

EXPLORING THE SOCIAL INTERACTIONS BETWEEN  
INTERNATIONAL AND CANADIAN STUDENTS AT  
SIR WILFRED GRENFELL COLLEGE

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Exploring the Social Interactions between  
International and Canadian Students at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College

by

© Carolyn S. Parsons

A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of Master of Education

Faculty of Education

Memorial University of Newfoundland

March 8, 2007

St. John's

Newfoundland & Labrador



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*ISBN: 978-0-494-31275-9*

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*ISBN: 978-0-494-31275-9*

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## Abstract

There are several benefits associated with the social interaction of international and domestic post-secondary students. Social interactions can assist international students with their adjustment to a new environment and can encourage two-way learning about different cultures, global issues and lifestyles.

This study explored the current state of social interactions between international and domestic students studying at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College. In-person interviews were conducted with 16 international students and 12 domestic students to gain a deeper understanding of what social interactions are occurring on campus; what benefits are being realized as a result of social interactions; what students perceive as being potential benefits; what adjustment concerns international and domestic students experience; and whether domestic students have an understanding of the adjustment concerns experienced by international students.

Social interaction between international and domestic students does appear to be happening at Grenfell, although several domestic students would like to have more interaction. Also, it was identified that although some benefits are being realized, there could be a greater cultural exchange – students feel that there is not a high degree of learning occurring as a result of social interactions.

## Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the support of many people. I am grateful to Dr. Elizabeth Yeoman who was willing to take me on and be my thesis supervisor, even though I was a part-time, distance student. Dr. Yeoman and I only met once in-person, but we communicated electronically and she always gave me encouragement.

The student participants were key to this research and I am so thankful for their willingness to share their opinions and feelings about their experiences at Grenfell.

Several people at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College provided me with much needed support and guidance. I would like to acknowledge Dr. Wade Bowers who provided a lot of encouragement in the very early stages of my thesis preparation; my colleagues Sharon Nofall-Bennett, Derek Jackman and Nicky Carlson in the Registrar's Office who supported me and often acted as a sounding board/counselor; and Dr. Ivan Emke who gave me an extra set of eyes when I was analyzing some of my data.

And last but not least, I want to thank my husband Jim Parsons, who not only encouraged and put up with me when I was feeling stressed, but provided me with invaluable intellectual inspiration and motivation.



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## Chapter 1: Introducing the Study

### *1.1 Introduction*

There are many benefits that can be realized through social interactions between international and domestic students. Social interactions can help with the adjustment of international students to their new environment (Lacina, 2002) and can encourage two-way learning about different cultures, global issues and lifestyles (Calderwood, 1993; Heikinheimo & Shute, 1986; Knight, 2000). These social interactions are beneficial for both international and domestic students.

International students face a number of adjustment concerns when attending university in a new country. Common concerns are: adjusting to a new language and a new educational system; missing friends and family; adjusting to new social norms; and meeting academic standards (Abe, Talbot, & Geelhoed, 1998). Greater interaction between international and domestic students has been shown to benefit international students on a psychological, social and academic level (Ward, 2001).

There is a lot of discussion around the potential benefits experienced by domestic students as a result of having an increased number of international students on campus. Many articles state that international students will enrich the education of domestic students (Holdaway, Bryan, & Allan, 1988; Knight, 2000; Veriesi, 1999). It is assumed that international students will help domestic students develop cultural sensitivity and awareness of new cultures, laws, politics, economies and natural environments (Canadian Bureau of International Education, 1986, as cited in Bowry, 2002). Little research has

been done to actually confirm that this benefit occurs simply through increasing the number of international students on campus.

If these perceived benefits are to be realized, a certain level of social interaction is necessary. Unfortunately, studies show that the level of social interaction is normally quite low and does not occur without intervention. If interaction is low, it is less likely that students are receiving the full benefit of an ethnically diverse campus.

### *1.2 Purpose of the Study*

This study will look at the level of social interaction that currently exists between international and domestic students at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College and the benefits that occur as a result. This study will also investigate how well domestic students understand the adjustment concerns of international students and what they feel they contribute or could contribute in helping international students adjust.

Sir Wilfred Grenfell College is a small campus, which has recently embarked on international recruitment. In order for Sir Wilfred Grenfell College to recruit new international students and retain those currently attending, it is vital to continually assess the satisfaction and adaptation of those current students. Social interactions play an important role in both the satisfaction and adjustment of international students (Ward, 2001).

The findings of this study will be made available to Sir Wilfred Grenfell College and may lead to new programs, initiatives, and/or policies surrounding social interactions between domestic and international students on campus. Although this study relates

specifically to Grenfell College, it could also have implications for other small universities in relatively homogeneous communities.

### *1.3 Research Questions*

This study will ultimately try to answer the question: “What is the current state of social interaction between international and domestic students at Grenfell?” In trying to answer this question, I will also attempt to answer a number of sub-questions, including the following:

- What benefits do international students feel are evident from having social interactions with domestic students?
- How do social networks affect the adjustment of international students?
- How important are local or “domestic” students in helping international students adapt?
- What benefits do domestic students feel are evident from having social interactions with international students? Do domestic students see any benefit in having international students on campus?
- Do domestic students recognize the adjustment concerns of international students and that they can play a part in helping international students adjust? How do domestic students feel they do or could contribute to the adjustment of international students?
- How do domestic students feel about the increasing number of international students?
- Would domestic and international students both like more social interaction with one another?
- How could students’ experiences be improved?
- How can the University assist in forming stronger social networks between domestic and international students?
- What is the nature of the interaction and relationship between international and domestic students? If there is social interaction occurring, where and how is it occurring – under what conditions?



#### *1.4 Definition of Key Terms*

Domestic student: a student who is a permanent resident or citizen of Canada.

International student: a student who is a non-permanent resident of Canada

Co-nationals: individuals of the same nationality.

Cross-cultural: involving more than one culture.

Intercultural: between different cultures.

Internationalization: attempt to integrate an international and cross-cultural dimension into teaching, research, study, and service functions through various activities, policies and services (Ho, Bulman-Fleming, & Mitchell, 2002).

#### *1.5 Background of the Study*

##### *1.5.1 Personal experiences as a starting point.*

I have worked in the Registrar's office at the Sir Wilfred Grenfell College campus of Memorial University of Newfoundland since March 2003. From March 2003 to August 2005 I was employed as a student recruitment officer. My duties often put me in contact with international students who were considering Grenfell or had decided to attend. Grenfell College does not have an international student centre and up until October 2006, did not have an international student advisor. In October 2006, the Student Services division hired an International Student Program Coordinator. In the past, when students arrived at Grenfell, I would meet them at the airport and help them with the basics of getting settled in. Since August 2005, I have been in more of an academic advising role in the Registrar's Office, but am still involved with recruitment and still

have a relatively high level of contact with our international students – both before and after they arrive.

Through my position in the Registrar's Office, I have gotten to know all of our international students, some better than others. My husband and I often invite the international students to our home for a meal and we have had international students stay with us during the Christmas holidays, sharing in our family traditions.

Some of Grenfell's international students feel quite comfortable talking with me and have shared their adjustment challenges. Two specific international students piqued my interest in social interactions between international and domestic students and how they really do impact their adjustment to a new environment. These two students are no longer studying at Grenfell. One student stayed for two semesters, while the other student only stayed for one semester. Both of these students moved to St. John's where they felt they would be happier attending a larger campus in a larger city.

The first student, whom I will call "Joe," attended Grenfell College for two semesters. He moved from a very large city and English was not his first language. He was amazed by the wide open space and numerous park-like areas, and the lack of tall buildings. One of the first nights he was in Corner Brook, my husband and I went for a walk with him around Glynmill Inn pond, which is a walking trail in the centre of the city. He was in utter amazement at the space and natural environment. He stayed in the chalet-style apartments on-campus and when he looked through his bedroom window he could see nothing but trees. He loved the physical environment of Corner Brook; however, he struggled socially.

In the on-campus, chalet-style apartment, Joe had three roommates with whom he did not have much in common. According to Joe, they did not talk to him and they always had big parties without discussing it with him. He found it very difficult to make friends. In his second semester, he decided to move into the more traditional, dormitory-style residence. I agreed that this might make it easier for him to meet new people. In the residence at Grenfell, there are large kitchen facilities on each floor of residence where students cook their own meals. Again, Joe found that people did not initiate conversation with him. He said he would go into the kitchen/lounge area and everyone would just stare at him and nobody would say anything.

Grenfell's international student population is fairly small and at the time when Joe attended, there were no other students from his country and no other students who spoke his language. He found this very difficult. He did try to seek out people in the community from his country and he did meet a few people, but there was minimal opportunity for interaction.

Joe has since graduated from Memorial University in St. John's and thoroughly enjoyed his experience. Joe is still in contact with me and comes to visit with my husband and me from time-to-time. He found the adjustment to St. John's much easier because he immediately met a number of students from his country. He readily admits that his move to St. John's was not good in terms of improving his English because he could speak with his friends in his first language.

The second student who shared his social concerns with me will be called Tom. Tom only stayed at Grenfell for one semester. I did not get to know this student as well as

Joe; however, I did speak with him on several occasions throughout the semester and did talk to him about his reasons for leaving. Tom also came from a large city and English was not his first language. Unlike Joe's experience, there were other students on-campus who spoke Tom's language. Tom lived in the on-campus, chalet-style apartments with three roommates. He did not know his roommates before living with them and found they did not get along well with him – he did not want to get into too much detail about this. Tom found it incredibly difficult to meet new people on-campus, but when he looked back on his semester he said he probably could have been a little more outgoing; however, he was very intimidated to speak or express himself in English. He said he thought that the local students would have been friendlier towards him because he had moved from a different country. He feels that the people in Corner Brook are lacking cultural sensitivity and awareness and feels this could be improved. He recognizes that there is not a lot of diversity in Corner Brook and feels that cultural sensitivity and awareness should be talked about in the K-12 school system.

Tom did have difficulty socially, but he also stated that he just found Corner Brook too small. He said he did have accurate information before attending, but thought he'd be able to handle the change of pace and environment. The size of the city coupled with the lack of socialization led Tom to move to St. John's.

I take my job very personally. I love Corner Brook and Grenfell College and I want students to have a positive experience here. In both of these cases, social interaction was a large factor in the students' decision to leave.

This study will look at the current social situation at Grenfell to see if these concerns are being experienced by other international students and to see how student experiences can be improved.

#### *1.5.2 Internationalization of university campuses.*

Universities are increasingly trying to internationalize their campuses. Internationalizing a campus can involve several aspects of the overall university, such as, Canadian students studying outside of Canada through exchange programs or internships; professors enhancing curriculum and changing the teaching/learning process by adding international components to course work and teaching; international students studying at Canadian institutions; and education and training programs delivered out of Canada, which are often called offshore education and can be offered through various mediums, including distance education and offshore campuses (Knight, 2000). According to a survey conducted by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) in 1999, the majority of respondents felt that “the most important rationale for internationalization is to prepare students who are internationally knowledgeable and interculturally competent” (Knight, 2000, p.85).

Recruiting international students to Canadian university campuses is just one aspect of internationalization; however, it tends to be the most visible. Over the last several years, institutions have put more and more emphasis on recruiting international students. According to Knight (2000), the enrolment of international undergraduate university students studying in Canada increased 24% between 1995-96 and 1999 (p. 61). There are various reasons why universities are increasingly recruiting international

students. Hosoi (1996) states that there are three main reasons for these recruitment efforts: “To give international students quality educational opportunities, to secure financial resources to maintain educational quality in times of reduced government funding, and to tell the world that the institution is alive and well” (p.45). Similar reasons were stated in the AUCC’s Progress and Promise report (2000), whereby a survey asked respondents to rank their top three reasons for enrolling international students. The number one reason was to “integrate domestic and international students in and out of the classroom.” The second most popular answer was to “increase institution’s profile and contacts in target recruitment countries” and the third reason was to “generate revenue for the institution” (p. 53).

#### *1.5.3 International students at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College.*

The number of international students at the Sir Wilfred Grenfell College campus of Memorial University has been increasing over the last couple of years. Sir Wilfred Grenfell College, located in Corner Brook, Newfoundland, is a small campus of Memorial University with an overall student population of 1,346 (Registrar’s Office - SWGC, internal report, 2006). Sir Wilfred Grenfell College opened in 1975 with the mandate of making education more accessible for residents of the west coast of Newfoundland and Labrador. It was primarily a feeder college for the St. John’s campus of Memorial University; students could only complete up to two years at this campus. Over the years, the Grenfell campus has evolved and now offers various complete degree programs in a unique and personalized campus environment. Due to the declining

population of Newfoundland and Labrador and the desire to increase cultural diversity, recruitment efforts have moved outside of the province and outside of the country.

In 2002 Grenfell had four international students, three of whom were from the United States (Matthews, 2003, p. 16); in 2006 Grenfell has 24 international students, three of whom are from the United States, four are from Belize, three are from China, one is from the United Kingdom, one is from Korea, two are from Bangladesh, five are from Mexico, two are from Nigeria, one is from Japan, and two are from South Africa (Registrar's Office - SWGC, internal report, 2006).

#### *1.5.4 Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador – the student experience.*

Of the 1,346 students at Grenfell, 1,177 are from Newfoundland and Labrador (Registrar's Office - SWGC, internal report, 2006). Unlike some of the other Canadian provinces with large urban centres, Newfoundland and Labrador is not very culturally diverse. Newfoundland and Labrador is often said to have the most homogenous population of European origin in Canada. Compared to other parts of Canada, in recent years, very few immigrants have moved to Newfoundland and Labrador (Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage, Ethnic Diversity section, ¶ 1). For example, in the 2001 Newfoundland and Labrador census, the majority of the people identified their ethnic origin as being either British or North American. Only 0.015% identified as coming from Latin, Central and South American origins and only 0.092% identified themselves as coming from African origin (Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency, 2001, Ethnic origin section).

Newfoundland and Labrador, and specifically the city of Corner Brook, offers international students a different Canadian experience. Newfoundland and Labrador is widely believed to be an extremely safe province and is known for its outstanding friendliness and hospitality; however, Corner Brook is a very small city with a minimal amount of cultural diversity. The Grenfell campus primarily consists of students from Newfoundland communities that also have minimal cultural diversity.

According to Knight (2000), in 1998-99, Newfoundland only had 1.2% of the total international students studying in Canada, whereas Quebec, British Columbia and Ontario accounted for close to 80% of international students. Newfoundland was the second lowest in terms of percentage of overall students and was also the second lowest in terms of international students as a percentage of total provincial student enrolment. Less than 3% of the total provincial university student population was international, compared to the National average of 4.3%. In 2005, Memorial University's fact book states that they had 512 undergraduate international students, which was 3.3% of the total undergraduate student population, including all campuses (Thorne, 2005).

### *1.6 Conclusion*

After working in the Registrar's Office at Grenfell College for four years, I have worked closely with new international students and have heard about their positive and negative experiences on campus. After hearing these stories and becoming aware of some challenges experienced by international students, I became interested in studying this further as part of my thesis research. This study will look at the current state of social interactions between international and domestic students studying at Sir Wilfred Grenfell



College. The information gathered through this research will be made available to Sir Wilfred Grenfell College and may lead to new programs, initiatives, and/or policies surrounding social interactions between domestic and international students on campus. In addition, the findings could have implications for other small universities in relatively homogeneous communities.

Universities across Canada want to internationalize their campuses in order to prepare internationally knowledgeable and interculturally competent students, and recruiting international students plays a role in this process.

The number of international students studying at Grenfell College has been increasing; however, international students still only make up a small percentage of the student population. Both Grenfell College and the surrounding Corner Brook area are not very diverse and will ultimately provide international students with a different experience than would be found in a larger, urban centre.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### *2.1 Introduction*

The literature review will look at a number of aspects concerning social interaction between international and domestic students. Several related research studies will be highlighted and I will identify their methodology and findings with respect to the occurrence of social interaction on university campuses. Literature that discusses the role of the university in fostering social interactions will be discussed. A study that evaluated a peer-mentoring program from the perspective of domestic students will be highlighted. Models related to the development of intercultural sensitivity and adult learning will also be discussed in relation to social interaction.

### *2.2 Occurrence of Social Interactions*

Why don't social interactions occur naturally between international and domestic students? Several studies that have investigated the adjustment of international students found that social concerns were identified as one of the main problems or stressors for international students (Heikinheimo & Shute, 1986; Kaczmarek, Matlock, Merta, Ames & Ross, 1994, as cited in Abe et al., 1998).

According to Lacina (2002), language diversity and cultural differences often make it difficult for international students to form new relationships. Surdam and Collins (as cited in Abe et al., 1998) found that international students did not have meaningful relationships with domestic students because there was a lack of social interaction opportunity.

Wicks (2004), Burnaby (2002), and Parsons (2000) have all conducted research around international student issues on the St. John's campus of Memorial University of Newfoundland. Wicks (2004) conducted a qualitative study entitled *Exploring the Experiences of Speakers-of-English-as-an-other-Language at Memorial University*. Six graduate students studying at Memorial University participated in this study through multiple in-depth interviews and journal writing. This study explored the specific complexities of language and culture for SEOLs in higher education. Language issues discussed included: the complex nature of English and the problematic assumptions accompanying accent, dialect, standard and world Englishes; the complicated process of learning a language, and the conditions required to communicate in that language; the status and access afforded or inhibited by speaking English or a variety of English; and the complexity of English itself as a means of communication and as a language of dominance and perceived superiority. Cultural issues were discussed following six themes: SEOLs, Newfoundland, and the local people: some perceptions; comparing home and host cultures; challenges to cross-cultural adjustment; the role of support in cross-cultural adjustment; stereotypes and generalizations; and discourses of difference and Othering.

Wicks' (2004) study provided me with some useful insight, particularly around international adjustment experiences and specifically their experiences with domestic students. Although many of the students participating in Wicks' research identified Newfoundlanders as being friendly, they did also identify challenges they experienced from not feeling accepted by the domestic students. For example, one international

student commented that “Canadian students prefer to be in the same group rather than being paired or grouped with international students” (p. 95). Another international student said, “The vast majority of this university seems to be from Newfoundland...they stick to themselves” (p. 136). Also, several of Wicks’ participants commented on the lack of knowledge Newfoundland students had about other countries. One student stated, “Basically, Newfie people are more kind of on their own and don’t know much about the rest of the world” (p. 129). Another student said that Newfoundland students are interested in her country, but “sometimes they kind of confuse between China and Thailand” (p. 129). Wicks’ research was focused on six individuals and unlike my study, she specifically focused on graduate students who did not speak English as a first language and she did not focus specifically on their social experiences. Several of the international students studying at Grenfell actually speak English as their first language, so their concerns and experiences may be somewhat different.

Burnaby (2002) compiled a report entitled *Where the Rubber Hits the Road: Services of International Students at Memorial University*. This report was written to highlight the needs of international students studying at Memorial University of Newfoundland and to make recommendations to Senior Administration to help Memorial University move towards their goal of internationalization. Burnaby’s purely qualitative study involved a literature review, as well as interviews with participants at the university, in the community, in other universities, and in non-governmental organizations. Unfortunately, this study was limited by a tight time constraint and no international students were actually interviewed. For information on the international

student perspective at Memorial, Burnaby relied heavily on studies conducted by Parsons (2000) and Walker (2000). This report made very specific recommendations to the university concerning internationalization. Recommendations pertained to such things as developing a vision statement concerning the overall scope of internationalization; conducting retreats involving faculty and staff who deal most with international students or deal with arrangements for Canadian students to study abroad; making resources available for improved housing facilities, and increased classroom and administrative space for international student programming; and conducting a study of organization of work regarding international students and identifying training needs. This study focused on the overall internationalization of Memorial University of Newfoundland, which was a much broader scope than my study.

Treena Parsons (2000) conducted a quantitative study entitled *Retaining International Students: Identifying the Needs of International Students Attending Memorial University of Newfoundland*. Parsons (2000) studied the pre-entry and entry needs of both undergraduate and graduate international students. The main purpose was to identify the students' needs and make recommendations on how these needs could be met. A sixty-five item questionnaire was used covering topics on academic, social/cultural, housing, finances, and recruitment and retention issues. The questionnaire used both Likert scale and open-ended questions. Again, this study is fairly broad and looks beyond just the social concerns of international students. Sixty-three questionnaires were completed and returned, which was a 72% return rate.

The “social/cultural expectations” section of the survey is of most relevance to my study. When asked whether they “had an opportunity to interact with Canadian students, 100% of undergraduate and 82.6% of graduate international students answered yes” (Parsons, 2000, p. 73). When given an opportunity to expand on this in open-ended questions, some students stated that the university should have more programs that give international students an opportunity to socialize and meet with Canadian students. Some other students stated that “Canadian students do not make an effort to befriend an international student” and another individual student made a similar remark, stating “Canadian students should take more initiative to show international students around” (Parsons, 2000, p. 73). One international student commented that:

The young students at the university do not interact much with us. It is very essential that we know each other, respect each other’s customs and beliefs so that we live in peaceful co-ordination with each other. It is also essential that students from other countries reach out to the people who have been born and brought up in this country. If there is better understanding, any foreign student would certainly feel at home here (Parsons, 2000, p. 103).

Parsons (2000) asked students to provide suggestions that would help ease the transition into Memorial University. One of the top three suggestions was “having a good social and academic support network of friends, family, and Memorial University personnel” (p. 86).

In addition to the studies conducted at Memorial University of Newfoundland, there have been a number of other research studies focusing on the adjustment of international students and more specifically on the benefits of social interactions between international and domestic students. Research has involved both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Many studies identify that there is a lack of research done from the perspective of the domestic student; however, I did find some research that did focus on or include domestic students as research participants. I will provide a brief overview of several research projects that discuss benefits of social interaction between international and domestic students. These articles provide some insight and guidance into how I will carry out my study.

Dalglish and Chan (2005) conducted a qualitative study entitled *Expectations and Reality: International Student Reflections on Studying in Australia*. The primary purpose of this study was to find out how the Faculty of Business at Queensland University of Technology (QUT) in Australia could improve the learning environment for its international students. The study looked at why international students chose QUT; what their initial expectations were; what their positive and negative experiences were; and what could be done to improve learning. The primary focus of this study was not social interactions; however, this topic did arise.

In this study, focus groups were held with 38 international students. The study specifically focused on students in the Business Faculty and included students from various geographical regions. Even the Australian students were invited to participate; however, very few accepted the invitation. The focus group leader had a clear set of

questions to guide the session; however, students could comment on things outside of these questions. The focus group leader was an official of the school and there was fear that students might not feel comfortable openly expressing their concerns or might feel required to provide answers. To overcome this, the facilitator held the sessions in an informal setting over tea and tried to include students with similar cultural backgrounds.

When asked, “What has not worked out/been very difficult,” (p. 7), the common theme was that students felt they did not have access to university social activities where they could meet more local Australian students. When asked, “What can we do to improve things?” (p. 7), again, although this focus group looked at things other than just the social aspects of learning and adjustment, the students felt that the school should encourage multi-culturalism and the interaction of students from various countries both in and outside of the classroom. It was felt that faculty, staff and students could play a bigger role in helping new international students adjust to their environment.

The Ministry of Education in New Zealand commissioned a study from Ward, Masgoret, Ho, Holmes, Newton, and Crabbe (2005) entitled *Interactions with International Students*. This study actually involved five inter-related studies all looking at the perceptions of international students. It involved a survey of New Zealand students in secondary and tertiary institutions; a survey of teachers in secondary and tertiary institutions and in language schools; focus groups with teachers across these sectors; a national household survey; and field work and interviews with key stakeholders in four New Zealand locations. The report makes recommendations on how to improve the social and educational integration of international students.



The survey conducted with New Zealand students is most relevant to my research. This section of the overall study was entitled *New Zealand Students' Perceptions of and Interactions with International Students*. The objective of this survey was to: assess the attitudes toward and perceptions of international students in New Zealand; examine domestic students' exposure to and/or interactions with international students; examine how attitudes, perceptions, and interactions vary across centres with varying concentrations of international students and as a function of demographic characteristics of New Zealanders; assess the communication practices used by New Zealanders in interacting with international students and the value of such practices for effective communication and language learning; and identify any areas of concern for international-domestic student relations.

Five hundred and forty-three New Zealand students from 12 institutions across New Zealand were selected to participate in this survey. Participants included students from both secondary and tertiary institutions. The results of the survey revealed that domestic students appear to respect cultural differences and hold positive perceptions of international students; however, fewer than 50% of students felt that they had an opportunity to learn from international students and felt that they worked well together (Ward et al., 2005, p. 3). The level of social contact between international and domestic students was rated as low. Forty-one percent of domestic students reported having no international friends; however, some students appear to be open to increasing the level of interaction with international students and even desire an increased level of interaction. The survey also revealed that 56% of New Zealand students agree that international

students have qualities they admire, and 48% agree they like having international students in their class. Twenty-nine percent of students feel that international students do not get along well with New Zealand students and although just over half of students feel the number of international students is about right, there are 43% who feel that there are too many international students studying in New Zealand (Ward et al., 2005, p. 4).

