

SOCIOCULTURAL ADAPTATION OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

by

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ARIZONA

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We respectfully acknowledge the University of Arizona is on the land and territories of Indigenous peoples. Today, Arizona is home to 22 federally recognized tribes, with Tucson being home to the O'odham and the Yaqui. Committed to diversity and inclusion, the University strives to build sustainable relationships with sovereign Native Nations and Indigenous communities through education offerings, partnerships, and community service.

DEDICATION

To my grandfather. *Papaji*, the apple didn't fall far from the tree, thankfully.

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Abstract

This study examines the sociocultural adaptation of international graduate-level students ($N = 56$) at a Southwestern university in the United States (US). The participants were divided into three groups based on the length of duration in the US since arrival – 1-6 months, 7-12 months, and more than 1 year. The Revised Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (SCAS-R) was used to measure firstly, the overall adaptation of international students, and secondly, the scores received on the five subscales of the inventory – interpersonal communication (IC), academic/work performance (AP), personal interests and community involvement (PI), ecological adaptation (EA), and language proficiency (LP). The overall adaptation score received was compared to Lysgaard's U-curve model of adaptation (1955) to examine whether adaptation occurs the same way with a modern population. The scores indicated statistically insignificant results between the three groups of students on overall adaptation as well as among four out of the five subscales. Ecological adaptation showed statistically significant differences between the two groups being the US the longest, 7-12 months and more than 1 year.

Keywords: international students, sociocultural adaptation, U-curve model

Sociocultural Adaptation of International Students in the United States of America

The scope of global education knows no bounds. This also means that there is a high number of students who migrate from their native countries to a foreign land for better education, exposure, and resources. According to [statista.com](https://www.statista.com), in 2021 approximately 915,000 students were reported to have migrated from different countries to the United States (US), which even considered with the 15% drop from 2019 because of COVID is a huge number. The current statistics on [statista.com](https://www.statista.com) for the 2022-2023 academic year report a total of 948,519 international students in the US. What becomes the focal point of such a large number is whether these students who leave the relative ease and comfort of their homes, find some sense of belongingness in an alien land.

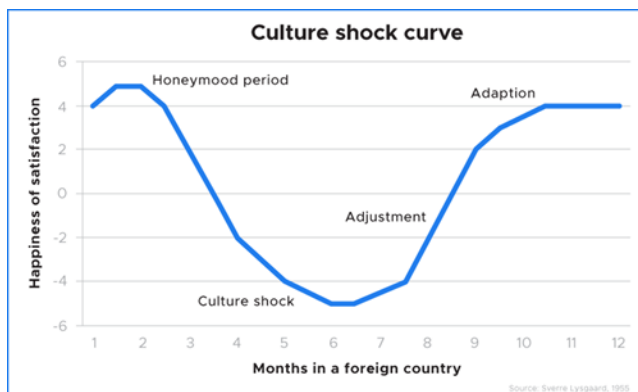
As an international student from India studying in the US, my experience with how well I have adjusted is mixed. Although there are instances of making friends and feeling included in a social group which have been easy, there were experiences like understanding the accent and adopting values of an individualistic society which were much harder. The aim of my study is to explore, identify, and understand how well international graduate students adjust at a US university.

Berry (1997) defines adaptation as changes that occur in an individual in response to environmental demands. He further explains adaptation as being either psychological or sociocultural, where the latter deals with responses that an individual elicits to better deal with daily challenges and ability to cater to problems involving family, social groups, or academic/work concerns. The literature on this topic revolves around the U-curve of adaptation

defined by Lysgaard (1955). He hypothesized that cultural adjustment happens over a time frame that can be explained by a U-curve (figure 1). The first phase is known as the “honeymoon” phase, where sojourners feel liberated and excited to move to a different country. This period lasts on average the first 6 months after arrival. The next phase is called the “culture shock”, where sojourners start to feel anxious and somewhat troubled to adapt to new values and customs that are far different from their native culture. This period lasts about 6 months to 1 year of living in the host country. Post this shock, comes adjustment leading to the “adaptation” phase, where students become comfortable with their new lifestyles which ultimately leads to a mastery in adjustment.

