

SATISFACTION WITH OKLAHOMA STATE
UNIVERSITY AMONG SELECTED GROUPS
OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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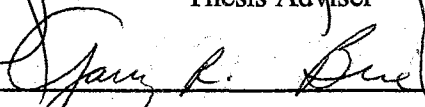
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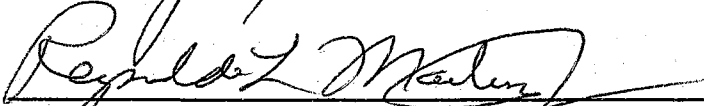
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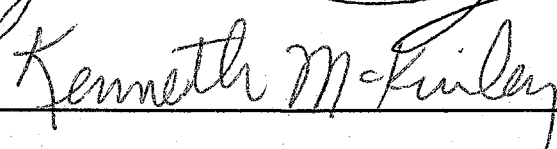
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The extraordinary growth of higher education around the world is one of the hallmarks of the twentieth century. Among the leading host countries for international students, the United States is one of a few countries which has no restrictive policy limiting the flow of these students. Italy, in contrast, has given little thought to the significance and value of the resource of foreign students, and its commitment toward less developed countries has fallen since the late seventies (Cammelli, 1991). Nevertheless, attitudes toward international acceptance are changing. There is growing awareness today that the world is similar to one family. The great technological shift in communication and transportation has made the world seem smaller and its parts more connected to each other.

Following this trend, a strong belief is emerging among college and university officials in the United States regarding the importance of cultural diversity in the student population. Besides the contribution of international students to the national aggregate demand and the value of embodied capital in non-returnees, the U. S. Commerce Department estimates total expenditures for foreign students, including tuition, to be over \$7 billion dollars. Over 80,000 jobs in this country are being sustained by foreign students cost of living expenses this year. (Davis, 1996). In addition, the education of foreign

students may be seen as an effective channel for developed countries to provide aid for the Third World (Throsby, 1991).

According to Pruitt (1978), the United States recognizes the value of having international students build bridges between the United States and the rest of the world and in the process contribute to the American economy and culture. On the other hand, Kaplan (1987) has indicated that many developing countries recognize the importance of improving the technical skills of their own human forces to improve their own standards of living. By doing so they will improve the efficiency of the operations and structure of their government and industry. Since many developing countries are not able to offer their students certain highly specialized educational programs, such students seek higher education programs in the United States.

Most international students who come to study in the United States have at least one thing in common: A wish to acquire an American education. Zikopolo and Barber (1986) as well as Galiouridis (1980) have indicated that the most important reasons for studying in the U. S. include the high quality of U. S. education programs and the availability of scholarships and fellowships. Only slightly less important reasons include a proficiency in the English language, the availability of information about U. S. institutions, and the opportunity to have friends or relations in the U. S. Student selection of certain universities are strongly influenced by that university's overall reputation, the reputation of certain of its departments as well as the encouragement of parents or friends.

Consequently, most international students have a great concern about their academic success in the United States. Most studies about international students have found that the number one priority involves the achievement of academic goals (El-Agha,

1991; Galiouridis,1980; Zikopolo & Barber,1986). In order to achieve such success, international students must have a good perception and clear understanding of the host country. Their special needs and interests must be understood as well as their perceptions and unique point of views need to be clarified to meet their expectations so they may become more satisfied.

While the vast majority (81%) of U. S. freshmen are classified ethnically white, the largest single foreign group (57%) is classified as Asian (Davis, 1996). At the graduate level, international students may represent more than 25 percent of the total graduate enrollment. Calderwood (1993) also reported that in 1990, only 48% of doctorate degrees in engineering were awarded to American students.

While satisfaction is an important factor in the success of all students, it has become increasingly important for international students since their numbers have steadily increased in the U. S. from 10,000 students in the 1920s to more than 453,000 in 1996 (Davis, 1996 and Ike, 1997).

The number of international students in the United States has been doubling every five or six years. Rogers (1984) indicated that international student enrollment at U. S. colleges and universities has grown (since the beginning of this century) at rates greater than 15 percent annually until 1978. Since then, Rogers argued that the rate of growth tapered off because of world economic recessions and increased concern in some countries about the “brain-drain” or the failure of those trained in the United States to return to their countries following the completion of their studies. Other reasons, including students discontent, have been suggested.

It is a fact that many countries have a growing tendency to see the internationalization of higher education within a framework of hard-headed, cost-benefit calculations (Wagner & Schnizer, 1991).

Astin (1987) has indicated that college students satisfaction with the collegiate environment has become an important subject of discussion for faculty and campus administrators. Interest in satisfaction has arisen, in part, from the concern about the declining numbers of college-age youth and the need to demonstrate the effectiveness of college programs. Astin has also reported that retention rates have decreased considerably during the last 15 years. According to Sanford (1962), those environments which challenge college students while providing a support system will increase their satisfaction with that environment. Astin (1977) also argued that undergraduate students involvement in the college environment increased satisfaction. His conclusion about student involvement led to yet another developmental theory for higher education: student involvement and integration are important predictors of retention and achievement among college students (Astin, 1984). It was also reported by Schmidt and Sedlacek (1972) that some studies have found that the better the “fit” between a students expectations and a college the greater the degree of satisfaction. Davis (1996) has argued that students’ satisfaction with a college, its retention and graduation are shaped by the extent to which these students’ behaviors and expectations match what a college has to offer.

It is the institution’s responsibility to provide meaningful educational experiences for all of its students. As part of this responsibility, it is important for an educational institution to examine periodically the needs and attitudes of its students in order to better facilitate their educational experiences. This issue was also emphasized by Kerr (1973)

when he stated that educational institutions should be mindful of problems encountered by their international population and should make provisions to them in the best possible way. Rogers (1984) argued that it is essential to have a clear understanding among faculty and administrators as to how international students may contribute to curricular programs and extracurricular activities.

To date most research has focused upon satisfaction in terms of academics. Empirical research measuring satisfaction within the entire college environment has not been conducted. There remains a need for research that links college satisfaction with various campus activities (Holland & Huba, 1991). The vast majority of studies has not been qualitative and do not explain the “Why and How” questions.

Statement of the Problem

There is an agreement among researchers regarding the stressful nature of being an international student who experiences problems associated with being in a foreign country. These problems have not changed (Barber, Morgan, & Torstrick, 1987; El-Agha, 1991; Galiourdis, 1980; Holland & Huba, 1991; Mncadi, 1993; Sonari, 1993; Wong, 1991; Xia, 1991). International students experience a variety of problems while studying in the United States and not all international students have positive experiences in their pursuit of higher education abroad. In fact, some data clearly indicated that international students often return home discontented by their experiences (Akpan-Iquot, 1980; Amoh, 1985; El-Agha, 1991; Mncadi, 1993; Shandiz, 1981; Sonari, 1993; Wong, 1991; Xia, 1991).

With the increased number of international students attending colleges and universities in the United States and the role of these institutions in the global community

expanding, there is an increased need to reduce the number of international students having negative university experiences. If international students are to be potential business and diplomatic allies after securing their diplomas, they must emerge from their educational experiences with positive attitudes (Ahmand, 1984; Amoh, 1985; Galiouridis, 1980; Mncadi, 1993). Consequently, there is a need to not only assess the satisfaction of international students at educational institutions but to find out how to satisfy them.

In fulfilling the goals of this study, the area examined was the international students' experience at Oklahoma State University. The purpose of this study ultimately was to discover how to make international students more satisfied academically, personally, socially, and financially. Their suggestions and ideas are the answer to these problems and it is the University's role to consider their views for implementation in order to increase satisfaction.

Theoretical Frame

Several authors have investigated how international students deal with problems of adjustment, academic achievement, and satisfaction (Ahmad, 1984; Calderwood, 1993; El-Agha, 1991; Galiouridis, 1980; Mncadi, 1993; Perrucci & Hu, 1995; Schmidt & Sedlacek, 1972; Shandiz, 1981; Sonari, 1993; Tallman, 1990). These studies indicate that many international students experience different kinds of problems in adapting to American education and return home dissatisfied with their educational experience. While the unique needs of each international student are recognized, there are common problems international students share by virtue of the fact that they are in another country with a different culture, language and educational system.

Perrucci and Hu, (1995) argue that international students must, in addition to making adjustments as they enter a new graduate or undergraduate program, acclimate to a new culture, its customs, language, food, living arrangements, social life, and much more. It was also reported that the absence of home and friends, combined with an inability to deal with stressful circumstances, might affect physical and emotional well being which could produce physical illness. Negative experiences at the university may, in some cases, contribute to diminishing self-worth. To offset stressful situations, these international students need supportive social relationships and coping strategies which could be provided in the university community.

Given the strategic importance of international education in preparing students for careers in the twenty-first century, universities need to consider carefully their past and present involvement in international education, paying particular attention to the issue of enrollment. Since most international students are self-financed, they tend to shop for the best potential return for their investment. Those institutions that charge more and provide less than their competitors will enroll fewer international students. Any attempt to design programs and services to accommodate international students must be based on a clear understanding of their needs, interests, perceptions, and problems (Kaplan, 1987; Rogers, 1984; Wagner & Schnitzer, 1991).

Satisfaction

Satisfaction, as Calderwood (1993) has defined it, involves a positive feeling of accomplishment which arises from one's successful achievement of academic goals and the overcoming of social and cultural obstacles. Students are satisfied when they derive

pleasure from their educational experiences and life at a university. Astin (1977) has studied satisfaction by examining variables such as a) quality of instruction, b) degree of contact with other students and faculty, c) curriculum, d) institutional reputation, e) intellectual environment, and f) total undergraduate experience. Galiouridis (1980) has defined satisfaction as “the degree of contentment reported by international students at a university with regard to their academic, personal, social, and financial status” (p. 16). He has also argued that student satisfaction reflects a successful, positive, and enjoyable experience. In addition, Galiouridis contended that the focus and the core mission of colleges and universities ought to be directed toward this end.

These various studies and their different results indicate that there are different and diverse problems that international students face. More attention than ever is required to provide a high quality, relevant, and responsible education (Rogers, 1984). Every institution from time to time, in order to stay current must evaluate the needs and perceptions of international students.

Perrucci and Hu (1995) have developed a general theoretical model of determinants to gauge satisfaction among international graduate students (Fig. 1). They have argued that international students play different roles as students, parents, employees, and family or community members. They can be satisfied in one area of their lives and not satisfied with others. Four general factors relate to satisfaction. The first one is social status which includes gender and marital status. Women are expected to face more negative experiences and to face more difficulties in adapting to social and academic life than men. Married students may have more opportunities to socialize and interact with more people than single students, and as their network of relationships increase, a greater

satisfaction with social life may result. The combination of one's social status, individual resources, social resources, and social context influence satisfaction with an academic program, an academic appointment, and social relations. A male who is married, financially secure, has self confidence, and a good command of the English language is more likely to be more satisfied, both socially and academically. More discussion concerning this model will be in the Conclusions of Chapter V.

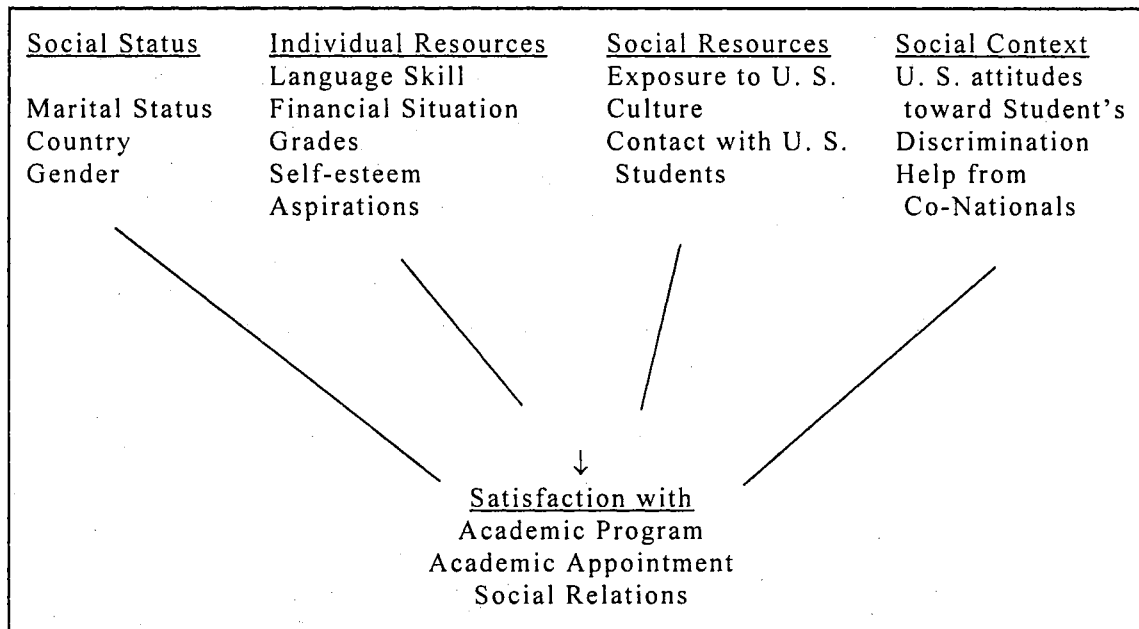


Figure 1. Determinants of Satisfaction – Theoretical Model
(Perrucci & Hu, 1995, p.497).

These resources that influence international student satisfaction can be strengthened by specific social and educational programs designed and made available through the university in order to increase their satisfaction.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to gain a deeper understanding of the level of satisfaction among selected groups of international students at Oklahoma State University (OSU) with respect to their academic, personal, social, and financial experiences. Whether students with different backgrounds have different perceptions of satisfaction at OSU was also investigated.

Research Questions

The following research questions inform and guide this study:

1. How do the demographic characteristics of selected international students at OSU contribute to their level of satisfaction.
2. How do the academic experiences of selected international students at OSU contribute to their level of satisfaction.
3. How do the personal experiences of selected international students at OSU contribute to their level of satisfaction.
4. How do the social experiences of selected international students at OSU contribute to their level of satisfaction.
5. How do the financial experiences of selected international students at OSU contribute to their level of satisfaction.
6. How do the overall experiences of selected international students at OSU contribute to their level of satisfaction.

Need for and Significance of the Study

Tallman (1990) has indicated that the success of international students in the United States can directly be affected by the response of the universities to their needs and concerns. For international students, problems cloud their opinions of the value of their education, affect their immediate academic success, and hinder their perception of the worth of that experience when they return home.

According to Galiouridis (1980) and Sonari (1993), international students attend institutions of higher education in the United States primarily to advance their personal and professional development through the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Their home countries are looking for highly educated citizens who can help in the overall improvement of their countries as well as contribute to the advancement of knowledge throughout the world.

Many citizens of the United States hope to make friendships with citizens from other countries in order to achieve a more harmonious and peaceful world. Consequently, the importance of educational and cultural exchanges can not be overemphasized in realizing this goal, and therefore, most institutions consider satisfaction of international students a matter of considerable importance (Ahmad, 1984).

Schmidt and Sedlacek (1972), in studying variables related to university student satisfaction, discovered that the best indicator of student dissatisfaction involved a tendency to withhold information about one's feeling. Their discovery clarifies the need to do a qualitative study to uncover what some students might hesitate to share.

One of the benefits of this study could be to help higher education faculty and administrators address the perceptions, concerns, and needs of international students by providing relevant programs and services. The information gathered in this study could enhance the educational experience of higher education faculty and administrators and serve as a reference point for advising and counseling. It can contribute to future studies concerning international students' experiences at different institutions while providing specific information about satisfaction at Oklahoma State University.

It is important for officials/administrators/leaders at all higher education educational institutions to examine periodically the needs and views of their students if they hope to create educational satisfaction. The motivation should be obvious: more satisfied international students might bring more international students to those same institutions that were successful in satisfying them.

This study, then hopes to contribute positively in the following areas:

1. Provide a better basis to assist international students at OSU and those at other similar universities to make their educational experience a positive one;
2. To help administrators and faculty members understand and interact with international students in meaningful ways and offer them productive experiences and opportunities;
3. To address the needs and concerns of international students through planning and services designed to help them understand their relationship to the university they are attending;
4. To provide data for future research on international students; and

5. To serve as a resource for foreign countries and prospective international students considering study in the United States.

The results of this study will hopefully be a good resource to be used for planning and improving the conditions of international students. Knowledge of such results may lead to the establishment of services that better reflect the needs and expectations of international students.

Definitions of Terms

English Language Institute (ELI) – An institution that offers intensive English language preparation.

English Proficiency – The degree to which an international student is comfortable with, has knowledge of, or uses the English language.

International Student – A student who is neither an American citizen nor a permanent resident of the United States; a student who has come to the U. S. from a foreign country with a non-immigrant visa for the purpose of attending college.

International Student Services – Services, programs, and activities for the benefit of the international student.

National Student – A domestic student or a student raised in the U. S..

Satisfaction – The degree to which an international student is satisfied with the academic, social, personal, and financial aspects of life in the United States. Satisfaction results from a sense of ease and accomplishment arising from successfully overcoming cultural hurdles, achieving academic success, and developing a network of associations

and friendship within a local American community which improves one's personal and social life experience at OSU.

Social Adjustment – The degree to which an international student is satisfied with the social dimensions of his or her life.

Limitations of the Study

This study relied upon the interview; a method which has its strengths as well as its limitations. In qualitative research methods, relationships and meaningful experiences are more important than numbers. An interview is a useful way to get a substantial amount of various information in a very short period of time.

The procedures for conducting interviews are not standardized. The interviewees' responses and points of view are only partial revelations, shaped and made meaningful through the interview process. Participants are affected by the framework of understanding used by the interviewer. Those frameworks emerge in the actual content of specific questions guiding the interview (Biklen & Bogdan, 1992).

The major limitations of this study are as follows:

1. Bias:
 - a. The relationship between the interviewer and the participant affects the quality of information received (positively or negatively).
 - b. Some participants have their own agenda (bias) that they wish to achieve (i.e., hero or victim). The interaction and level of trust determine participant response. The respondent might try to please the researcher by providing only certain types of information.

- c. Face-to-face interviews allow participants to hide some important information or provide answers that may not be properly comprehended because of the presence of the researcher.
 - d. The interviewer's behavior and personality affect the respondents' answers. Since the researcher is also an international student, the topic is familiar to him and he has a good background for it. For that reason, he might, unconsciously, create or interpret information in ways that turn out as he unconsciously desires.
2. Generalization: The sample that was used in this study was not randomly selected and may not be large enough to be representative of the whole population. This qualitative disadvantage can not be avoided because of the limited time and resources available for this study. This limitation can be stated as follows:
- a. The study was limited to a few selected participants from those included countries which might not represent all other fellow international students. Only certain nationalities of international students enrolled at OSU (i.e., China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, and Turkey) were included in the study. Yet they represent 75 percent of all international students at OSU.
 - b. The perception of selected groups of international students at OSU would be limited to the period during which the study was conducted. Their perceptions during the study might be different

from the perception they may have after returning home and applying what they have learned.

