

**Students' Intercultural Development During  
Faculty-led Short-Term Study Abroad:  
A Mixed Methods Exploratory Case Study of Intercultural Interventions**

A Dissertation  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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May 2021

## Acknowledgments

What a humbling and wild journey this has been! Since beginning my doctorate over a decade ago, I have worked at three universities, married, and become a mom of three. Nobody gets through a doctorate without support, and I am certainly no exception.

I want to first express my appreciation to the late Dr. R. Michael Paige, an influential and invaluable mentor. I enrolled at the University of Minnesota expressly to study under him, and the experience exceeded my expectations. He was my advisor during the early stages of my dissertation, and I am grateful to him for his sage advice, sense of humor, and encouragement. His passing was a terrible loss to those who loved him and to the field of international education. While I wish I could have completed this dissertation while he was still alive, I can vividly imagine the sparkle in his eye letting me know how proud he is that I have completed this journey.

Thank you to the members of my dissertation committee: Dr. Gerald Fry, Dr. Deanne Magnusson, Dr. Michael Stebleton, and Dr. Rachel Gable. I deeply appreciate your patience and support. To my advisor, Dr. Fry: You demonstrated how to be a compassionate teacher. Thank you for always believing in me.

I wish to express my appreciation to the instructor and students who participated in this study. Listening to and observing the depth in which you reflected upon your experiences has made this an unparalleled learning experience.

I was fortunate to have many classmates at University of Minnesota who provided friendship and accountability during the doctoral program, most especially Cristina Grasset. Cristina: Thank you for the camaraderie, moral support, wine, laughter, and the willingness to read many choppy drafts.

To my parents, Don and Pat Cressy: Thank you for instilling in me a love of learning and exploration. Thank you also for encouraging me to stay in college when I proposed dropping out in order to travel the world. Who would have thought I would continue on for a masters and doctorate degree?!

To my siblings, Kiernan and Corey: Thank you for always having my back. No matter what.

To my extraordinary stepdaughter Abby: I am eternally grateful to have a such a beautiful, intelligent, and compassionate redheaded stepchild like you.

To my amazing daughters Boden and Josie, who both came into this world while I was pursuing my doctorate: You may have been one of the reasons this dissertation took me so long to complete, but wow are you worth it. I was determined to finish this doctorate to demonstrate that we girls can do it! I love you three with all my heart.

Finally, to my husband Chris: This dissertation predates us. I know this has been a long, difficult journey for us both. In the final months of completing the dissertation you stepped up big time in terms of caring for our girls, cooking healthy meals, and providing me with moral support. You helped me find the light at times when I could not, and I am forever grateful. I hope to support you as much as you have supported me.

## **Dedication**

To all women working on graduate degrees while raising young children.

“It doesn’t matter how slowly you go so long as you do not stop.”  
—Confucius

## Abstract

The purpose of this case study was to examine the ways in which an instructor's interventions and guided reflections influenced students' intercultural development during a short-term study abroad experience in Oaxaca, Mexico. The research questions were: (a) What was the impact of the study abroad program on the level of intercultural sensitivity and cultural intelligence of participants? (b) How did the instructor intervene to facilitate students' intercultural development? (c) In what ways did the interventions influence students' intercultural development? A mixed methods approach was employed, using both quantitative and qualitative methods to triangulate data, achieve deeper understanding, and further explain the quantitative findings. The population consisted of 10 students from one 4-year public higher education institution in the United States who participated in a faculty-led study abroad program. This study's findings suggest that a short-term, faculty-led study abroad program can have a positive impact on students' intercultural development. The major finding from the quantitative research is that students increased their scores on the Intercultural Development Inventory and the Cultural Intelligence Scale. The two major findings from the qualitative data are (a) guided reflections played a critical role in students' intercultural development, particularly their culture-general learning, and (b) interactions with host nationals played an important role in students' culture-specific and comparative learning. The findings have important implications for the design of short-term study abroad programs and for the instructors leading such programs.

*Keywords:* faculty-led, short-term study abroad, guided reflections, interventions, intercultural development

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## **List of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

| Term | Explanation  |
|------|--|
| CQS  | Cultural Intelligence Scale  |
| DMIS | Developmental model of intercultural sensitivity                       |
| ELT  | Experiential Learning Theory   |
| FEV  | Fundación en Via   |
| GCP  | Georgetown Consortium Project  |
| ICO  | Instituto Cultural Oaxaca  |
| IDC  | Intercultural Development Continuum                                    |
| IDI  | Intercultural Development Inventory                                    |
| T1   | Time 1 (IDI and CQS administered at beginning of study abroad program) |
| T2   | Time 2 (IDI and CQS administered at end of study abroad program)       |
| VCU  | Virginia Commonwealth University                                       |

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Intercultural mindfulness is rapidly becoming a global imperative in our turbulent world. (Jackson & Oguro, 2018, p. 1)

The world of education abroad is changing and, whether in incremental or monumental steps, colleges and universities are responding. There are now increased expectations that universities and colleges will prepare students to understand and communicate effectively with individuals from a range of diverse cultures and backgrounds. Semester and year-long study abroad programs continue to grow, but not at the pace of short-term programs of 8 weeks or less. Universities are partnering with third-party providers and encouraging their faculty to lead student groups abroad. According to the Institute of International Education's *Open Doors* report (2020), 347,099 students studied abroad in 2018–2019, compared to 260,327 in 2008–2009 (see Figure 1). The same data show that the largest enrollment growth since 2007 has occurred in programs that are 8 weeks or less (see Figure 2). More students are studying abroad and increasing numbers of students are choosing to go abroad for shorter periods of time.

These changes reflect a broader demand on universities to internationalize. Campus internationalization refers to a learning environment in which all aspects of the institution are international in character. This enables students, teachers, and staff to understand other parts of the world and prepares students to work with people from other cultures and countries. Internationalization is an active process of integrating an international dimension into an institution (Ellingboe, 1998). Although the movement of students, scholars, and ideas across national boundaries occurred as early as the 12<sup>th</sup>

century in Europe (Bartell, 2003), it is only in the past couple decades that universities worldwide have come under pressure to internationalize.

In response to these demands, leaders at colleges and universities are implementing programs to increase international learning by adding international courses, programs, and study abroad opportunities. However, their efforts often result in just cobbling together a few internationally focused programs and infusing international content into existing curricula, rather than in substantive and transformative change. Without stakeholder support for strategic internationalization, opportunities for intercultural learning and development among students, staff and faculty are diminished. The result is a marginalized set of activities that affects a small, self-selected group of students, staff and faculty.

### **Statement of the Problem**

For many years, it has been assumed that students studying abroad will develop a range of attitudes, behaviors, and skills related to international understanding and cooperation, global perspectives, and intercultural skills. However, several studies indicate that this is not accurate (L. Engle & Engle, 2012; Nam, 2011; Paige et al., 2004; Vande Berg et al., 2009; Yang, 2012). Findings from the 2009 Georgetown consortium project: Interventions for student learning abroad (Vande Berg et al., 2009) suggest that immersion alone does not significantly increase intercultural learning and that it is important to include guided reflection, which is the sixth component in J. Engle and Engle's (2003) classification of program types. Guided reflection is one of the single most important factors impacting students' intercultural learning (L. Engle & Engle, 2012; Vande Berg et al., 2009). Furthermore, findings from a 2004 study of the

*Maximizing Study Abroad Guide* (Paige et al., 2004) suggest that immersion programs can actually hinder intercultural development if students placed in particularly challenging situations do not receive sufficient support. Finally, findings from Nam's (2011) study of two short-term study abroad groups suggest that maximum intercultural learning comes from combining intensive immersion experiences with faculty support and opportunities for debriefing and critical reflection.

Together, these studies suggest the following conclusions. First, students learn most effectively in environments that provide learners with a balance between challenge and support for their learning. Second, instructors must go beyond immersion and intervene in ways that will allow students to make meaning out of their new cultural interactions and experiences. This suggests that the crux of the problem is a lack of intensive intercultural immersion experiences that are followed by reflection and conceptualization of what happens, as it happens. There is a need to investigate the guided reflections of students' immersion experiences during short-term study abroad programs in order to understand the potential impact they have on these students' intercultural development and cultural intelligence.

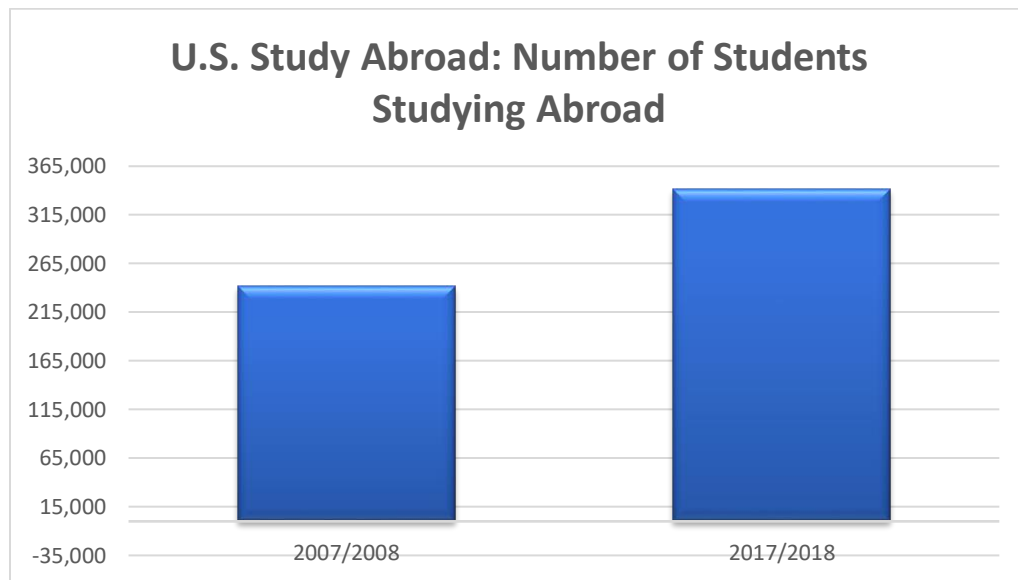
### **Background and Rationale**

The intercultural communications field began in the late 1950s with the work of Edward T. Hall (1959, 1966) and continued with the creation of the Peace Corps in the 1960s and their subsequent intercultural training manual 10 years later. The first intercultural communications courses were offered in the 1970s at places like Stanford and Portland State University. These were followed by the establishment of the Intercultural Communications Institute in the 1980s and Milton Bennett's conceptual

framework on developing intercultural sensitivity. Finally, international education master's and doctorate degrees were created in the early 2000s at places like SIT Graduate Institute and the University of Minnesota. The field of intercultural education has seen massive growth and development in areas such as academic research, education abroad program designs and program outcomes and assessments.

**Figure 1**

*U.S. Study Abroad Students*



*Note.* Institute of International Education (2020).



**Figure 2**

*Duration of Study Abroad*



*Note.* Institute of International Education (2020).

Given this history and the statistics in Figures 1 and 2, it would be provincial to think that a single program design works best; yet, many academics and administrators in higher education continue to believe that leaving students to their own devices is the best way to become intercultural competent. However, this logic is flawed (La Brack, 1993; Paige, 1993; Paige et al., 2004; Vande Berg et al., 2009). Research demonstrates that many study abroad participants are not developing the type of intercultural competence that had been assumed would occur automatically as a result of a sojourn abroad.

This study examines a short-term study abroad program that used four types of intentional interventions, plus guided reflections, in an effort to increase participants' intercultural development. Interventions accompanied by guided reflection activities in which students are required to reflect on their intercultural experience have an impact upon students' intercultural learning (Harvey, 2013; Hoff, 2008; Jackson & Oguro, 2018; Vande Berg, 2007). Nam's (2009) comparative study of short-term, faculty-led study abroad groups to Thailand and the Netherlands also found that interventions involving faculty support and opportunities for debriefing and critical reflection can result in increased intercultural sensitivity.

Recent empirical studies among students studying abroad support interventions as a means of increasing their intercultural development (Bosley, 2018; Smolcic & Martin, 2018; Vande Berg et al., 2009; Vande Berg et al., 2012). We know that (a) a combination of guided reflection activities and immersion is more effective than immersion alone, (b) participation in short-term programs is growing, and (c) three preliminary studies suggest that a combination of guided reflection activities and immersion can improve intended outcomes. While preliminary studies suggest that the combination of activities is helpful, we do not have a detailed understanding of what works in developing intercultural sensitivity when guided reflection activities are combined with immersion activities. There is a need to understand (a) which types of curricular interventions and guided reflection activities are effective; (b) the facets of intercultural learning that are influenced; and (c) the degree to which those facets are influenced, as measured by changes to Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) and Student Cultural intelligence (CQS) scores as well as through participant and instructor interviews.

**Table 1***Definitions of Terms*

| Term                        | Definition  |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Cultural intelligence       | “An individual’s capability to deal effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity” (Ang et al., 2006, p.101).   |
| Guided reflection           | Intentional and deliberate pedagogical techniques, materials, and approaches used to facilitate students’ intercultural development.  |
| Intercultural competence    | “The ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes.” (Deardorff, 2008, p. 33). It includes “the ability to think and act in intercultural appropriate ways” (Hammer et al., 2003, p. 422).   |
| Intercultural sensitivity   | Refers to the “ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences” (Hammer et al., 2003, p. 422). Furthermore, “greater intercultural sensitivity is associated with greater potential for exercising intercultural competence.”  |
| Intercultural development   | The Intercultural Development Continuum posited a continuum of five worldviews of increasing sophistication in dealing with cultural difference, moving from more monocultural to more intercultural mindsets (Hammer, 2009). In other words, “it is the construction of reality as increasingly capable of accommodating cultural difference that constitutes development” (M. J. Bennett, 1993, p. 24).   |
| Intercultural learning      | Intercultural learning is “the acquisition of general (transferable) intercultural competence; that is, competence that can be applied to dealing with cross-cultural contact in general, not just skills useful only for dealing with a particular other culture” (M. J. Bennett, 2010). The terms intercultural learning and intercultural development are often used in conjunction in this paper; it is assumed that they go hand-in-hand. The basic intercultural learning goals are generally agreed upon, encompassing cultural self-awareness, other- culture awareness, and various skills in intercultural perception and communication (Paige & Martin, 1983). |
| Internationalization        | “The process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (Knight, 2004, p. 2).   |
| Intercultural interventions | Intentional and deliberate settings designed to provide students with intercultural experiences throughout the study abroad cycle.  |
| Short-term study abroad     | An education abroad program that is 8 weeks or less.  |

## **Statement of Study Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to examine the ways in which an instructor's interventions and guided reflections influenced students' intercultural development during a short-term study abroad experience. I focused on 10 college students who participated on a 5-week, faculty-led study abroad program to Oaxaca, Mexico. The goal was not only to measure students' intercultural sensitivity and cultural intelligence as an outcome, but also to examine the types of interventions and guided reflections involved in that development.

## **Research Questions**

To better understand the nature and types of interventions and guided reflections that facilitated students' intercultural development during study abroad, the following broad questions guided my research:

- What was the impact of this program on the students' level of intercultural sensitivity and cultural intelligence?
- How did the instructor intervene to facilitate students' intercultural development?
- In what ways did the interventions in this study abroad program influence students' intercultural development?

## **Context of the Study**

As study abroad participation has increased over the years, so too have the expectations regarding the accountability of study abroad programs. Many colleges and universities tout study abroad opportunities in their marketing materials yet have put little time or effort into identifying the learning outcomes they want for their students who are studying abroad. Student learning cannot be assessed without first identifying intended

learning outcomes. If students going on study abroad programs are told they will acquire intercultural knowledge and global perspectives, what are the explicit learning outcomes of those programs?

The Association of American Colleges and Universities' Greater Expectations Project on Accreditation and Assessment reported that "global knowledge and engagement, along with intercultural knowledge and competence, have been identified as essential learning outcomes for all fields of concentration and for all majors" (Musil, 2006, p. 1). This emphasis on comprehensive internationalization has been supported by John Hudzik, former president of the Association of International Education Administrators president and chair of NAFSA: Association of International Educators, who outlined strategies and action steps in his 2011 monograph regarding comprehensive internationalization. Numerous rationales have been articulated supporting the efforts of colleges and universities to strengthen their global, international, and intercultural dimensions within these experiences (Horn et al., 2012; Hudzik, 2011; Knight, 2004; de Wit, 2002). However, college and university short-term programs are often "*ad hoc* ventures that are designed and led by faculty members, campus internship and volunteer offices, or others who may have little or no experience with the standards for designing and managing education abroad programs" rather than systematically planned, coordinated activities involving carefully selected strategies for achieving specific objectives (Forum on Education Abroad, 2009.)

### **The Setting**

In 2013, Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) launched VCU Globe, a living-learning program aimed at increasing its students' global engagement through the

connection of coursework, cocurricular activities and a residential experience. In the spring of 2015, NAFSA, the world's largest nonprofit association dedicated to international education and exchange, selected VCU Globe for a Senator Paul Simon Spotlight Award for its contributions to comprehensive internationalization. At that time, VCU Globe had approximately 230 enrolled students—encompassing 34 different majors—and employed five full-time staff, three adjunct instructors, and three graduate assistants. Each year, VCU Globe runs two short-term study abroad programs during the summer, one during fall break and one during spring break. These for-credit programs are offered to students enrolled in VCU Globe. The target population for this study was all VCU students who were enrolled in a 5-week summer Global Education course in Oaxaca, Mexico, as well as their VCU faculty instructor. In order to protect the identity of the students and instructor, a specific year is not provided, but the program occurred between 2014-2019. Ten of the 11 students enrolled in the course participated in this study.

