

**LABELED INDIVIDUALS:  
THE INFLUENCE OF STEREOTYPES ON INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION  
BETWEEN AMERICAN AND NON-AMERICAN STUDENTS**

A Thesis by

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The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommended that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in Communication.

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## **DEDICATION**

To my parents and my sister, Ladan

“Once you label me you negate me.”  
Søren Kierkegaard

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to dig the negative influences of stereotypes on interpersonal communication, and to give public awareness to reduce the number of the victims of isms, labels and negative stereotypes. The arguments are discussed in different cultural, social, political and religious contexts, and the findings are supported by qualitative and quantitative research methods. The particular emphasis is given to the influence of stereotypes on interpersonal communication between American and international students at Wichita State University, Kansas. Two different surveys were taken by two groups of American students (N=50) and international students (N=50). Thirteen other individuals were interviewed to express their authentic personal feelings of being stereotyped. The study offers practical and theoretical solutions and remedies to help the educators and students solve stereotypic issues that are main communication barriers even at multicultural universities.

This study indicates that 80 percent of the international students have experienced being unfairly stereotyped and negatively judged, compared to only 32 percent of the American students who had similar feelings. None of the international students had a sense of ethnocentrism, whereas 44 percent of the American students mentioned they feel superiority. Majority of the international students (66 percent) found communicating with American students challenging and difficult, and they believed American students are unpredictable and they feel uncomfortable when interacting with American students. International students' accent and cultural differences are the main reasons American students avoid communicating with international students, and African American and Middle Eastern students are described as the most challenging groups and races to communicate with for American students.

## PREFACE

My life has been full of joy, loss, success, failure, hope, fear and change, but it helped me to make myself stronger after being all broken and beaten by isms, obias, and unfair stereotypes. What makes such pain tolerable is the fact that I have not felt I am alone in this public victimizing. *You* have been cut by the stereotypic dagger too. If it is the right time and place for my confession, I should admit that even me, who am writing against stereotyping, have labeled, tagged, categorized and negatively stereotyped you. Being one of the millions that could not choose their mother tongue or their country of origin, we have been attacked by stigmas, labels, and tags, and have been repeatedly seen with a big mark of *stereotyped* on our forehead.

This paper is a meditation on the problem of negative stereotypic images and it grows out of my research and personal experiences, for nearly over two years of my stay in the United States as an international student, to understand the influence of stereotyping on daily interpersonal communication between American and non-American people, focusing specifically on the students at Wichita State University in Wichita, Kansas. What I hope is increasing public awareness and finding practical solutions to reduce negative effects of stereotypes on the quality and quantity of communication between domestic and international students.



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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

*An American fifth-grader: “Where do you keep your camels?”*

*My response: “Every family in my country has two assigned parking spots for their camels and one assigned parking for their Ford.”*

*The student: “Wow! Really?! I didn’t know you have Fords in your country!”*

This conversation took place at an elementary school in a small town near Wichita, Kansas. As an Iranian Wichita State University graduate student who has served as a cultural ambassador at various community events, I was invited by the school’s principal to give a presentation about my country to a group of first through fifth-grade students. After getting over my feelings of initial shock at the child’s ignorance, I have asked myself how such a young person would come to hold the erroneous stereotype that all Iranians ride camels. Had he learned to think in stereotypical ways about Iran and its people from his parents or teachers, or from the media?

This reminded me of a more troubling experience I had a few months before as I sat in Starbucks doing schoolwork. A gentleman walked to me, introduced himself as a senior history student who had been present at my on-campus presentation on sexual harassment the day before.

*Student: “Is it too personal, if I ask you about Arab women and the fact that you are always sexually abused and raped by your husbands?”*

*My response: “Yesterday, I told you all that I am from Iran, but I am not necessarily Arab, just because of my skin color, or because my country is located*

*in Middle East. Secondly, how do you claim your knowledge as a fact, while as a student of history, you do not know about different countries and their cultures? Finally, why do you generalize and categorize all Arab women as the victims of sexual harassment by their husband?"*

The gentleman apologized gently, grabbed his coffee, and left.

The negative stereotypes I have encountered as a female Middle Eastern Muslim graduate student attending a U.S. university in the State of Kansas have typically affected the quality of any subsequent conversations I have had with those who convey them. Pondering this reality has led me to the research I have conducted for this thesis. Indeed, scholars and others interested in the effects of negative stereotypes share my assumption that being labeled, categorized, tagged, and stereotyped erects barriers that impact the interpersonal communication of international and American college students. After learning through a review of literature that relatively little research has been conducted on the effects of negative stereotypes on relationships between international and American college students, I designed a research project employing both qualitative and quantitative research methods to address this problem. This first chapter of the thesis consists largely of a review of scholarly literature on stereotypes and their negative effects on the relationships of college students, both international and American. Drawing from this material, the chapter's conclusion provides a more fully developed rationale for the research conducted for the thesis.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of the scholarly literature in the area of stereotyping and international/American college students covers the following areas: the origins and history of the word “stereotype;” how stereotypes function in people’s lives; certain types of stereotypes especially relevant to the topic of the thesis; the general effects of stereotypes; stereotyping and interpersonal communication; and, finally, what scholars have learned about the stereotyping of international students on American college campuses.

### Stereotypes: Definitions and History

Stereotype, meaning “solid impression,” is a combination of the Greek words *stereos*, which means solid, and *typos*, meaning impression (Liddell & Scott, 2010). French printer and engraver Firmin Didot coined the word, in 1798, to represent the metal printing plates he developed to replace movable type, which was a duplicate plate, or stereotype, used instead of the original printing. In 1922, American journalist Walter Lippmann first used the word “stereotype” in a modern psychological context in his classic book *Public Opinion*. Lippmann’s oft-quoted statement was intended to explain his theory that people think in ways that affect society. He wrote,

“The pictures inside the heads of these human beings, the pictures of themselves, of others, of their needs, purposes, and relationship, are their public opinion; to examine how in an individual the limited messages from outside, formed into a pattern of stereotypes, are identified with his own interests as he feels ... and how opinions are crystallized into what is called Public Opinion” (Lippmann, 1922, p.18).

Lippmann’s writings inspired a proliferation of research and writing about stereotypes and stereotyping by scholars in the fields of human psychology, sociology, and mass

communication. In addition, the word has become part of the vocabularies of people across the world. Today, uses of the word usually carry a negative connotation. In 1933, Katz and Braley wrote that stereotypes are “inaccurate representation[s] of reality,” and in 1935, they described them as “reaction[s] leading to racial prejudice,” and they happen when people are being categorized unfairly, and then evaluated by ignorance and ill-founded knowledge. In 1976, Hamilton and Gifford claimed stereotypes lead to *illusory correlations*, i.e., incorrect assumptions about people that come from stereotypes and have negative influences on people. In 1994, Hamilton et al. added to the definition of stereotypes by focusing on distinctive and fixed information that people use to judge others in ways that aren’t flattering. Furthermore, sociologists have emphasized that humans use stereotypes in relation to social groups and classes in addition to individuals. The power of the latter way of thinking is seen in the *Dictionary of Psychology*, which defines stereotypes as “fixed and over generalized belief[s] about... specific group[s] or class[es]” (Cardwell, 1996). Based on the annual review report of psychologist (1996), stereotypes are basically centered on cultural differences, with remarkable impacts of individual features such as race, religion, and gender on the way people are stereotyped and evaluated.

Clarifying the differences between stereotypes and other modes of thinking and behavior, Susan Fiske (1998) wrote that stereotyping is a cognitive process that reflects our beliefs and expectations about the members of groups, prejudice effectively represents our emotional reactions to such thinking, and discrimination is the behavioral presentation and action the person takes in reaction to his/her prejudices.

In contrast, there has been considerable discussion about the more positive aspects of stereotyping, and the fact that not all stereotypes are negative. For example, Jussim et al. (1996)

claim that some ethnic and gender stereotypes are accurate, although they admit that many are inaccurate and can be harmful, particularly those regarding people's political origins, beliefs, and/or actions.

### Functions of Stereotypes

Scholars have focused on factors regarding how stereotypes function in our lives. Fein and Spencer (1993) argue that stereotypes are created for social comparison purposes, i.e., to help people demonstrate that they are better than others. In contrast, Tajfel (1981), Bodenhausen et al. (1994), and Macrae et al. (1994), claim stereotypes help us manage our social relationships, by helping us become more efficient in our responses to things we confront during interpersonal communication. McLeod (2008) agrees, claiming stereotyping decreases the amount of thought processing we need to do as we go through our daily lives.

Other scholars place more emphasis on the less positive functions of stereotyping. Jost and Banaji (1994) argue, for instance, that we are prone to using stereotypes to justify the status quo; and Eagly and Robinson (1995) emphasize their utility within certain social environments, particularly as they relate to our ways of dealing with imbalances in the social power of groups, especially in the midst of broader environmental contexts where group conflict is heightened.

But while stereotypes do help people in such ways, their use often leads to imbalances in social and cultural power. Stereotypes often contribute, for example, to the formation and maintenance of social boundaries that mark and separate in- and out-group members. By labeling out-group members in various ways, negative stereotypes help in-group members establish and maintain their positions in society (Hilton & Von Hippel, 1996; Spencer & Fein, 1994).



### Kinds of Stereotypes

There are many kinds of stereotypes that can lead to problems for the individuals and groups subjected to them. But since this thesis largely concerns the impact of stereotypes on international and American university students, this section of the literature review is limited to discussion of stereotypes in the following areas: race, gender, social class, and nationality/ethnicity (Middle Eastern people and Americans).