- c. It is reasonable to assume that international students might be hesitant to comment negatively about their academic or social experience.

Summary

This study was designed to gain an understanding of selected groups of international students satisfaction with regard to their academic, personal, social, and financial experiences at Oklahoma State University. International students at OSU face various kinds of academic, personal, social, and financial challenges, most of which require the help and support from the surrounding community as well as from the university. In a new culture, new environment, and a new society international students need guidance and support in order to maximize this experience.

Chapter I includes a brief introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, theoretical frame and a definition of satisfaction, research questions, significance of the study, definitions of terms, limitations of the study, and summary.

Chapter II provides a review of research relevant to the subject of international students satisfaction, their problems and successes, and the interview method. Chapter III reports on the method employed in conducting the study, including the identification of the setting of the study, its participants, a sample, an instrument, and the method of data collection. An analysis of the data gathered and the subsequent findings will be reported

in Chapter IV. Summaries, conclusions, and recommendations will be addressed in Chapter V.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a review of literature related to the subject of international students satisfaction at colleges and universities in the United States. It covers what international students satisfaction entails, satisfaction, the success and problems experienced by them in regard to their academic, social, personal, and financial experiences, and a review of literature about the interview method, followed by a summary.

International Students' Satisfaction

Hendershott, Wright, and Henderson (1992) have considered the length of time a study will need as an important factor in determining the validity of international student satisfaction because that population's characteristics and conditions change from time to time. Age also has a positive and strong effect on the social life, academic life, and friendships; younger students are less able to adapt to and deal with their challenges in a positive way. Khalidi (1972) also has reported on a positive relationship between an international students adaptation to the United States and one's length of stay. High satisfaction tended to be associated with degree completion, graduate admission status, and competent use of English. He also found a similar relationship between satisfaction

with academic achievements and the level of adaptation. The stronger one's relationships with national students, and the better the educational quality of the field of study and academic department chosen resulted in a higher level of adaptation.

Changes in a campus environment affect the level of students satisfaction.

According to Holland and Huba (1991), satisfaction with college among participants in a Campus Service Program did increase as a result of their involvement in the college environment. An environment that presents a challenge to college students while providing a support system will increase their satisfaction. Akpan-Iquot (1980) has investigated the problems experienced by international students in selected Oklahoma institutions of higher education. English language, financial aid, and academic records were found to be the most critical to those students. He also found that the longer students stay in the United States the fewer problems they face.

Xia's (1991) study of Asian students' adjustment problems at the University of Wisconsin-Madison recognized that the variables of country, academic classification, grade point average, graduate assistantship, and membership in organizations proved the most useful in predicting the Asian students adjustment problems.

Differences among groups international students do depend to an extent upon the country of origin; Ahmad (1984) studying students from Malaysia, Nigeria, and Thailand at the University of North Texas, found that Malaysian students were more satisfied with the administration of the university than the other two groups. Sonari (1993) reported that 8.5 percent of the international students in the United States were enrolled in English language programs in 1991 and the majority of them was from Asia. The English language poses the greatest problem to international students enrolled in that English Language

program at Oregon State University. Other problems reported those involving admission selection, social-personal, health services, academic records, placement services, financial aid, student activities, orientation services and religious services. International students liked to be invited to visit American families or friends even from their home countries in order to reduce loneliness and homesickness. Other divisions and areas of interest to be explored include data about part-time job and information and advice about how to go about the admission process in the United States (Sonari, 1993).

Tallman (1990) reported similar results when he investigated the level of satisfaction International Graduate Library and Information Science students had with their United States academic programs and what those universities could do to improve the quality of education and environment for international students. Students want more information about funding, faculty interests, and areas of specialization deciding upon which institution to attend.

Success Experienced by International Students

International students appeared to be better prepared for the collegiate experience than national students. The only areas where the proportion of national students reported higher levels of preparation than international students were in English Language and American History. The majority of National students (77%) looks to college as a way to a better job, while over 60% of the international students look at it as a place to become a more cultured person; they have much higher expectations than national students for what college experience may enable them to do (Davis, 1996).

Rogers (1984) stressed the cultural and intellectual enrichment international students bring to US universities more than the economic benefit they represent. He reported that studies conducted at Indiana University and other institutions confirm that the overwhelming majority of foreign students who meet regular standards for admission performs at or well above average.

Proficiency in the English language was considered one of the most important factors contributing to the academic success and the development of a satisfactory cross-cultural adjustment by international students. In addition to that, communication skills were critical factors in establishing friendship with national students (Galiouridis, 1980).

In contrast, Hill (1966) has argued that one's difficulty with English language did not prevent international students from achieving satisfaction with their college education, although international students with higher levels of English language adjusted better academically (Lanz, 1985).

Problems Experienced by International Students

International students experience additional serious challenges and different kinds of difficulties when they have to deal with a new language, culture, society, educational system, and for being away from home. These problems are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Academic

International students have to adapt to an unfamiliar culture, a different educational system, and a different language, while assuming the work load responsibilities

of their courses. Hill (1966) found that Indonesian, Thailand, Pakistani, and Indian students at Indiana University, as a group, experienced substantial difficulties with their academic, personal, and financial experiences, with their academic problems resulting primarily from a lack of English proficiency.

Antanattis (1990), Elosibo (1987) Shana'a (1979) and Zain (1966) found that specific differences among international students change depending on a group's country of origin. They found that language deficiency is the major academic obstacle to the success of Asian students. Asian students experienced more serious academic difficulties than any other group, and these involve communication deficiencies, understanding lectures, taking notes, answering questions, participating in class discussion, and preparing written and oral reports. Even with the help of an international student adviser heavy academic pressure was generally experienced by international students who had to prove their intellectual ability to the host-university and also maintain passing grades, crucial to keeping scholarship. For those supported by their families the same stress resulted in order to maintain their academic standing. These students did not want to disappoint their parents who sacrificed much to support their education (Lanz, 1985).

According to Galiouridis (1980), academic loads were reported as time consuming; international students complained that there was no time for them to socialize with others. Use of the library and understanding lectures were found to be the most important factors influencing international students' social and academic adjustment at the University of Pittsburgh School of Education.

Hamouda (1986) investigated the academic and social adjustment problems of international graduate students at Pittsburgh University in a study that included one

hundred and eighty-four participants. He found that there were seven areas of academic adjustment problems involving advisers, the curriculum program, discrimination, educational system differences, instructors, university system difficulties, and language proficiency.

Tallman (1990) identified the following five problem areas as those the majority of international students faces: 1) a lack of comfort in participating in student organizations; 2) low faculty interest in international professional topics; 3) a lack of faculty knowledge about international students' problems; 4) low satisfaction with the amount of class discussion about international issues; 5) lack of faculty expertise about their home country's information environment; and 6) weak writing and counseling support programs. Also students indicated that language was a significant concern for many of them. They were not willing to accept getting low grades for language deficiencies.

Personal

While international students have been successful in their countries, the stressful nature of being in a foreign country negatively affects their performance. Mncadi (1993) stated:

Studies examining international students all report the stressful nature of being an international student. Perhaps the most well-known study on international students was that conducted by Lysgaard (1955) in which he generated the U-curve hypothesis, which states that at the beginning of the sojourn, adjustment is felt to be easy, followed by a period of depression when adjustment is felt to be stressful and a period of better adjustment. Subsequent studies either confirm or question that U-curve hypothesis, but the significance of this study is that it points to the stressful nature of being an international student and all later research agrees (pp. 10-11).

She also reported that married international students who left their families back-home experienced loneliness, homesickness, and depression more than those who live together.

Social

Understanding American culture, interacting and developing relationships with national students, and understanding their attitudes toward foreign students are key social issues that affect international students satisfaction. Many studies have indicated that close social interaction with national students led to favorable attitudes toward American culture. Hendershott, Wright, and Henderson (1992) concluded that having a social life and friendships with nationals aided one's overall well-being. In another way, those who showed more satisfaction with their social lives and friendships also tended to have higher levels of well-being. They found this result to be consistent also with Light's (1990) study *The Harvard Assessment Seminars*, which found that women have higher levels of satisfaction with their university experiences because of their personal relationships and informal meetings with faculty.

Japanese students, as reported by Xia (1991) encountered the fewest difficulties in regard to social and personal matters, while Malaysian students expressed many difficulties in all problem areas of adjustment.

Akpan-Iquot (1980) indicated that the major problems that international students face at Oklahoma universities were social in nature. Researchers suggest social programs can accommodate international students so that they can socialize and interact with American students and families. Tallman (1990) also reported that international students

have difficulty fostering friendships with national students who do not accept international students equally in group-project assignments.

Pierce (1995) indicated that the negative perceptions that some local residents might have, such as when they deal with an unfamiliar accent, are very sensitive for international students. Female respondents had more positive perceptions of international students as compared to males. Traveling outside US seems to create more positive feeling toward international students. Visiting an international student's residence was positively correlated with positive perceptions toward international students.

Financial

The majority of international students (83 percent) is funded in the United States either by their savings, their family, or by foreign sponsors (Rogers, 1984). It was also reported by Zikopolo and Barber (1986) that 60 percent of those completing a questionnaire (1,065) were self or family supported; another 20 percent were supported by their home government. Many studies report financial problems among the greatest difficulties for international students (Hamouda, 1986; Sonari, 1993; Xia, 1991, Wong, 1991). Jacobs and Shatswell (1996) have report that less than 7 percent of undergraduate international students receive funding from U. S. colleges and universities.

It is apparent that financial issues cut across national and cultural boundaries. It is rare to find international students without financial obstacles. These hardships can be stressful and emotionally draining. International students are also affected by political and economic changes in their countries. Financial problems also result from U. S. government cutbacks on education budgets. According to Salim (1984), financial problems and the

English language were the major problems faced by Malaysian students enrolled at Western Michigan University.

Gender and Age

Wong (1991) found no significant differences between the problems of male and female international students, between those below age 25 and those 25 years and above, or even between single and married students. In contrast to that, Strutz (1971) investigated the age differences in college student satisfaction. Adult women were found to be more satisfied with college than young women. Older women tended to be more self-motivated and to look at attending college as a privilege rather than as an obligation. They were more satisfied, generally, than younger women. However, younger women tended to look at university regulations positively while older women, having been independent for many years, perceived those as restrictions limiting their freedom. Significant age differences may exist in students satisfaction with the quality of one's education, policies and procedures, and overall satisfaction. Maturity and clear goals appears to contribute to a greater degree of satisfaction.

Values and Culture

Shandiz (1981), students from countries with very different cultures from the host country experience more problems. The lack of communication by many international students in their host country was often related to their culture. Calderwood (1993) indicated that it is against the culture of many international students to be argumentative with their teachers who have absolute authority and are not to be challenged. In contrast

to American culture and its allowance for independence, aggressiveness, and competition, other cultures place a greater value upon cooperation (Mncadi, 1993).

Summary

The majority of the international students who come to study in the United States is academically well prepared and have been successful in their home countries. Yet, the stressful nature of being in a foreign country contributes to their academic, social, personal, and financial problems. Clearly different from national students, international students have higher and different goals. The attitudes of international students about nationals differ because of cultural differences.

Available data suggests that not all international students have positive experiences. Language proficiency affects their level of success and satisfaction in many ways. However, no two international students experiences are alike, and their problems vary. The longer one's stays, the better one communicates and the more one's becomes satisfied.

Institutions interested in maintaining their international student populations and their global competitiveness should actively address their students needs and expectations. This study is founded on the premise that academic, personal, social, and financial factors determine international students satisfaction on a given campus.

Interview

Qualitative research provides a way to express a “whole” experience. The interview method and its process of doing research can effectively accomplish this task (Meloy, 1994).

What is The Interview?

Interviewing includes learning that occurs by reading, discussing, sharing, feeling, writing, and reflecting (Meloy, 1994). Qualitative interviewing is a great adventure; every step of it creates new information and opens windows into the experiences of the participants. Qualitative interviewing is a way of finding out what others feel and think about their worlds (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

An interview, as Biklen and Bogdan (1992) describe it, is a conversation between two persons, directed by the interviewer with the purpose of getting information from the interviewee. Similarly, Frey and Oishi (1995) define the interview as a direct, guided conversation whose purpose is to gather information using a set of questions in a consistent way to all selected participants. Interviewing is a conversation that includes “give-and-take” between two persons. According to Kvale (1996):

Interviews are conversations where the outcome is a co-production of the interviewer and the participant. With the “Interview” we “Inter” others’ “View.” An *inter view*, is an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest. (p. 1).

The interview has been considered by many researchers as a key data-collection tool for conducting surveys. MaCraken (1988) has indicated that the long interview is one of the most powerful methods in the qualitative armory especially for descriptive and

analytic purposes. Researchers use the interview to gain a quality of understanding from the perspective of the *informants* (participants).

There are seven stages of interviewing investigation suggested by Kvale (1996):

1. Thematizing: The question of why and what to be investigated (purpose and concept) should be clarified before the question of how (method) is posed.
2. Designing: Plan the design of the study, taking into consideration all seven stages of the investigation, before the interviewing starts.
3. Interviewing: Conduct the interviews based on an interview guide.
4. Transcribing: Prepare the interview material for analysis, which commonly includes a transcription from oral speech to written text.
5. Analysis: Decide on which methods of analysis are most appropriate.
6. Verifying: Ascertain the generalizability, reliability, and validity of the interview findings. Reliability refers to how consistent the results are, and validity means whether an interview study investigates what is intended to be investigated.
7. Reporting: Communicate the findings of the study and the methods applied in a form that lives up to scientific criteria, takes the ethical aspects of the investigation into consideration, and results in a readable product. (p. 88).

The qualitative interview seeks qualitative knowledge expressed in normal language; it does not aim at quantification. The interview seeks to interpret the meaning of central themes in the life world of the participant. The role of the interviewer is to register and interpret the meaning of what is said as well as how it is said. The researcher

attempts to obtain nuanced descriptions of different aspects of the participants' life worlds (Kvale, 1996).

Why The Interview?

Interviews have particular strengths. An interview is a useful way to get a large amount of data in a short period of time. When more than one person is used as an informant, the interview process allows for a wide variety of information (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Qualitative interviews enhance understanding experiences and reconstructing new events. Applied qualitative research audiences are different (teachers, administrators, officials, parents, students), but those audiences share in common the concern with its immediate practical implications which can help improve people's life and cause change for the better (Biklen & Bogdan, 1992).

Using qualitative interviews, researchers evaluate all kinds of projects and programs, whether for social reform or managerial improvement. Researchers put together the information they find from qualitative interviews to form explanations and theories grounded in the details, evidence, and examples of the interviews. These grounded theories explain what is happening in the terms of those who are involved in the situation. Grounded theory is based on exchanges in which interviewees can talk back, clarify, and explain their points. These explanations and theories are not just of academic interest; they can have practical implications (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Qualitative researchers ask participants to tell them in their own language about their personal views and perceptions. Interviews are especially useful for new topics, and

for exploratory research aimed at understanding what people know, believe, think, and feel about something or a particular subject (McCraken, 1988).

A well-carried out research interview can be a rare and enriching experience for the interviewee who may obtain new insights into his or her life situation. The process of being interviewed may produce new insights and awareness, and the participant may, in the course of the interview, come to change his or her descriptions and meanings about a theme (Kvale, 1996).

Abbott and others (1990) have investigated student satisfaction with eight methods of collecting student evaluations of college instructors to rate these methods. They found that students prefer the interview method at midterm followed by the instructor's reaction to traditional approaches.

Seidman (1991) indicated that at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in listening and understanding the stories of others and the meaning each party makes of that experience. Interviewers should believe that others' stories are important and interesting. Seidman also argued that interviewing allows us to put behavior in a context so that one is able to understand the meaning others make with their experiences. Interviewing is a powerful way to gain insight into educational issues through understanding the experience of individuals whose lives constitute education. It is deeply satisfying to researchers who are interested in others' opinions.

Clarifications can be done by the interviewer when a respondent has not understood the question or the answer is not complete or imprecise. Another advantage of using interviews involves the ability to probe (a technique used to get more information) when a response is unclear or incomplete. Probes include simple gestures, such as nodding

or saying “uh-huh,” and neutral requests like “please tell me more about that” to motivate the respondent to give more details (Frey & Oishi, 1995).

The Interview Guide

Most studies recommend the interviewer hold to a schedule or a guide to keep the interview focused. Kvale (1996) indicated that an interview guide specifies the topics and their sequence, serving as a guideline for the interviewer to follow. It can be a detailed sequence of carefully selected questions as in the structured interviews, or it can be rough topics to be discussed in an open and flexible way. For the semi-structured type of interview to be used in this study, the guide contains an outline of research questions which cover the main topics of the subject studied followed by interview questions. The interview questions are brief and simple. Every research topic is covered by five to seven interview questions. Questions that can be answered by “yes” or “no” were avoided as much as possible.

Sensitive questions are those which a respondent may be uncomfortable answering, such as questions about finances, illegal behavior, or embarrassing events (such as filing bankruptcy). It is not recommended to start an interview with such questions. The same things apply to complex questions that require lengthy explanations or numerous response categories. Another type of question is “open-ended.” Open-ended questions do not offer response choices; they open the door for long answers where respondents are completely free to frame their answers (Frey & Oishi, 1995).

Characteristics of a Good Interviewer

Biklen and Bogdan (1992) listed the following five recommendations for those who aspire to be good interviewers:

1. They should be good listeners and communicators: A good interviewer communicates personal interest and attention to the participant by being attentive, nodding one's head, and using appropriate facial expressions to communicate as much as needed. The interviewer has to be friendly to gain trust and establish a relationship with the participants.
2. They should be flexible: flexibility is crucial to a successful interview.
3. They should be patient and have self-control: Since participants share their experiences with the interviewer, it is important to control the reaction and not to be evaluative. Good interviewers need to display patience and wait for full explanations.
4. They should ask for permission when necessary; interviewers should never record without permission.
5. They should be creative investigators: They have to be like detectives who fit bits and pieces of information and experiences together in order to develop an understanding of the participant's perspective.

According to Denzin (1989), an interviewer should be a good and active listener and be able to get the participant back on track when he or she leaves the topic.

Establishing relationships to make participants comfortable, using eye contact to watch how they say what they say are necessary in interviewing. He also recommended dressing

and looking in a way that gets the interviewee's approval; a first impression is very important. One needs to control one's voice to an acceptable level, sit in an attentive way, and leave a free space or comfort area.

