A.” She also talked about things having gone better in residence for her as she has managed to get to know some people. She doesn’t find it as cold as she once did. She commented:

“Well it is okay now since I know some of them, a few of them.”

“O” discussed what he finds incredibly different about college life in terms of traveling time. He has spent two hours in travel time just getting to the college and spent the same getting to where he is living. He has found that a significant difference and has moved around a couple of times to get closer to the college. This is an aspect of college life that could be improved. Traditionally, community colleges have had little experience and expertise in housing students. At home, there were more opportunities to be boarded if travel distance was too great. Another significant factor at home is that it was free of charge. He commented, however, that the infrastructure in terms of public transit allows students to live further away. He explained:

“Alright. Like here, people go to school far away. Unlike back home, you go to school nearby. Otherwise, if you have to go, like those people who... Our town is very small. But for those people who come from rural area and have to come to the urban area for further education, we have some boarding but that is for free because education there is without payment. The only trouble is when, you know because you don't have that house by the school and I do not have anybody to depend on in this country. I just have to grab any room. Somebody offer me, then I pay them. I stay as long as I am around Toronto but many people living far away from school. I think the reason having to study faraway from school because they have infrastructure like road is very nice and transportation with a timetable...So

you know your timetable and you know which bus you're gonna take it. Everything is okay about infrastructure here.”

“N” talked about the classroom interactions and how shy she felt initially. She has had to work hard to overcome her feelings. Previously she had no real experience in talking with boys in class and people of other cultures. She considered this a big step for her and realized the potential benefits in gaining other people’s perspectives. Overall, she would have preferred not to have had these feelings of insecurity. She elaborated:

“Not a lot shier but I was a bit but here you know I am just like everybody else. Back home, we did not sit in groups in our classes. Everybody had to do individually. But here we have groups so there are boys with us and you have to speak with them. And I am use to it now. First semester, I did not do that. Oh my God, no way, I can't do that. I was feeling a bit shy but now I can talk. So I think this is a change too. They did but not in the classroom. We use to talk outside but there were Indian people. We use to talk with lots of boys but they were Indian. But here we have to talk on each and everyone. Ya. And you get their ideas, you know, in some things. You just ask and they help you. So it is good in a way.”

“S” talked about the differences for him with respect to uniforms and behaviors. He laughed about the concept of the ‘Neighborhood Watch’ at home in comparison with Canada. Students were closely monitored at home. Rights didn’t seem to matter much at home. He stated that he feels that there is not much of monitoring in Canada. This is something he would like to see changed. He shared:

“ A lot. Well school, back home it only up to me like...first start with the grade school. It's only up to me where I'm gonna go. And then you go to some tertiary level. Then you go to high school. But in high school, if you were student, you can see your uniform then they will know which school you are from. You do something; they can see exactly where you are coming from. So by the time you get the

school, there is a report there already. That's how it works. And then I don't know here. But right from the...like some people here from grade 9 we use to have live in the campus. So in a way living in a campus you are monitored something like. And then in class aspect as I was saying before there is wasn't that much discipline just because people don't consider rights to be anything. But here it is quite different."

The motivations for teaching can be very different. "S" also talked rights of students to ask questions. He also commented on the wealth of experience a teacher brings to the classroom and about their dedication to students. They have made the learning real and integrate curriculum with reality. He explained:

"Ask question when you want to ask question. Or whatever masters tell you and if you see something and you still don't understand, stop right there. And if you don't, so don't ask too many questions that they will think you are bad. It's really like back home people teachers are teaching they don't really enjoy what they are doing. What happens is back home...they are going to teach you because they can't get other job. But here is not like that...The master had for minimum experience 10 years. The person work at the floor know exactly because what we read in the books is quite different from what is real life...He knows exactly what he is doing or he asks me through some of thirty years experience in the field... It's not like that back home."

"S" continued about the teacher preparation as the teacher-student relationship. For him, much of his learning was based on test whereas here it is more active and engaging. He explained:

"(Back home) Sometimes you have to argue. But you cannot argue with the master. Some of them are like that but a lot are not good. Once they get out of school, they just go into teaching. No experience. So they teach. Here we have a lot of stuff on the table. This is what we are talking of. You see it, you feel it, you turn it, you move it and you know how it works. So once you see it even if you see you

can remember exactly what is on your notes. You will be able to focus.”

He also discussed how students are evaluated at home and at college. He seemed to like the concept of formative evaluation where everything counts toward the final grade. This has made him feel that the workload is somewhat lighter and he appreciated having a specific text from which to study. He elaborated:

“For example this is a two-year program. At home, I will study for the whole two years, then a final test. When the final test is in one day and that day will determine my fate in my two years... It may be like you study like the whole 95% of maybe the workload, you study 95% and you cannot make it quite the same. You go to your test and you have the answers for the other 5% then you are through and nothing else. You have to stay and have to rewrite. But here, it is nothing like that. Everything you do in class counts to your final grade. Very different...Since I came here, I never studied more than two hour...And we don't have a specific book (at home). Like here we have a book for the two-year course...”

“S” continued to talk about other issues in higher education and government support. He considered the modifications here a great benefit and seemed to recognize governmental support in change. He stated that technical knowledge is not valued in his home country and furthermore, there is no one there to teach them. If students cannot get into business or medical programs, they are considered ‘dropouts.’ There were few resources for these ‘dropouts.’ He is knowledgeable enough to understand that for a country to be viable, different kinds of knowledge and skills are required. He explained:

“And basically the government did not care about technical aspect too...because for a lot of years, there is no modification. Nothing. The government, they do not care about anything. Here they introduce a new system for the

secondary life. Like doing business, medicine, that kind of stuff. And you wanted to prove to your people what is best study in O level, A level. So all the people are concentrating on what is that aspect. So in a way having technical skills in my country like a place for the dropouts. So my country cannot prosper because before our country can prosper it needs to be both. Technical people use to be able to do that. And yet there is no one there to give that type of education. So that is what gonna happen a whole lot. If you have the full course, you have to see like for yourself. What's a place like if it left totally for the dropouts? If you know you are not able to take like business or do something study about science, something about medicine or something you will go to technical high school. We use less textbooks. And if you can't buy them so what are we gonna do? So we can't buy everything. Nobody cares."

"B" shared his thoughts on the differences in education with particular emphasis on respect. At home, elders and in particular, parents, and older siblings are respected. Usually decisions are made based upon parents' wishes. Even, senior students have respect by virtue of being older and younger students are required to provide service to older students. Rights don't seem to exist. This is an aspect of life in Canada of which he would like to see more. He explained:

"A lot. Because like I said people make decisions based on parents out there. Here you don't. They do but not all the time. I see high school here and there is one big piece missing. Something down there like respect. Like back home, respect is something very big. Like really, really big. Like you respect your parents and you respect one another in the family too. Like older brother, you give respect and I mean maximum respect. And the guys over at the school, we call it junior secondary school. If I am in junior secondary school one and I have a senior secondary school too, I give maximum respect but I can't talk. I have to respect. They can actually call me as a "Who get me this" and I have to do it. And because I grew up in like a boarding school, right, it was like that. I went to a boarding school and my senior can actually tell me to go get him

water to take a bath and I have to go get it. So it's like that respect is something really big.”

“B” also talked about going to university at home and how professors treated students. Student success did not seem to be important to professors at home. He has found the workload much easier in Canada. He elaborated:

“Because I think the workload here is easy, but way back home. You can't like, if you go to the university there, even if you're a genius there, down there. And it is not easy to get into the university. And if you get in there, it is not easy to pass because professors make so difficult. They make the workload so hard.”

“M” talked about how she doesn't feel International Students are considered to be very important here. There have not been any special events for them and she is not aware of any communication for International Students. She even was advised by her friends at home not to come and the reasons are unclear. She has been also concerned about the lack of sports for women. This is something she would like changed as it is a high priority for her. She explained:

“...International Student don't really have importance over here. There is not campus that really involves International Students. I don't any get any to real, like any activities you see we would like to do, like notice boards. I have not got anything like talking space also to like may you guys to know you guys exist in the school, I mean there is nothing. You just hear from word or whatever. Ya...Like when I came here most of my friends, they don't want me to come here..... I expect to involve myself also in sports. Back home I am in sports...When I come here, there are no teams for ladies. I like sports.”

She also commented on the support of teachers in the college and understanding that she is part of the process. She was not encouraged by one teacher's comment at home but seems a difference in the approach taken by teachers at the college. As she has adjusted to her new environment, she has come to understand that she needed to learn to get involved and to give herself some time. She shares:

“I was talking about Math. At home, when the teacher coming and I said I don't like math, so okay those who don't want it, go out. So that's it, no encouragement. But here, if you need help, everything is possible and reachable. Just to teach why I have to get involved. I'm just trying to learn. Everybody, in life, feel new in a place. I would like to right that. It's a nice place. It is just a matter of time.”

“Q” talked about changes that she felt are necessary in terms of being allowed to work and as a student. Students would be better able to appreciate their work experience. The prestige that you have worked abroad is significant and she has wanted that opportunity. This is an aspect of her Canadian experience she would like to change. She discussed:

“If I could change something, for sure, don't make it so hard for us to work. Not only because some of us like financially...even those who are financially stable like give this personal opportunity to work in the college, if you know we are not allowed to work anywhere else. They'd be able to learn to be able to appreciate...They think it's cool when you come abroad and work. So that experience of just trying to work, to get earn on your own and try to budget it from that. Give us the opportunity.”

“K” continued about a good infrastructure and everything seemed to be working. People here have been always available to talk, even the professors and he referred to this as a ‘safety net.’ He explained:

“...back home people, are more the way of teaching is strict. Here, they have a closer teacher to student relationship. Back home, it is not...people just do what they have to get paid...We can call up the lecturer. We can call up the school or ask to try to solve the problem.”

“K” also talked about the have more projects and study requirements, however, he doesn't really want them to change. He seemed to like the application of his learning to the ‘real’ world at the end of the course. He also has liked how he is treated by teachers. The teaching styles involve listening to students. Teachers have given more support to students and shown them how they can improve their grades. He has been impressed that students can contact their teachers here. These approaches are very different from home where he has found the relationship between teachers and students very strained. He explained:

“And another thing is that we have a lot of projects here...but at the end of the course, you get to know how to course relates to the world and stuff like that. More studying at home and more project work here...The teaching style here is also better. Because the teaching style at home, teachers don't listen to us. Teachers just go to class and open the book, read notes to you, telling you two weeks there will be a test. Here, teacher even goes to the point of

telling me where the test did come from. In fact we are not allowed to ask the teacher where the test is coming from. They set the exams from sections they haven't even touched yet. You are not supposed to ask or question the teacher how come they said that and it was like that. This also led to the strain in the relationship between student and teachers...about Canada you will find the teacher leaving his phone number. They say 'you can contact me in this number.' Back home it is extremely hard."

International Students have encountered many differences in the community college experience. Several International Students noted differences in the motivation of teachers as well and teaching styles and relationships. Teachers are more motivated in Canada and are committed to their students. One student considers this to be a 'safety net.' They have found their teachers to have a great deal of real world experience and most of the students have felt that their opinions are heard.

The ability of students to ask questions was a significant difference for some. Workload, study time, writing reports, and the opportunity for leisure pursuits were identified. For some the work was even easier even though it has taken more time.

One International Student identified how students were responsible for their own learning. Another student commented on building on previous knowledge. One student liked the fact that "you did it 'til you got it right. For some, the education here was more practical.

Student evaluation has caused some confusion. Testing and reward for continuous progress was new to most of these students. This concept of 'everything counts' is a new experience. They were accustomed to a final exam that indicated success. They had mixed feelings about the practice of monitoring students.

College life offered more variety for some. There were more resources overall, but not enough specifically for International Students. Travel distance to college was identified as an issue. Several of these students spent over an hour traveling each way. One student spent two hours traveling each way. Despite this concern, some International Students described the infrastructure very supportive and workable.

The idea of respect was evident in many of the International Students comments. They felt a lack of discipline within the student body. This is demonstrated through dress and behavior. Some students felt that respect was missing. In addition, the lack of uniforms was also very different. In the home country, there were very strict norms on respect and dress.

Interaction with other students of other opposite gender and of other cultures was a new experience for several students. Some did not have this opportunity in their home country. Yet, working in groups and speaking with people of other cultures has been a new experience and learning for them. These opportunities in the social context of the college cannot be undervalued. Lack of sports for female students was also identified as an issue.

Finances, again, were raised as an issue. Education is free at home and students were very surprised at the tuition fees in Canada. In addition, technical knowledge is valued in Canada and that is an issue that some home countries are confronting. Students have realized the impact of government on education through this experience.

International Students have been concerned about the lack of recognition that they have received. This has further isolated them and made them feel that the college is an unfriendly place. They don't have their friends from home although there is plenty to do

at the college. They are starting to make new friends in Canada. They are also concerned and more sensitive to what perceptions others may have of them. This is consistent with the fourth stage of 'culture shock.'

Yet, International Students held steadfast in their beliefs. Parental influence had extended over thousands of miles. They still consider it to be somewhat of a prestigious opportunity and will consider it even more so if they have the chance to work in Canada. Some changes in thinking had occurred in some areas but not in others.

This section has focused on the impressions International Students have about college life. There are many impressions and this has impacted them in many ways. It is important to understand that these impressions contribute to surviving in the new environment. International Students recognize the differences from a variety of perspectives and have become more comfortable in functioning within these differences.

Decision-Making

This has been a period of the life span involving significant changes played out in the context of the community college. There have been many kinds of adjustments and made by all students, including International Students. These include academic, social, personal, and emotional decisions. There has been a great deal of responsibility to make decisions the right ones and hoping that the outcome will be positive.

Choices must be well made for International Students to be successful. This chapter focuses on the experience of International Students making decisions at home and in Canada. In this discussion, it was evident that some International Students were

moving towards the fifth stage of 'culture shock.' As this phase progresses, students have **taken** on more responsibility and exercised choice.

“R” described no real change in his decision-making. It has been up to him to get **it right**. He felt that he does not always have his parents agreement in some of his **decisions** but he has had their help. He valued his independence. He explained:

“ If I make a decision, it is up to me. My parents support me sometimes. It is up to me for decisions. After my studies is done, no one is going to work for me if I don’t make my life. They (my parents) will be there to help me so that make you whatever you do, you are doing it right.”

“A” talked about how decision-making has changed for her. Her parents have delegated decision-making to her since she has become more grown up. Not having the protection of her parents making decisions made her somewhat uncomfortable. She found it difficult at times as she did not know sometimes to whom she should be listening. She had to assume the responsibility and tries to follow a process and make the right decisions. All the while she has been learning. A leadership course has been of benefit to how she makes decisions. She chose not to utilize a random decision-making approach but rather a planned, methodical approach. She elaborated:

“Back home, they use to make the decisions for me. But now they say you are grown up and make the decisions myself. It is okay but it's kinda hard because you don't know because you listen to too many people. You don't know what is right or bad, you see. Like most of them say listen to your heart, then make the decision. Or maybe like go through the decision process. In leadership, we do something like that. Like decision D-E-C, like follow the process... I don't remember but it was a leadership program that will help me make some decisions....Decide when to go to the doctor. What kind of people I have to follow. Like

what to do in difficult situations. It is kind of hard because my parents make me accustomed to protect you. They have that much freedom. So I am kind of learning by myself now. Like I can learn from my mistake and everything. And they do not have to tell me "Don't do that. Don't do this." I have to ask myself why. If I do, then I should know why I shouldn't do that something like that."

