



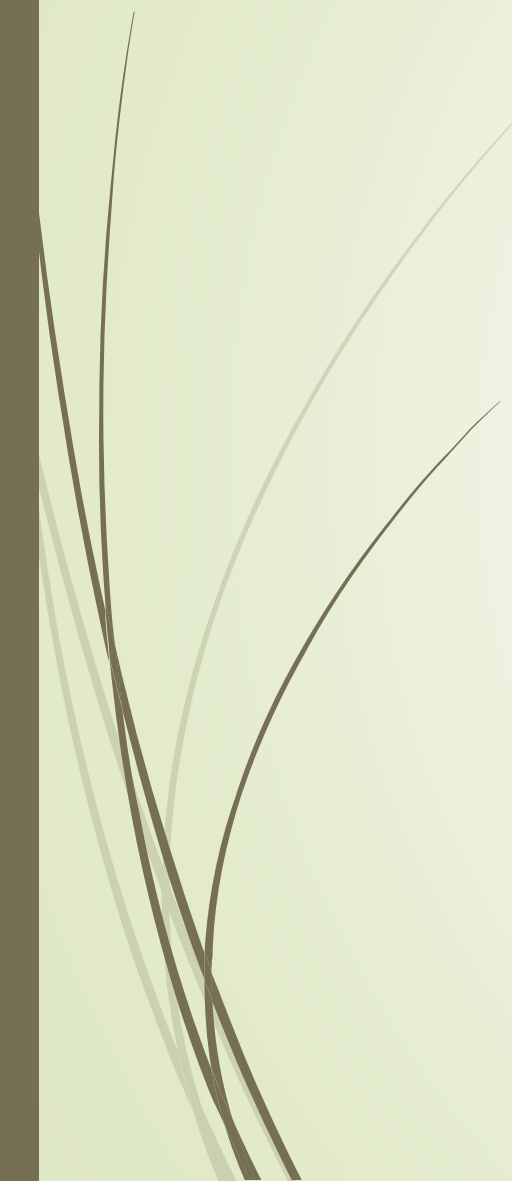
# Are they picking up what we're putting down?

Efficacy and Impact of a Cultural Transition Course for First-Year  
International Students

February 5, 2016 | Nelson Brunsting  
WISE Conference | Wake Forest University



# Overview

- Introduce the challenge
  - Examine the research literature
  - Focus the research question
  - Outline the method
  - Interpret results
  - Jointly determine limitations, conclusion, and future research
- 

# Introduce the Challenge

Students make multiple transitions, all with a cultural component, when attending university in a foreign country.

Greater cognitive and emotional load of multiple transitions correlates with acculturative distress, leading to:

- Lower academic achievement (Martinez, DeGarmo, & Eddy, 2004).
- Illness, depression, and hopelessness (Wang et al., 2013).

Call: What can we do to help international students successfully navigate these transitions?



# What are colleges doing?

- Pre-Orientation Programs
- Bridging Programs
- International Student Housing
- Transition courses (both for-credit and non-credit)
- Others?