Figure 1

Lysgaard’s U-Curve of Adaptation



The purpose of this study is to first evaluate the current applicability of this U-curve of cultural adaptation by replicating the study on international students at a Southwestern US university with three different groups of students varying in their duration of stay in the US. Group 1 represents students who arrived in the US within the past 1-6 months and are expected to be in the “honeymoon” phase of cultural adaptation. Group 2 represents students who have

been in the US for approximately 7-12 months and are expected to be in the “culture shock” phase of cultural adaptation. Group 3 represents students who have been living in the US for more than a year and are expected to be in the “adaptation” phase of cultural adaptation.

The second part of the study is a comparative analysis of the sociocultural adjustments among these three groups of students to identify factors that are responsible in adaptation. The adaptation concerns of international students are important because most studies conducted on this topic are at least two decades old. The findings will hopefully help academic departments and the International Student Services (ISS) at the university in this study to provide better support in areas that are the key concerns for international students.

Literature Review

The study which first hypothesized the U-curve by Lysgaard (1955) conducted research on Norwegian Fulbright scholars in the US and concluded that adjustment is easier when students initially arrive which slowly becomes a challenge with time before complete adaptation happens. Since then, this theory has been put to test by many researchers in different countries to evaluate its validity. In a study conducted in the US, international students already come with a low expectation of their adjustment capabilities (Kaczmarek et al, 1994). The Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (Baker & Siryk, 1987) compared international students and US students, showing significantly lower social and institutional attachment for international students. In a study conducted by Chien (2016) on graduate international students in a Southwestern United Kingdom (UK) university, the U-curve assessment by Lysgaard (1955) did not necessarily hold true. Out of the 26 students interviewed for this study, only 4 students fit with the timeline of the U-curve. For the other 22 students, there were variations due to personal

experiences, knowledge of English, and values of their native country being similar to that of the UK. For example, students who came from European countries where the culture is parallel to the UK in terms of food, habits, and background had an easier time adjusting and their sense of belongingness was also higher. Since adjustment was not a concern for these international students due to the above-mentioned factors, they did not fit the timeline of the U-curve. There are multiple other factors that influence how well students adjust in a foreign country.

Ward et al. (1998) conducted a longitudinal study to understand the psychological and sociocultural adjustment in a cross-cultural scenario for international students. This study was conducted on Japanese students studying in New Zealand who were assessed according to the timeline defined by Lysgaard's U-curve. The study concluded that the U-curve does not consider important factors like the sources of stress, mental health, language barriers, and many others for international students which means it is time to reevaluate the U-curve to make it more relevant and current.

Even popular media articles mention new factors that have become significant in the past 40 years that should be included when researchers try to understand adjustment and adaptation for international students. An article published by Optnation in 2019, the author identified other key variables like facing prejudice and racism, adapting to new time zones, financial and academic expectations, learning styles, and homesickness to be some of the challenges that international students face in the US.

Sociocultural Adaptation

Cross-cultural psychology describes various concepts that revolve around the effect one's culture has on human development and behavior (Berry, 1997). Sociocultural adaptation can be

understood by examining factors such as cultural distance, cultural identity, language ability, and cultural knowledge (Ward & Kennedy, 1993). Following this same literature, Brisset et al. (2010) in their comparative study on Vietnamese students studying in France, found that satisfaction with cultural identity of Vietnamese students with their ingroup associates positively relates to how much and how quickly they relate to the host-nation. Ingroup is defined by Tajfel (1970) as a social group to which a person psychologically identifies as being a member. The role of social support and resources provided by the host university in France for Vietnamese international students is stressed. The research provided evidence that international students who had positive engagement with French domestic students through the help of social groups, showed better sociocultural adaptation.