"O" talked about the differences in decision-making. At home, it seemed it was his decision, only although he admitted his parents and in particular his mother was not averse to voicing her opinions. Since coming to Canada, he wanted to discuss his decisions with other people, especially family and sometimes friends. He has experienced more parental influence since coming here. He stated, however, that if he continued to stay in Canada, he would be making his own decisions with less influence from home. He elaborated:

"Alright. When I make a decision at home I just do it. But here I always want to discuss with other people. I have to ask somebody if I am gonna do if I am gonna put me into trouble or gonna give me further confusion. I always have to make a discussion before I am doing something. But back home I have to do everything right away. I just have to decide to do anything. They are very influenced, especially my mother. Even if something is less important but she gonna tell you. And even if that thing does not need somebody's opinion but she's gonna tell you.... I should have some sort of discussion with my friend. Even if I want to get married or I want to go for further education, I am gonna ask my parent, not only my parent, but also my brothers to see what I shall do...Unless I decide to stay here, then I gonna have my own decision."

“N” talked about not being able to rely on others as much. She said she was ‘spoon fed’ at home, particularly, by her father. Since coming to Canada and staying with her uncles, decision-making has become her responsibility. Her uncles have refused to make decisions for her. She explained:

“You know back home I am used to just going to my father. I tell him “Papa, please help me.” You know I can't do anything. He used to spoon feed me all the time. But here I have to go on my own. My uncles here, they say no, I have to be smart and go on my own. They look at me and say “Alright.” So I have to make my own decisions here. Nobody helps me...I have to do everything on my own so it is a bit hard but that is good. At least I get courage. I get to be on my own now. Because I know there nobody else who can help...so everything is on us.”

“S” talked about how his decision-making has changed. At home, he made his own decisions, but since coming to Canada, he is asking others at home for their opinions. He explained to them what life is like here and has felt more responsibility for finances and in particular, for the money that is being spent for his education. Here, decisions have been thought out and validated. He felt he was getting a sense of the ‘real’ world. He elaborated:

“Well back home if I decide to do something, I do it whether people like it or yes hate it because no one will stop me for what I wanted to do...like my parents. But here it is not like that. Sometimes if I want to decide, I get a phone card, call them and tell them that this is what I intend to doing. What do you think about that? Ya, it is like putting them into a more different area. Here basically everything is different. If I want to decide on something, it takes a while. Basically I decided to get like.... I decide to get a car because it was difficult for me to go from home to school and go back because it takes up to two hours by bus. And then from here I use to work in the campus. So when I go, when I finish work I don't have any choice but just be walking out the road and then come back to class here. To make life quite simple for me, I decide since September that I have the money. But thinking of can I maintain a car and the benefits? Can I pay my insurance? Do I really need a

good car? Or if I don't get a good car very soon I have to get something for my car. Sometimes it's a lot of work. If that would be the case then why don't I go for a good car? To get a good car maybe I need a bank or something like that to help me. Okay. It's like going for a mortgage for car. I will never be able to pay my credit on time. My bills will pack. How am I going to maintain my credit? How am I going to stay in Canada? With that credit how can I live in this country here? So a whole lot of questions. So I really can't decide. So I made the phone call. They don't know how the system or how it works here. But I try to explain to them so how to tell them. So basically, back home wasn't like that. If I want to buy a car back home, I'll just buy a car because I am not going to maintain it. It's not my money. I don't really care. Here is different. In a way, it makes me see how the world looks like.”“

B” talked about making decisions and how they might affect his family. He has had conflict within himself because of parental support and yet has felt that he cannot influence them. He has started to make more decisions on his own and not based upon other people’s expectations. As he is becoming an adult, he realized that this is his opportunity. He talked briefly about how his religion has influenced his making decisions. He found life so strict at home and in Canada, everything much more lax. He was surprised at the age when some Canadian children make decisions. He explained:

“...because basically down there it's your parents make it. You don't work. It's not your work and you don't make money for yourself. Parents make money and they pay for you tuition and everything. So you make all this ambition based on what they like, your parents basically...I can't make decisions on what my parents think anymore. The reason I notice the difference out of my teenage life and going to the adult. I believe in my mind that I am becoming an adult so you take this chance by yourself and not on based what they say anymore...I make my decisions on my own not on people's expectation. As a Christian, I try to believe my decision making, making me be a Christian.

...Things (in Canada) are so loose because back home, everything is so strict. Like people make decisions based on their parents and parents are so strict. Not so strict but they lay down rules and you have to follow. Not everybody follows but then 75%. But here the rules you make, a 15 year-old kid can make decisions and they can get away with it...but not back there...now I think I make decisions on myself.”

“M” talked about her experience in making decisions. Living with her brother has helped her. She has learned how to make them and gets assistance when she needs it. She is anticipating making decisions more independently in the future. She elaborated:

“You'll see because I was either living alone like at school or whatever and maybe something on my own. And know this is how I have to do things. I live with somebody and I mess up with things. It's okay then. It makes me know what is right, what is right. And I believe in time then I will decide on what to do...”

“K” discusses decision-making as being different. He felt he had become more independent since coming to Canada. He had some input from home in terms of what the benefits and implications might be for these decisions. Also, many of his decisions have been based on finances and academics and as a result, he has changed his lifestyle since coming to Canada. His parents have not been made aware of what he is studying at this time. Working has been an influence as well particularly on social decisions. Because most of his work has been at night and he has been in class during the day, he has had little spare time. He has learned to manage his time. He explained:

“There is a difference. Back home my decisions are usually done in unison with my parents. Here I usually act on my own. I was trying to change my course. I wanted to do another course. I wanted to change from Marketing to go

back to the IT side. And it's a big thing. My parents have left that to me and told me I can do what I need to do. So as of right now, they don't really know what exactly I am doing. They don't know if I am still in Marketing or Information Technology...Most decisions from home is what can I get from this. The life that I live here is very limited. I have cut out a lot of things in my life. I barely go for to movies these days. I barely have the time actually, to even call people. I get a message on the phone. I get to answer it maybe on Saturday. So the decisions here, are really limited on financial decisions or academic decisions. The social decisions, they are included there. Probably, sometimes, I worked nights from 8 to 6 in the morning. At 8:30 I have class...I make use of my time."

"Q" shared how making decisions had changed for her. Many things at home had been done for her and she basically got whatever she wanted in life. Her parents were there to support her in many of her decisions, but still made decisions for her as well. In addition, she had had to learn to problem- solve. She thought that it would be worth it in the long run. She, too, has gained a 'real' world perspective. She explained:

"You know before I came her, people use to tell me I am stressed, I have a problem. I did not know the definition that life is hard. To me life is so hard. I am like why is that because at that time, life was just good. We had chauffeurs. Everything for me was just done. I won't even clean the table, like you know. If I wanted anything, I would have it...My Mom would say just do it, like you know. I am just there, nothing to worry about. So it was like the parents and you know the parents kinda made the decisions for you because 'What do you want to do when you finish school?' You go 'I don't know.' So you wait for their decision...in the long run I say it's worth it. Because if I will kinda be exposed to this, I won't really know the real life. Because right now when I am in that kind of situation, I can really adapt and just fit it. I think I am going through the toughest, toughest challenge."

She compared herself with other family members and the differences in their lives. Her family has seen her growth. She talked about how the culture stresses the importance of work and the potential to be independent. She has found students in Canada so different in terms of their dependency. She elaborated:

“My Mom cannot believe that I am grown. Oh when I went home they said "Oh you're so much grown." Because my oldest sister right now when I talk I, when we talk you'd think I am older than her because we're just use to it doing things for our self...But according to the culture, it's like if you don't have a job, if you don't have anything, you are still staying in your Daddy's house until you are able to support yourself. They will do for you everything. So you know you are still dependent but here you can't. Here you are still 18 years old, they move out. Ya. So it's different. It's so different.”

At home, some International Students were already making decisions while others were not. The approaches to making decisions have changed for International Students. At home, some students gave very little thought to making decisions and just acted upon their instincts and giving little, if any, consideration. For other students, decisions were made for them and frequently without any input into the decision. Even thinking about making decisions has been uncomfortable for International Students.

Since coming to Canada and gaining a real life perspective, some International Students have become very methodical and action-oriented in their decision-making. They considered the consequences of their actions and try to weigh pros and cons, benefits and risks by making deliberate thoughtful consideration of the total situation and they are learning from their mistakes. Some students have been uncomfortable having to

make their own decisions. Even so, International Students seem to have the support of their families.

They are becoming more assured and confident as they are making choices and taking on more responsibility. They are progressing from Stage 4 of 'culture shock', as they are becoming increasingly able to function in the new environment.

Parents of some International Students have given the impression to their children that they are grown and must make their own decisions. International Students have been talking to other people about their decisions to gain perspective. Families may still offer opinions, but often the decisions have often been left up to the International Student. Even extended families have been promoting this independence as well, so students have been obliged to make their own decisions.

International Students have found that they have more freedom. At home, these students felt that life was stricter. They knew what the rules were. Here, in Canada, they have been learning what some of the rules are. They have been amazed at the age at which Canadian children can make decisions and even more surprised that these children have managed to get away with it.

International Students have appreciated the fact that they are spending other peoples' money, namely their parents. Managing finances has been a great motivator. They have felt responsible and have wanted to make good decisions. International Students have felt that their own families and friends would not recognize them at home as decision-makers unless they had made decisions successfully.

Sometimes students have used distancing and avoidance as part of their decision-making process in order to focus on other pursuits. In addition, International Students

have been selective in the information that has been relayed to family. For some, decisions have still been made on an emotional basis.

This interview has provided International Students with an opportunity to share changes in their decision-making abilities. It has been a great adjustment for students who have gone from no decision-making opportunities to all decision-making opportunities. Overall, the differences in making decisions, the degree of preparation and support has seriously impacted their stress levels and served as a barrier to adjustment to college and culture. The ability to exercise choice and take on this responsibility shows some movement towards Stage Five of 'culture shock'.

Surviving Academia

One of the first major adjustments these nine African International Students have had to make is to get familiar with the college setting. This has been a complex issue for these students because they have had to focus on not only understanding a new country and cultures, but the college culture as well.

"R" described his continuing difficulty in his identity...he is not Indian, but African. He admitted that it was also kind of fun at first. Home also is multicultural, but here, there are so many cultures. He talked about life here in terms of being more modern and having less crime. He explained:

"They are more vast, we have more Muslim, like Chinese and the America, Christian with Chinese. But here you have more whites, than you see at home. People have their way here. They have the way they need and there is not much crime with the modern life. People are still trying to

build a life like here. They become good they way you have it.”

He also commented on the balancing of school and work. He thought that the life at home is better because children are not sent to work. He also found the lack of school uniforms very different. He explained:

“The place (at home) is more friendly for children because children are not sent to work. To go to school at the same time and take, like high school, you go to high school and you work part-time. But at home no. If you go to high school, you will see them in high school and they don’t have to go to work. Here if you go to college, you have to have a part-time job. In high school, also like delivering a newspaper, store items, they do. Also uniforms. Most of the schools here don’t have. If you are going to high school, every high school have one.”

“A” who stated that she didn’t usually mix with International Students tended not to discuss culture. She expressed that everything was okay for her.

“Everything is okay. What can I say like I only go to the international supervisor when I need something like application.”

“O” discussed politics and law enforcement with his respect to coming here. He has found this a sharp contrast to his home country. He considers everyone here including police officers very helpful and very different from the behaviors used by persons in positions of power at home. Democracy, as exemplified by his Canadian experience has been a significant difference. He elaborated:

“Democracy. In democracy, many Canadian, they don’t want like to change their Prime Minister. They only want to

stay with only one person who is very famous. But back home they want to change but the ruling government, they don't give that opportunity. They are cheating too and they use intimidation. Back home, even police participate to intimidate people. But here, police are friendly. You can ask police questions like where you want to go. When I went to Kenya and I asked police where the Canadian embassy...He said he doesn't know. So some policeman they are rude and they use force and they are corrupt. But here I know police are friendly and they can tell you whatever you ask them.”

He also talked about the cost of living. He gave detailed examples of what life was like here and at home. Families can survive on \$400 a month in his home country. Electricity, gas and transportation are much cheaper at home. Long-distance phoning was more expensive and he called home to reduce costs rather than have his family call him. Even starting a business was easier at home. He shared his perceptions:

“Somehow back home...And the other reason is about life. Back home, if you believe some people just paid \$400 a month but they can survive...but here, transportation is very high and life and everything, bills are very high. Back home, we don't have this system of calling local phone and we don't have payment...Here is cheaper. My family if they dare to call me here, it means that it cost a lot of money. The other significance here is that for small business people who want to initiate a business, they face hard problem. Because of this system they cannot let them. Back home, you can only have only one boat, one fishing boat and you can grow to be rich. But here, you cannot only have one boat, fishing boat to grow rich. It is impossible. That is hard.”

“N” talked about academic life in terms of curriculum and teaching styles. Everything at home was taught very quickly and not reviewed to ensure comprehension. Teachers at the community college have been more helpful. She said she doesn't find

academic life really very different, but in fact talked about several differences. She elaborated:

“Also for example, we did everything in one year, right. For example we did geography. So everything, all over the world, we did everything in one. While here, you need six semesters. We do a little bit and little bit and little bit. For example in accounting, the thing we did in the first semester and second semester, there we do fast in three months. So we are very fast over there but we did not understand everything...And about our teachers, of course they use to spoon feed us but there, they are very, very fast. ...Not as helpful as the teachers over here. Here the teachers are very, very helpful. Ya, that's why when I came here, there was nothing different for me like it was back home. But there, we use to go around in groups. So here, everybody know everyone and you have to say hi to everybody.”

“S” talked about some of the different ambiance that he noticed within the college. He seemed to enjoy talking with people and having fun with his teachers when they are teaching and within the context of the class as well. People seemed to be happy in class. He found this the biggest difference. People were actually smiling. In addition, confidentiality was an aspect of academic life that he has noticed significantly different. Posting of grades was a common practice at home. He explained:

“Everybody is friendly most days. You talk to everybody. It's lovely, like to have fun with your teachers like that. I did not get class, like fun and explained to you. Nothing comes like that. Everything is good. The biggest difference. One is the style of teaching. And then like the classroom aspect. Ya, at is the previous college, you can't see everybody smile. And then something like privacy. Ya. You know sometimes some masters is like put up grades for a class. And they post it for everybody to see. So like, everybody sometimes this will encourage them...Everybody know what they are doing in class. If you are not doing good, then everybody will know.”

“S” also found the communication within the classroom very different. At home, students had no opportunity to make any choices. Here, teachers wanted their students to understand and participate. It has even been permissible for students to make suggestions. Teachers at the college also have made themselves available to their students. He elaborated:

“Then over there, we did not have a choice. You do what they say. Back here, we have a choice. But here you can also say something and make a suggestion and that is alright. Patient...They teach and they make sure that you understand. If you don't, then see me... in any program, then you can locate them.”

“S” also talked about the level of socialization in college. He felt that it has been very low and there was more interaction, at home even between the males and females. He has found the college more isolating because people did not mix or want to get involved.

“Like college life. Believe me, they expect more than what is here. When I see this level of socialization is quite low, college life. Because most people like they don't really talk of social life like guys, guys, girls, girls. Something like that. But my country is not like that everybody is mixed. People talk to people. People get into things like harassment, that kind of stuff. But here is not like that. Nobody want to trouble with anybody and no one want to get in any trouble...”