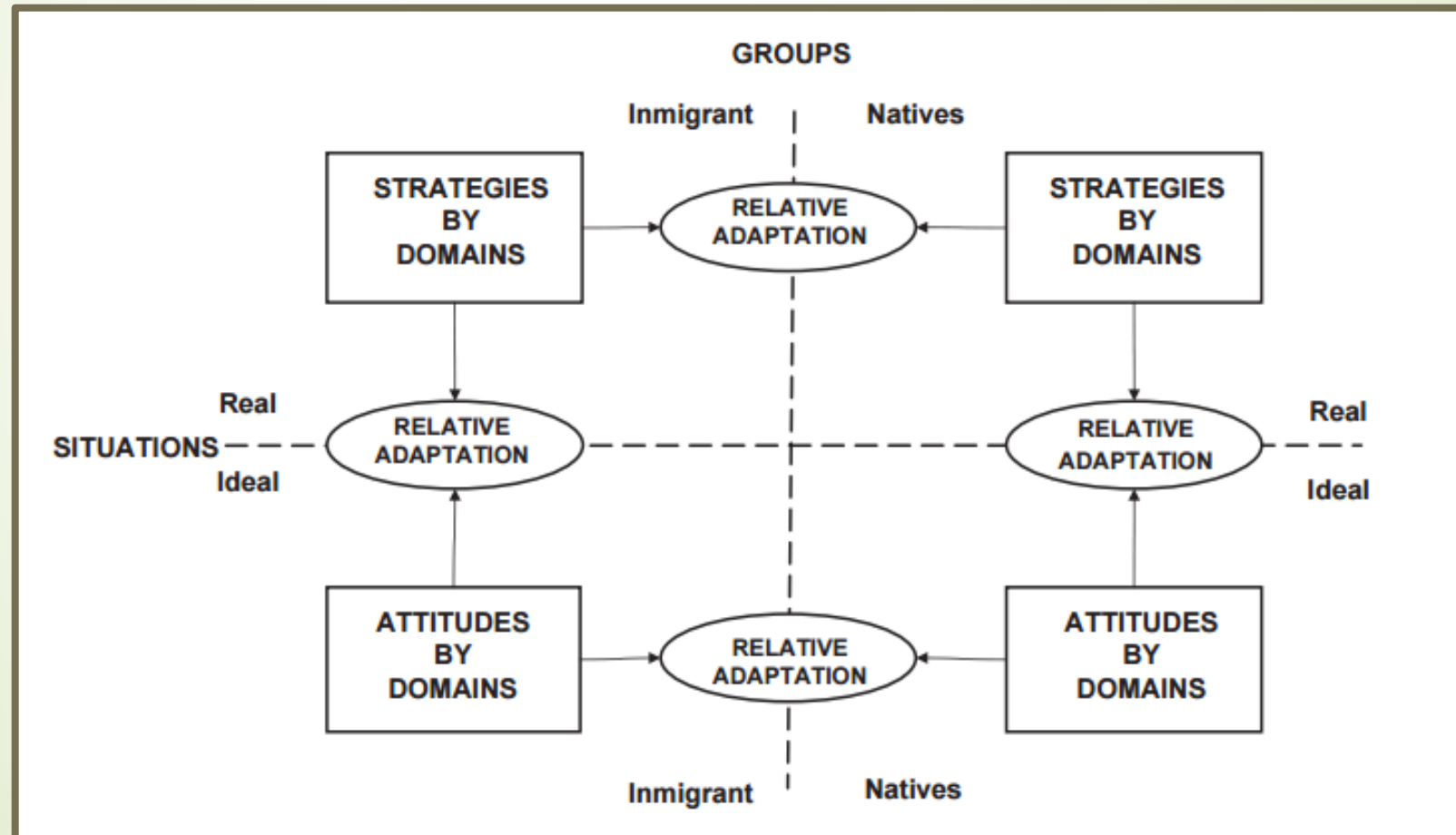


# Examining the research literature

- ▶ Andrade (2006)
  - ▶ Most useful semester class information: host culture expectations, host culture social norms, and group-work experience
- ▶ Kovtun (2011)
  - ▶ Student outcomes from semester class:
    - ▶ Greater perceived written and presentation abilities
    - ▶ Higher comfort with people of diverse races/orientations
- ▶ Smith & Khawaja (2014)
  - ▶ Student outcomes from course-like intervention (8 hrs):
    - ▶ Increased coping self-efficacy
    - ▶ Increased psychological adaptation

# Bringing in Theory

- Relative **Acculturation** Extended Model (Navas et al., 2005)





# Determining Course Content

We'll be perfect roommates as long as you never touch anything of mine and leave the second my friends come over.