Present Study

Aim

The aim of this study is to reexamine Lysgaard's U-curve of adaptation by looking at modern populations of students in three time periods of arrival in the US and comparing the level of sociocultural adjustment among those three groups of students. The study will further investigate factors that are responsible for determining adjustment in a foreign country.

Research Question 1

Will the three groups of students with differences in the duration of their stay in the US (1-6 months, 7-12 months, and longer than 1 year) align with the phases of Lysgaard's U-curve model?

Hypothesis: The differences among the three groups based on the duration of their stay in the US will not align with the phases of Lysgaard's U-curve model.

Research Question 2

Will there be differences in the overall sociocultural adjustment score on the Revised Sociocultural Adjustment Scale (SCAS-R) between the three groups of students?

Hypothesis: There will be differences in the overall sociocultural adjustment score on the Revised Sociocultural Adjustment Scale (SCAS-R) between the three groups of students.

Research Question 3

Will there be differences in the SCAS-R subscale scores (interpersonal communication, academic/work performance, personal interests and community involvement, ecological adaptation, and language proficiency) between the three groups of students?

- Will there be differences in the SCAS-R subscale score for interpersonal communication (IC) between the three groups of students?

Hypothesis: There will be differences in the SCAS-R subscale score for interpersonal communication (IC) between the three groups of students.

- Will there be differences in the SCAS-R subscale score for academic/work performance (AP) between the three groups of students?

Hypothesis: There will be differences in the SCAS-R subscale score for academic/work performance (AP) between the three groups of students.

- Will there be differences in the SCAS-R subscale score for personal interests and community involvement (PI) between the three groups of students?

Hypothesis: There will be differences in the SCAS-R subscale score for personal interests and community involvement (PI) between the three groups of students.

- Will there be differences in the SCAS-R subscale score for ecological adaptation (EA) between the three groups of students?

Hypothesis: There will be differences in the SCAS-R subscale score for ecological adaptation (EA) between the three groups of students.

- Will there be differences in the SCAS-R subscale score for language proficiency (LP) between the three groups of students?

Hypothesis: There will be differences in the SCAS-R subscale score for language proficiency (LP) between the three groups of students.

Method

Participants

The study was conducted on three groups of graduate-level international students studying at a Southwestern university in the US. Group 1 ($n = 10$) consisted of students who have been living in the US for 1-6 months, group 2 ($n = 14$) consisted of students who have been living in the US for 7-12 months, and group 3 ($n = 32$) consisted of students who have been living in the US for more than 1 year. The participants belonged to countries from all 6 habitable continents including India, China, South Korea, Japan, Iran, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Pakistan in Asia; Russia, Italy, Germany, and France in Europe; Cote D'Ivoire, Kenya, and Togo in Africa; Mexico and Canada in North America; Columbia, Brazil, and Paraguay in South

America; and Australia. The sample was recruited through a snowball method via publicly available social media accounts and international students' clubs, graduate student listservs, and global ambassadors (student representatives working with the International Student Services) at a Southwestern US university. Only those students who had not lived in the USA prior to being enrolled in their graduate program were eligible to be in the study.

Instrumentation

The students were asked to complete the Revised Sociocultural Adjustment Scale (SCAS-R) by Wilson (2013) through Qualtrics which was originally developed by Ward and Kennedy (1993). This self-report scale focuses on cultural competence, cross-cultural transition, and adaptation by measuring the sociocultural adjustment and psychological wellbeing of the participant. SCAS-R yields an overall score from 21 items with sub scores: interpersonal communication, academic/work performance, personal interests and community involvement, ecological adaptation, and language proficiency. The descriptions of each of these five subscales explained by Wilson (2013) are- *Interpersonal communication* is defined as an individual's behavioral proficiency or skill in cross-cultural social encounters. *Academic/work performance* is defined as an individual's ability to perform behavioral tasks (a combination of abilities, skills, and knowledge that shape role-prescribed behaviors) in domain-specific settings such as academic or work situations. *Personal interests and community engagement* is defined as a person's ability to become involved with the community and maintain personal interests and hobbies. *Ecological adaptation* is defined as an individual's behavioral adaptation to the general ecological environment that includes ecology, education, the economy, mass communications, and population. *Language proficiency* is an individual's ability to use language (English, for the

purpose of this study) with a level of accuracy which transfers meaning in production and comprehension.