It is important to be prepared, confident, and non-judgmental. Sensitive topics should be brought up toward the end of an interview. The interviewer should know what not to do such as avoiding formal setting or in a noisy moment. Positive or negative reinforcements should be avoided groups interviews.

In addition, Seidman (1991) has added more recommendations for the interviewer. The interviewer should not interrupt the participant's train of thought; should ask questions when the context is not clear but avoid asking leading questions; ask open-ended questions; ask participants to try to reconstruct rather than remember; use an interview guide cautiously; tolerate silence; wait before asking another question; and avoid any in-depth analysis of the interview data until all interviews have been completed.

In conclusion, the most important personal characteristic that interviewers should have is a genuine interest in other people. Interviewing leads to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the amazing intricacies and coherence of people's experiences. It leads as well to a more conscious awareness of the social and organizational context of people's experience. Interviewing continues to lead researchers to respect the participants, to relish the understanding that one gains from them, and to enjoy sharing their stories (Seidman, 1991).

Types of Interviews

Professional interviews take a variety of forms, such as a legal interrogation, a job interview, a therapeutic interview, or a research interview. There are also two types of interviews: (1) in-person interviews: one-on-one interviews or face-to-face interviews; (2) and telephone interviewing. The discussion in this study was focused upon in-person interviewing. In-depth interviewing is not designed to test hypotheses or mainly to answer questions. Rather, it is designed to ask participants to reconstruct their experiences and explore their meanings (Seidman, 1991).

In some interviews, the goal is to elicit narratives; in others, the interviewer is delighted if the interviewee tells a story. There are different approaches to hearing. These include:

1. Topical oral histories: in which the interviewer seeks participants who have experienced a particular historical event such as the Great Depression. The researcher is looking for narratives that explain what happened and how it was understood.
2. Life histories: these interviews focus more on the experience of an individual through his or her different stages of life. They involve a combination of both narratives and stories that interpret the past.
3. Evaluative interviews: these interviews attempt to learn whether new programs, projects, or other types of intentional changes are living up to expectations. Myths may arise as people try to explain present problems in terms of unresolved tensions from the past.

4. Focus group interviews: these encounters are formed for evaluation in which groups of people discuss potential changes or perceive new products (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 28).

Gregson (1990) has noted that there are two primary forms of research interviews: structured or unstructured. The standardized or structured interview is more favored among quantitative researchers. Structured interviews ask the same questions in the same way and exit with the same statement. The qualitative interview is sometimes called an unstructured or a non-standardized interview. The researcher in the unstructured interview uses open-ended questions. It provides information otherwise hard to get. The interviewer controls the conversation, but only careful monitoring will keep the interview focused and on track. Information is created through the collaboration of both the interviewer and the participant.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The semi-structured (focused) format is used when interviewers want specific information. It is also called *focused* because the interview is focused on particular themes; it is neither strictly structured with standardized questions and a rigid format, nor entirely “non-directive.” According to Gregson (1990), the semi- or moderately structured interview possesses the advantages (a flexible and adaptable method and reliable data) of both the structured and unstructured interview.

Qualitative interviewing requires intense listening, curiosity about what people say, and a systematic effort to understand what people tell (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Criteria for Judging Qualitative Research

Researchers should take into consideration a study's intellectual honesty and authenticity, and how that study fits with the context of already published results. Also a study's integrity must be achieved by making sure that it is unified in a logical, rational way and identifiable within a paradigm. The researcher should emphasize intellectual depth rather than superficial reasoning. The study must be useful for a recognizable professional audience (Utility), and be professionally relevant. It also should make a contribution to the field. In addition, it should be meaningful, important, and have a sense of excitement and discovery; it should touch the spirit in some way (Meloy, 1994).

Getting only one side of an argument is not sufficient. To represent all divisions, interviewers need to strive for balance in their choice of interviewees. What is important is not how many people one talks to, but whether the answers work. Reaching saturation helps one gain confidence that what is learned bears significantly upon the particular area being studied.

Kvale (1995) has described many factors that affect the quality of an interview. He notes that shorter questions and long answers tend to be better. Also, the interviewer should ask for clarifications and explanations to get more detailed and specific answers. Good participants are knowledgeable, truthful, consistent and precise, can give long and lively descriptions of their life situation, and cooperative and well motivated. Interviewers need to read about and practice interviewing to gain self-confidence and experience. Doing in-depth interviewing encourages the researcher to develop a strong empathy for the interviewees. This empathy is needed though emotion will not hurt the research. In

qualitative interviewing, the researcher is not neutral, distant, or emotionally uninvolved. The researcher's empathy, sensitivity, humor, and sincerity are important tools for the research. The researcher asks for openness from the interviewees; he or she is unlikely to get that openness by being closed and impersonal (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Summary

A qualitative interview is a method of data collection that may be described as an interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee, designed to obtain valid and reliable information. Qualitative interviewing is a way of finding out what others feel and think about their worlds (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

As any other research method, the interview has its strengths and weaknesses. An interview is a useful way to get a large amount of fresh data quickly. It helps participants to understand experiences and in reconstruct new events; it offers insight into educational issues; and the interviewer provides clarifications when necessary. It is deeply satisfying to researchers who are interested in the opinions and stories of others. According to Gregson (1990), the moderately or semi-structured interview possesses most of the advantages of both structured and unstructured interviews.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the design and setting of the study; participants and population; a description of sampling criteria; the study's instrument and procedure for collecting and analyzing data; the limitations and significance of the study; and concludes with a brief summary.

This descriptive or non-experimental study was conducted using a qualitative semi-structured interview to collect and analyze the data. Qualitative researchers seek to understand “how” and “why” participants see their world the way they do. Participants were asked to describe their experiences and perceptions of satisfaction in their own words. Qualitative research is more concerned with meaning rather than frequencies (Kirk & Miller, 1986).

According to McCracken (1988) and many other researchers, the interview is one of the most powerful methods in the qualitative armory, designed especially for descriptive and analytic purposes. The result of this study is “thick” description of the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 1988).

Reviewing of the literature about international students satisfaction made clear that a qualitative method such as the in-person interview would be the most appropriate method for gaining a deeper understanding about this issue. As Seidman (1991) stated:

So much research is done on schooling in the United States; yet so little of it is based on studies involving the perspective of the students, teachers, administrators, and counselors whose individual and collective experience constitutes schooling. (p.4).

This study examines the level of satisfaction among selected groups of international students at Oklahoma State University (OSU) with respect to the following four critical components of their: academic, personal, social, and financial experiences. Also the question of whether students with different backgrounds have different perceptions of satisfaction at OSU was investigated.

Setting of the Study

This study took place at Oklahoma State University (OSU) in the town of Stillwater, Oklahoma. This university is one of the largest institutions of higher education in the Southwest with a total enrollment close to 18,000 students on its main campus in 1998. International student enrollment during the Fall of 1998 totaled 1,952 students or around 11 % of the total student enrollment. This number is equal to (if not more than) all other national minority students (e.g., African Americans, Asians, Hispanics, and Native Americans) at that university combined. Approximately one-third of the international students at OSU are females. Located in a growing residential college town with approximately 42,000 residents, OSU and the town of Stillwater are reputed to be cordial and hospitable to all students including internationals. Although a growing town in which

many business are settling and expanding, Stillwater continues to be considered a student-oriented city.

Participants

Participant is the term chosen in this study, instead of *subject* or *interviewee* or *respondent* or *informant*, to reflect the active stance of the interviewees. The word seems to capture both the sense of active involvement that occurs in in-depth interviews and the sense of equity established among interview participants (Seidman, 1991). To derive results from qualitative interviews, participants must be carefully selected for their ability to offer accurate information. Then it is possible to extrapolate the results beyond their original setting and participants through the logic of comparison (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Participants in this study were thirty-five international (male and female) students from 10 countries with the greatest number of enrollees at Oklahoma State University on the Stillwater campus. This number of participants represents a compromise between a representative sample and the available resources. Participants were carefully selected from different countries of origin to counteract possible special circumstances related to certain nationalities. Different genders, academic levels, and cultural issues were also considered. Purposive sampling was used to select participants nominated by their fellow leaders and friends to represent, as much as possible, typical international students. Participants were expected to provide valuable and interesting information about their experiences and how they perceive their satisfaction at Oklahoma State University (OSU).

Confidentiality

The names and addresses of these participants were not be accessible to anyone other than the researcher because of section 513 of the Public Law 93-380, the Education Amendments of 1974, which deals with the protection of rights and privacy of students, commonly known as the Buckley Amendment. Confidentiality assured the respondents that identifying information known about them (e.g., name, telephone number, and address) would not be revealed in any way. Participants were informed that they could withdraw at any time from the interview or from answering any question they did not feel comfortable to discuss. Anonymity and confidentiality protected the participants' privacy (Frey & Oishi, 1995).

Confidentiality was necessary in order to convince respondents that their identity would be kept secret in order to increase the response rate and to elicit detailed information (Frey & Oishi, 1995). Confidentiality is an important guarantee.

Male and female students were included in this study and more information about their demographics were reported later in the study. The researcher visited with the International Student Office and with the Assessment Office at OSU to obtain sources of information as well as to have access to the international students' names and address. After getting approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the International Student Office provided more specific information about the population used in this study.

Sampling

According to Johnson (1990), credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirm-ability played a role in selecting. This explicit concern for choice criteria facilitated both comparability and replication. He indicated that when researchers seek out participants, they hope they will provide accurate and reliable information.

Purposive sampling was used to select individuals on the basis of accessible and known population characteristics. It is a selection based on an apriori framework that emphasizes selecting key informants who might be able to provide a wide range of experiences. Key informants (participants) could add insights that could not otherwise be anticipated in the original research design. Such individuals are those with whom researchers tend to work closely (Spradely, 1979).

The criteria for determining key informants included their role in the community, their popularity, the knowledge they possessed as a result of their representative role, their willingness to communicate as well as their ability to communicate well. It is often the case that informal networks are the only means available for identifying and selecting informants. Once these social networks are understood, a researcher can identify well-informed participants (Biklen & Bogdan, 1992; Denzin, 1989).

With the help of international students' leaders, the ISS office, and the researcher's friends, a diversified sample of participants from different backgrounds were selected. Those students who had not completed one semester at OSU, those who were not willing to be involved in the study, and those who have major communication deficiencies (according to their leaders' comments) were excluded. The main reason for excluding

some informants was to maximize the quality of the information which could be elicited from the limited number of knowledgeable selected participants who could talk well about their personal experiences.

There are 103 countries represented in the OSU student body; 10 of the most extensively represented countries were included in this study. These students happen to be the vast majority of the total international students attending (1469 out of 1952 international students, or 75 % of those enrolled in the Fall, 1998 semester). Because of the limited time and resources of the researcher, and the time-consuming nature of the qualitative interview method, the number of participants was limited to thirty-five students.

Survey Instrument

Semi-Structured Interview

In qualitative case studies the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 1988). The researcher in this case is very familiar and knowledgeable about the semi-structured interview. In various degrees the researcher possesses the necessary qualities of a good interviewer including good listening, curiosity, patience, flexibility, experience, empathy, sensitivity, humor, and sincerity. Familiar and interested in this topic, the interviewer wants to discover new information that might help prevent dissatisfaction among international students.

The interview, or "Guided Conversation Interview", as Denzin (1989) has called it, is appropriate to this because it is more attuned to the lives of international students and to

the exploring of meaning and opinion. Face-to-face interviews allow the researcher to build relationships with participants and gain their trust; the interviewer can elicit behaviors from respondents, and not only record what is going on. This kind of interview also provides a chance for creative and attentive listening in a conversation where persons can share experiences. Biklen and Bogdan (1992) have argued that relationships with participants should be built on empathy, trust, friendship, intense contact, and equality. This trust is necessary to elicit more detailed information from the participants.

Data Collection

A list of certain questions (interview guide) was formulated based on the review of the literature (Calderwood, 1993; El-Agha, 1991; Galioridis, 1980; Mncadi, 1993; and Tallman, 1990) to guide the semi-structured interviews (Appendix C). These questions all related to international students academic, social, personal, and financial satisfaction. The interviews were conducted after the questions were clarified and minimized, and duplications were eliminated by the researcher and the dissertation adviser. The researcher's dissertation committee gave its final approval of the interview guide, in order to insure the credibility of the instrument and the dependability of how the interview procedure would be conducted. The researcher contacted each selected participant either by phone or in person to set appointments for the interview. Some of the interviews were made in the apartment of the researcher, others in their homes, or on campus at OSU. Most of the interviews lasted roughly one hour. The most difficult aspect of this kind of study is to have access to meet and interview participants. In some cases the participants do not show up at all. To work most reliably with the words of the participants, the study

made use of audiocassette recordings in order to help capture the thoughts, perceptions, and feelings of the participants. After each interview the researcher transformed (transcribed) those spoken words into a written text (thick descriptions). The transcripts were titled with pseudonyms used for participants. Participants were called again by phone for clarifications when needed. These transcripts constitute the main data for the study. A room was left on left-hand margins for coding and comments.

Time-consuming and potentially costly, transcribing interview tapes took about five hours for each 1-hour tape. The cassette tape recorder used in this study had a special feature to slow down the speed of the tape to make typing easy and smooth.

Because of the extensive time and expense involved in transcribing interviews, people working without research funding often take shortcuts. One shortcut was to type transcripts, but leave out some of the material that does not address the study's concerns. The researcher did not exclude any proportion that could be related to the subject of this study. The first interviews consumed more time to conduct, transcribe and analyze than later ones. As the study proceeded, the interviewer became more familiar with the study's focus and more confident about what to include. The tapes were saved in a safe box with the researcher for future needs (Biklen & Bogdan, 1992; Seidman, 1991).

Thick descriptions were produced by getting beyond ordinary listening and by focusing the discussion so that more depth and detailed answers could be obtained. These thick descriptions form the material that researchers gather, synthesize, and analyze as part of hearing "meaning". Interviewers need to pay attention to the symbols and metaphors with which people describe their world so they can understand what people say. In a different context, a term can take on a different meaning. It should not be taken for

granted that we understand the terms of the new-world or setting. None's experience is more true than others' experience. There is no right or wrong in this issue (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Analysis of Data

According to Kirk and Miller (1986), the third and fourth steps of qualitative research studies involve the interpretation of collected data and compiling its results into an understandable form.

Transcripts refer to the rough materials that researchers collect from the world they are studying; they form the basis for analysis. In qualitative studies, researchers seek to understand how those participants view their experiences in a particular situation. Controversies and possible comparisons between their views and with other published research were made (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging interview transcripts and other accumulated materials to increase our own understanding and to enable us to present what has been discovered to others. Data should be analyzed inductively. While reading transcripts, one should begin developing a preliminary list of coding units and categories. Units come from the transcripts; for example, they can be a sentence or a single statement related to a participants satisfaction at OSU. Then, abbreviations could be assigned to those units and then read through the data once again. Categories could be formed by sorting the units according to similarity in meaning. These categories could then be integrated into themes and more general concepts. Finally, the

collected data should be edited, organized, and analyzed to provide a clear picture of the thoughts and feelings of the participants (Biklen & Bogdan, 1992; Merriam, 1988).

Making thematic connections involves organizing excerpts from transcripts into categories. These categories develop from the experience of the participants as represented in the interviews. Patterns and connections among these categories emerge to form themes and synthesis of what the participants have said and how the researcher has responded. Coherence which results from working with data is important. It is the researcher's contribution to the study (Seidman, 1991).

The enormous amount of text developed during an investigation should be reduced to what is most important and interesting (McCracken, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1984). A sense of what has been collected should be informed by insights which facilitate the ordering and summarizing of the data (Denzin, 1989). The researcher looks for any patterns, directions, or differences, categorizes theme, and uses what participants say to support a certain position.

Using a Computer for Analysis

The greatest change in qualitative research technology in the last fifteen years has involved the use of computers to help record, sort, retrieve and analyze data. The use of computers in qualitative research ranges from simple word processing to doing sophisticated data sorting and retrieving. Most word processing programs have search-and-find features or indexing capabilities that allow a researcher to locate key words or codes in text files. Some programs come with data base managers that can be helpful to qualitative researchers. Other software can transform tape recordings to compact disk,

convert data into digital form, and store it in the computer. The researcher used Microsoft Word in addition to Microsoft Access database software.

One of the goals of the interview design is to ensure that the results are deep, detailed, and vivid. Depth means getting a thoughtful answer based on considerable evidence as well as getting full consideration of a topic from diverse points of view. The interviewer invites the interviewee to think of differences and explain with examples by asking follow-up questions and showing in the process a familiarity with and sympathy for their world (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Completing a study should point out what was learned from doing interviews, studying transcripts, marking and labeling them, crafting profiles, and organizing categories of excerpts. New findings, understandings, and surprises should emerge clearly. The connections among the participants' experiences, confirmations of previous instincts, and whether the results are consistent with previous studies are all matters to be reported. Any interconnections among people's experiences who live and work in a shared context should be pointed out (Siedman, 1991).

Reporting the Findings

A theme is some concept or theory that emerges from data. A researcher should expect false starts, reformation, and refinement and be open to discovery (Biklen & Bogdan, 1992).

There are several ways of considering what qualitative researchers do when they write up a study; Spradley (1979) calls it translation. The job involves deciding which evidence to use to illustrate certain points; it is a balancing act between the particular and

the general. Quotations not only tell what the participants said, but also how they said it and in what context. Alternative points of view should be followed by a discussion of how and why this or that is more consistent with the data. The dictionary and the thesaurus are important measures from which to choose the clear and more precise word (Biklen & Bogdan, 1992).

Research Criteria

Krefting (1990) suggested Guba's (1981) model in designing research. A model based upon the identification of four aspects of trustworthiness applicable to qualitative studies. These four aspects include: a) truth value, b) applicability, c) consistency, and d) neutrality. The model defines different strategies for each approach to assess the value of the results.

1. Truth Value (Credibility) – Establishes how confident the researcher is with the findings based on the research design (internal validity). It is the most important criterion for the assessment of qualitative research. It is the researcher's responsibility to present an accurate picture of how participants view their experiences. Merriam (1988) suggested three strategies to establish credibility that were used for this study:

- a. *Member checks*: involves checking back with the participants to see if the results accurately represent their opinions. The researcher checked back with participants by telephone as needed.
- b. *Peer examination*: a person who is knowledgeable and interested in the study serves as a debriefer. The feedback from the dissertation adviser

improved the efficiency of data collection and reduced the researcher's bias.

- c. *Gathering data* for a reasonable amount of time and conducting interviews to the point of redundancy and saturation. The more experience the researcher has with interviewing methods the better the results. The period of doing interviews for this study was 12 months.