He also talked about working in groups and how he felt about this approach to his learning. He had a positive regard and has felt recognition. This has been a far cry from how he used to behave at school in his home country. Work was not to be shared and it

was very competitive. Students may have been successful in his home country because they did not share their work. He talked about his classroom experience here and grinned broadly when he talked about other students liking him. Working in groups has been a positive experience for him. He described it as fun. This has sharply contrasted with his experience at home. He explained:

“Back home, I want to be the top of the class. If I had any idea, I will not share it with you. See the problem? This is basically what is happening in Africa. We come first because we don't share any ideas.... I have to keep it separate...Living him in school, boarding house, we have something called Perk. We use to do this every day. So it's two hours, it's from 7 PM to 9 PM. When you go home, we do everything in your notes, you realize somebody is coming then you close it. You don't ever want anyone to know whatever you are doing. That's how it goes. Here, you share everything, even English course. You go into groups and share a case. Ya! Because you know like some of the things you might be thinking is right. But, you're there to prove yourself. And then you realize ya, ya, it's true. It's different. It's good. Before I did not like to do that. But I don't have any choice but I just be with my group. You just look at what you're doing. But then I realized it's not like that here. Everybody is working in groups. Everyone is happy. Eventually, my group people even like me. You have a lot of ideas. So like what is the group, it's lovely, it's lovely...You're doing something that means more fun. Work (at home) in the form for the master, that's what they do. If you are not able to make it, you become his enemy. They take you.”

“B” discussed the efforts made by the professors and the differences in workload. He has been pleased with the availability of resource materials and how they have been given out. He stated that he has enjoyed the Internet and how students have had access to it. At home, students have been lobbying to have Internet access. He explained:

“Here professors actually make you pass. They teach you very well. They give you materials. There, you have to buy materials yourself. Handouts, you buy handouts down there. So it's like the workload down there is very heavy whereas here, it's like you have Internet you actually can interact and get information. Money. I don't know about you. Well I think right now the students' association (at home) is fighting for like to get it free in the campuses. It's like that.”

“B” also talked about the social aspects of academic life as being pretty much the same as at home. He has been impressed with technology and in particular, with telephones. He has been absolutely amazed that even students have had cell phones. He explained:

“But the social life is like of the same. Kinda of the same group set-up....everybody is busy with cell phone. Way back there no household have their own phones. You understand? What basically you go to high school here or junior high has a cell phone. Having your own line, having your own phone number. So that kind of like is a big difference.”

“B” also stated that there were not many differences other than the two items he had already mentioned, namely workload and respect. He has been proud of his education at home, stating his school had the best teachers in the country. He explained:

“There are some more differences. But basically, no big difference only the workload and things like that and the respect in the high school. Like I told you in the high school, it is slightly different. So we got like attention, we got the best teachers in the nation, in the whole nation. We have 42 colleges like that but not like in high school so we had the best teachers. The best facilities we can get. The

teachers were so proud. Like they expect us to pass before any other of the schools.”

“B” did not feel that he has had to adapt very greatly. This was because he was raised in a large city in Africa that has had a great deal of western influence. In addition, he went to private school that was based on a western culture. He learned English at an early age as well and he considered it his first language. He talked about being growing up in two cultures:

“Okay, well... not that much. Like, because where I live, right, is basically influenced by western culture. Do you understand? I am from Africa, yes... I was in one of the biggest cities in West Africa. It is called _____. It's like basically western like highly...let me see...like the whole city like basically 75% of the whole city is like western culture, like it has been influenced by western culture. Like it was like a normal life for me. And then when you go to private school, it is influenced by western culture all through. So I grew up my elementary school around...and actually, I learned how to speak English right when I was a baby....ya I had my language and I had to speak English too. So I was raised in like with two cultures, basically the western culture and also my culture.”

“M” talked about the differences in schooling at home and here. She has enjoyed the resources here and the assistance from professors and other students. She finds the relationships with teacher and students very close. Homework has been quite different and she has found it harder in some ways in Canada and in some ways easier. She lived in a boarding school prior to coming to college in Canada. Currently, she was experiencing a heavy emphasis on essays where, at home, it was on exams. There were opportunities to work in groups and there was a very definite code of behavior. She hasn't liked 'multiple choice' exams. She explained:

“... the opportunities that are here in school, like you have tutorials, a lot of computers to study and labs to study of the sort. You are rich if you have one in your home or whatever. Because in school, you will find it and you like are the best. If you need help, you have it. These are the advantages and like you can talk to tutors really if you need help you do have it. But, at home, at times, you don't get the help. It's just a different process. Like students, you know, here is that somehow they are closer...Everybody is teaching each other. So somehow, this is assistance...it's pure advantages and it's just like they give a lot of homework to students, mostly like essays...They concentrate on exams...back at home, we had study assistance. Ya. We don't have multiple choice back home. Because back at home I use to live in school hotel, the school takes care of you like a boarding school. So you must behave at this time, you must work in a group.”

“K” talked about the differences he noticed in the educational system. He too, has found the ambiance very different. “K” also commented on the closer relationship between teachers and students as well as the availability of teachers. Teachers have been trying to bring out the best in their students. Success seems to be easier to attain with less work. He has felt motivated. He also talks about the learning that goes on outside of the classroom. He discussed his perspective:

“..back home, people are more the way of teaching is strict. Here, they have a closer teacher to student relationship. Back home, it is not. People just do what they have to get paid. And we still learning, you have more friends, more study in the library. We can call up the lecturer. We can call up the school or ask to try to solve the problem.”

He did have some questions, however, about the grading system and the teacher approach. Even getting credit for continuous learning has been different. He found it strange stating that he was getting credit for just about anything he wrote. He didn't feel

that he had deserved so much credit at times. He felt he was being recognized for not knowing anything. He was used to a more substantive approach. He did feel that teachers were trying to bring out the best in students and keep them motivated. He elaborated:

“The level of education is high but I am not sure about the exams because it seems anything you write you always get a mark for it. You can go to an exam and you really do not know anything but anything you write you get a mark for. I am not sure about that because as you know in the British system you have to write concrete stuff. But here, you can just write...anything... I don't know. Sometimes I write a paper and I get a B and sincerely, I really believe I don't deserve that. I don't know. It's strange. But if you are going to ask International Students and you are already on this program, they will tell you somehow the system is easier because the amount of time we are use to study back home, the same amount of study will never make the grade. Here, it is like the teacher is trying to bring out the best in you and trying to look at where you are going. It is good because it also doesn't put your hopes down.”

He continued discussing how college has affected his culture and how he had changed. He felt that his culture has had a negative impact on his college experience. His culture has taught him things that would make him very unsuccessful in a Canadian college. His city upbringing has helped him to some extent. He elaborated on the differences:

“Definitely my college is playing in role in that, my culture has a negative role. I would say because my culture taught me to not to talk with anyone. Don't be too talkative. Don't be too friendly. And I was lucky I stayed in the city and I stayed with different peoples from different parts. But if I just rely on my culture and interaction, I would come to class and talk to very few people, kept to myself and try to act that behaving in class and not question. the teacher. It is acted on a very negative way. And I think I try not to relate

to people in the same way I relate to that. You are only great with the people you know. And people you don't know or people of higher authority, like teachers, you don't interact with. That's basically the people back home. They have very limited interaction, teachers. And with regards to students, you only talk to him and you don't talk to everyone."

"K" also found the group work and projects very different. Most of his educational experience had involved independent work and summative evaluation. He explained:

"It (schoolwork) was independent study. Again, I only stayed in Kenya for high school. But from what I know there is very little amount of group projects in Kenya. But there is little amount of projects. In India, the one I attended, had projects. We just had one exam (at home) then if you passed it, that went to the next entry level. If you failed, you stay. We did not have groups like that in Toronto."

"Q" shared her thoughts on the differences in terms of finances and the fact that students worked to support themselves. There were fewer worries for her at home. She only had to worry about passing the exam. Since coming to Canada, there have been many more worries. The only things that she really enjoyed here have been the culture and the trends. She explained:

"You know when you are young like they catch you watching TV, the fashion, the trend, the culture, that's the only good ... now that I've lived here that's the only thing that is nice. But generally, studying back home is better. My parents will buy the books for me. I don't have worry to buy the books. I know here they still pay for me money but considering here, the culture that you have to take a loan or work in the summer for us. Okay, it's the parents' responsibility ...so you don't have to worry all this because at home you don't have this to worry...To just pass the

exam. Not worry about where am I going to get books, how am I going to do this? No. You don't have to worry about how will I get this.”

“Q” also found the lack of corporal discipline very different. She felt that students should be beaten. She elaborated:

“...What I dislike about here, they don't beat. Oh there, they beat so much. I was beaten like... that one was terrible. Back home, it is that way still.”

She discussed the difference in students making choices and this has resulted in less stress for herself. Teaching has been more focused in Canada with a semester system. The different areas of math have been confusing. She preferred the exam structure in Canada as well. She too, likes the formative evaluation. Students in her home country are fearful of going to school, particularly at exam time. Often, they are not successful as well. She explained:

“But the teaching here is like, it's more focused for us. It's tough. I find it is most simplified. It 's simpler. But like Biology, or Math, like you have finite, you Algebra, you have Calculus. For us, it's Math. Everything together. And you have to take all the 7 subjects like Math, English, Biology, Physics, Chemistry. It's compulsory. Not like you, you have to choose...So I find it much, much easier here. They make it simpler. Less stress on the student. Less pressure. It's not like at home, the way they teach from January to December. They just teach, teach, teach and then you just do a final exam, a national exam countrywide. The same. Everyone has to do the same exam. That will really determine whether you are passing. You are going to college or university. And like, here it is a continuous assessment. They teach for a month. They test you that and it is not taking too much. So that's why I thought the teaching here much better. I always wish they try to change

because students even fear to go to school (at home)
because they are repeating and it is just too much there.”

“Q” also discussed student behavior and what she felt was a lack of respect for the teachers. Sometimes, in the college, students were rude to teachers. She found it ‘strange’ that people were eating and drinking while the teacher was talking. Punctuality seemed to be non-existent in the classroom. She elaborated:

“Behavior. They have no respect. They make...first, when a teacher talks, you don't make noise. You don't talk. People discussing, eating, like you know... seating in the table like we are calm. No noise, like you want the teachers up there. The classroom is not the place to chat when the teacher is there. Like you know it's rude. Walking like...for us walking to the bathroom at times, ...some teachers depend, some teachers you have to ask or just leave politely. But here this people in and out and they are eating and they are making noise and answering back the teacher. We don't do that. So to us, respect to our teachers. I think here it is different. I think that beating that they made us be quiet or something I don't know. I just used to be so quiet. ...Actually we are so quiet. I find it so strange with people eating and drinking and teacher is trying to talk. People would come late. You cannot come late. For us, if you are late, we fear and then we do not come to class. Oh now, I am use to it. I walk out. But in high school, ya, in high school it was different. It was so different.”

She continued talking about the noise level in the classroom and the fact that students asked the teachers so many questions. She was amazed that students can talk so much. She explained:

“I am just not talking or asking questions to teachers so much. We are just kind of quiet. Even I have noticed some students in my area but you'll realize like the Canadians or people that have been brought up here, they talk so much. They ask teachers so much questions. They joke like, they

are laughing. Today in post-conference, they are talking and the teacher would say nothing. We are just use to being calm. As much I don't talk but I have calmness and respect for the teacher still there. So like you know it's just that."

She also had issues with sincerity in other people and the way they dressed. Dress wasn't just for yourself. It has been considered a way of showing others that you respect them. She was uncomfortable with people smiling as she thought they were often being insincere. She explained:

"For me, dressing impress me. I dress still but it is the quietness and respect for other people, you know. Here you smile. I don't mean to be rude but you cannot tell a genuine smile from someone just smile or on smile from someone just causes to smile like it's just enough from someone saying hi, you know just, being their friend. I realized here, before, they may be friendly but with time, you might pick up it's not natural... like some pretense."

Having experienced racism in high school, she welcomed the change at the community college. She has been enjoying the group work and the availability of assistance. She did, however, find the college to be lacking in social opportunities and other non-academic kinds of support. She wondered if this has been impacted by not living in residence. Friendships seemed to be more casual. Furthermore, she really didn't know any other International Students. They seemed to be spread out. Her clinical group appeared to be a closer group. That may have been because it was a small group in a single setting. They had to work together. She explained:

"I kinda experience prejudice in (small Ontario Town) but in ____ (the community college). Nice, ya, it's nice. I like it there, like for school wise, working in groups and

projects. You can always approach anyone...This college is not social...like you can have friends just to call oh, this but a friend in school to actually stay over the weekend or someone like you go in the summer out together, I haven't seen that in _____(community college). Probably, I think now that they build their friends in residence...We're scattered, that, that's so their friendship is not a solid. It does not stay as solid. It's very casual...The nursing program, people are more friendlier ...because of the clinical group. We are so attached together. It really pick up on that especially now that I'm second year compared to first year ...Ya, there's a big difference but it's not as solid."

International Students have demonstrated an increased need for adaptability and resourcefulness in the areas of change and competency. International Students have seen many differences that have been hurtful, confusing, and amazing. Obviously, this disequilibrium has led to stress and distress.

International Students have not been recognized for who they are. One student was Indian, but not from India. Race and ethnic identity have been equated with place of origin leading to incorrect assumptions about people. Even so, most International Students found everyone helpful. They find Canada more politically stable and there was less crime.

International Students have found the cost of living expensive in Canada. Although the incomes were higher, people were struggling to survive. Calling home from Canada rather than having people in Africa call Canada has been significantly less expensive. International Students have found Canada an expensive country in which to live. They were amazed at the number of cellular phones that students have.

Most International Students liked the teaching and learning environment. They have found the pace of teaching to their liking as it was slower and more understandable.

They were building on previous knowledge and often working in a group. They were not 'spoon fed.' Some International Students talked about having fun in class with their classmates and teacher. They shared their work and ideas. One student said he was 'happy' in class. Students obtained assistance when they needed it. They did not become the 'enemy' of the teacher for not understanding their material. They have not liked 'multiple choice' exams. Teachers have helped students to be successful, as it seemed, to the students, that teachers were trying to bring out the best in their students. They felt closeness with their teachers and classmates. Only one student felt that education was better at home.

International Students found the workload in Canada significantly greater. There was more emphasis on homework, essays and assignments. They were surprised at the number of handouts that are given in class and the fact that they did not have to pay for them. Unlimited access to the Internet was a new experience for them and they liked the college resources including the gym and computers. They felt that they have had more opportunities in Canada.

The grading system confused International Students. Most have only experienced a summative evaluation such as final exams to determine future success. At the college, they said they got credit for everything. One student commented that he probably got more credit than he earned. All efforts have been recognized.

International Students have acquired the perception that children are sent to work. They noticed the lack of uniforms. In addition, the behaviors of students were different as well. They have found Canadian students rude towards teachers, making a great deal of noise when the teacher was speaking and a lack of punctuality. In addition, eating and

drinking in the classroom had been poles apart from their experience. Dress was a concern as well as some considered it a sign of respect for other people. One student felt that there is a dire shortage of corporal punishment in Canada. Overall, the main thing missing according to some students was respect.

The fact that people are always smiling was problematic for one student. She felt that people were being insincere and has found it difficult to make friends. Two International Students have commented on the difficulty in making friends. Yet another student acknowledged how his culture may have played a negative role in his adaptation. He had been taught not to talk, ask questions and get to know people. He realized that he would not be successful in college if he did not have interaction with other students and staff. One other student, purposely, did not mix with other International Students. All students did not know of each other's existence.

Without adapting effectively to the change, sadness, and depression has emerged. These students have been required to develop new coping skills particularly in regards to academics, values, emotional support, and problem solving. One student commented about being raised in two cultures prior to even coming to Canada. Coming to Canada has added a third dimension to which to adjust.