This survey was extensive and involved a broad sample. It highlights some important issues for policy makers within the Ministry of Education; however, there is a need for additional information. Students had little opportunity to expand on their answers. One of the limitations of a purely quantitative study is the inability to discover the deeper answers to questions – asking participants why they feel a certain way.

The five inter-related studies that were carried out and resulted in the report *Interactions of International Students* (2005) did not involve any direct research with international students; however, the Ministry of Education in New Zealand separately commissioned a national survey of international students, which was conducted by Ward and Masgoret (2004). This survey involved 2,736 international participants from 357 education providers, including secondary schools, tertiary institutions, and private language schools. The main objectives of the research were to: identify general characteristics of international students in New Zealand; assess self-reported academic performance or success of international students; determine satisfaction of international students with educational, pastoral and support services, living conditions and social circumstances; and ascertain the future plans of international students (p. 2).

Ward and Masgoret's (2004) section on "social relationships and social support" (p. 4) is of particular interest to my study. The study found that international students were most comfortable in getting emotional support from people from their own country; however, educational staff and homestay families were seen as vital to providing support with practical problems. International students did not recognize the wider community as providing support to them. 25% of the participants said they had no social interactions with New Zealand students and 35% said they had no New Zealand friends. 70% of participants did identify that they would like to have more New Zealand friends. This study "confirmed that increased contact with New Zealanders was related to positive academic, social and psychological outcomes for international students" (p. 4). One-third of international students stated that one of the major barriers to making friends with New Zealand students is English ability and others felt they were inhibited by the anticipation of how New Zealanders would respond. A mere 29% of participants stated that New Zealand students were friendly (p. 38). It is also interesting to note that international students living outside of major urban areas have better relationships with New Zealanders and have more positive perceptions (p. 48). Unfortunately this study did not establish cause and effect; therefore it is not clear why relationships tend to be more favourable outside of urban areas.

Brown and Daly (2004) conducted a quantitative study *Exploring the Interactions and Attitudes of International and Domestic Students in a New Zealand Tertiary Institution*. Eighty-eight business students studying at a post-secondary institution in New Zealand responded to the survey, which consisted of Likert-scale and

open-ended questions. This survey involved both international and domestic students. The questionnaire had four sections – the first section looked at co-ethnic and cross-ethnic interactions; the second section examined friendships; the third section looked at classroom experiences; and the final section collected demographic data. The questionnaires were the same for both international and domestic students with the exception of the third section on classroom experiences. International students were asked about their experiences in the classroom with domestic (New Zealand) students and in turn New Zealand students were asked about their experiences with international students.

The results of the survey showed that social interaction occurred more frequently with students of the same ethnicity. Interaction between domestic and international students most often occurred in an academic setting and not socially. The survey also found that both groups of students had positive attitudes about one another and the lack of social interaction was not due to any negative views. Unfortunately, this study did not unveil detailed reasons for the lack of social interaction other than finding that students didn't initiate friendships with people with different ethnic backgrounds because they felt "they were less confident, had less common ground, and that it was more difficult to express dissenting ideas and to get information" (Brown & Daly, 2004, p. 7). Also, according to Ward (2001), there are numerous reasons for a lack of social interaction between domestic and international students, such as personal efficacy, cultural differences and learning preferences.

Rosenthal, Russell, and Thomson (2006) conducted another study based in Australia entitled *Social Connectedness among International Students at an Australian University*. This study involved 979 participants out of a student population of 6,828 from a large Australian university. It involved a mail-in survey that investigated connectedness in Melbourne; social mixing and interaction with co-culturals and Australians; involvement in organizations, associations and groups; and connections to home and family (Introduction section, ¶ 6). Unlike my study, this research only involved international students; was quantitative in nature; and involved a much larger sample. The section on social mixing and interaction with co-culturals and Australians is of most relevance to my study.

The survey asked a series of questions related to social connectedness and found that both on-campus and off-campus students tend to socialize with people whose culture is similar to their own. When looking at specific variables, there were some differences found with respect to age, country of origin, and program of study. The study found that older international students were less likely to interact with culturally similar students and they were more likely to interact with Australians. Asian students, compared to non-Asian students were more likely to interact with culturally similar students and interact less with Australian (domestic) students. It also appears that students enrolled at the Victoria College of the Arts (VCA) and in Veterinary Science interact less with co-culturals and students in Medicine, dentistry and health sciences, economics and commerce, land and food resources, and engineering interact most with co-culturals. Economics and commerce students interact the least with Australians and students

enrolled in VCA interact the most with Australians (Rosenthal et al., 2006, Social Mixing section). Again, due to the quantitative nature of this research, the reasons for these differences were not discovered. The advantage of conducting qualitative research is you can ask students further questions and find out why they feel or act a certain way.

The survey findings did conclude that for Asian students, social interaction with both co-cultural and Australians (domestics) had a positive correlation with a feeling of connectedness in Melbourne. For non-Asian students, social interaction with Australians had a positive correlation with a feeling of social connectedness, whereas, social interaction with co-cultural was unrelated to their feeling of connectedness (Rosenthal et al., 2006, Relationship between connectedness in Melbourne and other measures of social connectedness section, ¶ 1).

This study did conclude that, similar to previous studies, social interactions do have a positive correlation with successful adjustment of international students, but an adequate level of social interaction is not being realized. Survey results showed that only 21.4% of international students said that they mix with Australian (domestic) students socially “to a considerable degree” or “very much,” compared to 76.7% who said they mix socially with people who have a similar cultural background to their own.

Bowry (2002) conducted a study entitled *An Initial Exploration of the Impact of Foreign Students on the Education of Domestic Students at Queen's University*. This study used both quantitative and qualitative research techniques to try and answer three main questions related to students attending Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario: Does the presence of foreign students enrich the education of domestic students; what are

the characteristics of that enrichment and what accounts for it; and what factors account for cases in which a domestic student does not perceive his or her education as being enriched (p. 2).

This study focuses primarily on domestic students. One hundred and ninety-six senior undergraduate students in four different departments (computer science, economics, sociology, and education) were surveyed and 96 surveys were returned. The survey used yes - no, Likert scale, and agree-disagree type questions. Students were also given opportunity to expand on their responses. On the survey, students were asked if they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview. Ten students participated in a follow-up interview. In addition to the students, Bowry (2002) gathered additional information through interviewing faculty members, administrators, and relevant staff members (p. 10).

The research data revealed that interaction between domestic and international students resulted in enrichment for domestic students. Some domestic students felt the impact and enrichment of international students through “working in groups with foreign students and learning about other cultures; making friends with foreign students; tutoring foreign students; living with foreign students; and attending workshops and events with foreign students” (Bowry, 2002, p. 155). However, an equal number of students felt that their education was not enriched by foreign students, but students often felt this was due to lack of interaction. Although Bowry found that enrichment does occur, there were still a high percentage of students who felt their education was not enriched at all by international students.

In answer to the second research question, students defined the characteristics of their enrichment in various ways. Most students stated that they had been exposed to new or different ways of thinking. Other students cited that they had learned a great deal about the countries of the international students they met. Some students felt that they had been positively affected by being exposed to new choices and opportunities. Students felt they had made “international personal connections and foreign students had impacted their academic, career, and travel aspirations” (Bowry, 2002, p. 176). It was clear from the research results that the most important factor in allowing enrichment to occur is social interaction, whether it is interaction in the classroom, in study groups, or outside of the classroom. It was felt that enrichment occurred from “social interaction in any situation in which national, cultural, historical, or racial differences between foreign and domestic students surfaced and gave the domestic students an opportunity to see themselves in a different light” (Bowry, 2002, p. 177).

In Bowry’s (2002) study, for cases in which a domestic student did not perceive his or her education as being enriched, social interaction was again cited as the major factor involved. Students who felt their education had not been enriched by international students often did not attend any classes with international students and did not socialize with them outside of class. A few students cited international students’ “reclusive classroom behaviour was a barrier to learning from them” (p. 177). The type of class also seemed to affect the amount of learning or enrichment that occurred. Students who attended computer science and economics classes with international students found they learned very little from them. These subject matters are not very subjective and do not



encourage much personal reflection or discussion, therefore resulting in little social interaction.

Bowry (2002) identified that further research needs to be done in several different areas. For example, further research is needed to study how universities can “maximize the benefit their students receive from the presence of foreign students” (p. 179) and how active a role the university should play. More research is also needed around the role professors play in helping realize the enrichment foreign students can offer through involving foreign students in the classroom. Future research should also look at “how the academic discipline affects the educational impact of foreign students on domestic students” (p. 181). Also, some students did state that they felt that foreign students actually had a negative impact on their education and this may warrant further follow-up research. Social interaction appears to be key in order for learning and enrichment to occur; however, it is unclear how interested domestic students are in learning about the rest of the world (p. 185). Throughout Bowry’s study, there were some comments or observations made about specific racial or ethnic groups. It would be interesting to investigate whether different groups had different effects on the enrichment of domestic students.

Several other empirical studies have shown that increased interaction with domestic students results in improved adjustment of international students (Westwood & Barker, 1990), specifically on a psychological, social, and academic level (Ward, 2001). The benefit international students bring to domestic students is said to be to help prepare the domestic students for the global marketplace or to make them more culturally aware;

however, there is limited evidence to show to what extent this benefit is actually being realized.

### *2.3 What is the Responsibility of the University?*

Research shows that social interactions between international and domestic students are not occurring naturally. Should the institution feel responsible for fostering these social relationships? An institution cannot force individuals to become friends; however, they can organize events that would encourage interaction between the two groups of students. Many universities have realized the benefit of encouraging social interactions and have put services in place to help them develop or improve their social life (Lacina, 2002). The AUCC (1998) stresses the importance of international students having a place to socialize and meet both Canadian students and students from other countries.

Previous research shows a strong correlation between the amount of contact with domestic students and the psychological, social and academic adaptation of international students. International students that spend more time with friends from the local area, have lower stress levels (Berry & Kostovcik, 1983; Redmond & Bunyi, 1993). Westwood & Barker (1990) identified that not only does guided interaction help with the psychosocial health of international students, but it often results in reduced failure rates (p. 255). Patti, Tarley, Goree, and Tice (1993) found that international students who felt the university was personally concerned for them, were more likely to be retained by the institution (p. 19).

Universities invest a lot of money in the recruitment of international students; therefore, they should be concerned with how to retain international students and be interested in maximizing benefits for all students.

#### *2.4 Peer-mentoring Programs*

Linda Devereux (2004) of the University of Canberra in Australia wrote a paper entitled *When Harry Met Sarita: Using a Peer-mentoring Program to Develop Intercultural Wisdom in Students*. The University of Canberra implemented a peer-mentoring program for their international students and Devereux evaluated this program by using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Unlike most studies, Devereux focused on the success of the program from the domestic students' perspective and not from the perspective of the international students. International students on campus are deemed to benefit domestic students by giving them an opportunity to develop global awareness and understanding; however, this will not occur unless there is quality social interaction between international and domestic students (p. 1).

The University of Canberra recruited 32 domestic students to be peer leaders to a group of new international students. At the end of the program, the domestic students were asked to complete a survey and to participate in an independently run focus group. After an evaluation of the program, it appeared it was beneficial to all involved. The domestic students felt that not only was it beneficial in improving social interactions, but they felt it improved their communication skills and helped them become more aware of cultural differences (Devereux, 2004).

Smith, Lambert, Know and Foster (2000) and Smith, Morey and Teece (2002) all recognize the importance of institutions initiating programming that will facilitate social interactions between international and domestic students, but they highlight the fact that domestic students may not have the proper skills to act as leaders to the new international students. Before initiating programs, such as peer-mentoring programs, it is wise to train domestic students in skills that will allow easier interaction.

Surdam and Collins (as cited in Abe et al., 1998) found that institutions that have implemented peer programs encouraging social interaction between international and domestic students find that the international students display higher academic achievement and lower drop-out rates (Westwood & Barker, 1990).

### *2.5 Related Theories*

Institutions need to help their students, staff and faculty to move towards an environment of cultural awareness and sensitivity. Internationalization of a campus is not something that can occur over night. Institutions can assist with educating their students and help them move towards a more inclusive environment.

In Komives and Woodward (2003), Bennett describes a six stage model of Intercultural Sensitivity, whereby students “pass through a continuum from lack of experience and low tolerance to increased experience and appreciation for diversity” (p. 428). The first stage of this model is denial. Students are so isolated that their views and beliefs have been unchallenged. This would probably relate to many of the students attending Grenfell; many local students may not have been exposed to diversity and for some international students, this may be their first time in a different culture. In the later

stages of this model, a student comes to accept and recognize that there are differences in cultural values and then reaches the adaptation stage where they develop the ability to empathize with people from different cultures (p. 428). This theory is based on concepts from cognitive psychology and constructivism. It is believed that by recognizing the cognitive aspect, programs, courses or services can be developed to help move students through these stages and therefore reach a higher level of intercultural sensitivity.

Adult learning theorists provide insights into how people learn in various situations. According to the proponents of the constructivist approach to learning, “learning is a process of constructing meaning; it is how people make sense of their experience...whether the process of meaning making is primarily individual or social” (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 261). Driver, Asoko, Leach, Mortimer, and Scott (1994) explain that there is both personal constructivism and social constructivism. Both views would see educational or learning benefits in having international and domestic students share their experiences. The personal constructivism perspective involves “experiences that induce cognitive conflict and hence encourage learners to develop new knowledge schemes that are better adapted to experience. Practical activities supported by group discussions form the core of such pedagogical practices” (p. 6). This type of learning could be realized if professors encourage more class discussions and try to involve perspectives from our international students.

Social constructivism claims that knowledge is “constructed when individuals engage socially in talk and activity about shared problems or tasks. Making meaning is thus a dialogic process involving persons-in-conversation, and learning is seen as the

process by which individuals are introduced to a culture by more skilled members” (Davis et al., 1994, p. 7). I believe that this type of knowledge would also be improved through increased interaction and discussion in the classroom; however, more importantly, students need to interact socially outside of the classroom for this learning to occur. If the literature is correct, and international and domestic students do not have a high degree of social interaction, then students are missing out on learning opportunities.

Transformational learning occurs throughout one's lifetime. Transformational learning normally occurs in three phases: “critical reflection on one’s assumptions, discourse to validate the critically reflective insight, and action” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 60). Transformational learning is about major changes in the way individuals see themselves and focuses on the process of cognitive learning – “the mental construction of experience, inner meaning, and reflection” (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 318). According to this theory, differences in opinions and perspectives can cause discourse, which in turn causes learning to take place. Although this type of learning frequently happens outside of the classroom; it can be facilitated in the classroom. International students have often grown up with different perspectives and views. Professors who promote classroom discussion on various issues and who encourage international students to share their perspective will challenge students to reflect critically on their own views. These differences in views and opinions may cause discourse, which will often result in learning.

## *2.6 Contributions of this Study*

Some research has been conducted around international student issues on the St. John’s campus of Memorial University of Newfoundland (Burnaby, 2002; Parsons, 2000;

Wicks, 2004); however, no research has been done specifically on the Sir Wilfred Grenfell College campus of Memorial University of Newfoundland. In conducting my literature review, most previous research has been conducted at larger institutions that have a higher percentage of international students. This study will look specifically at Grenfell College, which is small university campus that has only recently focused on international recruitment.

This study will attempt to articulate the current state of social interactions between domestic and international students studying at Grenfell College. The hope is that through interviews I will receive rich, personal narratives on students' individual experiences, attitudes and feelings and expand on findings found in the current literature. This study should provide useful information to Grenfell's administration, Student Services division, faculty, and other key staff members who are currently providing services to students. The study will identify how social interactions are currently occurring and what benefits are being realized or could potentially be realized. The hope is that the findings of this study will lead to improvements on-campus that will result in further benefits for both international and domestic students.

The majority of the studies discussed in the literature review are quantitative in nature. Brown and Daly's (2004) study is similar to my research interests in that they involved both international and domestic students as participants and they were primarily interested in social interactions. My research will involve personal interviews and not surveys; therefore, I should be able to gather more in depth information and will be able to ask students to expand on their answers, which will provide personal narratives and

experiences to illuminate the more general findings of these previous studies. In addition, Grenfell College is a small, relatively rural campus; whereas the majority of other studies were conducted at larger universities in more urban settings. This study could provide important insights for other small campuses with a growing international student population.

## *2.7 Conclusion*

Some previous studies have shown that although there are many benefits associated with social interactions between international and domestic students, due to language diversity, cultural differences, and lack of opportunity, the interaction does not occur naturally. The highlighted studies discuss issues around social interaction between domestic and international students. Dalglish and Chan (2005) and Parsons (2000) both conducted studies involving international student participants and found that international students felt they did not have social opportunities to meet domestic students and they felt that faculty, staff, and students could play a bigger role in helping new international students adjust to their new environment.

Ward et al., (2005) conducted a quantitative study involving domestic students in New Zealand. They found that fewer than 50% of students felt that they had an opportunity to learn from international students and the level of social interaction between these groups of students was rated as low. Ward and Masgoret (2004) conducted a study in New Zealand that did involve international students and they found that international students were most comfortable in getting emotional support from people from their own country. Brown and Daly (2004), who also conducted their research in



New Zealand and focused on international and domestic business students studying at a post-secondary institution had similar findings to Ward and Masgoret. They found that social interaction occurred most frequently with students of the same ethnicity.

Rosenthal et al., (2006) conducted a study based in Australia. They found that both on-campus and off-campus students tend to socialize with people whose culture is similar to their own. They were also able to conclude that social interactions do have a positive correlation with successful adjustment of international students; however an adequate level of social interaction is not being realized.

Bowry (2002) conducted research at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. His study involved domestic students and he found that interaction between domestic and international students does result in enrichment for domestic students. He found that when students stated that their education had not been enriched by international students, it was normally due to the fact that the student had not had opportunities to interact with international students.

Previous studies have shown that social interaction between international and domestic students does benefit both groups of students. International students who interact with domestic students generally adapt better psychologically, socially and academically and domestic students who interact with international students have their education enriched. Universities should encourage more social interaction so these benefits can be realized and/or maximized. Peer-mentoring programs are one example of what a university can put in place to try and encourage greater social interaction.

Using Bennett's six-stage model of intercultural sensitivity, universities can establish programs that encourage students to pass through the various stages, and come to accept and recognize cultural differences and develop an ability to empathize with people from different cultures. Ultimately, students need to have their beliefs, views, and perspectives challenged. This model is also in line with the constructivist approach to learning and transformational learning. International and domestic students need to discuss various issues and learn about one another's experiences and perspectives. Often these discussions will result in cognitive conflict and will encourage students to re-think or develop new knowledge schemes.

The review of previous research provided insight into what issues have been found regarding social interaction between international and domestic students in various other educational settings and also outlined various methodological possibilities. This study will focus solely on international and domestic students studying at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College. No previous research has been conducted on this topic at this institution.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### *3.1 Introduction*

A qualitative approach was used to assess the current level of social interaction between international and domestic students studying at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College. Face-to-face interviews were used to gather data.

### *3.2 Epistemological Approach*

A naturalistic approach to research was utilized in this study. As Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) identify, most social scientists agree that “the social world can only be understood from the standpoint of the individuals who are part of the ongoing action being investigated; and that their model of a person is an autonomous one” (p. 20).

As an employee of Grenfell College I am specifically interested in the current state of social interactions on this campus and my research has been conducted somewhat as a case study. Case studies enable the researcher to provide a representation of reality by analyzing the uniqueness and complexity of specific, local situations and providing detailed descriptions (Cohen et. al, 2000).

The findings of this research are very specific to Grenfell College and will therefore not have a high degree of generalizability outside of this setting; however, it can be useful as a model to generate questions for future research.

### *3.3 Participant Selection*

Grenfell students were the primary participants in this research study. After receiving approval from the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (see Appendix A), I obtained a complete list of international and domestic students

through the Registrar's Office at Grenfell College. Prior permission was requested through this office (see Appendix B).

Both international and domestic students participated in this research. There are only twenty-four international students on campus; therefore, all international students were invited to participate in this study (Appendix C). All international students are full-time students. An invitation was emailed and mailed to all international students. If a response was not received by the stated deadline, a follow-up message was sent. Seventeen international students agreed to participate; however one international student did not follow through and did not show up for his interview. Sixteen international students actually participated in this study.

There are approximately 1,322 domestic students on campus; however, 208 of these students are nursing students attending the Western Memorial Regional School of Nursing (WMRSN). Although these students do attend some classes on the Grenfell campus, the majority of their courses are held at the nursing school, which is physically not on campus. There is only one international student studying at the nursing school; there is a separate residence located at the WMRSN, so many nursing students do not live on the Grenfell campus; therefore, the students have little opportunity to interact with international students. For this reason, these students were not included in the research sample.

There are both full-time and part-time students studying at Sir Grenfell College. A part-time student may only be taking one course, and therefore will have a very different campus experience. The sample for this study only included full-time students,

defined as students taking three courses or more during the Fall 2006 semester. As of September 21, 2006, there were 1061 full-time domestic students studying at Grenfell excluding nursing students (Registrar's Office - SWGC, internal report, 2006).

Quota sampling was used when selecting the domestic student participants. Quota sampling is a non-probability research technique, which is similar to stratified sampling in that it identifies population variants that will be of interest in the study (McIntyre, 2005). For example, when selecting a sample of domestic students for this study, the full-time student population was broken into various groups: students living off-campus and on-campus; students originally from Newfoundland and Labrador and students from other parts of Canada; and students in various years of study. It was important to have students representing these various factors. With quota sampling, once the important groups are defined, the researcher can choose samples from each group based on convenience (McIntyre, 2005).

To try and avoid researcher bias, the domestic participants were chosen using an online random number generator; therefore every full-time domestic student, excluding nursing students had an equal chance of being selected. If the random number generator selected a student who was already adequately represented, the student was skipped over. Twenty-four initial invitations (see Appendix C) were sent via email and postal mail. A deadline was given for them to respond and a follow-up message was sent. Enough responses were not obtained after the first round of invitations so additional ones were sent out. Sixty invitations in total were sent out over a 4 week period and thirteen domestic students agreed to participate. The thirteen domestic participants represented

the various groups that were intended. One domestic student who agreed to participate did not follow through with scheduling an interview time, so there were 12 actual participants.

### *3.3.1 Overview of the participants.*

Sixteen international students participated in this study. Participants were from Belize (4), Mexico (3), Nigeria (2), China (2), the United States (2), South Africa (1), Bangladesh (1), and Japan (1).

Eleven of the 16 international participants live on-campus, four live off campus and one student lives at home with his parents. Three of the international participants are in their fourth year, three are in their third year, five are in their second year and five are in their first year.

Three of the international students had spent a year or more in Canada directly before attending Grenfell. Twelve of the 16 international participants had traveled outside of their country for vacation or school trips before moving to Canada. Ten of the international participants have at least one international roommate.

Twelve domestic students participated in this study. Nine of the participants are from Newfoundland and Labrador. Four of the nine Newfoundland participants were from Corner Brook and all Newfoundland and Labrador participants were from communities with less than 25,000 people. Three participants were from outside of Newfoundland & Labrador (Nova Scotia and Ontario).

Of the twelve participants, five live on campus, two live on their own off campus and five live at home with their families. Three of the domestic participants were in their

fourth year of study, two students were in their third year, four students were in their second year and three students were in their first year.

Nine of the twelve domestic participants had traveled outside of Canada either for vacation or a school trip. Three of the nine domestic students who had traveled internationally had traveled to St. Pierre, which they said “doesn’t really count.” International travel for one of the nine students was to the United States. The remaining five students had traveled in various parts of Europe. One student had never traveled outside of Newfoundland and Labrador. Of the twelve domestic participants, one student currently is roommates with an international student and another participant has had an international roommate in the past.

The knowledge of the international student population varied amongst domestic participants. When asked how many international students are studying at Grenfell, six students had absolutely no idea and the other six students varied in their estimates. One student estimated that there are approximately 12 students on campus and the remaining students’ estimates ranged from 35 – 100 students.

### *3.4 Data Collection*

#### *3.4.1 Interviews.*

The interview used a combination of interview styles. The first part of the interview was relatively standard for all participants. The interview opened with basic questions around country of origin, area of study, mother tongue, and so on (see Appendix D & E). The second section of the interview was photo identification. Participants were shown individual pictures of other interview participants and were

asked who the student is; if they know the student, and if so, in what context. This provided interesting data on social interaction patterns. All participants were asked to consent to having their photograph taken prior to the interview process (see Appendix F).