#### *Race*

It is probably true to claim that every ethnicity, group, and social class has committed racial stereotyping and has belittled other groups (McLead, 2008). Some claim that categorizing people because of their skin color and other physical attributes is a “natural” part of being human. Macrae and Bodenhausen (2000) believed that social category of race is a natural and fixed fundamental category; what matters is the way that people and society interpret such divisions.

Indeed, studying the histories of various civilizations, including American history, validates this point. But research on racial stereotyping also demonstrates the magnitude of this practice. In 1933, Katz and Braly conducted a survey at Princeton University that asked respondents to label the members of various races. The results of their research demonstrate that the students categorized people of various racial/ethnic groups with grossly different labels: Jews as shrewd, Japanese as sly, and African Americans as lazy, ignorant and musical people, compared to intelligent, progressive, ambitious and industrious white Americans.

While many believe that post-Civil Rights Movement Americans don't engage in racial stereotyping as much as they used to, academic studies along with plenty of anecdotal evidence

suggest that the kind of racism Katz and Braly uncovered in their research has not completely disappeared, and the general negative beliefs about races still exist, especially in regard to people of Middle Eastern descent. Because of 9/11 and other events, some Americans incorrectly label all Middle Easterners not only as terrorists, but in other negative ways.

### *Gender*

Gender stereotypes are based on general beliefs about how men and women should think and behave in society (Browne, 1998). Brown et al. (2009) claim that everything and everyone is distinctly gendered. As a result, we tend to think it inappropriate for girls and boys to appear and act in certain ways. For example, spider and soldier Halloween costumes are not appropriate for girls, who should instead dress up in more feminine costumes. The fact is the more we break down gender either-or, the more we establish healthy relationships with fewer moments of gender stereotyping (Brown et al., 2009).

The shaping of gender stereotypes begins early in life, as we are exposed to normative rules and definitions. According to Brown and Lamb, who conducted a 2009 survey, both genders see males as central players in the world. Other studies suggest that children who watch a lot of TV establish more stereotypical images of gender roles, which are mostly masculine roles. What audiences members tend to recall about female roles are stereotypical images of sexuality, exploitation, and suppression (Jensen, 2007).

More specifically in regard to this thesis, the misunderstandings held by both American and international university students about the gender issues of people from other countries are of great concern. What do American students know about the gender issues of Middle Eastern men and women and vice versa? Plenty of anecdotal evidence suggests that Americans often

assume that Middle Eastern women are subservient to the various men who control every aspect of their lives. And on the other side, Middle Eastern people hold stereotypes concerning American men and women. What is of concern in this thesis is whether such stereotypes negatively affect the interpersonal relationships of American and international students, and/or the academic performance of those subjected to them.

### *Social class*

If not all, almost all societies have different levels of status, and prestige for different social groups. Such differentials place each of the society members in a specific level and fit any individual into an identified social category. Such divisions, categories, labels and separations in society shape an important part of any individual's self-definition. By the growth of social science in 1970s, Henry Tajfil published *Human Groups and Social Categories*, one of the famous socio-psychological works about stereotyping. He believed that the social class that people belong to is an important source of pride and self-esteem. Belonging to a specific class and group comes with specific prejudiced views against the other groups. The individual's social class is a representation of his/ her "social identity" and it is what divides the world into "them" and "us" (Tajfil and Turner, 1979).

Social identity theory deals with stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination. Whenever you put an individual into a specific category and identify him/ her with a particular social class or group, you are stereotyping that person. Categorizing people and classifying them under a special class or group means ignoring and spoiling their rights of individuality. Tajfel (1981) defines stereotyping as "categorizing people into groups" based on a "cognitive process" of finding the differences and similarities between different social classes.

Social classification is one of the sources of stereotypes that separates people and put them in two categories of in-group and out-group. Providing such mentality that somebody does not belong to our in-group social class is the beginning of stereotyping the people around us, since they are inferior “them” and you are superior “us”. Tajfil and Turner (1979) call social classification as an explanation and justification for the people who have prejudice attitudes and discriminating behaviors.

Spencer and Castano (2007) found that low socioeconomic status participants in their survey had the worst test scores. Students who come from a low socioeconomic family have lower SAT scores in high school and later, lower acceptance rate for colleges (Sacks, 2004). According to Educational Testing Service (ETS) that administrates exam such as TOEFL, GRE, and SAT, the first generation college students have the lowest scores record (ETS annual report, 2003). Haycock (2001), McGee (2004), Rothsten (2004), and Simpson (2005) found about the relationship between socioeconomic class of an individual and his/ her academic and social achievements. Moreover, the negative influence of social stereotypes on the individual’s physical abilities (Banks & Marshall, 2005), eating disorders (Gard & Freeman, 1996), and sexuality (Cortese, 1989) has been proved and claimed by a lot of scholars.

### *Islamphobis: Religious and Political Stereotypes of Middle Eastern People*

The political and religious beliefs of Middle Eastern people who come to the United States to attend college play a central role in their lives as students. As an Iranian student pursuing a master’s degree at a public university in Wichita, Kansas, I have insight into how destructive negative stereotypes concerning religion and politics can be. One semester I took a Middle Eastern Studies class comprised of about a dozen students. I and one other Middle

Eastern woman were the only non-Americans in the class. When the professor asked class members to identify labels and adjectives describing the Middle East, I eagerly awaited my classmates' responses. It was not surprising to hear the words "war, oil, terrorist, Arabs, Palestine, Iran, nuclear bomb, Islam, fear, women's rights, and suppression." It was a great beginning to a discussion about the stereotypes non-Middle Easterners have about Middle Eastern people. By the end of the semester, most of the American students' negative opinions and stereotypes were gone, and I could see they realized how false their assumptions were about the Middle East and its people.

The example of my class, as well as the writings of scholars and others who study and write about the Middle East and its people, illustrate that, sadly, on first thought, many Americans think this way about Middle Easterners: "They are Muslim, meaning they are terrorists, veiled, oppressed, uneducated, and live in a male-dominated society." How many Americans ask what Muslim women are like beneath their veils? Do they know that there are many cultural differences among Middle Eastern people? Ignoring all of these specifications, seeking simplification, and thinking in stereotypical ways, Middle Eastern people are placed in one category: "Scary Folk" who should be avoided, especially after 9/11. Among some of the more damaging stereotypes that denigrate Middle Easterners are that they are savage, uncivilized, uneducated, unfriendly and prejudiced people who threaten the peace and humanity of the world.

American Nadia Ali Maiwandi, who is of Afghan descent, wrote, "It was a confusing time for all Afghans, too." She was among the Afghans who left their country to be away from the Taliban. Now they were threatened in their new country, but this time under the brutal attack of stereotypes. Some Afghans have claimed other nationalities, such as Greek or Hispanic, to

avoid stereotypical tags and abuses. Muslims have also hid their Allah necklaces. Fatimah, an American- Lebanese student, said that after 9/11 she didn't feel comfortable wearing tank tops because of the tattoo on her arm that says "God is Great" in Arabic script. Dr. Fawzia Afzal Khan (2004) wrote that stereotyping was so rampant after 9/11 that even some who look like they might be Middle Eastern have been targets of abuse.

The Egyptian author, Rabab Abdulhad, whose writings about her 9/11 experiences are included in Afzal-Khan's book, *Shattering the Stereotypes*, said she believes society is forcing Middle Easterners to avoid themselves. She suggests that Middle Easterners should try to pass, thereby forgetting about diversity as they become part of America's melting pot. "Better save your life, if you do not want to be told go back to your home!" This passage from her writings offers a vivid picture of what was going on in her life and mind on 9/11:

I am stuck in the 96<sup>th</sup> street. No trains are running. My hand instinctively goes to my neck to hide the chain with the Qur'anic inscription. Do I want to escape the fact of my fellow Arabs, Palestinians, and Muslims? I conclude! Today is not the time to bravado. Passing is a survival; no matter you are in Palestine or in America, if you are a Muslim, an Arab or the other....I find a Caribbean taxi driver. As the only passenger who knows the back roads, I began to give him directions. Then I began to worry that someone may notice my accent and ask where I come from. So, I keep my mouth shut and try to pass for a professional American woman. Another passenger, I realize from his accent, is Iranian. But we sort of pretend not to notice each other's accents." I should be calm. I have seen this before in West Bank" (Khan, 2004, p.73-74).

### Americans

While there are many stereotypes that denigrate Middle Eastern people, there are also stereotypes concerning Americans. To start with the positive labels, William J. Bennett, the author of a CNN essay titled *America the Generous* (2011), categorizes Americans as charitable people who volunteer a lot. In fact, a 2010 Charities Aid Foundation study found that Americans

ranked fifth in the world in terms of their willingness to donate time and money to various causes (Crary, 2012). In addition, Americans are well known for their optimism (Pew Research Center, 2012).

In contrast, people across the globe hold negative stereotypes of Americans. Not only are they thought of as materialistic over-consumers with an extreme devotion to capitalism (Dodson, 2005), but as uneducated people whose lack of intellectual curiosity makes them ignorant of other cultures and places outside the United States (Wojnar (2008). In addition, non-Americans believe Americans are fat. In fact, many Americans themselves are concerned about the country's obesity problem. In 2011, Center for Disease Control announced that 33.8 percent of Americans are obese because they eat excess amount of fast food.