SCAS-R items are based on a Likert scale of 1 = Not at all competent to 5 = Extremely competent. Scores are calculated by averaging the individual item scores, where higher scores represent greater competency (skills or behaviors) in a new cultural environment. The internal reliability for all the subscales and overall SCAS-R were found acceptable with $\alpha = .91$ for interpersonal communication, $.86$ for academic/work performance, $.76$ for personal interests and community involvement, $.71$ for ecological adaptation, $.90$ for language proficiency, and $.92$ for overall SCAS-R (Wilson, 2013).

The students were also asked to answer questions on demographic details such as program background, native country, and duration of stay in the US when taking the SCAS-R survey. The purpose of collecting demographic details was to identify the group in which the student would be categorized, i.e., 1-6 months, 7-12 months, or 1 year and more, and to establish eligibility in the study.

Procedure

After consenting to the study, students were asked to fill out the SCAS-R survey on Qualtrics along with the demographic questions. No personal or identifiable information was collected to keep the data confidential. A total of 68 surveys were received which included 12 blank surveys, bringing the final number of participants to 56. The data procured was analyzed to examine the aim and the three research questions of the study.

Data Analysis

Scores from the SCAS-R items were assessed to understand and evaluate Lysgaard’s U-curve of adaptation through descriptive statistics. Survey scores were also evaluated using a one-way ANOVA to draw comparisons among the overall sociocultural adaptation of the three groups of students. Finally, the scores from the 5 sub-scales (interpersonal communication, academic/work performance, personal interests and community involvement, ecological adaptation, and language proficiency) were evaluated using five individual one-way ANOVAs for each of the subscales to understand how differently these factors affect adjustment for international students among the three groups. Tukey’s HSD post-hoc test was conducted where statistically significant differences were found.

Results

For research question 1, the mean scores received on the SCAS-R scale for each of the three groups according to the duration of their stay in the US were calculated. A higher mean score denotes a higher level of sociocultural adaptation. Consistent with Lysgaard, group 3 had the highest sociocultural mean score of 75.75 (Table 1).

Table 1

Descriptive information of the three groups based on the length of stay in the US

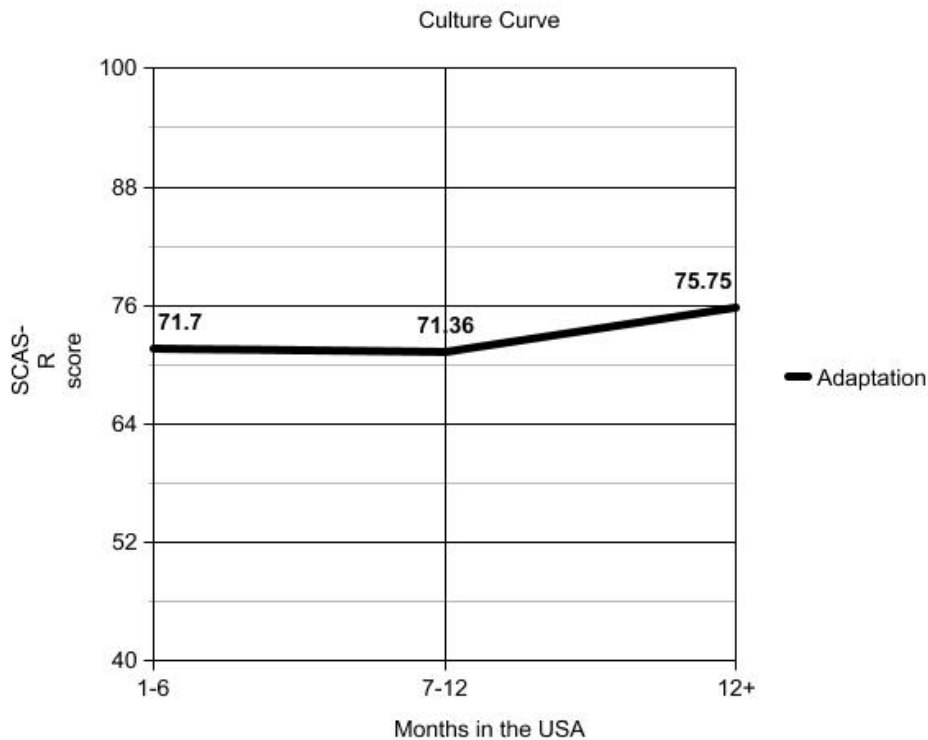
Groups	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1-6 months	10	71.70	9.75
7-12 months	14	71.36	12.69