A guided approach to interviewing was used for the remainder of the interview. It was important to conduct the interview as informally as possible; however, I did not want to proceed with a purely informal, conversational interview. In informal, conversational interviews the interviewer does not predetermine questions, topics or wording; questions emerge from observations during the interview session. Although the informality of this type of interview is desired, one must be prepared for interviewees who do not open up very easily; therefore, I proceeded with a guided approach to the interview. In a guided approach, the interviewer predetermines topics and issues in advance; however, depending on the interviewee and how the conversation proceeds, questions or topics will surface at different times. This type of interview will still be fairly informal and will be carried out in a conversational manner (Patton, 1980). I pre-determined a list of open-ended questions (see Appendix D & E) to help guide the discussion, but they were not necessarily asked as specific questions. Many answers to the questions naturally emerged throughout our conversation.

Interviewees had an opportunity to review my record of their interview, to ensure accuracy and to provide further information. Lincoln and Guba (1985), refer to this as “member checking or respondent validation and suggest that this review process will help ensure validity” (as cited in Cohen et al., 2000, p. 108).



### *3.5 Ethical Concerns/Considerations*

#### *3.5.1 Free and informed consent.*

Article 2.1 of the tri-council's policy statement (TCPS) on ethical conduct for research involving humans, states that participants must "have been given the opportunity to give free and informed consent about participation, and their free and informed consent has been given and is maintained throughout their participation in the research" (CIHR, NSERC, SHCC, 1998).

In keeping with this policy, all participants who were invited to participate in my study were informed of the nature and scope of the study. Each participant was informed of the nature of my study at our first meeting and was reminded of this at every subsequent meeting. Participants were informed that they were permitted to stop participation in the study at any time. Due to the fact that I am an employee of the university and have contact with students as part of my job, I made it clear that participation was voluntary and explained that participation or lack of participation in the project was outside of academic requirements and would have no effect on their academic standing. Students were invited to direct questions or concerns to me or to a third party in the Faculty of Education.

Evidence of free and informed consent was obtained in writing, as recommended by the TCPS. All participants were required to sign a consent form (see appendix F).

#### *3.5.2 Anonymity, privacy and confidentiality.*

Article 3.2 of the TCPS outlines the necessity to inform participants of the extent of the privacy. Interview participants were assured that the raw data collected from the

interviews would be kept in a secure location, such as a locked filing cabinet and the only people who would have access to the raw data would be my supervisor and me. Interview sessions were audio recorded, so as not to disrupt the flow of conversation, and were later transcribed by me personally. Interviewees who were not comfortable with having the interview recorded were given the option of just having me take notes. One interviewee requested that the interview not be recorded, so in that instance I took notes instead.

My thesis report does not contain names or other identifying information. I took special care in maintaining confidentiality. Although cultural background may be of interest in this study; I did not normally state this specific information. For example, if I were to say “a student who moved here from Japan felt...,” people could readily identify the individual because there is only one Japanese student studying at Grenfell College. Cohen et al. (2000) also state that “a subject agreeing to a face-to-face interview...can in no way expect anonymity. At most, the interviewer can promise confidentiality” (p. 61). Again, I ensured that the data is aggregated in such a way that individual responses can not be traced back to the respondent. To help ensure this, I used “crude report categories” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 63) to generalize students’ backgrounds and help reduce the risk of identification. In my discussion, I refer to students as “he” or “she” to try and give a balanced sense of gender; however, when I use the masculine form, it does not necessarily mean that I am referring to a male student and vice versa.

All participants were asked to have their photograph taken. These photographs were used in the interview sessions to identify social relationships. Every interview participant was shown individual pictures of all other student interview participants and

they were asked who the student is; if they know the student, and if so, in what context. The interview provided no information about the photographed students and did not even confirm their identity. Although this did identify study participants, again, their individual responses were not tied to their identity and the photographs are not being used in this final thesis.

To help ensure confidentiality and to obtain the trust of participants, I allowed them to review their interview transcript before it was analyzed to ensure they were comfortable with how their views and experiences were documented.

### *3.6 Limitations*

This study is limited in its external validity and its ability to make generalizations about the student body at Grenfell College. This study only involved international and domestic students studying at the Grenfell College campus of Memorial University. Also, there are a small number of international students currently studying at Grenfell and the student participants were at varying stages of their university degree. Students who have been studying for a couple of years will probably have different experiences than those students who have only been studying at Grenfell for a couple of months.

English was the language of communication in this study and this may have posed a limitation. Due to language or cultural differences, international students may misinterpret the intent of the interview questions or may feel they cannot adequately express their thoughts in English.

It is important to recognize that there are limitations with specific research methods. By using a guided approach to interviewing in this study, it was difficult to

compare the responses because not all participants were asked the exact same questions in the same order (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 271). Also, according to Cohen et al. (2000), interviews in general have limitations due to interviewer bias, caused by such things as: “the attitudes, opinions, and expectations of the interviewer; a tendency for the interviewer to see the respondent in her own image; a tendency for the interviewer to seek answers that support her preconceived notions; misperceptions on the part of the interviewer of what the respondent is saying; and misunderstandings on the part of the respondent of what is being asked” (p. 121). Also, sometimes the research participants provide answers they think the researcher wants to hear, or they “may wish to avoid, impress, direct, deny, or influence the researcher” (p. 156). The fact that I am an employee of the university and am Canadian could have impacted on the openness of some of the students. One international student told me that it was difficult for him to share some of his thoughts about the Canadian students because I am Canadian, and he did not want to offend me.

The research site was Grenfell College, which is also my place of employment. This was beneficial due to the accessibility of participants; however, it also brings limitations. As the researcher, conducting a study at my place of employment with students whom I already knew, I had to be careful not to let my preconceived ideas influence the findings of the research. It may have been challenging for some students to see me as a researcher as opposed to an employee and student advisor; however, although this can be seen as an obvious limitation, I believe the positive aspects outweighed the limitations because many of the students had already developed a level of trust with me,

which allowed them to more readily open up with me during the interview process and give a greater level of depth to the qualitative data (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 62).

### *3.7 Analysis of the Findings*

#### *3.7.1 Analysis of the interview data*

All interview sessions were audio taped and later transcribed. The transcription occurred as close to the original interview as possible to ensure accurate reflection. According to Mishler (1991), it is important to realize that transcriptions do not capture the true context of the interview. In transcribing the interview, Mishler recommends including such things as tone and inflection of the voice, pauses and silences, interruptions, mood, the speed of talk, and any other events that were occurring at the same time (p. 260).

After the interviews were transcribed, I coded the data by identifying appropriate categories. Although it is possible to pre-determine coding categories, I coded my data in the post interview stage. The coding of open-ended questions is normally more challenging than that of closed, quantitative interviews (Cohen et al., 2000). By following some of the guidelines set out by Hycner (1985), I clustered responses that had related meanings and determined appropriate themes.

When analyzing the photo identification section of the interview, the answers were categorized into four different levels and were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet. A rating of “1” was given if the person could identify the student in the photo, but had very little contact or relationship with them. A rating of “2” was given if the person considered the student an acquaintance; they knew the name of the student in the photo and might

say “hi” in passing and had semi-regular contact with the student. A rating of “3” was given if the person considered the student in the photo a friend and a rating of “4” was given if they considered them a close friend. NetDraw, which is a program for drawing social networks, was used to chart the social relationships and networks that exist between the students participating in this study.

### *3.8 Conclusion*

This study was conducted using qualitative research techniques. In-person interviews, including a photo identification section were held with students to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences pertaining to adjustment and social interactions. All international students were invited to participate and full-time domestic students were chosen using quota sampling. Factors that were considered were: students living off campus and on-campus; students originally from Newfoundland and Labrador and students from other parts of Canada; and students in various years of study. All participants were informed of the nature and purpose of the study and gave free and informed consent.

This study will provide useful information to the administrators of Grenfell College; however, it is limited in its external validity and its ability to make generalizations about the student body.

## Chapter 4: Adjustment

### *4.1 Introduction*

The focus of this study is on social interactions; however questions around adjustment concerns were also asked. Previous studies have shown that social interactions play a key role in assisting with the adjustment of international students and some of the adjustment challenges experienced by international students may affect their social interactions (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Also, it was felt that it would be beneficial to find out whether domestic students understand the adjustment concerns of international students and whether they see the adjustment concerns of international students as similar to their own.

According to previous studies, common adjustment concerns of international students attending university are adjusting to a new language and a new educational system; missing friends and family; adjusting to new social norms; and meeting academic standards (Abe et al., 1998). Furnham and Bochner (1986) identify four key problems experienced by international students: problems associated with language and cultural skills; prejudice; discrimination; and homesickness and loneliness. Previous studies also identify that international and domestic students experience some of the same challenges as local students, such as academic challenges and getting used to a new school or university (Ward et al., 2001).

In this study, there were some similarities between the adjustment concerns of domestic and international students, but the majority of domestic students recognize that international students have to overcome greater adjustment challenges. Some

international students felt that domestic students understood their adjustment challenges; however, other international students felt that this was not the case. One international student said “[people] were nice, everyone was really nice, but nobody really understood.”

This study found that the prime adjustment concerns for domestic students were academic in nature or related to adjusting to a new school environment. The key adjustment concerns highlighted by international students were related to culture, food, missing friends and family and meeting new friends, language, new school and living environment, climate, and workload.

#### *4.2 Adjustment Concerns of Domestic Students*

The vast majority of domestic students stated that increased workload compared to high school was their greatest adjustment concern. Nine out of the 12 domestic students participating in this study are from Newfoundland and Labrador and did not experience a high level of homesickness. The majority of students was able to visit home frequently and knew other students attending Grenfell. Five of the 12 domestic students who were interviewed still live at home and students recognized that having friends and family around helps ease the adjustment to university. As one student stated:

Everybody that I went to high school with, when I ask them how they like Grenfell, they all say it’s just a glorified high school. They don’t feel a huge change, their work load increases a little bit. The class times are a little more free, but other than that, it doesn’t feel like a big change. I still go home and sleep in



my same bed and get up and go to class....The only thing I had to work on was study habits.

Another student said his adjustment to university wasn't too bad "because a lot of (his) friends came here...if you don't know something, you just ask your friends and they help you out."

One domestic student who moved from another province did indicate that he experienced some challenges with meeting people. He felt that the majority of first year students studying at Grenfell already knew a number of students and he felt it was hard to break into these already formed social networks.

The other concerns that were identified mainly related to the new university environment – the pace, the scheduling of classes, drop in marks, and the size. Most students found that Grenfell was larger than their high school and thus created a challenge; however, one student who was from outside of Newfoundland stated that he found it challenging getting used to the small size of the school and city.

#### *4.3 Adjustment Concerns of International Students*

International students identified several areas that they had to adjust to when arriving in Corner Brook. Students mentioned adjusting to a new culture; food; being away from friends and family; meeting new friends; language; location; climate; and workload. When the domestic students were asked about the adjustment concerns or challenges faced by international students, all of the domestic students who were interviewed could identify possible areas that may cause concern. They identified several of the same concerns, such as culture, food, family and friends, language, and climate;

however, one domestic student also identified finances as an adjustment concern, which was not highlighted by the international students. Most domestic students had not learned of these adjustment concerns through an international student, but they used their common sense to determine what possible concerns might exist. One or two students referred to specific international students they knew and were familiar with their challenges. A couple of students stated that they knew an international student, but were not aware of any of their specific adjustment challenges. One student stated, "All of the international students I've spoken to, I've asked them was it scary coming here and they were like, no, it was exciting. They didn't really tell me more than that."

The international adjustment concerns identified by the international and domestic students were somewhat similar to the four key problem areas identified by Furnham and Bochner (1986); however, neither student group mentioned the presence of discrimination or prejudice. Both groups did identify challenges associated with language, culture, and homesickness and loneliness. The students in this study also mentioned challenges related to food, location, climate, and finances, which were not mentioned as key problem areas by Furnham and Bochner (1986).

Several students felt that international concerns would be somewhat similar to those of a student moving from another Canadian province, in that the students are far enough from home that they cannot go home on the weekend; however, they recognized that there would be differences as well. One Canadian student, who is not from Newfoundland stated, "In terms of being away from home, I think it's kind of similar, like the people who can't go home on weekends probably all have a similar experience."

The international people probably have to get used to not only being away, but culture, and I think that could be difficult.”

#### *4.3.1 Adjustment – culture.*

Several of the international students identified having to adjust to the new culture when first moving to Corner Brook. Some students found this adjustment challenging, whereas other students found it exciting and enjoyed some of the differences.

One student stated that Canadian culture was vastly different in that “people here are more open about everything and they have a broader mind for things.” This was different for the student, but he “was okay because that’s the way (he) actually wanted things to be at home anyway, so (he) really liked that.” A student also commented on the difference in people in Corner Brook compared to the city where he grew up, he said:

In Corner Brook, people actually say hi to you when you cross the road. At home if you do that it means that they’re going to kidnap you or do something dangerous...I found that hard to get used to at first. When I first met a person who said hi to me, I thought, what does he want? I wasn’t used to that, but now I know it’s just the culture.

One student felt that although the culture is quite different in Canada, he felt somewhat prepared; therefore he felt it was not a huge challenge for him. He said:

In Canada a lot of things are different, like the way we dress...the kinds of meals.

I don't even know how to explain it, but the culture is different, like I wasn't surprised or shocked when I got here because I've been watching TV and Hollywood and I know it's not the same, but it's still an introduction, so I knew what to expect.

Another student found some aspects of Canadian culture difficult to get used to, especially when it came to the importance of family. He said:

Back home family is very strong, it's probably one of the most important things; culture is family. Here I don't see it as important because I see a lot of divorces, which was another thing I had to adapt to because back home if someone gets divorced, it's a huge thing in school, but here it's seen as every day life.

Another student commented on his ongoing difficulties with adjusting to one aspect of Canadian culture; that people are so judgmental. He could adjust to all of the other differences, but he said:

just the aspect of culture, the labeling, I can't stand it.... (It's) the only thing that I always saw that I had to get used to and am still trying to get used to is the ways people express or the way people treat people who are different, and I don't mean just cultural differences – those classifications, the nerds, the geeks, the weirdoes.... Why is the culture this way? Culture is meant to be non-

judgmental.... I don't like it, but I realize it's not personal; it comes from a long history. So realizing this I can still be friends with them, although it gets on my nerves.... You can't make them see what they are doing, that's how they have been brought up.

Although cultural differences exist, one student from Belize also recognizes some similarities in the Newfoundland and Belizean culture and is actually doing a research paper on this for one of his courses. Belize, like Newfoundland, used to be a British colony.

The majority of domestic students identified adjusting to a new culture as an adjustment concern for international students. One student pointed out that most international students would have to adjust to a new and different culture; however, he felt this would not apply to international students coming from the United States "because the States are similar to here." The American students who participated in this study would agree with this comment, they also commented that they feel American and Canadian culture is not vastly different and they do not consider themselves to be true international students.

Most students spoke about culture in a broad, general sense, but some domestic students also spoke of the challenge of getting used to new social norms, behaviors and situations. For example, one domestic student stated that the role of men and women may be different in our culture. Another domestic student identified that international students may feel like they stick out "because everyone around here is the same and we don't really have any people of a different colour in Corner Brook and if we do, they are likely

doctors or students.” A few of the international students did comment on this as well and made comments that sometimes people stare at them. None of the international students stated that they felt discriminated against, which is normally a common challenge for international students; however, they felt people were curious because they weren’t used to seeing international people around town.

Differences in culture can have an impact on social success. According to Lacina (2002), cultural differences often make it difficult for international students to form new relationships. It has also been found that the more culturally and ethnically similar international students are to their new environment, the fewer difficulties they will experience (Ward et al., 2001). The American students in this study would agree with this statement. They feel that their culture is extremely similar to that of Canada and they did not feel they had many extreme adjustment challenges or difficulties. A student from Belize feels there are some cultural similarities between Belize and Newfoundland and feels this may have made the transition somewhat easier, although there were still some challenges. It would be interesting to further analyze this finding and look at the cultural and ethnic similarity of countries compared to Canada and contrast the students’ adjustment success.

Furnham and Bochner (1986) identify adjusting to a new culture as one of the four key problems experienced by international students and almost every other piece of literature that discusses international students refers to this challenge. Several of the international students in this study commented on the cultural adjustment they experienced. Some international students referred to enjoying the cultural differences,

such as strangers being friendlier without any hidden ill intent and other international students referred to not liking some aspects of Canadian culture, such as the non-importance of family and people being judgmental. Whether international students like the new culture or not, it still requires an adjustment. Oberg (1954, 1960) was one of the first people to use the term “culture shock” and he used it to describe the strain and anxiety resulting from contact with a new culture and the feelings of loss and confusion resulting from the loss of familiar cultural cues and social rules (as cited in Furnham & Bochner, 1986). Even though some students commented on liking the new aspects of Canadian culture, they still had to adjust to it and they were still removed from their comfort zone or removed from what they were used to; however, if the new culture is more in line with their values, then adjustment will likely be easier. Studies have shown that the challenge of adjusting to a new culture is one of the main differences between the adjustment concerns of international students and the adjustment concerns of domestic students who are living away from home for the first time. (Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr, Christiansen, & Van Horn, 2002).

#### *4.3.2 Adjustment – language (verbal and non-verbal communication).*

Language is an adjustment concern of international students and also affects social interactions. Half (eight) of the international students who were interviewed speak English as their first language. Seven international students indicated language as being an adjustment challenge. Some of the international students who indicated this was a challenge actually speak English as their first language, but found accents were an issue.

Some students who do not speak English as their first language did not find this to be an issue because they had already attended other English speaking institutions.

One international student, who speaks English as his second language, feels he speaks English quite well; however feels that people still find it difficult to understand him because of his accent. He said, “The accent sometimes is hard to understand because I find sometimes a lot of communication gaps, I would talk and then they wouldn’t understand me as well.”

An international student who does speak English as her first language had a similar experience. When asked what she found difficult during the first few weeks of moving to Corner Brook, she said, “The only thing that I found difficult first when I came was getting people to understand when I spoke and a lot of people kept asking me because of my accent, they thought I spoke a different language as a first language. Gradually, I guess I changed the way I spoke.”

One international student who speaks English as his second language felt that he was misunderstood. He felt that students did not understand “that (he) was quiet because of language problems. They misinterpret (his) personality or think (he’s) not interested in their conversation.”

Other international students who spoke English as their second language did not necessarily find it a challenge in all settings, but found it difficult in writing courses, such as English literature class or in courses like history where there was a lot of reading and essay writing.



International students who had spent time in other Canadian cities commented on the adjustment to not only English, but the Newfoundland accent. One student said, “I struggled to understand the language, they speak very fast, there are words that are used that are sometimes very hard to follow and with English as my second language, I had a hard time following.” Another student spoke about her experience with getting a taxi at the airport when she first arrived in Newfoundland. She said, “We asked for a taxi and after five or six times, I still could not catch up with what the taxi driver was saying he spoke so fast. Then the taxi driver told us, that’s Newfoundland English, so you need to know and learn how to speak Newfoundland English.”

Several of the domestic students mentioned language as being an adjustment concern for international students. One student said:

For a lot of them there is a language barrier because Corner Brook is very English and a lot of them, their English is good, but they have an accent and then also in Newfoundland in general, we all have our own little language, so even when they know English, we probably say words that they don’t understand.

Another student identified that not being comfortable with the language may prevent them from asking questions. The student commented that “if you’re not fluent in English, you don’t know what to ask. If you’re trying to figure something out, you have to first figure out how to say it and it’s harder to learn about a brand new place, like where you’re living.”

Although most students saw language as being a barrier or challenge, one domestic student didn't feel it was a problem for international students at Grenfell. The domestic student said, "All of the international students speak fluent English, so I don't think the language was a barrier for them." However, this domestic student did identify how the use of language or how Canadians communicate may be misinterpreted. The student mentioned that he is friends with one international student who misunderstood his use of sarcasm; he said, "I am a pretty sarcastic individual and every time I'd say something, she'd think I was serious....it did cause some confusion."

There are also non-verbal communication differences across cultures, which can also impede social interaction. For example, in Latin American countries the level of bodily contact is much higher than it is in Canada. When these two cultures first meet, it is easy for there to be a misunderstanding. To the Latin American, the Canadian may be seen as being cold and unfriendly, whereas to the Canadian, the Latin American may be perceived as being overly flirtatious (Ward et al., 2001). A couple of international students at Grenfell did comment on their frustration and annoyance with this difference. One student said that, "(In our country we) are very touchy and very close, we're used to that and when I came here, it was like hi and everyone was shaking hands. I like kissing and hugging, that's what we do." Another international student made a similar observation and commented on his frustration with how Canadians physically interact. This student feels that if you hug your male friend or touch them on the shoulder, people automatically think you are gay.

Furnham and Bochner (1986) did identify language skills as one of the four key problems experienced by international students. Henderson, Milhouse, and Cao (1993) conducted a study involving Asian students studying in the United States. Ninety-seven per cent of their study participants identified inadequate language skills as being their greatest difficulty (as cited in Ward et al., 2001). Some international students at Grenfell, who did not speak English as their first language, did feel that their inadequate language skills impeded them from developing strong friendships, made them feel intimidated to ask questions, and challenged them academically, which resulted in a more difficult adjustment period. International students who have a greater amount of contact with domestic students tend to obtain greater language competence and tend to do better academically (Ward, 2001); however, inadequate language skills tend to make international students more hesitant to make new friends from the host culture, so it can result in a vicious cycle. Ideally, the university should initiate programs that will encourage interaction early in the semester, so students can overcome this challenge.

Unlike the Henderson et al. study, my research also involved international students who do speak English as their first language and they also commented on language challenges, but it was due to different accents. The majority of studies that I have reviewed do not discuss language with respect to accents, although in Wicks (2004) study at Memorial University, international students also commented on the difficulty of understanding the Newfoundland accent. It is interesting to note that some English speaking international students commented on their frustration with domestic students not understanding their accent; however, the international students were quick to comment on

their difficulty in understanding the “Newfie” accent. This type of language issue can be quite frustrating for an international student because they are not expecting to have any language problems. They know they are moving to an area that speaks the same language, so communication difficulties are not anticipated.

A couple of students who speak English as their second language also commented on their difficulty with the Newfoundland accent. Some international students had lived in another Canadian city to become proficient in English. When they moved to Newfoundland, they felt confident that they would understand the language; however, they soon realized that it would still take some adjustment to get used to a new accent.

Apart from specific language differences, people from various countries do communicate differently and there will frequently be misunderstandings because of this, especially if students are not aware that these differences exist. As one student mentioned, his use of sarcasm resulted in a misunderstanding with an international student. This type of misunderstanding is common. Sometimes communication misunderstandings are greater between students who actually speak the same language, but are from different cultural backgrounds. Students know their words are being understood because they speak the same language, but they do not realize that their intended message may be misunderstood or they may also be misinterpreting the information that they are hearing (Ward et al., 2001).

#### *4.3.3 Adjustment – food.*

When asked about adjustment challenges, four of the international students indicated food was something they had to get used to. Not only was it difficult finding the

ingredients they were used to, but the greater challenge seemed to be having to cook for themselves. Like any student, many of the international students were not used to cooking and in residence, there is no meal plan; students cook for themselves. One student was asked what he found different here, and he said, "The food; it's really different. I miss (the food from home). My mom used to cook everyday and I didn't cook. I cook now. When you come here you have to learn how to cook." Another student said:

Cooking for myself was really hard because I wasn't used to doing that and the food was really messy and the food was bad. For a year, I don't know what I ate; I used to depend on canned food a lot. When I went home this summer I told my mom I had to learn ...so this year is a big improvement.

One third of the domestic students who were interviewed identified food as a possible adjustment concern for international students. One domestic student stated "just not being able to get the food that you're used to. I know when people go to Harlow, they all want Kraft dinner sent over!" Another student said, "The type of food that they might be used to; we don't have a lot of choice in terms of food. There are only three places in the food court and then there are only a couple of grocery stores that just sell the basics."

International students found it challenging to find specific ingredients in the grocery store, the majority of them were not used to cooking, and then in addition to that, there are limited, or you could say no international restaurants in Corner Brook. Students

did speak highly of two bulk food stores that are located in Corner Brook and commented that these stores are normally willing to order in special things for them. The challenge of having to learn to cook was also a great challenge for many of the international students, but this challenge led many of the students to develop skills that maybe they would not have developed otherwise. It is also possible that having to cook may have caused some international students to break down traditional gender or societal roles; however, this point was not specifically raised during my interviews.

#### *4.3.4 Adjustment – finances.*

One domestic student mentioned financial concerns as a possible adjustment challenge for international students. The domestic student stated, “Well, I know the financial thing is huge where their tuition is so much more and they have all these weird money transfers or passport issues.” No international students directly mentioned finances as an adjustment concern; however, one international student, when asked about the benefits of having international students on campus, commented, “That’s the benefit, why they can reduce their tuition is because our tuition is increased.” There seemed to be a little bitterness about the difference in cost. A couple of international students, when asked about what more the university could do to assist them, did mention that there could be more flexibility with respect to paying their fees. Some international students are unable to pay their fees on the first day of class, and then they get charged a late payment fee. Some international students feel that the university could be more flexible with this and allow them to pay on some type of structured payment plan throughout the semester.

