

Intercultural experiences of ‘fitting in’

Researcher

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Research focus

- What challenges do new students have in ‘fitting in’ to their university life, where there are people from many different backgrounds?
- How can they overcome these challenges?

Methodology

Master’s students carried out their own action research through a cyclical sequence of noticing something they found uncomfortable and selecting it to focus on, reflecting on why they felt uncomfortable, observing how others behaved, and adjusting their own behaviour.

Key findings

- The most frequently selected issue was greetings – seemingly easy, but the cultural differences (even within Europe) disoriented people and they feared it was affecting their success in forming new friendships.
- They found that through a cyclical sequence of careful observation, reflection and the trying out of new behaviour, they became more confident and comfortable in using different patterns of greeting.

To find out more:

Spencer-Oatey, H. (2018). [Transformative learning for social integration: Overcoming the challenge of greetings](#). *Intercultural Education*, 29(2), 301–315.

Spencer-Oatey, H. & A. Davidson (2018). [The 4S Stretch Tool: Developing behavioural flexibility in intercultural encounters](#). V.2