someecards





# Building Course Structure and Content

- ▶ 1 credit hour (12.75 contact hours, 50min/wk, 1 semester)
- ▶ 2 sections, ~15 students each
- ▶ Content:
  - ▶ Theory and intercultural skills
  - ▶ Academic expectations (classroom structure, faculty office hours, presentations, group-work)
  - ▶ Navigating roommate issues
  - ▶ Cultural norms and expectations
  - ▶ Cultural literacy (news, media, and sports)





# Developing the research question

- ▶ Do students report increases in perceived knowledge, confidence in using, and usefulness of the nine focal concepts taught in the course?
  1. Intercultural competence
  2. Shifting perspectives
  3. Suspending judgment
  4. Solving problems with roommates
  5. Communicating with students from other cultures
  6. Interacting in class with students from other cultures
  7. Making friends with students from other cultures
  8. Communicating with faculty
  9. Self-advocacy



Method





# Outlining the method

- ▶ Longitudinal design with three time points
  - ▶ T1: early fall semester (within first six classes) first year
  - ▶ T2: end fall semester (after class completed) first year
  - ▶ T3: end fall semester sophomore year
- ▶ Survey Measures
  - ▶ KCU Form (Lane, Menzies, Bruhn, & Crnobori, 2011) adapted to test for nine intercultural skills or applied contexts
  - ▶ Campus Belonging (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990)
  - ▶ Campus Social Support (Sarason, Sarason, Shearin, & Pierce, 1993)

### Directions

Please rate the concepts or skills in terms of how knowledgeable you are about them, how confident you are in your ability to implement them, and how useful each concept or skill is for you. **CIRCLE** the number that best represents your rating for **EACH** concept or skill.

### Knowledge

0 = I have no knowledge of this concept or skill.

1 = I have some knowledge of this concept or skill.

2 = I have more than average knowledge of this concept or skill.

3 = I have a substantial amount of knowledge about this concept or skill.

### Confidence

0 = I am not confident in my ability to use this concept or skill.

1 = I am a little confident in my ability to use this concept or skill.

2 = I am confident in my ability to use this concept or skill.

3 = I am very confident in my ability to use this concept or skill.

### Usefulness

0 = I do not believe this concept or skill is useful.

1 = I believe this concept or skill is somewhat useful.

2 = I believe this concept or skill is more useful than average.

3 = I believe this concept or skill is very useful.

Concept or Skill	Knowledge	Confidence	Usefulness
Intercultural competence	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Self-advocacy	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Communicating with students from other cultures	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Interacting in class with students from other cultures	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Solving problems with roommates	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Making friends with students from other cultures	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Communicating with professors	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Shifting perspectives	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Suspending judgment	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3



# Administering the Survey

- ▶ Survey Administration

- ▶ In last 15 minutes of class (for students in course)

- ▶ Online through Qualtrics (for students not in course)

- ▶ Survey Response Rate

- ▶ Class: T1 90.6% (29 of 32); T2 96.6% (28 of 29)

- ~~▶ Online: T1 9.0% (8 of 89); T2 25% (2 of 8)~~





# Results

# Pre-/Post-Survey Increases in KCU Scores

Item	Knowledge	Confidence	Usefulness
Intercultural competence	.50**	.50***	.37*
Shifting perspectives		.42**	.27*
Suspending judgment	.39*		
Solving problems with roommates			.21*
Communicating with students of other cultures	.47***	.36*	
Interacting in class with students from other cultures	.30*		
Making friends with students from other cultures	.26*	.26*	
Communicating with faculty			
Self-advocacy	.29*	.36*	.36*