Although this model of 'culture shock' is a phase model, a consideration at this point is that all the phases do not have distinct lines and may not occur in sequence. At this time, students have discussed their struggle to survive academia. They do not seem to see this aspect as an achievement. They are still adapting to the differences in the college culture as exemplified by academic and social experiences.

This chapter has described the college experience of these International Students and some of adjustments and decisions that these International Students must make. Certainly strong values about the education were clearly evident as well as positive perceptions of the campus environment and support from teachers. It was the relationship with peers that has remained most problematic for some students.

Chapter Six

Cross-Cultural Adaptation

International Students have brought cultural diversity in terms of different languages, religious orientations, traditions, worldviews, and their own cultural constructs of reality. Their cultures have been omnipresent in their lives. These all have influenced daily behaviors. International Students have needed to make a number of personal, social, and environmental changes.

One of the most significant issues for International Students has been the ease with which they have lead their daily lives with respect to feeling safe and secure, finding food to which they are accustomed to eating, enjoying satisfying leisure pursuits, and maintaining religious commitments. Whether they realized it or not, they have, in many ways, lost their culture. Sometimes a sense of guilt or fear has arisen as International Students started adopting values and strategies that are present in the host culture resulting in them feeling like they have betrayed their own culture. They have believed that they must adopt or adapt these values or strategies to be successful.

These students have had major concerns and developed new coping strategies. The ability to retain some familiar patterns of activities has eased a path for transition though a very stressful time for International Students. The quality of the International Student adjustment has depended on a number of factors including their ability to manage academics, economics, and social change while retaining some of their own cultural comforts.

This chapter will focus on how these International Students managed living in another culture and some the adjustments that they have made.

Maintaining Culture

It is believed that interaction promotes self-esteem and a sense of belonging. It also decreases loneliness. Having close co-national friends may restrict interaction with host national friends and mainstream Canadian students, but can also help with the adjustment. For some students, it was not a particular concern, however, most International Students were unaware of any other students from Africa studying here. By in large, most International Students did not have mainstream Canadian student friends. As a result, most attempts to maintain any of their culture were left up to the International Students themselves. They identified several aspects of culture and some of the difficulties that they encountered. These difficulties were in the areas of language, religion, traditional celebrations, and family. Other attributes were identified as well.

Maintaining Language

For all students except one, English was their second language although many of them learned it at an early age. “R” did not think it is any big deal that he did not know of any other International Students. Even when asked, he would tell other people that he does not know anyone. A person would have had to speak his language for him to be recognized him as a Mauritian. He elaborated:

“Since I am here I don’t know if there are some Mauritian here but I don’t know any of them here, like any one from my country. If I see one, I won’t be able to recognize him... Someone from Mauritius, I cannot identify. Then, there are

advisors, the counselors, the international counselors, they also asked if there is someone from Mauritius and I say 'I don't know because there are many cultures here.' If you are Chinese and you come from Mauritius then you won't be able to tell if you are from Mauritius. Even from here, unless I speak the language we speak back home, then I cannot say this is from my country."

"O" spoke of maintaining two cultures and the respect of both cultures. He felt that he must follow a certain code of behavior and has kept the two cultures very distinct, especially with language. He did not want to be ignored. He explained:

"There are some people who behave like western people while they are still in Africa. Those people, people are ignored those people who behave like that. So I have to maintain both the western and my traditional behavior. I have to behave the same. When I speak my language, I have to speak straight not putting some English words and not mixing. I have to speak straight. I have to behave like anybody behave in my society. If I am gonna do like I am westernized, then it's gonna be hard for me. And somehow...I am Muslim and I have to stay as a Muslim. But if I go on the other hand, then nobody gonna feel like I am better than them but everybody gonna ignore me."

He continued talking about not being aware of any other students from his country or culture studying here. He has been willing to share his culture with anyone who comes from his home country. He has not been comfortable expressing his culture in the college. The other important concern was language. He would have liked to invite others who speak Swahili to join him in expressing their culture and was really at a loss to express it in other ways. Most of the International Student applicants from his country go to Europe lessening the potential for this opportunity. He elaborated:

"...I was looking for Tanzanian people or Zanzibaric people but I did not get nobody. So for me alone to be or try to express my culture, I can't be such a creative person to

express what I mean, what people need and what people are gonna be interested. That's why until now I don't think my culture is expressed in this college. But I think our culture for these people coming in the coastal area of Indian Ocean in east Africa, we share some culture with Indian people...Maybe because we have some kind of Indian culture that we have, some kind of Islamic culture that we have, so maybe people, some people wear the same as we do back home. They wear a hijabis, like a veil or scarf. And that's it. But the other thing is language. Because I meet people visit Tanzania and what I ask them is Swahili...I am talking to them in Swahili voice. So that is the only reason my culture is expressed...Nothing else because I don't know what to do to contribute for people to recognize my culture. But once other people from Tanzania realize this college, maybe they can join me and maybe we can express our culture because with the life back home people cannot afford to come to study. That's the only problem. So it is impossible to express Tanzanian culture in such a continent, I mean North America. Because most of the people who are black like us, they come from Nigeria or Sudan or such western country. Because most of my people, they go to Europe."

"N" talked about being instructed in two languages and speaking Swahili in school as part of the curriculum and as a way of life. Sometimes it is difficult, but in Canada, she speaks more English because she wanted to be part of the group. She explained:

"...you know we just don't just study English. We have to do Swahili. Some of our subjects are in Swahili. So everything was mixed up. And then most of the time we only use to speak Swahili. But here they speak English most of the time because. Because Africans speak Swahili, right. We can speak on our own but we feel no way we should speak English. So this is a change over here. Even there in school we use to speak our own language...but here, they don't impose anything on us but still we feel like speaking English because everybody speaks English out here. So that's good. It's also hard too, ya. But at home of

course, we speak our own language, right. In school...we have to try to speak English all the time. So you don't get left out."

"B" also talked about the accents in language and wanting to understand more about it. He had felt embarrassed by speaking English and not being understood. He stated that he has more to learn. He shared his thoughts:

"...you don't wanna get embarrassed in the class when you raise up your hands and you wanna talk and they said, pardon, pardon and it's like, without you knowing, it changes because people get to understand you more...My language, the way I speak language English, the accent. Like we have British. ...I thought I have American accent because I watch videos, movies, you, you wanna talk like that right, when I came here I found out I didn't have that. I had nothing... Anyway, it was like difficult. Over the course of time, I like listening to people, like Canadian friends, being around them talking. It is changing me... it's like my day to day life because I basically speak English everyday with Canadian accent, I think I am managing to survive and I think it's still gonna change more."

Sometimes the expectations regarding the degrees of formality and giving respect were problematic. In his culture, elders are not called by their first name. In addition, eye contact was not considered respectful. He also wanted to be open to the rest of the world and not necessarily impose his culture. He maintained some of religious comforts. He did not wear the traditional clothing. Overall, he has found people polite in Canada. They used some titles that would be considered inappropriate for his culture. "K" talked about keeping open to the rest of the world. He explained:

"...Like I stay with a very elderly couple. In my country I am not allowed to talk and calling people by their first names, you know. I can't call them. He is called George. But I can't call him George. I have to put something like I can't call. I have to call like in my country a respectable

name will be like in Swahili. I don't have the English tongue for that. There is one thing. The other thing is that you cannot look at your elder straight in the eye. You have to show some respect. The thing is people are straightforward. People are really polite here. Really polite I have to say. People will use the word "Sir" here. In my country, they are that resistant. People do want to call you Mister or they don't want to use that word. Basically the most significant difference is the social aspect. I don't think I have (maintained cultural values). I don't really think I have. The only thing is I read the bible. I still cope. Beside that I couldn't do things the same way and I even back home. I do not wear the traditional clothes that I used to wear. I speak Swahili, when I am with people from Kenya but beside we I am not high on acting like closing myself to the world."

"Q" talked about language and the fact that it was an area of no special interest for her. She explained:

"I notice, also here ... the language. People are very different. It's just the difference, not my thing."

International Students have seen language as a significant part of their identity. They recognized, however, that because someone speaks a certain language, it might indicate that person's origin. Then again, it may lead to assumptions. They have learned that it won't always help them to get to know people even if they are from their own country. There are many small communities of people from their homelands in Toronto. There are so many cultures.

Languages were to be kept distinguishable and not to be mixed with other languages. International Students have had a great desire to 'fit in' and have been obliged to speak English more often. For most this has been because it is the language in which instruction is given. One student was particularly concerned about his accent and did not

want to be embarrassed. They were realizing that English is not always spoken the same way. Another student did not feel that he could be totally 'westernized.' He was afraid of being ignored by his family and friends at home because it would be perceived that he considered himself better than other people.

Another student commented on calling people by their given or first name. This was not done in his home country. Even here, he preferred to add a title. Profanity is non-existent for these students. Eye contact is another taboo. Yet, in Canada, it is expected for people to have eye contact as a display of active listening and speaking.

Feelings of loneliness and stress have emerged. Even so one, student did not want to 'close himself off from the world.' Many students have not had someone with whom they can speak their language. As a result, International Students did not feel that they were expressing their culture through language.

Maintaining Religion and Traditional Celebrations

Engaging in opportunities to participate in religious and national holidays has helped some International Students retain their culture. Both holidays and maintaining religion have been problematic. The emphasis on some holidays was different in Canada. Accessing religious facilities for some International Students has proven difficult.

“R” talked about the holiday schedule being very different in Africa. The emphasis on holidays is somewhat different as well. He figured that it evens out in the long run. It was not bad, just different. He explained:

“It is just like when I came here, like you have a Christmas and it's a big thing. It's a big holiday. And New Year is not that much of a concern. It's not that big. But the difference is back home is Christmas is same as Christmas and New Year. Like New Year is more festive than Christmas. You enjoy yourself on Christmas time but you don't get that much of a holiday compared to New Year...You get the week of Easter. April, you got to wait for high school or college and then you can come back and you have school until August. And August, you got four weeks you go back then go to October, November then get to four weeks again. About the holiday thing. Here you got summer. You have a long summer. In Mauritius we don't get summer...I miss it but I don't miss it. Because here we have, in fact here we have more holidays. Like the summer we have three, four months. So what you miss there, you get it in.”

“O” discussed the lack of religion in the lives of children in Canada. He talked about how he maintained some of his religion by keeping his holy day and making use of the college prayer room. He admitted that he does not pray every day. He elaborated:

“First of all about in school, you don't teach your kids about religion. But they come, if those Islamic people they have Islamic knowledge, and Christian, they have bible knowledge. Alright, some of my culture maybe. I am Muslim and like I am able to go to mosque. There is a lot of mosque in here. Though they have a different distance, because back home when I go to the mosque, I just walk five minute you are in the mosque, walking. Here, you have to catch a bus. So I can't go, like five prayers a day but I pray every Friday. For other prayers, I pray at home. The good thing right here in school, they have a prayer room. So for Muslim, they can participate in going. They going to pray down there.”

“N” talked about keeping up with Canadian society as well as maintaining her religion and volunteering at her mosque. She stated that she did not wear any of the traditional dress. Praying was important to her but there was not always enough time.

She talked about how friendly everyone was at the mosque. Here, she has had the opportunity to speak her language. She felt good about this experience. She elaborated:

“Actually when I came here, my uncle used to tell me ‘you are so slim. You don't have to do that, this.’ But I am just open-minded so it did not affect me a lot when I came here. Secondly, of course, I am Muslim but I do not wear the hijab thing. Back home too, I did not put that thing on. It did not make any difference for me. It's just the praying thing that I don't want to leave it. I have to go with my religion. But there is no extra time. Of course, there is volunteer. When we go to pray. We have to have help old people...So this is what I do but not any other thing. We speak all types of language when we go to pray. And you know our community is good...Like me, I am not from here and I came from Tanzania. The first two weeks there it was so good because they help me because they ask me how is school and how it has been. It is a very good thing.”

“B” shared his strong commitment to attending church. He has been able to locate a Nigerian community within a church. He said it is like family. He has had a strong sense of faith and has maintained it despite having a social and academic life. He talked about self-discovery in terms of aspects of his life that will never leave him. He explained:

“People are so friendly. You have clubs. You have friends. You can go everywhere, so I was studying until nine o'clock or until six, seven o'clock, and I still go out and it's been like expectations for social life has been okay. And I do attend church, because my parents are Christians. I am a Christian and I am a strong believer and it was instilled in me. When you grow out of a teen-age, when you discover life for yourself, there are some things you discover. If it were a part of your life before and you discover it, it will never leave you, something like that. I go to church, part of my social life is like church, like I'm in the choir here, I can

sing. Part of life Saturdays, Wednesdays, Sundays 'till like four o'clock. I have no families here, just where I come from, it's like when you're from the same place with someone, you can trust family and basically I go to Nigerian church. It's like a family away from a family."

He also talked about how he felt his values have not changed even though he has had tremendous western influence in his life. He felt his strong sense of values will ensure his success in life. He elaborated:

"...All my life has been like people living up to 'Oh, I wanna be in America, I want to be this." So if you like, all my life has been Western influence, like the values I had never change, never change. Not that I don't think of Africa, Nigeria, like every week I think. Like my values never change, I'm that kind of person. Things don't basically change me. Friends don't change me, no peer pressure. So it is the situation is where I can maintain my values, then I'm going to be fine and I'd rather do it."

"M" talked about not maintaining traditions. As far as she is concerned, schooling has interfered with her traditions. She has thought maintaining her traditions while she is a student has been impossible and in some ways, not that important. For her, it has been just the same as back home as she had maintained only a couple of events. She has been more interested in the social activities. She shared:

"That's really a far-fetched because, like, back home, my culture, there we do traditional things. When you are a student it doesn't matter. I don't even think about it. I just think about the social activity. It doesn't matter. Ya, I can't keep holidays because we have very special day and I have certain things to do. I forget about prayers. When somebody dies, and it one year, we sit down in our house and pray. I can just do it in my house. I was like went to Protestant back at home. Here, it is the same."

Finding a church has been difficult for “Q.” She was trying to find one that could meet her needs and be consistent with her values. She discussed:

“Pain, going here in Toronto...Some people go through many churches and that's one thing that I can do.”

For most Intentional Students, religious pursuits, and holidays have played a positive role and influenced them by providing support and self-esteem. Although there has been a different emphasis on holidays, religion has guided them to maintain positive behaviors and gain insight into their own moral judgment. Some students haven't felt that there has been a great deal of time for religious pursuits while others have made it an integral part of their life in Canada. One student considered it 'far-fetched' because there was no time in the life of a student to maintain their religion.

One International Student has maintained the Sabbath and has utilized the 'Prayer Room' on the campus while another has sung in a choir. For some International Students, religion has helped them maintain their language and their values. It has been a big part of their life. They have enjoyed attending their places of worship.

There has been a strong correlation between religion and high regard for family and honor. One student has volunteered to maintain her language and her religion. Another International Student was trying to find a church to suit her. Another student has felt that Canadian children are lacking in a religious background. For other students, maintaining religious pursuits has been a moderating influence in the potential for stress and depression. It has been part of their lives and they did not want it to leave. They acknowledged the value of religion in their lives.

Maintaining Family

Many International Students have had high family obligations. They have respected the sacrifices their parents have made. They have promoted the broader family needs at the expense of their own individual pursuits. They have been impacted by a new-found autonomy and changed relationships. These family obligations have played a positive role in the development of these relationships.

“R” talked about the development of new traditions with the changes within his family as he seems to be dealing with three cultures. He was also trying to really focus on Canadian culture as well. Sometimes things have become a little mixed. He described this in relation to food. He explained:

“Some of the family have different values but for me where I am living right now. His wife is from an Indian country so we have two cultures, one from my country and one from their country. First, we have Canadian. Canadian only. So combine everything and we live with it. We prepare food from my country, we eat and we prepare Canadian food and we eat.”