Many of our international students say one of their major factors in choosing to study at Memorial University was the reasonable cost of tuition compared to other Canadian and American universities; however, I know many of them do still struggle with the cost of their university education and would like to see more assistance with this. I don't think this challenge was raised during the interviews due to the questions that were asked and the general focus of the interview. The main focus of my research relates to social interactions on campus. I did ask about adjustment challenges that they experienced when they first arrived, but I think many of them think about finances as a separate issue and see it as being different than the other adjustment challenges mentioned.

#### *4.3.5 Adjustment – friends and family.*

Seven of the international students mentioned missing their friends and family as being a challenge at first when they arrived. One student said her number one challenge was “not being with (her) family.” Another student said it wasn't so much home that he missed, but “missing the people that matter to (him).” One student commented that he had lived away from home before, but was able to visit on weekends and talk to his family whenever he wanted, whereas now it costs \$1.60/minute to talk to someone from home.

Some students also mentioned that they were nervous and lonely at first and were concerned with not knowing anyone. One student mentioned that first when he arrived, everything was new and he was trying to figure things out and then “(he'd) sit in the

classroom and not talk to anyone.” This soon changed and he did get to know people through his classes.

In addition to missing friends and family, two international students, when asked what their main challenge or concern was when first moving to Corner Brook indicated the challenge of living on their own. One student said his main concern was, “Living on my own, nobody telling me what to do, when to go to bed, when to study, when to eat.” The other student said that the biggest challenge for him was “being on my own.” This student was pleasantly surprised and said, “but that is something I can actually do. I was surprised that I could do it so well; I thought it would be hard.... I was looking forward to the fact that I could make my own decisions and do whatever I wanted to do.”

A few of the domestic students identified that moving far away from family and friends would be a concern for international students and also the stress of meeting new friends and fitting in. One student said that “someone from Ontario can just get a Canadian long distance plan, but for international students, it would be more expensive just to call home and hear that voice, so it would be much more of an adjustment, mainly because they’re so much farther away.” Another domestic student stated that “probably the biggest concern (for international students) is making friends and being accepted.”

Previous studies have shown that international students do have a greater challenge than domestic students adjusting socially. Part of this greater difficulty stems from the distance they are away from home, which tends to reduce their social support from friends and family and also results in more extreme homesickness and loneliness. International students also tend to have a more difficult time building a new strong social



network of friends, whereas domestic students tend to already have this in place; however there are exceptions as expressed by one of the domestic students in this study who moved from another Canadian province and also experienced challenges in building a new social network. It is interesting to note that at least one of the international students actually found this challenge to be a positive one, leading to greater independence, which is something he desired. A strong social network is vital for the adjustment of international students (Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002; Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2002).

#### *4.3.6 Adjustment – location and climate.*

International students cited the challenge of adjusting to a new location; and more specifically, adjusting to the size of the location and the climate. Like many students, the international students had to adjust to a new location and get used to where various things were located in the city and in the school. One adjustment that was specifically cited by three of the international students was getting used to the size of Corner Brook. Although most students admitted they were aware that Corner Brook was small, they still were not prepared for *how* small it actually is. One student stated, “When I first got here, I expected more people and a bigger place.... I knew it was a small city, but I didn’t know how small it would be, I expected it to be a bit bigger.” Another student said, “I was a little bit shocked because when I was coming here, I thought it would be a bit bigger, but I came here to the school and found that it was a lot better.” Another student commented, “I had heard of Corner Brook city and I was expecting to see a city. I was like, okay, it was a little shock. You see that word city behind Corner Brook and you expect to see a city.”

The vast majority of international students who were interviewed came from much warmer climates than Corner Brook. Six of the interviewed international students mentioned that the climate of Corner Brook was something they had to adjust to. One student mentioned weather as something he had to get used to, but he did not consider it as big a deal as other things. He said his first thoughts about the weather were:

It was very cold, colder than I ever expected. First, I was like, one, how can a place exist where the wind is always moving, two, who were the people who settled here, what were they thinking, three, this is like living in a freezer, but there's a sun there. I got used to it and it was no big deal.

Another student thinks back to the first week when she arrived, it was close to September and she said, "It was cold, I was cold all the time; I was cold in my room with the heat up high."

Only two domestic students identified weather as being a possible adjustment concern for international students and this comment was just made in passing. One student mentioned weather in a list of possible adjustment challenges and the other student mentioned it when telling me what advice he would give a prospective international student, she said, "Depending on where they're from, I'd tell them to take their hat and mittens!"

The size and climate of Corner Brook created adjustment challenges for some international students. After adjusting to the change in expectation of the size of Corner Brook, students did make positive remarks and referred to how nice and friendly the

people are both in the community and on campus. Although these students were able to see positive aspects of a small community and came to enjoy aspects of it, I do believe it was an adjustment challenge for them initially. In addition to the data collected through my interviews, through my past and ongoing dealings with international students, I know the size of Corner Brook is a challenge for other international students who are used to a more urban centre; they find it difficult to get used to the pace of Corner Brook. The students speak very highly of their experience at Grenfell; however, they find it challenging to get used to the size of the community. Part of the frustration can be attributed to the lack of a good transit system. Although Corner Brook has a city bus system, it has limited hours, so students find it difficult to get around town.

For a number of the students, the climate was their biggest adjustment, many of the students were not accustomed to snow, and it was the first time ever seeing it.

#### *4.3.7 Adjustment – academics.*

Four of the international students commented on the adjustment to university in general. Some international students found there to be an increased workload compared to what they were used to in high school or used to in university in their country. This adjustment concern was also mentioned by several of the domestic students as a concern or challenge that they experienced as well. One international student commented on having to work harder in his writing courses, such as English literature or in courses like history where there was a lot of reading and essay writing.

For the majority of the international students, academics were not their foremost adjustment concern. The majority of international students also did not appear to have

problems with understanding their professors and one student said, “Some of the classes I have are actually smaller than the classes I had in secondary school, which is weird. It’s really good because you can ask questions freely.” One international student commented on the challenge of getting used to the grading system in Canada because it was quite different than what he was used to, so when he got a mark back, he found it difficult to know what it actually meant.

Academic challenges exist for both international and domestic students; however, International students did not cite this as one of their primary adjustment concerns. For the most part, International students experience similar academic challenges to those of domestic students. Obviously, some international students can experience greater challenges due to the fact that they speak English as their second language or are not familiar with the grading system. Some of the international students had very positive experiences with adjusting academically and found the academic setting to be more comfortable and open than they were used to.

#### *4.4 Adjustment Assistance*

Social interactions appear to have played a key role in the adjustment of international students at Grenfell. The vast majority of international students, when asked what helped them adjust to a new environment, said “meeting people.” Some of the international students specifically made reference to other international students helping them and some students just made reference to meeting people in general. One international student said:

It wasn't hard getting used to the place, well at first I was feeling like I didn't know anyone, so that was kind of hard, but gradually I met a lot of friends, so I was okay.... Just walking around the place with my friends and getting used to the area and going out with people who already knew Corner Brook.

This same student made reference specifically about a more senior international student who was living on his floor in residence and greatly helped him with his adjustment.

When asked, "What helped you adjust?" another international student said:

Making friends. In all my classes I made friends with someone and that's how I got adjusted to the classes and getting around the campus and Corner Brook.... I have been faced with so many challenges, but the people have helped me quite a lot, the people from Corner Brook have helped me quite a lot.

Again, another international student said that his greatest help with adjusting to a new culture and environment was "being here and interacting with people." When asked what help is available on-campus to help students adjust, this student said:

You can always go to the housing office. I never really had problems, so I didn't go looking. I think the people around you can help you most - the other students. You get to bond a lot with other international students, just because they are from outside just like me.

When this student first arrived, he talked about meeting a more senior international student who spoke to him in his first language; he said “that was cool, so we identified ourselves with him.” Another student, commenting on the importance of friends said, “At first, I was like, I don’t want to be here and then I started meeting people and getting to know the place and stuff.” This student realized early on that when he was feeling homesick the most important thing was “being around people. Going out and doing stuff and talking to people and getting to know them.”

One international student said that knowing another international student on campus before arriving really helped because he was able to prepare a little bit before he arrived. His friend was able to help out with all of the logistical things, such as where to get books, groceries, etc. In addition, he was able to explain some more subtle aspects of communication. For example, compared to their home country, Canadians tend to use humor more when talking to one another, so he suggested when speaking with other students to throw in a good joke here and there.

Communicating with family back home was also identified by international students as a common means to assist with the initial adjustment period. One international student, when he was having a particularly bad day or feeling homesick, said “I would call mom or my dad. The first thing I did was buy a web cam!”

A couple of international students did mention that in the early weeks of arriving at Grenfell, if they were feeling homesick or having a really rough time adjusting, they kept it to themselves because they did not feel they had any close friends to discuss it with. One student said, “I didn’t have close friends in those first couple of days and

weeks, so I probably would have just kept it to myself.” As this student got a little further into the semester, he felt he had one close friend that he could talk to about adjustment concerns. He felt comfortable speaking with another international student who was experiencing similar concerns. As the international student said, “He also had difficulty communicating, so we were sort of in the same boat.”

Another international student recounted his story of when he first arrived at Grenfell and spoke of how current Grenfell students who were from his home country came and introduced themselves and helped him figure out where everything was and introduced him to several other students. These students were a great support, especially early on.

Previous studies show that greater social interaction benefits international students on a psychological, social and academic level (Ward, 2001). The International students participating in this study were very clear in identifying social interactions as being the most important resource in helping them adjust. International students referred to social relationships with both domestic students and other international students. Getting to know both domestic and international students seemed to help new international students adjust to the general environment, but for deeper issues, international students seemed to play a bigger assistance role. A special bond often forms between international students because they tend to have a better understanding of the concerns faced by new international students. They have had similar experiences and therefore new international students are more comfortable confiding in them (Ward et al., 2001).

The existence of a special “International student bond,” will be discussed in greater detail in chapter five.

#### *4.5 Conclusion*

International and domestic students have some similar adjustment concerns; however, both groups of students realize that the adjustment challenges of international students are greater than those experienced by domestic students. The main international adjustment concerns that were identified were related to culture, food, missing friends and family and meeting new friends, language, new school and living environment, climate, and workload. These concerns are similar to those found in previous studies; however, previous studies did not highlight community size, climate, and use of local language or dialect as challenges for international students. Also, Furnham and Bochner (1986) mentioned the challenge of prejudice and discrimination, which did not surface in this study. Domestic students were able to identify some of the concerns experienced by international students, although they did not necessarily learn about the challenges first hand from international students. Adjustment concerns of domestic students were primarily related to a new academic setting; however, one domestic student also mentioned the challenge of meeting new friends.

Social interaction between international and domestic students is the primary focus of this study. A discussion around adjustment concerns was necessary to further understand the challenges faced by international students and to identify whether domestic students are aware of these challenges. Interestingly, international students did recognize that social interactions were a vital part of helping them overcome their



adjustment challenges and although international students mentioned getting support and help from domestic students and the local people, they seemed to take particular comfort from fellow international students. The following chapter will take a more in depth look at these social interactions and will look at the social networks that exist.

## Chapter 5: Social Interaction

### *5.1 Introduction*

There are many benefits associated with social interaction between international and domestic students. Greater interaction has been shown to benefit international students on a psychological, social and academic level (Ward, 2001). Domestic students benefit from becoming aware and learning about different cultures (Holdaway et al., 1998; Knight, 2000; Vertesi, 1999). To realize these benefits, a certain level of social interaction must occur.

This chapter discusses where social interactions generally occur at Grenfell and whether social interaction occurs between international and domestic students. The photo identification section will look at some of the social networks that exist between the student participants. Several domestic and international students identified that there is a special kind of bond between international students and the possible reasons for this will be discussed. Participants were asked to identify the benefits of having social interaction between international and domestic students. The benefits identified were awareness of different cultures, new perspectives, and learning; and helping international students adjust.

### *5.2 Where does Social Interaction Occur?*

Social interaction can occur in a variety of settings through both structured and unstructured events. Participants were asked how they generally meet people at Grenfell. The most frequent answers were “in class” and “in residence.” Other students also

mentioned parties, orientation, clubs & societies, sports, and general proximity, such as meeting people randomly in the hallway or food court or library.

At Grenfell, social interaction can occur as a result of students having shared academic and non-academic interests and can occur during structured and unstructured activities. Structured activities, such as sporting events, intramurals, and meetings of various clubs and societies encourage interaction among students who have shared non-academic interests. These events are geared towards the general student population. Social interaction also occurs as a result of students having a shared academic interest, such as being in the same degree program. Students who are in the same degree program often interact in their classes, which is a structured environment or through their degree specific society; however, students who share the same academic interests also tend to socialize in unstructured settings, such as study groups and other academic and non-academic social gatherings.

Some university structured events are focused on the general student population and other events have an international focus. For example, an orientation program is organized for all new, first year students. This is a structured program meant to facilitate social interaction at the beginning of the semester. There is also orientation programming organized specifically for international students, such as a buddy program, a grocery store tour, an outing to Gros Morne National Park, and an international student meeting that allows new international students to meet returning international students as well as meet key faculty and staff.

Another structured campus event that has an international focus is the International Student Night, which normally occurs in October. For the past three years, the international students have been the primary organizers of this event and faculty, staff, students and the general public are invited to attend an evening of cultural presentations and displays, dancing, singing, and food sampling.

General proximity to other students often leads to social interaction. At Grenfell, the students who were interviewed who live in residence seem to be more likely to interact with one another. Residence students often interact through structured activities, such as floor meetings or socials, but they also interact in unstructured settings - they see each other on a daily basis in the kitchen, the lounge, the hallway, the laundry room, etc. Grenfell College is a small campus; therefore students who regularly congregate in the food court or the library will often meet and interact with people because they see each other repeatedly. Students will also get to interact with one another by being in the same class and seeing each other regularly throughout the week. Several students commented on meeting people that they frequently see around campus; however, general proximity does not automatically lead to positive social interaction. The two international students that I spoke of in my introductory chapter, who were not a part of this study, both lived in residence and were in close proximity to other students, but they actually felt isolated and not a part of the residence community. Although they were physically close to students, they did not have close relationships with them. An international student in this study also had some negative experiences in residence. He did get to meet and interact with other students, but actually tried to avoid cooking in the student lounge during busy times

because he felt personally judged by the other students. In Wicks (2004) study, proximity did not always result in positive social interactions. One international student commented on feeling very isolated in the classroom. The professor often asked the class to form their own groups and this student always felt left out and was the last student to find a group to work with.

Participants in this study feel that they meet the most people in class or in residence, whether as a result of proximity or through organized residence activities. Several students identified that they also get to meet a lot of new people through being introduced by their friends at parties. Generally, students commented that orientation was somewhat beneficial and that they did meet a lot of people; however, they found that they did not form lasting relationships. The lasting relationships tended to be formed outside of orientation. Also, the international students feel that the International Student Night is a very beneficial event, but a lot of social interaction does not occur specifically at that event, although it may facilitate it in the future because of increased awareness.

Increased social interaction leads to an improved adjustment experience for international students (Ward, 2001). If social interaction tends to occur more frequently in residence, international students should be encouraged to live on campus, especially during their first year. For international students living off campus, further programming should be established to encourage more social interaction that will create a better sense of community among students.

### *5.3 Social Interaction between International and Domestic Students*

International and domestic students do interact at Grenfell. Grenfell is a small campus, so it would be virtually impossible not to interact with one another. The majority of international students have had positive experiences with Canadian students; however, there have been a couple of negative experiences as well.

All of the domestic participants stated they knew at least one international student studying at Grenfell. When asked who their closest friends were at Grenfell, four of the 12 domestic participants (33%) named one or more international students as among their closest friends and all 12 named Canadian students. Thirty-three percent is a fairly high percentage considering there are only 24 international students on campus, which makes up 1.8% of the total student population or 2.3% of the full-time student population, excluding nursing students.

Eleven of the 16 international participants (68.8%) named co-nationals as among their closest friends; five (31.3%) named students from other countries as among their closest friends; 10 (62.5%) named Canadian students as among their closest friends; and one international student felt he had no close friends. It is worth noting that students may not all define “close friend” in the same manner. When asked, the majority of domestic students indicated that they would like to have more interaction with international students or would not be opposed to it.

Previous studies have found that there tends to be a strong connection amongst co-nationals and a not so strong connection with domestic students. In a study conducted by Bochner, Hutnik and Furnham (1985) in a residence hall at Oxford University, it was

found that out of 32 international students, 17% identified a British student (domestic) as their best friend and 70% said they had no domestic friends (as cited in Ward, 2001). Furnham and Bochner (1982) conducted a study of international students in London, Oxford and Cambridge. They found that 44% of best friends were identified as co-nationals and 20% were identified as domestic students (as cited in Ward, 2001). A study conducted by Burke (1990) at the University of New South Wales found that 15% of international students identified domestic students as being among their closest friends compared to 45% who identified co-nationals as close friends (as cited in Ward, 2001). Grenfell students displayed similar results in that they identified a high percentage of co-nationals as being among their closest friends; however, unlike the previous studies, Grenfell's international students also identified a relatively high percentage of domestic students as among their closest friends.

According to Bochner's functional model of friendship networks, international students often have three distinct social networks. The main network normally consists of friendships with people from their home country, which allows them to continue practicing and expressing their cultural traditions, values, and norms. A second network involves interactions with people from the host country, which normally assists with students' academic goals. The third network normally involves befriending other international students, who are not from the same country. This network generally provides support and often exists because students are having similar experiences due to the fact that they are in a new and different environment (Ward et al., 2001).

Most international students commented on the friendliness of people at Grenfell. One international said, "If you just go and talk to someone, (Canadian students) are really friendly. I don't consider myself different from anyone else." Several international students said, "The people are very friendly."

Although several international students are close friends with other international students, all of the international students stated having Canadian friends. In addition to having Canadian students as "close friends," a high percentage of international students have identified Canadian "acquaintances" and "friends." One international student said, "I definitely hang out with international students, but I have some Canadian friends too."

Several of the domestic students perceived that the friendliness of Newfoundlanders would lead to social interactions and help ease the transition for international students. One Newfoundland student said:

Newfoundland is good, we're all very friendly. There are no negative influences on the international students. I don't know any who have been looked down upon for any reason. We're all very open-minded. There are jokes about how friendly Newfoundlanders are, so I would assume we're very welcoming.

Another domestic student feels that Grenfell must be a welcoming environment "judging by the amount of (internationals) that have stayed." A domestic student, who spent time studying at another university said, "Grenfell is a good school and really accepting of people, that's one of the reasons I came back actually because it's just an



anything goes kind of school. There are not a lot of judgmental people and it's really easy to get along with everyone."

Several international students also commented on the friendliness of Newfoundlanders; however, two international students specifically commented on negative experiences they have encountered with respect to social interaction and in addition to these two students, six other international students commented on how they initially found it difficult to meet domestic students or how they feel there is somewhat of a barrier between international and domestic students. Although these international students commented on these challenges, the majority of them still referred to Newfoundlanders as being friendly. There was only one domestic student who identified that international students may have this type of social challenge and that is because he had a similar experience because he moved from another part of Canada and did not know anyone else attending Grenfell. The remaining domestic students assumed that international students would have a positive social experience.

In direct contrast to the domestic student's comment about people at Grenfell being non-judgmental, one international student specifically commented on his ongoing difficulties with adjusting to the fact that Canadians are so judgmental. He exclaimed, "The labeling...those classifications - the nerds, the geeks, the weirdoes.... Why is the culture this way? Culture is meant to be non-judgmental.... I don't like it, but I realize it's not personal; it comes from a long history."

One international student commented on how he felt students made fun of him when he was cooking different types of food in the student lounge or when he watched

certain shows on television. Another international student commented that some domestic students are very open to meeting international students and others are not. This student feels he has not been accepted by people in his program. The student realizes that this may be more of a personality issue than an international issue, but feels there may also be some jealousy. He said:

I think it does come down to personality and I think there is some envy and a bit of jealousy because they may say, well I come from British Columbia or I come from Nova Scotia and I'm not given that kind of attention, but here comes (an international student) and he needs to get all the attention because he's international.

This student clearly states that this attitude is not prevalent with all Canadian students; some of the student's closest friends are from Newfoundland. This student feels used by some of his fellow Canadian classmates, he feels when they need to know something about his country or language, they approach him and ask and he gladly helps them out and then the next day they ignore him again.

One international student stated that she noticed "here in Newfoundland, it's a very small community, there are Newfies, and that's about it...they haven't had really close encounters with international people." She feels that although people are friendly, there is still a barrier. Another international student who is beyond her first year did comment on the friendliness of Newfoundlanders, but stated that meeting people was not always easy and it does take time. She feels she knows many more people now than she

did after her first year of study. Another international student stated that he is quiet and a bit shy and the international students tend to speak to him more and are more outgoing with him; the Canadian students don't just come up and start a conversation. A couple of international students also commented that although domestic students may interact with international students and are nice, they "are not deeply interested."

When asked, "How do you think the socializing is on campus between international and Canadian students?" an international student responded by saying, "I think it's really good, very, very good. If it got any better the Prime Minister would have to give us an award." A domestic student also commented that "(he) feels everyone mixes a lot, it's easy; everyone is friends with everyone." This domestic student also commented specifically on residence and said, "I feel like in residence you meet everyone and you don't exclude anyone, you all talk to each other and I think that's a really good way for international students to interact with other people and make friends."

Another international student commented that he does not feel interaction is a problem at Grenfell, but wonders if that is due to the fact that he is a fine arts student and students doing a fine arts degree tend to feel closely connected with their fellow classmates whether they are international or not. He said, "I'm a visual arts student and I find there is already a lot of interaction. Maybe if I was just a general student, I would think differently and maybe I would find interacting with Canadian students more difficult." Although my study did not directly look at specific degree programs and my sample is not large enough to draw generalized conclusions, it is interesting to note that

in the Rosenthal et al. (2006) study on social connectedness, they found that international students studying at the Victoria College of the Arts (VCA), which is a visual and performing arts training institution interacted the least with co-culturals and had the most contact with domestic (Australian) students compared to other international students (Social mixing section, ¶ 4). At Grenfell, there are approximately 50 students each year accepted to fine arts programs - 25 in visual arts and 25 in theatre. There is a fine arts building where the majority of classes are held and for the most part these students are in all of the same classes together. Students completing a science or arts degree often have more choice in their course selection, so they are not necessarily in all of the same classes together. Students in the fine arts programs do tend to be somewhat isolated from the other students because of the structure of their program and tend to be a very cohesive group. Outside of class, fine arts students are rehearsing late at night together or creating art in the studios. This is a case where extreme proximity tends to lead to close social bonds.

A domestic student indicated his desire to have more interaction with international students, but admits he finds it difficult. He is very interested in learning more about different cultures and loves making new friends, but says the only opportunity he has had to interact with them is during the International Student Night, he said that at this event “(he) talked to a few of them, but there really wasn’t much interaction, you just walked around their booths and had their food, there really wasn’t a lot of interaction with them.” This student finds it very difficult to just strike up a

conversation with an international student because he's afraid that he might say something wrong. He said:

You don't know them, you don't know what they're like, and I find that if I'm here and I know someone is from here, I find it a lot easier to talk to them than if I talk to someone who I know is international and I don't know what they're like....When I talk to someone I often say something funny and I don't want to - something funny to us might not be funny to them....I love making new friends, and international friends, it's just hard to.

Although this comment was limited to one student, it is similar to a finding in Brown and Daly's (2004) quantitative study. They found that students didn't initiate friendships with people with different ethnic backgrounds because they felt "they were less confident, had less common ground, and that it was more difficult to express dissenting ideas and to get information" (p.7).

A Newfoundland student feels that domestic students are really excited to meet international students. He said:

The majority of Grenfell students are from Newfoundland and it's the excitement of knowing someone from (another country) that makes them want to talk to them and introduce themselves. You're so used to having friends who grew up down the street that you want to have a friend who had to fly 4000 miles to get here.

The majority of international and domestic students feel that social interaction is occurring between international and domestic students. Obviously there have been some negative experiences and some international students feel that there are some barriers, but overall, social interaction does occur. One international student commented that interaction is definitely occurring, but he feels relationships are normally at a superficial level, there are no deep bonds formed.

Previous studies have focused on social interactions from the perspective of international students and have indicated that international students are generally disappointed with the amount of social interaction they experience with domestic students (Ward, 2001). Smart, Volet and Ang (2000) conducted a study at Murdoch University in Australia and did involve both international and domestic students. They also found that international students were disappointed with the amount of social interaction with locals. For example, an international student commented on disappointment with not being able to break into the Australian circle of friends. In this study, domestic students were found to be generally apathetic towards social interaction with international students (as cited in Ward, 2001).