2. Applicability (Transferability) – Research meets acceptable criteria when its findings fit into other contexts or settings. Merriam (1988) has argued that thick and rich descriptions of data, that is typical to the perceptions of participants, should be provided to whoever is interested.

3. Consistency (Dependability) – Reaching consistent results over time (reliability). Research studies need to present sufficient and detailed descriptive data about its setting, its methodology, and how its themes and categories were developed to allow for comparison. Keeping notes and tapes helps peer examination. Variations in experience rather than identical repetition is sought (the range of experience rather than the average of it). Also providing a rich and thick description is recommended “so that anyone else interested in transferability has a base of information appropriate to the judgment” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 125).

4. Neutrality (Confirmability) – the freedom from bias in the research procedure and results will be possible if open-ended questions are used since these reduce the researcher's influence on the participants.

Summary

The source of data for this proposed study was the participants. To maximize the quality of data, key participants were identified and selected using purposive sampling. The inquiry method was qualitative and descriptive oriented and data were collected through the semi-structured interview. The primary instrument was the interviewer who is an experienced international student and familiar with the interview method as well as with the topic of the study. A set of six research questions was made to guide and facilitate interviews. Each question was covered in detail by some interview question. An audio-tape and a personal computer using the Microsoft Word and Microsoft Access programs were used in collecting, transcribing, and sorting the data.

The results were interpreted and discussed in the light of the research questions for the study and related research literature. The participants also were asked to provide suggestions about how they could become more satisfied. Participants were quoted sufficiently and their views were used to describe their settings. The results were documented and presented in the next chapters.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

This chapter reports the findings relative to the research questions posed by this study. The main purpose of the data analysis was to assess satisfaction of the participants according to their academic, personal, social, and financial experiences at OSU. Their feedback and suggestions provided insights into their world and could be considered a valuable source for improving their situation and increasing their satisfaction.

The source of data for this study was the participants. To maximize the quality of data, key participants were identified and selected using purposive sampling. The inquiry method was qualitative in nature and data was collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews guided by a list of questions or interview guide (Appendix C). The primary instrument was the interviewer, an international student familiar with the interview method and the topic of the study. A set of questions was made to guide and facilitate the interviews. An audio tape and a personal computer using the Microsoft Word program were used to collect and transcribe the data. Then a Microsoft Access database program was used to sort and make inquiries in order to organize the raw data and facilitate its analysis.

The study was designed to elicit a clear picture about the experiences of selected international students from ten different countries. The study focused on their academic, personal, social, and financial concerns as major indicators to their overall satisfaction at OSU. Their demographic differences were also analyzed to determine if their satisfaction varied as a result of demographic differences.

The results were interpreted and discussed in light of the research questions for the study and related research literature. Participants were quoted often, and their words best describe their views. The participants provided many valuable suggestions regarding the issue of international student satisfaction.

Findings of the Study

The findings are organized into six subheadings:

1. A descriptive analysis of the sample.
2. The results relative to Question 2 concerning academic experience.
3. The results relative to Question 3 concerning personal experience.
4. The results relative to Question 4 concerning social experience.
5. The results relative to Question 5 concerning financial experience.
6. The results relative to Question 6 concerning an overview and suggestions for change.

Descriptive Analysis of the Sample

Demographics – The interview guide consisted of six major questions related to the participants' demographic, academic, personal, social, financial, and overall evaluation

of their experience and satisfaction at OSU. Some questions (interview questions) were purposively redundant in order to verify the consistency in answers. The vast majority of questions was open-ended and opportunity was given to each participant to take his or her time and share in detail any aspect of his or her experience at OSU.

The participants in this study were thirty-five international students from ten different countries (e.g., China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysian, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, and Turkey). Seventy-five percent of all international students who attended OSU during the years 1997 to 1998 were from these ten countries. Interviewing students from different countries and backgrounds enriched the quality of this research and added different dimensions to it.

The distribution of international students who participated in this study appears in Table 1 and is based upon one's country of origin and gender. Twenty-two of the participants were male students (63 percent) and thirteen were female students (37 percent). Five participants were from Malaysia (2 females, 3 males), four from China (2 females, 2 males), four from Indonesia (1 Female, 3 males), four from India (1 female, 3 males), four from Japan (2 females, 2 males), three from Korea (2 females, 1 male), three from Pakistan (all males), two males from Sri Lanka, three from Taiwan (2 females, 1 male) and three from Turkey (2 males, 1 female).

TABLE 1
PARTICIPANTS' DISTRIBUTION BASED ON COUNTRY
OF ORIGIN AND GENDER

Country of Origin	Male	Female	Total
China	2	2	4
Indonesia	3	1	4
India	3	1	4
Japan	2	2	4
Korea	1	2	3
Malaysian	3	2	5
Pakistan	3	0	3
Sri Lanka	2	0	2
Taiwan	1	2	3
Turkey	2	1	3
Total	22	13	35
Percentage	63%	37%	100%

Reflecting different cultures and different backgrounds, this data increase the opportunity to generalize because the results of this study do not represent one ethnic group or culture. Participants speak different native languages (more than thirteen different ones); some participants have command of three or four native languages and they represent different religions (Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Catholics, and some without any religion).

Table 2 represents the distribution of participants based on their degree of program. Most participants were pursuing graduate degrees (Masters and Doctorates: 73

percent). Nine of the participants (26 percent) were undergraduates, eleven (31 percent) were enrolled in Master programs and fifteen (42.9 percent) were Ph.D. candidates.

TABLE 2
DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS BASED
ON CLASS LEVEL

Educational Program	Sample		Population	
	n	%	n	%
Undergraduate	9	26	1043	54
Masters	11	31	549	28
Doctoral	15	43	335	18
Totals	35	100	1927	100

Data indicated their majors also vary as well as their departments. As a result, they have different academic experiences. The majority of them specialized in engineering or science.

According to the OSU International Student Office' statistics in 1997, the vast majority of undergraduate students was single (97 percent), while only 53 percent of the graduate students were single. Fourteen of the participants were married (40 percent) and

eleven of them do have, between two to three children on average (Table 3). Not all of the married students have their spouses with them. Four of them experienced great hardship because of this situation. The participants ranged in age from 21 to 43 years old; the mean age of the sample was 29.6 years.

TABLE 3
PARTICIPANTS' DISTRIBUTION BASED ON MAJOR

Major	Total
Animal Science	1
Art and Science	1
Biochemistry	3
Computer Science	1
Business and Finance	2
Economics	3
Engineering	14
Education	4
Environmental Design (Soil, Forestry, HRD)	4
Total	35

Length of Stay in the U. S. -- The vast majority of the participants has been attending OSU for more than a year. One student has been in the US for thirteen years,

another for six years, and third for five years while most have been in residence for two years.

Academic Experience

Satisfaction with the Orientation Program – As can be seen in Table 4, only four (11 percent) of the participants were very satisfied with their orientation program and how it helped them to get to know OSU and its programs and services. They expressed the satisfaction and mentioned many benefits that new international students can obtain. As a graduate Malaysian student related:

The orientation program helped me to understand OSU, how to adjust to the new environment and to be more comfortable. It also helped me academically, even in doing my paper work.

Another Indian student was very happy with the idea of having discussion groups to share ideas and raise questions. A Korean student suggested sharing and discussing only the major concerns and regulations, and providing details in written material to be studied later. It was also important to know, from the first day, how to meet and deal with one's adviser. Making appointments in advance was new for most international students.

The majority (52 percent) were satisfied with the orientation program, and they shared their views and suggestions. One suggestion was:

to have the orientation program on weekends only so they can digest the information slowly. Long breaks might be helpful for students who need to go home to eat or pray and come back . . . We can learn a lot how to run our daily routine without making many mistakes . . . Life examples and practical information are more interesting to us than regulations and laws of immigration. More training is needed to improve the performance of international students assistants and councilors.

TABLE 4
SATISFACTION WITH THE ORIENTATION PROGRAM

	Male	Female	Graduate	Under Graduate	Total
Very satisfied	2	2	3	1	4
Satisfied	10	8	13	5	18
Somewhat Satisfied	4	0	3	1	4
Not Satisfied	1	2	1	2	3
Didn't attend	5	1	6	0	6
Total	22	13	26	9	35

On the other hand, only 7 students (20 percent) expressed some level of dissatisfaction with the program by considering it to be okay or not good in general. They conveyed the idea that: “the orientation program was too general and most of the information is written in the brochures.”

More than one participant suggested:

including more international students to educate the new comers. Sometimes it is hard for a freshman to understand the accent and the slang of some instructors or speakers.

Many international students expressed their sensitivity to some advice that was given to them such as: “to take a shower before going to work or to school!”

Another student complained that the orientation program was religious oriented.

He continued to say:

International students need to know How-to-do things right, without being cheated or deceived; how to get a job, how to avoid traffic tickets, parking rules, etc. They need to listen to the experienced international students and learn from their mistakes and experiences and not to repeat those mistakes.

Six of the participants did not respond because they did not attend that program.

Major Academic Concerns – The major academic concerns were listed in Table 5 according to their frequency and importance to international students. To succeed academically was the first priority to all international students.

The most important and first mentioned academic concern for the majority of international students was the academic advising. The role of the adviser is seen as the key to their success because the adviser provides advice and support based on their experience. Having good instructors, updated course work, and practical knowledge are considered next in terms of importance. Some participants indicated that flexibility in schedule and relationships with advisers were more important to graduate students, while the undergraduate students cared more about course content and an instructor's ability to deliver lectures in interesting and successful ways. A Pakistani undergraduate student related:

the professors are the most important to me as an undergraduate student. The way they teach or convey the information to students is critical in making them awake and listen . . . some instructors have their own ways to attract students and share examples that make the lecture fun and beneficial.

TABLE 5
DISTRIBUTION OF MAJOR ACADEMIC CONCERNS
BASED ON FREQUENCY

Academic Concern	Frequency
Advisers	7
Faculty	6
Course work	4
Text books	3
Library	3
Learning Approach	2
Research	2
Project's content	2
Language	1
Facilities	1
Transportation	1
Class discussion	1
Financial aids	1
Students' number/class	1
Grading	1

Library and Computer Labs – Table 6 presents a distribution of participants satisfaction with the OSU library, computer labs, and their accessibility.

TABLE 6
SATISFACTION WITH LIBRARY AND
COMPUTER LABS

	Library	Accessibility	Computer Labs	Accessibility
Very Satisfied	7	11	7	7
Satisfied	21	20	12	12
Somewhat Satisfied	4	1	1	6
Not Satisfied	2	0	7	2
No Response	1	3	8	8

The majority of the participants (60 percent) indicated they have satisfactory experiences with the library and with its services. Seven participants (20 percent) reported that their experience has been very satisfactory. Only 4 noted it as somewhat satisfying and 2 were not satisfied.

Regarding the computer labs and their accessibility, 19 (54 percent) of the participants were satisfied. Seven students (20 percent) asserted that they were not satisfied with the service of some computer labs and with their accessibility (see Table 6). Regarding the accessibility of the library, the vast majority of participants were satisfied. Among the suggestions made regarding the library and the computer labs were the following:

1. Extend the time for using the Internet and the working hours of the library especially during holiday seasons which not concern them (such as

Thanksgiving); more resources are needed, especially new magazines and books.

2. Keep computer labs open 24 hours so that students can have access to certain software that they need, be sure all types of software are available.
3. Computer lab instructors should be knowledgeable concerning programs or software available to the students utilizing the computer lab.
4. Labs need more printers and students should be allowed to print as much as they need.
5. Computer keyboards should be updated regularly as they are in a high-use atmosphere.

Academic Advising Services – Advisers are crucial to international students satisfaction. The vast majority of participants emphasized this point more than any other.

Table 7 summaries the general conclusion about participants satisfaction with academic advising. Nine of them (26 percent) reported they were very satisfied and happy with their academic advising they receive. Thirteen additional participants (37 percent) also were satisfied which makes the total (63 percent). One undergraduate male stated:

I am satisfied with my adviser and do not like to be told what to do and what not to do so my adviser is flexible and agrees on what I ask him for. (sic) It has advantages and disadvantages. Sometimes I learn the hard way and do some mistakes that I pay for them (sic). I attend the classes that I am planning to take next semester a semester before so I know these courses and the instructors in advance to choose the good for me (sic). But still I do mistakes because of the lack of experience and lack of seeking guidance from my advisers.

TABLE 7
SATISFACTION WITH ACADEMIC ADVISING

	Frequency	Male	Female	Graduate	Under Graduate
Very Satisfied	9	5	4	7	2
Satisfied	13	9	4	10	3
Somewhat Satisfied	5	3	2	3	2
Not Satisfied	8	5	3	6	2
Total	35	22	13	26	9

Five students evaluated their experience with their adviser to be somewhat satisfactory. Eight participants (23 percent) stated that they were not satisfied with their experiences with their advisers.

A graduate male student explained:

Sometimes I am not satisfied with my adviser because he is a new faculty member and he does not have enough experience to know how to deal with mature graduate students and international students (sic). He is also hard to deal with and tough with students. He rarely smiles or socializes with students. Also he is busy and provide less office hours compared to other faculty, may be because he is working harder to publish papers and keep his job at the university (sic). One of his two classes has more than 25 students and he only provides 2 hours for advising students. How can that be enough time.

A female graduate also noted:

I am not satisfied. Because he gave me very little help and I only met him 4 or 5 times during doing my theses (sic). He gave me little guidance. I am thinking about changing him, but I am afraid that it will ruin the

relationships among teachers (sic). Another teacher is mentoring me and helping me a lot just like an adviser so I feel good.

Each of the students who expressed dissatisfaction with an adviser were of different genders, ages, academic levels, and countries of origin. There is no evidence, however, of a relationship between dissatisfaction and these factors regarding academic advising.

Satisfaction with Summer Sessions – The data presented in Table 8 represents the distribution of participants satisfaction with summer sessions. The data indicated that fifty-two percent of those students who take summer classes enjoy them. Another twenty percent indicated that they might like summer sessions, but they do not have the chance to try them because the courses they need are not offered.

A senior male undergraduate student related:

I like summer sessions and I think they are very good idea; the best courses to me are those I took in summer. I like them so I can finish soon and also I just focus on one or two topics only.

TABLE 8

SATISFACTION WITH SUMMER SESSIONS

	Frequency	Male	Female	Graduate	Under Graduate
Very Satisfied	1	1	0	1	0
Satisfied	16	8	8	11	5
Somewhat Satisfied	8	6	2	5	3
Not Satisfied	10	8	2	9	1
Total	35	22	13	26	9

Participants not satisfied with summer sessions represented 28 percent. Different reasons were for not enjoying summer sessions were related:

There is a lot of pressure, low quality and expensive, and it is compressed in a short period of time which limits the absorption of the information and learning will be less (sic).

Some others did not take summer sessions because it was not obligatory. They like to work and help themselves financially during that time. Some students considered the weather to be too hot and detrimental to studying at that time. They like to have a break and work only on their own research.

Satisfaction with Grades – The vast majority of participants (71 percent) expressed their satisfaction with grades. As indicated in Table 9, 22 participants (62 percent) reported that their grades were satisfying. Three others were very satisfied and getting straight ‘A’s. Nine participants were not satisfied with their grades (26 percent). Grades did not seem to be a major factor in academic satisfaction for international students.

TABLE 9

SATISFACTION WITH GRADES

	Frequency	Male	Female	Graduate	Under Graduate
Very Satisfied	3	0	3	3	0
Satisfied	22	16	6	16	6
Somewhat Satisfied	1	1	0	1	1
Not Satisfied	9	5	4	6	2
Total	35	22	13	26	9

English Ability and Communication Skills – Table 10 summarizes the participants evaluation of their English ability and communication skills. Twenty-three participants (65 percent) reported that they were excellent or good in English. Only two students reported a major deficiency in English language and communication skills. Ten others also reported that their level of commanding that language was only fair. They need help in improving their writing, communication and speaking, and listening as well. Many international students indicated they were used to keeping silent and listened to the teacher (The Master). That is why they keep quiet in class and they tend not to participate in discussions. A Sri Lanka graduate male explained:

I have no problem in English except in group discussion. I am not that aggressive to jump into the discussion without permission and to speak loudly and argue with the American students in that way.

TABLE 10

ENGLISH ABILITY AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

	Frequency	Male	Female	Graduate	Under Graduate
Excellent	9	7	2	7	2
Good	14	7	7	10	4
Fair	10	7	3	8	2
Weak	2	1	1	1	1
Total	35	22	13	26	9

Another Turkish student related:

It is hard to understand the slang of some farmers that we visit from time to time. I also like to mention that writing is a major difficulty for an international student (sic).

It seems there is no clear difference between the level of commanding English and other demographic factors such as gender, academic level or nationality. The only noticeable note is that Indian and Pakistani students better express themselves in English and communication than the rest of international students.

Prerequisite Courses – Twenty-three participants (65 percent) were not required to take prerequisite courses and they were somewhat satisfied with that (see Table 11). Six participants (22 percent) took such courses and they were from satisfied to very satisfied.

TABLE 11

SATISFACTION WITH PREREQUISITE COURSES

	Frequency	Male	Female	Graduate	Under Graduate
Very Satisfied	1	1	0	1	0
Satisfied	5	3	2	3	2
Somewhat Satisfied	23	14	9	18	5
Not Satisfied	6	4	2	4	2
Total	35	22	13	26	9

Six other participants were not satisfied having to take prerequisites; for them, it was a waste of time and money. As with grades, prerequisites appear to not be a major factor in academic satisfaction.

Adult Education Programs – The vast majority (80 percent) of participants did not attend any adult education programs (see Table 12). Most of those who participated in adult education programs mentioned the Family Resource Center and churches or mosques as the main places where they practice and learn English and discuss that with their friends. Two of them considered this kind of experience not satisfactory and a waste of time. One related:

I felt uncomfortable with the topics they discuss in FRC (Family Resource Center) and the vast majority of the attendants was females, so I felt I am odd there.

TABLE 12
SATISFACTION WITH ADULT EDUCATION
PROGRAMS

	Frequency	Male	Female	Graduate	Under Graduate
Very Satisfied	4	4	0	4	0
Satisfied	1	0	1	1	0
Not Satisfied	2	1	1	2	0
Did Not Attend	28	17	11	19	9
Total	35	22	13	26	9

Another participant from Korea said that she attended a church to learn English but the class level was below what she was looking for. Some students considered visiting the Writing Center at OSU, having some English courses, or attending ELI and communicating with their coworkers or in class discussion as an adult learning process. A Taiwanese student said that he attended a speech class at OSU that is designed to improve pronunciation. It consisted of speech therapy for two hours per week at a cost of \$150. He recommended that for international students. He said "I used to say 'seory' and I mean (sic) 'theory' or 'sank' you instead of 'thank' you." Another Turkish student said that a volunteer teacher taught his wife and they both have learned from her.