“O” described some of his family expectations. He has wanted to get married, but his family wants him to be established first. He has been looking forward to getting a good job and getting some Canadian work experience. Getting married at this time would have a negative impact on his future. He elaborated:

“I would like to maybe marry early but my father say you don't have to that until I finish my education. So when do I ...so when am I gonna finish my education? When I am 40 years old then when I get my first kid gonna tell me ... I am like grandfather to him, not like father. So what they expect to me not to associate with a friend that can take me away from my goal, my goal that I set. Not to have a wife soon. But I have to wait... ...For me getting a wife soon is like plan for the future very early. Having let marry is going to mess up my future plan.”

He talked about the marriage traditions at home and the customs surrounding socialization. He said that some girls have been forced to get married and that girls and boys must be chaperoned. Here, too, he notices that single parenthood is considered the norm, but not in his home country. According to him, girls are the same everywhere. He explained:

“And maybe some stuff about marriage, back home we don't have that arrangement. We don't have arrangement. ...So they force her to marry rich person because they know their daughter will now live in a secure condition and as well as that rich man can help them. And back home you cannot hang in with your girlfriend and if those people gonna catch you in a secret place, maybe you go to the park and stay, they are gonna catch you and they force you to marry. They force you right on to marry. It's like that. Or if you give her pregnancy, then you have to marry her. But here everything is okay. Even a pregnancy person, it's okay. But girls always, they behave the same. Like when you go to marry a girl now she know each and everything of marriage. Ya. So always the same. You cannot teach a girl how to behave because she knows everything. So that's a problem.”

“O” talked about culture being a broad space. He continued his discussion by sharing how proposals are made and how after marriage, disputes and problems were resolved. He elaborated:

“Culture is broad space. In marriage you have to go to that girl's parent. Like me, I cannot go on my own. But maybe I can tell my grandfather, I can tell my father or my uncle who are mature, grown up so they can talk to my bride, I mean to my bride's parents very clearly...So for any problem that gonna happen inside our marriage she gonna tell her parent and her parent are gonna come to those people who come to make the act of putting ring, those who came to the wedding, the ceremony. If I am going to have a

contradiction with my wife, then we have to make a solution we don't have to divorce or ya. We have to make a solution by using those parents on both sides, sitting together and negotiate what the problem is.”

He also talked about the status of women at home and what he expects with regard to behaviors. He has been very cognizant of the behaviors of other students. He shared:

“Because back home we have both, some of them you have girlfriend and be at your house but that girl, many people regard, what we call a ghetto girl. She doesn't behave like a girl. Because a girl should not go with any man until they are married. They do like that...For me I prefer the one of my own culture and my traditional culture of having a girl during the marriage, not outside the marriage. I don't like my kids and my sister to be like that. I don't care for others. As long as I am not gonna marry her.”

“N” discussed some of her differences, although she said it does not make any difference for her. She talked about socializing with other people even from different castes. Having friends who smoked was something new for her. She acknowledged not telling her family everything although she missed them tremendously. She continued:

“It did not make any difference for me. Some people smoking. But one or two of my friends are smoking but it didn't affect me. Because I did not used to, right? So there is nothing different. No. It's just that there the boys are too few. But here, I have come to know too many boys in different cultures. Even if they are Muslims, they are different castes, so we get to know everybody. So I don't think there is anything wrong with that. Ya but everything is okay. You know I get used to everyone very fast. I think because of my sign, I'm Gemini, right?...I know I am big girl and I don't have to tell Mom all the time. But there you always have your parents so it is a difference. You do all these crying and your parents over there. But here that is the thing I miss. I really miss my parents. I wish I was with

them or they were with me. I really think that is the difference...I think parents is the biggest, biggest issue.”

“B” talked about his adherence to respect. He said that it would never leave him. He has found the lack of respect tremendously different in Canada. Even at home, people who were not familiar were given respect. There was much more respect at home, especially for family. He shared:

“And the part of my culture that the thing that would never leave is respect... the only thing that I find is so different is the respect because in my culture, it's a lot of respect everywhere. Even the way you talk to people like people you don't know like you give respect, like maximum respect. Even the way you talk to your elder brother...”

“K” talked about missing his family and his girl friend. It has been some time since they were all together and their lives have changed. He has kept closer contact with them since coming to Canada, more so than when he was in India, telling them what he is doing in Canada. Because he has been calling them so often, he has felt that they are closer to him. He talked about ‘owing them.’ He has shared his issues and concerns with them. In spite of missing his family, he felt that he has been able to cope. He elaborated:

“Ya. I miss my family... But for the past something, like seven years we haven't been together as a family. So this time, I felt that I owe them...This has been compounded because my girlfriend stayed with my family. So I have to call every single weekend. And I have to keep in touch but if I didn't call them for more than one month, it will be kind of like improper. Because when I was in India, I sometimes don't call for like three, sometime two months, you know. So I think missing my family is not because of Canada. It is because I call them and I keep in touch with them. And

keeping in touch with them keeps them close to my mind, you know. And everything I do, I keep between family...Because it has been five years since I have been away from home all together. So it's only this time that I miss them but the other time I feel I am okay....”

“Q” talked about her family values and the inspirations she has felt from her family. She recalled some of the family discussions and how they have taught her to be true to herself. She elaborated:

“It was the way I was brought up. My parents, my Dad would sit down and say ‘My dear children.’ He use to talk and he'd say that ‘Some of you won't succeed and some of you will win some. You'd listen to me and try to use it as a tool to grow and some of you won't.’ But no one should turn around and say that ‘Dad you did not do this and that for me.’...But I look upon my Dad so much. But I would love to be like him... he is very kind, very encouraging, very appreciative. He is just a wonderful man...So with that like it has just tried to help me stay in what I believe. And my Mom she is very Christian in spirit. Like her spiritualities so when things are tough my Mom will just trust in God and pray. So we will pray. So those are the little things that I have kept...You know some things are not in just someone's personality. It may be an easier way to escape. You should try you can't. It is just not in you.”

Family has been very important to International Students. They have missed their families incredibly. They have called home frequently and they all smiled when they talked about their families. This was not to say that they agreed with all their family decisions and abided by all the values that they have been taught. There are many family values that these International Students felt they must uphold. These included the rituals around talking with members of the opposite gender and castes, dating, and marriage as

well as how disputes are resolved. In addition, smoking was not considered appropriate. International Students acknowledged that some behaviors are just not in their personality.

For the most part, however, International Students have kept the concept of family close and the values and traditions have been a large part of their lives. At times, however, they admitted that they do not tell their families 'everything.' There had even been some integration of other cultures into their home lives. One student defined culture as a 'broad space.'

Their respect for their parents was clearly evident and for the most part, they felt inspired by these values. They have respected their families and appreciated the values that have been instilled in them. This has helped International Students to adjust to college, especially in times of challenge. They have adhered to these values to sustain themselves.

Other Considerations

"Culture is a broad space" was described by one of the International Students. It has incorporated many other aspects of life. The following students have described other aspects of culture that these students have found different, difficult, and as a source of pride.

'N' talked about not enjoying the food here. Music and movies were not any different for her but it took some time to get used to the food. She stated that she particularly enjoyed MacDonalds. Everything at home, however, was fresh. They were fewer convenience foods. She explained:

"...You know, food is not tasty over hear. I am very much into food. I like food, different types of food. Back home,

you get everything fresh. Here everything is frozen, so food makes a very big difference. I did not like food the first three-four months. I just like McDonalds and that's it. ...I miss my mom's food. And about the music I don't think there is much difference. We use to hear Indian music over there and here we do the same thing. So there is no difference. Even the CDs, it's the same...even the movies. So we go to Indian movies. But food is different. There is a lot of difference."

"S" talked about being able to eat food that is similar to home. It was helpful that he has been sharing his accommodation with someone from his own country. It has, however, been a different experience going to church wearing the traditional dress where he was asked to explain his outfits. He talked about this day when he wore his traditional outfit to school and was the subject of many questions. He shared:

"I share with someone from my own country and we speak the same language. We almost maintain the same food. Sometimes, once in a while when I go to church, I dress in the traditional way. When it happens that way people really want to know everything. People come and say will you explain your dress to my son. No, like, when I go to church. I don't put on Kente. You know why? It is cold sometimes and you can't just put it that way. So, they want you to explain so I don't put them on often. I have a lot. I brought a lot. I don't put them on. Eventually I will be. So what will happen when I have the traditional dress when I came to school. Now all my friends ask "Are you going somewhere? Having a date tonight? It's okay. So tell us what?" How come you are dressed this way. Nothing. But that's how it goes."

He also talked about dressing for different occasions and how he was trying to respect the environment and meet the expectations of others. He explained:

“Ya. Sometimes, ya like when I am going to an important place like when I am going to the office. I like putting on a suit, then I dress traditionally. If I am not in school or in uniform or something I put on something casual clothes. So like when I am going to some place that you respect like church or to see somebody or someone who in the order.”

“Q” also talked about traditional dress as a means of appreciating her culture. She has become very used to the western style of dress. It seems to be a source of comfort and pride for her now and she admitted that she appreciated it more than ever now. She elaborated:

“.... ... the dress you don't see as much. It's only that, I never appreciate our dress because in Kenya, we really dressed more westernized but this is culture, Masai...we try to appreciate our culture...when I went home and came back, I really kinda appreciate that...During the Afro fest, like the African festival, I try to dress up just to represent, I feel proud of myself but back home I never use to bother.”

“S” talked about dress being much freer in Canada where at home, it seemed to be much neater. In addition, he had found limitations imposed because people were labeled. Going around with a friend of the same gender set up the potential for some assumptions in Canada and he was somewhat confused by these social attitudes. He has found this very different. He explained:

“...I used to uniforms but here, it is like a free style. Always my shirt always have to be tucked in, make sure that your belt is in the right place. What we use to do with your friends... Like people say ‘gay.’ But even if you move with the friend people say you are ‘gay.’ There is a whole lot of limitations and that’s a whole lot of stuff. . Here, ya. Going around with your friend... They may be thinking that you're gay. It's not like that at home. So that is basically one of the things.”

He also found the prevalence of women in the workforce very different. Even the emphasis on women in the culture has been different. It has really affected his attitude towards women. At home, this is not the case. He elaborated:

“Here, it's everything about the ladies. It's all about the ladies. That's what people say, I don't know. My country is not like that. When I came here I said everybody is like... I talked to the International Student who is lady. I went to the registrar's office, I talked to the lady... When I went to the bank I want to talk to some person, it was a lady. So it's like, everybody is a lady. It's not like that in my country ... How come every place is a lady. Ladies cannot do these things. I was wrong. Back in my country, it's not like that. Back home, you can go into an office and go to like and go to a place where you find a secretary or that kind of stuff. It's always like that. But in tradings, sellings, in the market and it's ladies. In our country, only 1% are ladies in the industry.”

“S” has managed to be able to talk to women in varying positions and realized that this was an accepted practice. He continued to talk about how complicated relationships were with women in Canada. The terminology and the structure of the relationships were a challenge for him.

“So when I came here I find a couple of them and I decided to talk to them but here, you can talk to people. It's no offence. They look at ladies at a different angle. If you talk to people, being a guy talking to a girl, she might be thinking you are interested in her. Relationships and things like that are different. Here the breakdown _ of dating _ something like that. Seeing someone, dating, being in a relationship... it's just one thing to back home. I am already seeing someone. Not like ... I am already seeing someone. I am already dating someone. Okay, it's not like that. Once you move in there is someone like you're in a relationship with the person. So like here... A lot say they use all words to say.. Whatever you say you say you are in a relationship.

That's it. So here everything looks different. ...It's not like that back home."

"B" made several comments about music. He had not found any difference coming to Canada. He was very familiar with the music scene. He commented:

"Basically I still listen to like some music from back home since I bring CDs from back home. But it has been like I listen to old classics all my life. So it has been like that. I grew up with Michael Jackson, Stevie Wonder way back there when I was a kid also. Like I am into R & B. All the hip-hop since the 80's. I was a kid then but I grew up with it."

He continued talking about food. He had grown accustomed to eating pizza, something he ate once and thought he would never eat again. He was able to obtain many foods that are familiar to him but some of them were expensive and not quite the same. He explained that everything at home has been influenced by western culture. He shared:

"So it's a lot back has not changed but the food...I never ate pizza in my life. Never ate pizza in my life till I came to Canada. So like...the first time I ate pizza, I said "I'll never eat this again." Well, guess what I ate today. Like my lunch was pizza. Like the food, it changed a lot. Ya, everything is influenced by the western culture. The main food is rice and you can always get rice here. Rice is huge. But the cultural foods that we have down there, yeah, you can get it here even if you get it here it is expensive and a bit different also."

"B" continued by making comments about the changing of the seasons. Having four seasons was new to him, and so was the necessity to have a variety of clothing to accommodate for it. The enjoyment of seeing snow was starting to wear off now. He explained:

"..the weather is like so different, actually we have two seasons, dry and rainy season...Here, we have four seasons,

you have to buy four clothes in a year...totally different. I never saw snow,...never in my life until December 1999 and I love it, oh it was so good. I played in the snow. I was like 21 but I played in the snow, but now it's getting on my nerves.”

He also discussed values and some of his relationships with his friends. He did not think his experience in Canada can changes his values. He gave his rationale:

“I don't let things change me or ya, a very big thing can change my values...Even when I was in high-school, they smoked weed, smoke cigarette...they were bosom friends.... When I can work with guys for two years and they smoke every living day and I never smoke in my life. They cannot change me.”

“S” talked about his discoveries. Music was very similar for him but food was very different. He hasn't usually eaten in restaurants, but has made use of the campus food sources. He has found buying some of his home type of foods expensive here and sometimes he has felt that he has wasted his money. He has resigned himself to the fast food life. He explained:

“Music because we enjoy the same music back home. But like food, I don't really eat in restaurants....But sometimes you buy something and I waste my money. You can't eat it so.... in that aspect, it is a mistake. And then like here we have some African curry bread in shops. You can buy some stuff there and mix but it is expensive. You spend like more than \$50 for a course that will not take you even more than a week. It's so expensive. I have to adjust to that one because that one you can go with fries, burger, KFC, MacDonalds, Burger King...And sometimes I go buy Chinese food because you can have rice.”

“M” also talked about music as being very similar and about the style of dress in Canada. Here, people are more exposed. This exposure was considered to be part of an

attitude. People from her culture would be 'shocked' at the amount of exposure that is seen in Canada. It would be not considered appropriate. In addition, the weather has been cold here. She explained:

"What I see different here in Canada, I see they way people dress because at home people would be shocked at you like you dress and you are exposed. The music is the same but the dress is different. Here, I cover all my body because of cold and it depends on your habit. In my family, a certain dress is an attitude."

She made another comment in regards to the building of houses. She has discovered how homes are built and the regulations surrounding them most interesting. She stated:

"like the structure..... houses. At home, it is not like that, you just build where you want to build. It is so interesting."