There does appear to be a much healthier amount of social interaction between international and domestic students at Grenfell compared to previous studies. Ten (62.5%) of international students named Canadian students as being among their closest friends and all of the international students participating in this study indicated that they are friends or acquaintances with Canadian students; however, there was some apathy

detected amongst some of the domestic students. When asked whether they feel it's important to interact with international students, nine domestic students made similar comments. One student said, "No more than anybody else really." Another student said, "There's no reason why not...I'm not against it." Another student commented, "Just like it's important to interact with anyone...I don't know if you really say it's important to interact with international students especially." Another domestic student answered, "Sure. I wouldn't have a problem with it," and another student said, "Yeah, I mean, I'd like to have more interaction with all students on campus." These comments are not negative as such and the majority of domestic students did indicate that they would like to have more interaction with international students or would not be opposed to it, but the above comments portray a sense of apathy or an indication that they do not see international students as being different than other domestic students.

Social interaction is key to the successful adjustment of all students. Domestic students may take this for granted and although they feel they are "friendly," they may not realize that international students are likely lacking that much needed social support. Hechanova-Alampay et al. (2002) found that both domestic and international students have a decreased social support system when they move away to go to university; however, domestic students normally have more opportunity to interact with other domestic students. In the Hechanova-Alampay et al. (2002) study, like Grenfell, a lot of the domestic students in their study moved from within state and already had acquaintances and friends who were also starting university and the domestic students had a greater opportunity to return home for short visits. The international students in

their study moved from great distances and normally did not know any other students, thus making their transition more difficult. It is vital for domestic students to understand this difference because then they may be more likely to provide support by befriending international students.

#### *5.4 International Bond*

The majority of international students feel that there is a special bond amongst the international students; however, most international students were quick to point out that although there may be a special bond between international students, they are also friends with Canadian students. Of the 24 international students on campus, there are 10 different countries represented, so all of the international students do not come from the same country, but yet they feel that there is a special bond or understanding amongst them. When international students were asked who their close friends were at Grenfell, 87.5% named an international student, whether it was a student from their home country and/or a student from another country.

One international student said:

I think there is (a special bond between international students), I've been trying to figure out what it is, but I think it's the fact that we're different from all the people here and we all miss home and we have different cultures and languages and we also have different types of food that we can offer to people who aren't from different places, so that's what we have in common. We're all different, but



we all share similar things that other people here don't share. We understand each other more than a Canadian and an international would, well mostly.

Another international student feels that:

There is a natural bond among the (the international students) because we are not all really from here and basically we're going through the same experiences so we can identify with each other... We can share experiences. There are certain problems we may have faced that maybe they are also facing and they may not know how to deal with it, so we can share our experiences.

This student was very quick to point out that although there is a natural bond amongst the international students, "in (his) case, the guys that were more friendly were the Canadians, were the locals."

As mentioned previously, international students are a great support network when a new international student arrives; they can help them adjust to their new environment.

An international student said:

There are challenges that you face and you need that focus point, and that point is another international student that can relate to you and the international group gives you that wall to lean against. They give you that ground point and that

strength that you need, that there are other people that can identify with you and support you.

Another international student made similar comments, he said:

When you see another international student who has just come here, you know exactly how the person is feeling, like they're probably feeling cold, or they might feel lonely if they're used to a big city, or if they arrive during a break, you know how the person feels and you just go and say hi and you become friends and then you help them out.

An international student commented that she fits in better with the other international students. She said:

I fit in better with them because they're experiencing the same things – we have a common ground. For example, (one of my international student friends) has trouble with English; I have trouble with English too and we understand each other's situation, so we don't care if we misspell something or say something different. English isn't our first language.

One international student, who also feels there is a special bond between international students said, "In my experience, international students, we are all close. Especially (students from specific countries), we're all really close, all of us." They get

together and have parties, celebrating the various country specific holidays; however, again, he was quick to point out that “(he) is very close to international students, but (they) also include other students into (their) group and welcome everyone and are friends with everyone.”

Another international student commented that, “You get to bond a lot with other international students just because they are from outside just like me. You can always count on them first and then your other friends too...I got excited when I found out more people from home were coming.”

One international student commented that it is nice having other students on campus from their home country because it’s nice having someone that understands their background and can share in the same traditions. Another international student mentioned feeling an automatic connection with another student because they spoke the same language.

One international student said that he is probably more comfortable with the international students just because he is quiet and a bit shy and the international students tend to speak to him more and are more outgoing with him, the Canadian students don’t just come up and start a conversation. This same student said, “I don’t think there’s any special bond (among international students), I have Canadian friends.”

One international student feels that international students get along better together because “anyone who is an international has seen more of the world than someone from Newfoundland has...that’s how they see things - in an open mind because they’ve seen

so many other people. Newfoundland people are mostly only seeing Newfoundland, so they're used to that type of culture only."

One international student stated that there is definitely a special bond with people from his home country and feels that having people from his home country definitely helped make his adjustment less difficult; however, this student said, if he didn't have anyone to turn to from his own country, then he probably would have made more of an effort to meet other students. He said, "Maybe in that situation I would have to talk to them and I'd have to make friends, there'd be a pressure on me. There's no pressure on me right now so I don't need to make friends too much."

One international student, who identified two of her closest friends as being other international students, was asked how they became such good friends or why they are good friends. The international students said, "I don't really think it has anything to do with us being internationals. The first day we met, I forget what happened, but we just clicked and I think it just had to do with our personalities and that's how we became friends." However, this international student does agree that most international students support each other because they understand the challenges they are experiencing.

Another international student was asked if he felt his adjustment would have been easier if there had been another student from his country already studying at Grenfell. The international student responded by saying:

No. I don't think it'd be any better or any worse or any different. I don't choose my friends based on race, nationality, whatever, it's really based on similarities, personality, shared interests and what we consider important. If I found someone

with similar interests and shared personality and was (from the same country as me) and someone with similar interests and shared personality and was Canadian, I'd go for the (student from my same country) because the cultural divide wouldn't be there.

Although several of the domestic students feel that social interaction is occurring between international and domestic students, some domestic students did comment on the closeness of the international students. Some people could identify with why this may occur. One domestic student said:

I think it's a good thing that (international students) know each other, but it reinforces the fact that they are different. They tend to hang out and be roommates together....I guess at first (it occurs because) they're all brought together initially and introduced to each other before they are introduced to anyone else....Also, they all have a common difference, being that they are not from here. They're from different parts of the world, but they have common problems – dealing with coming to the country, so they probably identify with each other a lot better. I think it's inherently a good thing, but it could cause problems with meeting people from this culture, but I don't think that's a huge problem here. I think they hang out as a main group, but also individually talk to other people.

Another domestic student commented on some students from specific countries who tend to stick together and party together; however, he also said, “but of course they’re really fun (and) they also interact with a lot of other people.” He could understand the natural bond between international students, he said “language is a big thing and it’s something they have in common.”

The majority of international and domestic students agree that there is a special bond between international students because they have a better understanding of the challenges faced by international students. When international students were asked who their close friends were at Grenfell, 87.5% named an international student. This bond between international students is common and has been discussed in numerous previous studies (Bochner et al., 1985; Furnham & Bochner, 1982; Burke, 1990). As Bochner’s functional model of friendship networks outlines, international students often have three distinct social networks. One of the three networks involves befriending other international students, who are not from the same country. This network generally provides support and often exists because students are having similar experiences due to the fact that they are in a new and different environment (Ward et al., 2001, p. 148). Compared to previous studies, international students at Grenfell appear to have a greater number of domestic students as friends.

In addition to international students having a deeper understanding of each other’s challenges, they are also more likely to meet each other because of university policy and programming. The university allows international students to move into residence early,

which gives them an opportunity to meet and bond with one another. International students are also invited to specific international student orientation sessions; so again, they are given an opportunity to get to know one another before they really get to meet domestic students.

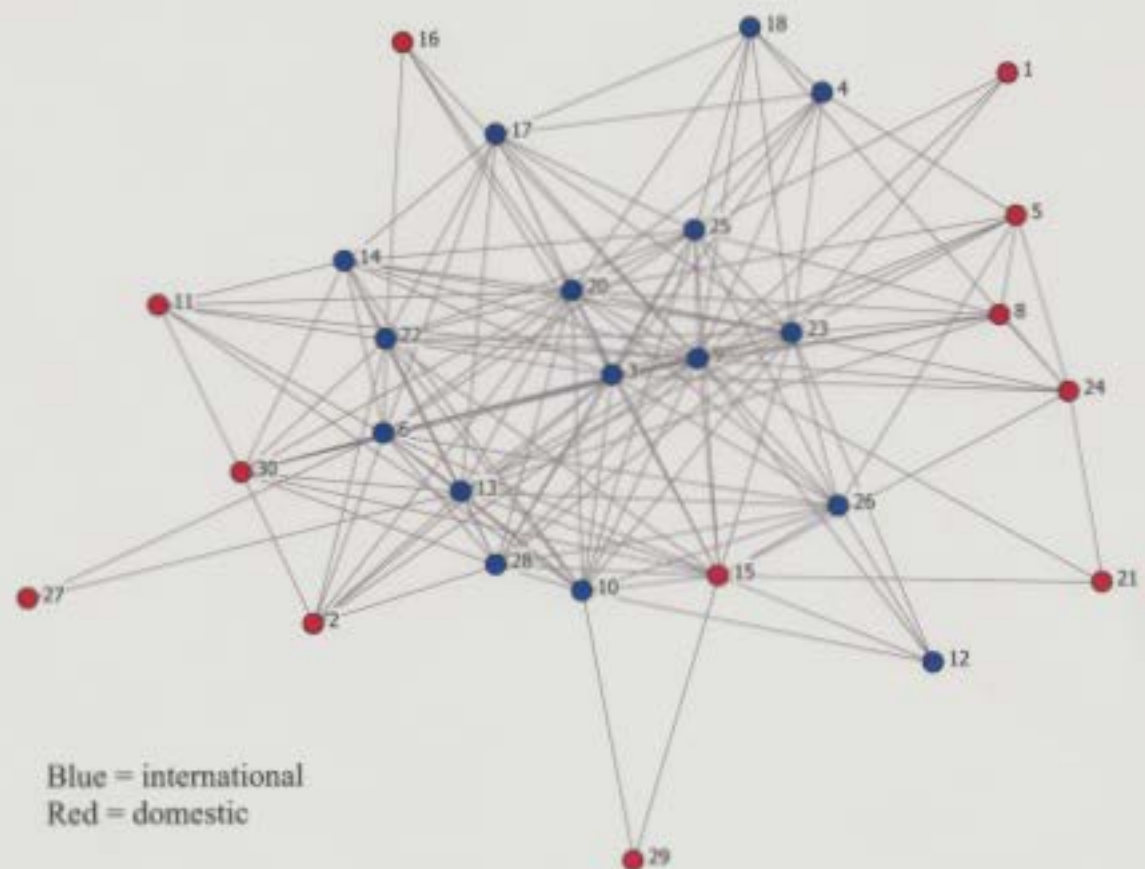
International students can be a great support to one another, but universities must find a balance. International students also need to have a support network of domestic students. When the university initiates programs and services to assist international students, it is important not to unconsciously encourage segregation. Some universities have experienced a “segregation” of international students caused somewhat by university programming. As Bowry (2002) found, at Queen’s University, the educational benefit of having international students on campus was diminished because of things such as a separate week long orientation specifically for international students, the international student centre, and floors in residence specifically reserved for international students. Bowry (2002) states that these services were created to provide international students with a strong sense of community and support; however, it does not promote interaction with Canadian students.

### *5.5 Photo Identification*

All research participants were shown photos of the other student research participants. They were asked if they knew the person, and if so, how they knew them and how well they knew them. The answers were categorized into four different levels and were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet. A rating of “1” was given if the person could identify the student in the photo, but had very little contact or relationship with them. A

rating of "2" was given if the person considered the student an acquaintance; they knew the name of the student in the photo and may say "hi" in passing and had semi-regular contact with the student. A rating of "3" was given if the person considered the student in the photo a friend and a rating of "4" was given if they considered them a close friend.

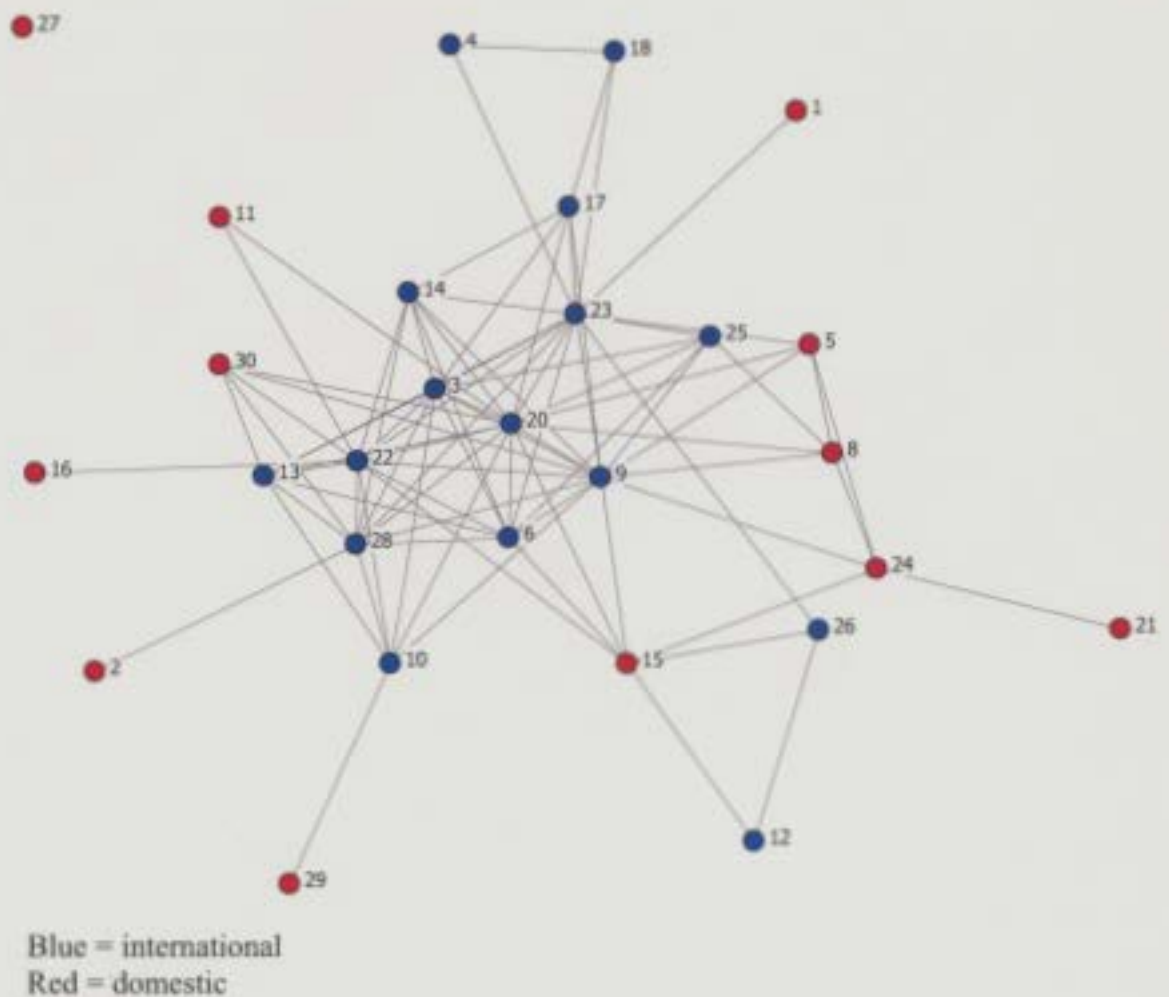
NetDraw, which is a program for drawing social networks, was used to chart the social relationships that exist between the students participating in this study.



*Figure 5.1.* Social networks of international and domestic students (acquaintance or better). Includes non-reciprocal ties and layout shows node repulsion with "equal edge length" ties, i.e. all relationships are considered equal.



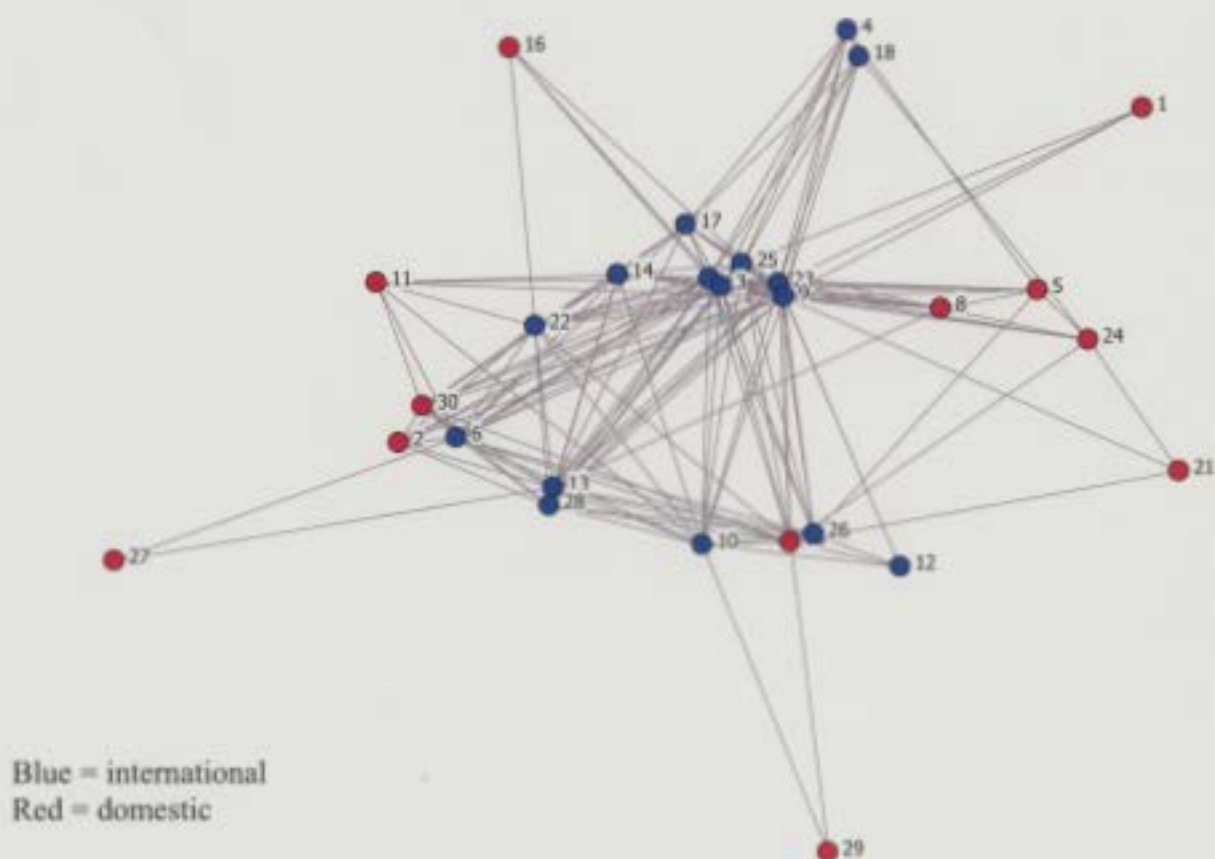
Figure 5.1 shows the social networks of all of the student research participants. Relationships that were given a rating of “1” are not included. The majority of the international student nodes are focused in the centre of the network diagram, meaning that the international participants are more connected to the overall network of student research participants. Obviously, all of these students likely have social connections with other students that did not participate in this study. This diagram does not account for the closeness of a relationship, but takes into account any relationship that was rated as acquaintance or higher.



*Figure 5.2.* Social networks of international and domestic students (friend or better). Includes non-reciprocal ties and layout shows node repulsion with “equal edge length” ties, i.e. all relationships are considered equal.

When you analyze the data in the same manner, but only include relationships ranked as “friend” or better, you get a similar display of core relationships (see figure 5.2). Again, international students identified several of the research participants as a friend or close friend, whereas domestic students identified very few. The domestic students in this figure appear to be even further isolated, except for number 30. It is

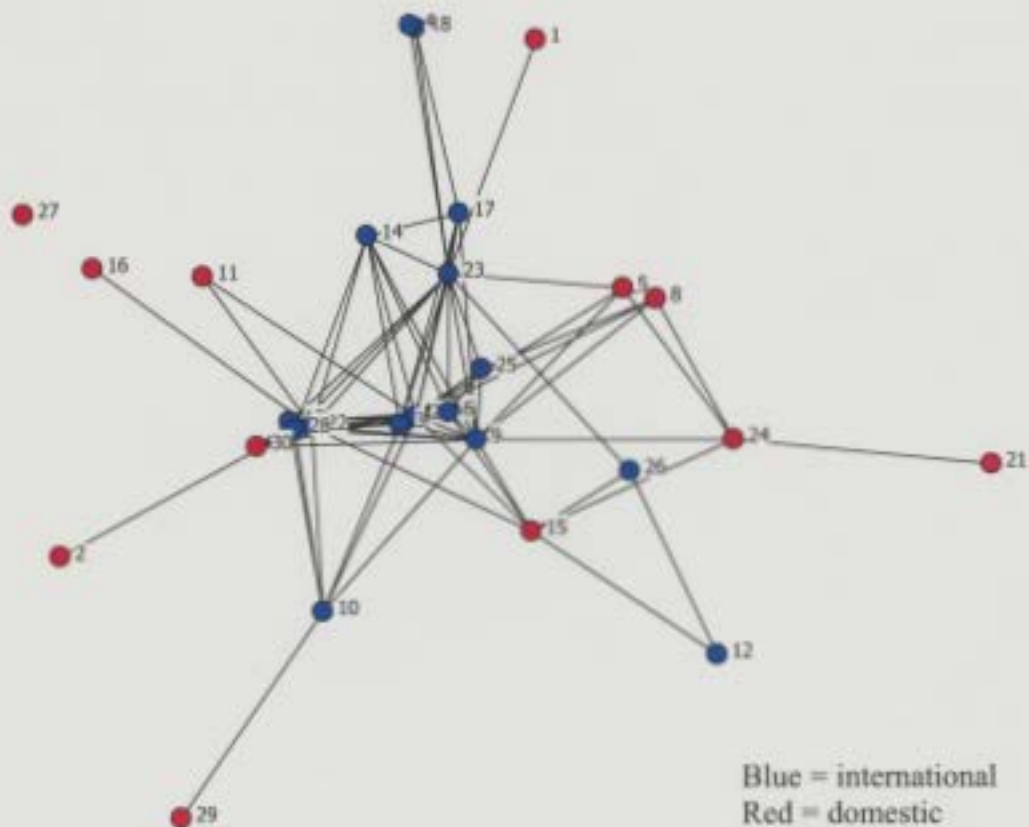
interesting to note that this domestic student (#30) is actually roommates with an international student.



*Figure 5.3.* Social networks of international and domestic students (acquaintance or better) using multi-dimensional scaling. Includes non-reciprocal ties and layout employs MDS (Multi-dimensional Scaling), which groups nodes based on the similarity of their connections.

Multi-dimensional scaling groups nodes or participants based on their similarity of relationships or how much they know the same people in the sample. In figure 5.3, it is apparent that there are smaller groupings or networks within the international student

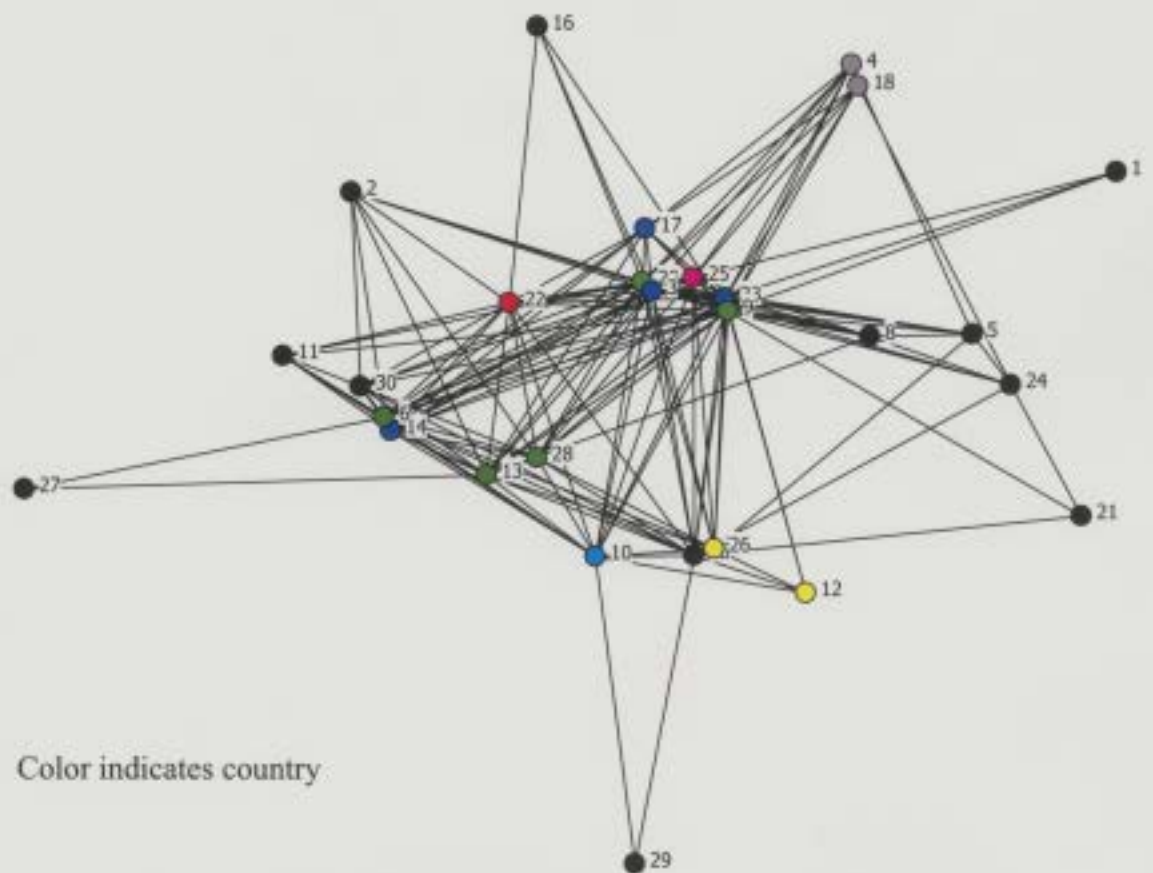
group. For example, nodes number 9 and 23; 4 and 18; and 13 and 28 know almost exactly the same group of students and consider them to be at least an acquaintance.