1 year or more	32	75.75	12.15
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An examination of the mean scores received by the three groups when displayed like Lysgaard’s curve model showed the graph line in figure 2.

Figure 2

Descriptive graph showing sociocultural adaptation scores for the three groups



For research question 2, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine whether there were differences in the overall mean SCAS-R scores among the three groups. Prior to conducting the ANOVA, the assumptions of independence, normality, and homogeneity of variance were checked. The normal probability plots indicated that the data were

approximately normally distributed for all groups, except for a few outliers in group 3. A Levene’s test to check if the assumption of homogeneity of variance produced $p = 0.56$, which is greater than 0.5 signifying that the assumption of homogeneity holds true. The ANOVA results to understand group differences showed $F(2, 53) = 0.83, p=0.44$. Since the p -value is greater than 0.05, it can be concluded that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean scores between the three groups.

Table 2

One-Way ANOVA of the three groups

	<i>df</i>	<i>Sum Sq</i>	<i>Mean Sq</i>	<i>F-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>	η^2
Group	2	248	124.2	0.831	0.441	0.03
Residuals	53	7925	149.5			

For research question 3, mean scores and standard deviations were recorded for each of the five subscales of SCAS-R between the three groups of students (table 3). The table indicates that there are certain trends that can be understood with these descriptive statistics for the five subscales. Personal interests and community involvement showed the lowest mean scores for all three groups ($M_1 = 2.73$ and $SD_1 = 1.07$, $M_2 = 2.84$ and $SD_2 = 1.16$, and $M_3 = 3.06$ and $SD_3 = 1.17$) and language proficiency recorded the highest mean scores for all three groups ($M_1 = 4.50$ and $SD_1 = 0.59$, $M_2 = 4.29$ and $SD_2 = 0.80$, and $M_3 = 4.17$ and $SD_3 = 0.89$).

Table 3

Difference in mean scores of the five subscales for the three groups of students

Student groups	Group 1		Group 2		Group 3	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Subscales of SCAS-R						
IC	3.41	.89	3.39	1.17	3.58	1.08
AP	3.58	.89	3.71	1.01	3.73	.94
PI	2.73	1.07	2.84	1.16	3.06	1.17
EA	3.40	1.16	3.21	1.39	3.80	1.02
LP	4.50	.59	4.29	.80	4.17	.89

Note. IC = interpersonal communication, AP = academic/work performance, PI = personal interests and community engagement, EA = ecological adaptation, and LP = language proficiency.

Individual one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine whether there were statistically significant differences among the three groups for each of the five subscales. Prior to conducting the five ANOVAs, the assumptions of independence, normality, and homogeneity of variance were checked. Levene's test for homogeneity of variance was used to determine if the variance of overall mean score was approximately equal across all the three

groups for each of the five subscales. For interpersonal communication, academic/work performance, personal interests and community engagement, and ecological adaptation, a *p*-value of more than 0.05 was recorded, 0.40, 0.72, 0.76, and 0.62, respectively, indicating that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated. For language proficiency, the Levene’s test showed a *p*-value of 0.001, indicating unequal variances between the three groups so a Welch’s ANOVA was conducted instead.