“K’ talked about cultures and has been much happier in Canada than he was in India. He was the only ‘black’ and he experienced racism in India. There, he felt people were saying ‘nasty ‘ things about him. People were not friendly and he often missed class. They would not speak in English so he could understand. He eventually was about to deal with their comments and stated that it is not a good thing to which to become accustomed. He made the best of a bad situation. Life seemed to improve by his third year in India and he had learned to be better able to handle people’s preconceived notions. He discovered that it was better to meet them head on by getting to know people. He explained:

“Definitely you feel better about attending here. (In India) You attend 40 to 45 % because being the only African in the whole Commerce Department. You had very a few friends...And they don't talk English. They were talking Indian so we had the complications...After a while the names they used to call black people, I found it offensive. That would get to you. You know you wake up, you go to college and you are jolly and someone calls you that and spoils your whole day. But the funny thing after a while you just laugh about it after five months, six months. I told my friend, ‘oh they called me this today. And they like getting to be so creative these days.’...So you get used to it, I guess. It's not good to get used to it but you have to get over it and do what you can. Actually, the change that is happening in my third year, I met a lot of people And the thing was I thought people from Europe and I learned not to bother. And I thought the people who knew stuff say nasty stuff because okay he is from Africa. People don't know stuff. And they are ignorant about something they will not treat you as they should...it is just like some people have preconceived notions...And if you don't talk to people, they'll never know what you are saying...So that the most important thing for me right now is that I really enjoy learning about different cultures.”

He talked about getting to know other cultures and about opening up to other people. He also commented about participating in this interview. He continued:

“ I make a point of knowing for me because ...I am an avid sports fan. So at least, if any question from a country tells me, comes from Japan or any country probably I know someone from that country. So, since I talk to people... you relate to that label that you know something from their country. They want to know something else. And slowly I start to open up and talk to people. So if I was to bring that Kenyan student, straight from Kenya and you told him that you wanted to do an interview, don't promise. Probably 60% or 70% will not go. Most people will not do it if you ask them. Most would not be that enthusiastic if that was the first time they left Kenya. Most people are taught that that you don't have to do to anything...”

Other aspects of Canadian life have interested “K”. He was impressed with the universal health care system in Canada. At home, all expenses would have been the responsibility of the family. He has been also impressed with the opportunities to find work and that the economy was so much better here. He has enjoyed the fact he can obtain hot water 24-hours a day and that he can travel around quite easily without a car. The ability to call home rather inexpensively was a tremendous bonus. He elaborated:

“And the fact that and on other things like health care. Here you have a working health care plan...(At home) All of the expenses fall on the family. What else,...jobs. Look at the paper...Everyday there is a job. Like in my home, if you would see 5 vacancies, you would send resumes as soon as possible because you don't know when you can see vacancies like that in the paper...Our economy is so bad. Downward trend and it is good to come in a place where things are working...The hospitals are up and going. You have hot water 24 hours a day ...I have to say the infrastructure is great. I don't really need a car. I can use

the bus. I don't need the car...I can afford to call a cab. It is cheaper to call home."

"Q" talked about traditional food and how she has tried to eat it as often as she can. She has appreciated it that much more now. She never brought any of her traditional music with her at first, but after her visit home she brought several tapes to which to listen and dance. She stated that if her country were more stable she never would have left home. She has felt very alone. She shared:

"..it's not like really original but I still eat it here...We always have to have that food , to mix with beef or chicken and greens, the food we try to eat, like beans we used to boil from scratch, the way we like...you appreciate much more...So the music. When I went, when I come back, I never had one tape of African but when I went to visit and came back. That's all I like to listening, dancing... I say If only our country be financially and economically stable, I would have never, never, never thought of coming here...just the economic is good but the socialization, people are stressed, crying, depressed...It can be friendless. It can be there for a moment but on and off, it's not like something dependable.

"O" talked about the socialization process in terms of neighborhood. There seemed to be more opportunity to socialize at home and he felt that the Canadian climate was a factor in this. In addition, his sense of community caring was noted. He shared.

"The other problem is about the neighborhood. Back home, we have because it is like always summer. It is a hot country. It is not a cold country. So, some people stay on the street on the corner, they talk and they share friendly. But here, everybody on his own at home and nobody take care of the other person who live on his side."

“O” talked about getting music from home. He also had experienced a festival in Toronto where he was able to join an African group of musicians. He did express conflict with his goals, however, as he was not working towards his main reason for being in Canada. He explained:

“...I order from my family, those CDs to listen to my back home music, Tanzanian music. The other day when had a festival here in Canada, we go to the park in the downtown and we participate...But there are some couple of Tanzanian musician or Zairian musician, when they come here, I can't go there because I am in my way of something that I follow here. I mean studying. I am busy for going there. I got to study. That's important. So I miss them somehow.”

There have been many differences and adaptations for these African International Students. They have experienced 'culture shock' from a variety of perspectives and been able survive in the new environment. Most International Students did not enjoy the food in Canada. They have adjusted to fast foods like pizza and the golden arches of MacDonalds. They did not find the food here as fresh and it was expensive to obtain many of their foods from home. Rice has been a main staple in their diets.

One International Student wore his traditional dress to church and school and as a result, was the object of many curious questions. He was asked to explain his dress and in turn, people asked him if he had a date. Maintaining their tradition dress was a source of comfort and pride even more so than when they were at home. The use of the word 'gay' was a source of concern. Even the terminology around relationships was confusing for one student.

International Students have talked about dress as a means of showing respect and an attitude. Shirts must be tucked in and belts must be placed in proper position. Some students felt that Canadians dressed to expose themselves.

One student considered life in Canada to be about the ladies. In addition, another student was surprised about the number of women in the workforce and the responsible positions that they hold.

Music and other forms of entertainment were not different from home for some International Students. Others have brought some music from home or had it sent to them. They talked about the need to study. They state their values have not been changing despite tremendous peer pressure and the desire not to be 'left out.'

One student was getting tired of winter while others were still enjoying it. One student actually preferred it. One student commented on how winter impacts socialization. Another student found how houses are built in Toronto amusing. They were amazed at the transit system, the healthcare system, the economy and the opportunities for work.

International Students have become more comfortable in the new culture and have learned the way of mainstream Canadian life. This is consistent with Stage 4 of the 'culture shock' model. They are more confident and able to cope in the new environment and attempt to maintain some of their culture. This chapter has focused on International Students experience in maintaining their culture. They have described this in terms of language, religion, traditional celebrations, family, and a variety of other observations. They have been on a journey about discovery of Canada and themselves.

Chapter Seven

What's Ahead

These nine African International Students have talked about having goals and wanting to do well in their academic studies and life. They were able to describe how they felt that they had changed, what it would be like for them to return home and what future plans they had. This chapter will focus on the new sense they have about themselves, their ability to return home and the adjustments that they might be required to make and share what hopes they have for their future.

A New Sense of Self

Self-esteem and self-concept have increased for these International Students because of their experiences in Canada. For this to occur, most of these experiences must have had a positive outcome. International Students have remained stressed and angry, but they have been developing ways to deal with their anger and stress. They told me that they were more confident and more responsible. Some were making friends and from their comments, have done well with their studies despite some frustrations. They have made cross-cultural connections with other students and adaptations. These comments are consistent with Stage 5 of 'culture shock.' This chapter will focus on this stage.

“R” had found people in the college very helpful. In addition, he has made a few friends that he genuinely seems to value. The impacts of interpersonal relationships and experience have contributed to his self-esteem. He has become more self-reliant and responsible. He knew what he wanted to do. He explained:

“Now I can go to the computer without being afraid of doing something else...I can do some new program...Sometimes I will go alone in the lab. Like before, I used to wait for a friend to go to the lab. After that I say no. It is not good every time to get somebody to go with you. Maybe that is the thing to do. They would be happy to help but you have to be comfortable....This experience has made me more myself like, more responsible and work...It's good for me. I am having fun when I study. And this is helping me. Like right now I have an objective. I know what I want to be.”

He stated that he has also learned the concept of punctuality and understood that attribute was valued in Canada. He had adopted a value shared by many of his peers and as a result, adapted his behavior. “R” shared his thoughts on being responsible:

“Being or causing some sort of responsibility like if you have to go somewhere you have to be on time. You don't want to be late. You just want to be on time like when you go or like when you go for an interview or you are going to meet someone you make sure that you there on time. It's better to be there early than late. So this time.... whenever I go I make sure that I am there early like 10 minutes or 15 minutes so I don't make the person wait. So I try to be always on time. This is how I am...like right now I am more responsible like”

“A” described herself as being less shy and eager to communicate with others, particularly as she has felt that her English had improved. Her sense of self was one of

more confidence. She was able to 'blast' someone as well as make jokes as a result of her cross-cultural adaptation. She explained:

"My English is better now. And no more that shy. Like I can say whatever I want. Like I can just blast someone or crack some jokes. It's okay. I enjoy it. I enjoy it.... I'll be slang a little bit like in terms of speaking English."

"O" has enjoyed success, as he was able to work in a group and manage conflict within that group. Because of his cross-cultural adaptations, he felt that this was an area in which he now excelled. He commented:

"When I was back home I did not know how to work in a group. Though I was doing it but now I am advance in working as a group like how to handle a friend who is working in a group and have no conflict with them. That's what I have changed."

He also has become more responsible about time in terms of his punctuality. One of his adaptations is that he has developed a schedule to make sure he is on time. In addition, he is taking more responsibility for his learning. He came to understand that he would be successful in school by using his own notes and reading as well. At home, he felt he was spoon-fed but in Canada, he has felt more accountability to do things on his own. He explained:

"And time back home, I don't care about time. When you tell me you say we have to meet at about five, then, maybe, at five, I will be somewhere. When it reach five, then I start to come...I do everything on schedule to make sure I get everything on time. I learn how to study on your own. ...Here they give you book. Then you even if you do not attend the class you are gonna pass as well as you read exactly what is in the book. But back home, the teacher give you notes. And you suppose to write those notes. And there is some books for only reference. The book is very advanced...But here I really learn to read the text and go

with your own note. That's what I am changing. Back home, you are like spoon feeding back home. But here you got to do on your own."

"N" shared her cross-cultural adaptations in terms of how her thinking had changed. She has used the Internet more. Her English had improved. She had become diet and image conscious. She was studying more and was more involved with her teachers. She has been friendlier with the boys and not as shy. She was making some decisions and developing confidence in doing so. She thought her family was proud of the changes in her. She commented on her adaptations:

"...I think in a different way. I do not know how to explain. I have become open-minded...For example, Internet, we did not use much at home. I have changed lots of things. Even when I speak English. Now I speak precisely. So I have just changed. Even the food. Now I am more conscious. How many calories is this? I shouldn't eat this, I shouldn't eat. Everybody in the college is skinny and this I feel I have to have style and everything. In way I have changed. Even my reading style and lessons, I did not use to read my lessons. Now I am always with my books. I am always in the library. I am always with my teacher so I think this is a change with me. Actually, I am very much friendlier with the boys too....I don't feel shy.... Ya. I think when I go back home I have to make my own decisions there too now. It won't change...I get courage now. Even when he calls me I tell him I did this, I did this. ...'That's good, that's good. At least you don't need me now."

"S" talks about his adaptations and said that he understands the concept of money much better now. He made the following comment:

"Basically what I can say, the first thing I can say is about money trend. Personally, I realize I know better now than before. Money."

“B” described his adaptation in terms of being more serious about his studies in college than he was in vocational school. He has been studying outside of class and this is a new phenomenon for him. He, also, had felt that he has matured as he considered this experience of coming to the ‘real’ world as making him focus on the ‘true’ values in life. He wanted to be successful and has used any spare time to study to achieve his goal. He shared the following:

“Ah, I have been more serious, like I told you. When I was going to the vocational school, and I was like, I never study. I just go to class. I never missed class. I would never miss class for anything in the world cause I don’t like studying by myself and I don’t know what to study by myself. I’m not that kind of person...When I’m class and the teacher is explaining something and the bulb would go on. So basically I never study. When I go to college, it was different courses, heavy course load, I have to look up my books and read. It’s like different and I never used to study...Level of maturity...I have been in the real world since I came to Canada... I had it was hard to focus on the true values of life. Well, you have to succeed in life. Pass all your courses to succeed...I have the time, sit down to study my book.”

“M” talked about improving herself and developing an appreciation for tomorrow as part of her adaptation. She had come to understand that learning is gaining things even if she did not enjoy learning it. This was true of her programming course that she did not enjoy, but realized that there were benefits in being successful in this course. She said that she has the ability to learn other things. She commented:

“Well, I’ve changed as a person because, like I wanted to try to improve and increase the level of how I use to go...I just decided I just care about a lot of things...What will happen tomorrow? So, I am praying for success. I did some

computing. I did learn other stuff so I gained something instead.”

“K” stated that he had more confidence. He also talked about learning about other cultures as a result of his working in a factory and his international experiences. He had gained a better understanding of people and their experiences. He was a very proud person. Having been a manager at home, but working in a factory in Canada, he had become less judgmental. For him, this was a significant cross-cultural adaptation. He explained:

“First I think I am more confident in how I do things. I am more of a hardworking person. And this time the other aspects of life now that I've worked in a factory I know how people in the factory live and how life is at the other end. I am more knowledgeable about different cultures now that I lived in different countries and cultures... and I was proud since I came over I was managing a company, a foreman...I guess it gives me a more understanding on people and I don't judge them on what they are or what they do for a living. I know why they are doing it and I know what they are going through so I guess it makes me a better person....”

“Q” said that she has grown in her thinking. She has been more appreciative of what her family has done and the ‘little’ things. She has understood the impact of not being able to have everything she wanted as compared to a time when this was not the case. She felt she has grown. She stated that she was more organized and better able to ‘make do.’ These were some of her adaptations. Other people have also commented on the changes in her. She shared the following:

“I think I have grown...just my thinking. The way I appreciate. Like you know like appreciate the little thing... At time we used to take for granted things. Like back at home, we use to take for grant many little things...the socialization and my parents' love. At first, my parents provide everything. You don't appreciate they have...If my parents say "I don't have, you understand." There was time when they say they don't have money and we say how can't

you not have money. I just am better in organizing... The things the you have are very little and you can try to survive that and just being appreciated with little things. I don't know how to put it in words. But I know deep down... even when I talk people say this is just a changed person. I can't really say it. I don't know how I can put it in words. I know I have grown." This experience has resulted in the adoption of new values, attitudes and behavior patterns for many International Students. These nine African International Students talked about having more confidence in their new skills and being more independent and organized. They were more punctual and accepted responsibility. They were using English more including slang and being able to "blast someone."

International Students have been reading more, using the computer more often, studying outside of class and trying to keep an open mind. Some female International Students had been friendlier with boys. One student had become also more diet conscious. Some International Students were able to resolve many of their issues. Now they have been starting to call home to tell families how they have resolved issues. They appreciated the struggles of other people and they have started to make friends. They have made many adaptations.

International Students have been able to focus on what truly mattered to them. Although it may be strange and challenging, the experience has made these students more adaptable, responsible, flexible, and insightful. They have been achieving a new equilibrium where they have been able to make choices and take on responsibility. They also were starting to develop relationships and have made friends within the college. Frustrations and worries continue to be present but these International Students have begun to function more like the mainstream students. Most of these students have moved toward the fifth stage of 'culture shock.' They still need to find more pleasure with their

lives in Canada. There continues to be a great deal of stress for International Students.

Returning Home

Returning home can be a happy time for many International Students. Yet there may be difficulties and unanticipated changes. There may also be some conflicting feeling about leaving Canada, a place that these students have called 'home' for three or more years. They have not realized that they may experience 'culture shock' upon their return home and their bicultural efficacy may be challenged.