*Figure 5.4.* Social networks of international and domestic students (friend or better) using multi-dimensional scaling. Includes non-reciprocal ties and layout employs MDS (Multi-dimensional Scaling), which groups nodes based on the similarity of their connections.

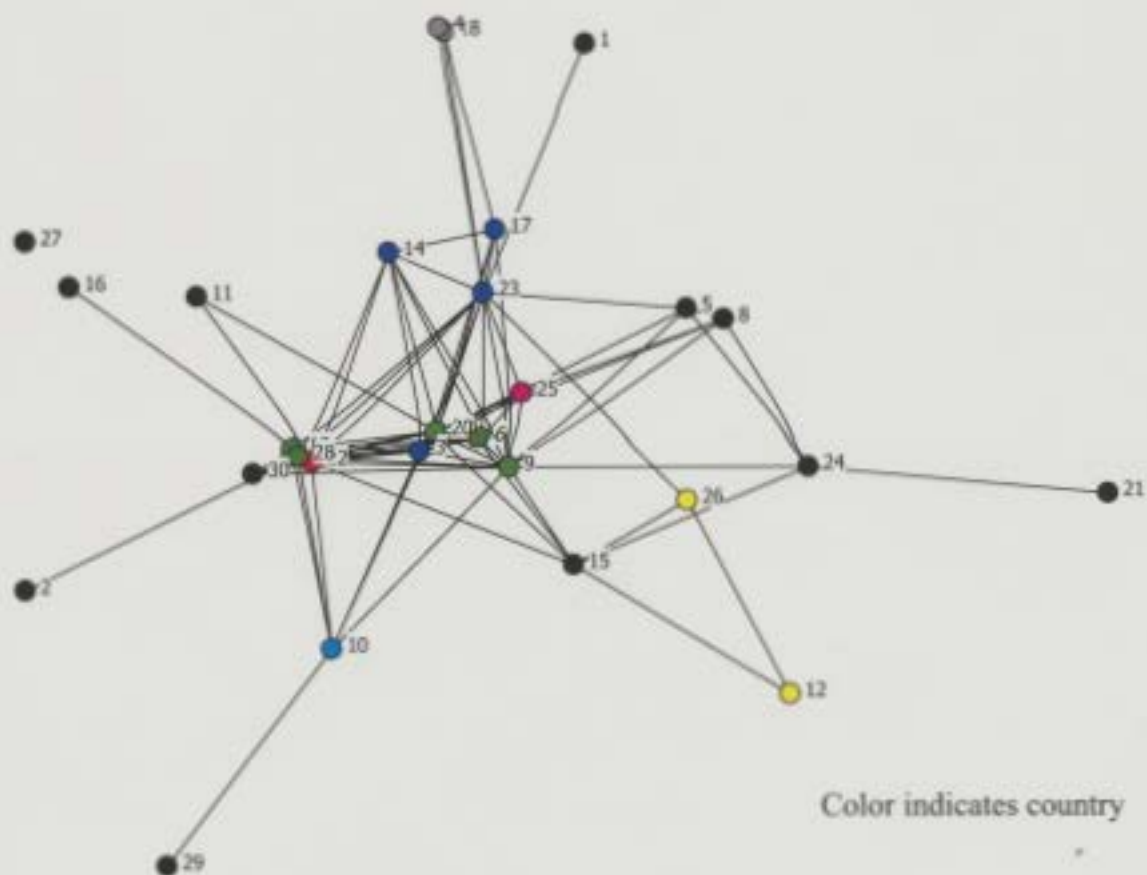
When looking at the similarity of relationships using multi-dimensional scaling at a “friend” or better level, there are some variations (see figure 5.4). Some students, who are very similar with respect to their network of acquaintances, actually vary a little bit when

purely looking at “friend” relationships. For example, nodes 9 and 23 were very close in their “acquaintance” relationships, but appear somewhat further apart in their “friend” relationships. Other students, such as nodes 22 and 28 appear much closer or similar when looking at who they consider to be a “friend.” Nodes 5, 8, and 24 seem to be more closely connected than other domestic students (see figure 5.4). It is worth noting that these three students are all in the same program of study and are all in their third or fourth year.

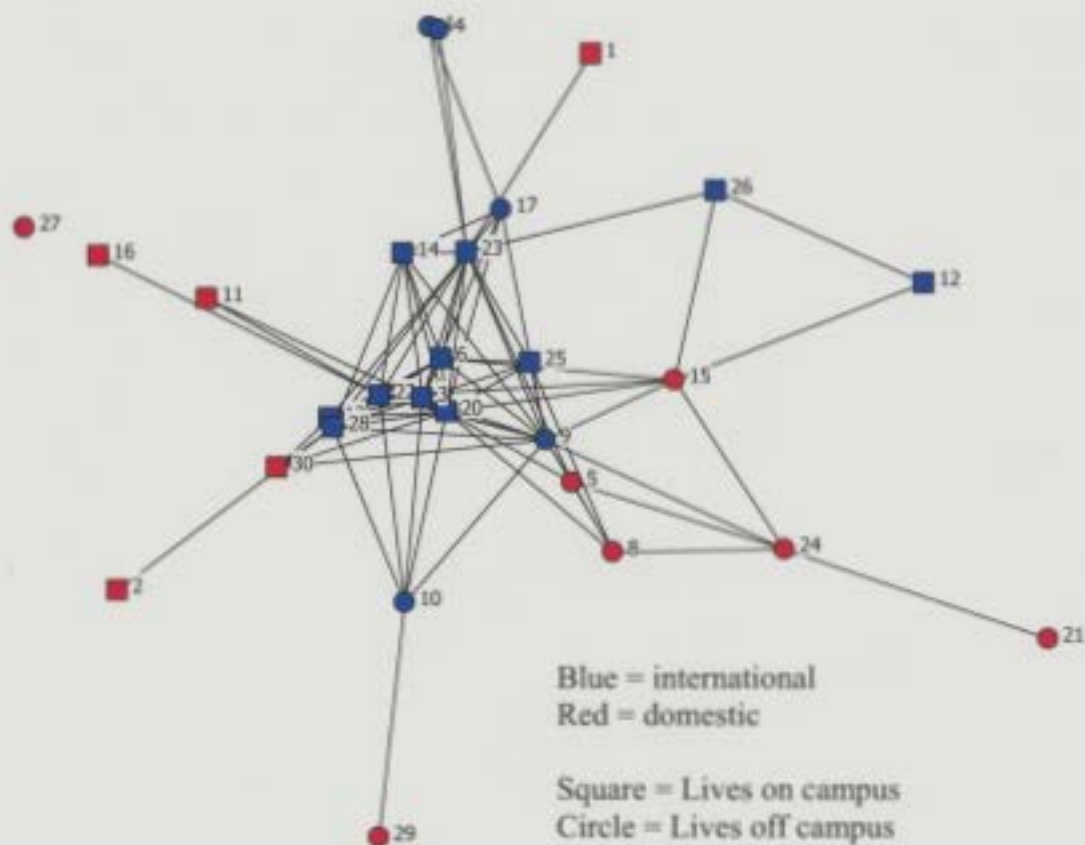


*Figure 5.5.* Social networks of international and domestic students by country (acquaintance or better) using multi-dimensional scaling. Includes non-reciprocal ties and layout employs MDS (Multi-dimensional Scaling), which groups nodes based on the similarity of their connections.

As mentioned previously, Grenfell College does not have a large number of students from one specific country. In this study alone, there was representation from eight different countries, including Canada. When analyzing data using multi-dimensional scaling and breaking it down further by country, you do notice some similarities of networks based on country of origin. For example, the two grey nodes have a very similar network of “acquaintances” (see figure 5.5) and “friends” or better (see figure 5.6). The fact that some students have similar networks does not mean they do not interact with others, it just means that they tend to interact with the same group of people as each other.



*Figure 5.6.* Social networks of international and domestic students by country (friend or better) using multi-dimensional scaling. Includes non-reciprocal ties and layout employs MDS (Multi-dimensional Scaling), which groups nodes based on the similarity of their connections.



*Figure 5.7. Social networks of international and domestic students showing on and off campus (friend or better) using multi-dimensional scaling. Includes non-reciprocal ties and layout employs MDS (Multi-dimensional Scaling), which groups nodes based on the similarity of their connections.*

International students who live on campus tend to be more closely connected to each other than those living off campus (see figure 5.7). There are a few exceptions to this statement. Nodes 12 and 26 are both international students who live on campus, but they are not as connected as many of the other on-campus international students. It is interesting to note that in their interviews they both stated that they do not consider themselves to be true international students. They are both from the United States and



feel that their culture is very similar to that of Canadian culture. There is one international student who lives off campus, node 9, who appears to be highly connected; however, this student did live on-campus in the past. All of the other off-campus participants have always lived off campus.

	International Students	Domestic Students	All Students
International Students	7.0	1.5	8.5
Domestic Students	2.0	0.8	2.8

*Table 5.1. Average number of connections (friend or better)*

On average, international students were connected to 8.5 study participants (both international and domestic) as a friend or close friend, including non-reciprocal relationships (see table 5.1). In comparison, domestic students were only connected to 2.83 participants (both international and domestic) as a friend or close friend (see table 5.1).

International students do form a network of social relationships on campus. Of the 16 international student participants, all but 3 were acquaintances with at least 10 other international student participants. There were not many social connections amongst the domestic student participants. International students, on average, identified seven international students in the photos as their friend or close friend (see table 5.1). Domestic students identified 0.8 domestic students as their friend or close friend (see table 5.1). This would imply that in our sample, although international students predominantly identified fellow international students as their friends or close friends, they still identified more domestic students as their friends or close friends than did

domestic students themselves. On average, international students identified approximately 1.5 domestic students as a friend or close friend, whereas domestic students only identified 0.8 (see table 5.1). The reason for this was not evident from this study; however, one theory is that international students become more a part of campus because of their lack of family connection in the community and their inability to go home regularly. The majority of international students live on campus and they do not go home on the weekends and they often do not go home during extended breaks, whereas domestic students who live in Newfoundland often go home on the weekends and almost always go home for the extended breaks. International students are normally physically on campus more than the majority of the domestic students; therefore, they would have more opportunity to socialize with others on campus and in the Corner Brook area. It would be interesting to involve a larger sample of domestic students in this study and analyze the social networks of the entire student population. Based on the sample in this study, it is difficult to make broader generalizations.

Living on or off campus also appears to impact student relationships and networks. On average, international and domestic students living on-campus identified 7.1 students (international and domestic) in the photos as friends or close friends, whereas international and domestic students living off-campus only identified 4.8.

#### *5.6 Benefits of Social Interaction*

Both international and domestic students recognize that there are many benefits when social interaction occurs. Some students were hesitant to distinguish between the groups because they feel there are benefits in social interaction with all students. Some

domestic students made such comments as, "It's important to interact with anyone...I don't know if you really say it's important to interact with international students especially." When questioned further, they identified specific benefits associated with social interaction between domestic and international students. Both international and domestic students identified similar benefits such as, awareness of different cultures; new perspectives; learning; and assisting with adjustment to a new culture.

One international student indicated that social interaction with Canadian students may assist them academically in that study groups can be formed or you can borrow class notes. Academic assistance was only mentioned by one international student as a primary benefit; however, this benefit is discussed in Bochner's functional model whereby he states that domestic students are often the preferred choice for helping with such things as academic difficulties. Studies have shown that increased interaction with local students does lead to greater academic success (Ward et al., 2001).

Although students identified several benefits, this is not to say that they are being realized by all of the interviewed students; however, most students understand the potential benefits. One international student commented on his feeling that these benefits are not being realized to their true potential. When asked whether there are any benefits for Canadian students in having international students study at Grenfell, the international student said, "It benefits so few. The select few are those who are really interested...are those who really want to know. Those who don't want to know don't benefit." This student feels that international and domestic students are definitely interacting with one

another; however, there are no benefits being realized, there is no exchange of knowledge or learning occurring.

A couple of additional benefits, other than those related to social interaction were mentioned. One international student stated that domestic students benefit financially by having international students on campus; this student said, “That’s the benefit, why they can reduce their tuition is because our tuition is increased.” One domestic student and two international students stated that by having international students on campus, the university benefits from greater world recognition. One international student said, “People from outside normally talk about Grenfell College as the ‘school up the hill.’ (Having international students on campus) helps them know that it’s internationally known, people are traveling here to do their degree and I guess they’d respect Grenfell a little bit more, it would be put on more of a pedestal.”

International and domestic students identified potential benefits of interaction to be, awareness of different cultures; new perspectives; learning; and assisting with adjustment to a new culture. International and domestic students at Grenfell appear to be interacting with one another on a certain level; however, the big question is to what extent are benefits being realized and what more could be done to further foster relationships that would result in greater benefits.

#### *5.6.1 Benefits – awareness.*

Both the international and domestic students recognize that social interaction with international students can result in a greater awareness of different cultures and may

make people more culturally sensitive; it can bring new perspectives; and result in learning, in general.

One international student thinks it's important for people to be aware that there are students from different countries studying at Grenfell. He said, "When things are monocultural, then you tend to have views from the same stand point. Just to know there are people from different cultures...it may make (people) re-think and re-choose their words."

Two international students commented that sometimes, when speaking with a domestic student, they are able to help them understand an aspect of their culture that may frequently be misunderstood. For example, they may be talking about a world issue that is related to the international student's country; therefore the international student can share their opinion and better explain how things actually are in that country and what the climate is. By having a discussion and debating an issue, people get to see a new perspective and may understand a different culture or world issue in a new light. One international student said that these cultural misunderstandings can be challenging, but "where there's a will there's a way." One international student feels that the benefit of this type of learning is not often realized "because (Canadian students) are not deeply interested, therefore it would not matter if (international students) are here or not."

Some domestic students feel that international students do bring a new perspective. One student said:

I think (international students) bring a different perspective on things. They open your eyes. I grew up where the first coloured person I ever saw was in grade nine. They brought a whole new interest...they were different and made you realize that there is a whole other part to this world. I think it's important, for them as well, to realize that there's another world over here as well, so it's win-win.

Another domestic student, when asked if they felt there were any benefits in having international students study at Grenfell, said "Yeah, like why not? It's just basically exposure and getting people to realize that there's necessarily nothing wrong with these people and they're just like the rest of us and probably get their typical views out of their heads and stuff like that."

Both of these students see value in being exposed to international students. The primary benefit expressed was a greater awareness of new cultures. These students believe domestic students will gain a better appreciation of both the differences and similarities they share with international students.

Domestic students can potentially learn from international students; international students can learn from domestic students; and international students can also learn from other international students. Several international students stated that it is important to interact with Canadian students because they want to learn more about the country where they are studying. One student said, "It's important (to interact with Canadian students) because you need to learn about the place and the customs and how things work." Another international student said, "It's from interaction with Canadians that I find out

what's going on in Canada, like with politics. I can learn that through the news, but it's better to talk to people and it's actually fun."

Several international students feel that Canadian students benefit by being exposed to and learning about various cultures. One international student said, "Without going outside, they can see what other cultures are around." Another student said, "One (benefit) is when you interact with international students, you expand your knowledge base of different cultures, with that knowledge, if it's someone who likes traveling a lot, then you already know what to expect, so that would be easier on the person."

Seven international students identified that domestic students may have more of an interest to travel to other parts of the world after meeting them. One international student said, "If I was a Canadian student and I saw students from Mexico and Bangladesh, I might think I would like to study somewhere else." A domestic student stated that when she finds out someone is an international student, she is automatically more interested in them "because (she is) really interested in traveling and in different cultures" and she wants to learn as much as she can from the international student. Meeting international students often helps domestic students realize that they could also study or travel elsewhere and further learn about a new culture and location. Domestic students who already have an interest to travel can learn from the international students, not only about their specific country, but about how they coped with moving to a new culture and what challenges they experienced.

International students also learn a lot by interacting with other international students from various countries. One international student said, "I always like asking a lot

of questions to other international students who are here, I may never go there...but I find it really interesting to know a lot about different cultures.” Other international students gave specific examples of what they have learned from other international students, such as the languages that are spoken in different countries and the types of music that are common. A couple of international students talked about how they see similarities between some countries that they did not realize existed, for example, one student said that when she heard the traditional music from a country represented by another student, she felt it was very similar to a specific type of music from her country. Other international students made comments about learning about the industries of different countries and about the political situations. A few international students also commented on how they participated in the celebrations of the Independence Days for both Mexico and Belize.

Another international student feels it’s good for Newfoundland students to interact with international students so they will become aware of other cultures and accept them. He said, “I noticed that here in Newfoundland, it’s a very small community, there are Newfies, and that’s about it...they haven’t had really close encounters with international people.”

One of the Newfoundland students said that he really likes having international students on campus because Newfoundland is “not really that mixed.” He said, “I like to learn about the other countries. I’m curious about it, so I’m always asking questions and it’s nice to see the different clothes that they come over with and all their different cultural stuff. I think it’s definitely beneficial.”



The majority of domestic students said that they did not know very much about the countries that our international students are from; however, several of the students felt that they have learned something new from an international student, but there were other students who felt they had learned nothing from an international student. One student said, "I have not (learned) a whole lot. None of my close friends are international." Bowry (2002) and other previous studies have shown that lack of learning from international students is normally a result of lack of interaction.

One domestic student commented on his increased knowledge of Belize, which has not come from direct interaction with Belize students. This student said he was aware that there were several Belize students studying at Grenfell and this lead him to look it up on a map to learn where Belize was actually located. He said he also learned some things about Belize at the International Student Night last year and he has learned a little bit about their government and economics through one of his classes. A professor, who had a Belize student in another one of her classes, passed on an example of how Belize is starting to use cooperatives as a new economic system.

Many of the domestic students, who felt they have learned something, commented that they really had not learned anything too in-depth. Food is the most common thing domestic and international students said they have learned about from an international student, whether it was from the International Student Event or through seeing them cook in the residence kitchen. One domestic student said, "They eat a lot of spicy food...we tried different foods at the international event. I haven't learned any really in depth things. They don't really talk about it a whole lot, but every now and then something will

come up.” A different domestic student, when asked what she had learned through her international friends, stated, “Not a whole lot. They may say something about their cultural events, but they don’t say a whole lot about what’s going on down there.”

Another domestic student talked about learning about traditional clothing from a specific country and seeing different kinds of jewelry; he felt that he was mainly learning about the more “material things.” An international student, when asked whether people have learned more about his country just by knowing him, said “I think they have, but not as much, just the general stuff...My close friends know a lot, but not everyone.”

Just the presence of international students piques an interest in some students. One student acknowledged that they don’t always learn something directly from an international student, but their curiosity or interest is often piqued. After meeting a student from a specific country, they are more prone to research or look up basic things about the country, such as where it is located. Another student, who appears to know a number of the international students and seems eager to learn new things, explained how he is “really curious about religion and stuff....(and is) always asking questions....It’s interesting to learn about different cultures!” On the other hand, there was at least one domestic student who was friends with a student from a specific country, but still did not know where the country is located geographically.

The majority of international students enjoy talking about their country and like it when other students ask questions about where they are from. Some international students said domestic students ask questions about where they’re from. They most commonly ask about culture, climate, and location. One student, when asked if he

enjoyed talking to other people about where he's from said, "I'm not opposed to it; I'm indifferent." Another international student said it is not necessarily important for him to discuss his home country with students. He said, "Sometimes if they don't ask, I don't see the point, except if they ask reasonable questions....The questions have to be reasonable, I don't like dumb questions. I answer them when they ask and I smile, but in my mind I think, this is stupid. I like people who are genuinely interested." One international student, when asked if people ask many questions about where he is from, said, "Some do and some don't. Most of them don't. There's a small group that takes an interest and that makes us feel good."

One international student commented that Newfoundland students tend to be more interested in the fact that he is an international student compared to people he has met on the mainland. He said, "The people in Newfoundland are normally more surprised and excited (and ask) where are you from? How did you get here? Wow. They tend to be more interested."

By having international students on campus, domestic students are definitely becoming more culturally aware, even if it's at a very basic level. This awareness does not necessarily come from interaction with international students on campus, but for most students, just by seeing international students and knowing that they are on campus makes them realize that there are other countries out there and there are differences.

According to Hidalgo (1993), there are three levels of culture: the symbolic, which involves values and beliefs; the behavioral, which includes how we define social roles, the language we speak, our rituals, non-verbal communication, and other things

that situate us organizationally in society; and the concrete, which includes the visible aspects of culture, such as food, dress, holidays, etc. (as cited in Epstein & Kheimets, 2000). In terms of specifically learning about the different cultures or countries represented on campus, it seems that when learning does occur, it tends to be at somewhat of a superficial level. The vast majority of domestic students indicated learning about food, climate, and dress. These things are more related to the concrete aspects of culture, which unfortunately does not really share anything about deeper beliefs or values of a person's culture. Four domestic students, in addition to mentioning learning about such things as food and dress, did indicate things that were more related to the behavioral level of culture. One student indicated a strong interest in learning about various religions and says he always asks the international students questions about this. This would involve learning a little more about the behavioral or symbolic level of culture, depending on the depth and detail of the specific conversation. This same student also learned about how miscommunication can occur because of differences in the use of English. He used sarcasm a lot, which resulted in a misunderstanding with his international student friend, so he quickly learned how what we say can be easily misinterpreted. How we use language is at the behavioral level of culture. Two domestic students learned about the class division within a specific country and one of the students stated, "I didn't know people still had servants, but they do." This is also related to the behavioral aspect of culture in terms of how a society is organized. One domestic student feels that he has not learned anything new from an international student.

International students have also commented on learning from other international students. Again, a lot of the learning has been about the concrete aspects of culture, such as dress, music, and food; however, some international students made comments about learning about the industries of different countries and about the political situations, which involves the behavioral level of culture.

Some students have learned about these things through direct interaction with international students; however, other students have learned these things from a distance. Some domestic students have learned from the international students specifically by asking questions, but other learning has occurred more naturally by students doing things together, such as cooking together in the student lounge. Without having any interaction, some domestic students have learned about the various represented countries from going to the International Student Event or by just seeing international students in passing in different clothing.

It is interesting to note that in chapter four, some international students stated that adjusting to a new culture was a challenge for them. When they gave examples of this, they were more related to the behavioral and symbolic levels of culture; such as Canadians being judgmental, the difference in family values, and the difference in verbal and non-verbal communication; however, domestic students appear to be mainly learning about the concrete aspect of cultures. When domestic students were asked about the possible adjustment challenges of international students, they were able to identify challenges that were related to the behavioral and symbolic aspects of culture, such as, differences in gender roles and social norms, but they could not give specific examples

based on experiences with international students at Grenfell. If domestic students had a greater understanding of the behavioral and symbolic aspects of the cultures represented by Grenfell's international students, would they in turn have a greater understanding of the adjustment challenges they experience?

#### *5.6.2 Benefits – helping international students adjust.*

It has already been stated in a previous section that the number one thing that helped international students adjust was meeting new people. Sometimes it was specifically meeting other international students, but Canadian students were also identified as a source of adjustment assistance. When international students were asked if they felt it was important to interact with Canadians while studying at Grenfell, some students identified the benefit of having someone teach you more about the culture and how things work, as well as how to get around the school and city. One international student said, "If you really want to get around and get the most out of not only the university experience, but also the community experience, you need to meet people who are from the community, so I think it's very important that you interact with the locals." Another international student said, "It's important because you need to learn about the place and the customs and how things work." A similar comment from another international student was "(Canadian students) can show you around town and help you make new friends."