Table 4 shows the ANOVA results for the five subscales respectively, among the three groups. Four out of the five subscales recorded a *p*-value of more than 0.05 indicating that there were no statistically significant differences between the three groups for interpersonal communication, academic/work performance, personal interests and community engagement, and language proficiency. For the ecological adaptation subscale, $F(2, 53) = 3.32, p = 0.04$ indicating that there were statistically significant differences between the three groups (students who are 1-6 months, 7-12 months, and longer than 1 year in the US). To understand which groups are statistically significantly different from each other, a Tukey’s HSD post-hoc test was conducted. The groups that were statistically significantly different from each other were group 2 and group 3, i.e., 7-12 months in the US and more than 1 year in the US with a *p*-value of 0.047.

Table 4

Individual One-Way ANOVA for all the five subscales of SCAS-R

<i>df</i>	<i>Sum Sq</i>	<i>Mean Sq</i>	<i>F</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	η^2
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IC						
Groups	2	21.3	10.64	0.41	0.67	0.01
Residuals	53	1386.7	26.16			

AP						
Groups	2	3.2	1.575	0.239	0.79	0.009
Residuals	53	349.7	6.598			

PI						
Groups	2	17.3	8.657	0.925	0.40	0.03
Residuals	53	496.1	9.361			

EA						
Groups	2	59.2	29.613	3.318	0.04	0.11
Residuals	53	473.0	8.924			

LP						
Groups	2	3.33	1.667	0.813	0.45	0.03
Residuals	53	108.65	2.050			

Note. IC = interpersonal communication, AP = academic/work performance, PI = personal interests and community engagement, EA = ecological adaptation, and LP = language proficiency.

Discussion

The present study aimed to understand the sociocultural adaptation of international students studying in a Southwestern university in the US. The research is based on the U-curve model of adaptation developed by Lysgaard in 1955 which presents adaptation in three phases of the honeymoon period, culture shock, and adaptation. This study examined how adaptation differs according to the time spent in a different country. The students who filled out the SCAS-R survey were categorized into three groups, international students who spent 1-6 months in the US, international students who spent 7-12 months in the US, and international students who spent more than 1 year in the US.

Results for question 1 compared the overall scores on SCAS-R received by the students to the U-curve model by Lysgaard. As can be seen in figure 2, groups 1 and 2 obtained almost similar overall mean scores of 71.70 and 71.36, respectively, and group 3 obtained a slightly higher score of 75.75. The original adaptation model of Lysgaard showed that adaptation is the highest in the first phase, which was termed as the honeymoon period because students are experiencing joy of being in a different country and fulfilling their dreams. But as seen in the data received in this study, that is not the case and the sociocultural adaptation is quite consistent for groups 1 and 2. According to Lysgaard, phase 2 is where students experience culture shock and the scores are the lowest, however as can be seen from the results of this study, international students from group 2 scored almost the same as those from group 1. Finally, phase 3 is described as the period where adaptation finally happens, which takes a minimum of one year for

students. According to our results, students from group 3 scored slightly higher than students from group 1. Even though the graph for the current study aligns in the shape of a U-curve, there were little to no differences in the overall SCAS-R mean score between the three groups of students. This result suggests the U-curve model of adaptation suggested by Lysgaard is outdated when applied to modern population. The existence of other factors that influence how well an international student will adapt in a new country other than just time spent there can be further examined. For example, Bierwiazzonek and Waldzus (2016) in their study on the antecedents of cross-cultural adaptation postulate factors like social interaction between host members and international students as well as social support and stressors that affect acculturation. They also suggest that research on the sociocultural adaptation of international students is in some manner related to the success or failure of their academic/performance achievement and its causal effects. Therefore, the hypothesis stated for research question 1 is partially correct where the shape of the curve aligns with Lysgaard's U-curve, however, the dip of the curve is not matching.

