

CULTURAL TRANSITIONS

Alexandra Lemos Zagonel

Brazilian Portuguese GTA

Languages | Latin American Studies

alemosza@uncc.edu



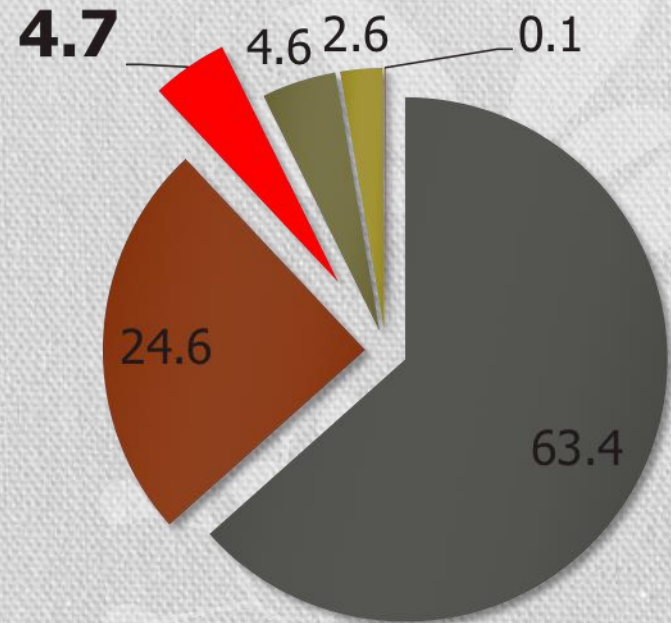
OBJECTIVES

- Share some of our own experiences as international students
- Understand the process of cultural transition
- Strategies for building cultural awareness
- Helpful Information and Resources

UNCC Statistics

Fall 2011

- African-American: 24.6%
- Asian: 4.6%
- White: 63.4%
- Hispanic: 2.6%
- Native American: 0.1%
- Non-resident alien: 4.7%



1178 Foreign Students

SOURCE:

http://publicrelations.uncc.edu/sites/publicrelations.uncc.edu/files/media/factsheet_march%202012.pdf

Stages of Cultural Transition

Honeymoon Stage

Cultural Shock

Recovery Stage

Adaptation

Cultural Transitioning Survey

- Method:
 - Oral Interview (17 students) ; Google Docs Fill in Form (14 students)
- Subjects:
 - 16 male students, 15 female students
- Age:
 - 3 students 21 or younger
 - 9 students 21-25
 - 11 students between 25-30
 - 7 students between 31-40
 - 1 student 53 years old
 - 1 student did not respond
- [Link to the Online form](#)

Differences in the Universities in the U.S and in other countries:

“ The educational system as a whole is different. Here in the US education is a luxury, in my country it is a survival need. There, the system is very ‘politicized’ in the public universities, and the private universities are not accessible financially to everyone.”

Response of a male student, age 31-40, from Honduras

“Although the relationship between students and professors (in my university) is more informal than here, we don't feel so free to go to the professor's office as I feel here. In general we don't live on campus, we live with our families. In all my classes here the professors use the computer every day and in my university there are professor who never use.”

Response of a female student, age 21-25, from Brazil

Students who are here for less than a year...

- Were the youngest subjects of my survey;
- 5 are studying English as a Second Language, 4 are enrolled in exchange programs;
- All 9 consider their experience as “Excellent”
- 7 out of 9 students find the food the most challenging aspect of living abroad;
- All pointed out housing as one of the differences between here and their home countries;
- They miss the food, cultural aspects such as TV programs, music, and friends.

What are the most challenging aspects:

- Understanding law system (1 response)
- American way of life, work is more important than family (1 response)
- Building relationship outside the classroom (4 responses)
- Language (8 responses)
- Differences in behavior (16 responses; here I included difficulty to understand some of the humor; physical distance between two persons; punctuality)
- Food (21 responses)

How teachers and colleagues could help?

- “Fostering diversity, some US students tend to look bad at international students like we are taking their stuff. Some, not all.” (male, 31-40)
- “They already help me a lot to understand better how the system works. They have been patient and explaining me things I eventually don't understand.” (Female, 31-40)
- “They are already helpful, mostly the ELTI professors.” (male, 21)
- “Show that they care. Attention is the point. If they paid and gave more attention I'd feel more comfortable to ask questions.” (female, 21-25)

Helpful Resources

- Center of Graduate Life - <http://gradlife.uncc.edu>
- International Student/Scholar Office - <http://isso.uncc.edu>
- International Students Organizations - <http://studentorgs.uncc.edu>
- Multicultural Resource Center - <http://mrc.uncc.edu>
- Counseling Center - <http://counselingcenter.uncc.edu>