

4-9-2016

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International and Domestic Students Relationships: Impact of Interpersonal Relationships on the Development of Cultural Understanding

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ABSTRACT

The population of international students attending American higher education institutions continues to rise. International students contribute to the campus diversity. Higher education institutions strive to develop a diverse campus community that will enrich students prospective of other cultures. It is through examining how relationships between international students and American college students will provide an understanding of how these relationships

evolve and affect the campus community. This research project examined

the impact of interpersonal relationships between international and domestic college students contribute to the development of cultural understanding within a university community.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the struggles that international students experience in creating relationships with American peers?
- What are the benefits in developing interpersonal relationships between international students and American students?
- How will building these relationships contribute to cultural understanding within the university community?

METHOD



The research method that I choose to utilize within my research project is qualitative method. The reason for utilizing qualitative method for my research project is that, qualitative method assisted me in exploring individuals' experiences in developing relationships. According to Mertens (2015), "qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials- case study; personal experience; introspection; life story; interview; artifacts; cultural texts and production; along with observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts- that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives" (p. 236). I conducted interviews with both international and American students.

PARTICIPANTS

- Personal interviews were conducted with 2015-16 undergraduate students.
- Eight interviews were held consisting of five American Students and three International Students
- The participants grade level consisted of one Senior, two Juniors, one Sophomore, one Freshman, two IEP Level 5 and one IEP Level 4

FINDINGS

Themes:

- Living Environment
 - Reflects the living conditions that the participants within this research study live in on or off the campus.
- Personal Relationships
 - Reflects the relationships that the participant has made thus far as well as if the participant has developed relationships with individuals from cultures opposite of their own.
- Barriers in Building Relationships Among People from Different Cultures.
 - Reflects the relationships that the participant have made with individuals from cultures opposite of their own.
- Cross Cultural Connections
 - Reflects the participants' perception between different cultures as well as their participation in cultural events at the University of Dayton.

RESEARCH PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to understand the impact of interpersonal relationships between international and domestic students and how it contributes to the development of cultural understanding within a university community. Research reflects that relationship building within the higher education environment leads to the feeling of being part of a community and building upon self-perception. It is through analyzing the interpersonal relations between these two populations of students will assist higher education institutions understanding and will therefore help design outreach programs or activities will assist in building upon their cultural understanding within their university community.



SUGGESTED IMPLICATIONS

This study outcomes produced three implications that will help solidify this research study and contribute to the development of interpersonal connections between international and domestic college students.

- The living learning environments at the University of Dayton needs to be reevaluated to include more international students intermingling with American students.
- More cultural diversified events and or classroom interaction.
- Examining the interactions from students post graduation that they have with people from other cultures. This examination will help gain a perspective on cultural awareness and understanding that would contribute to overall evaluation on the areas that need to be enhanced or created when creating cultural diversity events and or classroom activities.

CONCLUSION



In conclusion, this research study provided a prospective regarding the inclusion of international students and American students within the living learning environment. This research study reflected the barriers that international and American students face when interacting with individuals from other cultures. This research study also provided a prospective regarding building personal relationships. Lastly, this research study reflected the cross cultural connections that have been exhibited throughout the campus community.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My husband Robert Nickell
 My daughter Maggie Nickell
 My father Dr. Palazotto
 Holy Angels School
 EDC 569 Peers
 Center of International Programs
 Dr. Nasser Razek