For question 2, there are no differences between the three groups' mean scores on the SCAS-R which is exactly what the result of the ANOVA analysis showed. No statistically significant differences were observed between groups 1, 2, and 3 for students' overall SCAS-R scores ($p > .05$). This result was not in alignment with Lysgaard's theory of cross-cultural adaptation where it was postulated that international students who are around 6 months old in a new country face the greatest difficulties or "crisis" by feeling unhappy or lonely. This difference could be sourced back to the writings of Church (1982), where he urged that Lysgaard's theory only focused on the psycho-emotional factors to define and understand

adjustment, whereas factors that are more cognitive and behavioral in nature are much stronger predictors of sociocultural adaptation. Therefore, the hypothesis stated for research question 2 is proven incorrect because there were no statistically significant differences found in the overall mean scores of adaptation among the three groups.

The SCAS-R originally developed by Ward and Kennedy (1993) and later revised in 2013 by Wilson divides the 21 survey items into 5 subscales pertaining to competencies of different nature. These are interpersonal communication, academic/work performance, personal interests and community involvement, ecological adaptation, and language proficiency. The current study investigated differences in the scores received on these five subscales among the three groups of students. The overall mean and standard deviation scores between all five subscales for the three groups (Table 3) show that the lowest overall score was received on the subscale personal interests and community involvement, for all three groups. Among the three groups, group 1 received the minimum score on this subscale ($M = 2.73$) and even though there were no statistically significant results, trends according to the descriptive statistics can suggest that international students who are around 1-6 months old in the US have the greatest difficulty to form social connects and involve themselves with the host community. They may also face challenges in continuing hobbies or interests that they might have indulged with in their home countries. The subscale of language proficiency received the highest scores out of all subscales for all three groups with group 1 receiving the maximum mean score ($M = 4.50$). Essentially, language is a big barrier when it comes to students adjusting in a dominantly English-speaking country like the US, especially if they migrate from a non-English speaking country. It is also noteworthy to understand that all international students are required to pass a standardized

English proficiency test like IELTS or TOEFL to attain admission in US universities. This means that international students with English as their second language still possess enough proficiency in English that it does not become an obstacle in their adjustment journey. A study conducted by Fritz, Chin, and DeMarinis (2008) on international students in the US compared levels of adaptation stress between Asian and European students and found out that Asian students reported a much higher level in stress which could be sourced to a vast difference in culture differences in the native and host countries (individualistic versus collectivistic) as well as difficulty in speaking/understanding English.

One-way ANOVA results for each of the five subscales showed no statistically significant results for interpersonal communication, academic/work performance, personal interests and community involvement, and language proficiency among the three groups of students (Table 4). However, the subscale of ecological adaptation showed statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) among the three groups (Table 7). A post-hoc Tukey's HSD analysis showed that significant differences exist between groups 3 and 2, with group 3 being higher than 2. This result suggests that aspects of ecological adaptation like adjusting to the physical environment, understanding US bureaucracy and policies, getting used to the pace of life, and overall adjustment in one's neighborhood become relevant factors that denote the ease and speed of adaptation. Therefore, the hypothesis stated for research question 3 was proven partially correct where statistically significant differences were found for one of the five subscales (ecological adaptation) among the three groups of students.

Another significant aspect that should be considered with these results is the effect of COVID-19 on how adjustment would have occurred, especially for group 3 students who arrived

in the US in the middle of the pandemic. Different countries were impacted differently which resulted in a suspension in attaining US student visas. With the embassies shut down along with international travel, this posed as another stressor that international students had to deal with in addition to the initial adaptation concerns. Moreover, with the modality of instruction changed to virtual teaching, the opportunities to meet their cohorts and colleagues in-person significantly decreased. It is important to consider that results of this study could have been influenced by how international students coped with COVID-19 related perturbation.