Marketed as a “global engagement service course,” students were enrolled in two three-credit courses: a Spanish language course and a global engagement course. The former was taught by Mexican instructors at a language institute in Oaxaca, and the latter was taught by a VCU Globe instructor. Students were housed in homestays with one to three other program participants. All were invited to participate in the study. The service component included teaching English as a foreign language to adults and children in a nearby village. The global engagement course focused on intercultural learning, migration, and service-learning. Assignments included written reflections, in-class group projects, essays, and a final written project.

## **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant because it provides insight into the nature of four curricular interventions and the guided reflections used to help advance students' intercultural development. Furthermore, its findings will help study abroad program administrators determine how to help prepare faculty leaders to use a curricular design that includes intercultural development as an outcome.

The increasing popularity of both student-centered learning and short-term study abroad call for empirical research focusing on guided reflection in short-term study abroad. According to a Pew Research Center survey (2010), millennials—those born from 1981 to 1997—are now the largest living generation in the United States and are on track to become the most educated generation in U.S. history. Two common characteristics of this generation are that they are more open to change than previous generations and that they are more diverse. This does not, however, mean that Americans are increasingly open to embracing those who hold differing values. On the contrary, individuals still tend to evaluate differing values as wrong rather than simply accepting them as different (Nam & Condon, 2009). Education abroad offers an opportunity to not only learn about the different cultural and social values held by others but, more importantly, to also become aware of one's own values and norms. The first step in learning about another culture is to be aware of one's own.

A number of studies, such as the Georgetown Consortium project, have provided empirical support for the emerging view that far too many students are not learning and developing in ways that many members of the study abroad community had long believed. This growing body of evidence undermines both the positivist assumption that

humans learn directly from experience and the relativist assumption that students learn best through being immersed in another national culture through such practices as living with host families, committing themselves to speaking only the target language, and enrolling in regular university courses. Research and disciplinary evidence suggest that students abroad will continue experiencing events through their original frame, unless someone or something intervenes and helps them become aware of how they habitually frame events and how they can reframe events in ways that are effective and appropriate within a new cultural context.

### **Outline of Chapters**

In the next chapter, I will review the relevant literature and research on short-term study abroad, students' acquisition of intercultural competence, and interventions in study abroad. In Chapter 3, I will discuss the research methodology and the specific data collection and analysis methods I used in this study. The findings will be presented in Chapter Four, and in Chapter 5 I will discuss those findings in light of recent research and offer concluding thoughts.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself.

—Rumi

The data on study abroad participation among students from U.S. institutions show that there has been a substantial increase over the past 15 years. Increased financial support, program model diversification, emphasis on global awareness, and increased short-term programming have all contributed to this exponential growth. The increased emphasis on study abroad participation by university leadership can be attributed to heightened awareness of the need for internationalization and global citizenship.

Research measuring the effectiveness of study abroad has also increased. According to the Forum on Education Abroad's *Guide to Outcomes Assessment* (Comp et al., 2007), research related to study abroad has totaled close to 1,000 studies in the past 10 years. It is difficult to measure the effectiveness of study abroad, however, without being explicit and consistent about what is being measured. International education professionals have known for a long time that intercultural competence has far-reaching benefits to both individuals and society, yet the evidence was, for too long, predominately anecdotal. The old paradigm posited that the best study abroad experiences were those that involved minimal to no contact with home culture members and that intercultural learning and competence would occur by virtue of exposure to other cultures; the longer the period abroad, the better. This logic unfortunately resulted in primarily anecdotal evidence of study abroad outcomes rather than the more tangible findings that come from

empirical research. This has changed, however, with the increased demand across all disciplines for accountability and assessment of student learning outcomes.

### **Short-term Study Abroad**

Short-term study abroad programs are not new. Indiana University's first short-term study abroad program was established in 1879, and several small, private liberal arts schools such as St. Olaf College have been running short-term programs since the 1960s (Hulstrand, 2006). Studies of short-term study abroad programs also abound. Historically, short-term, faculty-led programs were run out of academic departments and, in essence, they flew under the radar. With the growth of short-term programs and the increased presence of study abroad offices, these programs started becoming more centralized and therefore easier to track. Spencer and Tuma (2007) noted that the definition of short-term study abroad has changed significantly over the past 50 years. Short-term programs today are now considered to be 1 to 8 weeks in duration and are usually faculty-led and sponsored by a home university. This section provides background on short-term study abroad programs, reviews three empirical studies of intentional intercultural interventions in short-term study abroad programs, and identifies four common criticisms of short-term programs.

Only in the past decade has research begun to emerge on the need for and impact of curricular interventions during short-term study abroad programs. Yang's (2012) dissertation looked at the influence of a short-term study abroad program in China on its participants' attitudes toward China. One of the aims of that study was to provide suggestions to enhance the design of short-term study abroad programs. Although the case study ( $N = 16$ ) did not use the IDI and lacked a pre- and post-trip comparison,

findings from student journals, surveys, and interviews showed the participants' experiences were significant to their worldviews. It suggested peer-reviewed journals and prearranged opportunities for interactions with members of the host society. Both of these are intentional intercultural interventions.

Allen's (2010) comparative case study of students who participated in a short-term study abroad program also identified curricular intervention as a key need for student learning. Two specific interventions suggested were faculty-mediated blogging and "differentiated learning" (p. 469). The former would enhance self-reflection and goal setting, and the latter would take students' foreign language proficiency levels and learning goals into consideration. Allen did not, however, elaborate on how an instructor on a short-term program could feasibly do this. Additionally, the small sample size ( $N = 2$ ) makes it difficult to generalize to other settings and demographics.

Nam's dissertation (2011) looked at the intercultural sensitivity of students who participated in short-term study abroad programs and found that students did demonstrate intercultural gains. Using the IDI to measure intercultural sensitivity, Nam's findings indicated intercultural gains among 56% of the participants in her study ( $N = 39$ ). Her findings also led to her recommendation for further examination of cross-cultural, curricular interventions during short-term study abroad programs. Additionally, 10% of those students moved from the ethnocentric stage to the ethnorelative stage. One finding that emerged from Nam's study was an increase in IDI scores among participants who received a "combination of intensive immersion experiences with faculty support and opportunities for debriefing and critical reflection" (Nam, 2011, p. 153).

Criticisms of short-term, faculty-led study abroad are, first and foremost, about program duration. Short-term study abroad has been the target of many doubts and criticisms about the effectiveness of improving participants' intercultural competence during a short period of time (Dwyer, 2004; L. Engle & Engle, 2004; Erwin & Coleman, 1998; Ingraham & Peterson, 2004; Vande Berg et al., 2004). How much can a person learn about culture during a program lasting 8 weeks or less? In her article, "More is Better: The Impact of Study Abroad Program Duration," Dwyer (2004) described a longitudinal study conducted by her organization, the Institute for the International Education of Students. The study showed that study abroad "has a significant impact on students in the areas of continued language use, academic attainment measures, intercultural and personal development, and career choices" (Dwyer, 2004, p. 161). As the title implies, Dwyer supported long-term study abroad programs as having a "more significant and enduring impact on students" than short-term programs. However, she concluded her article by conceding the benefits of structured short-term programs, if the programs are very well organized.

In some categories of factors, summer students were as likely or more likely to achieve sustainable benefit from studying abroad in comparison with semester students. This seems counter-intuitive since one would expect that with declining duration of study abroad a corresponding lessening pattern of impact would result. One explanation is that well-planned, intensive summer programs of at least 6 weeks duration can have a significant impact on student growth across a variety of important outcomes. While it requires very careful educational planning, expert implementation, and significant resources to achieve these outcomes in a shorter-term length, the results of this study should encourage study abroad educators and should reinforce the value of short-term programming. (p. 161)

Unlike Nam's study, findings from the Georgetown Consortium Project (GCP), described in detail later in this chapter, found no statistically significant intercultural

gains among students in short-term programs (Vande Berg et al., 2004; Vande Berg et al., 2009). The greatest intercultural gains were among students who studied abroad for a semester. However, IDI findings from the GCP revealed that longer durations overseas resulted in only slightly higher levels of intercultural competence. Furthermore, the study's sample of 1–3, 4–7, and 8–12 weeks showed small and negative gains, but these were too small to permit valid conclusions about their intercultural learning. It did, however, reinforce the importance of cultural mentoring to help increase students' awareness of cultural differences and their ability to respond to them over these shorter time frames. These findings suggest that duration “does exert some marginal influence on intercultural competence development, but overall, the results are underwhelming in terms of supporting the assumption that the amount of time students spend abroad is meaningfully associated with their increased intercultural competence” (Hammer, 2012, p. 126).

A second criticism of short-term programs is the island-like formation of the student groups. Students on short-term study abroad programs are generally unable to participate in courses with host country nationals because of the program duration, and therefore they spend most of their guided (and unguided) time with one another. Groups typically have class solely with one another and therefore have limited exposure to students from the host country. This makes it difficult to have meaningful interactions with host country members. An important finding from the GCP is that intercultural learning “simply stopped” when students spent 76-100% of their free time with other U.S. nationals (Vande Berg et al., 2009).

Paige (1993) described 10 intensity factors that can raise the level of psychological intensity associated with intercultural experiences. He posited that these factors can predict which types of intercultural experiences might be the “most challenging, difficult, and stressful” (p. 4) for sojourners during their study abroad programs. An example of this is Paige’s hypothesis on cultural immersion: “The more the sojourner is immersed in the target culture, the higher the degree of psychological intensity” (p. 8). A second hypothesis is on cultural isolation: “The less access sojourners have to their own culture group, the greater will be the psychological intensity of the experience” (p. 8). Both of these highlight the need for cultural mentoring: the intensity can be facilitated into constructive and beneficial lessons if there is guided reflection.

Woolf (2007) issued a caustic critique of the oft-claimed superiority of immersion over island (he refers to them as independent) models. He argued that independent models can in fact provide more immersion opportunities because they provide opportunities for comparative analysis of the host and home cultures: “The level of integration is an entirely inappropriate measure of quality. In practice, it may be more advisable to get a toe wet rather than to plunge into icy waters” (p. 497).

Students need help translating their cultural experiences. Sanford’s (1966) challenge and support hypothesis supports Woolf’s argument that immersion programs are not always the best model. Sanford stated that students learn most effectively in environments that provide learners with a balance between challenge and support for their learning. This includes intercultural learning, but it does not often occur in direct enroll programs in which study abroad participants are only with instructors from the host country institutions.

A third criticism is that faculty leaders often do not have knowledge of or interest in facilitating intercultural learning. Students who are interculturally underchallenged can actually become more ethnocentric: “It is not unusual to find groups of self-protective students who reinforce each other’s feelings of confusion or fear, who travel protectively with other Americans, avoid contact with the locals, speak English whenever possible,” (Vande Berg et al., 2009, p. 5). This can happen with programs of any duration, but common sense tells us that it is greater on short-term island programs. These program characteristics may hinder the acquisition of intercultural competence among students attending short-term programs.

Without an instructor intervening in their culture learning, many if not most students will simply remain isolated among themselves throughout the duration of their program abroad. Faculty leaders are typically more involved in student activities, and thus their learning, in short-term programs than in the traditional longer term programs (Mapp, 2012). Faculty instructors trained and educated about cross-cultural learning can play a pivotal role in students’ culture learning. However:

It is still commonly expected that students will become more interculturally competent simply by being abroad, even if for as little as a few weeks. What this highlights is the importance of developing and implementing programs that are very intentional in facilitating participants’ intercultural learning. (Harvey, 2013, p. 44).

There is limited research, however, on guided reflections as a form of intervention on short-term education abroad programs. Those who have researched intentional interventions on short-term programs (Allen, 2010; Nam, 2011; Yang, 2012) all indicated that more programs should include it.

A fourth and final critique of short-term programs is that many consider it glorified cultural tourism. Many short-term study abroad groups travel a fair amount and spend little time in any one place. Research (Dwyer, 2004; Vande Berg, 2007) has shown that, regardless of program duration and location, study abroad participants struggle to integrate into the types of social networks that facilitate their learning while abroad. The reality is that some cultures may be relatively impenetrable in a short time. In these situations, “supportive contacts with study abroad program personnel and fellow students become extremely important” (Savicki & Selby, 2012, p. 347). It is especially situations like these where provocative yet supportive dialogue with program staff and fellow students becomes extremely important. The staff and students of the program itself typically provide the primary set of social relationships. As Citron (2002) and others have acknowledged, peer groups can provide important sources of identity and cross-cultural understanding. Although students are more likely to experience crucial intercultural experiences over a longer time span, and they will have more opportunities to process the cultural differences between cultures, longer term programs that are unaccommodating may yield worse student outcomes than shorter, better organized, more supportive ones. The key is in the intentional design and development of the study abroad program.

As findings from these interventions and criticisms have shown, there is reason to believe that students can benefit from short-term study abroad experiences and that intentional interventions are required if that is to happen. Guided reflection on students’ cultural experiences proved to be the most predictive variable of J. Engle and Engle’s (2003) seven variables of intercultural development in the GCP. These findings on intentional interventions in short-term study abroad programs make it clear that it is



needed for significant intercultural development to occur. Yet there is still a dearth of programs that incorporate it.

### **Intercultural Competence**

The importance of seeing from others' perspectives is a critical component of intercultural competence and is, arguably, central to students' education abroad experiences. Intercultural competency is a broadly accepted key learning outcome for education abroad participants; the concept itself has a variety of labels, such as intercultural development, cross-cultural learning, intercultural sensitivity, intercultural awareness, intercultural transformation, and cross-cultural competency. Virtually all of these terms refer in some form or another to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and awareness of other cultures as well as of one's own culture. Put another way, the comprehensive term *intercultural competence* can be defined as "a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts" (J. M. Bennett, 2008).

Within each of these three competencies lie opportunities for intercultural development. J. M. Bennett (2008) described and discerned these competencies as the mindset, skillset, and heartset. At the *mindset*, or cognitive, level, the most commonly cited knowledge areas include culture-general knowledge, culture-specific knowledge, identity development patterns, cultural adaptation processes, and cultural self-awareness. The affective competency, which Bennett refers to as the *heartset*, refers to attitudes and motivations such as curiosity, initiative, risk taking, suspension of judgment, cognitive flexibility, tolerance of ambiguity, and cultural humility. The behavioral competency, or *skillset*, usually includes characteristics and skills such as "the ability to empathize,

gather appropriate information, listen, perceive accurately, adapt, initiate and maintain relationships, resolve conflict, and manage social interactions and anxiety” (J. M. Bennett, 2008, p. 19). Greater potential for cultural learning and transformation exists when emphasis is placed on the three competencies as a set.

### **Intercultural Sensitivity and the Intercultural Development Continuum**

Whereas intercultural competence has been defined as the “ability to think and act in interculturally appropriate ways,” Hammer et al. (2003) proposed *intercultural sensitivity* as the “ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences.” A model for conceptualizing intercultural sensitivity is the intercultural development continuum (IDC), which is grounded in the developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS) originally conceived by M. J. Bennett (1986, 1993). The theoretical underpinnings of the IDC are personal construct theory and its extension, radical constructivism. According to this theory, a person can be exposed to numerous episodes and yet, if they fail to keep making something out of them, they will gain little in the way of experience from having been around when they happened. It is not what happens around them that makes a person experienced; it is the successive reflecting and conceptualizing of what happens, as it happens, that enriches the experience of one’s life (J. M. Bennett & Bennett, 2004, p. 153).

In other words, how a person responds to cultural differences depends upon the sophistication of their developmental stage for perceiving and understanding differences. The IDC is an adaptation of the original DMIS, which is based on the belief that “greater intercultural sensitivity is associated with greater potential for exercising intercultural competence” (Hammer et al., 2003, p. 422). The IDC, like the DMIS, is relevant to this

study in that it focuses on how people respond to cultural differences and provides a way to identify change in individuals as they move from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism.

As shown in Figure 3 (Hammer, 2012), the continuum consists of five stages (also called orientations) positioned within two worldviews: monoculturalism and interculturalism. These orientations represent a progression from less complex perceptions of cultural differences (monocultural mindset) to more complex ones (intercultural mindset). Whereas a person with a monocultural mindset perceives cultural differences from their own cultural perspective, an individual with an intercultural mindset has the ability to shift cultural perspectives and adapt subsequent behaviors. These orientations are denial, polarization (either defense or reversal), minimization, acceptance, and adaptation. Each is described in the following subsections.

### ***Denial***

People in denial “have little to no experience with cultural differences and have at most a very limited perceptual system to deal with them” (Wilkinson, 2007, p. 13). This could be a result of living in isolated homogeneous groups. Recognition of differences typically boils down to “foreigner,” “Black,” or “Hispanic” (Pusch & Merrill, 2008 p. 311).

### ***Polarization***

A polarization orientation can take the form of a defense or reversal perspective, and “is a judgmental orientation grounded in a sense of ‘us’ and ‘them’” (Hammer, 2009, p. 207). In defense polarization, individuals see their way of doing things as superior to how people from other cultural groups do things. Differences are seen as threatening and divisive; those with a defense perspective use stereotypes when it comes to cultural

differences. Individuals in reversal polarization tend to view the adopted culture as superior to their primary culture.