That Americans are racist is another prevalent stereotype. Indeed, many agree that the country's history of slavery and segregation, including the forcible resettlement of Native Americans, represents a shameful and unforgettable historical legacy of racism.

In conclusion, further American stereotypes relate to their love of guns, arrogant behavior, and ill treatment of women. According to the Seventh UN Survey on Crime Trends (1998-2000), the United States has one of the highest death rates caused by firearms. Dodson (2005) portrays Americans as arrogant people who love to show off. And film represents white American women as dumb tramps or helpless virgins (Clover, 1992).

#### Interpersonal communication: Definitions, effects of stereotypes, and theories

Interpersonal communication involves one-to-one conversations between people that are complicated by the various situational, cultural, complementary, contrasting, and/or emotional contexts they take place within. Interpersonal communication can include all aspects of verbal

and nonverbal communication, and is either informal or formal, depending on whether it takes place between strangers, friends, family members, co-workers, etc. Interpersonal communication also includes on-line communication as well as face-to-face interactions.

Group identity adds further complexity to interpersonal communication. Berger (1986) discusses how uncertainty affects the quality of interpersonal communication, and argues that uncertainty reduces interpersonal communication. Miller (2005, p.183) has highlighted some of the effects of uncertainty on interpersonal communication:

- Verbal and nonverbal communication and the level of intimacy are positively related.
- Verbal and nonverbal communication and similarity are positively related.
- The amount of verbal/nonverbal communication and liking are positively related.
- Similarity and liking are positively related.

In 1960s, Homans, Blau and Emerson introduced social exchange theory, drawing the attention of scholars to the dynamics of the processes of human interaction. According to social exchange theory, “the length, kind, quality and quantity of interpersonal communication are based on the benefits individuals expect to earn in relationships” (McDonnell et al., 2006, p. 359). Thus, during our initial communication with other people, we evaluate whether we will gain, or, in contrast, lose something we value if we pursue relationships with them. Theoretically, the stereotypes—positive and negative—we connect to those we communicate with interpersonally weigh in our evaluations of whether to pursue further communication with them (Cook & Rice, 2003, p.53).

Symbolic interactionism is another theoretical approach that is helpful in assessing the effects stereotypes can have on interpersonal communication. This perspective, introduced by George Herbert Mead in the 1920s, suggests that our interactions with others are affected by our



definitions of various types of people and social groups. Since George Herbert Mead introduced this perspective to American sociologists in the 1920s, it has become a widely accepted theory. Based on this theory, it is correct to assume that we are prone to defining people and groups in ways that eventually coalesce into stereotypes that hold either positive or negative connotations.

But to what extent do people we interact with portray their true selves? Onion theory, which suggests human beings are like onions in that we are comprised of many layers, raises the question: Is it possible humans who fear they are being stereotyped hide certain aspects of themselves from people they don't know? Mongeau and Henningsen (2008, p. 367) explain four stages of social interactions: "At first, individuals interact very little. Then, they become more relaxed to communicate more. Later, an open communication between individuals takes place, and finally communication means a more and deeper personal interaction." It's not difficult to assume that stereotypes can affect the way these stages unfold for people who are getting to know each other.

Another trait of communication relevant to stereotyping is its inescapability. Many assume that if one says nothing, he/she is not communicating. Many communication scholars, however, argue that we are always communicating, even when we don't think we are, because facial expressions, body posture, gestures, and even the way we dress, are part of interpersonal communication. Moreover, communication is irreversible, meaning that it cannot be taken back. In light of such realities, learning about other cultures and social groups will often mitigate the effects of negative stereotypes.

According to Osmo Wiio (1978), if a message can be understood in different ways, it will be understood in the way that harms most, and Hopkins (2011) has written that personal, cultural, and language differences influence interpersonal communication. In addition, Flauaus

and Joeyn's (2009) research suggests that one can never be certain how effectively we are as interpersonal communicators, since there are times when those we are talking with aren't really listening to us, even though they might look like they are.

When there are no cues for people to know what particular strategy is suitable for a specific interpersonal situation, people often go for a "default strategy" that is more common among most of the people (Yamagishi, 2010). In addition, people choose a way of interacting, communicating, and maintaining a relationship that matches better with their social class, cultural identification, political view and economical status which can make them fit better into the popular, superior or in-group category of individuals.

In general, depending on what kind society an individual belongs to, our relationships, communication, and social interactions differ (Greif, 1989). In "collectivist societies" peoples' social lives are bounded by clearly defined social interactions. These people and groups have fewer opportunities to fit themselves into other groups and they have less exposure to new social interactions and relations. Now, for any reason, if a member of the collective society is excluded from his/her current status/ category/ group, it is difficult for him/her to fit into any other alternative status/ category/ group that would accept him/her with one's own beliefs and standards.

The cost of being excluded is a lot higher for the individuals living in a collective society compared to an "individualistic society" (Yeung and Kashima, 2012). In comparison, in individualistic society, the person meets more new people and he/she is more likely used to new situations, new relations and different social interactions. Consequently, the individuals are more open to new situations and new people outside their current relations and interactions. The risk of

feeling being excluded is less as well (Yamagishi, 1998). Western society is an example of individualistic society, and Eastern's is a good example of collectivistic society.

Western society and individuals are more likely following the default social strategy of "assert yourself clearly and accurately." In a sharp contrast to Westerns, Easterners are more concerned about their society standards and harmony, so they try to be less confrontational and logical reasoning during their interpersonal communication. Trying to be non-offensive is a part of their culture and social interactions (Ting-Toomey, 1985).

Such cultural characteristics about Westerns make them seem more direct and logical when interacting with others. So, it is not fair to say that Americans stereotype and offend the others more than non-Americans. Actually, it seems that they assert themselves more logically, clearly and accurately, although the way that they want to uncover the truth is sometimes associated with lack of knowledge and stereotypic images and messages that they have fixed in their minds in order to have shorter and faster ways to conclude and fix something.

Schug, Yuki, and Maddux (2010) added that Westerners are more likely to "self-disclose" rationally and honestly than Easterners. The motive to be accurate and simple is a part of American culture, reflected in communication as well. To communicate accurately, simply and directly, one should communicate informative information as the default strategy of communication (Hall, 1976). Obviously, people from different social and cultural settings have been exposed to different strategies of communication.

Leung and Bond (1982) empirically discussed that Easterners consider maintaining harmony in relationships and integrity in interpersonal communications with others more than Westerners. The participants were asked to give overt responses to an unhelpful target person. The results showed that Easterners were more moderate and less punitive than Americans.

More recent studies put more focus on communication differences in collectivistic and individualistic societies (Kim, Sharkey & Singelis, 1994, Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1996, Kim, 2006). In collectivistic societies (like Easterners), there is stronger interpersonal sensitivity, and group members care about the other individuals' feelings. So, there are fewer offensive social interactions such as negative stereotypes. Kim (2006) found that Easterners and Westerners have different perceptions of communication: Americans look for more clarity and simplicity, whereas non-American Easterners think about maintaining the communication with less hurt to the person's feeling they are interacting with.

Commonality is another factor that influences the way and the aim people communicate with each other. Heath and Wu (2009) reported the results of their empirical social science studies and discussed that people prefer communicating the familiar knowledge, so they would rather communicate with individuals who they have more in common with. Creating stronger social bonds and more connected categories of people with higher percentage of commonality are some of the other remarkable positive outcomes in this field. But what is the negative fact behind this? According to Heath and Wu (2009), stereotypes and classifications will be amplified by such perspective in communication. Their report explains that seeking social bonds, people prefer to communicate with specific groups of people who have more commonality with them. Such a group making process ends up with classification and categorization that are parts of stereotypic labeling and making in-group and out-group people in society.

Consequently, the possibility of meeting and interacting with different people with different cultures, values and beliefs will be limited. When there is less communication, there is less exchange of true knowledge about other people, so the wrong stereotypic images and message remain uncovered and gradually they become some fixed standardized facts about

special group of people. In addition to the mentioned ecological, social and cultural differences that form different ways and purposes of communication, here are some other influential factors that cause communication to be practiced within categorized and stereotypic contexts:

Color and gender differences are the next elements that we use to discuss the negative influences of stereotypes on interpersonal communication among people. Elsie Smith (1981) reported some clinical psychiatric facts about black Americans that they have higher rates of anxiety disorders and more serious “social phobia” compared to whites. Challenging with these issues make them be hostile and paranoid, and they will face more difficulties and harsh interactions when they communicate with people of other racial and cultures.

#### Effects of Stereotypes: International and American College Students

No area of social life is without the negative effects of stereotypes and reminders that those who perpetuate them are incapable of objective reasoning and fair judgment (Lazier and Kendrick, 1993). One might like to think that college and university campuses, which are supposed to be places of learning and enlightenment, would be free of negative stereotypes. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Before reporting on the body of research that looks at the negative stereotyping that affects the interpersonal relationships of international and American college students, a discussion of the relationship between negative stereotypes and shame is called for. One of the most debilitating effects of negative stereotyping is shame. Charles Darwin (1872) called shame a “confusion of mind.” Broucek (1991) claims that shame happens when a person experiences any kind of disgrace, humiliation, embarrassment, or dishonor. And psychoanalyst Helen Lewis (1971) wrote that feeling of shame is more painful than guilt, since

shame is about one's very essence, rather than the result of something one may, or may not have, done.