An Indonesian male was happy with the classes he received in a church, and he attends mosque activities where he can learn and practice English.

Personal Experience

Main Personal Concerns – The majority did not agree on things that can be considered as their main personal concerns. The percentage of students who were satisfied being in Stillwater and considered it a good place to study and a safe place to live was 12 (34 percent). On the other hand, only 7 (20 percent) were not satisfied and reported complaints ranging from a lack of convenient transportation to poor hospitality (see Table 13). One complained:

There are no social activities, theaters or cinemas showing good quality movies. Everyone should have a car to move around to be able to enjoy life in Stillwater.

TABLE 13
SATISFACTION WITH LOCATION

	Frequency	Male	Female	Graduate	Under Graduate
Satisfied	12	9	3	6	6
Not Satisfied	7	2	5	5	2
No Response	16	11	5	15	1
Total	35	22	13	26	9

Many participants requested more specific questions to answer. That is why 16 students (45 percent) did not respond to this general question. A few students voiced complaints about the weather: it is not predictable and changes often. One student was happy with the university's role in bringing many companies to interview students and facilitate jobs for them before they even graduated. Another one was not satisfied with the telephone systems and internet services. He said they are still behind modern technology. Another group of students was concerned about scheduling their courses and having the permission to celebrate their holy days (one day after Ramadan and one day after Haj). Friday prayer at 1:30 p.m. sometimes conflicted with classes and Moslem students indicated that it is mandatory for them to attend weekly Friday prayers at the mosque.

University Housing – Eleven participants (31 percent) reported that university housing is satisfactory and reasonably affordable to students. One participant was very satisfied with the housing. Four participants considered the rent and electrical (A/C) charges to be expensive and more than what they should be (Table 14).

TABLE 14
UNIVERSITY HOUSING – DORMITORIES
AND APARTMENTS

	Frequency	Male	Female	Graduate	Under Graduate
Very Satisfied	1	1	0	1	0
Satisfied	11	6	5	9	2
Somewhat Satisfied	4	3	1	3	1
Not Satisfied	10	6	4	8	2
Not Applicable	9	6	3	5	4
Total	35	22	13	26	9

Many OSU international students live off campus. However some of those have at one time lived on campus and they left for different reasons: the need for more privacy and freedom; the need for more space for a larger family; or to live with a friend who lives off campus.

Some of those who have lived or still live in the dormitory complained about food and cooking regulations. They also declared that meals are expensive, dorms are noisy, and lack privacy. They like to cook their own food and they wish kitchens were open on holidays. Some students believe living without a roommate should be an option to increase privacy.

Other students who have children suggest providing three-bedroom apartments.

An Indian female said:

I wish they had three bedroom apartments for those families with children.
I think the rent is not lower than off campus rates. Also the telephone

service is not good and the whole system needs to be changed so they can get us lower rates (sic).

Some of the students who live on campus were not satisfied with the telephone service. They criticized the telephone system and the rates as too expensive. Participants did, however, express their satisfaction with the safety and the maintenance that the university apartments provide. They report housing to be good and convenient for students.

Expectations about OSU – Fifteen (43 percent) of the participants did not know how to answer this question (Table 15). Eight participants found it to be better than expected and three as expected. One participant explained:

The service improved and the number of students are increasing in our department. The university in general is better and harder than I expected because they have a different education system while we are used to British system (sic).

TABLE 15
EXPECTATIONS ABOUT OSU

	Frequency	Male	Female	Graduate	Under Graduate
Better than Expected	8	6	2	6	2
As Expected	3	1	2	2	1
Worse than Expected	9	5	4	7	2
No Answer	15	10	5	11	4
Total	35	22	13	26	9

Nine other participants reported that it was worse than they expected. A male graduate student stated:

I could not imagine that a big university can be in such a small city, because we have the big universities in the major cities in Turkey. Only the small and junk ones are in small towns. But when I came here I found there is no city so I was disappointed, so I wondered where the students come from. Now I think the location is perfect here.

Choose OSU Again – Forty-six percent of participants reported they were satisfied OSU and if they were to choose it again, they would do so. Only five, out of thirty-five, participants were not satisfied; two of those said that they like it for undergraduate or for master's work, but they want to do their doctorate work somewhere else in order to learn something new. Another was happy with the university but said:

I will go somewhere else not because of the university but because our department is poor and not competitive; it needs more qualified instructors and better curriculum that can reduce the gap between what we learn and what the employers need (sic). It is understaffed and the curriculum is way behind the latest knowledge and technology.

Another student said:

I think I will study at another university because my department here is good in theory and academics only but not in implementation and application (sic). I need practical knowledge and experience. Also the winter here is so cold to my health.

Another student said:

If I have a choice I will go to the university that will accept most of the credit hours that I completed back home to focus on my major (sic).

Ten of the participants (29 percent) stated that they will keep their options open, and their choice will depend on all the available alternatives so they can choose the best. Many of them do not have other choices. However, many international students indicated that OSU was the first to respond to their application (see Table 16).

TABLE 16
CHOOSE OSU AGAIN

	Frequency	Male	Female	Graduate	Under Graduate
Yes	16	10	6	12	4
Questionable	10	7	3	7	3
No	5	3	2	3	2
No Answer	4	2	2	4	0
Total	35	22	13	26	9

Role of the Degree in the Future – The vast majority of participants were more concerned about how to improve their professional career through education and completing a higher degree in order to get a job or a better job. Some of them (mainly graduate students) were specific and asserted that they wanted to become faculty members (29 percent) at one of the universities in their countries or to become a researcher (7 percent) in their field of specialty (Table 17). Undergraduate students were directed toward getting a job or a better job. One graduate student said:

I chose a topic that is going to be very helpful to me and to my people; so I am not doing that for money but to serve the community as well (sic).

Another male graduate said that:

Of course it will help me to become a professor at one of our universities and it will give me a good status which is much better than here. Here it is not big deal to be a vice president and most people do not know or care much about what position he runs, but back home most people know and respect professors.

Another participant said:

I do have a position in our government and they sent me here to gain a (Ph.D.) and return to improve the situation there. With the degree, I will have a better position and more opportunities back home.

Another undergraduate stated:

The degree will have a great deal in my life; I already got a job in Dallas and I became more focused and a hard worker.

TABLE 17

ROLE OF THE DEGREE IN THE FUTURE

	Frequency	Male	Female	Graduate	Under Graduate
Get a Job	11	8	3	5	6
Get a Better Job	11	6	5	8	3
Become a Professor	10	6	4	10	0
Become a Researcher	3	2	1	3	0
Total	35	22	13	26	9

Information about OSU – Forty-six percent of participants came to OSU with enough information to get started (Table 18). Female students were more informed than male students were. A female graduate student said:

I did have good information before I came here because of my previous work experience in my country, which was related to here (sic).

And a female undergraduate related:

We were guided by some advisers in our country and the university sent to us books and brochures that informed us about OSU.

TABLE 18
INFORMATION ABOUT OSU

	Frequency	Male	Female	Graduate	Under Graduate
Yes, had Information	16	8	8	12	4
Had some Information	2	2	0	2	0
No Information	11	7	4	8	3
No Response	6	5	1	5	1
Total	35	22	13	26	9

Two participants reported that they some information, but felt it was not enough.

A graduate male said:

They accepted all my credit hours, the cost is reasonable, and I have friends here to help me if I need so I came based on this information.

Six participants (17 percent) did not respond to this question. Eleven participants (31 percent) had no pertinent information about OSU before they arrive. They reported their only sources of information to be either a friend, the image of the university as an inexpensive one, or the first university to accept them.

Social Experience

Main Social Concerns – Many international students experienced some degree of homesickness and difficulty the first time they came to this country. Some of them felt like strangers; others felt homesick or experienced some kind of culture shock. If it was easy to go back home, some students would have done so. The most important answers per participants are listed in Table 19.

TABLE 19

MAIN SOCIAL CONCERNS

	Frequency	Male	Female	Graduate	Under Graduate
Get Adjusted, Feel Homesick	9	4	5	5	4
Interact with People	6	5	1	4	2
Have Good Friends	6	4	2	4	2
Have Good Teachers	4	3	1	3	1
Participate in Social Activity	5	3	2	5	0
Be with My Family	3	2	1	3	0
Not to be Discriminated	2	1	1	2	0
Total	35	22	13	26	9

Female students were more emotional and missed their home and family. It was very hard for wives who were unable to bring their husbands with them; and it was also

hard for those husbands who could not get a visa or afford to bring their family with them.

Most could not afford to visit their families and parent every year. One female undergraduate said:

The first few months I experienced culture shock and homesickness but later I got used to it.

Another graduate female said:

I felt like some kind of stranger for a while then we got used to the life here.

The majority of participants focused their social concerns on adjusting to a new life and new culture. They expressed the need to feel welcomed and not discriminated or threatened. It took some time to build new relationships and make new friends and interact with people.

Some students mentioned some form of discrimination they experienced as foreigners, but they said only a few people were discriminatory. The main concern was how to adjust to a new life, have friends and good teachers, and participate in social and cultural activities and picnics organized by the university, department, international students' organizations or mosques and churches.

Culture Shock – Twenty of the participants (57 percent) did not experience culture shock which represents the majority of the group. They were used to travel and had been away from home before. Many of them had their families with them and have friends here already. Five participants (14 percent), representing the minority in this category, did experience homesickness and some culture shock to some degree. Seven participants (20 percent) experienced a culture shock when they first arrived and felt lonely, homesick and shocked (Table 20). One graduate male contended that he developed diabetes because of

stress, pressure and culture shock. No relationships, however, emerged between demographic factors and culture shock.

TABLE 20
PARTICIPANTS' CULTURE SHOCK
EXPERIENCE

	Frequency	Male	Female	Graduate	Under Graduate
Yes	7	5	2	6	1
To Some Degree	5	2	3	4	1
No	20	14	6	14	6
No Answer	3	1	2	2	1
Total	35	22	13	26	9

Assistance from University to Help Students Overcome Culture Shock – Table 21 presents the participants' views regarding the role a university should play in helping students overcome culture shock. Very few participants (9 percent) received help from OSU to reduce either culture shock or stress, four participants (11 percent) did receive some kind of help, and others became busy with their daily life duties. These seven participants were among the twelve participants who did experience some form of shock.

TABLE 21
ASSISTANCE FROM UNIVERSITY TO HELP STUDENTS
OVERCOME CULTURE SHOCK

	Frequency	Male	Female	Graduate	Under Graduate
Yes, Received Assistance	3	3	0	2	1
Received to Some Degree	4	2	2	3	1
No, Assistance not Needed	13	8	5	10	3
No Answer	15	9	6	11	4
Total	35	22	13	26	9

One male graduate student suggested that:

The university should do something to improve our conditions. They should look at us as differently than Americans. We need somebody to get to us to build an understanding, a relationship, so we can collaborate and get out of our isolation. We can not change just by ourselves. OSU itself has the authority, the resources and the respect from international students to do the change.

Another female graduate student said that:

International Student Services should play a more proactive role rather than a reactive. They should do more than being representative of the INS (Immigration).

Those students who were involved in organizations or having teaching assistantship were more positive and satisfied in this regard than other students.

Relationship with OSU Students – Only four (11 percent) participants, most of them undergraduate students, enjoyed good relationships and have many American friends at OSU. Another twenty-six (74 percent) reported that they have some or a few national students as good friends (Table 22). Some international students blame American students for not being patient listeners to foreigners and to foreign accents. One male graduate student said:

We are patient to express our selves but they are not patient to listen to us (sic). Many of us feel uncomfortable to meet with American people because of the language barrier. This free environment is new to us and we are not used to express ourselves that way (sic). We do not even defend ourselves and we keep silent. We need to be more aggressive and we also need help so we can contribute more.

Another male undergraduate student said:

My interaction with Americans was limited. I made a friendship with three of them in the last three years. I also have many friends from international background such as Malaysian students: they are easier to deal with and simple people. National students are less motivated to interact with us, and some of them look down at us. The only people who like to make a relationship with us are the missionary people and the people of the Bible because they have a reason or a goal of that (sic). The other group are the classmates who have to do some project with us and they do not have much choice. In every country there are good and bad people. For example I was in Wal-Mart and one man came to me and hit me on my shoulder just to intimidate me to say something but I kept quiet and walked away. Another occasion I was driving I stopped my car and a girl was with some students and she threw a cigarette that burned some of the sleeve of my jacket. I called the police but I saw the police are not different from the students; same careless same ideas, same thinking but they done nothing to those students to teach them how to behave (sic). Also there is a lady in the department of the public safety here in Stillwater. I can not imagine how that lady is still employed by that department. She called a Chinese girl Chink, just as if you call a black man a Nigger. Also I took a friend of mine to that place to get a driver license and he was American citizen but an Arab origin so she asked him to show her the I-94 card that every international student should have when they enter the US. He told her I am American citizen. She told him: you do not look like one. Where have you been born show me the birth certificate the passport is not enough. And when I interfered to explain she told me to get out of the room. We went

to the International Students' Office to complain and they called them, then they said: let them comeback. We went again and waited another forty minuets just to get a simple right of applying for a driver license. This can not be tolerated. The good and bad every where (sic).

Five students reported bad experiences or no relationships. One said that, "They do not welcome us and the people here and in Texas are prejudiced."

The rest of the participants stated that they interact with some classmates but not as friends. One graduate female said:

I do not feel comfortable to interact with Americans because I have difficulties in explaining myself (sic).

TABLE 22

RELATIONSHIP WITH OSU STUDENTS

	Frequency	Male	Female	Graduate	Under Graduate
Good Relations	4	3	1	1	3
Some Friends	26	16	10	20	6
No Relations	4	2	2	4	0
Bad Experience	1	1	0	1	0
Total	35	22	13	26	9

Nature of OSU People – Fifteen participants (43 percent) were very happy with the nature of the Americans people they see in Stillwater and at OSU. Another 11 (31 percent) reported that some of them are friendly and others are not (Table 23).

One Graduate student said:

People here watch what you do or achieve and like those who work hard all the time. They are friendly especially if you communicate with them well and you discuss something interesting (sic).

Another graduate male said:

Maybe one complaint here is that they do not care much about foreigners but we back-home love to interact with foreigners and deal with them as guests. One time I was traveling with Americans in a field trip and I did not talk with them for three hours. They were sleeping and as if no body is with them (sic). They are afraid of us as competitors especially Chinese and Indians work very hard and compete with Americans. They work more for less.

Only four participants (11 percent) had bad experiences and the people they interacted with were not friendly. A graduate female said:

They are not very friendly. The friendly one most of the time turn out to be church missionaries who try to get us involved in church activities (sic).

Another male undergraduate student said:

They do not know us real well and we have major differences. People in small towns are narrow minded. Another graduate female said: I study too much and I do not have time for social life. If they do not like me I do not like them too. If they do not respect me I just withdraw and go somewhere else.

TABLE 23
NATURE OF OSU PEOPLE

	Frequency	Male	Female	Graduate	Under Graduate
Friendly	15	9	6	12	3
Some are Friendly	11	6	5	7	4
Not Friendly	4	2	2	3	1
No Answer	5	5	0	4	1
Total	35	22	13	26	9

Another male graduate student said:

They are not very friendly but they are okay; some of them look like they have never seen people like us before; they do not know what to expect or how to deal with us.

Quality of Social Life at OSU– The majority (60 percent) of participants were satisfied to very satisfied with the quality of social life at OSU (Table 24). One participant stated:

Most probably yes. 70 percent yes and 30 percent no. Because we came from different culture and religion and to me the quality social life must be related to religion. I know most of American students are Christians but they do not follow their religion too. Because they value their culture and religion according to their needs not according to the religion while I am directing my culture and behavior according to my religion. So that why I do not feel match here. If they relate their culture to their religion I think we will have better relationship because I do not like gathering men and women together drinking, dancing etc. I do not agree with that but in the academic way I feel comfortable in socializing with them in academic way. I think the social activity must have a profitable and beneficial goal so that I participate in it, not just for fun. I socialize with the Americans well and I

have five very good American friends who are very helpful and exchange ideas and I visited them and their families. At first some of their families hesitated to shake hands with me because I am a Muslim, but later they accepted me.

TABLE 24
SATISFACTION WITH QUALITY OF SOCIAL
LIFE AT OSU

	Frequency	Male	Female	Graduate	Under Graduate
Very Satisfied	5	4	1	4	1
Satisfied	16	9	7	12	4
Somewhat Satisfied	7	4	3	4	3
Not Satisfied	7	5	2	6	1
Total	35	22	13	26	9

Another female student said:

Americans do interact and smile with everybody but they do not make a close relationship. When you meet them they show you that they are friendly but when you leave they forget you very quickly. It is the individualism culture that they have (sic).

Seven participants (20 percent) were somewhat satisfied. They considered the quality of social life okay and fair. Another 20 percent were not satisfied and reported that there is no social life for internationals. They need OSU to organize activities that encourage international students to participate and feel welcome.

National Student Associations and Their Role – Though all participants have their own national student associations which represent them, the majority (55 percent) of them was not satisfied and do not participate with these organizations or their activities. One graduate student related:

Yes we have student association here at OSU but I do not join it . . . Their focus is only social and fun not about integration of cultures and religions. I do not like that. They use this association not to help the students but just to get funds from my government. They need to have association and some activities to get that fund. They are not doing great in their studies and they came here to have fun, maybe 70 percent of them are like that . . . They are totally sponsored by government and they are the creams of the crop back home, but when they come here they just want to have fun. They are carefully selected and trained for three years before they come here. They are followers not leaders and consumers not producers. That is why they can not change or affect the . . . student association to become more serious and beneficial.

Twelve participants (34 percent) were happy and satisfied with the role and activities that these associations organize (Table 25). A graduate male participant stated:

I like to interact with them and exchange opinions and reduce the gap between them. They have a bad image about each other and I like to show them that we are better than what they think, by example. I do not ask the university for help, because I get the help I need from the mosque. I wish our association get more involved with other associations and present the right picture about our country.

Another undergraduate male participant related:

Yes we do and I am the president of that now and they helped me a lot when I just came and they held an orientation and welcoming party to the new students every semester so we get to know each other and socialize and feel like we are not so far from home. About half or so participate in these activities.