### ***Minimization***

People in minimization recognize cultural differences but focus more on similarities. In this orientation, it is assumed that humans are all the same once we get past our cultural differences. It is still a monocultural worldview because individuals in this stage view others from the perspective of their own cultural contexts. The challenge with this worldview is the assumption that people all want the same thing and share the same beliefs of what constitutes things such as achievement. The principle behind the golden rule, treat others as you want to be treated, is an excellent example of minimization. To shift that principle to a platinum rule, treat others how they wish to be treated, highlights an intercultural worldview. Moving into an intercultural worldview usually requires a significant other-culture experience, one in which individuals begin to contextualize other cultures within the perspectives of their own cultural lenses.

### ***Acceptance***

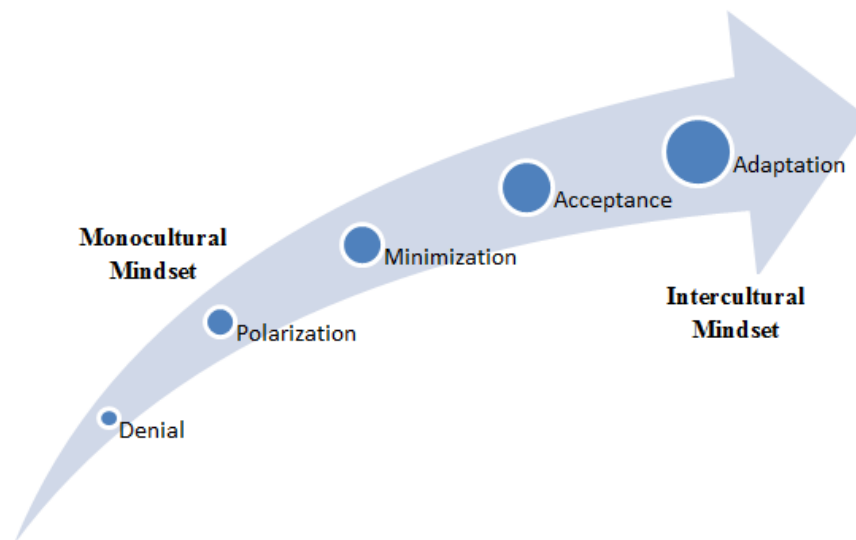
In acceptance, “an appreciation of the complexity of cultural differences arises” (Hammer, 2009, p. 250). Difference is not judged as negative or positive; rather, it is accepted, respected, and appreciated. What is being accepted at this stage is the equal but different complexity of others. This respect does not necessarily mean agreement or liking. The major issue emerging at this stage is how to approach differing yet valid viewpoints of others within the context of one’s own values.

## ***Adaptation***

Individuals in adaptation become more conscious and skilled at relating to and communicating with people of different cultural origins. In this stage, one begins to move from conscious incompetence to unconscious competence (Pusch, 2008). One in acceptance is becoming more aware of the cognitive and behavioral steps necessary to effectively interact across cultures.

### **Figure 3**

#### *Intercultural Development Continuum*



*Note.* Hammer (2009).

## **Cultural Intelligence**

With a nod to the complexity of intercultural competency and, more broadly, of global citizenship, Nam and Fry (2010), Earley and Ang (2003), and Ang and Van Dyne

(2008) all emphasized the importance of including cultural intelligence (CQ) when examining the development of intercultural competency. Explicitly grounded in the theoretical framework of multiple intelligences (Earley & Ang, 2003; Sternberg & Detterman, 1986), *cultural intelligence* was defined by Earley and Ang (2003) as “a person’s capability for successful adaptation to new cultural contexts” (p. 9). CQ differs from other types of intelligence, such as cognitive intelligence or emotional intelligence, because “it focuses specifically on settings and interactions characterized by cultural diversity” (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008 p. 4). This is significant to intercultural development because of its relevance to how one functions effectively in diverse cultural settings.

The link between intelligence and the ability to deal with culture shock and adapt to a new cultural situation is an element of cultural intelligence that applies well to this study. Similar to the cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills of intercultural competency, cultural intelligence can be categorized into three different key elements: mental (metacognition and cognition), motivational, and behavioral. *Metacognitive CQ* is an individual’s cultural consciousness and awareness when interacting with someone from a different cultural background. *Cognitive CQ* indicates an individual’s knowledge about different cultures, such as specific norms, practices, values, and traditions. *Motivational CQ* refers to an individual’s interests in learning about and adapting to cultural differences. Lastly, *behavioral CQ* is an individual’s ability to express verbal and nonverbal actions appropriately during interactions with people from different cultural backgrounds (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008).

The constructs of intercultural sensitivity and CQ are similar in that they both view cross-cultural competence “as developmental and trainable and focus on the ability

to understand and make sense of cultural cues and both can be developed through training techniques” (Bhawuk et al., 2008, p. 353.) Another similarity between cultural intelligence and intercultural sensitivity is that both capture the three domains of cognition, motivation, and behavior. A key difference between cultural intelligence and intercultural sensitivity is that CQ is considered by many to be a multidimensional perspective of intelligence, thus making it a skill or developable tool. Intercultural sensitivity, on the other hand, is more of a process and can encompass progress as well as regression. In that regard, CQ is more skill based and intercultural sensitivity is more process based. Evidence of this can be seen in Chapter 4, in the Quantitative Findings subsection.

### **Dimensions of Culture Learning**

Similar to Deardorff’s process model of intercultural competence—which focuses on knowledge, attitudes, and skills—Paige’s (2005) dimensions of culture learning focus on both the process and content involved in developing intercultural competence. These dimensions are:

- **Learning about the self as cultural being.** Students need to become aware of how the cultures we are raised in contribute to our individual identities, our preferred patterns of behavior, our values, and our ways of thinking. Cultural self-awareness enables a student to better recognize cultural differences and practices.
- **Learning about the elements of culture.** “To be effective culture learners, people must understand culture” (Paige & Goode, 2009, p. 337). Students need to distinguish between subjective and objective culture. M. J. Bennett (1998) referred to objective culture as “the institutions and products of a culture group,”

and subjective culture as “the learned and shared patterns of beliefs, behaviors, and values of groups of interacting people” (p. 3). Emphasis on objective culture is needed in order to help students become more intercultural competent.

- **Culture-general learning.** Culture-general learning refers to learning that can be adapted to multiple cultural contexts. Key concepts include values and communication styles and phenomena such as intercultural adjustment, culture shock, adaptation, acculturation, and assimilation (Paige et al., 2002).
- **Culture-specific learning.** For study abroad participants, culture-specific learning means becoming knowledgeable about objective and subjective culture in the host culture. Paige and Goode (2009) noted that “this is the dimension of culture learning most commonly supported by international education professionals” (p. 337).
- **Learning about learning.** The premise is that “strategic learners are self-empowered and more effective language and culture learners” (Paige et al., 2002, p. 40). As Paige and Goode (2009) explained, “Effective culture learning includes testing and refining one’s understanding of the culture (Crawford-Lange & Lange, 1984), participating in the culture, and reflecting on one’s intercultural experiences (Kolb, 1984)” (p. 337).

### **Experiential Learning Theory**

While there are several theories and conceptualizations of experiential learning, Kolb’s model of experiential learning applies particularly well to the field of study abroad and to curricular interventions. In Kolb’s (1984) words:



Immediate personal experience is the focal point for learning, giving life, texture, and subjective meaning to abstract concepts and at the same time providing a concrete, publicly shared reference point for testing the implications and validity of ideas created during the learning process. (p. 21)

Kolb's model draws a great deal from the experiential learning theories of Kurt Lewin, John Dewey, and Jean Piaget; however, other significant and related schools of thought also contributed to the development of experiential learning theory (ELT), such as Perry's scheme of ethical and cognitive development. The therapeutic psychologies of Carl Jung, Erik Erikson, Fritz Perl, and Abraham Maslow made two significant contributions to experiential learning theory: the role of adaptation and the importance of socioemotional development. The work of Paulo Freire, often referred to as a radical educator, also contributed to the development of experiential learning theory with his emphasis on critical consciousness.

Experiential learning differs from other types of learning in that it relies heavily on a perspective that integrates experience, perception, cognition, and behavior. Other theories of learning, such as rationalist and cognitive, emphasize recall and de-emphasize subjectivity. According to ELT, "learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984, p. 38). The Association for Experiential Education (n.d.) describes experiential learning as both a philosophy and methodology in which "educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities."

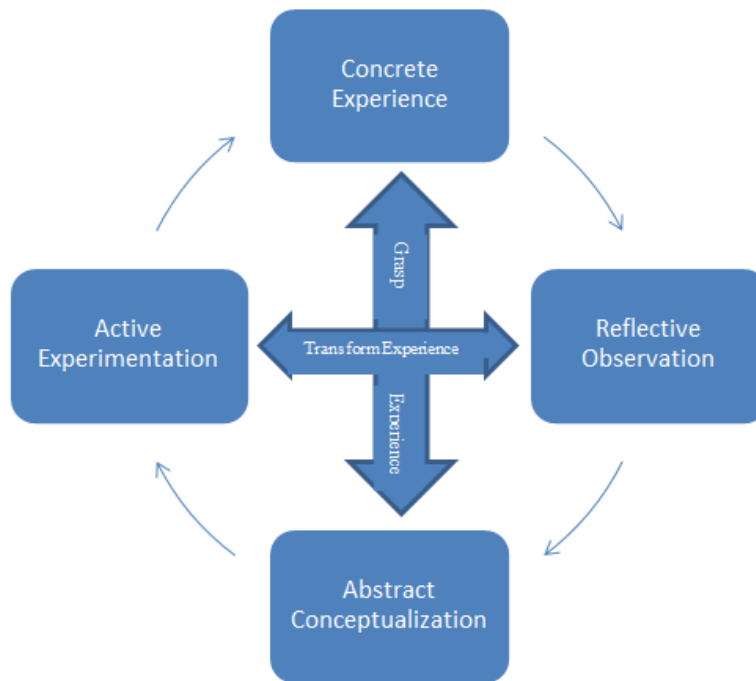
Kolb's model shows how learning occurs as a cycle that begins with an experience that causes a person to reflect. Upon reflection on that experience, the person

generalizes about the meaning of that experience in and subsequent reflections. These generalizations, also referred to as hypotheses, are then tested through active experimentation. Learning is taking place throughout the process. While this process is often referred to as a cycle, Kolb (1984) also referred to it as a spiral, because one hopes that a person does not move around and around within the same learning cycle but instead spirals upward based on the learning acquired from the previous cycle. This is significant because the new learning is perceived through changed lenses, and a learner's subsequent experiences will be perceived from a more developed starting point.

While Kolb's cycle of experiential learning begins with a *concrete experience*, there is no specific state at which a person must begin or complete their learning. This is significant because recognizing that individuals have different styles of learning helps instructors and learners identify differing approaches to teaching and learning. The concrete experience is processed by *observation and reflection* on that experience. A learner uses these reflections to generate hypotheses about the meaning of the experience, which in turn leads to new skills, understandings, and interpretations: *abstract conceptualization*. These hypotheses are then tested through *active experimentation*, which in turn leads to new concrete experiences. The cycle continues, with the learner's skills and interpretations evolving throughout the process so the new experiences are reflected upon and processed at more complex levels. This is shown in Figure 4.

**Figure 4**

*Experiential Learning Cycle*



**The Challenge and Support Hypothesis**

Sanford's (1966) challenge and support hypothesis makes a case for why educators need to balance the level of challenge that learners face with the amount of support they receive in order to keep them engaged in the learning process. To promote student development, Sanford said educators must "present [students] with strong challenges, appraise accurately [their] ability to cope with these challenges, and offer support when they become overwhelming" (p. 46). M. J. Bennett (1993) applied the idea of Sanford's challenge and support hypothesis to the study abroad context with a

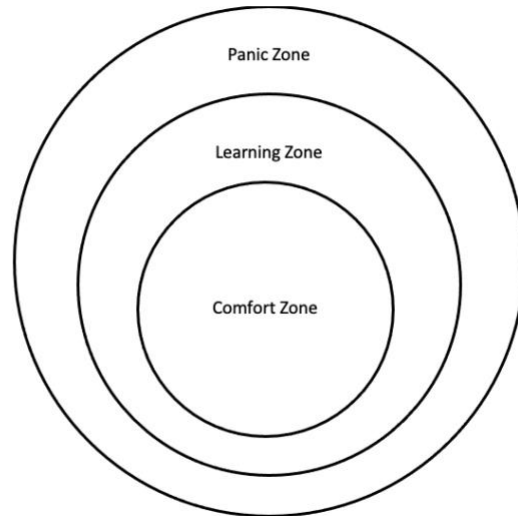
challenge and support grid designed to help educators assess the needs of participants and carefully balance challenge and support in order to maximize learning.

Vande Berg also applied Sanford's challenge and support hypothesis to the study abroad context (Vande Berg & Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2010); his representation is depicted in Figure 5. He explained that if study abroad participants are overly challenged, they will go into a panic zone and be unable to learn effectively as a result. For example, they may step away from a challenging cultural situation by spending more time with other Americans and doing the types of things they would do back home. On the other hand, if students are not sufficiently challenged, they will become overly comfortable and their ability to learn will decrease as well. Like Sanford, Vande Berg argued that the level of challenge students experience must be just right for learning to result. This balance helps students move into and stay in the learning zone.

What the challenge and support hypothesis highlights is that educators working with study abroad participants need to be aware of the level of challenge and anxiety that each student is experiencing and also provide the support or challenge necessary to promote optimal learning. Achieving this can clearly be difficult and, particularly in the case of short-term, faculty-led study abroad programs in which students live, study, and travel with peers, it becomes much too easy for students to remain in their comfort zones and thus lose out on potential learning opportunities. Paige's (1993) intensity factors can help educators assess how challenging an experience may be for individuals.

## Figure 5

### *Vande Berg's Challenge and Support Representation*



Note. From Vande Berg and Medina-López-Portillo (2010).

## Intensity Factors

To help study abroad students better understand the potential psychological challenges they may experience in different cultural settings, Paige (1993) identified 10 intensity factors. The greater the difference (appearance, communication styles, concept of personal space, etc.), the more psychologically intense the experience will be. An intensity analysis can help educators intervene more effectively with relevant exercises and assignments. The 10 intensity factors are (Paige, 1993):

- **Cultural differences.** Paige identifies cultural differences in values, beliefs and behaviors as the most common intensity factors. The more negatively students evaluate cultural differences between their home and host cultures, the more intense their experiences will be.

- **Ethnocentrism.** This factor can be expressed in two ways. First, as an ethnocentric individual (those in denial or polarization worldviews according to the IDC). Ethnocentric students will find intercultural experiences more challenging. Second, as an ethnocentric community that does not welcome outsiders. No matter how open a student is to a new culture, the experience will be a stressful one if the community resists.
- **Cultural immersion.** The more immersed a student becomes in the host community (using the language on a regular basis and interacting with host culture counterparts), the greater the amount of stress. It is psychologically fatiguing to immerse oneself. This can be reduced by spending time with people from the student's home culture, which can provide cultural renewal.
- **Cultural isolation.** Somewhat similar to cultural immersion, cultural isolation occurs when a student is immersed in the host culture and has limited home culture opportunities for cultural renewal.
- **Language.** Students without host country language skills will have a more stressful experience.
- **Prior intercultural experience.** Students with few to no experiences outside their own culture will have a higher intensity experience because they have not yet developed coping strategies, an understanding of the adjustment process, and other intercultural skills.
- **Expectations.** When students have unrealistically high expectations of their host culture or of their ability to adapt to the host culture, subsequent disappointment can be a serious factor and intercultural adaptation can be adversely affected.

- **Visibility and invisibility.** Being physically different from host nationals can increase the intensity of an intercultural experience. Conversely, having to keep parts of one's identity invisible, such as sexual orientation, can also increase the intensity of an experience.
- **Status.** Feeling that one is not receiving the appropriate respect can increase intensity of the experience. Conversely, receiving attention that the sojourner does not think seems warranted can also increase the intensity of an experience.
- **Power and control.** When sojourners feel they have no power or control in intercultural situations, particularly over their own circumstances, the intensity of the experience increases. This is an especially prevalent factor because the behaviors that allow one to control a situation in the home culture—language, relationships, and academic and other roles—all are likely to be missing or changed in the new society.

### **Intervening in Study Abroad**

For 2 decades, cognitive psychologists and educational researchers have gathered evidence that students learn most effectively when teachers avoid lectures and instead strategically mediate. Examples of this include creating learning environments; focusing on specific learning goals; asking students to connect new knowledge with what they already know; reflecting on themselves as learners; encouraging students to interact with each other and with the teacher; and helping students apply their new concepts, perspectives, and skills beyond the class. Pedagogical approaches reflecting this paradigm are usually characterized as active, collaborative, or cooperative. The growing evidence that students learn most effectively in learner-centered environments poses an

awkward question for study abroad programs: if many students do not learn particularly well when passively sitting in classrooms in the U.S., how could they effectively learn in classes abroad, using a pedagogy still based on faculty lectures, especially if these lectures are delivered in a language other than English? (Vande Berg et al., 2009, p. 2).