"R" talked about what it would be like for him to go back home. He had ambivalent feelings, yet he felt that there might be changes in how others view him. He stated that he would be happy to see his family and would miss his adopted family in Canada to whom he feels some indebtedness. He was planning to purchase a computer. He did not think there would be any changes in other people initially. As he talked, he realized that this perspective would likely not be the case. Other people may have changed as well, and in addition have new responsibilities. He talked about people seeing him as changed and more responsible. He elaborated:

"It will be a good experience for me to go back. How I feel it here. Ya sometimes I miss my family and the new family you make...I am going to get a computer...When I go home, it will, like everybody will be the same. Maybe, I don't know. I don't think I would see any change. Maybe they will see changes in me...Here you see me more responsible and more a good boy....Maybe when I go home.... I don't know. Maybe they will see more changed and more responsible...but for me I have not changed. They (other people) might change because some of my family got married. Some may have their own job. Some of

them may have their own business. They may have work that I don't know."

"A" talked about having different behavior when she will be in the presence of her family. She wondered about some of her acquisitions and how her family will react to them. She was positive that she would be asked about having a boyfriend. She stated that she felt more responsible and did not think that she would be isolated from family decisions. She believed that she would be considered an 'elder.' All in all, she felt that she was the same person. She explained:

"There is some stuff you can't do in front of your family. Like I know how to behave myself when I am with my family and when I am not with my family. Ya. And I guess that's it. If they ask me if I got a boyfriend. They will say "here the heck did you get that?"... I am more responsible because when I go back home, like I take part most of the time in decision making about family and everything...Before they use to isolate me in everything. So now I am okay. And like they consult me and if they want something to be done, they consult me because they think I am part of elder....I was still the same."

"O" discussed maintaining the two cultures. He said he has some friends from his home country to help him maintain his cultures and make sure he behaved. He did not want to become like his brother. He talked about being punctual and being well-oriented in his work. He wanted to have a good work ethic and push others to develop the same. He discussed his thoughts with respect to going home and managing his cultural bi-efficacy:

".....I think I'm not gonna be left behind but because I try to maintain ...Canadian culture and Tanzanian culture. And to practice this, I have a friend from my nearby country. And some friends from my real country. To make sure I behave like I use to be. Because my brother, he use to be in

Dublin. When he came back to my country, he like changed. He can tell a rude word to anybody. But I hope I am not gonna do that. I can't tell anybody 'Shut up' unless that is my kid or somebody younger. But for any other but for anybody older than me who is grown up until mature, I can't tell that. So I try to maintain not to change. ...At least for those things, I am gonna be on time....I am gonna be well oriented in my job. That's I am gonna be affected also. Maybe I'm gonna most serious in job because some people, some Zanzibaric people are said to be lazy people. So maybe I'm gonna push them doing some stuff. Because when I came here, I learned how people do work. How people do, I mean anything. They do on a right way. But back home is not."

"N" felt that many of her ideas would change. She wondered if she would talk to her parents about some of them. Her home country has been changing as well. Yet, some things would not change for her. She would maintain her religion and be respectful of her parents. She talked about returning to 'the way she used to be.' She admitted that this would be a bit difficult for her. She would need to be careful about talking with boys to maintain her respectability. She explained her ability to manage the difference in culture:

"I will be here until 2004 and then I go back home. Till then, all my ideas will change. When I go home it will be a bit different. I feel that, oh Mom, this is not good. You have to change this way and that way. Maybe I'll tell them but maybe not. Because I don't know what will happen there, right because everything is changing...it has become very good and very clean...But I don't think I will change religion wise or I'll change with my parents because they are my parents. I will always be good with them. And I think when I go back home I have to be returned the way I use to be. I do not have to talk with too many, too many boys in front of my Daddy. I have to be respectable. I just will have to adjust to everything when I go back home but it will be difficult for me...If you talk to two three boys in front of him that's okay. But you cannot talk with lots of boys in

front of him...NO...So we have to be good in front of our parents.”

“S” seemed a bit bewildered at the prospect of even staying in Canada. He was lonely and missing his friends. He was still a bit unsure about things. He had actually started to make plans to return home as he felt that coming here was not a ‘progressive’ move. He believed that he was missing a great deal of his life not being at home. He found the change between Canada and home too ‘wide’ initially. His roommate was able to help him and then he discovered that the differences were not as great as he initially thought. At times, he thought he was suffocating and now, he wants to stay. He explained:

“Why did I even come here? And then I get lonely, because at home because, I'll go wherever you want to be. If I am in school I have my friends. They go wherever I say we should go. I don't know where to go...I am missing a lot. I realize I am missing a lot...Eventually I decided to go back when I came. I said I wanted to go back. I made the arrangements to go...from how I was living back home....and here was too wide . I thought I was making a progressive move. In a way it wasn't that way, I realized. So it was just my roommate and he said you'd be fine and you do this and you do that. It was not great after all ...In a way I was breathing like a prisoner...Well right now I am getting use to the stuff. I don't think I really want to go back...I am okay.”

“B” admitted not thinking about going home, but realized that it will be another change. At that time, he had 7 semesters to go and many things can occur. He stated that he would miss many of the amenities in Toronto, such as the transit system and electricity that he had often been without for over a month. He thought that there might be things that he would not be able to tolerate any more. He related his going home to a movie and how going home, he would be in a ‘vacuum.’ He commented:

“That's a very good question, I never thought about it, like I'm not gonna say because it's been a big change like now I am 27. I still have, this is my second semester, my program is nine semesters....If I have to go home back now...lot, I have been used to a lot of things...and going back again will be like changing all over again... transportation for example, ya, I can actually here, go anywhere I want...If we don't have electricity here for an hour,...I won't freak out...I can't take it anymore. When I go back there...it will be like big liberty...it's like you watched the movie 'Back to the Future'... present now, it's gonna be a past. It gonna be like a big, big vacuum.”

“M” has been looking forward to arriving home safely and seeing her mother and her friends, but she said it was really too early for her to really think about it. She shared:

“Well, just thinking ...to arrive safe and just thinking what my family is thinking the day I'm coming home and just to see my mom again after I lost my daddy 5 years ago... thinking to see my mom, house, friends, everybody...I just know but I don't want to think about it now. It is so early.”

“K” talked about going home in terms of ‘struggles.’ He did not want to comment any more. He simply stated:

“Ya. Actually I am sure if I was to go home, it will be half the struggle.”

“Q” commented that she did not know what it would be like for her to go home. She responded only with:

“I don’t know. Only my face can tell.”

International Students felt that their parents would see many changes. They have changes they want to make as well. One student wanted to obtain a computer. Another student felt that she would have to monitor her behavior and maintain the respect of the family. Some things that International Students have done here in Canada, they will not be able to do at home. They did not anticipate telling their families everything about their Canadian experience. Some attributes of their cross-cultural adaptation would not be evident to their families and friends. By not revealing some of their adaptations in Canada, they would be better able to manage bicultural efficacy.

One International Student felt that he had missed a great deal of his life by not being at home. Yet for most students, it was a progressive move. Others will miss the infrastructure and the amenities. They talked about how they will be punctual and how their ideas may have changed. In addition, they anticipated being well prepared to work. One student anticipated 'pushing' others so success will occur.

They anticipated some changes at home. Friends may have new and additional responsibilities. International Students believed that they would have a voice in decisions within the family. Some students hoped that their friends and families would adapt as well.

International Students have missed their families. They anticipated some struggles. Some students said that they did not know what it would be like for them to go home. One student described it as a big vacuum while another thought it would be a struggle. They addressed behaviors and amenities. For some International Students,

bicultural efficacy will be more of a challenge and hardship. They have changed so much and are unable to predict the possible conflicts that may arise

These nine African International Students anticipated change at home. They realized that they themselves have changed. Some students had insight to understand others may have changed as well. Most students were looking forward to going home despite the changes that may have occurred. For other students, it was too stressful to think about what it would be like to go home. Some International Students did not even want to think about going home. It was just too far away.

Future Plans

These International Students have goals and plans for their future. This section will focus on the many things that they hope to achieve.

“R” spoke about finishing his studies and maybe continuing them before he goes back home. He was not overly concerned with making decisions at this time. He said:

“Maybe later on, I see if I could be able to go on with further studies. Or stay with the college and go back home to stay. It will be the same.”

“A” was just focused solely on her studies whereas “N” would just like to stay in Canada. She explained:

“It's just that I miss my parents. Nothing else. I really, really miss my parents. That's it. Otherwise everything is good over here. You won't believe me but I like winter. Me too I use to take pictures. You know in pictures, I use to say ‘Oh, my God look at that.’ But when I came here I said ‘wow.’ It was opposite with me. Until now I love winter. If you tell me summer I don't like it...you know I came from Tanzania and there is no snow over there.”

“O” talked about improving his English and improving his vocabulary. He saw this as advantageous when job hunting. He did not want to appear different, ‘speak slowly’ or ‘use different words.’ He elaborated:

“...I want to speak like Canadian speaking. That's it. Because I hope maybe if I am going to speak with Canadian people while I am doing my course that's the only way I can improve English...I have to spend time to improve my vocabulary and I don't have time for that. And I have to do that because when you have to do your interview for the job I have to speak fluent English. Nobody has to remark any differences between you and a real native speaker. That's why I got to learn.”

“S” talked about several ideas for his future. He was worried about protecting his family assets in the event of his parents’ demise. In addition, he had considered continuing his studies in the area of mechanical studies. He had also thought about teaching as well as a career with the military in the area of mechanics. Ultimately, he was hoping to combine the two careers. He explained:

“You see I have 3 things in mind. I love my course. I wish I could study to the highest point. For now, I don’t know when my parents are going to die. Eventually, everybody going to die..It is not like here that everybody wins. Even if just my father died, if some members will come for everything, my camera, something like that. But my education is something you cannot take away from me. I also enjoy like teaching... I also want to be in the army too. So I said I like to work and be in the mechanic aspect, being a mechanic job. I want to get into the highest level. Once I will get there then I can do the work. And if I am in the army, there I can do the mechanic work once in the army so that is what I am willing to do. I love to teach. I love to work. It's like one and two are the same thing but that is the only way I can combine the two things. That's what I am hoping for.”

Now that she has been away from programming, "M" talked about her plans to become a nurse. She was working on credits that would get her accepted into the program. She shared:

"I've always thought about a nurse or whatever. They had to send me to a program with something that is sort of the program I applied and then for the Nursing."

"K" talked about going home, taking his contacts and some jerseys with him. The main thing was that he had been thinking more about his future. He wanted to get working and was considering coming back to Canada and bringing his family. Also, he was interested in politics as well and wanted to foster an interest in his country. He explained:

"I just have to take some Jersey and pictures and confidence I guess. Those contacts and there is the Professors. I plan to go home December...I have a girlfriend and we have a little girl and she is like a little girl. She is like six months and I am thinking about them and I should start another planning and if it will work, then she might come here because we have things here that we don't have like health care, and all those stuff....Maybe go somewhere else but definitely at the end of the day, I see myself here... I am thinking of going into politics. This is a funny thing.... I think about going and home working in the areas that don't have and trying to get others interested in my country. I will try to get them interested and try to improve the roads and try to get them interested because there is potential. It's just that no one wants to go back there. Once they are out here and they get a comfortable job then they forget where they come from. I wanna go back home and do something that would change rather seat in the desk and just get a salary. I wanna go home and help people and have see what I can do as a person...I just want to go back and see and do

some reports. and so I was just wanna go do show my face so in future date they can relate and when I am running for office. I can relate that they saw me. So I am going back on December. My post-diploma ends in the fall. They did not say that but I have an option of working in Canada...So I think I would take that. If I can work here for one year then I plan to apply for residency and maybe making myself a Canadian resident for 18 months... and if and move with my family.”

“Q” would not recommend coming to Canada. She talked about her hopes in terms of opening up a clinic to help the people of her home country. She also talked about settling down and having her own family. She shared:

“For me it's like, personally if they ask me can you recommend someone to come to Canada as an International Student I would say no. Considering what I have gone through.... You know one thing I wish I could just work a little just to save up...just a little income. Then if I go, I'd like to open my own clinic. I'll just have people and help. I know what I've been through. I would not want anyone to go through what I have gone though and just try to make a better place...just do on my own thing. You know it's my own business. Hopefully I get someone, start a family, you know, family support, just to be around people, you know will make you happy.”

International Students had many goals for the future. Some students talked about further studies as well as preparing for a job or career. One student in a nursing program wanted to start her own clinic. One student wanted to improve his English so he would 'fit in' more than he did. Another student wanted to take jerseys and his contacts home. Most of them wanted Canadian work experience.

Some students have been very anxious to see their families. Others talked about staying in Canada and perhaps having their families come here. One student talked about starting a family. They seemed overwhelmed at the prospect of what they are going to do.

This chapter has focused on the future as seen by International Students. Some students had more definite goals while others have been trying to keep several options open. They did want to see their families. International Students have many goals that they can achieve in their futures.

Chapter Eight

Implications of This Study

It is imperative to note that many of these nine International Students were able to identify and discuss many of the aspects of their lives in Canada and the cross-cultural adaptations that they have made. It is essential and important that these aspects be taken into consideration as a means to decrease stress, 'culture shock' as well as be considered as a means to recruit future students. The suggestions put forth in this study can assist in these matters and these nine African International Students seemed pleased that someone was, at least, interested to hear their histories and experiences. This final chapter will focus on the new equilibrium that these International Students have achieved, considerations for the community college and reflections of the writer.

A New Equilibrium

International Students had many impressions about studying abroad, coming to community college and life in Canada. They were excited at the prospect of coming to Canada, although it may not have been their first choice. The reasons for studying abroad included quality education, financial, being in the 'real world,' getting work experience, and the fact that Canada is considered as a safe, clean country. For a couple of International Students, there was family support here as well. In addition, these students had to learn a whole new set of skills to attend college. This has included finding a place to live, familiar food and how to get around the city. Most International Students have found Canadians friendly and helpful.

International Students have been able to describe stress and what they have found stressful about life in Canada. They encountered many challenges in preparation for coming to Canada and since they arrived here. There was a multitude of tests and government applications that required completion. Proof of finances was a created hardship for some students. They were required to learn new technology. In addition, some International Students were not comfortable speaking English. The slang and idioms were difficult to learn. They found the workload different in their studies. They are worried about failing courses.

International Students have found it expensive to live in Canada and have been disappointed that they are not legally entitled to work while they are here. Managing their finances has been a great worry for these students. In addition, many International Students were hoping for Co-op placements that did not seem to be materializing. They don't want to lose time and are concerned about their final transcripts. Furthermore, several students were not comfortable with the behaviors of mainstream Canadian Students as demonstrated through their dress and lack of respect for others.

International Students have experienced loneliness and isolation and they identified stress as an issue. They have not felt recognized as International Students as there were no special events for them and very few resources. A couple of students have been disappointed in their program of study. At times, they have found the people within the college not helpful, cold, unfriendly, and even racist.

International Students were able to share their perceptions and the opportunities that they have had about their ability to maintain their culture. They have faced some unique challenges. These included ethnic identity, prejudice and racism, language issues,

separation from home, dietary adjustments, financial stress, misunderstandings, and loneliness. They have had more freedom in Canada and felt that the rules were stricter at home. Here, however, they have had to learn to make decisions in a different way. Some International Students have had to learn to make decisions independently while others prefer to consult with peers and family members at home. They have been surprised at the age at which Canadian children make decisions and are supported. They have adjusted to the prevalence of women in the workforce.

Overall, however, International Students have enjoyed the relationships they have with their teachers and the classroom environment. They have gained experience working with students and teachers of diverse cultures and have learned to work in groups and share knowledge. They feel they have a better understanding of their work in class. They have been confused about the grading system. They have found the education they are getting very practical towards a future career. They are concerned about how other students treat teachers, talk while the teacher is speaking as well as eating and drinking in the classroom. Calling elders by their first name has been problematic. International Students felt that Canadians demonstrated a significant lack of respect for others.