In the 1980s, the relationship between shame and stereotypes became a major concern of scholars in the fields of psychology, sociology, and communication. A number of Likert scales have been devised to measure feelings of shame, including the Cook Internalized Shame Scale (ISS), which indicates there is a strong correlation between feelings of shame and low-self esteem. In 1984, Lindsey-Hartz emphasized that shame makes people feel worthless, and; in 1987, the Lewis et al. claimed that shame leads to depression, anxiety, and social isolation; and in 2004, Moradi et al. found that the shame experienced when subjected to negative stereotyping makes people more fearful of social interaction.

Shaming is undoubtedly part of what happens to college students who are the targets of negative stereotyping. The concept of "stereotype threat" was the focus of research by Steele (1997) and Aronson (2002). Their findings demonstrate that they can lead to decreases in students' feelings of individuality and self worth, and even to academic failure. In line with such research, Stone (2002) demonstrates that stereotype threats affect the amount of time students are willing to assign to various class-related tasks. Good et al. (2008) found that chronic stereotyping can result in lack of access or ability to pursue to various fields of study and professions.

In a survey administered at the University of California, Berkeley, by Spencer-Rodgers (2001), American students' prejudicial attitudes discouraged them from seeking relationships with international students. And the authors of a 2012 study published in the *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* reported that few international and American students sought to form friendships or working relationships at their highly multicultural university. In the way,

they stated, were feelings of uncertainty, stereotype-induced shame, and discomfort, and the fear of being misunderstood.

In 2002, Hanassab learned that female international students need more support than their male counterparts, and, in 2006, the same scholar reported that, while all international students are subjected to negative stereotypes, individuals from the Middle East and Africa appear to be the most highly targeted international students. According to the Institute of International Education (2012), Chinese students are the largest group of college and university students in the U.S. In fact, Ruble and Zhang (2012) report that some Chinese students have had difficulty adapting to life on American college campuses because of the stereotypes they've encountered on campus. However, on a more positive note, their findings suggest that Chinese students experience less anxiety when they interact with Americans who believed Chinese people are friendly, polite, hardworking, and smart.

Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern report in a 2002 article in the *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* that the more time American students interact with international students, the more prone they will be to overlooking cultural misunderstandings and negative stereotypes. Ruble and Zhang (2012) suggest that non-international students could provide a solution to the stereotyping problem by gaining more cultural knowledge. To do so, they argue, will help them be more open-minded and non-judgmental when interacting with international students.

## RATIONALE

*“You are always one of ‘Them’ for a group called ‘Us,’ and there is always a Southerner for a group called Northerner in every society!”*

Having heard this statement here and there, over and over, I decided to write about how out- and in-group people think and feel about each other, especially when they must interact with each other in college classrooms. As an international student among the American students at Wichita State University, I have felt it important to dig into communication problems and search for solutions and remedies to fill the gap that exists between American and non-American students. As the review of literature demonstrates, while there is a considerable amount of published research on the effects of stereotyping of international students, little has sought to probe the negative results of stereotyping on all the students involved.

More specifically, this study aims to: 1) highlight the existing problems of international students in their efforts to communicate with the American students, 2) remind scholars, educators, and program leaders that greater attention should be paid to finding practical solutions to solve the problems that result from the negative stereotyping of college students who come from different countries, and, 3) warn others that negative stereotypes can cause harm to students’ mental, physical, and emotional health, as well as their academic achievement.

Chapter two explains the methodologies used in the research, and describes the survey and interview respondents who agreed to participate in the study.



## CHAPTER II

### METHODOLOGY

This thesis concerns the impact of stereotypes on the interpersonal communication of American and international college students. Generally, the study addresses the existing problems that international students, who can be considered members of an out-group, encounter in their daily interpersonal communication with American students. The participants, selected materials and procedures, and research questions, are aimed at the development of more effective and less harmful interpersonal communication between American and international students.

#### Research Questions, Participants, and Methods

More specifically, a research project was designed to address the following questions:

RQ1: Is there a relationship between stereotyping and the quality and quantity of the interpersonal communication between American and non-American students?

To address this question, two surveys were designed—one for international students, and a second for their American counterparts (see Appendix A and B). I employed a convenience sampling approach, since amassing a more scientific random sample was not possible. A total of 100 students completed the questionnaire—50 Americans, and 50 non-Americans. Their ages ranged from 18 to 36, with 24 being the average age of the international students, while the average age of the American students was 26. Approximately 56 percent of the international survey respondents are female, and 44 percent male. In contrast, 66 percent of the survey's American respondents are male. The international students are from 14 different countries, including Bangladesh, China, Columbia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan,

Paraguay, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, and Venezuela. According to Wichita State's Office of International Education, there were approximately 1,350 international students among the 15,000 enrolled at the school. At the time of the survey, the International participants had been at Wichita State University an average of approximately one year and seven months.

RQ2: If, in answering question one, respondents report that they have experienced stereotyping, how can they be understood on a deeper level?

To answer RQ2, I interviewed 13 friends and colleagues who were willing to answer questions of a more in depth nature than were possible in a printed questionnaire. Rather than conduct a focus group, I conducted these interviews one-on-one in my office or in the break room at work, since I believed the informality of such an arrangement would lead to more open conversations. Ten of the interviews were conducted in Wichita, and three in California, where I have lived and worked for the past six months. Being in California has allowed me to interact with Americans who are generally of a more cosmopolitan nature than many of those in the smaller and more conservative city of Wichita, Kansas. All of those interviewed were informed that their identities would remain anonymous, and that they could refuse to answer any questions that they were not comfortable with. Four of the 13 chose not to answer questions about religion and politics. The names used in Chapter 3 for interview respondents are not their real ones.

Chapter three presents the answers to the research questions in detail and summarizes some of the main concerns of the international and American students in their daily interpersonal communication. In addition, some remedies and solutions are suggested to provide a practical part of the research findings in the present study.

## CHAPTER III

### RESULTS

The aim of this thesis is to provide insight into the issues surrounding stereotypes and how they affect the interpersonal communication of international and American college and university students. The results of its questionnaire and interviews verify that stereotypes influence the minds, health, academic achievement, and daily interpersonal communication, of international and American college students. In addition, respondents have suggested both practical and theoretical solutions that could help eliminate or reduce the number of negative stereotypes students are faced with in their daily interactions with others on campus.

#### Key Questions and Findings

The following sections of the chapter report on a set of key questions derived from the surveys and interviews.

#### *Have you ever been stereotyped?*

Stereotypes are so constant in our people's lives that scholars representing a wide range of academic disciplines have studied them extensively. But what, more specifically, do international and American students at Wichita State University have to say about whether and how they have been stereotyped? Approximately 82 percent of the international students report they have experienced feelings of being unfairly judged and stereotyped by American students, whereas the remaining 18 percent say they have not. Looking at the results of the American students' surveys, 68 percent reported that they feel that international students have subjected

them to negative stereotypes. All of the survey's respondents stated that stereotypes negatively influence their everyday interpersonal relationships.

#### *Are you ethnocentric?*

To be "ethnocentric" is to evaluate other people and cultures according to the standards of one's own culture, and ethnocentric people are among those who are prone to the negative stereotyping of others. It's interesting to note that, in answer to a question about one's ethnocentricity, none of the international students labeled themselves as ethnocentric. In contrast, 44 percent of the American students stated they believe they are ethnocentric.

#### *Efforts toward establishing and maintaining interpersonal communication*

Approximately 78 percent of the international students said they believe they put effort into establishing friendship and communication with American students.

#### *The most common negative stereotypes*

When asked about the frequency of various kinds of negative stereotyping, 58 percent of the international students reported that most are related to race, although they also reported that political, gender, and religious stereotyping are also common. In contrast, 36 percent of the American students reported that racial stereotypes are the most common.

#### *Racial and ethnic groups*

In answer to the survey question about what racial or ethnic groups are the hardest to establish interpersonal relationships with, 42 percent of the international students reported they had the most difficulty with African-Americans (Figure 1).

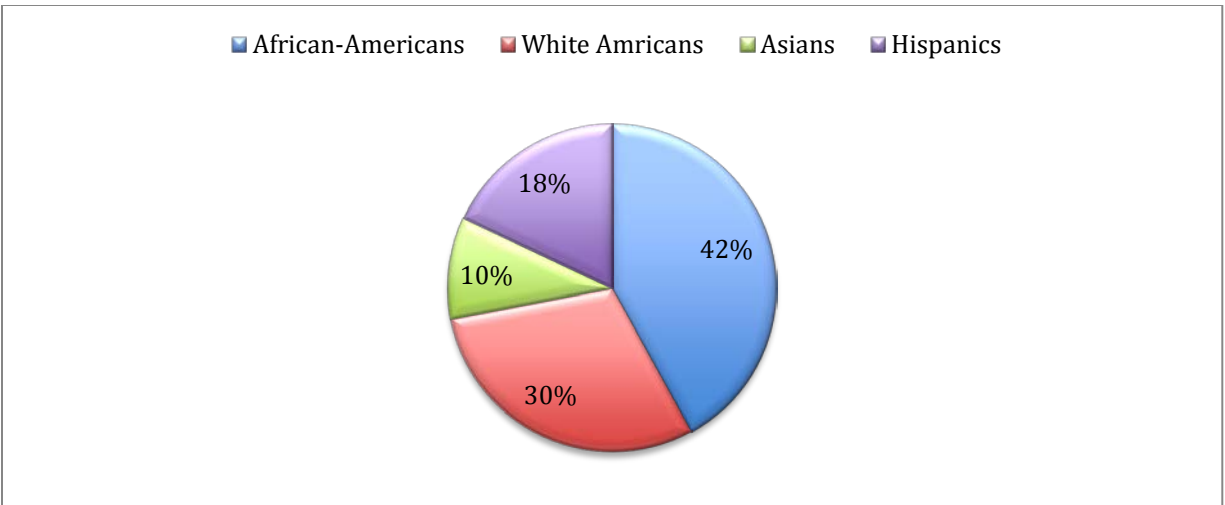


Figure 1 Challenging groups for international students to communicate with

Turning to the surveys completed by American students, 44 percent identified Middle Easterners as the racial/ethnic group they had the most trouble communicating with (Figure 2).