Literature on international education all too often focuses on disciplinary rather than thinking competencies (Yershova et al., 2000). Empirical studies (discussed later in this section) substantiate the emerging paradigm of a developmental approach to intercultural competence, demonstrating that intercultural learning and the transformation of perspectives are best achieved when taught using a curriculum that includes active reflection. This evolving paradigm of study abroad involves educators establishing intercultural learning outcomes and intervening in students' learning. It also advocates working with students both before and after they study abroad, so as to further their potential opportunities for intercultural learning and competence. Intercultural experience alone is not enough: "It is not enough to send someone into another culture for study or work and expect him or her to return interculturally competent. Mere contact is not sufficient to develop intercultural competence" (Deardorff, 2008 p. 36).

In 1977, Janet and Milton Bennett developed an intercultural train-the-trainer program for high school teachers who would be leading student groups on short-term study programs abroad. The defining assumption of the training program is that individuals need some form of education, training, and mentoring to become interculturally competent. M. J. Bennett (1993) took a strong position on this matter, stating:



Intercultural sensitivity is not natural... Education and training in intercultural communication is an approach to changing our 'natural' behavior. With the concepts and skills developed in this field, we ask learners to transcend traditional ethnocentrism and to explore new relationships across cultural boundaries. (pp. 21, 26).

This view is consistent with La Brack's (1993) conclusion that intercultural competence could be "more effectively and predictably fostered within intercultural programs" (p. 250).

The ability to change the way we think about ourselves and about the world does not occur intrinsically:

It is well established that the historic human propensity to form enclaves of similarity and common interests in order to survive a physically hazardous world has persisted in unconscious psychological defense systems that perpetuate conformity and exclusivity within groups, and misunderstanding between them. (Wilkinson, 2007, p. 2)

One way that intercultural competence is developed is through meaningful interactions with those from different cultures. Thus, it becomes crucial for study abroad programs to incorporate ways in which students can engage in meaningful interactions with host nationals while abroad, beyond brief interactions with those in the service industries, for example. (Deardorff, 2008, p. 45).

The old paradigm of study abroad posited that the best experiences were those that involved minimal to no contact with home culture members and that intercultural learning and competence would occur by virtue of exposure to other cultures: the longer the period abroad, the better. In reality, isolating from home culture members is much less likely today, given the access to communication around the globe. Social networking sites, blogs, email, and phones are but a few of the ways students remain connected to happenings back home.

Today, interventions have become increasingly accepted in all types of study abroad programming. Mounting empirical data demonstrating significant intercultural learning gains among students receiving intentional interventions have helped strengthen what was once predominately anecdotal evidence. Evidence from the Georgetown Consortium and Maximizing Study Abroad studies has demonstrated that intercultural learning is significantly enhanced when it is facilitated (Harvey, 2013; Vande Berg, 2007; Vande Berg et al., 2009). However, the format and frequency in which an intervention occurs within a study abroad program is “uneven at best and often nonexistent” (Paige & Goode, 2009, p. 334).

Recent support for intervening in students’ learning during study abroad comes from the Georgetown Consortium Project (Vande Berg et al., 2004; Vande Berg et al., 2009). The GCP conducted a large-scale, multiyear, comprehensive study of U.S. student learning abroad that sought to (a) document target language, intercultural, and disciplinary learning of U.S. students abroad and compare their learning to that of a control group; (b) identify the extent to which a relationship existed between student learning, specific program components, and learner characteristics; and (c) explore the extent to which target language gains were related to intercultural learning (Vande Berg et al., 2009). To date, “it is the most comprehensive examination of immersion and its impact on intercultural development and language learning yet undertaken in study abroad research” (Paige & Vande Berg, 2012, p. 34). The Intercultural Development Inventory was administered to measure intercultural learning among 1,297 students (1,159 participants in 61 programs abroad and 138 control students on three U.S. campuses) at the beginning and end of the semester. The findings from the GCP can be

classified in three broad categories, all of which demonstrate significant support for the argument that educators should intervene in students' intercultural learning (Harvey, 2013).

The first lesson learned from the GCP is that immersion alone does not significantly increase students' intercultural learning. Two preferred immersion practices are housing students with host families and direct enrollment at host universities. The gain of students who lived with host families (1.07 points) was not significant. That said, when students chose to engage with someone in the host family, the gains were significant. Direct-enrolled students gained just 0.71 points on the IDI scale. By comparison, those studying with other international students gained 4.99 points (Paige & Vande Berg, 2012)

A second lesson learned from the GCP links cultural mentoring to intercultural development. J. Engle and Engle's (2003) sixth defining component, guided reflection, proved to be one of the single most important factors impacting students' intercultural learning. Several of the findings suggested that the presence or absence of a well-trained cultural mentor who meets frequently with students may be the single most important intervention to improve student intercultural learning abroad (Vande Berg et al., 2009).

A third category of relevant findings from the GCP relate to Sanford's challenge and support hypothesis regarding how students interact with the host culture. The IDI scores of students who spent the least time (0–25% of their free time) with host nationals decreased from pre- to posttest. Students who reported spending 26–50% of their free time with host nationals had the greatest intercultural gains, whereas those who spent 51–100% of their free time with host nationals actually regressed (Vande Berg et al., 2009).

Vande Berg et al. explained how these findings reveal the upper and lower boundaries of the challenge and support hypothesis:

Students, at one extreme, those who spent much of their free time with other U.S. nationals were interculturally under-challenged and actually became slightly more ethnocentric while abroad. Students at the other extreme spent so much time with host country nationals that they became interculturally overwhelmed, lost ground in their IDI scores, becoming more ethnocentric (2009, p. 24).

Findings such as these strongly support the power of reflection and the need to guide the learning process. Although interventions can be interpreted as handholding and being overprotective, it is a reliable model of challenge and support. It is about putting students in a situation that they perceive as different, creating the destabilizing difference that is essential to learning. The GCP does not explain, however, how to structure intercultural interventions.

The word *intervention* is often used interchangeably with other words such as cultural mentoring, intentional interventions, and active or guided reflection. Paige and Goode (2009) wrote about cultural mentoring within the context of instructors' intercultural competence (or lack thereof) and their subsequent abilities (or inabilities) to facilitate the development of intercultural competence among their students. Lou and Bosley defined interventions in study abroad as "interrupting the flow of events before, during and/or after the study abroad program via facilitated, critical reflection" (2008, p. 278). These interruptions may be instructor facilitated (teaching) or not (independent study, peer interactions, journaling, etc.). Vande Berg (personal communication, April 7, 2011) distinguished interventions from cultural mentoring in study abroad as being more active, addressing the assumption that individuals, when left to their own devices, will not push themselves to that which is foreign. Rather, they will stay "in the shallow end of

the pool with the other U.S. Americans.” Cultural mentoring, on the other hand, more passively helps students with cultural differences.

Woolf (2007) asserted, “Immersion as an objective needs to be modified by some element of reasoned distance, creating a distinct intellectual space” (p. 496). This statement has garnered increasing value as empirical studies have demonstrated higher intercultural learning outcomes among students who receive guided reflection assignments than among their counterparts who experience the full-immersion paradigm. Two trends in study abroad today are short-term programs and faculty-led programs. Studies such as the Georgetown Consortium demonstrate that the development of intercultural competence is greater during longer term programs and also during programs in which instructors intervened in student learning.

Below, I describe four study abroad programs that have implemented curricular interventions. I also discuss research regarding these interventions. The four programs are the University of Minnesota’s Maximizing Study Abroad (MAXSA) project, the American University Center of Provence (AUCP), the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) Seminar on Living and Learning, and an online course at Willamette and Bellarmine Universities.

### **Maximizing Study Abroad**

*Maximizing Study Abroad* is a set of two guides: one for students and one for program professionals. These guides were created to help students improve their language- and culture-learning strategies in order to maximize their study abroad experience. They were also created to help provide study abroad professionals and language instructors with different ways the materials could be used, such as orientations,

on-site programs, and strategies-based language teaching (Paige et al., 2002; Paige et al., 2006). Originally a required, one-credit course, *Global Identity: Connecting Your International Experiences to Your Future* has evolved into its current form and is optional for all students participating in Learning Abroad Center programs through the University of Minnesota. The MAXSA guides are significant in the field of intercultural education in that the guides break intercultural learning into four dimensions: behavioral, affective, cognitive, and developmental. Theory driven and empirically tested, the project developed hypotheses about how intercultural competence could best be facilitated through intentional interventions.

A study examining the impact of interventions used in the MAXSA guides on students' intercultural development found no statistically significant differences in IDI scores of the experimental and control groups (Paige et al., 2004). The sample consisted of 86 students from seven Minnesota colleges and universities who were studying abroad for one semester in a Spanish-speaking or French-speaking country. Students were randomly assigned to a control group or the experimental group. Students in the experimental group attended a predeparture orientation to the *Students' Guide*, were assigned weekly readings from it, and were asked to email reflective journal entries to a designated research assistant biweekly. Three data sources were used to evaluate students' intercultural development: analysis of the ejournals, pre- and post-study abroad IDI scores, and follow-up interviews with students from the experimental group.

The IDI results showed that both the experimental and control groups increased their intercultural sensitivity, however, analysis of the ejournals and interviews demonstrated that the guides helped students in the experimental group by giving them

perspective on their experiences and providing them with the terminology they needed to more precisely describe them. This suggests an intervention might provide the support needed to facilitate intercultural development when students are placed in challenging situations.

### **The American University Center of Provence Program**

Another example of a study abroad intervention that aims to facilitate students' intercultural development is the one developed by Lilli and John Engle, program directors at the AUCP. Engle and Engle developed the independent immersion program in Provence in 1994, and in 2004 they opened a second center in Marseille. The developmental and educational theories and instruments at the heart of the AUCP program design are Kolb's experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984; Passarelli & Kolb, 2012), the Sanford and Bennett model of challenge and support (J. M. Bennett, 2009), Bennett's developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (M. J. Bennett, 1993, 2012), and the IDI (Hammer, 2009, 2012; Hammer et al., 2003).

The AUCP program is significant because Engle and Engle recognized early on the need to go beyond an immersion model that encouraged direct enroll at host universities and discouraged island models in which a study abroad cohort took courses together. For students to learn and develop interculturally, "we must go beyond immersion and intervene in ways that allow them to make meaning out of the new cultural and linguistic interface that they experience, with the culturally different Other and within themselves" (L. Engle & Engle, 2012, p. 285).

This program stands apart from others in that, since its inception, the program directors have made an institutional commitment to the outcomes assessment of two

educational goals: language acquisition (French) and the development of intercultural competence. Both of these are consciously reflected in the design of the program. Their semester and year-long programs promote French-language competence and intercultural competence. For cultural immersion, students participate in a weekly series of community-based, experiential activities called French practicum. Student learning in the practicum is supported through a semester-long intercultural communications course called Cultural Patterns that addresses the cognitive, emotional, and physical dimensions of the students' encounters with difference (L. Engle & Engle, 2004). Given its holistic design, the entire AUCP program can be considered a study abroad intervention.

In their first AUCP research report (2004) L. Engle and Engle evaluated the effectiveness of the program using two standardized instruments—the *Test d'Evaluation de Français* (TEF), to measure language acquisition, and the IDI—to participants pre- and post-semester. They analyzed IDI results from 187 one-semester students who participated in the program over the span of six semesters. and found that the average gain was 33%. Among their full-year students ( $N = 25$ ), the average gain was 40%.

The AUCP program differs from the online Maximizing Study Abroad intervention in that it provides good insight into ways intercultural interventions can be facilitated on-site. Based on their findings, L. Engle and Engle concluded, “Two factors lead to the clear development of cross-cultural competence in the American student group: as much direct, authentic contact with the host culture as possible, and skillful mentoring which guides, informs, inspires, and stimulates the experiential learning process” (2004, p. 232).



## **CIEE Seminar on Living and Learning Abroad**

Another example of a study abroad intervention is the Seminar on Living and Learning Abroad, developed in 2008 by the Council on International Educational Exchange. The Seminar is a semester-long, credit-bearing elective course for students participating in CIEE study abroad programs and is designed to target students' intercultural development. The seminar is the first study abroad program to systematically utilize IDI Guided Development in which a primary goal is to tailor student mentoring and guidance at the level of each student's intercultural development by balancing challenge and support (Paige & Vande Berg, 2012).

Through the Seminar, CIEE addresses three major challenges to facilitating intercultural learning. The first challenge is motivating students who are abroad to willingly engage in structured learning aimed at developing their intercultural capacities. The core course content is culture-general and culture-specific materials designed to help deepen students' understanding of subjective culture. A second challenge is training program directors with the skills to facilitate and intervene in guided reflection. CIEE developed intercultural training materials for the resident directors to help them teach the seminar's cross-cultural concepts more effectively. Lastly, CIEE developed effective curricula for instructors and students abroad that assist in the challenging process of cultural learning while studying and living abroad.

## **Willamette University and Bellarmine University Intercultural Learning Courses**

This intercultural learning course “arose from the experience and recognition that, without explicit and intentional intervention into the study abroad experience, students, in general, will limit themselves to surface-level experiences” (Lou & Bosley, 2008, p.

278). They have substantiated this recognition through empirical data derived from the IDI, finding that students left to their own devices tend to gain very little in the way of intercultural development.

The authors, faculty members at Willamette and Bellarmine Universities respectively, developed a Blackboard course for students who were studying abroad for a semester or year. This course includes international students studying at the home institution (Willamette or Bellarmine) and occurs in three phases: a predeparture workshop, the immersion phase, and a post-program workshop. The students are placed into small groups, according to their IDI development orientations, and are required to provide feedback to their peers who are studying abroad at other institutions. Discussions of intercultural concepts from students in different countries, including international students studying at the U.S. home institution, raise the intercultural learning to a meta level. That is, students are forced to move beyond assumed cultural understandings and interpretations (the “typical German way”) and are led to reflect upon the differing outcomes that can result from similar cultural processes at work in different settings. Home-school instructors can then lead the discussion to a deeper level of cross-cultural comparative analysis by facilitating discussions among the students about why and how outcomes differ.

The early versions of the course (mid 1990s to early 2000) were facilitated before the development of the empirical assessment tools that are now used. In the 20 years since the inception of their course, Lou and Bosley (2008) have developed the intentional targeted intervention (ITI) model. This model takes an experiential/constructivist approach and uses Bennett’s DMIS as the organizing framework: “Repetition of the

experiential learning cycle throughout the immersion experience is critical for the development of intercultural skills, not the least of which is an emergent understanding of how the student's own cultural identity is socially constructed" (Lou & Bosley, 2008, p. 278).

Between roughly 2003 and 2011, Bellarmine and Willamette University students who were enrolled in the ITI intercultural course ( $N = 144$ ) "achieved an average gain of 8.08 points on the IDI scale" (Lou & Bosley, 2008 p. 340). By contrast, students participating in the Georgetown Consortium study ( $N = 1,297$ ) only gained 1.32 points on average (Vande Berg et al., 2009). The latter group did not receive any intervention in the form of intercultural instruction. A gain of just 1–2 points does not signal any fundamental development in orientation. A gain of 8 points, however, "represents fundamental changes in one's orientation to cultural difference" (Lou & Bosley, 2008 p. 340).

### **Conclusion**

Studies of programs of varying durations have shown that intercultural learning acquisition can happen, but that learning is increased when facilitated. Courses such as the University of Minnesota's Global Identity, AUCP's Cultural Patterns, CIEE's Seminar on Living and Learning, and Willamette and Bellarmine's intentional, targeted, intervention model all include intentional intercultural interventions. Findings from each identify interventions as essential in helping students articulate specific knowledge acquisition and behavioral changes resulting from their studies abroad. However, these are all semester-long courses. Interventions in short-term faculty-led study abroad programs take a more laissez-faire approach. Without agreement across the disciplines

about the need for interventions, student learning in short-term programs abroad will fall short of its potential.

While the emphasis on intercultural competence has been a goal of education abroad for many years, its actualization has only recently become more apparent among scholars and practitioners in the field. Research demonstrates that many study abroad participants are not experiencing the type of intercultural development that had been assumed would occur automatically as a result of a sojourn abroad. Many study abroad professionals and scholars now advocate for intervention strategies that aim to increase students' intercultural learning. Research on such interventions has been consistently growing, and the findings are promising.

Conducting a study through the lens of intercultural development provides a richer picture into the complex process of intervening in students' intercultural learning. An instructor using guided reflection as a technique has the complex task of doing so in an experiential and dynamic environment, one that includes in-class as well as out-of-class learning and in which learners are tasked to examine the cognitive, behavioral, and affective domains of intercultural learning.

While preliminary studies suggest that the combination of activities is helpful, we still lack a detailed understanding of the ways in which intentional interventions, accompanied by guided reflections, develop intercultural competence. There is a need to understand (a) the types of guided reflection activities that are effective, (b) the processes that are most effective, and (c) the degree to which specific facets are influenced, as measured by changes on the IDI and CQ scales as well as through findings from document review and participant interviews.