TABLE 25
NATIONAL STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS
AND THEIR ROLE

	Frequency	Male	Female	Graduate	Under Graduate
Very Satisfied	7	4	3	5	2
Satisfied	5	4	1	3	2
Somewhat Satisfied	4	3	1	4	0
Not Satisfied	19	11	8	14	5
Total	35	22	13	26	9

Financial Experience

Main Financial Concerns – The largest segment of the participants was concerned about tuition and rent. They conceded paying out-of-state tuition is very expensive for those students who do not have scholarships. Even those students who have assistantships need to pay in-state tuition which is about one-third of the out-of-state rate. Students who have been here for a long time also wish that after a few years they could get financial help from the university and have some of the tuition waived for them. Another request by international students was to stop increasing the tuition and rent rates. Many students reported that the rent does not match the quality of the university apartments and it should be cheaper. Some students from Asia have suffered from the economic crises that their countries are experiencing, and so they could not afford to continue their studies and some

of them had to return to their countries before they finished. Table 26 lists the most important answers per participant.

TABLE 26
MAIN FINANCIAL CONCERNS

	Frequency	Male	Female	Graduate	Under Graduate
Tuition and Rent are High	13	9	4	10	3
Teaching Assistant or Scholarship	12	9	3	11	1
Paying In-State Tuition	4	1	3	1	3
Other Fees or Charges	6	3	3	4	2
Total	35	22	13	26	9

There is always a demand for more teaching or research assistantships and scholarships. A few students, especially from Japan, said that the tuition and living expense were inexpensive. Many students also reported that these expenses were cheap if compared to other universities and other states in the US. Some students were satisfied as long as their parents continued to support them. Some of those who were married have difficulty asking or accepting financial support from their families, and they like to be independent, but it is not easy. A few students were focused upon learning and gaining new experience from having assistantships.

Tuition Rates – The majority (54 percent) of the participants considered the tuition to be inexpensive or reasonable compared not only to other universities in this country but also to some universities in their own countries (Table 27). One student noted:

I read a week ago in the Daily Oklahoma that OSU tuition and fees are 4th lowest nationwide. My friends also found that tuition here is about 50 percent less than at other universities.

TABLE 27

SATISFACTION WITH TUITION RATES

	Frequency	Male	Female	Graduate	Under Graduate
Very Satisfied	9	4	5	6	3
Satisfied	10	7	3	8	2
Not Satisfied	8	6	2	5	3
No Answer	8	5	3	7	1
Total	35	22	13	26	9

Eight participants who have scholarships and do not pay tuition did not comment about tuition rates. In addition, eight participants (23 percent), who did not have scholarships, and whose currency is not that strong against the dollar, considered tuition very expensive. An undergraduate male complained:

Tuition is increasing while the quality of education is not. The labs rules and limitations are examples of how we get less for high technology fees and high tuition.

Financial Support and Financial Aid – Table 27 lists the most important answers to this issue per participant. The parents of international students and their own savings finance the majority of the participants (52 percent). Some of these participants also work part-time jobs to help themselves financially. Very few of them have half assistantships as well. Seven participants do have scholarships and most of these are financially satisfied and do not work or need help. Another 11 participants (31 percent)

TABLE 28
FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND FINANCIAL AID

	Frequency	Male	Female	Graduate	Under Graduate
Savings and Parental Support	18	11	7	13	5
Scholarships	7	5	2	5	2
Assistantships or Half TA	11	7	4	10	1
Loans & Part-Time Jobs	9	6	3	6	3

report that they do have assistantships. A few of these still pay out-of-state tuition. Most of them are satisfied with what they get. Nine participants (26 percent) work part-time jobs, and some get loans or financial support from their parents.

Part-time Jobs or Teaching Assistantship – Twelve participants report that they work part-time jobs (34 percent); most of them are males. Very few female students work. One female undergraduate student stated that she is busy and it is not worth it to work at the minimum wage. Most females are financially secure and do not need to look for a job. Nine out of thirteen female participants do not work and do not have an assistantship, but they did have either a scholarship or parental support. Fourteen males of the twenty-two have a part-time job and/or a teaching or a research assistantship (Table 29).

TABLE 29
PART-TIME JOBS OR TEACHING
ASSISTANTSHIP

	Frequency	Male	Female	Graduate	Under Graduate
Part-Time Job	12	10	2	7	5
TA or RA	6	4	2	5	1
None	16	7	9	13	3
No Answer	1	1	0	1	0
Total	35	22	13	26	9

One male graduate student stated:

I have a research assistant and I told my adviser that I like to work in areas that will help me academically not just financially (sic). The related experience is very important to me.

Another male undergraduate student related:

I do have a scholarship from my country but it is not enough, so I try to work part-time. I do have a TA position: not a teaching assistant but a Trash Assistant! I work in cleaning and stuff like that (sic).

Financial Difficulties – While ten participants (28 percent) report that they have experienced some kind of financial difficulty or problem, these problems were not identical (Table 30). One graduate student related that his car was his main problem. The cost was much more than he thought or believed it should be. He suggested that the university should build a facility that serves the students with some discount and honest service. Many international students are concerned about tuition and how to provide three thousand dollars or more every semester.

TABLE 30

FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

	Frequency	Male	Female	Graduate	Under Graduate
Yes, I Did	10	9	1	8	2
No, I Did Not	20	11	9	13	7
No Answer	5	2	3	5	0
Total	35	22	13	26	9

One student reported that he has difficulty understanding the bursar office bill and what he is charged for. Another complained that the interest charges apply after a one-

month billing period if the student did not pay on time. He suggested to give the student more time and to charge the student each semester not each month. Interest is not only an additional burden, he said, but is also against his religion. Another student is always short of money and sometimes he drives his car without valid tags or insurance and he has to wait a long time to get money and pay for such things. A few other participants, especially the married ones, had problems with hospital bills.

Some students have solved their financial problems by getting loans, others by asking parents for help, and still others by charging expenses on their credit cards.

Concluding Questions

Happiness Through Time – Twenty-six participants (74 percent) indicated that they are happier now than when they first came to this country. There were different reasons why some students became more satisfied over time. Some students stated that in time they became used to the system, the weather, the new environment, and language; consequently they became more relaxed and found more friends to socialize with. Culture shock, they said, requires time and patience more than anything else. Some students are happier now because they accomplished something such as passing comprehensive exams or approaching the end of study.

Four participants did not feel any difference between the present and when they first arrived in the U. S. Five other participants (14 percent) became less happy than when they first came (Table 31). One graduate female was upset from being not able to bring her husband with her. She explained:

I was expecting that I would be able to bring him with me, but now, it is a year and a half and nothing happened (sic).

TABLE 31
HAPPINESS THROUGH TIME

	Frequency	Male	Female	Graduate	Under Graduate
Happier Now	26	17	9	19	7
The Same	4	2	2	4	0
Less Happy	5	3	2	3	2
Total	35	22	13	26	9

Another female undergraduate student has become more homesick than when she first arrived. An undergraduate male noted: “when I just came I still had the drive but in time you loose that.” Another graduate male experienced difficulty concentrating on his study because he is worried about the future and other personal issues.

Happiness and Length of Stay – The majority (57 percent) of participants’ satisfaction with OSU increased year after year (see Table 32).

Though five participants reported that their satisfaction was the same, six participants (18 percent) experienced mixed feelings. Their satisfaction with their academics increased while their social satisfaction decreased. Only four participants became less happy over time.

TABLE 32
HAPPINESS AND LENGTH OF STAY

	Frequency	Male	Female	Graduate	Under Graduate
Happier with Time	20	13	7	15	5
The Same	5	2	3	4	1
Mixed Feeling	6	4	2	4	2
Less Happy	4	3	1	3	1
Total	35	22	13	26	9

Satisfaction Expected Next Year – Table 33 report the majority of participants (52 percent) expect their satisfaction with OSU to be better next year. Some of them explain that it will because they expect to graduate and finish their study successfully. Others believe it will because they will achieve more academic success and get involved deeper in their research or programs. One graduate male student said:

I hope it will be better since I am learning more about the resources and the environment here so I can be more efficient.

Eight participants (23 percent) expected their satisfaction to be the same as the current year. They did not expect anything significant would happen and change their current satisfaction. Seven participants had different answers, and their satisfaction depends upon what could happen. They stated they would be happier if they graduated on time. Others indicated they are graduating and leaving the university soon to look for a job or return to their countries.

TABLE 33
SATISFACTION EXPECTED NEXT YEAR

	Frequency	Male	Female	Graduate	Under Graduate
Better	18	13	5	11	7
The Same	8	3	5	7	1
Worse	2	2	0	2	0
It Depends	7	4	3	6	1
Total	35	22	13	26	9

Only two male graduate students reported that their satisfaction would be less next year. One of them said:

I think it will decrease because I will have harder courses and more loads to study. Another one said: I think it will be less because I got my master from here and if I continue my doctorate here I will not have the chance to learn many new things. At the same time I do not like to leave my adviser and the community I used to live with. I have a difficulty in finding good courses to take and learn new things more (sic).

Meeting Expectations about OSU – Twenty-one participants (60 percent)

expressed their satisfaction with OSU as a whole and believe it has met their expectations (Table 34). One graduate female said: “it is good enough for the money we pay.” Another undergraduate female noted: “yes, it is good university and we have a good agricultural program.” A graduate female also explained:

Yes I am satisfied with the university in general, and they have, especially in our department, many excellent teachers and good environment. The living expenses are not as high as in big cities.

TABLE 34
MEETING EXPECTATIONS ABOUT OSU

	Frequency	Male	Female	Graduate	Under Graduate
Very Satisfied	21	14	7	17	4
Satisfied	7	3	4	4	3
Somewhat Satisfied	4	3	1	3	1
Not Satisfied	3	2	1	2	1
Total	35	22	13	26	9

Seven participants (20 percent) reported they were satisfied with the university. These participants expressed the university had met about 70 percent of their expectations. Two of them were satisfied with the university in general, but discontented with their departments. One undergraduate related:

The university yes, but my department no. Because my department is understaffed, the curriculum is not updated and some courses are irrelevant. They can be competitive with the best universities in the country and the university has the potential to be, but they are not taking it seriously.

Four participants (11 percent) were somewhat satisfied, indicating that the university has met 30 percent of their expectations. One graduate male mentioned that he likes the university but not the courses that were offered here. Another one likes his department but is not sure about the university as a whole.

Only three participants (9 percent) expressed their dissatisfaction with OSU overall. One explained that he believes in contextual learning and practical knowledge that can be applied. Another graduate female declared:

No, I am not happy with the university, academically and socially it fell behind my expectations (sic).

Suggestions about How to Be More Satisfied

Participants vary widely about how to be more satisfied. They were asked to list whatever they think needs to be done to increase satisfaction. Their suggestions are listed under the following sub-headings:

Academically

- A Malaysian male graduate suggested:

The university needs to help us understand the educational system here and how to deal with it. International students need to know and get direction about it. OSU will help me if they get me involved in their program: in developing and in designing these programs, evaluating and implementing these programs. They need to get different input to succeed in getting new customers.

- A Turkish male graduate suggested:

I think the university should provide more chances for the internationals to make presentations and participate in each course to express your ideas. Also I think they should give us computers in our offices as some other departments do.

- A Sri Lanka male student suggested:

If we had variety of elective courses to choose from, more guidance academically, the people were more friendly I would be more satisfied.

- A Malaysian male undergraduate stated:

Undergraduate students are taking more credit hours to get the degree than many other universities require. Some unnecessary courses should be eliminated. I do not need to take three courses in history while my major is not history. The university should be flexible and let us take the courses that we can use or need not irrelevant courses. I did not come to study philosophy or history or math. It wasted our time and money. Also they should provide more advisers for us not one for hundred students.

- A Japanese male student suggested:

The department and the adviser should be more flexible with students.

- A Chinese male student suggested:

The department and teachers should be good and choose a good textbook and informative lectures so we can learn more and better. The exams should match the level of teaching. Some teachers here they assign homework and they do not know the right answer because they did not solve the problem. OSU needs to change to meet the market and the latest technology. Many courses are the same for long time.

- A Pakistani male undergraduate student stated:

The variety and spectrum of courses and how good they are and more marketable courses that can help us get good jobs. More doctors and good ones who can teach many courses are needed.

- A Malaysian female undergraduate student stated:

The university should hire good lecturers to teach us, not all of them can teach well. They should follow up on them and find ways to provide us with good education and good instructors.

- An Indonesian female graduate student suggested:

Improve the library resources and provide more offices and computers for graduate students.

- An Indonesian female graduate student suggested:

Extend the time of using the Internet and the working hours of the library especially in some holidays that do not concern them (such as Thanksgiving); more resources are needed, especially new magazines and books. To improve the library resources and to provide more offices and computers for graduate students. Some departments do not open their own computer labs 24 hours, and their students can not use other labs because they do not have certain software that they need.

- A Japanese male graduate suggested:

Advisers need to increase their office hours to serve students better.

- A Taiwanese male graduate suggested:

We need more offices for graduate students..

- An Indian male graduate student suggested:

Comprehensive exams should be scheduled in a way that each student can manage. More time should be given between the exams. Instructors should understand the students' ability and other responsibilities student deal with before loading them with a lot of homework. Some of the computer labs' instructors were not helpful and do not know how to get you into the programs or to run some soft-ware programs and some of them are hard to deal with. The computer labs need more printers and to be allowed to print as much as they need. Some of the keyboards in the computer labs are plain and very hard to read, updating is always needed (more seats and more time).

Personally

- A Malaysian male graduate student suggested:

I think OSU should have more programs available for international students. After Orientation they forget us. If they can guide us more, provide workshops for international students to meet their personal needs and solve their problems.

- A Taiwanese female graduate student suggested:

The transportation should be more frequent and on stable schedule, so we know when it will come and to where. Now we wait 2 hours to get the bus.

- A Pakistani male graduate student suggested:

I wish they should provide 800 numbers so that new students can call from the airport to arrange their coming (sic). Also they should provide all information they require through the Internet so we can know that we are fully admitted or not before we come here. Some room or tables should be provided to help new students. Some students get lost and we could not find them for twenty days and the international office did not give us his address because they said it is confidential. I do not agree with them, this is not secret and he needs us to help him but we could not find him for that. One other student lost his mother and we could not find him to get them together. The new comer needs to eat and we do not know how to find the food and also the open-showers and bathrooms in the dormitory are not convenient for us and our religion (sic). Also many students do not have insurance and they complain from the high medical charges. I am not satisfied with the medical service of the university because they do not do the necessary analysis before they make the prescription. They need to improve a lot. If the university can not fix my car then they should fix our body and health. Also I heard that the university do not have one single ambulance. I helped one student who suffered from his kidney and I took him to the Stillwater Medical Center. If I know that the universities have an emergency car I will call them. At least they should arrange a free vision test for us so we can fix our sight if we know that we have a problem.

- A Korean male graduate student noted:

I think that probably the university needs to put more effort to improve their rank and their image especially in the international community so students will believe that they can get good life and education for the money they spend here. I also heard from several people and friends their is one person that is rude with them and gives them hard time. I think they should check and watch their employees' behavior and politeness with international students.

- A Chinese female graduate student suggested:

One thing they stopped doing as they used to is help us in improving and correcting our English writing. They used to read the paper and sit with us to correct and advise us but now they ask you what do you need, what is your question. We can correct the spelling. We need them to help us in improving our writing style and structure as they used to do before.

- A Turkish male graduate student:

Housing and transportation should be better and the academic departments should help international students more that regular ones because they are strangers to every thing here. Students need better health care services and

should be free. Students deserve a better health service and a cheaper one. Students should not be charged for health tests such as cancer and diabetes.

- An Indian male graduate student suggested:

Housing and health service should be improved. Health issues and tests for cancer will be required from new international students to be admitted in the universities. A student should not be charged for these tests. Also if a student wants to do his tests here should be given the choice.

- An Indian female graduate suggested:

We need more guidance to reduce our mistakes and our loss. We lose sometimes because we do not know exactly what is the right thing to do and take unnecessary courses, then we discover later that we made a mistake. A driving school is needed for international student. Many of them get many tickets and some make accidents because they do not know the rules enough. Some of them they are not used to stop on the stop sign for example and they might make a dangerous accident. I know one international student died in an accident that way.

- An Indonesian male graduate student suggested:

We need a two-month communication skills program to better understand and talk with American people.

- A Malaysian female undergraduate student suggested:

We, Muslim students are hundreds and we need a room to pray in it so if they give us a room it will be good instead of going home and coming back.

- An Indonesian graduate female student suggested:

Most international students have a problem in English so if the department assigns a professor to help those students to improve in that area and have more meetings with them to listen to their problems and concerns from time to time.

- A Japanese male graduate student suggested:

I think it is good if there is a channel available for us to express our concerns, needs, and suggestions to help us improve our conditions.

- A Korean female graduate student suggested:

I wish the dormitory hall do not close on holidays and provide us with kitchen to cook food privately. Also I do not like that male students live in the same building and can have access to our section very easily.

- A Malaysian male undergraduate student suggested:

The university needs to give international students a voice at OSU to speak out and express their views and needs and influence the administration. We need our own identity to affect the university and raise our concerns. OSU has a lot of international students and they should play some role in the university.

- A Pakistani male graduate student suggested:

There should be an auto facility to help students in fixing their cars.

- A Malaysian male graduate student suggested:

International students were raised up in a different culture for a long time. That is hard to change. We are different and we need to be treated not as American students. We have our own difficulties and our own contributions. We need to be treated as international students.

Socially

- A Malaysian male graduate student suggested:

I believe that what OSU is doing now for international students is not enough because they are just dealing with associations while many students are not involved. Let me give you one example: the Malaysian student association. How this association does interact with the local people? Is there any program they do? I did not hear about any program. The university is the one who can make these programs and students will follow and participate.

- A Pakistani male graduate suggested:

OSU should try to increase the American people's awareness about the international student. One time I was asked by an American high school boy and he said: why you talk funny? Where are you from? I said: from Pakistan. He asked: where is that? Is it out of the country or in this country? I did not believe what I was hearing! Then I told him it is 500 miles east of Michigan. Also a lot of Americans think that internationals are atheists. They need to learn that we are believers not as the media present

us in a very negative way. If you are not American then who are you? America is not the whole world. That is a culture problem. They need more international awareness and they should reduce the dominance of Christianity. This is not a religious university. There is racism and they should change their attitude. Once I asked an American: why are you so racist? He said: man, I have a colored TV!

- A graduate female from Taiwan suggested:

International activities and programs should be free with no charge for international students to attend.

- A graduate male from Sri Lanka suggested:

These people have to see the world. They think that this is the world, as in my language we say: "as the frog inside the well." They need to broaden their perspectives and to know other people better.

- A graduate female from Korea suggested:

I want Americans to try to expand their minds and views to see us in a better way and deal with us in a more understanding way so we can feel confident, welcomed, and encouraged to participate. We also need to discover, know ourselves, and depend on ourselves more than back home.

- An Indonesian male undergraduate student suggested:

The university should sponsor and organize activities for international students not just to leave them up to international students themselves.

- A Japanese male graduate student suggested:

If they can have a host family system for international students so they can visit and socialize with them.