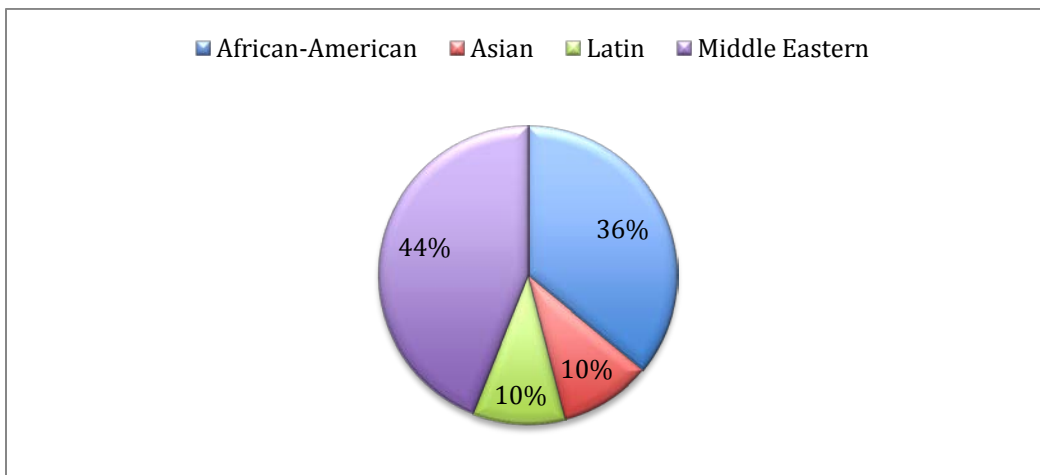


Figure 2 Challenging groups for American students to communicate with

### *Kinds of Stereotypes*

Survey participants' answers to questions about religion and geography demonstrate that stereotyping plays a central role in the division of the world into "Us" and "Them." Survey

respondents reported that Islam is the most stereotyped religion, and the Middle East is the world's most stereotyped geographical region. Fifty percent of the American students who participated in the survey did not wish to express their opinions about religion. Those who did reported that Islam is the most negatively stereotyped religion in America, although Judaism and Hinduism were also named.

Approximately 44 percent of the questionnaire's American respondents stated that cultural stereotyping is the most prominent among those perpetrated by college students, although they stressed that political stereotypes are also common (Figure 3).

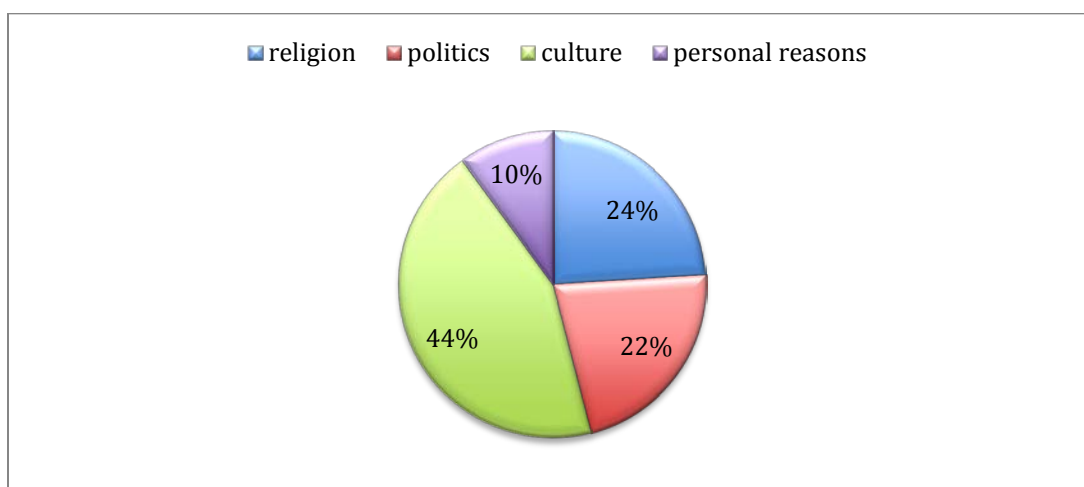


Figure 3 Common types and sources of stereotypes mentioned by American students

#### *Other barriers to communication*

While American students reported that the accents and broken English of non-American students is a problem, their most frequently reported reason for having difficulty communicating with international students related to cultural misunderstandings, especially those concerning religion and politics. Within the category of “cultural misunderstandings” were comments (5 percent) about hygiene and cleanliness. In addition, about 5 percent of the American students

who filled out the survey said their lack of understanding of international students is aggravated by the fact that they are rarely in situations where they have opportunities to get to know them.

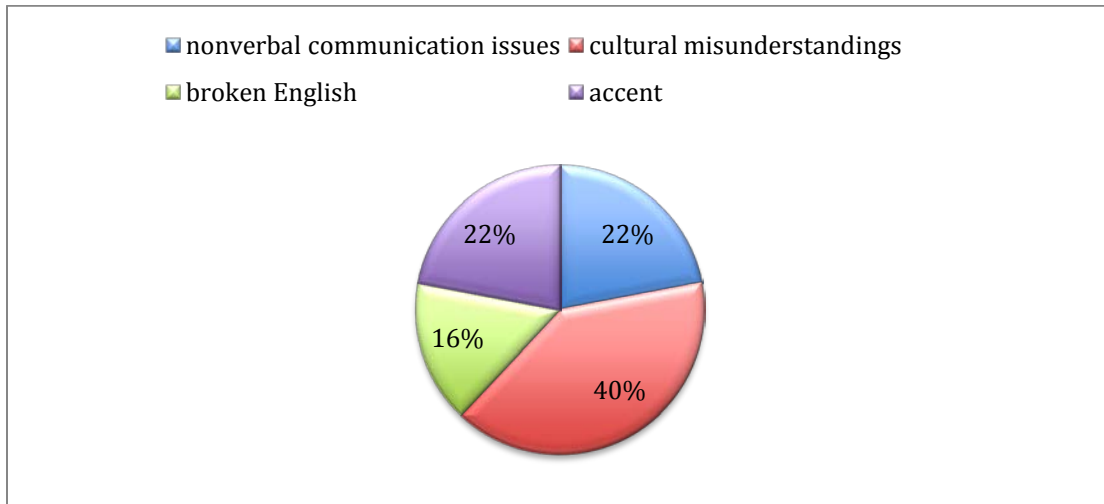


Figure 4 Communication barriers for American students

*International students on the difficulty of communicating with American students*

According to survey results, 30 percent of the international students said they find it challenging to communicate with American/domestic students, and 16 percent said they avoid communication with them unless they have to. Eight percent of the international students reported that they find Americans unpredictable, and 12 percent stated they feel uncomfortable when communicating with American students. A majority of the international students reported they find it “difficult and challenging” to communicate with American students because they fear being rejected by American students because of cultural and language differences. They reported that speaking with American students makes them feel uncomfortable, and 36 percent stated that few of their days include communication with American students.

In contrast, approximately 34 percent of the international students reported they have found American students to be supportive, helpful, and friendly (Figure 5).

Such labeling, name-calling, and stereotyping is worse for Muslim women, since they are simultaneously the targets of gender stereotypes. Shiba, a friend of mine who is now a Jesus follower, was once a Muslim. She has even dyed her hair and wears green contact lenses to be more alike the blond Americans. She said, “Sometimes I do hate what I am right now, because it is not my real self.” Shiba continued, “I was tired of feeling different and live as an out-group individual even after so many years that I have lived with in-group people. I even married an American, but I still feel different when I am among all of our American friends.”

American Jessica, another colleague of mine who has Iraqi ancestors, expresses her fear of the Middle East, and says she could never imagine travelling to the Middle East, even though her grandmother is trying to convince her that it is not as unsecure and scary as American people imagine. Ali, an American- Iranian student at Wichita State University, highlights the disaster of the 9/11 and calls it as a justified excuse for the American politicians to exploit and abuse more of the Middle East.

Josseline, who is originally from France, says she still feels like a stranger and an out-group member after being in the United States for more than 40 years. She said, “whatever that you do and however that you react, even so Americanized, just after you do something wrong or make a common mistake that Americans may make such mistakes on a daily base, you will be tagged and stereotyped.”