I have presented a theoretical framework that outlines the areas that are important to examine when researching the use of intercultural interventions and guided reflections in facilitating students' intercultural development. Culture learning dimensions (Paige, 2005) highlight what such learning entails. The intercultural development continuum (Hammer, 2009), the challenge and support hypothesis (Sanford, 1966), and experiential learning theory suggest how guided reflections might be facilitated. They provide the framework for several study abroad interventions that are currently offered. Although this study is too small to be generalizable to a larger population, I hope that my findings will assist administrators of study abroad programs with best practices for designing intercultural interventions into their programs and guide faculty instructors toward meaningful reflective learning assignments aimed at increasing students' intercultural development.

### **Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology**

The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeing new landscapes, but in having new eyes.

—Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*

The purpose of this study was to examine the ways in which an instructor’s interventions and guided reflections influenced students’ intercultural development during a short-term, faculty-led study abroad program. To do this, I conducted an exploratory case study and applied a mixed methods approach. My study focused on four specific types of study abroad interventions and the guided reflections embedded within each of those interventions. Using a pre- and post-program design, the quantitative methods of the study measured students’ cultural intelligence and intercultural sensitivity as an outcome of a short-term study abroad program. These data were combined with qualitative methods in order to better understand how interventions and guided reflections impacted students’ intercultural development.

#### **Case Study Methodology**

Given the line of inquiry of this study and that it focused on a particular study abroad program, an exploratory, in-depth case study approach was employed. A case study involves the examination of the “particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (Patton, 2002, p. 297). Furthermore, a case study method was chosen for this study in order to investigate a “contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context” (Yin, 2018, p. 12). The nature of case study supports a goal of this study to gain an in-depth

understanding of the impact of interventions and guided reflections on students' intercultural development.

A mixed-methods design was employed for this study in order to “address more complicated research questions and collect a richer and stronger array of evidence than can be accomplished by any single method alone” (Yin, 2018, p. 63). In social science research involving human behavior, using quantitative and qualitative data in conjunction can help improve the depth and rigor of results because it employs multiple, complementary sources of data. (Bogdan & Bicklen, 2007; Creswell, 2009). This mixed methods case study includes quantitative data from the Intercultural Development Inventor and Cultural Intelligence Scale along with qualitative data gathered through observations, interviews and document review. These methods align with the emerging experiential constructivist view of intercultural learning abroad. According to this framework, students interpret their intercultural experiences and construct their own reality around what is happening in terms of what they are taking away. Students learn from continual reflection on how their experiences and backgrounds shape how they perceive the world (Vande Berg et al., 2012), and faculty guide their students through this process. In applying this approach, students' perspectives were brought to the foreground.

### **Study Design**

Using a pre- and posttest design for the quantitative portion of the study, I examined students' intercultural sensitivity and cultural intelligence as a learning outcome of their short-term study abroad program. I examined the ways in which

interventions and guided reflections influenced students' intercultural development through observations, document review, and participant interviews.

### **Data Collection**

I collected all data before conducting my analysis in order to assess, observe, and interview the participants within the 5-week timespan of the course. The quantitative instruments (the IDI and CQS) were administered to respondents before their departure to Mexico and just before their return to determine the effects of the interventions and guided reflections on their intercultural development. The qualitative instruments (document review, interviews, and observations) were conducted during the students' last 2 weeks of the program in Mexico and in the first 2 weeks after their return to the United States.

The table below provides demographic information about the students, which was gathered during the interviews.

**Table 2**

*CQS Scores by Student*

| <b>Participant</b> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Race/Ethnicity</b> | <b>Academic Major</b>                                | <b>Academic Standing</b> |
|--------------------|---------------|-----------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Rima               | Female        | Black African         | Health, Physical Education and Exercise Science      | Sophomore                |
| Rhonda             | Female        | African American      | Business and International Studies                   | Junior                   |
| Molly              | Female        | White                 | International Studies                                | Sophomore                |
| Bridget            | Female        | African American      | Psychology, Journalism, and African American Studies | Junior                   |
| Emma               | Female        | White                 | Political Science and Spanish                        | Sophomore                |
| Moira              | Female        | Asian American        | Chemistry  | Freshman                 |
| Pablo              | Male          | Mexican American      | Political Science                                    |                          |
| Nicky              | Female        | White                 | Political Science                                    | Freshman                 |



| <b>Participant</b> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Race/Ethnicity</b> | <b>Academic Major</b>                              | <b>Academic Standing</b> |
|--------------------|---------------|-----------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Elizabeth          | Female        | White                 | Spanish  | Junior                   |
| Felicity           | Female        | African American      | African American Studies,<br>International Studies | Freshman                 |

### *Participant Observations*

Observations of the students, program instructor, and the surrounding environment was a source of data collection in this study. I visited the program in Oaxaca in June during the last 1-and-a-half weeks of the program. During that time, I observed two VCU Globe class meetings, the students teaching English, and the students on two excursions to rural villages. My main purpose was to observe interactions between students and instructor in order to get a sense of what the instructor did to facilitate intercultural development and how the students responded. A secondary purpose was to gain a deeper understanding of the contexts from which the students and instructor were drawing when I interviewed them.

I chose participant-observation over direct observation because it provided more opportunities to gain insight from the views of the students and the instructor. A distinct opportunity with this approach is that it allows the researcher access to activities and groups that may otherwise be inaccessible. A challenge with this approach, however, is that it limited my ability to take notes during my observations (Yin, 2018). Recognizing this challenge, I immediately journaled about my observations following each activity and meeting. I did not have an observation protocol but rather used an inductive coding scheme to later develop codes based on patterns of observation.

## ***Interviews***

The purpose of qualitative interviewing is “to capture how those being interviewed view their world, to learn their terminology and judgments, and to capture the complexities of their individual perceptions and experiences” (Patton, 2002, p. 348). Although the purpose of these qualitative interviews was to gather data and not to change people, interviews are inevitably interventions. Good interviews expose thoughts, feelings, knowledge, and experience to the interviewee as well as the interviewer (Patton, 2002, p. 405). Through questions about their intercultural learning, I asked students to reflect upon aspects of their experiences that they may have not previously considered.

## **Instrumentation**

### ***Intercultural Development Inventory***

The IDI (Hammer, 2009) is a validated and reliable 50-item self-assessment inventory used in this study to assess the extent to which students’ intercultural sensitivity developed during the course of the summer term in which they studied abroad on the VCU GLOBE Mexico program. Only licensed IDI Qualified Administrators are permitted to administer this instrument and I received my license in 2007. Based on the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS, the IDI is a psychometric instrument meant to assess one’s orientation toward cultural difference. It includes 50 statements to which respondents must choose among a 5-point answer set ranging from “agree” to “disagree.” It has been extensively tested and validated (Hammer et al., 2003; Paige et al., 2003) and is now used in a wide variety of contexts.

Adaptations of the original DMIS evolved after years of IDI use in research, resulting in what is now called the intercultural development continuum (IDC). The IDC

identifies five orientations, also referred to as worldviews, that range from more monocultural to more intercultural or global mindsets. These orientations are denial, polarization (which includes defense and reversal), minimization, acceptance, and adaptation. The IDI produces a developmental orientation, which identifies a person's primary orientation toward cultural differences and commonalities. Table 2 provides a brief description of each of the orientations and the corresponding numerical IDI score; additional information about each of these orientations is provided in Chapter 2. The IDI also includes a short section with demographic questions.

**Table 3**

*Scoring and Description of Intercultural Development Inventory Orientations*

| Orientation                       | Score     | Description  |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|--|
| Denial                            | 55–69.9   | People in denial ignore or are unaware of the existence of cultural differences.   |
| Polarization (defense & reversal) | 70–84.9   | In polarization, people have a polarized sense of us and them. This worldview can take the form of defense, in which people view their own culture as superior, or reversal, in which they hold the other cultural group in higher regard. |
| Minimization                      | 85–114.9  | Minimization is considered a transitional worldview in which people may be aware of cultural differences but tend to focus on similarities. The assumed similarities, however, are typically derived from one's own culture.               |
| Acceptance                        | 115–129.9 | In acceptance, people recognize and appreciate the complexity of cultural differences. However, they are often unclear about how to adapt to such differences.   |
| Adaptation                        | 130–145   | People in adaptation are able to shift perspective and adapt to different cultural contexts.   |

Individuals who place within one of the first three orientations are considered to have an ethnocentric worldview; whereas individuals whose scores place them in an acceptance or adaptation orientation possess an ethnorelative worldview. These two worldviews have also been referred to as a monocultural mindset and an intercultural mindset (Hammer, 2009), as illustrated in Figure 3. or ethnorelative, as shown in Figure 3. The IDI has been extensively tested and validated (Hammer et al., 2003; Paige et al., 2003) and is currently used in a variety of contexts. I also gathered information on students' gender, class standing, previous experience with study abroad, and previous participation with the VCU GLOBE program.

### ***Cultural Intelligence Scale***

The instrument used to assess increases in student's cultural intelligence was the Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS), designed by Ang et al. (2007). Consisting of 20 questions, the CQS uses a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) and measures the four factors of cultural intelligence: metacognition, cognition, motivation, and behavior. The instrument has demonstrated reliability and validity, based on large, multisample studies. Ang and Van Dyne contended that CQ is a "cleaner construct that assesses multiple aspects of intercultural competence in a single instrument, based on a theoretically grounded, comprehensive and coherent framework" (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008, p. 10).

### **Instrument Pilot**

I selected a small group of students to run a pilot study with the demographic survey and the interview questions. These two students were VCU Globe students who had recently participated in a short-term VCU Globe program to Qatar. I asked them to

provide feedback on the clarity of the IDI instructions as well as the overall time to complete, any errors in spelling, and so forth. Recommended changes were made prior to commencing data collection.

**Table 4**

*Data Collection Timeline*

| Date                            | Action  |
|---------------------------------|---|
| April (prior to site visit)     | Review curriculum materials obtained from the instructor.<br>Send consent form to instructors and obtain agreement in writing.  |
| April–May (prior to site visit) | Instructor forwards email from researcher to participants; the email includes the consent form.<br>Collect consenting students’ IDI data.   |
| May–June (during site visit)    | Informal observations in and around VCU instructor’s class meeting space, service sites and the language institute.<br>Conduct focus group interviews.<br>Collect students’ post-trip IDI data. |

## Chapter 4: Findings

The next time you are planning to take your horses to drink, “salt their oats” first – they will be a lot more likely to drink when they get to the water. (Weimer, 2002, p.103)

This chapter presents the research findings by the following research questions.

1. What was the impact of this program on the students’ level of intercultural sensitivity and cultural intelligence?
2. How did the instructor intervene to facilitate participants’ intercultural development?
3. In what ways did the interventions in this study abroad program influence participants’ intercultural development?

### **Research Question 1: What was the impact on students’ IDI and CQS scores?**

In response to the first question, I report the scores from the students’ Intercultural Development Inventory and Cultural Intelligence Scale in order to provide context for the qualitative findings that follow. All names used are pseudonyms.

#### **IDI Scores at Time 1**

The average IDI score for all students at Time 1 was 88.97, which is at the very beginning of the minimization range. The minimum and maximum scores were 65.3 and 121 points. The standard deviation had a value of 15.52. There were no significant outliers. One student was in denial, five students were in polarization, three were in minimization, and one was in acceptance. There were no students in adaptation. Only one student began this study with an intercultural mindset (acceptance).

## **IDI Scores at Time 2**

At the end of the 5-week program in Mexico, the average IDI scores for all students were 96.18. The minimum and maximum scores were 77.60 (polarization) and 124.93 (acceptance). Seven of the 10 students showed positive gains on the IDI. Four moved up an orientation and three moved up within an orientation. Five of the seven who gained did so by more than 10 points. One student moved from denial to polarization, two students moved from polarization to minimization, and one moved from minimization to acceptance. One student moved up within polarization and one student moved up within acceptance.

The other three students regressed numerically on the IDI; however, two of those regressions were less than a percentage drop. One regressed within minimization and two regressed within polarization. Among those who gained, the average increase was 11.14. Among those who regressed, the average was -1.95 points. Students who showed positive development gained between 1.11 and 20.46 points; those who regressed lost between -4.35 and 0.67 points. Overall, the scores increased from pretest to posttest. The participants' average score was higher than the pretest scores by 7.11. Only one student ended this study with an intercultural mindset (acceptance).

**Table 5***IDI Scores by Student*

| Participant | IDI T1 |              | IDI T2 |              | IDI Change |
|-------------|--------|--------------|--------|--------------|------------|
| Moira       | 65.30  | Denial       | 79.67  | Polarization | 14.36      |
| Nicky       | 76.52  | Polarization | 77.62  | Polarization | 1.11       |
| Molly       | 78.44  | Polarization | 77.60  | Polarization | -0.89      |
| Pablo       | 80.37  | Polarization | 93.75  | Minimization | 13.38      |
| Emma        | 82.68  | Polarization | 82.02  | Polarization | -0.67      |
| Felicity    | 84.56  | Polarization | 105.02 | Minimization | 20.46      |
| Elizabeth   | 95.63  | Minimization | 106.74 | Minimization | 11.11      |
| Rima        | 102.37 | Minimization | 116.10 | Acceptance   | 13.68      |
| Bridget     | 102.81 | Minimization | 98.47  | Minimization | -4.35      |
| Rhonda      | 121.05 | Acceptance   | 124.93 | Acceptance   | 3.88       |

**Student Cultural Intelligence Scores**

The pretest (T1) for the CQS produced the following descriptive statistics. The average score for the 10 students was 104.80 points. The minimum and maximum scores were 79 and 120 points. The average CQS posttest (T2) score was 119.20 points. The minimum and maximum scores were 105 and 133 points, and the standard deviation was 9.25. The participants' average posttest score was 12.00 points higher than the average pretest score. The minimum scores were about 30 points larger than the pretest scores.



**Table 6***CQS Scores by Student*

| Participant | CQS T1 | CQS T2 | CQS change |
|-------------|--------|--------|------------|
| Rima        | 99     | 129    | 30         |
| Rhonda      | 100    | 105    | 5          |
| Molly       | 103    | 105    | 2          |
| Bridget     | 114    | 119    | 5          |
| Emma        | 120    | 133    | 13         |
| Moira       | 79     | 117    | 38         |
| Pablo       | 120    | 120    | 0          |
| Nicky       | 96     | 116    | 20         |
| Elizabeth   | 114    | 121    | 7          |
| Felicity    | 103    | 127    | 24         |

**Similarities and Differences Between CQS and IDI Change Scores**

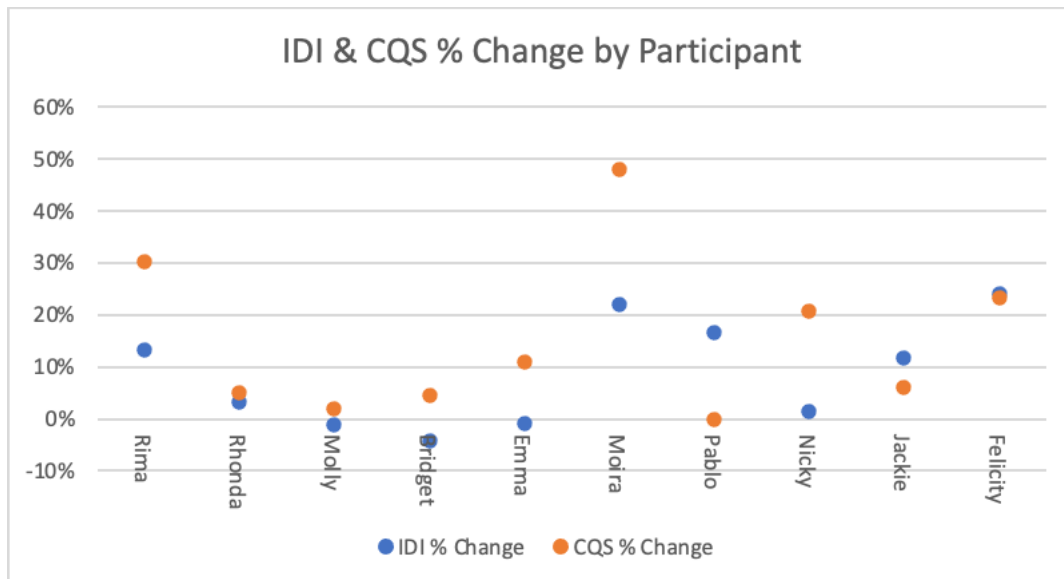
Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used to explore the relationship between the CQS and IDI change scores. With a coefficient of .578, the correlation between CQS and IDI is moderate at best. Table 6 presents the IDI and CQS T1 and T2 mean scores together, in order to take a closer look at the two instruments together. Figure 6 shows each participant's IDI and CQS change score. The majority of the students had increases in both their CQS and IDI scores.