Most of the specific anecdotes about social interaction helping international students adjust were related to fellow international students. However, international students did make general comments about social interaction with domestic students

helping them adjust, such as, “At first I was feeling like I didn’t know anyone, so that was kind of hard, but gradually I met a lot of friends, so I was okay.” Another international student commented, “Making friends...that’s how I got adjusted to the classes and getting around the campus and Corner Brook.”

A couple of the domestic students who were interviewed also recognized the potential benefit of assistance with adjustment. The domestic students felt that interacting with Canadian students can help international students better understand Canadian culture. One student said that for students who are moving to Canada to study, if you interact with Canadian students, “then you have people that you can come and see and talk to about certain things dealing with Canada....I can kind of help (them) along with general Canadian culture.” Another student stated, “We can help them adjust to our culture and they can learn from us.”

One domestic student thought that there were definitely benefits in international students interacting with Canadian students, but also felt that there were some possible negative factors in that sometimes international students lose their true identity. He said:

I think (there are benefits), but I also think that it’s easy for them to change who they are to fit in with people here and I don’t necessarily think that’s a positive thing; however, if you’re living in a different culture, you’re just automatically going to try to figure it out, so you can interact with them, instead of being seen as different, so I guess that is a mixed thing.

As previously discussed, international students stated that they received a lot of adjustment support from other international students; however, both international and domestic students recognize that domestic students also play a very important role in helping international students adjust. Domestic students can help international students meet new friends, learn about Canadian culture, and navigate how to get around campus and the city.

Compared to previous studies, the amount of social interaction between international and domestic students at Grenfell appears to be higher; however, I believe there is still room for improvement. There are many positive outcomes when this interaction occurs, and one of those outcomes is an improved adjustment experience for international students. According to Ward (2001), when international and domestic students interact, it normally results in a better psychological, social and academic experience for international students. In a study conducted by Hechanova-Alampay et al. (2002), they also found that international students who had a greater amount of interaction with domestic students, experienced a greater adjustment and had less strain. As a university, we must find ways to encourage this type of interaction early in the semester to help facilitate a more successful adjustment experience for international students.

### *5.7 Conclusion*

Domestic students and international students feel that social interaction is occurring between international and domestic students. Compared to other studies, there



does appear to be a healthier amount of social interaction between international and domestic students at Grenfell. Ten (62.5%) international students named Canadian students as being among their closest friends and all of the international students participating in this study indicated that they are friends or acquaintances with Canadian students.

Domestic students perceive that Grenfell is a very welcoming environment and that international students do not have any trouble fitting in. Several international students also commented on the friendliness of Newfoundlanders; however, two international students specifically commented on negative experiences they have encountered with respect to social interaction and in addition to these two students, six other international students commented on how they initially found it difficult to meet domestic students or how they feel there is somewhat of a barrier between international and domestic students. With the exception of one person, domestic students are not aware of these challenges experienced by international students. Although domestic students say they are interested in interacting more with international students, there does appear to be a sense of apathy towards actually initiating further relationships and a sense that some domestic students do not see international students as being different.

Social interaction is key to the successful adjustment of all students. Domestic students may take this for granted and although they feel they are “friendly,” they may not realize that international students are likely lacking the much needed social support that’s necessary for a successful adjustment experience. It is vital for domestic students to

understand this difference because then they may be more likely to provide support by befriending international students.

The vast majority of international and domestic students commented that there is a strong bond amongst the international students. Although all international students were quick to point out that they also have Canadian friends and acquaintances, they feel that a natural bond often occurs with other international students because they are all having similar experiences with adjusting to a new culture and environment. When international students were asked who their close friends were at Grenfell, 87.5% named an international student. Eleven of the 16 international participants (68.8%) named co-nationals as among their closest friends; five (31.3%) named students from other countries as among their closest friends; 10 (62.5%) named Canadian students as among their closest friends; and one international student felt he had no close friends. This is in line with Bochner's functional model of friendship networks. According to this model, international students often have three distinct social networks. The main network normally consists of friendships with people from their home country, which allows them to continue practicing and expressing their cultural traditions, values, and norms. A second network involves interactions with people from the host country, which normally assists with students' academic goals. The third network normally involves befriending other international students, who are not from the same country. This network generally provides support and often exists because students are having similar experiences due to the fact that they are in a new and different environment (Ward et al., 2001).

Grenfell international students displayed similar results in that they identified a high percentage of co-nationals as being among their closest friends; however, unlike previous studies (Bochner et al., 1985; Furnham & Bochner, 1982; Burke, 1990), Grenfell international students identified a much higher percentage of domestic students as among their closest friends. The majority of previous studies have been conducted at larger institutions, so the fact that Grenfell is a small institution with a small number of international students representing several different countries likely contributes to there being stronger relationships between international and domestic students.

The photo identification section of this study showed that there is a core social network amongst international students; international students were more connected to the overall network of student research participants; within the core group of international students there are smaller groupings or networks that appear to be somewhat related to country of origin; and international students who live on campus tend to be more closely connected to each other than those living off campus. There were very few social connections between the domestic student participants. On average, international students identified approximately 1.5 domestic students as a friend or close friend, whereas domestic students only identified 0.8. The international student networks identified in this exercise are again in line with Bochner's functional model of friendship. The reason for the lack of social connections between domestic students was not evident from this study; however, one theory is that international students become more a part of campus because of their lack of family connection in the community and their inability to go home regularly. Previous studies did not analyze social networks in this way.

International and domestic students were able to identify potential benefits of interaction with each other, such as awareness of different cultures; new perspectives; learning; and assisting with adjustment to a new culture. By having international students on campus, several domestic students are definitely becoming more culturally aware, even if it's at a basic level. The vast majority of domestic students indicated learning about food, climate, and dress. These things are more related to the concrete aspects of culture, which unfortunately does not really share anything about deeper beliefs or values of a person's culture. Four domestic students, in addition to learning about such things as food and dress, did indicate learning some deeper things that were more related to the behavioral level of culture, such as learning about religion, class structure, and use of language. One domestic student felt that he has not learned anything new from an international student.

International students have also learned from other international students. Again, a lot of the learning has been about the concrete aspects of culture, such as dress, music, and food; however, some international students made comments about learning about the industries of different countries and about the political situations, which involves the behavioral level of culture.

International students feel that they are benefiting from interacting with domestic students because they are better able to learn about Canadian culture, how things work, and how to get around the school and city.

Compared to previous studies there does appear to be a greater amount of social interaction occurring between international and domestic students; however, there is still

a sense of apathy evident in some domestic students' comments and there is definitely room for improvement. The next chapter will discuss what is currently being done at the University to encourage social interaction and what more could be done.

## Chapter 6: The Role of the University

### *6.1 Introduction*

The university has various programs that are meant to encourage social interaction amongst the general student population. Intramural sports, clubs & societies, and the general student orientation are some examples of structured events that are meant to facilitate overall student adjustment, development, and interaction. There are a couple of programs specifically designed to assist international students in adjusting to their new environment and to facilitate social interaction and integration, such as the international orientation sessions and the International Student Night.

Although there are certain programs and services in place to enhance social interaction, there is more that could be done – not only to increase interaction, but to increase the benefits related to interaction. Some students commented that interaction is occurring, but the full range of benefits is not being realized.

### *6.2 What is being done?*

#### *6.2.1 Orientation for international students.*

International students are encouraged to attend the general student orientation, which allows them to learn about student services, meet faculty and staff, make new friends and have fun. In addition to the general orientation, some sessions are targeted specifically towards international students.

For the past three summers, as part of international student orientation, the Student Services division has hired a student to work as an intercultural coordinator. This position assisted new international students with all aspects of their initial period of

adjustment from their arrival, through general orientation activities and into the first days of class. For example, the intercultural coordinator met new international students when they arrived on campus; introduced them to faculty, staff, and students; gave them a tour of campus; arranged an appointment at a local bank, if necessary; and assisted them with finding their way around Corner Brook. For the past two years, as part of the international student orientation, the intercultural coordinator organized a buddy program for new international students, if they were interested. New international students were paired with a current Grenfell student. Sometimes the current student was an international student, but this was not always the case. The intercultural coordinator sent an email to current Grenfell students to see who would be interested in participating and then paired the students as she deemed appropriate.

Seven of the 16 international students in this study arrived in September 2005 or September 2006, when there was a buddy program in existence. Four of the seven students specifically mentioned participating in the buddy program. Two of the international students who participated thought it was fantastic and commented on the assistance provided by their “buddy” and have actually become very close friends with the person they were paired with. They said it was beneficial because they were shown how to get around campus and Corner Brook, but also they were introduced to a number of people through their “buddy.” The other two did not think it worked out well and felt that their “buddy” didn’t really do a whole lot for them. This program was organized somewhat informally and could be improved for future years. There was no formal training involved for the “buddies” that volunteered.

During the second week of classes, as part of an international student orientation, all international students, including new and returning students, are invited to attend an international student meeting or “meet and greet.” Only international students are invited to this event. Faculty representing the various divisions are invited along with staff members who provide services directly to international students. Pizza and refreshments are provided and students learn about the various services that are available. Students get to meet the various faculty and staff who they can turn to for assistance and they also get to meet the returning international students.

In addition, during orientation there is a grocery store tour organized so international students can see what stores and products are available. This event is primarily organized for international students; however, other students can attend, if space is available. A tour of Gros Morne National Park is also organized primarily for international students; however, other students are also invited, if space is available.

Several of the international students commented that they met a lot of the other international students during one of these orientation activities. There are several activities organized primarily for international students and this is one of the reasons why international students tend to know each other more than other domestic students. It would be beneficial to include domestic students in more of these activities as well. Although it is important for international students to get to know one another, it is also important for them to develop strong connections with domestic students. You don’t have to involve all domestic students, but even by having some domestic students involved in these activities, they would gain a better understanding of the challenges faced by new



international students and would likely introduce them to their already formed social networks on campus. As studies show, international students who interact more with domestic students tend to experience a greater adjustment (Ward, 2001).

#### *6.2.2 International student night.*

In October 2004, the international students at Grenfell College put off their first International Student Night, which has become an annual event. The event is primarily organized by the international students themselves and faculty, staff, students and the general public are invited to attend an evening of cultural presentations and displays, dancing, singing, and food sampling.

Five (42%) of the domestic participants have attended an International Student Night, seven of the participants have not; however, all of the students were aware of the event and what occurs. Twelve of the 16 international participants (75%) participated in the international student night this year. All domestic and international students who were interviewed think this is a beneficial event to have on campus.

When asked about the benefits of the International Student Night, the majority of students gave similar responses and commented on the awareness that it brings. One domestic student said, "I think it just raises awareness that there actually is an international population at Grenfell and teaches people about their countries and kind of makes people aware that there are different ways of living and different cultures." One of the international students believes there are benefits for both Canadians and internationals. He said, "It's good for the internationals because they can show their

cultures and it's good for everyone, including international students, because they learn about different places. It's good for the school's image."

In addition, two domestic students commented that it's nice to attend the International Student Night to show appreciation. He said, "Even just letting them know that we appreciate your culture, that's one of the reasons I went, and we appreciate having you here at the school." Another student said, "They come here and learn all about our culture, so it's nice to actually reciprocate the feeling."

One international student does believe the International Student Event is beneficial, but does not feel it promotes cultural awareness. He feels people just want to be entertained and this event is entertaining and interesting, "it's more like going to see a play." The only true benefit is it reminds people that Grenfell is becoming more diverse. He feels people don't really leave the event with a greater knowledge of the various countries, "but they leave knowing that there are people from all over."

Another international student, who feels that the International Student Night is a great event because "it is the only opportunity that international students have to show their culture in public," feels like it could be improved. He feels it is missing "involvement of local students with the international students."

It is debatable whether the International Student Night encourages greater social interaction between international and domestic students. Although benefits were identified, some domestic students feel that it doesn't necessarily improve social interaction. As one domestic student said, "I think it's still up to the student to take the initiative to go up and speak with one another because it could be like something where

you just watch.” Another domestic student feels the event is beneficial from a learning perspective, but doesn’t feel it gets really personal.

One domestic student does feel that the International Student Night encourages social interaction. This student, who indicated an interest in getting to know more international students, but stated that he was uneasy to strike up conversations with them, attended the international student night and feels now he may find it a little easier to start a conversation. He said, “All of the international students, they were really nice and it was good to learn a little something about each culture, it would make it easier to talk to them.”

A number of international students think that the International Student Night does encourage more interaction. One international student commented on being approached by a guy at school who said he had seen him at the International Student Night. This international student felt that attending the International Student Night encouraged the domestic student to approach him.

A number of international students said that during their presentations, they only have time to share basic information about their countries, but afterwards, people approach them and ask more detailed questions. One international student said, “People who come to watch get to know the internationals and become friends with them... We answer their basic questions through the presentations and then they feel more like, okay now it’s okay to go and ask the questions I’ve been wanting to ask.”

All domestic and international students felt that the International Student Night is a beneficial event. The vast majority of students felt that it did encourage cultural

awareness and basic learning, but it was debatable whether or not it actually facilitated social interaction.

The location and set-up of the International Student Night will have an impact on how much social interaction or participation occurs. For example, one year, the chairs for the people attending the event were set-up in a circle and the international students spoke from the centre of the circle. This type of set-up was much more conducive to interaction and participation. The following year, chairs were set up in rows and the international students were at the front of the room. This was not a good environment for interaction and participation because the people who attended just felt like spectators.

Some students suggested involving domestic students in this event as well. For example, a student from Newfoundland could give a presentation about Newfoundland culture. Not only would this involve a domestic student, but it would also help domestic students realize how difficult it is to explain their culture in words and would make them think about what they would highlight. This type of involvement could also be done as a game or activity at the International Student Night; the organizers could ask for volunteers from the audience to explain Canadian culture in 60 seconds or less. Again, this would encourage some interaction and would help people realize how difficult it is to define culture and how easy it is to just highlight the stereotypes of a culture.

#### *6.2.3 The Humber Education Alliance (International Student Centre).*

The Humber Education Alliance (HEA) is a non-profit organization that is made up of four educational partners: College of the North Atlantic; Academy Canada; the Western School District; and Sir Wilfred Grenfell College. HEA's mandate is to recruit

international students to the Corner Brook area and they also provide some support services to the international students. Throughout the semester, HEA organizes a couple of social activities that encourage building social networks with other international students in the city and also encourage networking with the general public. Students attending Grenfell, College of the North Atlantic, Academy Canada, and the junior and senior high schools are invited to attend these events, as well as the families participating in the homestay program. Activities have consisted of welcome socials early in the semester, barbeques in the park, skiing, end-of-semester parties, and this past year they organized an international fair where the international students made displays to represent their country and the people from the community were invited to view them. In previous years, HEA also organized an international student committee that met to discuss international student issues. Some of the international students did first meet each other at an event organized by HEA.

Only four of the international students specifically mentioned HEA. HEA played a more important role for Grenfell international students who first arrived in September 2003. In September 2003, six new international students registered at Grenfell and four of them were a direct result of the recruitment done by HEA. At this time, Grenfell had a very small number of international students. In 2002 Grenfell only had four international students, three of whom were from the United States (Matthews, 2003, p. 16). None of the new six international students in September 2003 were from the United States. At this time, there were no specific international student services or resources on campus and HEA tried to fill this void. In addition, they tried to create more of an international

community for the new international students by introducing them to each other and to other international students in the area. Over the last couple of years, Grenfell has been increasing its international student population and its international support on campus and as a result, I think students feel less of a connection to HEA.

### *6.3 What do students think?*

All student participants were asked whether they think the university has a role to play in encouraging more social interaction between international and Canadian students or whether they think that's up to the individual student. Answers to this question varied. Some people feel it's solely up to the student, some feel it's a shared responsibility between the university and the individual, and some people commented that the school shouldn't necessarily encourage social interaction specifically between international and domestic students, but should encourage more social interaction between all students.

Several of the international and domestic students feel that the university does have a role to play in encouraging more social interaction between them. Some of the domestic students feel that because the university is actively recruiting international students, it is important that they facilitate interaction to ensure that they adjust appropriately. One domestic student stated this by saying, "If they're encouraging international students to come here, you want to make an environment where they feel they are completely integrated." This student feels that it is the university's "role to make that integration happen." Also, one domestic student recognized that by encouraging this interaction, "if international students make more friends, then it's a lot less stressful." Another domestic student said, "I think the university should instigate some socialization

between (international and Canadian students) because...some people come here and they just get plopped into this school and environment and they're not used to it, a lot is foreign to them and they need to get introduced to people and maybe they can't do it by themselves."

A few of the domestic students feel that the university should continue with the activities that already exist, but not go overboard. One domestic student said, "I think it's nice that they encourage it somewhat, but they don't really shove it down your throat, if you want to go out and have a conversation or befriend a person from another country then fine, but keep up the things like the whole international afternoon thing that they have." Another domestic student also commented on the International Student Night, which they feel is a great event, but said, "it's up to individual students to look for other ways."

Several domestic and international students mentioned that the university should have more events similar to the International Student Night. One domestic student suggested, "instead of just having it about them, have someone from Newfoundland, Ontario...incorporate everyone instead of just focusing on (the international students)."

Another international student commented that the countries represented by Grenfell students have various special occasions, but there is no mention of them. For example, the Mexican and Belize independence days flew by without a mention. He said, "To raise awareness, the administration might be able to host small little events concerning independence of different countries." Another international student who really thinks the International Student Night is a great event suggested having

“international party day where everyone can go dressed up like a topic of one of the countries – make it more visible that there are people from other countries.”

One domestic student suggested that the university help set up a type of language exchange. The student said, “A lot of the international students speak their home language and they speak English, so they could maybe teach some of their language to people. I’d like to learn any other kind of language, I just want to learn the basics, so if you had some of the international students teaching, even informally.”

A couple of students feel the university should encourage social interaction amongst all students. One domestic student said, “I think the university has a role to play with interaction in general. I don’t separate the two groups at all. The university does have a role, but I wouldn’t say in particular for the international students...maybe first when they get here, just to encourage it.” Another domestic student feels that “this school doesn’t really do anything to promote anything outside of classes.” He said, “At other universities there are organizations and clubs that are really important to students and there are sports teams that influence school spirit.” An international student feels that if you promote it as an international thing, the only people that are going to go are international students. He said,

Although there are some international events planned, very few native students attend....Maybe we should cross the “international” out and just say Grenfell students. If we say “International” other students may feel excluded. We don’t have many students; this would be a more convenient way to organize things.



Another international student feels that “if the university does too much for international students, that means the international student is different.” This student stated, “We don’t want to feel different, we just want to be the same to others.”

One international student does not believe the university should directly encourage social interaction between international and Canadian students. They feel that the university’s primary goal is to truly educate people and not just give them a degree. If they are able to achieve this goal, the student believes that social interaction will occur naturally. The student believes that the university should organize events or activities outside of the classroom that truly make people think. For example, a debate on a world issue may indirectly encourage a student to talk to an international student to further understand the issue. He feels that “if you have more of these types of things, then automatically people just interact more” and people will become more globally aware in general.

The students made some great suggestions regarding how to further foster social interaction between international and domestic students. They suggested such things as language exchanges and debates about world issues. Several students also suggested activities similar to that of the International Student Night, which can often lead to highlighting the more superficial or concrete aspects of culture, such as clothing, food and festivals and can often perpetuate the long held stereotypes of specific cultures, if not planned carefully. I think it is feasible for the university to implement many of these ideas; however, it is vital to involve international students in the early stages of planning and development. In terms of a language exchange, the International Student Advising

Centre on the St. John's campus of Memorial University has come up with a new idea called speedCHAT. SpeedCHAT involves setting up booths in a variety of languages and having participants go from booth to booth. At each booth, participants have 5 to 10 minutes to talk to someone in that language. This is a great way to encourage social interaction between international and domestic students.

Some of the ideas suggested by students could also be implemented by a student society. For example, there is an International Student Society on campus and they could organize cultural celebrations throughout the year that represent different countries.

The university could try to organize more debates and panels about various world issues; however, again, it is vital to have student involvement from the beginning in order to actually have a high percentage of students participate in the event.

#### *6.3.1 The classroom experience.*

Some students identified that professors can play a key role in encouraging social interaction between international and Canadian students. One international student said:

When it comes to the university, I strongly believe that professors need to be aware that it's not only Canadians coming to this university. There are 20 something international students. Profs need to start acknowledging this group. It doesn't cost them anything to come to the Registrar's Office and check to see who the international students are in their class or ask where their students are from, especially in the environmental field. (In my country), we have a diversity of natural resources, I could share my country with the class and professors need to

do that more. I think if Profs integrated international students with Canadian students and tried to bring that communication - I think Profs could be the mediator between the international and Canadian student. It's in the classroom that it all starts. You meet people in the classroom.

A domestic student made a similar comment, he said,

If there was some kind of way that it could somehow be a part of classroom interaction, you know, people from other countries being encouraged to talk about their countries maybe through presentations or papers. Sometimes it's obvious someone is international, but it's not always. I think sometimes people are hesitant to talk about where they're from, so if that was encouraged in the classroom, you would automatically learn more and ask more questions. Especially, but not always, international students tend to be quiet, maybe because of language barriers, and then you don't tend to learn anything about where they're from, but if they were given an opportunity to express that more, then you would learn more.

Course content can also indirectly have an impact on social interaction. A few international students spoke of their frustration with course content being predominantly Canadian, when global examples could easily be used. One international student felt he was not encouraged to share examples from his home country and got the impression that his classmates were annoyed every time he tried to share an example.

A few international students mentioned classes where they were encouraged to share examples from their home countries, and the students really appreciated this and felt the professor was trying to help integrate them into the class. One professor asked an international student to speak to a class about a specific special occasion that occurs in her country. The students feel that sharing examples like this also helps the Canadian students learn about a different country and gives them a better understanding of the international student.

One international student stated that he has actually dropped a course before because of what he perceived as being discriminatory comments made by the professor. The student said, “(The professor) was making these comments, very discriminatory comments about different groups of people and I was afraid that she would make a comment like that about my culture, so that’s why I dropped the course because I am sure she would have and then I would have been really, really upset.” The student did not say what was specifically said, so it is difficult to know if this was a case of lack of cultural sensitivity awareness or if it was misunderstanding due to language differences.

One international student commented on a specific class where her professor does encourage her to share things about her country in class. She made a point of saying that she met this professor outside of class; therefore the professor was aware that she was from another country. This student finds that the senior students (2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year) tend to be more interested in hearing about her country, whereas in classes that are primarily made up first year students, or in larger classes where there is no interaction between the student and the professors, there is less interest. At Grenfell, class sizes are

relatively small compared to several universities, particularly beyond the first year. This creates a great advantage when trying to involve different students and perspectives in the classroom.

The vast majority of international students who were interviewed appeared to appreciate people asking about their country and did not mind being called on in class to provide country specific examples. The students who experienced this seemed to enjoy and appreciate it and others indicated that they would like the professor to encourage them to share their perspective. By doing this, professors are utilizing a prime learning resource in the classroom and in turn may also lead to an improved social integration experience for students.

#### *6.4 What more can be done?*

Social interaction is occurring between international and domestic students at Grenfell; however, further interaction could still be encouraged and a greater realization of benefits could be fostered. There is potential for the occurrence of increased learning and enrichment as a result of social interaction.

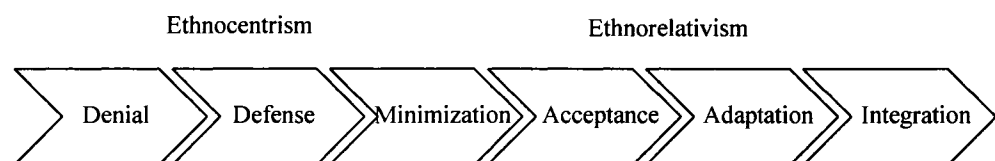
Bowry found that the most important factor in allowing enrichment to occur is social interaction, whether it is interaction in the classroom, in study groups, or outside of the classroom. It was felt that enrichment occurred from “social interaction in any situation in which national, cultural, historical or racial differences between foreign and domestic students surfaced and gave the domestic students an opportunity to see themselves in a different light” (Bowry, 2002, p. 177). This type of social interaction challenges students’ beliefs, views and perspectives and encourages transformational

learning. Transformational learning is about major changes in the way individuals see themselves and focuses on the process of cognitive learning – “the mental construction of experience, inner meaning, and reflection” (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 318). According to this theory, differences in opinions and perspectives can cause discourse, which in turn causes learning to take place.

At Grenfell, it is unclear how much enrichment is being realized through social interaction. Some students identified that they have indeed learned things through having international students in their class and through interacting with them outside of class or at the International Student Night; however, there were other students who felt there was not much in-depth learning occurring. The learning that is occurring is at a superficial level and needs to go beyond this.

#### *6.4.1 Using Bennett’s developmental model of intercultural sensitivity.*

To help increase the quality of social interaction between international and domestic students, universities need to help their students, staff and faculty move towards an environment of cultural awareness and sensitivity. When developing new programs or curriculums, educators can use Bennett’s six-stage developmental model (see figure 6.1) as a guide.