- A Pakistani male graduate student related:

When I applied for a job, a lady told me in a strange way that I should sign the application without reading the detailed information written on the form. I told her that does not mean I can not read it before I sign it, and so she stopped.

- An undergraduate Malaysian female student suggested:

Most of the society is American and internationals are not involved in most activities and I do not know if it is our mistake or the university's mistake.

Financially

- A Malaysian male graduate student suggested:

There must be more opportunities such as assistantships and research assistant jobs. I see most jobs are given to American people. I do not know why. Is it because of their skills and competence, or relationships, I do not know. I think the more diversified the department is the more beneficial it will be and it will help international students who do not have scholarships. Also I found that some students who are sponsored by their government and still get assistant ships.

- An Indian male graduate student suggested:

I feel at the undergraduate level students need more financial support and financial statistics. It is good to mention how many students do get assistant ships and how many do not.

- A Taiwanese female graduate student suggested:

Providing more financial aid and assistantships to international students. More funds should be available for international students and waive all the tuition.

- A Korean female graduate student suggested:

Graduate students who stay here more than one year should be treated them just as Americans and pay only in-state tuition. I do not know if they can provide more assistantships for every body to apply not just for American citizens.

- A Pakistani male graduate student suggested:

More jobs opportunities should be created for international students.

- A Taiwanese male graduate student suggested:

I suggest for the university to offer more assistantships so that students do not have to work while studying which delay their academic success. Our department needs to get more funds and projects to help the students make money and gain experience as well as education.

- A male graduate student from Sri Lanka suggested:

First to allow students to work as many hours as they can afford as long as their grades are good. Second to allow students after some time to pay in-state tuition.

- A Malaysian female graduate student suggested:

We, undergraduate students, are concerned about financial expenses such as fees and tuition. They charge us a lot of fees for technology and we still do not have enough computers to use. Also we need to print our papers but there is limitation on that.

- A Malaysian male graduate student suggested:

The University should charge students who do not pay on time after one semester instead of after one month.

- An Indonesian male graduate student suggested:

Students who get excellent grades and need help should get a partial tuition waiver.

Additional Suggestions

- A Malaysian graduate male student suggested:

It might be a good idea to give the interview guideline to the participants a day before you conduct the interview so they can be prepared. But sometimes this may be bad too because the answers might be less natural.

- A graduate male from Korea suggested:

Adding this question to the interview guide:
What did you learn from the new culture you experienced and new people you interacted with?

- A graduate male from Pakistan suggested:

Adding this question to the interview guide:
Are you satisfied with the class environment and the students' behavior there?

- A graduate male from Turkey noted:

One's relationship with an adviser can be social and academic at the same time.

- A graduate male from Pakistan suggested:

Adding these question to the interview guide:

Why you selected OSU and how you managed to choose and come here?

Was there any hospitality from the university when you arrived?

- A graduate female from Turkey suggested:

Adding this question to the interview guide:

Would you recommend OSU to a friend?

Also to add some multiple-choice questions to increase the response rate.

Some questions were redundant.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a summary of the study and its conclusions and recommendations. The first section of this chapter contains a summary of the study which covers its purpose, sample, instrumentation, data collection, integrity of results, major findings, and concluding questions and suggestions. In addition, recommendations for practice and further research, followed by concluding thoughts.

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gauge the level of satisfaction among a selected group of international students at Oklahoma State University (OSU). This qualitative study aimed, more specifically, at gaining a deep understanding of the academic, personal, social, and financial experiences of international students from their own perspectives. Furthermore, demographic data was analyzed to determine if there is any relationship between satisfaction and demographic variables. Finally, participants were asked to provide a general evaluation of their entire experience at OSU. Participants provided many suggestions regarding how they can be better served and become more content.

The Sample

The first research question provided a descriptive analysis of the sample: (a) The study's sample consisted of 35 international students; two thirds of the students were male. (b) The mean age of the sample was 29.6. (c) The average period of stay in this country was three years. (d) The most common educational level was the graduate level: Master's and Doctorate (73 percent). Nine of the participants (25.7 percent) were undergraduate, eleven (31.4 percent) were doing their Master's and fifteen (42.9 percent) were Doctoral candidates. (e) The countries of origin of participants were China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysian, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, and Turkey. (More than 75% of all international students who attended OSU during the years 1997 to 1998 were from these ten countries). (f) Participants speak different native languages, represent different religions, and study different majors. (g) The majority of participants specialize in engineering or science. (h) Fourteen of the participants were married (40 percent) and eleven of them have between two to three children on average. Not all of the married students have their spouses with them.

Instrumentation

The researcher is the main instrument in qualitative studies. To assist in collecting a consistent and valuable data, a six-part interview guide was developed to elicit data from participants in semi-structured, face-to-face interviews. In Part 1, participants were asked to provide a demographic view of themselves, including name, age, gender, geographical

region, native language, academic level, major, marital status, number of children, ethnic origin or religion, and time of being in the U. S.

Part 2 asked the participants to describe their academic experience at OSU with respect to satisfaction levels. Part 3 asked them to reflect on their own personal experience at OSU in terms of level of satisfaction. Part 4 asked them to describe their social experience at OSU with respect to satisfaction levels. Part 5 asked participants to describe, in levels of satisfaction, their financial experience at OSU. Finally, Part 6 asked them to provide a general picture of their experience, and satisfaction level, as a whole and what would they suggest in order to increase satisfaction.

Data Collection

In order to extend results from qualitative interviews, participants who can provide accurate information were carefully selected. They are necessary in order to get a complete picture of the research arena and feel confident of about the results and to extrapolate the results beyond the original setting and the original interviewees by the logical comparison (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Participants in this study were contacted by telephone and asked to participate in this study. Once their consent was acquired, the interview session was scheduled. The number of participants (35 students) was a compromise between obtaining a representative sample and the resources available for the study. Participants were carefully selected from different countries of origin to counteract possible special circumstances related to certain nationalities. Different genders, academic levels, and cultural issues were also considered. Purposive sampling was used to select participants

nominated by their fellow leaders and friends to represent, as much as possible, the typical or mainstream international student. Most participants helped in identifying additional participants for selection.

An interview script that explained the purpose of the study and its importance was given to each participant before the interview was conducted. All interviews, except one that was done by e-mail, were face-to-face. These interviews were tape recorded and transcribed in files using Microsoft Word V. 7.0 and Windows 95. Data were transcribed from audio tapes into typed files (transcripts or descriptions), and then data were sorted again under each category or sub-question. Due to the qualitative nature of this descriptive study, the researcher used a microcomputer Microsoft Access database program to assist in organizing and analyzing the data. The researcher summarized the long answers into short tables that categorize the level of satisfaction with each specific area of experience. The sum of these results formed a general picture of student satisfaction.

Integrity of the Results

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews in 12 months period (Fall 1997 to Fall 1998). This period was long enough to notice if the data are consistent from semester to another. Time is a major factor in determining the value and integrity of the data in qualitative research.

It was a learning experience to listen to different students as they told their stories about their experience at OSU, their international experience, and how that affected their learning and professional life. The researcher considered in-depth experience a criterion

for selecting participants because it would eliminate superficial (short-term) experiences. The vast majority of participants were at OSU for more than a year.

Participants were selected - with the help of their leaders and the international student office experts - in a way that took advantage of knowledgeable participants who can share their experiences. They were a mix of different genders, academic levels, ages, majors, ethnic backgrounds, marital status, and lengths of stay, at three different semesters. The interviewer is an international student who enjoy listening to people's stories and cares about international students.

Major Findings

The researcher invited participants to share their ideas, experiences, problems and concerns. They provided information about their experiences and how they perceive their satisfaction at OSU.

Perrucci and Hu (1995) developed a general theoretical model of determinants of satisfaction among international graduate students. Their model suggested that international students play different roles as students, parents, employees, and family or community members. International students can be satisfied in one area of their lives and not satisfied with others. They report four general factors that can be related to satisfaction. The first factor is social status, and it includes gender and marital status. They expect women to face more negative experiences and to face more difficulties in adapting to social and academic life than men. Married students might have a better chance to socialize and interact with more people than single students. As their network of relationships increase, a greater satisfaction with social life may result. The combined

effect of social status, individual resources, social resources, and social context influence how students feel about their satisfaction with academic programs, academic appointments, and social relations. A male, who is married, financially secure, with self-confidence and has a good command of the English language is more likely to be satisfied socially and academically (Perrucci & Hu, 1995).

Though published studies did not show a consensus among their results, the findings of this study, in general, do not contradict most of what previous studies have contended.

Academic Experience

Satisfaction with the Orientation Program – The majority of the participants (52 percent) were satisfied with OSU's orientation program and they shared some of their views and suggestions. On the other hand, only a few students (20 percent) who expressed dissatisfaction with the program. More than one participant suggested that the program should:

Include more international students to educate the new comers. Sometimes it is hard for a freshman to understand the accent or the slang of some instructors or speakers.

Major Academic Concerns – The major academic concerns of this study's participants were centered around advisers, faculty, course work, textbooks, the library, learning approaches, research, and project content. The most frequent academic concern for the majority of international students was the academic advising. The role of the adviser is the key to student success because the adviser provides advice and support.

Having good instructors, updated course work, and practical knowledge were the next most emphasized items of academic concerns for international students. Some participants indicated that flexibility in schedule and relationships with advisers were more important to graduate students, while undergraduate students are more about course content and the teaching style of professors.

Library and Computer Labs – The vast majority of the participants (80 percent) indicated they have “excellent or good” experiences with the OSU library and its services. Only four students rated that experience as fair and two others were dissatisfied. Regarding the accessibility of the library, the vast majority of them was satisfied. Regarding the computer labs and their accessibility, 54% of the participants were satisfied. Seven students (20 percent) asserted that they were not satisfied with the service of some computer labs and with their accessibility. In addition, a few students noted that some of the computer lab instructors were not helpful and they need to be trained how to run certain programs. They also suggested that students need more printers and should be allowed to print as much as they need.

Academic Advising Services – Advisers were very important to international student satisfaction. It was the most emphasized dimension regarding their academic experience by vast majority of participants. Twenty-two of them (62 percent) reported they were satisfied with the academic advising. Five others evaluated their experience with the advisers to be fair. Eight participants (23 percent) stated that they had bad experiences with their advisers. They suggested that OSU should hire more professors and that more advising hours to be provided.

Satisfaction with Summer Sessions – Fifty-two percent of those students who took summer classes enjoyed them. Some other students (20%) indicated that they might like summer sessions, but they do not have the chance to try them because the courses they need are not offered.

Only 28 percent of the participants were not satisfied with the summer sessions. Different reasons were given for dissatisfaction with summer sessions. As one participant related:

There is a lot of pressure, low quality and expensive; it is compressed in a short period of time which limits the absorption of the information and learning will be less.

Satisfaction with Grades – The vast majority of participants (71 percent) expressed their satisfaction with grades. Grades did not seem to be a major factor in the academic satisfaction for international students.

English Ability and Communication Skills – Twenty-three participants (65 percent) reported that they were excellent or good in English. As a graduate male from Sri Lanka explained:

I have no problem in English except in group discussion. I am not that aggressive to jump into the discussion without permission and to speak loudly and argue with the American students in that way.

It seems there is no clear difference between the level of commanding English and other demographic factors such as gender, age, major or academic level.

Prerequisite Courses – Twenty-three participants (65 percent) were not asked to take any prerequisite courses and were satisfied they did not have to do so. Only six participants (22 percent) experienced prerequisite courses and for them they were helpful. Six other participants did not like taking prerequisites; for them the courses were a waste of time and money. Prerequisites, like grades, do not appear to be a major factor in academic satisfaction.

Adult Education Programs – The vast majority (80 percent) of participants did not attend adult education programs. Most of those who participated in adult education programs mentioned the Family Resource Center and churches or mosques as places where they practice and learn English and have discussions with their friends. Some students considered visiting Writing Center at OSU, having some English courses, class discussion, attending ELI, and communicating with their coworkers as an adult learning process. A Taiwanese student said that he attended a speech class at OSU designed to improve pronunciation. Another Turkish student said that a volunteer teacher teaches his wife and they learn from her. An Indonesian male was happy with the classes he received in a church and he attends mosque activities where he can learn and practice English.

Personal Experience

Main Personal Concerns – Many participants asked more specific questions to answer, the reason why many students (45 percent) did not respond to this general question. Thirty-four percent of students enjoyed being in Stillwater and found it to be a good place to study and a safe place to live. In contrast 20% of participants complain from

the lack of convenient transportation, shopping, and felt the sense of being not welcomed. One student appreciated the university's role in bringing in many companies to interview students and facilitate jobs for them before they graduated. Another was displeased with the telephone system and Internet services and believed that OSU still behind the modern technology. Another group of students was concerned about class schedules. Muslim students declared their need to get permission to celebrate their holy days (one day after Ramadhan and one day after Haj: Pilgrimage). Friday prayer at 1:30 p.m. sometimes conflicts with some classes and yet it is a mandatory congregation prayer for male Muslims.

University Housing - Dormitories and Apartments – Eleven participants (31 percent) reported that the university housing was good and reasonable for students. Many students who live off campus and some of those who used to live on campus left for different reasons: the need for more privacy and freedom; the need for more space for a larger family, and the need to live with a friend who lives off campus.

Some OSU international students who lived or still live in the dormitory complained about the food and cooking regulations, prices of meals and lack of privacy. They said they like to cook their own food and they wish that the kitchen would be open on holidays. Some students indicated that the university should provide one-bedroom apartments for those students who wish to live alone. Other students who have children suggested three-bedroom apartments should be available as well as two-bedrooms.

However, for the most part, many participants expressed satisfaction with safety and maintenance that the university apartments have. They indicated that housing is generally good and convenient for students.

Expectations about OSU – Forty three percent of participants did not know how to answer this question. Eight participants found it to be better than expected and three found it to be as they had expected. Nine other participants reported that it was worse than they expected.

Choose the University Again – The majority of participants who answered this question reported that they were satisfied with OSU and if they were to choose again they would do the same. Only five, out of thirty-five, participants were not satisfied; two of these stated that they liked OSU for undergraduate and for master's level study but they would like to do their doctorate somewhere else in order to get a different experience. Ten of the participants (29 percent) stated that they would keep their options open; their choice would depend on all available alternatives and they would choose the best possible one. Many international students chose OSU because it was the first university to respond to their application.

Role of the Degree in the Future of Participants – All of the participants were more concerned about how to improve their professional career through education and with a higher degree get a job or a better one. Some of them (mainly graduate students) were specific and asserted that they want to become a faculty member (29 percent) at one

of the universities in their countries or to become a researcher (7 percent) in their field of specialty. Undergraduate students were more focused on getting a job.

Information about OSU – Forty-six percent of the participants came to OSU with enough information to get started. Females were more informed than male students were. Six participants (17 percent) did not respond to this question. Eleven participants (31 percent) complained about the lack of information available about OSU.

Social Experience

Main Social Concerns – The majority of participants focused their social concerns on adjusting to a new life and new culture. They expressed the need to feel welcomed and not be discriminated against or threatened. They seemed to recognize that it takes sometime to build new relationships, make new friends, and interact with people.

Many international students experienced some form of homesickness and difficulty the first time they came to the US. Female students were more emotional and severely missed their homes and families. It was very hard for those wives who were unable to bring their husbands with them; and it was also hard for those husbands who could not get a visa or afford to bring their family with them. Many students wished they could afford to visit their families and parents every year.

Culture Shock – The majority of participants did not experience culture shock (57 percent). They were used to traveling and had been away from home before. Furthermore, many of them had their families with them and had friends here already. Others did experience homesickness and some culture shock (14 percent) and seven participants (20

percent) had a culture shock upon arrival. One graduate participant contended that he developed diabetes because of the stress, pressure, and culture shock. No relationship emerged between demographic factors and culture shock.

Assistance from University to Help Students Overcome Culture Shock – Seven participants out of twelve who experienced some kind of culture shock reported receiving help from OSU to reduce their culture shock or stress. Those students who were involved in organizations or having teaching assistantships were more positive and satisfied in this regard than other students. One example of that help was that they became busy with the study so they forget their emotional feelings.

Relationship with OSU Students – Only four (11 percent) participants, most of them undergraduate students, have good relationships and many American friends at OSU. Another twenty-six (74 percent) reported that they have some or a few national students as good friends. Their experiences in the United States may suggest that people are friendly, but they may still have difficulty making friends. Some international students blamed American students for not being patient listeners and tolerant to foreign accents. Five students reported bad experiences or relationships.

Nature of OSU People – Forty-three percent were pleased with the nature of the Americans in the context of Stillwater and OSU. Another 31 percent reported that some are friendly and others are not. Only 11 percent had some bad experiences in which people they have interacted with were not friendly.

Quality of Social Life at OSU – The majority (60 percent) of participants was happy with the quality of their social life at OSU. Twenty percent were less satisfied. Another 20 percent were dissatisfied and reported that there is no social life for internationals. They want the university to organize activities that encourage international students to participate and feel welcome.

National Student Associations and Their Role – Though all participants have their own national student associations which represent them, the majority (55 percent) of them was not satisfied and did not participate with these organizations or their activities. Only twelve participants (34 percent) were happy and satisfied with the performance and activities of these associations.

Financial Experience

Main Financial Concerns – The largest segment of participants was concerned about tuition and rent. They considered paying out-of-state rate very expensive for those students who do not have scholarships. Even those students who have assistantships need to pay in-state tuition. Students who have been here for a long period of time also wished that after a few years they could get help from the university and have some of tuition waived. Another request of international students was to stop increasing tuition and rent rates.

A few students, especially from Japan, contented that tuition and living expenses were inexpensive. Many students also reported that these expenses were low compared to

other universities and other states, yet they are expensive compared to universities in their countries.

Tuition Rates – Nine participants (26 percent) considered the tuition to be inexpensive compared not just to other universities in this country but also to some universities in their own countries. Ten other participants (28 percent) also considered tuition to be affordable. Eight participants who have scholarships did not comment. In addition, eight participants (23 percent), who did not have a scholarship considered tuition too expensive.

Financial Support and Financial Aid – The parents of international and their own savings finance the majority of the participants' (52 percent) expenses. Fifty-one percent of the participants did have scholarships or assistantships and most of them were financially satisfied and did not work or need help. Nine participants (26 percent) worked part-time jobs and some of them got loans or financial support from their parents.

Part-time Jobs or Financial Aids – Twelve participants reported that they work part-time jobs (34 percent); most of these were males. One female undergraduate student stated that she is busy but it was not worth working at a minimum wage. Most females were financially secure and did not need to look for a job. Nine out of thirteen female participants do not work and do not have an assistantship, but they had either scholarships or parental support. Fourteen males out of the twenty-two had a part-time job and/or a teaching or research assistantship.