**Table 7***Comparison of IDI and CQS T1 and T2 Data*

| Test   | Mean     | N  | Std. dev. |
|--------|----------|----|-----------|
| IDI_T1 | 88.9727  | 10 | 16.34309  |
| IDI_T2 | 96.1844  | 10 | 16.94861  |
| CQS_T1 | 104.8000 | 10 | 12.63857  |
| CQS_T2 | 119.2000 | 10 | 9.24722   |

**Figure 6**

*IDI and CQS Percentage Change by Participant*

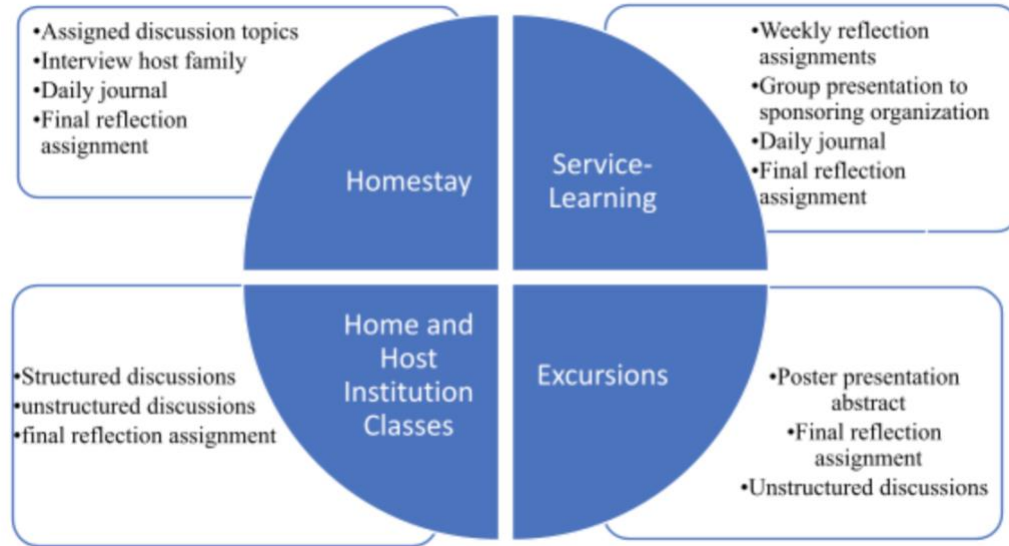


### **Research Question 2: How Did the Instructor Intervene?**

To answer the second question, I conducted a document review of the instructor's syllabus and program evaluation; interviewed the instructor and students; and observed the instructor and students in the classroom, on two excursions, and at the students' service site. Working with these data, I identified four types of interventions established by the instructor in which opportunities for intercultural learning occurred. These four interventions were (a) homestay, (b) classroom instruction, (c) service project, and (d) excursions. For each of these interventions, the VCU instructor assigned various types of guided reflections to help students progress in their intercultural development. Figure 7 illustrates the four interventions and the guided reflections assigned within each of them.

**Figure 7**

*Interventions and Guided Reflection Assignments in This Study*



**Intervention 1: Homestay**

The host families present a daily opportunity to engage and to learn.

—VCU Globe instructor

As part of the arrangement between the VCU study abroad group and the Instituto Cultural Oaxaca (ICO), ICO placed VCU students with Oaxacan families for the duration of the students' time in Oaxaca (3 weeks). Host families were from different socioeconomic backgrounds, lived within walking distance of ICO and the historic district of Oaxaca, and had been hosting international students for multiple years. Students ate breakfast and lunches (the central meal in Mexico) with their host families. Two to four VCU students were placed with each host family.

The instructor ensured that students interacted with their host families by assigning them discussion topics, which students then shared during class or wrote about

in a weekly reflection paper. These discussion questions centered on topics such as migration, globalization, and the teacher protests that were happening in Oaxaca. The instructor spoke about some students feeling outside their comfort zone during the host family discussions, because of the topic discussed or their lack of Spanish proficiency.

Of the four program goals listed in the students' VCU syllabus, the homestay intervention touched upon three: (a) develop abilities to navigate cultural and personal borders, with particular reference to professional goals and plans; (b) Encounter a wide range of individuals and groups of people and have direct and substantive contact with worldviews and experiences different from your own; and (c) build awareness of the skills required of a global citizen/culture broker within relevant professional fields. The instructor used four types of guided reflection to help guide students' intercultural learning as it pertained to their homestay experiences: class discussions, interview assignments, group work, and a daily journal. The instructor opened each class with an invitation for students to discuss any intercultural concerns or questions.

At the end of their 2<sup>nd</sup> week in Oaxaca, students were assigned interviews with their host families on the topic of globalization and how it had affected their lives. This assignment required students living together to develop questions and conduct the interview together in Spanish. The instructor built in class time for the students to work together in their small groups to develop interview questions for the host family. The groups then shared their experiences and interview information with the rest of the class, which provided an opportunity to discuss similarities and differences among their homestay families and their U.S. families. Students benefitted from this in two ways. First, it helped the students with lower Spanish language proficiency formulate questions

to ask. Second, in the process of developing their interview questions, students engaged in discussions on migration among themselves; this helped them become more aware of varying perspectives on the topic. For the fourth guided reflection for the homestay intervention, students were required to maintain a daily journal of observations about their experiences in Mexico and, more specifically, about life with their homestay families, Spanish classes, VCU classes, service project, and excursions. Students' journals were neither graded nor submitted.

### **Intervention 2: Service-Learning (Teaching English as a Second Language)**

I encourage the students to make connections between what they are learning in class and what they are teaching their students.

—VCU Globe instructor

Quite possibly the most challenging intervention for the students was their service-learning project, which comprised 20% of their overall grade. The students taught English to members of an Indigenous community (Teotitlan del Valle) twice a week for 3 weeks, with guidance and oversight provided by the VCU instructor and a local nonprofit that arranged the program. I have identified the service-learning component as one of four intercultural interventions in this study because of (a) the intentional and deliberate way in which the faculty director worked to create a setting for the students that would provide them with intercultural experiences, and (b) the assigned guided reflections that accompanied the intervention.

Of the four program goals listed in the students' VCU syllabus, the service-learning intervention touched upon all of them: (a) develop abilities to navigate cultural and personal borders, with particular reference to professional goals and plans; (b)

encounter a wide range of individuals and groups of people and have direct and substantive contact with worldviews and experiences different from your own, (c) build awareness of the skills required of a global citizen/culture broker within relevant professional fields; and (d) develop greater awareness of migration issues and pressures on families, both on those who lived or worked in the U.S. and those who have been left behind in Mexican cities and villages. The instructor used four types of guided reflections to help guide students' intercultural learning as it pertained to their service-learning experiences: weekly reflection papers; a group presentation to the sponsoring organization, Fundación en Via (FEV), at the end of the project; a daily journal; and a final reflection paper. Each week students submitted a one to one-and-a-half page reflection paper that focused on a different aspect of their service experience. In the syllabus, the instructor provided two to four prompts for each weekly assignment and required students to submit their first paper before teaching their students. A primary goal of the reflection papers was for students to reflect upon their expectations for and experiences with the service project and to observe changes in those expectations over the course of their time at the service site. Themes for each reflection were:

- expectations (how prepared students felt, their expectations, fears and goals);
- the community service site (the setting, people, and positive or negative feelings students may be experiencing);
- interactions with their students and with their peers (descriptive and reflective);
- the experience (perceived impact within the community and among their students, with a description of and reflection on a critical incident); and
- overall analysis.

Twice a week students traveled by public bus or by shared taxi to reach the community center in Teotitlan. Classes lasted 1 hour, in which the students broke their groups into smaller ones based on their age or proficiency level. All of the English as a foreign language (EFL) students lived in the village of Teotitlan; their first language was Zapotec and their second language was Spanish. Fifteen of the approximately 20 EFL students were under the age of 18.

I observed the students teaching in their third week, and they all seemed comfortable getting on the crowded public bus, getting off at a stop along the highway, crossing a bridge, and finding taxis to take them the rest of the way to the village. Once we arrived, we walked approximately 5 minutes along dirt and gravel streets to the community center where the EFL classes took place. The community center consisted of a large, one-story building with concrete floors and walls and some tables and chairs. Birds occasionally flew up into the rafters. Upon arriving at the village, the FEV coordinator split from the students in order to attend to the microloans being collected and disbursed among the village women.

The VCU students worked in the same pairs each week and taught the same group, which ranged in size from one to 15 students. For the first 10 minutes, I walked around observing the interactions between the VCU students and their EFL students. Some of the older EFL students, aged 12–45, joked with the VCU students, while others were quiet, apparently because of limited English proficiency. The largest group of students, around 15 children aged 7–12, were visibly the most fidgety. Several talked among themselves and were not listening to their VCU student teachers. As I walked over to them, a few of the children eagerly showed me exercises they were working on.

After asking the VCU students whether I could assist them and receiving their permission, I spent the remainder of the hour helping them with their English lesson. Going along with their lesson plan, I assisted three to five children at a time. After class, the two VCU students told me this was their largest group yet and thanked me for helping.

The 60-minute class included one 10-minute break. Following class, some of the students stopped by the space where the FEV coordinator and VCU instructor were meeting with the microloan members. Several of the Zapotec women extended warm handshakes with the VCU students and with me, and then all of the students returned to Oaxaca by bus.

### **Intervention 3: Excursions (Urban and Rural)**

All of our excursions are educational and often present opportunities to interact with locals. Our tour guides are from the villages and are extremely knowledgeable and engaging.

—VCU instructor

The excursions provided opportunities for informal discussions between the instructor and the students about cultural differences, often regarding challenges group members had with one another. Of the four program goals listed in the students' VCU syllabus, the excursion intervention touched upon all of them: (a) develop abilities to navigate cultural and personal borders, with particular reference to professional goals and plans; (b) encounter a wide range of individuals and groups of people and have direct and substantive contact with worldviews and experiences different from your own; (c) build awareness of the skills required of a global citizen/culture broker within relevant professional fields; and (d) develop a greater awareness of migration issues and pressures



on families, both on those who lived or worked in the U.S. and those who have been left behind in Mexican cities and villages. I joined the VCU instructor and students on two excursions and observed how students engaged with their hosts and how the VCU instructor helped facilitate engagement between the students and their hosts as well as among the students themselves.

### ***Excursion 1: Migration Story***

On a Saturday afternoon, I traveled with the students, the instructor, and the FEV coordinator by bus to Teotitlan to meet an FEV microfinance recipient. Upon arriving, we walked to the house of a Zapotec woman who had agreed to talk to the VCU group about her migration story. The group entered her home and sat in chairs and on the concrete ground of the open courtyard. She lived with her father and wove rugs for a living. In the courtyard were clothes hanging on lines, a loom, a dog, and a couple of roaming chickens.

Once everyone was seated and introductions were made, the young woman spoke for 30 minutes about her experience traveling undocumented with her husband to the United States. While living in California, they had two daughters and worked on a strawberry farm. She was deported when her youngest daughter was 1 year old and received a 10-year block from re-entering the United States. It had been 8 years since she returned to Teotitlan; her husband and daughters remained in California. The students had prepared questions and two or three of them spoke. The instructor and the FEV coordinator interpreted throughout the talk. After 45 minutes, the coordinator and students thanked the woman and our group departed.

### ***Excursion 2: Food Autonomy and Mexican Chocolate***

Another Saturday morning, I traveled with the students, instructor, and the FEV coordinator by van to San Andres Huayapam, a village 25 minutes northeast of Oaxaca, to visit another microfinance borrower: three young adults in their 20s who started a chocolate cooperative. The students listened as the young adults spoke to them about food autonomy and their principles of self-management, mutual support, and solidarity. The VCU instructor quietly interpreted in the back for students who could not understand. After the 30-minute introduction to the cooperative, the students were invited to make their own chocolate. Students divided into groups of four and were assigned to production stations, one of which involved riding a stationary bicycle that was attached to a funnel that ground the cacao. Everyone enjoyed trying this.

The chocolate cooperative tour wrapped up a couple hours later and the students then walked to the village center to await the van that would take them back to Oaxaca. While waiting, they listened to the municipal orchestra band as it performed to around 30-50 villagers. Children played and several students took photos.

### ***Primary Observations***

One of my primary observations of the VCU Globe excursions was that they were relatively casual, informal, and collegial. During one class I observed, one student was texting on her phone; she saw that the instructor also noticed but did not say anything. Shortly after, that student suddenly got up and left the room. Another student received a call from her father during the class and explained that it was about her broken laptop. It seemed there was momentum lost following the breakout session. This could have been because of fatigue: several of the students had been in language classes all morning. It

also became immediately apparent to me that the group had formed cliques and students appeared to sit next to those they were most comfortable with. The formation of cliques was confirmed during my interviews with students and the instructor. When a student shared an opinion that conflicted with another's, some students appeared to disengage rather than inquire into differing opinions. Clearly there was frustration with certain members of the group: I also noticed that a couple students paid little attention when another spoke.

On the migration excursion to Teotitlan, I noticed the students were especially silent during the visit to the Zapotec woman's home. Although all the students had been instructed to prepare questions, only a couple of them spoke. Quite possibly, several did not feel comfortable enough with their Spanish to ask questions, while others may have felt uncomfortable after listening to the painful story the woman shared and were perhaps uncertain how to respond. The students' energy was completely different during the tour of the chocolate cooperative. They asked questions, laughed with their hosts and among one another, and purchased several types of chocolate produced and sold by their hosts.

### ***Guided Reflections for Excursions***

Students were required to work in small groups to submit poster presentation abstracts for an upcoming conference focused on race, ethnicity, and Indigenous peoples sponsored by the Latin American Studies Association later that fall at VCU. The instructor spent half a class listening to groups present their ideas to the class and provided oral feedback. Two of the four proposals submitted to ERIP were accepted and presented in the fall.

#### **Intervention 4a: VCU Instructor's Class**

I encourage [my students] to make links between what they are reading and what they are seeing, and what they are learning in class, and what they are teaching their students.

—VCU Globe instructor

#### ***Classroom Context***

Students met to discuss their experiences, reactions, and readings twice a week during the course of the program for 1.5–2 hours at a time, either in a classroom space provided by the Instituto Cultural Oaxaca (ICO) or in the instructor's apartment.

Readings included articles and book excerpts about service-learning, barriers to intercultural communication, cultural values in Latin America and the United States, culture shock, archeological sites, Mexican history and culture, Zapotec women in Teotitlan del Valle, Oaxaca, globalization, and migration.

ICO is a Spanish language school located a few minutes' walk from the city center. This was where students took Spanish language classes, taught by ICO staff, with other non-VCU students. ICO is a small compound consisting of several small buildings that house the classrooms, a small kitchen for cooking classes, and a café. Located off the congested Avenida Juarez and near the busy bus station, the ICO compound surrounds students with palm trees, bougainvillea, and green grass. Both classes I observed were held at ICO. The group met in a conference room that was somewhat stuffy because the windows had to be kept closed to block out the noise from other students and from the exhaust of buses zooming along Avenida Juarez. Students and the instructor sat around one large table, and all 11 students—10 female and one male—were present except for a student who was absent from the second class because of illness and fatigue.

### *Description of the Class Sessions*

Classes were held twice a week for 90 minutes each and were taught in English. The lessons I observed covered cultural values, migration, and reverse migration. Examples of assignments included weekly reflection papers, group interviews with host family members, and abstract submissions for a conference on migration held later that fall at VCU. Each of the sessions started with the instructor asking students about intercultural questions they had regarding interactions with their host family or general observations of the host country. Most students contributed at least once. Examples of guided reflections described during participant interviews are:

- in-class discussions on everyday life, comparing and contrasting differences with home culture;
- unstructured dialogue;
- weekly reflection papers (with prompts);
- readings on Mexican politics and about different aspects of Mexican society;
- reflections meant to “keep our eyes open;”
- in-class discussions and sharing differing perspectives;
- coming to class with a checklist of things they did not understand;
- interview questions for host families and then discussing in class; and
- interviews with people (host nationals) in the city.

**Session 1: Cultural Values.** Students were to have come to class having read the cultural values spectrum handout and with examples from their host families. It was unclear how many read the handout prior to class, so they pulled out their copies and went over it as a class. The instructor broke students into small groups and assigned

specific values to each. The groups discussed among themselves and reported back to the class with specific examples for each of the values they were assigned. Three groups left the room to talk elsewhere and were instructed to return in 15 minutes. During this time, I walked around to observe each group.

When they returned, the instructor asked groups to volunteer to share their examples. A student spoke about the difference between meals in Oaxaca and mealtime back home. She shared that people in the U.S. had moved away from family meals together and offered her own family as an example. By contrast, the student said that in Mexico, the central meal of the day is lunch, and the entire family is sitting down together and just being with each other. The student went on to say that the cultural values represented were “doing versus being” and “individual versus group.”

The next group gave an example of the cultural value “equality versus hierarchy.” Many of the students’ host families had servants who prepared meals and cleaned. Most of the servants, in these students’ observations, were Indigenous. They commented on how common it was for families to have servants, even families that were not wealthy. They contrasted this to the United States, where only the wealthiest families have servants. The instructor asked the students why they thought this was and a short discussion ensued. This was toward the end of class, so the conversation lasted only a couple of minutes. The students were visibly tired.

**Session 2: Migration and Reverse Migration.** Class began with the instructor asking students whether there were intercultural questions or issues they wanted to discuss. A student raised her hand and described, along with another classmate who lived with her, an incident that occurred at their host family’s house. During a meal at the

house the previous day, another American student living there who was not part of the VCU group snapped her fingers at the host mother, pointed to an empty basket, and ordered more tortillas. The host mother did not say anything but did bring her more tortillas.

The two students describing the incident seemed shocked that the student would behave like that but also shared that they did not say anything to either the young woman or to the host mother. Several others in the group, upon hearing about the incident, agreed that it was rude. The instructor asked the students why they thought the young woman spoke to the host mother like that and what they could do about it. One of the students who witnessed the incident said that she wanted to say something to the host mother to let her know that not all Americans behaved that way. The class discussed whether the young woman's behavior was cultural, personal, or universal. After discussing the incident for several minutes, conversation waned, and the instructor asked the group whether they could move on to the assignment due in class that day.