Limitations

Although this study has highlighted certain trends in understanding how sociocultural adaptation happens in international students studying in the US, it is not without some limitations. The biggest concern while collecting data for the study was not being able to gather enough participants per subgroup. Ideally, if each of the three groups had a sample of at least 30 participants, it would have helped overcome this limitation. This happened because most new students typically join university during the fall semester, and the data was collected in the spring semester. Group 1 only had a sample size of 10 because the total number of international graduate students that enrolled in the university for spring 2023 was less than 100. The small sample size for group 1 may raise questions about generalizability of results. Admission data could not be procured from international student services to keep confidential details secure, also limiting recruiting.

Another limitation for this study was its inclusion of a vast diversity of immigrant groups. The data were collected from students from all over the world studying in the US. As indicated in the list of countries represented, some students belonged to nations with primarily

collectivistic cultures, yet it is acknowledged that dualistic cultures often exist within a country, and some students belonged to nations consider to primarily have an individualistic culture like that of the US. Many factors could have differed or been similar for students from countries where the culture is similar to the US, such as Canada, Australia, and a few European nations. Analyzing data from all students together could have impacted the overall adaptation findings. More targeted immigrant populations should be recruited in future studies or having a large enough sample for comparative analyses of students separated by varying cultures and languages should be considered.

Conclusion and Future Direction

This study aimed to understand how sociocultural adaptation happens for international students studying in a Southwestern US university. The findings of this study warrant future research considering international students as a heterogenous population understanding acculturation as a factor of cultural identification of domestic versus international students, host-culture perceptions, and culture-specific knowledge.

Another direction is conducting research after the COVID-19 impact lessens. The pandemic brought in a lot of uncertainty and disparity in how resources were provided for international students not only at the university level but also with border control and immigration procedures. Once administrative systems are more settled with the changes brought about by the pandemic, we can examine how students adapt in a foreign country without atypical COVID-19 trends.

Overall, the study was successful in understanding certain inclinations and factors that influence adaptation in international students studying in the US like ecological adaptation.

Lysgaard's (1955) U-curve theory of cross-cultural adaptation was not supported. Time is not the only factor responsible for impacting how adjustment differs for students. Other factors like personal interest and community involvement with the host country's students are also potential barriers in how well an international student will adapt socio-culturally. The objective of conducting research on this topic was to provide useful information to the international student services (ISS) about how they can dispense better resources to aid the adjustment process for international students in the university. One suggestion that could be made to the ISS based on this study is the need for awareness seminars and orientation to better prepare international students for adjusting to a new physical environment. Modules on legal policies, bureaucracy, and traffic systems can be created as audio/visual clips to make international students aware about what to expect in terms of ecological changes. Additionally, events and opportunities can be organized where international students can better connect with domestic students and participate in social and cultural activities that enable community engagement.

Appendix A: SCAS-R Survey

1 = not at all competent

5 = extremely competent

1. Building and maintaining relationships.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Managing my academic/work responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Interacting at social events.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Maintaining my hobbies and interests.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Adapting to the noise level in my neighborhood.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Accurately interpreting and responding to other people's gestures and facial expressions.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Working effectively with other students/work colleagues.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Obtaining community services I require.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Adapting to the population density.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Understanding and speaking in English.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Varying the rate of my speaking in a culturally appropriate manner.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Gaining feedback from other students/work colleagues to help improve my performance.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Accurately interpreting and responding to other people's emotions.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Attending or participating in community activities.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Finding my way around.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Interacting with members of the opposite sex.	1	2	3	4	5

17. Expressing my ideas to other students/work colleagues in a culturally appropriate manner.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Dealing with the bureaucracy.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Adapting to the pace of life.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Reading and writing in English.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Changing my behavior to suit social norms, rules, attitudes, beliefs, and customs.	1	2	3	4	5

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