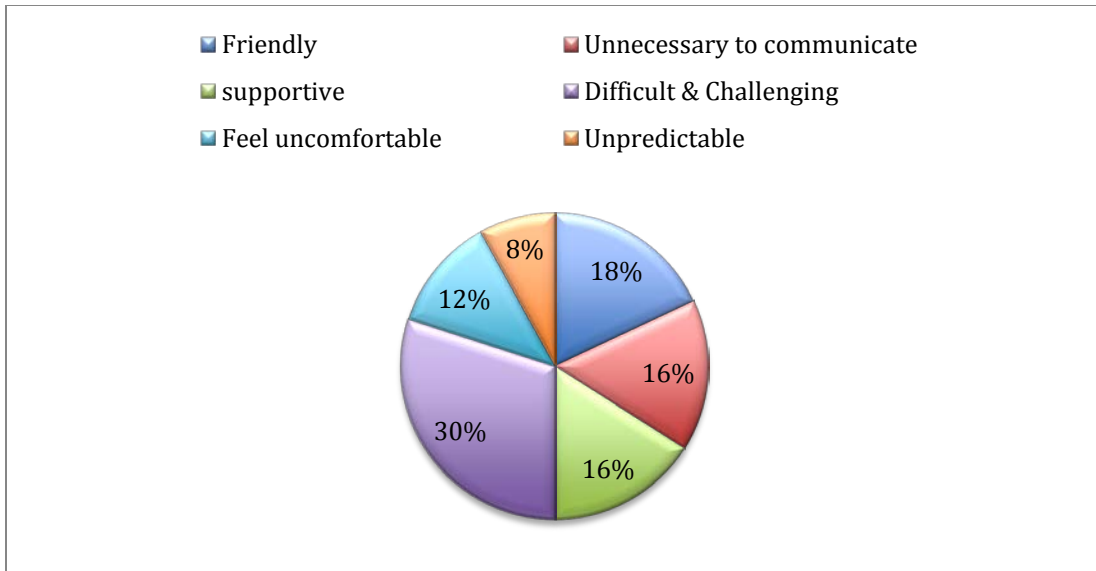


Figure 5 International students responses to how they feel about communication with American students

*International students' thoughts on why American students stereotype them*

In response to the question about why they think American students are prone to holding negatively stereotypes about people from other countries, 40 percent claimed the mass media's treatment of people from other countries in the news and entertainment areas cultivates a host of negative stereotypes in the minds of those who consume such content (Figure 6). In addition, 16 percent of the international students reported American students don't travel enough to be open-minded and knowledgeable about the other cultures and nations.

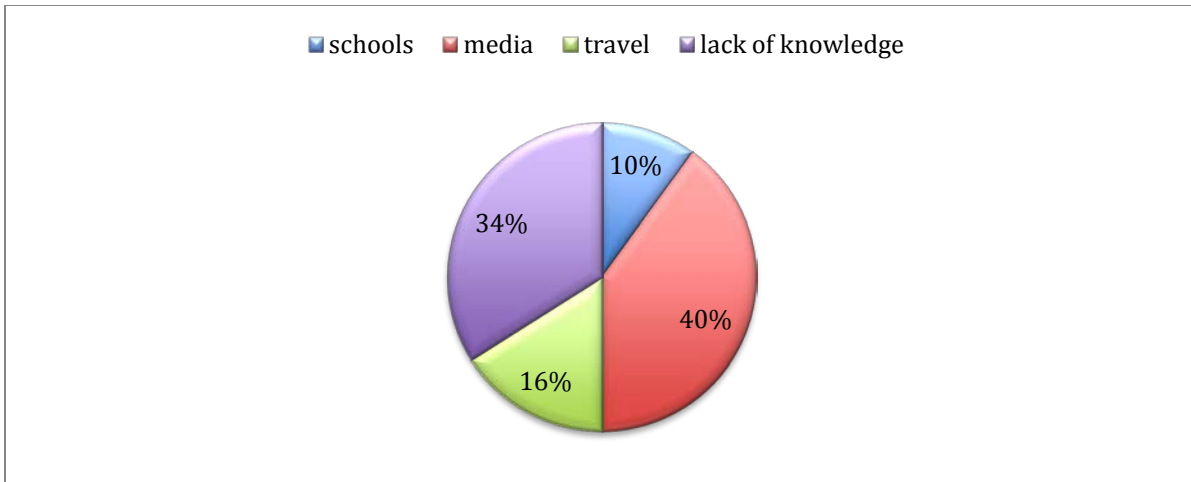


Figure 6 International students demonstrate the reasons that make American students stereotype them

*How to reduce stereotypes and cultivate better interpersonal communication*

American students suggested that international students should not be afraid or shy, and they should put more efforts into improving their language skills. The international students suggested that the Americans should be more patient, and less ethnocentric. They should learn to re-think and re-analyze what they hear and see in the media. Also, they need to be more friendly and supportive.

*Is there a relationship between racial/cultural stereotypes and identity loss?*

The research suggests that people who have been the victims of racial stereotypes limit their interaction with people of other races/ethnicities unless such groups are less likely to stereotype them. About 21 percent of the international students who participated in the survey for this research, preferred not to mention the country of their origin or indicate their race and ethnicity.

## Remedies

*People are incapable of stereotyping you; you stereotype yourself because you're the one who accepts roles that put you in this rut or in this stereotype.*

--Eva Mendes

Now that we know more about where the stereotype comes from, it is time to learn how we can get rid of it and make it go away. Here are some of the answers survey respondents gave to the question about how to reduce or even eliminate stereotypes in order to have better, deeper, and more regular interpersonal relationships with students from other countries, regardless of what political, social, cultural, and religious group we belong to:

- Be open-minded.
- Accept cultural differences, and study more about other nations and their cultures.
- Avoid ethnocentrism.
- Travel more.
- Show the truth and reality in books and the media.
- Learn other languages
- Become more involved in the social activities of those from other countries.
- Work on your interpersonal communication skills.
- Be a positive role model for your fellow students.
- Introduce more of your culture to others.
- Avoid misjudging others.

## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study highlights and reminds us of the negative influences of stereotyping on communication between American and International students. It is clear that stereotypes have affected the quality and quantity of the interpersonal communication between the American and non-American students who participated in the research. A majority of the research participants reported that they feel they have been unfairly stereotyped, although this was more obvious among the international students. International students reported that being stereotyped has led them to feel that Americans are difficult and challenging, and the American students said they also feel insecure when communicating with international students. It was also reported that negative stereotypes are most closely tied to cultural differences, and that media messages have influenced the labels people attach to others.

Also, the current study emphasizes people ought to be seen as individuals, not as members of groups or categories. Focusing on such facts helps the American and international students see each other as individuals who do not have to be the victims of classifications, categorization and negative stereotypic labels. After all, expanding positive perceptions that American students hold toward international students increase interactions and interpersonal communication. At the same time, international students should work more on their language skills and adaptation to new culture and communication experiences.

Among all theories discussed in this study, related to interpersonal communication and the negative influence of stereotyping on the quality and quantity of social interactions and intercultural relationships among students, the theory of uncertainty describes most of the

existing barriers and issues that the international and American students challenge with. Describing how and why our interactions are affected by our personal interpretations, understandings and definitions of different types of individuals and social groups, symbolic interactionism adds up more support to the idea that people are prone to defining and categorizing other groups and individuals based on some ill-founded stereotypic messages and generalized fixed images in their mind and thoughts.

In spite of this thesis and the many other studies completed by scholars representing diverse disciplines, there are still too many unresolved issues, including the effects of stereotyping on the interpersonal relationships of international and American college students. Such a multi-faceted phenomenon demands additional refinement of theories and practical solutions. When individuals are stereotyped, they start to stereotype themselves, and this results eventually in confirmation in the minds of those who conveyed such negative images in the first place.

### Limitations

The research completed for the study has three primary limitations. First, it is possible that the study's American respondents, when faced with an international researcher, would avoid answering questions in biased ways, or would be more cautious with their verbal and nonverbal language during interviews. Second, it is unclear whether the European students who completed the survey have experience stereotyping in the way that other international students have. And third, since the research involved a convenience sample, its findings cannot be generalized. A larger sample drawn using scientific random sampling would extend the impact of the results.

### Future Studies

There are many ways future researchers could enhance our understanding of how stereotyping impacts the interpersonal communication of international and American college students. For example, research ought to be conducted on how nonverbal stereotypes affect the interpersonal communication of international and domestic college students. In addition, the complex and multi-faced nature of the stereotyping of people representing different societal levels, groups, and settings, needs further consideration. Also, multiple surveys could be administered at different places and times. For example, if a survey conducted during students' first semester was repeated one or two years later, it would be possible to learn whether the effects of stereotyping lessened with the passage of time. It might even be possible to identify what the least required amount of time is for American and non-American students to feel more comfortable during their interpersonal communication.

More study of the stereotyping that takes place within universities ought to be conducted so that administrators can do more to mitigate their effects. In general, college administrators ought to provide more opportunities for international and American students to meet in safe environments, so that hopefully over time they will feel less negative about each other. Undoubtedly, international students need more attention and support (Asmar, 2005).

Finally, despite this study's limitations, it highlights that despite the fact that college campuses are often more multicultural than the broader environments they exist within, they are still places where students from other countries are experiencing anxiety, lack of self-confidence, shaming, and feelings of inferiority because of the negative stereotypes they are subjected to. In addition, such stereotypes can put such individual's physical and mental health in danger.

Hopefully, in the future, higher education will become the safest place for people from across the globe to live and work within.

### Postscript

If you have ever thought that we are all human beings, that are all the same, you may need to stop and think. Having particular skin shades, accents, ways of wearing clothes and makeup, or even names, make us different. But should that mean that some of us are superior to the other human beings? Does that mean that one should be careful if he happens to be named Osama or Hussain? Should women who cover their hair and wear long dresses instead of short ones have to worry? Should one feel as though they have to change his name from Mohammad to Matt, or convert from Islam to Christianity to bear less pain of being stereotyped? Should all non-Americans Americanize themselves to be valued? Should one be thankful that winter allows her to wear long coats, scarf and a big hat? Bottom line, is hiding our beliefs from public and pretending to be what you really are not the solutions to feel being an acceptable in-group individual? How and when the public is finally going to have space for *all* individuals?