Of the four program goals listed in the students' syllabus, the VCU classroom intervention touched upon all of them: (a) develop abilities to navigate cultural and personal borders, with particular reference to professional goals and plans; (b) encounter a wide range of individuals and groups of people and have direct and substantive contact with worldviews and experiences different from your own; (c) build awareness of the skills required of a global citizen/culture broker within relevant professional fields; and (d) develop a greater awareness of migration issues and pressures on families, both on those who lived or worked in the U.S. and those who have been left behind in Mexican cities and villages. The instructor used four types of guided reflections to help guide

students' intercultural learning during their VCU class: readings, interviews, written reflections and a daily journal, and class discussions.

When I asked the instructor during our interview how she would describe her facilitation of the students' intercultural learning, she said,

I hope I help to get them thinking more deeply about experiences they're having, things they're reading, differences and similarities in culture. I try to help them process what they are experiencing. I try to encourage them to take some risks, some risks that are not dangerous, but risks in terms of experiencing things that they haven't before, such as tasting new foods to really becoming involved with their host family and asking them questions about their lives and to try things like teaching, which most of them have never done. So, I've put together the framework of the program with the help of ICO and Fundación en Via, and I've tried to give a menu of activities that will not only be interesting but will also give them more to think about, more to talk about, give them some understanding of the history as well as the current situation in Mexico.

So, what do I do? I ask questions. I encourage them to talk. I show my concern and interest. I try not to baby them because their personal growth is a really important thing to me, and for so many of them, this is their first chance at true independence because their parents and friends aren't here to support them. I try to wean them away from their phones. Doesn't work too well. But I really want them to live the day here and not be tied to home. I encourage them to link, or to make links between what they are reading and what they are seeing, and what they are learning in class, and what they're teaching their students. And I want them to get a taste of what it is like to be an outsider. Some of them are already in minority groups or subgroups; we're all in some kind of subgroup somewhere. For some of them it's the first time that they are not one of the majority culture, and for others, I don't think they realize that there are subcultures, in other cultures, because we tend to talk about Mexico as some monolith or any country or any culture as being all of one thing rather than having many, many, many layers, including, especially here, it's quite obvious, the conquered and the conquerors, the Indigenous populations and the people who consider themselves not to be connected to that population.

I want them to...to think and to feel, and to savor the experience. I hope that I help them to do that. And sometimes I feel like my role is, as I see it, is not to be constantly dominating that process. I want them to think and to feel, and to savor the experience. I hope that I help them to do that. Hopefully they get to where they need to go, or want to go, or could possibly go on their own, and they don't see me as having any influence in that. And, that's fine with me.



#### **Intervention 4b: Spanish Classes at Instituto Cultural Oaxaca**

Students attended Spanish language classes 5 days a week for 4 hours daily for 3 weeks. They were placed in small groups according to their proficiency levels. All instructors were native Spanish speakers from Oaxaca. All students confirmed that their Spanish language skills had increased during their study abroad program. Examples of this from the students include:

- My host dad said that once you start to dream in the language that you are learning, that's how you know you are really absorbing it. I can say that I have 100% had more than one dream in Spanish.
- Learning about [Mexican] history [in my Spanish class] allowed me to begin to have an understanding of how modern Mexico became the cultural and political entity that it is today.
- The program helped me overcome certain insecurities about my Spanish.
- In my [conversational Spanish] class, we conversed for 4 hours a day on different topics, and I feel like this was where I learned the most about the Mexican and Oaxacan cultures. My teacher was amazing and made the 4 hours fly by. I really enjoyed my Spanish class!

The students in the most advanced classes seemed to gain the most intercultural development. Of the 10 students I interviewed, only three spoke at length about their ICO classes and instructors. Two of these students were in the most advanced classes, in terms of Spanish proficiency. In the advanced classes, the instructors spent less time on language and more time engaged in in-depth discussions on intercultural topics such as Mexican and Indigenous cultures, migration, and globalization.

### **Research Question 3: Influence of Interventions on Intercultural Development**

The third research question is: In what ways did the interventions in this study abroad program influence students' intercultural development? The interview data were analyzed through initial and focused coding. It is presented here under three key categories: culture-specific learning, comparative learning, and culture-general learning. Within each of these categories, the data are presented according to the source of the learning: (a) learning from host nationals, (b) learning from peers, and (c) learning through instructor's guided reflections.

#### **Culture-specific Learning**

Culture-specific learning refers to becoming knowledgeable about the aspects of subjective and objective culture that are specific to the host culture. Examples of this are the students learning about food, traditions, and values from their host families; about Indigenous governance laws from their Indigenous students and from Indigenous speakers students met while on excursions; and about social norms and expectations through class-based discussions with their peers and reflecting upon their observations through written assignments. Culture-specific learning derived from all three sources of learning.

#### ***Learning From Host Nationals***

During my interviews, the students shared examples of what they had learned about both Mexican and Zapotec cultures. Students responded with many examples drawn from experiences with their host families, lessons learned from their Mexican instructors, interactions with Zapotec students in their service project in Teotitlan, and excursions to various Zapotec villages. Many of the students commented on how little

they had known about Zapotec culture prior to the program and that they wished they could have learned even more.

Rima loved meeting Zapotec Indigenous women during their excursions, during which she and the other students learned about ways Indigenous cultures connected to their history through art. The nonprofit organization that organized the students' service project also ran a microlending program for Indigenous women. Rima and the others had opportunities to observe how the women received and paid back loans and how they produced and sold their tapestries. Rima spoke about watching women make dyes for the yarn that they would then weave into tapestries. She appreciated hearing stories from Indigenous women about how the nonprofit microlending program helped lift them out of poverty by forming their own businesses: "I thought it was beautiful to hear how the women, especially those who had been abused, started their own businesses and did not have to depend as much on their husbands."

Felicity spoke about the poverty she had seen as well as the differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Mexicans. She spoke about Zapotec food, music, and the vibrant colors of the clothes the women in particular wore: "I think it's really cool how the Zapotec women keep their super long braids and traditional dress. I have learned that Zapotec does not mean Mexican." Emma also spoke about her work with the Indigenous students in Teotitlan, describing it as her most powerful intercultural learning experience because it helped her to better understand differences between "the city versus the towns."

Rhonda valued her experience teaching English in Teotitlan del Valle because it gave her "a wonderful insight into this particular Zapotec community. It was a great way

to learn more about the people and their culture through the lens of children.” Nicky spoke about the semiautonomous government system called *usos y costumbres* that exists among many of the Indigenous villages they visited. In addition to several assigned readings, the students had opportunities to hear about this system during their excursions to Indigenous villages. Nicky found the system “smart because everyone can hold everyone accountable. Everyone respects each other’s jobs. It’s less ‘me, me, me’ stuff; it’s more communal and humans by nature are communal.”

Molly was surprised by what she learned about Mexican culture, saying “[The instructor] told us Oaxaca would be very conservative and yet my Mexican teacher believes in abortion and women’s rights.” She spoke about her host family being a bit more conservative than her Mexican teacher but still supportive of abortion. As a result, she said, “I don’t know if I have a conclusive view of Mexican culture because I’ve had so many different points of view of Mexico.” Molly also spoke about a strong sense of community that she observed in both her Oaxacan host family as well as in the Indigenous village of Teotitlan, where the students taught English.

Moira said she knew very little about Mexico before studying abroad and attributed most of her culture-specific learning to her Mexican instructors. In the classroom, she felt she learned about “the traditions, the food, the art, and the touristy parts of Oaxaca, as well as about immigration.” She spoke about activities in the classroom that taught her more about Mexican food.

When asked during the interview what she learned about Mexican and Indigenous cultures, Rima spoke about tours within Mexico City and excursions to Indigenous villages throughout Oaxaca and said, “although there is a big Spanish influence in

Mexico, the Indigenous cultures did not fade away.” She spoke about Indigenous cultures’ ties to their past through art and meeting a woman who demonstrated how she made the dyes for the yarn she would then weave. “That was beautiful. I loved that the most.”

Bridget said she learned much more about the diversity of Mexico through their excursions to Mexico City, Oaxaca, and Indigenous villages within the state of Oaxaca: “I remember meeting people from Mexico City and thinking they were Spaniards because they were so fair skinned and had Caucasian features. There are also Afro Mexicans.” When talking about Mexican food, she said emphatically, “What we think of as Mexican food in the U.S. is completely wrong.”

Rima also spoke about Mexico’s diversity and was surprised to learn how many other languages were spoken. She had assumed there were many similarities between Spain and Mexico because “Mexico is a Spanish-speaking country and had been colonized by Spain. But then I found out [Spain was] also invaded by the Arabs, and that’s why there is also some Arabic influence.” She was amazed to learn about the diversity of Mexico’s Indigenous cultures, how many different languages were spoken, and how different their ways of life were. Rima was also surprised to learn about the different social classes within Oaxaca and observed that it was “normal” for many Oaxacan families to have Indigenous servants. She shared that she was “surprised by that because American households don’t have servants at all. But apparently, you don’t have to be rich to have servants.”

Elizabeth also spoke about her surprise at learning how diverse Indigenous cultures in Mexico were and, more specifically, how diverse Zapotec culture is. She cited

excursions to different Zapotec villages in which the students met with local villagers. She spoke about differences in styles of dress, dialect, and degrees of modernity.

Pablo learned about the Indigenous semiautonomous governments through class excursions to Indigenous villages in which the group met with and listened to the stories of villagers. He said he knew a fair amount about Mexico prior to the study abroad program because his mother is from Mexico and that he is part Indigenous. During his class taught by a Mexican instructor, Pablo learned about and became fascinated by festivals that took place in Indigenous villages. He explained that the festivals would last several days and that one person, typically a man (“because that’s how certain roles in communities like that operate”) would cover the cost for the festival. This person, referred to as a *padrino*, could go into debt paying for the festival but, Pablo explained, “I was told it is an honor to be selected a *padrino*.” Even though the cost of paying for a festival could put someone into debt, Jose said he learned that it was considered “an honor to go into debt, because a party like that can cost as much as farming equipment that could be used to better the family. It could also buy, in some cases, a small house.”

When asked about meaningful intercultural learning experiences, Bridget shared a story about an unexpected encounter with villagers during one of her service trips to

Teotitlan:

One time we showed up a little early to teach and it started pouring, like the hardest rain I had ever seen. The streets were flooded up to our knees and so we rushed into the municipal building, which was packed with villagers who were taking their census. That was the first time I got to see the older generation villagers, who are much more traditional. Most of us teach children who don’t dress in traditional garments and who speak Spanish, but the older villagers did not speak Spanish. All the women had their mid-calf-length wool skirts and traditional braids tied up. Everyone looked like that, and they were all so short. I noticed how most of the women weren’t wearing shoes, the older women, but all

the men did. They were staring at us but we were also staring at them. I was in awe by the way they greeted each other. It was amazing how they shook hands with every single person. But they don't really shake, they kind of cup hands. That is when I felt like I got to see the culture and how people interacted. That was a really special day. I'll never forget that.

Students also learned a great deal about Mexico through conversations with their host families. Several considered their relationships with their host families to be one of the most meaningful intercultural experiences of their study abroad program. They spoke about spontaneous discussions they had with their host families about topics such as teacher protests that were occurring daily in the town center; about *usos y costumbres*, the Indigenous form of government recognized at the national level; and much more. Some spoke about food served by their homestay families that helped expose them to not only to Mexican food but more specifically to Oaxacan food. Learning about Oaxacan food led to discussions with their host families and with each other that helped them better understand important regional differences that existed throughout Mexico.

Pablo credited his host family with helping him understand more about the importance of extended family in Mexico. He spoke about grandparents and the elderly being "allowed to stay in the home instead of being sent to a retirement home." He also learned about differing attitudes toward time through conversations with his host brother, who explained to him that "Mexican people are not lazy, but they're also not punctual." Pablo said he frequently saw examples of Mexicans showing up late and said, "even the bus would sometimes show up 20 minutes late."

### ***Learning From Peers***

Both Emma and Rhonda credited their VCU peers with helping them learn more about Mexican cultural norms. Rhonda felt that the class discussions helped her and the others:

Talk about what happened in our household, what took place at school while we were teaching, or those things when people were able to share their experiences of what happened to them and “I made this mistake,” or “I didn’t realize that what I was saying would be offensive.”

Emma felt the VCU Globe class discussions were one of the best aspects of their classes because “you can bring up your own opinions and ask questions about something you don’t understand and hear the others’ perspectives.”

Nicky cited her class discussions as a primary source for culture-specific learning. Two of her peers had spent time in Oaxaca prior to the study abroad program and she appreciated hearing their perspectives and advice about things they had learned about Mexicans. She appreciated discussing cultural dilemmas in class and felt it helped her learn how to better navigate her time in Mexico.

### ***Learning Through VCU Instructor’s Guided Reflections***

Rhonda felt the instructor’s classes helped her become more “culturally fluent” by increasing the students’ awareness of different Mexican and Indigenous customs (through assigned readings) and by helping them know “what to do in certain circumstances that might arise.”

Unlike the others, Moira said she learned much about Mexican culture in her language class, which was taught by a Mexican instructor. Moira was one of the most proficient in Spanish among her peers and was placed in a conversation-level Spanish



class. It was there she learned about “the touristy parts of Oaxaca like the traditions, and also about the food, like what Mexico is known for and what Oaxaca is known for.” Food was the first thing Moira commented on when asked about what she had learned about Mexican and Zapotec cultures. She shared that, prior to the study abroad program, she had never tried Latino food.

When I asked her what she had learned about Zapotec culture, she responded differently from the others, saying, “I feel I have learned a little bit about that but not as much as I would like to have.” She gave an example about an excursion to a Zapotec village where they listened to a woman share her migration story. She recounted how she and the others were instructed to “shake her hand, say hello, and then sit down either on a chair or on the floor.” That was the extent of what Moira shared about what she had learned about Zapotec culture.

Some students shared that the most meaningful excursions were those that touched upon concepts learned in their classes. Students understood the context better. Pablo spoke about the benefits of relevant reading assignments prior to excursions to Indigenous villages in which they met with Zapotec women and listened to them speak about their migration experiences. Hearing about “their harsh living conditions and about living in a patriarchal society produced more of an effect on us as a result of our prior background knowledge.”

Several students commented on the value of coming to class with culture-specific questions that could then be discussed among each other and clarified by the instructor. Bridget said that without the culture-specific readings and discussions, “I would have been like, ‘These men are so forward!’ or, someone is creepy because of how close they

are standing to me, instead of thinking that people are more affectionate here.” Elizabeth felt the culture specific class discussions helped her process and understand the differences she was seeing. She appreciated learning why things were different.

### **Comparative Learning**

Throughout the interviews and the final reflection assignments, students repeatedly made comparisons between their home and host cultures on topics such as style of dress, food, family life, worldviews, politics, and governance. “We practice comparative thinking every time we explain other countries or cultures, explain ourselves to people from other countries, or describe life and conditions in one country or culture to someone from another” (Yershova et al., 2000, p. 56). Comparative learning is both an intellectual skill and also a problem-solving and decision-making tool. When combined with an intercultural perspective, it can result in positive frame shifting in all three areas of intercultural development: knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.

“Along with increased cultural self-awareness, an encounter with cultural difference stimulates an increase in the individual’s cognitive depth and breadth, as well as fosters emotional and behavioral openness and flexibility, thus facilitating [intercultural development]” (Yershova et al., 2000, p. 45). Comparing and contrasting their host and home cultures appeared to help students develop a better understanding of their own cultures. Examples of comparative learning in this study highlight times when students appeared to become more aware of their own culture through comparisons and contrasts with the host cultures. While some students’ comparisons were primarily descriptive, others’ comparisons led to deeper analysis of how they viewed things back

home. In this program, all students engaged in comparative learning and examples were drawn from all three sources of learning.

### *Learning From Host Nationals*

Many students drew comparisons when talking about interactions and experiences they had with host nationals. Felicity said that she had learned “how different Mexican American culture is from Mexican cultures. Some things are the same, but a lot is very different.” She frequently compared her own experiences and identity back in the United States to people she interacted with while in Mexico: “I thought that because I am half-Mexican that I knew Mexican culture, but mainstream Mexican culture in the U.S. is so different.” She then described “mainstream Mexican culture” as “all the good things” such as “nice clothes, beautiful women, and good music.” What she experienced in Mexico, however, was much different.

For Rhonda, observing the months-long teacher protests in Oaxaca and learning about Indigenous alternative forms of government while on excursions made her “think a lot more about politics in America.” She talked about people in Mexico “trying to stand up for their rights and really protesting and a lot of political graffiti everywhere,” and how it made her wish for activism like that in her own country: “I feel like we say that we’re not satisfied with the way our government is run, but I don’t necessarily think that we take time out of our lives to do something about it.” Emma also learned more about U.S. politics through comparisons and contrasts with the teacher protests in Oaxaca and was surprised to see how two democracies could “work so differently.”

Bridget was amazed by the differences between her host family and her family in the U.S. when it came to meals:

It's just a totally different way of living, different way of eating, you know. Eating a huge lunch with the whole family. Back in the U.S. we've kind of moved away from that. Even at dinner, like, my family kind of sits down for dinner, but with the TV on, whatever, talking on the phone with someone else. Here it's everyone sitting together and just being with each other. Lunch, not dinner, so that's completely different.