Financial Difficulties – While ten participants (28 percent) reported that they have experienced some kind of financial difficulty or problem, these problems were not identical. Many international students were concerned about tuition and how to come up with three thousand dollars every semester. A few other participants, especially married students had problems with hospital bills. Some students solved their financial problems by getting loans, others by asking parents for help, and still others used their credit cards.

Concluding Questions and Suggestions

Concluding Questions

Happiness Through Time – Twenty-six participants (74 percent) indicated that they are happier now than when they first came to this country. Reasons varied from one student to another. Some students stated that over time, they became used to the system, the weather, a new environment and a new language; thus they became more relaxed and developed more friendship ties. Some students also indicated that they are happier now because they accomplished something such as passing comprehensive exams or becoming close to finishing their studies.

Happiness and Length of Stay – The majority (57 percent) of participants reported that their satisfaction with OSU increased year after year. Though five participants reported that their satisfaction was the same, six participants (18 percent) experienced different feelings. While satisfaction with their academic life increased for some, their social life satisfaction decreased. Only four participants became less happy over time.

Satisfaction Expected Next Year – The majority of participants (52 percent) expected their satisfaction with OSU to be greater next year. Some explained that it would be so because they expected to graduate and finish their study. Others declared it is because of experiencing more academic success and getting more involved in their research and programs.

Meeting Expectations about OSU – Twenty-eight participants (80 percent) expressed their satisfaction with the university as a whole. Twenty percent of the participants indicated that the university did not meet most of their expectations and expressed some of their discontentment with the university as a whole.

Suggestions

Participants varied widely about how they could be more satisfied. They were asked to list whatever they thought needed to be done to increase satisfaction. Their suggestions were listed under the following sub-headings:

1) Academically:

- a. The university needs to help international students understand the educational system here and how to deal with it. OSU will help international students if they get involved in developing, designing, evaluating and implementing the educational programs.
- b. The university should provide more chances for internationals to make presentations for their research.

- c. International students need a variety of elective courses with alive and relevant content.
- d. Instructors should understand the students' ability and other responsibilities they deal with before loading them down with homework.
- e. Advisers need to provide more time to guide international students.
- f. OSU should provide more offices and computers for the graduate students.
- g. Some of computer labs' instructors need more training and supervision to serve students better.
- h. Computer labs need more printers and students should be allowed to print as much as they need.
- i. Exams should match the level of teaching. Comprehensive exams should be scheduled in a way that each student can manage. More time should be given between the exams.
- j. Library resources, especially new magazines and books should be improved and time for using the Internet and the working hours of the library should be extended especially during holidays (e.g. Thanksgiving.)

2) Personal Concerns:

- a. International students need workshops of guidance to meet their personal needs and problems. A room or a table should be provided to help and guide new students.
- b. OSU should provide 800 numbers so that students can call anytime.

- c. All required information about the school and each department requirements should be accessible through the Internet so that students can know their status and what to expect in advance.
- d. New comers need to know what to eat and how to find the right food.
- e. Students need better health care services and it should be free. At least vision tests for students should be free.
- f. The transportation should be more frequent and on a stable schedule.
- g. A driving school is needed for international student to make sure that international students aware of the traffic and parking laws.
- h. An auto facility to help students fix their cars is needed.
- i. The university needs to put more effort into improving its rank and image especially in the international community so that students will believe that they can have good life and education for the money they spend.
- j. The supervisors should check and watch their employees' behavior with international students.
- k. The university should arrange to help international students in improving and correcting their English writing, writing style and structure in a more serious way. Each department may assign a professor to help those students improve in this area.
- l. The dormitory hall's kitchen should not close on holidays so that students may have access to cook their own food. Also male students should not live in the same building and have access to females' section very easily. The open-showers or bathrooms in the dormitory are not convenient.

- m. It is necessary to have a channel of communication between OSU and international students to hear their concerns, needs, and suggestions.
- n. International students are different and they need to be treated not as American students, but as international students.
- o. There are hundreds of Muslim students at OSU, and they need a room for prayer.

3) Social Concerns:

- a. The university should sponsor and organize activities for international students; international activities and programs should be free, with no charge, for international students.
- b. OSU should try to increase the people's awareness about international students. They need to broaden their perspectives and to know other people better.
- c. OSU should arrange a host family program for international students so that they can visit and socialize with them.

4) Financially:

- a. There must be more opportunities such as assistantships and research assistant jobs so that students do not have to work while studying and delay their academic progress. Students should be allowed to work as many hours as they can afford to as long as their grades are good.
- b. Undergraduate students need more financial support and like to know more about financial statistics. It is necessary to mention how many students get assistantships and how many do not.

- c. OSU should start charging students who do not pay on time after one semester instead of monthly.

5) Additions and Suggestions to the Interview Guide

- a. What did you learn from the new culture you experienced and new people you interacted with?
- b. Are you satisfied with the class environment and the students' behavior there?
- c. Why did you select OSU and how did you manage to choose and come here?
- d. Was there any hospitality from the university when you first arrived?
- e. Would you recommend OSU to a friend?

One suggested including some multiple-choice questions in order to increase the response rate and to eliminate some redundant questions.

Conclusions

The following conclusions drawn from this study were based on the review of the relevant literature, the analysis of data and consideration of the findings of this study:

1. Knowledge of the results of this study should lead to the establishment of services that better reflect the needs and views of international students.
2. Participants were most satisfied with their academic experience at OSU. More than 64 percent of them were satisfied with their overall academic life at OSU.

3. International students believe the academic adviser and the experience of their professors are crucial with their overall academic success. Graduate students need more guidance and stronger relationships with their advisers while undergraduate students care more about course content and the lecturers' teaching style.
4. Not all international students are financially secure. About half needed financial aid and teaching assistantships. The availability of funds and assistantships is the second reason international students pursue study in the U. S.
5. Social life is an important factor in determining international student satisfaction. Only thirty-six percent of participants are satisfied with their overall social life at OSU, yet, they asked more patience and more care from their fellow national students. Friendships with domestic students was a major shortcoming. Only 11 percent were very pleased with having many American friends. This conclusion was consistent with what Akpan Iquot (1980) indicated that the major problems that international students face at OSU were social in nature.
6. Married students who have their families and friends with them did not experience homesickness or shock from living away from home. It is important that married students have their spouses with them, a finding consistent with Perrucci and Hu, (1995) who declared that international students play different roles as students, parents, employees, and family or community members. They argued that married students have better

opportunities to socialize and interact with than single students. As their network of relationships increases, a greater satisfaction with social life may result. Single students were more busy with their studies especially undergraduate students, yet they complained about the lack of social activities.

7. National students associations for international students need to do a better job of reaching out and serving their fellow students. Only 34 percent of the international students were satisfied with their own national student associations.
8. Language and communication deficiencies were not major factors in hindering student academic success, however, they affected participants' confidence in initiating relationships with national students.
9. International students need trust to share their ideas with someone. Qualitative research using face to face interviews is an appropriate method for this purpose.
10. All participants are unique, yet they all wish to be respected, welcomed, listened to, informed, and treated as international students.
11. As Akpan-Iquot (1980) found, the longer international students stay in the United States the fewer problems they face and the more satisfied they are; the majority (60 percent) of participant satisfaction with OSU in this study increased year after year.
12. This study did not find any serious financial problems among international students.

13. In contrast to the findings of Davis, (1996), international students were also (like Americans) primarily concerned with obtaining a degree in order to obtain a better job.
14. Social relationships did not affect or hinder students' academic achievements. Some international students satisfaction with their academic life increased while satisfaction with their social life decreased, a finding that was supported by El-Agha, 1991 and many others.
15. This study did not find significant differences among international students related to demographic variables with regard to levels of satisfaction. The only notable differences involved were that students from India or Pakistan who were more fluent in English than other participants and female students were more financially secure than males.
16. Combining the four areas of concern in this study, approximately 51% of the participants indicated satisfaction on some level; 29% were in-between or undecided; and 20% expressed some level of dissatisfaction with their overall educational experience at OSU. Almost the same conclusion was reached by Galiouridis, (1980) in his quantitative study. He also found that gender and cultural differences did not influence satisfaction. In this study financial experiences were more positive than personal experiences. Galiouridis found no relationship between the length of stay of international students and their perceptions of satisfaction at the University of Alabama while in this study student satisfaction increased year after year.

Recommendations for Practice

The following recommendations to maximize international student satisfaction are based on suggestions made by the participants and on the researcher's personal experience:

1. The university needs to help more international students understand the educational system here and how to deal with it by involving them in developing, designing, evaluating and implementing educational programs.
2. International students should read some informative books (like Guide to Succeeding in College, 1997 by Shaheena Ahmad), articles, and brochures about what every college student should know to succeed in college. This will prevent many of troubles and prevent many bad experiences before they occur.
3. International students need a variety of elective courses available that are more applicable to the degree programs.
4. The university should have available effective professors who can teach and guide international students.
5. More advisers with longer office hours in order to serve students better and have closer relationships with them.
6. Instructors should gauge international student ability and be conscious that they have other responsibilities.
7. Graduate students need offices and computers to do their research. OSU should provide adequate computer technology to support their needs.

8. Some computer lab instructors need more training and better interpersonal skills. The computer labs need more printers and should allow students to print as much as they need.
9. Exams should match the level of teaching. Comprehensive exams should be individualized with more time given between exams.
10. Library resources, especially new magazines and books need to be updated and increased; time for using the Internet and the library, especially during holidays, should be extended.
11. The International Student Service office (ISS) should implement suggestions provided in this study to help international students succeed at OSU. For example, by including more and experienced international students in the orientation program, new students can learn practical knowledge.
12. As far as financial problems are concerned, it was the demand of almost all international students for more job opportunities as well as teaching and research assistantships.
13. The host family program can facilitate a mutually rewarding relationship and better understanding between international students and Americans, who can exchange ideas about cultures and language slang. Host families can provide advice and answers to students' questions.
14. Periodic evaluations of international students' satisfaction can help maintain and increase that satisfaction.

15. Organizing and initiating new activities that enable both American and international students to socialize will make OSU a more friendly campus for those with culturally diverse backgrounds.
16. A home visit program should be initiated between American families and international students.

Recommendations for Further Research

Since generalizations concerning international students in this country are hard to determine, each institution must assess the degree of satisfaction of its international student population and develop its own strategy to offer a proper environment and accommodations for them.

1. Some interview questions in this study were not specific, and others proved irrelevant to measuring satisfaction. Further research will improve this interview guide and new studies are encouraged.
2. Further studies should look at differences among international students from backgrounds different than those included in the present one.
3. A sample in further studies should be taken from a larger geographic area and include more students from each country to better define demographics.
4. This study should be replicated on other campuses for comparative purposes.
5. More qualitative research should be done to elicit more input from international students since most of them have been raised to be silent.

Concluding Thoughts

Our age of increased connections across borders has made international education an essential element in school reform. To Dewey, isolation wastes human potential (Germain, 1998). I have attempted to deepen my understanding of the various experiences that different international students have and might share. This study hopes to bridge the gap and break down social barriers of race and class, locally and globally.

In addition, many international students who study in the United States might become leaders in their countries in the near future, and thus their experiences as students in the U. S. will undoubtedly affect their international views. International student experiences can foster a lifelong desire to learn and understand culture, and that would be educative in the Deweyan sense. I hope this exploration of the way international students perceived their experiences will generate further work on the impact that cultural experience in a teacher's classroom practice can have upon the life of all students.

In order for international students to adjust to American culture, achieve better academic performances, enjoy their studies in the U. S., and achieve some degree of satisfaction, the university should elicit, listen, and respond to their needs and suggestions. Some of the views that the participants shared in this study can be summarized as the following:

1. OSU has a responsibility to foster a better climate of international awareness and understanding on and off campus. Advisers need to spend more quality time in order to advise international students. Course content and teaching style of lecturing is important for the success of

undergraduate international students. International students should be respected, welcomed, and invited to socialize and interact with faculty and national students. Activities that accommodate international students should be organized by the university to increase the participation of American and international students. Flexibility and empathy will help reduce the stress and anxiety that international students' suffer from being in a foreign country.

2. In addition, each department should appoint a faculty member to advise international students in that department. Improving the language skills of international students should be given a high priority by universities. A booklet designed mainly for international students should be mailed to those who are admitted before they come to the United States. This booklet should include all the information needed for a foreign student to select an appropriate university. Detailed information should be included about requirements for admission, the areas of interests of its faculty, as well as job opportunities and campus resources.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Interview Script

Hello, my name is Jawad Abadi, and I am a doctoral candidate at OSU, doing my dissertation about international student satisfaction at OSU. I am conducting a study about international students from different countries and backgrounds to get their views and perceptions of their experiences at OSU. I will not give your name or any identifying characteristics about you to anybody. I am the only one who has access to that information. Each individual interview will remain completely confidential.

Your participation will allow your opinions to be heard by the officials at OSU and help them to better understand how they can make you more satisfied. Your suggestions might also be helpful for program improvement.

The interview takes about one hour to complete. Do you have any questions? May I interview you? I would like to begin by asking you general questions about you and other family members living with you. I appreciate your cooperation and thank you very much for your assistance.

APPENDIX B

RESPONDENT CONSENT FORM

Researcher: Jawad M. Abadi

I, _____ understand that

1. The information obtained during this research will be kept confidential and will be used for this study only.
2. The information will be conducted by interview notes and voice recording.
3. Real names and addresses of the participants will not be accessible to anyone other than the researcher and will not be used during data collection or in the completed dissertation at all.
4. The tape recordings and the interview transcripts (disk) and notes will be used and read only by the researcher. There will be no access to this information for anyone else.
5. I may review the dissertation before the final draft is written, if I so wish, in order to confirm or correct the researcher's construction of my statements. If necessary, I may negotiate changes in those constructions with the researcher.
6. I may withdraw from the study at any time, but I will notify the researcher of such an action.
7. I agree to participate in this study according to the proceeding terms.

Participant Signature _____

Researcher Signature _____

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE

(1). What roles do the demographic factors at OSU play in international student satisfaction?

A. Would you please tell me about yourself:

Name: Gender: Age:

Geographical region:

Native language: Major: Academic level:

Marital status: Number of children:

Ethnic origin or religion:

B. How long have you been in the USA?

(2). How satisfied are you with your academic experiences at OSU?

A. How was the orientation program that OSU provided for you?

Tell me more.

B. What are the major academic issues that you consider important to your satisfaction? (i.e., library, adviser, grades, courses, schedules, difficulty of study, class discussion, writing papers, and work load, etc.).

C. How was your experience with the library and computer labs' services? Describe their accessibility. Do you find the resources you need?

D. To what degree are you satisfied with the quality of academic advising that you receive? Explain please.

E. Describe the role of the summer sessions in speeding up your program of study?

F. How do the grades you get match your expectations and satisfaction?

G. Tell me about your understanding of written or spoken English material?

H. What is the role of your program's prerequisites as a factor that affects your satisfaction? How?

- I. How were adult education programs in town helpful in improving your English communications?
- (3). How satisfied are you with your personal experiences at O.S.U?
 - A. Tell me about your personal satisfaction at OSU (i.e., personal life, problems, es, traveling experiences and transportation, length of stay in this country, communication skills and interaction with national students, religious opportunities, shopping, etc.,...).
 - B. Are you satisfied with housing and university services?
 - C. How does the university differ from the picture that you had before coming to OSU?
 - D. If you were to do your study all over again where would you choose to do it? Why?
 - E. How will the degree that you pursue affect your personal lifestyle in the future?
 - F. Did you find the information you need to go through your new life in this country?
 - (4). How satisfied are you with your social experiences at OSU?
 - A. What is important to you with regard to your social life satisfaction? (discuss your homesickness, cultural shock, interaction with national students and meeting with faculty members, discrimination, involvement in the community and university's activities, etc.).
 - B. Did you experience culture shock when you first came to this country?
 - C. How was the university's role in reducing your shock?
 - D. How often do you contact national students?
 - E. How do you feel about that?

- F. How friendly do you see people at OSU and Stillwater? Explain please.
- G. Does the quality of social life and friendship at OSU meet your expectations?
- H. Is there a National Student Association for the students coming from your country? If yes, How does this organization affect your quality of life at OSU?

(5) How satisfied are you with your financial experiences at OSU?

- A. What is important to you with regard to your financial situation?
- B. How expensive are the tuition and fees?
- C. What types of financial support do you rely on?
- D. Do you take advantage of part-time jobs or financial aids to help you financially?
- E. Could you describe a typical financial difficulty you faced at OSU?

(6) Concluding Questions:

- A. Are you as happy now as when you first came to OSU? Why?
- B. How satisfied do you feel as you stay longer? Why do you think so?
- C. How do you expect your satisfaction to be next year?
- D. Does the university as a whole meets your expectations? How is that?
- E. Make suggestions on how you could be more satisfied. Could you explain in more detail what you just mentioned?
- F. What can you add to the Interview Guide?

APPENDIX D

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

APPROVAL FORM

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 09-17-97

IRB#: ED-98-015

Proposal Title: SATISFACTION WITH OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY AMONG SELECTED GROUPS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Principal Investigator(s): James Gregson, Jawad M. Abadi

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

ALL APPROVALS MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT NEXT MEETING, AS WELL AS ARE SUBJECT TO MONITORING AT ANY TIME DURING THE APPROVAL PERIOD.

APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR DATA COLLECTION FOR A ONE CALENDAR YEAR PERIOD AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL.

ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Disapproval are as follows:

Signature: _____

John F. W. [Signature]
Chair of Institutional Review Board
cc: Jawad M. Abadi

Date: September 29, 1997

VITA

Jawad Mahmoud Abadi

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: SATISFACTION WITH OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY AMONG
SELECTED GROUPS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Major Field: Occupational and Adult Education

Biographical:

Personal Data: Jawad Mahmoud Abadi was born in Ya'bad, West-Bank (of Jordan River) Palestine, June 17, 1963, the son of Mahmoud Abadi and Khadejah Awad.

Education: Graduated from Ya'bad High School, West-Bank, Palestine, May, 1981; received Bachelor of Managerial Sciences degree from Yarmouk University in Irbid, Jordan in May, 1985; received a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree from Oklahoma City University in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma in August, 1990; completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree from Oklahoma State University in May, 1999.

Professional Experience: Three years experience in Accounting and Auditing in Riyadh City and Jeddah City in Saudi Arabia; one year experience operating and managing international food corporation in Stillwater, Oklahoma; experience as a volunteer school director at the Islamic Society of Stillwater's part-time school. Has held many positions in the Islamic Society of Stillwater as: executive president; speaker; member in the board of trustees; and board of education director for the part-time educational and cultural activities provided for the community including children and adults.