The massive loss of life and devastation of 9/11 murdered the spirits of Muslim people, who became the targets of U.S. hatred. The towers were gone, many lives were lost, and just seconds after Al Qaeda's announcement, the dignity of Islam and the honor of Muslims and the Middle East also disappeared. I was in the newsroom of the newspaper office I worked when I heard about the Taliban, Al Qaeda, and the attack against Americans. I was in tears, fearful that being a Middle Easterner and Muslim, I would be thought of as a terrorist for the rest of my life. We were sad for the victims and the survivors of 9/11, but worried that we would live with a big mark of terrorist Muslim on our foreheads.

Later, chatting with an American colleague, the first thing he said was, “Oh, the land of oil and nuclear bombs!” This was insulting, but later he explained how bad he felt, and put the blame on the media. He said, “As far as I know about us, the Americans, we do not like to spend that much time to re-think and analyze what the media feed us with.” He also said that many of the ideas he has about Middle Easterners have been directed and shaped by his parents and 9/11.

My hope is that we will stop labeling each other. Stereotyping makes Muslims feel rejected and inferior, simply because of their religious and geographical origins. Mass media and political leaders should portray a different, more authentic and tag-free face of Muslim women, and a gentler face of Muslim men. We stand against the belief that all Middle Easterners are Muslims, all Muslims are Arab, and all Middle Easterners are terrorists.



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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### STEREOTYPES AND COMMUNICATION SURVEY: QUESTIONS FOR AMERICAN STUDENTS AT WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY

In this survey, we want to understand whether stereotyping influences on American students when they are communicating with international students, and, if so, how?

Please take a few minutes and tell us your views about stereotyping and its influence on the way you communicate with international students. This survey and research seek possible ways to help bridge the communication and social interaction gap existing between American and international students at Wichita State University.

Please answer honestly; we do not need your name and your answers are completely confidential.

#### WHO AM I?

1- Female----- Male-----

2- Age: -----

3- Major: -----

4- Are you a: Freshman ----- Sophomore ----- Junior ----- Senior----- Graduate student -----

5- Country of Origin: -----

6- How do you describe yourself?

Caucasian/ White----- African American ----- Latino/ Hispanic/ Mexican---- Native American ---  
Asian American/ Alaskan Native/ Aleut ----- Other -----, -----

7- With what religion do you identify?

Christianity ----- Judaism ----- Islam----- Buddhism----- Hinduism ----- Other----- None---

8- How long have you been living in the United States? -----

9- How long have you been at Wichita State University? -----

#### MY FRIENDS:

1- Are any of your friends international students? Yes----- No-----

- 2- If YES, how do you categorize such friendships?  
Close friend----- Acquaintance----- Both .....
- 3- How many international students do you communicate with, on average, per day?  
None ----- From 1 to 5 students----- From 6 to 10 students---- More than 10 students----
- 4- How do you categorize your relationship with international students at WSU?  
a. I have between 1 and 5 close friends who are International students----  
b. I have between 5 and 10 close friends who are International students----  
c. I have more than 10 close friends who are International students----  
d. I have NO close friends who are international student. We are only acquaintances ----  
e. I have no relationship, close or acquaintance, with any international student----
- 5- If you have any friends who are International students, how do you feel about your friendship?  
a. I am happy with having a close friend who is an international student----  
b. I regret having a friend who is an international student----
- 6- Would you like to ---- keep having your friendship with international students  
---- Stop having any friendship with International students
- 7- Are your international friends mostly male or female?
- 8- How have you found making friendship with International students?  
Difficult and challenging----- Easy and interesting----- Have no specific idea -----
- 9- Which category do your international friends at WSU fit best?  
Middle Eastern----- Asian----- African----- European----- Latin Americans-----
- 10-How do you categorize your relationship with international students? (Check all that apply)  
Classmate ---- Roommate----- Colleague----- In a romantic relationship -----  
closer relationship than a classmate, roommate, or colleague ----- Other -----

#### COMMUNICATION AND STEREOTYPING:

- 1- To what degree do you feel relaxed when you communicate with international students? (Not at all) 1 2 3 4 5(Extremely relaxed)
- 2- What nationality do you think would be more challenging to communicate with?  
Middle Eastern----- Asian----- African----- European----- Latin Americans----- Other-----
- 3- Which gender of international students do you find easier to communicate with:  
Male ----- Female----- Does not differ -----

- 4- How do you define “stereotyping”? -----  
-----
- 5- Have you ever stereotyped international students?  
Yes---- No---- Prefer Not to Answer -----
- 6- Do you have any ----Religious, ---- Political, ---- Personal, ---- cultural, or ----other reasons or beliefs that influence on your thoughts and how you stereotype international students? (Check all that apply)
- 7- To what degree do you agree or disagree: “I recommend that domestic students communicate more with international students.”  
(Strongly Agree) 1 2 3 4 5(Strongly disagree)
- 8- How do you feel about international students when you communicate with them?  
(Check all that apply)
- a. They are strange and unpredictable-----
  - b. They are difficult to make friends with----
  - c. They make me feel unsecure-----
  - d. I prefer not to be close to them-----
  - e. I feel I cannot trust them-----
  - f. I am not interested in communicating with them, unless I have to -----
  - g. I do not feel any necessity to be around them -----
  - h. They are friendly and open-----
  - i. They are supportive and helpful to me -----
  - j. They do not stereotype me ----
- 9- How have you learned about the other nations and cultures? Mention three sources of your knowledge:  
-----, -----, -----
- 10- How effective the media are in shaping stereotypes?  
(Not at all) 1 2 3 4 5 (Extremely)
- 11- To what degree do you think “lack of knowledge” leads to stereotyping?  
(Not at all true for me) 1 2 3 4 5 (Very true for me)
- 12- Have you ever been in any other country? Yes----- No-----
- 13- If YES, what countries have you traveled to? -----
- 14- Do you think international students stereotype you, too? Yes ----- No-----
- 15- Do you feel any superiority (ethnocentrism) compared to international students?



Yes -----

No-----

Prefer not to answer -----

16- Have you ever had any problem with international students in your daily communication? Yes---- No-----

17- How difficult or challenging do you grade "communicating with international students"?  
(Not difficult at all) 1 2 3 4 5(Extremely difficult)

18- What are the three main challenges you may face when you communicate with international students?  
-----, -----, -----

19- To what degree do you find international students' *nonverbal* language (gestures, postures, and facial expressions) a barrier in daily communication?  
(Not at all) 1 2 3 4 5 (A real barrier)

20- To what degree do you find 'language' a barrier when you communicate with international students?  
(Not at all) 1 2 3 4 5 (A real barrier)

21- To what extent do you agree or disagree:

"I hesitate to communicate with international students because they come from different cultural backgrounds."  
(Strongly agree) 1 2 3 4 5(Strongly disagree)

22- To what extent do you agree or disagree:  
"I hesitate to communicate with international students because they are not good English language speakers."  
(Strongly agree) 1 2 3 4 5(Strongly disagree)

23- To what extent do you agree or disagree:  
"I hesitate to communicate with international students because of political issues among America and those foreign nations."  
(Strongly agree) 1 2 3 4 5(Strongly disagree)

24- To what extent do you agree or disagree:  
"I hesitate to communicate with international students, because I think international students are strange and you may even have felt they are from another planet."  
(Strongly agree) 1 2 3 4 5(Strongly disagree)

25- What do you suggest to help American students avoid stereotyping international students when communicating with each other: -----  
-----

- 26- Have you ever attended any class, workshop or seminar discussing “stereotyping” and/or “communication”? Yes----- No -----
- 27- Would you like to learn more about the influence of stereotyping on communication?  
Yes ----- No ----
- 28- Which religious background of international students do you find more challenging to communicate with?  
Christian---- Muslim----- Buddhist ---- Hindu---- Jewish ----- Other----  
I do not care their religious background when communicating with-----
- 29- Rank the following factors from the less (5) to most (1) in terms of their influence on stereotyping in communication:  
Religion----Race and Ethnicity---- Social Class----- Gender----- Political beliefs-----
- 30- Which statement do you agree with?
- Stereotyping has a negative influence on communication among domestic and international students ----
  - Stereotyping has a positive influence on communication among domestic and international students ----
  - Stereotyping has no significant positive or negative influence on communication among domestic and international students -----

## APPENDIX B

### STEREOTYPES AND COMMUNICATION SURVEY: QUESTIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY

In this survey, we want to understand whether stereotyping influences international students when they communicate with domestic students, and, if so, how.

Please take a few minutes and tell us your views about stereotyping and its influence on the way you communicate with international students. This survey seeks possible ways to help bridge the potential gap existing between the domestic and international students that may influence on their daily communication with each other at Wichita State University.

Please answer honestly; we do not need your name and your answers are completely confidential.

#### WHO AM I?

1- Female----- Male-----

2- Age: -----

3- Major: -----

4- Are you a: Freshman -- Sophomore -- Junior -- Senior -- Graduate student?

5- Country of Origin: -----

6- With what religion do you identify?

Christianity ---- Judaism ---- Islam----Buddhism---- Hinduism ---- Other----- None---

7- How long have you been living in the United States? -----

8- How long have you been at Wichita State University? -----

#### MY FRIENDS:

1- Are any of your friends domestic students? Yes---- No----

2- If YES, how do you categorize such friendships? Close ----- Acquaintance -----

3- How many domestic students do you communicate with, on average, per day?