*Figure 6.1.* Bennett’s six-stage developmental model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Komives & Woodward, 2003).

As previously discussed, Bennett's developmental model of intercultural sensitivity shows six stages of development. The first three stages are considered to be ethnocentric. The first stage is "denial of difference." Students generally experience this if they have not had a lot of exposure to various cultures and have not had their views challenged – their own cultural experience is all that they know. The second stage is "defense of difference." Students in this stage often feel threatened by different views and feel that their own culture is superior. Students who are in the "minimization" stage, which is stage 3, often recognize the basic differences in culture, they tend to be very polite and include people from other cultures in their daily life, but they feel everyone is ultimately the same. The final three stages are considered to be ethnorelative stages. Stage 4 is "acceptance of difference" where students begin to recognize and accept differences. "Adaptation to difference" is stage 5 where students begin to empathize with people from different cultures. The final stage is "integration of difference;" students are finally able to look at things in a cultural context and draw their own conclusions (as cited in Komives & Woodward, 2003, p. 428). In these final three stages, students begin to feel less threatened by differences and begin to respect and value differences and become very interested in deeper learning about these differences. In these stages, when students meet people from another culture, they are better able to communicate with them and tend to want to learn as much as they can from them about their views and culture (Mahoney & Schamber, 2004).

The International Student Night, as many of the student participants identified, is beneficial from a cultural awareness and learning perspective. The international student night probably helps move students to the “minimization” stage. The international student night is fairly simplistic in its sharing of cultural views; students may become aware of basic cultural differences and it may stimulate a student’s interest in a specific country, but there is not normally a deep exchange of knowledge.

When discussing the benefits of having international students on campus, several students identified learning and the sharing of new perspectives as a potential benefit; however, many students commented that although they feel some cultural learning occurs, it is mainly about the more superficial or basic aspects of their culture and there is not a lot of deeper learning. Based on some of the comments from the interviewed students in this study, a preliminary analysis may categorize many of the students as being in the “minimization” stage of Bennett’s model. Students interact with international students and involve them socially and are somewhat interested in learning about the basics of their culture, but they likely don’t think there are great cultural differences between them. Some of the international students made comments to this effect as well, comments like “We’re not that different than anyone else...everyone is the same.”

The key to moving students through to the final stages of Bennett’s model is by engaging students in a more complex discussion or analysis of cultural differences. Students must have their views challenged and must be encouraged to evaluate them. This can often be accomplished through such techniques as role-playing, research, and small group discussions (Mahoney & Schamber, 2004). In a university setting, this can be



fostered in the classroom by professors encouraging the sharing of a variety of perspectives and can also be realized through various programs organized through student services.

One international student recommended that more events or activities be organized outside of classes that truly make people think. For example, a debate on a world issue may indirectly encourage a student to talk to an international student to further understand the issue. This type of event may also help move students to the later stages of Bennett's model.

#### *6.4.2 Intercultural learning programs.*

Some universities have established intercultural learning programs, which tend to be fairly informal programs that involve student services professionals, international students, and domestic students. These types of programs are meant to encourage domestic students to learn about the cultures, histories and global issues of their fellow international students and ideally help reduce typical stereotypes. This type of program became popular in the United States after the release of a study by Lee, Abd-Ella, and Burks (1981) entitled *Needs of Foreign Students from Developing Nations at U.S. Colleges and Universities*. This study found that international students found it difficult adjusting to the ignorance of American students. The majority of domestic students were not knowledgeable about various countries represented by international students and often held inaccurate stereotypes and tended to ask uneducated questions, such as, "Do you live in a tree? What is the capital of Africa? And do you have electricity in New Zealand?" (as cited in Peterson, Briggs, Dreasher, Horner, and Nelson, 1999, p. 71). A

couple of international students at Grenfell made reference to similar “stupid” questions being asked of them, such as, do you have MSN? And do you have cars? Some students feel that the domestic students’ knowledge of their country is just based on stereotypes or what they see in the movies.

The development of an intercultural learning program at Grenfell would be a nice extension of the International Student Night. It would allow for more discussion and analysis, as well as encourage social interaction and therefore should also have a greater impact on the development of students’ intercultural sensitivity and learning in general. This type of program could involve broader discussions of current world events and could also highlight important special occasions that exist in other cultures – these ideas were also suggested by some of Grenfell’s current international students.

#### *6.4.3 Improved peer-pairing program.*

Over the past couple of years, the Student Services division at Grenfell has initiated a “buddy” program or peer pairing program. This was done before an International Student Program Coordinator existed at Grenfell and was primarily organized by a Grenfell student who was hired for the summer to assist with the arrival and initial transition of international students. This program received very favourable reviews by some of the international students and some not so favourable reviews by other students. New international students who wanted to participate in this program were paired either with a current domestic student or an international student. The student coordinator looked for volunteers from the current student population. This program can be built upon in future years. There are pros to pairing new international students with

other current international students; however, there are also pros for pairing them with a current Canadian student.

When international students are paired or buddied with a co-national, the new international student tends to initially feel more comfortable and less stressed; however, if the new student gets too comfortable with having this home culture support, the student's adaptation to the new culture may be inhibited (Rosenthal et al., 2006).

International students often feel a special connection with other international students because of their adjustment experiences, but again, when a new student is paired with another international student, it is easy to feel overly comfortable and not be so eager to get involved in the host culture.

A previous study that evaluated a peer-pairing program that paired international students with a domestic student showed that international students who participated in such a program experienced greater social adjustment than international students who did not participate (Abe et al., 1998). When international students are paired with domestic students the cultural learning can be a two-way experience. Also, when they are paired with domestic students, it is more likely that there will be more social interaction between international and domestic students. International students will still likely meet one another, but ideally the social network of the international student and the social network of the domestic student will intertwine. Previous studies have shown that when international students are paired with a domestic student, the domestic student has "increased intercultural interactions and enhanced cultural awareness" (Ward, 2001, p. 4).

According to Smith, Lambert, Know and Foster (2000) and Smith, Morey and Teece (2002), before initiating programs, such as peer-mentoring programs, it is wise to train domestic students in skills that will allow easier interaction because domestic students may not have the proper skills to act as leaders to the new international students. Some of the international students at Grenfell did not have a favourable review of the peer-pairing program. The students who did not have a positive experience commented that their “buddy” was more interested in their own friends and did not really talk to them much or assist them. A training program may help alleviate these issues if the students are more aware of the challenges faced by international students and more aware of what they could potentially assist them with or talk to them about. Westwood and Barker (1990) structured a peer-pairing program to help establish personal relationships between a new international student and a domestic student. The program was an extension of their general orientation program and actually continued over an eight month period. In this program, the domestic student volunteers are meant to be “cultural interpreters, facilitators and information givers, referral agents, confidants, and friends” (p. 256). All domestic students who participate in this program are screened and provided with thorough training. The training involves a session on communication skills, where they discuss such things as cultural modes of expression and communication, empathy, listening, and perception checking. They discuss the conceptual knowledge of the cross-cultural experience and look at the typical stages of adjustment, the factors leading to academic success, and the signs of distress and indicators for psychiatric referral. The volunteers also obtain information on community resources as well as information about

the university's procedures and resources (p. 256). This type of training would be very beneficial for volunteers with the peer-pairing program at Grenfell and would better equip the students for making the program a greater success.

#### *6.4.4 Further internationalization of the campus.*

Merely having international students on campus does not automatically result in the internationalization of a campus; however, international students can contribute to internationalization if they are properly utilized as a resource.

In addition to recruiting international students, internationalizing a campus can involve several aspects of the overall university, such as, Canadian students studying outside of Canada through exchange programs, internships or co-op placements, research and field work, and involvement in international development projects; and professors enhancing curriculum and changing the teaching/learning process by adding international components to course work and teaching (Knight, 2000). Internationalization of the whole campus will lead to greater social interaction between international and domestic students because domestic students will be more globally aware in general and therefore will be more interested in initiating relationships with international students.

At the Grenfell campus of Memorial University, students have an opportunity to participate in the National Student Exchange program, which allows students to go on exchange to one of several participating universities. The vast majority of these participating universities are located in the United States. Memorial University does have a campus located in Harlow, England and some Grenfell students do have an opportunity to spend a semester studying at this campus; however, it is predominantly students

studying fine arts who have this opportunity directly related to their program of study.

Some Grenfell students also take advantage of the French program's study opportunity at the Frecker Institute in St. Pierre. Overall, a very small percentage of Grenfell's student population participates in a study abroad program. It would be beneficial to have a wider variety of exchange opportunities available to our students. If a greater number of domestic students participated in short-term study abroad opportunities, they would likely be more aware of the adjustment concerns experienced by international students and would be more likely to interact with them.

Internationalizing the curriculum can occur at both the macro and micro level of the university. At the macro level, decisions may be made to establish new degree programs with a strong international component, establish new study abroad opportunities, or create new graduation requirements, such as second language proficiency; however, internationalizing curriculum can also occur at a micro level and can be controlled specifically by an individual professor (Shailer, 2006). If professors internationalize the curriculum, students will have greater global awareness and will be more likely to approach international students to discuss what they have learned in the classroom. According to Bond (2006), internationalizing learning involves knowledge about the social-cultural content of other societies; changes in how one responds to cultural differences; how one behaves in intercultural circumstances; and how one keeps their own cultural integrity while understanding and working with others (p. 2).

Utilizing students in the classroom is one of the greatest untapped resources in the classroom. In addition to the new perspectives and knowledge of international

students in the classroom, there may be domestic students present who have extensive international experience. Professors can try to learn about the backgrounds of their students early in the semester and utilize their knowledge (Bond, 2006). According to the *AUCC report on internationalization at Canadian Universities*, less than 5% of participants from post-secondary institutions in Canada said that they draw upon international students as a teaching and learning strategy in the classroom with high frequency (Knight, 2000). International students often bring different perspectives to the classroom and may have experiences that are relevant to course content.

There were a few international students at Grenfell who indicated that their professor had asked them questions about their country in class and none of these students were opposed to this. Other international students who had not been specifically called on in class said that they would not be opposed to this and they really like it when they are asked about their country. Obviously some international students may be shy and be reluctant to speak out in class. Professors should be cautious when calling on international students in class because the student may feel put on the spot and may feel very uncomfortable, which could further alienate them. Professors may want to speak with the students individually outside of class to gauge the students comfort level, but again, the student may feel obligated to give a positive answer to a professor, even though they are not comfortable with the idea.

There are other methods, other than calling on international students in class, to further utilize international students as a learning resource in the classroom. Ho, Bulman-Fleming, and Mitchell (2002) suggest four strategies for utilizing international students as

a learning resource. In addition to calling on specific students to offer their unique perspectives in class discussions, they suggest forming multicultural groups to work together on projects, using students as guest speakers, and having students act as cultural resource people (p. 7).

Multicultural group work is a less intimidating way for international students to share their perspectives because discussion occurs in a small group setting. When doing group work, it may be beneficial for the professor to assign the groups to ensure that no student feels left out. In addition to the sharing of different perspectives, multicultural group work can also help “students learn how to communicate, interact, and solve problems with people from other cultures” (Ho et al., 2002).

Inviting international students to give presentations in class is another way to utilize them as a learning resource. This could be very intimidating for a student, but some international students would be more than willing to share their perspective with a class. One international student at Grenfell said that one of her professors asked her to speak to a class about a special occasion that occurs in her country. This student was more than willing to do this and was quite pleased that she was asked. Giving a presentation would entail more work on the part of the international student, but they would gain valuable presentation experience (Ho et al., 2002).

There is always a concern when you have one or two individuals representing a specific country or culture that people will think their views are consistent with the rest of their country. This can sometimes lead to further stereotypes, so it is important for all students to realize that when international students share their knowledge and



perspectives, it is from an individual stand point and may not necessarily speak for their whole country.

In Bowry's study (2002), he looked at whether international students have an impact on the education of domestic students studying at Queen's University. He found that international students do enrich the education of domestic students. In the classroom, depending on the course, domestic students generally perceived their education as being enriched by the international students because of the new and different perspectives that they brought, and the awareness about different countries and cultures. Some students may not feel comfortable speaking out freely and may need encouragement from a professor. If active participation of international students is not being encouraged in the classroom, both groups of students are missing out.

In order for students to reach the later stages of Bennett's six-stage model of intercultural sensitivity and in order for transformational learning to occur, students need to have their beliefs and thoughts challenged by others. Through interaction and discussion in the classroom, both international and domestic students will experience differences in opinions and perspectives that can in turn cause discourse, which often will result in learning.

Encouraging international students to participate in class discussions will not only facilitate further learning for both international and Canadian students, but it may also have an impact on social interaction because students will have a greater awareness that there are international students on campus and will have a greater understanding of their country and cultural differences.

Having faculty and staff participate in exchange or mobility programs can also encourage internationalization of the curriculum. According to Knight (1994), when faculty and staff have had an opportunity to work or conduct research abroad, they are more likely to bring international perspectives into the classroom. These types of programs should be encouraged at the macro level.

Internationalization of the campus does not just involve academic services; extra-curricular activities can also play a part. Extra-curricular activities, such as clubs, events, and associations can be related to international issues and help create an international outlook (Knight, 1994). At Grenfell, there are some examples of non-academic international activities. Last Christmas, the Off-campus Housing Officer coordinated volunteers to collect donations for Operation Christmas Child, which is an organization that collects Christmas gifts for needy children around the world. The Ghana Project is a ratified initiative of the Grenfell College Student Union, which raises money for children's school uniforms in a poverty stricken area. Various professors and societies show international films and operas on campus throughout the year. The Art Gallery on campus continually has international art exhibitions. Guest speakers with international expertise give presentations on campus and international poets put off poetry readings. Last year, students were given an opportunity to participate in a Model United Nations. This is a simulation of the United Nations system and students take on roles as foreign diplomats. Participants research a country, investigate international issues, debate, deliberate, consult, and then develop solutions to world problems. More of these types of

extracurricular activities are needed, but again, student participation must also be encouraged.

Cross-cultural training is a vital part of internationalizing a university campus. Whether interacting with international students on campus or studying/working abroad, faculty, staff and students must know how to live, study and work with individuals from various cultures (Knight, 1994). This type of training is often organized through the international advising office on university campuses. At Grenfell, there is no international centre or international advising office on campus; however, in recent months, the Student Services division has hired an International Student Program Coordinator. In the near future, there is a session planned for faculty and staff.

Further internationalization of the Grenfell campus can occur at both the macro and micro level. At the macro level, Grenfell can initiate more study abroad opportunities for both students, staff and faculty; and create new degree programs or requirements with a stronger international focus. At the micro level, faculty can encourage more international perspectives in the classroom from students with international experience and share their own international experiences that they have obtained through their research, work or travel; faculty and staff can support extra-curricular activities that have an international development component; and the institution or a specific department can organize on-going cross-cultural training for faculty, staff and students.

### *6.5 Further Research*

The sample in this study was limited; although a high percentage of international students participated, there was only a small sample of domestic students; therefore broad

generalizations cannot be made based on these findings. Also, the adjustment of international students and their social success often depends on personality, country of origin, and previous travel experience. International students at Grenfell are from various countries, are at different stages of their degree, have lived in Canada for varying lengths of time and have all had different life experiences that may impact their experience at Grenfell. It was difficult to focus on specific factors pertaining to the international students because they could easily become identifiable.

It would be beneficial to do further research involving a greater percentage of the domestic students studying at Grenfell. It would also be useful to look more closely at specific factors affecting social interaction of students in general, such as living arrangement, previous travel experience, program of study, and classroom experience.

#### *6.6 Conclusion*

This study has looked at the current state of social interactions between international and domestic students studying at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College. Although a healthy level of social interaction exists, it is questionable whether all potential benefits are being realized. Some domestic students do appear to be somewhat culturally aware; however, there does not appear to be a deep exchange of cultural knowledge; several students identified that the cultural learning tends to be at a superficial level.

Most students feel that, although social interaction is ultimately the students' responsibility, the university does have a role in fostering relationships between international and domestic students. Students suggested such things as expanding or continuing with events like the International Student Night; having a language exchange

program; having general debates about world events and issues; and having greater international student participation in the classroom through encouragement by professors.

Although studies have shown that international students do provide a strong support to one another, it is important to have a balance. International students also need to have a support network of domestic students. When the university initiates programs and services to assist international students, it is important not to encourage segregation. Grenfell is a small campus with a small number of international students; therefore, a relatively healthy level of social interaction has been naturally occurring. As the campus continues to grow and the number of international students increases, it is important to continue encouraging this interaction. Some other universities have experienced a “segregation” of international students caused somewhat by university programming. As Bowry (2002) found, at Queen’s University, the educational benefit of having international students on campus was diminished because of things such as a separate week long orientation specifically for international students, the international student centre, and floors in residence specifically reserved for international students. Bowry (2002) states that these services were created to provide international students with a strong sense of community and support; however, it does not promote interaction with Canadian students. At Grenfell, it is important to continue with the programs and services that have already been put in place, such as the international student orientation session, the peer-pairing program, and international student night, but with some minor adjustments or improvements. In addition, we must continue to develop a greater global awareness and interest among students. This can be achieved through intercultural

learning programs, improving the classroom experience by encouraging more participation of international students, and by further internationalizing the campus as a whole.

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APPENDIX A: ICEHR approval

April 27, 2006

**ICEHR No. 2005/06-067-ED**

Ms. Carolyn Parsons  
Faculty of Education  
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Dear Ms. Parsons:

Thank you for your re-submission to the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) for your research proposal entitled "*Exploring social interactions between international and Canadian students at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College*". The ICEHR is appreciative of the efforts of researchers in attending to ethics in research.

The Committee has reviewed the proposal and we agree that the proposed project is consistent with the guidelines of the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS). Full approval is granted for one year from the date of this letter.

If you intend to make changes during the course of the project which may give rise to ethical concerns, please forward a description of these changes to ICEHR for consideration.

If you have any questions concerning this review you may contact Dr. Katherine Gallagher at [kgallagh@mun.ca](mailto:kgallagh@mun.ca). We wish you success with your research.

The TCPS requires that you submit an annual status report to ICEHR on your project, should the research carry on beyond April 2007. Also, to comply with the TCPS, please notify ICEHR upon completion of your project.

Yours sincerely,

T. Seifert, Ph.D.  
Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee  
on Ethics in Human Research

cc: TS/en  
Dr. K. Gallagher  
Supervisor

#### APPENDIX D: Interview Guiding Questions (International)

Name of Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Start time: \_\_\_\_\_

End time: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Introductory/Background questions

- Where were you born?
- Where did you grow up?
- What country did you live in before moving to Grenfell?
- Had you traveled outside of your country before moving to Corner Brook?
- What is your first language?
- Do you speak any other languages?
- When did you start studying at Grenfell?
- How many years do you plan on studying at Grenfell?
- What are you studying at Grenfell?
- How did you hear about Grenfell?
- What was your biggest factor in deciding to study at Grenfell?
- Where are you currently living; who are your roommates; how did you choose your roommates?

2. *Photo identification* – students will be shown photos of various Grenfell students (other interview participants) and will be asked: do you know this student; what is the student's name; how well do you feel you know this student; where did you meet this student?

3. Focus on adjustment issues:

- Do you remember how you felt when you first moved to Corner Brook?
- When you first moved to Corner Brook, did you have any difficulties adjusting?
- What were your main challenges or concerns?
- What or who helped you adjust to a new culture and environment?
- What advice would you have for new international students?

4. Focus on social interactions between domestic and international students:

- How would you describe your overall experience as an international student at Grenfell?
- Who are your closest friends at Grenfell (how many Canadian friends, international friends, etc.)
- How do you meet people at Grenfell? (through regular classes, during orientation, on your own, through an organized on-campus event)
- In what ways do you interact with your friends on campus? (e.g., watch movies, go for coffee, study together, etc.)



- Do you think it is important to interact with Canadians while you are in studying in Canada?
- Do you know if there is a community or group of people from your country in Corner Brook? Have you ever made contact with someone from your country in the local community?
- How do you think Canadians view international students?
- Did you attend the orientation program offered to all first year students?
- Do you think the local students you meet know very much about where you are from?
- Is it important to discuss your home country with other Grenfell students and members of the Corner Brook community?
- Did you participate in the international student night held at Grenfell in October?
- Have you had the opportunity to interact with Canadian students?
- Would you consider yourself to be very involved on campus? Are you involved with any on campus clubs, societies, teams, etc? Do you work on-campus?
- Are you involved with any groups or societies off-campus?
- What have your experiences been like in the classroom? Do you participate in class discussions? Do professors encourage you to share your international experiences in classroom discussions?
- Do you think there is anything the university can do to help improve the experiences for international students?

##### 5. Concluding the interview:

At the end of each interview, I will summarize what has been discussed and tell the student that they will have an opportunity to participate in a focus group with other international students and will have an opportunity to verify what was said in the interview.

## APPENDIX E: Interview Guiding Questions (Domestic)

Name of Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Start time: \_\_\_\_\_

End time: \_\_\_\_\_

### 1. Introductory/Background questions

- How many years have you been studying at Grenfell College
- What are you studying?
- Do you speak any languages other than English?
- How did you hear about Grenfell?
- What was your biggest factor in deciding to study at Grenfell?
- Where were you born?
- Where did you grow up?
- In your hometown, did you have international friends?
- What is the population of the community you are from?
- Have you ever lived outside of Canada for more than 2 months?
- Have you ever traveled outside of Canada?
- Where are you currently living; who are your roommates; how did you choose your roommates?

### 2. Photo identification – students will be shown photos of various Grenfell students and will be asked: do you know this student; what is the student's name; how well do you feel you know this student; where did you meet this student?

### 3. Focus on international adjustment issues:

- What do you think would be main adjustment concerns of international students first moving to Corner Brook?
- What help is available for these students when they encounter concerns?
- What advice would you have for new international students?

### 4. Focus on social interactions between domestic and international students:

- Do you know any international students attending Grenfell? What countries are they from?
- Who are your closest friends at Grenfell (how many Canadian friends, international friends, etc.)
- How do you meet people at Grenfell? (through regular classes, during orientation, on your own, through an organized on-campus event)
- In what ways do you interact with your friends on campus? (e.g., watch movies, go for coffee, study together, etc.)?
- Did you attend the orientation program offered to all first year students?
- Do you know very much about the countries that our international students represent? Would you like to know more?

- Did you participate in the international student night held at Grenfell in October?
  - Have you had the opportunity to interact with international students?
  - Would you consider yourself to be very involved on campus? Are you involved with any on campus clubs, societies, teams, etc? Do you work on-campus?
  - Are you involved with any groups or societies off-campus?
  - Have you been in classes with international students? Do they ever share anything about their country or their perspective on issues?
5. Benefits of interacting with international students?
- Do you think it is important to interact with international students, why?
  - Do you feel there are any benefits to you in having international students study at Grenfell College?
  - Do you think there are any negative factors in having international students on campus?
  - Would you like to have more interaction with international students?
  - Do think there is anything the university can do to improve do to increase social interaction on campus?
6. Concluding the interview:

At the end of each interview, I will summarize what has been discussed and tell the student that they will have an opportunity to participate in a focus group with other international students and will have an opportunity to verify what was said in the interview.

## APPENDIX F: Interview Consent Form

Dear Participant,

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland. As part of my Masters of Education degree in post-secondary studies, I am required to complete a thesis. Individual, one-on-one interviews are the focus of my research; however, I will also be conducting focus groups. My thesis research is entitled Exploring the current level of social interactions between international and Canadian students at Grenfell College.

The purpose of my study is to provide information to the administration at Grenfell College so they can better assess the current situation and possibly develop or improve current services and/or programs on campus. The interviews will provide the necessary detail and insight on students' social experiences at Grenfell and will give us the opportunity to explore other related issues.

Photo identification will be part of the individual, one-on-one interviews. In order to participate in this study, you must agree to have your photo taken by the interviewer. Your photo will only be used as part of the interview sessions and will not be used in my thesis. Other participating interviewees will be shown your photo, they will not be told your name or anything about you, they will just be asked if they know who you are and if so, in what context they know you.

The information gathered through the interview process will be used for the purposes of my thesis research and will only be used with your consent. Your participation is completely voluntary and you have the right to decide if you want to answer questions or not and you have the right to withdraw from the research at anytime without explanation. If you decide to withdraw from the study, any information that was already collected will be destroyed. Participation in this study will have no effect on your academic standing; there is no credit or grade associated with this participation. Confidentiality is of utmost importance in this study; your name and other identifying information will not be included in the thesis. To help ensure that confidentiality is maintained, you will have the opportunity to review and make amendments to the analysis of your interview before the final draft is completed.

Interviews will take place throughout the month of April and will be 1 – 1.5 hours in length. I will accommodate your schedule, when setting up interview times.

This study has been approved by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR), which means it is ethical according to university guidelines. If you have ethical concerns about the research, please contact the Chairperson of ICEHR at [icehr@mun.ca](mailto:icehr@mun.ca) or by telephone at 709-737-8368.