# Campus Belonging at T2 (end of fall)

Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	10.428	5.957		1.751	.102
	D_KCU_IC	1.779	.473	.940	3.760	.002
	D_KCU_SA	-1.463	.582	-.719	-2.515	.025
	D_KCU_CommS	-.017	.638	-.008	-.027	.979
	D_KCU_Inter	.781	.567	.325	1.378	.190
	D_KCU_Solve	-1.008	.631	-.388	-1.598	.132
	D_KCU_Friends	.292	.639	.120	.457	.655
	D_KCU_CommP	-2.123	.602	-.898	-3.524	.003
	D_KCU_Shift	-.295	.404	-.157	-.729	.478
	D_KCU_Suspend	1.115	.421	.672	2.646	.019
	CB_1_Agg	.418	.309	.315	1.355	.197

a. Dependent Variable: CB\_2\_Agg



# In their words

➤ What was the most important idea or concept you learned?

“Culture can be analyzed through different lenses. To know more about culture will help me interact with others”

“From this course I learned how to get along well with my roommates”

“How to interact with other people and get to know the culture to understand the reactions of people better”



# Discussion



# Acknowledging Limitations

- No control group
- Small sample size ( $n = 28$ )
- KCU measures perceived knowledge, not actual
- Others?





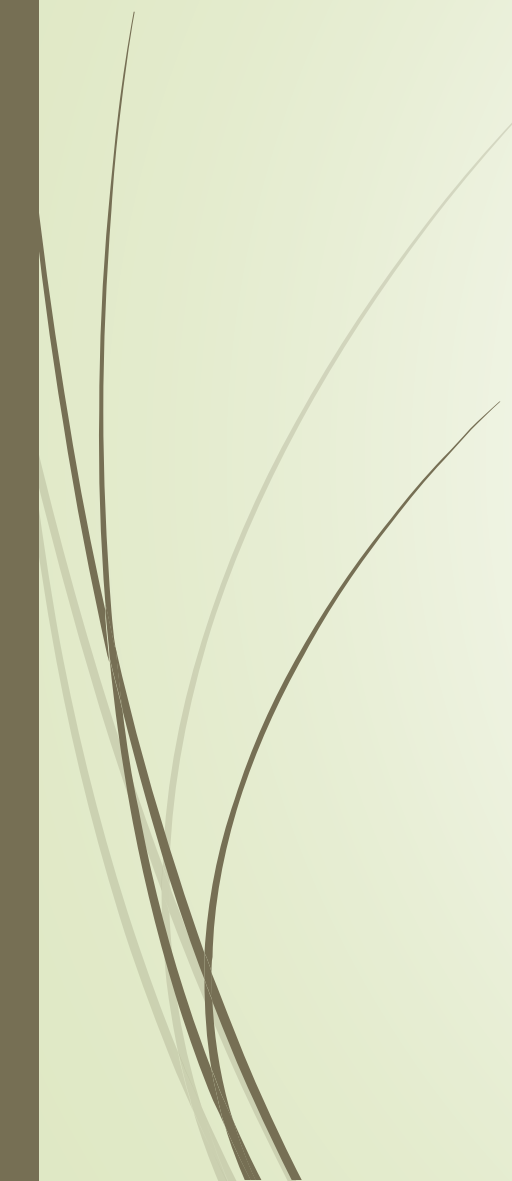
# Making contributions



- ▶ Students in cultural transitions course perceive gains in both intercultural skills and in using skills in certain challenging situations.
- ▶ Even a one-hour course can be effective.
- ▶ Intercultural competence and shifting perspectives may impact campus belonging.
- ▶ Connection with students on campus may be more important than connection with faculty for campus belonging.
- ▶ Others?



# Mapping the future

- ▶ How would you refine, change, or build on this work?
  - ▶ Refine focus of intercultural skills and contexts to teach and assess.
  - ▶ Include more outcomes: Academic, well-being, global engagement.
  - ▶ Seek a more diverse sample, potentially with current international high school students.
- 

Go forth and contextualize

I. What is the  
gospel

'EMERGENT CHURCH' WAS SO 2005.

NOW WE  
CONTEXTUALIZE

memegenerator.net



Questions?