None ----- From 1 to 5 students----- 6 to 10 ---- More than 10 ----

4- How do you categorize your relationship with domestic students at WSU?

I have between 1 and 5 close friends who are domestic students----

I have between 5 and 10 close friends who are domestic students----

I have more than 10 close friends who are domestic students----

I have NO close friend who is a domestic student. We are only acquaintances ----

I have no relationship, close or acquaintance, with any domestic student----

5- If you have any friends who are domestic students: how do you feel about your friendships?

I am happy with having a close friend who is a domestic student----

I regret having a close friend who is a domestic student----

6- Would you like to ---- keep on your friendship with a domestic student

---- Stop having any friendship with a domestic student

7- If you have any close friend who is a domestic student, how long have you known him/her? -----

8- How do you categorize your relationships with domestic students? (Check all that apply)

Classmate ---- Roommate ----- Colleague ----- In a romantic relationship -----

closer relationship than a classmate, roommate, or colleague ----- Other ----

9- Are your domestic friends mostly: ----- Male ----- Female

10- Which category do your domestic WSU friends fit best?

Caucasian/ White----- African American -----Latino/ Hispanic/ Mexican-----Native American -----Asian American/ Alaskan Native/ Aleut ----- Other -----

### COMMUNICATION AND STREOTYPING:

1- To what degree do you feel relaxed when communicating with domestic students?

(Not at all) 1 2 3 4 5(Extremely relaxed)

2- Who do you think puts more effort into interpersonal communication?

International students----- Domestic students-----

3- How have you found communicating with domestic students?

Difficult and challenging----- Easy and interesting-----

Have no specific idea (Not sure) ----

- 4- What racial group do you is most challenging to communicate with?  
 Caucasian/ White----- African American ----- Latino/ Hispanic/ Mexican---  
 Native American ----- Asian American/ Alaskan Native/ Aleut ----- Other -----, -----
- 5- Which of the following domestic students do you find it easiest to communicate with?  
 Male ----- Female----- Does not differ -----
- 6- In one or two sentences, how do you define “stereotyping”? -----  
 -----
- 7- To what degree do you agree or disagree: “I recommend that international students communicate more with domestic students even if they are being stereotyped by the domestic students.”  
 (Strongly Agree) 1 2 3 4 5(Strongly disagree)
- 8- How often do you feel you are not welcome to join the domestic students’ circle of friends because of being wrongly stereotyped by domestic students?  
 (Always) 1 2 3 4 5(Never)
- 9- Have you ever stereotyped domestic students at WSU? Yes---- No---- Not sure---
- 10- If yes, do you have any -----Religious, ---- Political, ----- Personal, ---- cultural, or ----- other reasons or beliefs that influence how you stereotype domestic students? (Check all that apply)
- 11- How do you feel about domestic students when you’re communicating with them?  
 (Check all that apply)  
 They are strange and unpredictable-----  
 They are difficult to make friend with----  
 They make me feel uncomfortable-----  
 I prefer not to be close to them-----  
 I feel I cannot trust them-----  
 I am not interested in communicating with them, unless I have to-----  
 I do not feel any necessity to be around them -----  
 They are friendly and open -----  
 They are supportive and helpful to me -----  
 They do not stereotype me -----
- 12- How have you learned about Americans’ culture and lifestyle? Mention three sources of your knowledge:  
 -----, -----, -----
- 13- How influential do you think “the media” are in shaping stereotypes?  
 (Not at all) 1 2 3 4 5 (Extremely)

- 14- To what degree do you think “lack of knowledge” leads to stereotyping?  
 (Not at all true for me) 1                      2            3            4            5 (Very true for me)
- 15- Do you feel any superiority (ethnocentrism) to the domestic students?  
 Yes -----            No-----                      Prefer not to answer -----
- 16- Have you ever had any problem with a domestic student in your daily communication?  
 Yes----                      No-----
- 17-
- 18- What are the three main problems you face in your communication with domestic students:  
 -----, -----, -----
- 19- How difficult or challenging do you find “communicating with domestic students”?  
 (Not difficult at all) 1    2            3            4            5(Extremely difficult)
- 20- To what degree do you find domestic students’ *nonverbal* language (gestures, postures, and facial expressions) a barrier in daily communication?  
 (Not at all) 1    2            3            4            5 (A real barrier)
- 21- To what degree do you find ‘*verbal* language’ a barrier in communicating with domestic students?  
 (Not at all) 1    2            3            4            5 (A real barrier)
- 22- To what extent do you agree or disagree:  
 “I hesitate to communicate with domestic students, because they come from different cultural backgrounds.”  
 (Strongly agree) 1            2            3            4            5(Strongly disagree)
- 23- To what extent do you agree or disagree:  
 “I hesitate to communicate with domestic students because they may not be patient with my English speaking imperfections.”  
 (Strongly agree) 1            2            3            4            5(Strongly disagree)
- 24- To what extent do you agree or disagree:  
 “I hesitate to communicate with domestic students because of political issues.”  
 (Strongly agree) 1            2            3            4            5(Strongly disagree)
- 25- To what extent do you agree or disagree:  
 “I hesitate to communicate with domestic students because of our different “religious backgrounds.”  
 (Strongly agree) 1            2            3            4            5(Strongly disagree)



## APPENDIX C

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR AMERICANS

Hello, I am Meli Lamei, and I am the one who called you about the interview. Thank you very much for allowing me to interview you. As I briefly mentioned earlier, I am trying to learn whether stereotyping influences on American students when they communicate with international students. I will ask you some questions about your personal experiences and opinions about stereotyping, and whether they influence interpersonal communication.

Please be assured that our conversation is strictly confidential and if you feel uncomfortable and do not want to continue with the interview you can always stop. I once again thank you for your cooperation.

Are we ready to begin?

- 1- Please tell me about yourself.
- 2- What are you studying?
- 3- How long have you been in Wichita and at WSU?
- 4- Why did you choose WSU?
- 5- To what extent do you like the multicultural environment at Wichita State University?
- 6- What was it like to be a new student at WSU?
- 7- Do you have any friends who are international student?
- 8- To what extent did you find the international students friendly and helpful?
- 9- How do you define *stereotyping* and *communication*?
- 10- Do you think if there is any relationship between these two variables?
- 11- Do you think stereotyping can be avoided?
- 12- Have you ever suffered from being stereotyped by international students? Would you like to share your experiences and feelings with me?



- 13- Have you ever tried to talk to international students about the realities of life of your country, or its culture, customs, and people?
- 14- Have you ever ended a friendship with an international student because you felt you had been stereotyped?
- 15- How do you define “ethnocentrism”?
- 16- Have you ever felt superior to international students?
- 17- Have you ever been in a romantic relationship with an international student?
- 18- Have you ever been the roommate, colleague, or classmate of an international student?
- 19- To what extent do you think lack of information, and/or the media, have had an impact on the way students stereotype people from other nations?
- 20- Do you think American students travel more than international students do? Is there any relationship between travelling to different countries and stereotyping?
- 21- Do you have any suggestions that could become strategies for the avoidance of stereotyping?
- 22- What are the influences of gender, religion, politics, race, and ethnicity on stereotyping?
- 23- Have you ever avoided communicating with international students because you were afraid of being stereotyped?

## APPENDIX D

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR NON-AMERICANS

Hello, I am Meli Lamei, and I am the one who called you about the interview. Thank you very much for allowing me to interview you. As I briefly mentioned earlier, I am trying to find out whether stereotyping influences domestic students when they communicate with the international students. I will ask you some questions about your personal experiences and opinions about stereotyping, and its influence on communication.

Please be assured that our conversation is strictly confidential and if you feel uncomfortable and do not want to continue with the interview you can always stop. I once again thank you for your cooperation.

Are we ready to begin?

- 1- Please tell me about yourself.
- 2- What are you studying? Where are from originally?
- 3- How long have you been in the U.S., and at WSU?
- 4- Why did you choose WSU?
- 5- To what extent do you think that the multicultural environment at Wichita State University has helped you feel more relaxed when you communicate with students from different nationalities and domestic students?
- 6- What was it like to be a new international student at WSU?
- 7- To what extent did you find the domestic students friendly and helpful?
- 8- How do you define *stereotyping* and *communication*?
- 9- Do you think if there is any relationship between these two variables?
- 10- Do you think stereotyping can be avoided?
- 11- Have you ever suffered from being stereotyped by the domestic students? Would you please share your experiences and feelings with me?

- 12- Have you ever tried to talk to domestic students and tell them about the realities of your country, culture, customs, and people?
- 13- Have you ever ended a friendship with a domestic student because he/she has been stereotyping you?
- 14- Have you ever been in a romantic relationship with a domestic student?
- 15- To what extent do you think lack of information, and/or the media, have had on the way domestic students stereotype people from other countries?
- 16- Do you think Americans travel more or less than international students? Is there any relationship between travelling more to different countries and stereotyping?
- 17- Do you have suggestions that you would like to offer that could help in the development of strategies that would lead to less stereotyping?
- 18- Please identify which of the following groups of domestic students have stereotyped you more than others? Native Americans, African Americans, or Hispanic Americans.
- 19- What are the influences of gender, religion, politics, race, and ethnicity on stereotyping?
- 20- Have you ever avoided communicating with domestic students because you were afraid of being stereotyped? Have you ever stereotyped domestic students?