International Students have missed many aspects of home. These include familiar people especially their parents, speaking their language, food, dress and music. They do not always keep their traditions despite a great effort. Some students have managed to connect with places of worship and been able to have some opportunity to speak their language. This has been a source of comfort and happiness to these students and they wanted to maintain this aspect of their lives. Some students were afraid of losing their culture because if they became 'westernized,' their families and friends would ignore

them. One student felt that it was impossible to maintain traditions and culture while being a student. Another student felt that our climate affected socialization.

International Students are struggling with becoming emotionally independent, self-supporting and productive and responsible individuals. They have been working hard at their academics and have had to learn skills and learning strategies. In addition, they have been placed in the role of ambassadors for their own country.

For most of these nine African International Students, coming to study in Canada had not been a negative experience. They have certainly had stress and frustrations from a variety of sources both internal and external to the community college. But to date, most students were coping and managing their academics as well as their lives. They were learning the expectations of the college and those behaviors that were most important to be successful.

International Students have great expectations for their future upon their return to their homes and families. There have been changes in self-perception. They anticipated being successful in their careers upon their return home. They felt that they have grown emotionally as well as matured in many aspects of their own behavior. International Students have accepted responsibility for their decisions and have learned a great deal about managing money. They have understood and appreciated the sacrifices that their parents have made for them. They have learned to work collaboratively and share their ideas and opinions. They have learned punctuality. They have also learned that behaviors in their culture may impede what they want to achieve in terms of career.

International Students anticipated earning a great deal of respect from their parents for being successful in their study abroad experience. They expected to take a more

active role in making decisions at home. Some students did not expect life to have changed at home while others felt it would be another adjustment. The amenities in Canada would be greatly missed. Some students did not even want to think about it. International Students will be required to make another cross-cultural adjustment upon their return home.

All nine African International Students have experienced 'culture shock.' They have progressed through the exciting and euphoric honeymoon phase as characterized by Stage 1. They have become disenchanted as described by Stage 2 and even felt anger and hostility as explained in Stage 3. For most of these students, they are making some of the adjustments characterized by Stage 4 and Stage 5, however, their transition is not yet complete or finite. The boundaries have become more blurred. Furthermore, they may experience 'culture shock' upon their return home. Certainly consideration of the 'culture shock' model assists in understanding the adaptations that are required by International Students. More research is required to enhance the understanding of the experience of International Students.

Considerations for the Community College

Although these findings cannot be generalized there may be some aspects of these findings that can enhance the lives of International Students. With the growing influx of International Students to large metropolitan areas such as Toronto, colleges may need to review their resources available to this group of students. There have been limited resources available to International Students to date. Prior to coming to Canada, these

students have received some information about many aspects of the college and living in Toronto.

There still may be some issues with program descriptions and outcomes. International Students would benefit from more information about college life, academic expectations and expected behaviors decreasing the tourist perceptions of Canada. Knowing this may have reduced some of the shock that these students have experienced. International Students in this study demonstrated that they needed more information about life in Toronto. All students have mentioned finances and they have found Toronto a very expensive city in which to live. Housing has been problematic although there is an information board posted in the college. There is only one residence. Most students have found a place to live on their own. Finding a place of worship has been a challenge. International Students did not mention getting any assistance from the college in this matter. Helping students locate housing and places of worship could significantly reduce their stress and allow them to focus on their academics.

International Students have appreciated the e-mail contact from the college and more information could be provided to students through the Internet. This should be continued. It would be possible to set up an International Students Board on the web site to share information, post suggestions and ask question. Furthermore, more detailed information about visa requirements, financing and other legislation especially around working in Canada could better prepare students for the life in Toronto. Most students were disappointed that they could not take on part-time work to help their financial situation. Furthermore, most International Students wanted Canadian work experience. This is an area of study that requires further investigation.

While in Toronto, there seemed to be limited support for International Students. There is one full-time International Student Coordinator that works across two campuses. At one site, the office is small and can only seat two people. There is not a sense of a meeting place for these students within the college. It was also interesting that I interviewed them in so many different places in the college including a residence hall, academic office, classrooms, sport center, and library. As most International Students did not know of each other's existence, setting up such a meeting place could be beneficial. Here, students could receive a substantive orientation and obtain information to assist them. Students could be recognized in terms of their culture and place of origin. Also, there would be the opportunity to meet other International Students and provide support in terms of problem-solving, sharing information, planning activities, and knowing someone from a similar culture. They may not have the same cultures but they may still be able to share and support each other through similar and shared experiences.

The availability of quality resources with respect to teaching and learning, extracurricular, and social activities will enhance International Students' involvement. It would also be important to be developing opportunities for International Students to get to know each other through formalized functions, including sports. This could ease the stress that these students have and also help them maintain their language and other attributes of their culture. The potential for small cultural groups to form is a possibility to further support International Students in Canada. Then, there would be the opportunity to share the familiar aspects of home. In addition, an International Student newsletter could assist with communication and allow access to information and other students. Students may feel more recognized if they are specifically addressed within the

college. They would also experience less loneliness and isolation. College personnel must be aware of how motivated International Students are and how much time and energy they devote to the learning process. Institutional policies and practices can be judged to some extent by the degree of involvement of International Students as there can be more focus on student needs and serve a more diverse population of students.

In addition, International Students have asked for opportunities to improve their English language skills. Involvement with other mainstream students and campus activities needs to be encouraged as a means to ease adjustment. The introduction of peer advisors and host-student preceptors could be beneficial. This would assist International Students to better understand college life and Canadian life as well. They would also have the opportunity to address student behaviors in a safe environment.

Teachers, too, are encouraged to understand the academic experiences of International Students. Although they may represent 'the cream of the crop,' they may have not had the same preparation for college and may be coming from politically unstable environments. Full assessment of academic achievement may assist with this. Teachers may need to determine the academic competencies that their students possess. Part of the orientation could address some of their prior learning. They also may find it helpful to understand of how learning was structured for these students in their home countries as a means to encourage participation in class. Working in groups, asking questions, or working with a member of the opposite gender may be taboo in the home country.

In addition, workload expectations and grading may require greater explanation to International Students as they find this concept confusing. Helping students prepare

for 'multiple choice' exams would be beneficial. Lastly the role of the teacher in stabling trust cannot be undervalued. Many students have had a history of not trusting faculty. This is also an area of further investigation.

Other college supports could be put into place. These include a Co-op Department that is better able to serve International Students and counselors that can specifically deal with stress, racism, problem-solving, decision-making, and accepting responsibility as well as work experience. In addition, private space for each gender of students may be beneficial to provide a sanctuary and opportunity to 'just be.' An on-site restaurant that provided a larger variety of international food would be helpful to International Students.

Lastly, as demonstrated by this study, International Students may need some preparation to go home. Although they realized that there would be changes at home, they do not fully understand that they may experience 'culture shock' upon their return home. International Students may not be aware of what 'culture shock' is and how they can deal with it. It may be beneficial to educate the families of these International Students as well so they can be prepared and support the returning student.

One last suggestion would be to have graduated International Students talk with potential International Students to provide information about their college experience. This could assist with the orientation of students as well as decreasing stress and 'culture shock.'

The experience could be less stressful and more meaningful if the needs of these students were taken into account. International Students could experience less 'culture shock.' These International Students have made a tremendous leap. They have suffered

and been triumphant in many aspects of their lives. The community college may be able to do better to assist International Students from not only an emerging market perspective but also a humanitarian one.

Final Reflections

As I mentioned earlier in this study, there has been little research conducted regarding International Students in community college particularly with respect to their adjustment, needs, problems, and 'culture shock.' Certainly the experience of any International Student is very unique. My own experiences with respect to many of the challenges and 'culture shock' did not even approximate the challenges faced by these nine African International Students. My most significant difficulty related to the logistics around the campus. Challenges such as housing, language and teaching, and learning styles were not problematic for me. For these International Students, they experienced significantly different challenges.

This study has been able to serve as a forum for nine African International Students to share their perceptions of their Canadian experience and the challenges they have faced during their study-abroad endeavors. Although the findings may not be generalizable, particularly with respect to all International Students and 'culture shock,' this study has provided insight into the positive and negative experiences that these students have had as well as areas that they continue to find problematic and confusing.

This study about International Students at a community college has addressed five major questions about International Students. These questions are: (1) What are the impressions that International Students have about studying abroad, coming to

community college and life in Canada? (2) How do International Students describe stress and what do they find stressful about life in Canada? (3) Are these perceptions and stresses (and distresses) consistent with the attributes of 'culture shock?' (4) What perceptions and opportunities do International Students have about their ability to maintain their culture? (5) What are International students expectations in terms of the future and return to home and family?

International Students experience a variety of stresses and distresses. These include academic, financial, and social stress. For some, this has resulted in physical symptoms. They have stated that they are stressed as well as lonely, confused, helpless and depressed. One student commented that he felt that mainstream Canadian students had less stress.

Several International Students also perceived that they experience more stress. They have felt that they have more financial worries and more responsibilities. Most of these students have fewer supports here in terms of family and friends. They have found Toronto an expensive place to live. Some have had problems with their program of study enhancing stress.

The main concerns for International Students with respect to 'culture shock' have been the lack of recognition, finances, housing, language, school workload, and maintaining grades. For some, it has been just getting to Canada. Another major concern has been the inability to gain Canadian work experience. Other concerns have been mastering new skills, adjusting to other students' behaviors, understanding the college dress code, family expectations, and making decisions. Fear of failure was another

concern along with worries about the family that is so far away at home. The weather was also cited as a concern.

Living in two cultures has been a challenge. They cited a lack of recognition for who they are. In addition, the culture of the classroom for most students has been very different yet for the most part, enjoyable. Attributes such as accessibility of teachers, working in groups and eating and drinking in the classroom have been new and positive experiences. They have felt, however, that they were coping and at times, tried to minimize the differences and 'culture shock.'

International Students have maintained some of their values, beliefs, and cultural practices. These values and belief are primarily their culture in terms of food and music as well as religious beliefs and family values. Some students manage on occasion to eat the familiar foods and listen to their music. Most students have maintained some religious affiliation. Respect was cited often as one of the most important family values. Although it may not be to the same extent, some students have sought out opportunities to maintain their culture, religion and beliefs.

Probably the most noticeable areas of conflict for values, beliefs, and cultural practices were in the areas of language, academics, dress, and opportunity for prayer. Some International Students have not had the opportunity to speak with someone here that speaks their own language. Traditional dress created a furor of attention in one particular situation. The traditions surrounding prayers have been reduced due to academic life. In addition, trying to be successful in school has created conflict in terms of time and space for practicing of these values and beliefs.

International Students have, surprisingly, maintained their beliefs in an environment where there has been little to support it and in some cases, where it has been challenged. Some students accomplished this through establishing linkages external to the college and sometimes through family that has been present in Canada. In addition, they have seemed to draw on their own strengths, beliefs and commitment to themselves, their families and their goals as a means to sustain them through their challenges and stresses despite 'culture shock.' This has been truly an inspiring experience for me to hear what these students have experienced and continue to persist in their academic studies.

These nine International Students have experienced stress and 'culture shock' and progressed through many of the stages of the 'culture shock' while attending a Canadian community college. Although I do not feel that they are well integrated, they have made tremendous gains despite serious and significant losses. These students remain in transition. Their equilibrium has not been established and is subject to the new experiences that they will encounter during their sojourn in Canada. It is hoped that through a better understanding of the culture shock model by institutions of higher education, strategies will be developed to enhance the student experience and reduce the impact of 'culture shock' particularly with respect to disenchantment, anger, frustration and stress. It is important to be aware of what International Students experience from an academic as well as psychosocial perspective. In addition, it is important to be aware of what values, beliefs, and culture practices have significant meaning for them. By reducing the impact of stress and 'culture shock,' the adjustment to college can be supported more effectively.

This study has focused on the experience of nine African International Students attending a Canadian community college. They have shared the 'in-and-out-of' class experience and adjustments by describing their transition to community college and their perceptions of their experience in Canada. In addition, there are many attributes of college life that they find satisfying and even, enjoyable, while others are stressful and distressful. Several suggestions have been made to support changes within the college system that may be of benefit to International Students.

With respect to the writer, I have learned from this study. As a learner, I must continue to strive to be culturally sensitive and alert to the differences in culture and the impact that it can have in the teaching and learning environment. As a teacher, I have reaffirmed the importance of listening to the experiences and hearing the voices of others as they reveal themselves. International Students need to be more proactive about communicating their needs and experiences. As a researcher, I have had the privilege of knowing nine African International Students, and had the opportunity to value their experiences and provide a place where they could share their perspectives on topics that were not only of interest, but important to them as well. These nine African International Students are to be commended for their willingness to share, courage, and persistence. They are wished great success. Indeed, "culture is a 'broad space.'"

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Appendix A

Letter of Explanation (I)

Dear _____

As you are a student at _____ Community College, I am asking that you volunteer in helping me to look at college life as experienced by International Students.

The study involves an interview that should last approximately one hour, followed by a few questions that relate to demographics. This interview, which is completely voluntary, will take approximately 1 hour and will be arranged for your convenience. With permission from you, I would like to ask you to respond to a few pre-determined set of interview questions about your college experience. All information and results will be treated with confidence and will remain anonymous in any report of research findings. Upon request and within these restrictions, general results will be available to you. I will not use your name or any other identifying characteristics for reporting information from this study. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent of the law.

A consent letter of permission and preferred time for you to be interviewed is attached. Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary, and in addition to it being voluntary, you, at any time, may refuse to answer any question or may at any time, withdraw from the study without penalty or recrimination. If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Heather Irwin-Robinson at 416-636-1646. In case you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please feel free to contact Dr. Ashir Kumar, Michigan State University's Chair of University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects at 517-355-2180, or email at ucrihs@msu.edu.

Results from the interview will be reported as part of a research paper on "International Students in Community College: The Canadian Experience of African International

Students.” Should you have further questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at my home, 416-636-1646.

Thank you.

Heather Irwin-Robinson

Written Consent for Heather Irwin-Robinson's Research Paper

By completing the following information, you indicate your willingness to participate further in a study. As indicated previously, all information will be confidential and you may request to withdrawn from the study at any time.

Student Signature _____

Phone Number _____

Best Time to Contact:

During the Day (time) _____

Evening (time) _____

Thank you

Heather Irwin-Robinson
416-636-1646

Interview Questions

1. Describe your first impressions of your college experience in Canada?
2. What does the word 'stress' mean to you?
3. What have been some of your greatest challenges since coming to college?
4. Would you describe these situations as stressful?
5. Describe the factors that were instrumental in your coming to study in Canada?
6. Are there many expectations placed on you while studying here?
7. Describe what it is that like for you (having or not having expectations placed on you)?
8. Describe how you make decisions here and how you make decisions at home?
9. Describe what it has been like for you in terms of distance to pursue academic work in a different country.
10. How has your culture played a role in college experience?

11. What is the most significant difference you have experienced here?
12. How has this challenged you or created problems for you?
13. Describe how you have maintained cultural values and beliefs (even when they are not supported around you).
14. How have you changed since you came to college?
15. How will this experience affect you and your family upon your return home?
16. If you could change one thing about the college and/or your experience here, what would that be?

Demographics

1. Country of Origin: _____
2. Ethnic Group: _____
3. Length of Time in Canada: _____
4. Length of time attending Community College: _____
5. First Language Spoken: _____
6. Other Languages Spoken: _____
7. Program of Study: _____

Please fill in the most appropriate space with 'X.'

8. Gender: female _____ male _____
9. Age: 18-24 _____ 25-34 _____ 35-44 _____ over 44 _____

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