Bridget also spoke about changes in the way she viewed the United States and how she did not want to leave Mexico. She felt she lived more simply in Mexico and said, "not to hate on my country of course, but I feel that the U.S. is overrated." She spoke of an increased awareness of her privilege to be from a country with a great education system, but also spoke about being a high-maintenance person and said that living in Mexico helped her "let a lot of things go."

Rima stood out the most from her peers because she wore a hijab (head covering) and many Mexican children asked if she was a nun. Rima said that, during the course of the program, she:

Became more aware of the similarities between Mexican culture and my own. Many of the children in Teotitlan thought I was a nun because of my hijab, and I later realized that they were not far off with their thought process because the reasons why Muslim women wear hijab and nuns cover up are similar.

Moira attributed most of her comparative learning to her time spent in the classroom with her Mexican instructor. Though she never lived in Vietnam, Moira identified as American Vietnamese and frequently drew comparisons between Mexican and Vietnamese cultures, while contrasting American culture. She spoke about Americans being stricter about time than Mexican and Vietnamese people and said she frequently talked about Vietnamese culture during class because it helped her relate to what she was learning about Mexican culture. She also spoke about an Indigenous woman's firsthand migration story that she listened to during one of the group's

excursions. She spoke about an increased appreciation for the struggles her parents experienced as immigrants to the U.S. from Vietnam. She said that she used to feel that they nagged her about their hardships and hard work but, after listening to the Indigenous villager tell her story, her parents' immigration story began to take on a deeper meaning.

Rima said she wished there were more acceptance of different people in the U.S. and used learning Spanish in Mexico as an example of her feelings of acceptance by host nationals. She said:

A lot of the people that we talked to, some people were very helpful and accepting, and they would, like when we made mistakes, they would help us out. Which was very nice. But here, like a lot of the times when foreign people come and they're new to English, most of the time Americans don't have the patience for it. Or they explain, and they don't get it and the automatically they just shut down. But in Mexico, it's not like that. They take the time to explain something to you. They don't rip off you or anything so. That was nice. I wish we had that here. Foreign people wouldn't feel that they couldn't speak English or feel sensitive about that.

Hearing firsthand emigration stories from Indigenous women made Nicky more aware of how "unaccepting Americans are toward immigrants, especially Mexican immigrants." She spoke about knowing this before the study abroad program, based on what she had seen from the media, but "hearing it from people who experienced [being turned away and shunned]" made her sad and disappointed with her country. Nicky spoke about feeling empowered by those stories to pursue a career in immigration in order to help change perspectives and to help prevent "terrible, traumatizing experiences" for migrants in the United States.

Molly contrasted her observations of "community" within Mexico with the more "self-based" worldview of people in the United States. As an example of this collective verses individualistic value, she spoke about Americans thinking about themselves when

making 5 and 10-year plans, whereas Mexicans always seemed to factor in their families when planning the future. Emma commented on the “collective versus individual” value difference when it came to family and observed that people in Mexico were “more closely associated with their families” than people in the United States. She also spoke about an increased awareness of “superficial friendships” back in the U.S and attributed that difference to having “busier lives back home.” She spoke about Americans being much more “on the go” and “trying to stay ahead of the game,” and how it hindered people from “taking the time to step back and realize the important things.”

Elizabeth also spoke about Mexican families being more connected than American families and described it within a context of independence, saying, “In the U.S., a lot of people, myself included, want to go away and be independent. But independence isn’t quite so important in Mexico.” She gave her host family as an example, describing the daily visits of her host mother’s daughter and grandson, who would “hang out and have dinner.” Elizabeth then spoke about her own family back in the U.S., whom she described as being “really close with.” She said friends and teachers back home had commented on how much time she spent with her family, “as if it’s not normal.” Yet, compared to what she observed with her host family, “I don’t feel I’m as close to my family as they are here.”

Nicky spoke about the different ways in which people greet one another in Mexico and in the United States. She loved that, in Mexican culture, “you greet everyone individually and you say goodbye to everyone individually.” She contrasted that with the standard greeting in the U.S. as “Hey, everyone. Bye, everyone.” In describing the

Mexican style of greeting as “meaningful,” she contrasted that to a less welcoming style in the U.S.

### *Learning From Peers*

Students also frequently compared their attitudes with those of their U.S. peers. An interesting phenomenon that emerged when coding the students’ descriptions of their interactions with each other was the increased awareness of cultural differences within the United States. Most students expected to encounter differences between themselves and host nationals but were surprised to see how different they were from their U.S. peers. Interacting with students in their program with whom they would not have otherwise interacted, students became increasingly aware of differing value systems. Elizabeth said that she learned much more from her VCU peers than she had anticipated: “Almost all of us came from different backgrounds, so it was awesome learning about that, especially learning more about Rima’s Muslim culture since I lived with her the entire trip.”

Nicky appreciated her VCU Globe classes because they provided opportunities to hear and share students’ perspectives as they compared and contrasted their experiences in Mexico with those back home: “Class meetings are important to study abroad because you can digest what is happening and you can get different perspectives on like, people’s experiences. They go like, ‘In Richmond it’s like this, but here it’s different.’”

Bridget spoke of numerous challenges between and among her VCU peers during the study abroad program and how frustrated she often felt. She talked about how culturally different many of them were from each other and how she had to work hard to

be understanding and patient. Working consciously on her communication skills with her peers helped her to realize “just how different people from the same place can be.”

### ***Learning Through VCU Instructor’s Guided Reflections***

Elizabeth said she struggled with feelings of shame about things her country has done to hurt other countries and people not from the United States: “Although I am extremely grateful for being from the States and having all of the privileges and opportunities I have had growing up, I still cannot say I am proud to be from the U.S.” She credited the instructor’s guided reflection assignments with helping her navigate those feelings and come to terms with accepting her culture and background.

### **Culture-general Learning**

Culture-general learning refers “more broadly to the intercultural experiences that are common to all who visit another culture” (Paige & Goode, 2009, p. 40) rather than to specific details about any particular culture. Culture-general frameworks can help students investigate how culture influences their attitudes toward power distance, hierarchy, communication styles, nonverbal behavior, class, in-group/out-group distinctions, etc., and compare these attitudes with those of others from different cultural backgrounds. J. M. Bennett (n.d.) described culture-general learning well when she stated: “Learning a single specific culture serves us well and learning about cultural differences in general serves us even better.” Culture-general learning came from all three sources of learning.



### *Learning From Host Nationals*

Rhonda said her most meaningful experience occurred on a 1-day excursion to a different Indigenous village, where they helped build an indoor stove for a woman and her family and where she found herself thinking a lot about her privilege.

After working for several hours, we took a break because [the family receiving the new stove] wanted us to eat. It was a hard experience for me because I have this thing with bugs and there were flies everywhere, including around the beans, tortillas, flautas, and egg they were serving us. And it made me nauseous. I had to focus because of course I didn't want to be rude. I wanted to eat the food, and it was tasty, but it was a lot for me to handle.

From that experience, Rhonda spoke about privilege and the importance of being flexible, saying: "People don't always have different options and it's a privilege to choose not to eat something."

Bridget spoke about lessons she learned after observing difficult situations in Oaxaca such as homeless children and how that led her to recognize that "there's a bigger system behind it. I've seen homeless people back home in Richmond but seeing children begging was new for me and really hard to deal with initially." The more she thought about children begging, the more she said understood that "some kids are forced to do this," and that in turn made her realize "so many more things about the world that I had no clue existed because I was in a box."

Felicity also talked about privilege during the interview. She spoke about struggling financially back home but still having opportunities to go to school and go on a study abroad program. She talked about "kids (in Mexico) around 7 years old on the street selling things" rather than going to school and said:

There are people who are literally dying to be in my position, and I feel uncomfortable because I'm working so hard to change my situation because I

want more. I had never really checked my privileges in such a life-changing way until now. I didn't have the most money or best styles growing up, but I'm here [on a study abroad program]. I went to school, I am in college and I have had opportunities to explore art and culture.

Emma felt teaching ESL taught her to be more empathetic. In an effort to “make everyone feel comfortable” in a social situation, she explained that she learned to first listen and “get a feel for” a situation before trying to change things.

Moira felt she learned to be more open-minded. She spoke about having stereotypes due to her ignorance about Mexican culture and that she was learning to suspend judgment while learning about a new culture. In her final reflection assignment Moira wrote about her plans to become a doctor and how her study abroad experience in Mexico will help her to become a better doctor:

I will be able to interact with my patients better because I will be open to more cultures, different people, and new experiences. For example, if a family does not feel comfortable with something, then I can change my behavior to accommodate them. I learned this from when we were building stoves in an Indigenous village. The volunteer coordinator Andres said they were not the best designs but, if they were built any differently, then the family would not use the stove. The most important lesson I learned from this experience is that before making any judgements or believing the stereotypes, I need to fully understand the situation or culture, and avoid being ignorant. I will admit that I did believe some of the stereotypes about Mexicans prior to the trip, but now I know better. The things I learned about myself in this experience will definitely help me with whatever I do in the future.

### ***Learning From Peers***

The topic of privilege and happiness also arose in class discussions, often following the students' excursions to Indigenous villages. Bridget said:

I remember one [class] discussion we had on first impressions after traveling to a village. Some people in the group felt like people deserved more. They were projecting their understanding of what's a good life; projecting their view of what people in that village are supposed to have. It's something I grappled with. Is it fair for us to say that these people deserve more? Is it just their culture and it's

just different? Like, obviously, I guess running water is important, but having a toilet with a seat, in the grand scheme of life, is maybe not that important. I don't know if it's right for us to project our opinion of someone's quality of life onto them when they could be just as content living the way they are.

The VCU student group stood out physically in Mexico and, during the interviews, a few of the students spoke about stares they received from host nationals and how uncomfortable it made many of them feel. Bridget talked about the discussions she and others had about these stares and about the shared discomfort several of them felt. She also spoke about becoming less bothered by it during the course of the study abroad program, and about increasing her understanding and patience:

“I had to learn how to get over the stares and comments about *negritas*, *morenas*, or *negros*, and not think of it in a malicious way. It was pure curiosity in most cases, like when they take a picture of us or just randomly touch your hair, which is something people probably wouldn't do in the U.S.

Bridget said she and her VCU peers discussed these stares frequently and acknowledged that, while she had become more comfortable with the stares, others in the group did not, and would say things like, “Could they stare any longer?!” Her response to that was: “They (host nationals) are curious, and they don't see a lot of people who look like we do. It's kind of natural to stare when you're curious.”

Felicity made similar observations about interpreting the stares as curiosity rather than maliciousness and reflected upon how differently and negatively she feels back home when stared at. Both of them spoke about learning to be more patient, understanding, and flexible as a result of experiences like these.

During the interview, Pablo spoke about the significance of stepping outside his comfort zone by spending so much time with VCU peers who were different from himself and from most of his friends in the U.S. He said, “I think it bettered my

communications skills and my ability to read different situations.” In addition to recognizing new ways of communicating with his U.S. peers, Pablo also commented on learning to adapt his behaviors in order to express himself better.

Rhonda credited her peers’ shared interest in increasing their levels of intercultural awareness with making this program more meaningful than other study abroad programs she had participated in. She noted that the study abroad program was organized through VCU Globe, which is designed to help students increase their intercultural competence.

Bridget appreciated the class discussions with her peers because she felt it provided a safe place for everyone to share how they truly felt and to hear one another’s thoughts. Doing that helped her question what she was thinking.

Nicky cited her extensive time with her U.S. peers in Mexico as helping her learn “to go with the flow.” She said she and others had to learn to be more flexible because they spent so much time with one another, unlike the temporary nature of class group projects back in the U.S. She also described that need to be flexible as important because the group had become like a family during their time in Mexico.

### ***Learning Through VCU Instructor’s Guided Reflections***

During the interviews, several students spoke about questions the instructor posed and how they led them to reflect more deeply on aspects of their intercultural competence. Students spoke about the impact of the instructor’s informal questions during excursions as well as her formal questions during class discussions and in the written reflection assignments. Examples of intercultural learning occurred in many of the students’ final written reflection assignments.

Felicity said:

Sometimes she would ask questions I would not have otherwise thought about, such as “How has your presence impacted the community?” Sometimes I don’t take the time to think about things. I just say, let me go through the experience and just go do it and sometimes her asking questions and saying, “Hey wait a minute. How about this? Did you learn from this experience that we had yesterday? Or this trip to Teotitlan?” And it would help me, and I think maybe the other students too, sort of helped us think back and say, “Hey that’s actually important to think about.” She helped teach me that intercultural competence is more than just not offending anybody.

In her final reflection paper, Felicity wrote about self-discovery during her time abroad and about moments in which she felt an “intense vulnerability that would never have happened in my home country.” She wrote, “When we read about the women who emigrated from Mexico, I was sad. When we talked to a Zapotec woman who had emigrated I was angry, ashamed and humbled.” During a class discussion on migration she said, “I understood how [the Zapotec woman’s] story unfortunately wasn’t too different from ones that we read about and I understood why I felt many of the ways I did. I learned that I have so much to learn.”

Pablo found the instructor’s assigned reflection papers more meaningful because they helped him to:

Keep our eyes open; to not live in a bubble and to basically observe the world around us. Observe, not just the world around us, but observe how we perceived it. And for that, we were able to see more of the culture. Reading is fine. It’s fine. But what your head knows, well what your head knows and what your heart knows, to quote a fortune cookie I got once, are completely different. I guess basically what you learn in class can help you but what you learn outside, doing actual things, is probably more helpful, and I think that was the benefit of having assignments like the reflection papers.

Rima also saw the instructor as a guide who asked questions about things that she would not have otherwise considered: “[The instructor] would ask people to think about and question their own expectations and observations.”

Several students spoke about becoming more self-aware as a result of questions posed by the VCU instructor. The instructor encouraged students to question their expectations and observations and described her design of the interventions as a “menu of activities that will not only be interesting but will also give [the students] more to think about and more to talk about.”

In her final reflection assignment, Elizabeth wrote about ways in which she had changed throughout the study abroad program:

I definitely increased my self-awareness and personal growth, but especially in trying to accept my own culture and background and becoming more comfortable talking to anyone in a different language and culture. Ultimately, I just hope I can change at least one person’s life in some way half as much as this trip has changed mine and shaped my ideals and life goals.

Emma found the discussion-based format of her Globe classes helped her learn how to apply her observations and thoughts that occurred in Mexico to other parts of her life back home, which she probably would not have considered previously. She also spoke about the importance of self-reflection, something that started through assigned reflection assignments but gradually evolved into unconscious reflection. In her final reflection assignment, she wrote, “I have come to realize that no matter how much you know going into something, you can never truly understand the situation until you actually experience it and you have had time to reflect on that experience.”

Although Rhonda credited her service project, teaching ESL in Teotitlan, with increasing her cultural awareness, she also felt conflicted about it. She spoke about the

VCU class debates among her peers and instructor whether they were properly trained to teach ESL and whether it was imperialist to teach English. She and others questioned whether teaching English implied their language and culture was superior to the students' Zapotec language and culture. Rhonda spoke about the class readings and discussions about globalization and said:

The fact that we're going into a village and basically pushing U.S. American ideals on them by teaching them English and, like, you need to know English in order to proper type of thing, made me question what they are actually gaining.

Rhonda also spoke about her postgraduation plan of teaching English through a Fulbright or the Peace Corps and how, prior to the program, she had not associated teaching English with "colonization and pushing ideals on people. So you're not pushing Christianity, you're pushing English."

Molly felt the weekly reflection assignments helped her to "self-check," to observe how her views changed over the course of the study abroad program. She spoke about assignments where she had to interview someone. Asking questions led to answers, and "judgments became more understanding when you realize the context of the culture. That was really helpful. By the end, you either get answers, or you come to terms with it being different."

In her final reflection assignment, Elizabeth wrote, "One of the biggest things I realized was how very important communication really is, especially for a global citizen/culture broker." She gave examples of miscommunications between locals and her peers, even those "who spoke proficient Spanish. It proved that just knowing another language is not all that counts. It is so very important to not only learn how to converse, but to learn about the culture."

Pablo felt the instructor's assigned reflection papers helped teach him to "keep our eyes open; not to live in a bubble and to basically observe the world around us" and to observe how he perceived those observations. He said he appreciated the assigned readings because it helped provide context, but the reflection assignments helped him become more aware of his thoughts and to think differently.

Elizabeth liked having both structured and unstructured assigned reflection papers. She credited those assignments with helping her become more aware of things she was questioning as well as things she had not questioned.

When talking about the weekly written reflection assignments, Rima said, "Sometimes just writing about things made me realize how much I had changed." She credited the instructor with helping her become more aware of her intercultural development through these structured reflection assignments and with helping her become more aware of her observations through discussion-based classes. She described the instructor as a guide who would ask questions about things that they might not have otherwise considered:

Sometimes I don't take the time to think about things. I just say, "Let me go through the experience and just go do it," and sometimes her asking questions and saying, "Hey wait a minute. How about this? Or that?" or "What did you learn from this experience that we had yesterday or this trip to Teotitlan?"

She felt these types of questions helped her and the others think more about the significance of their experiences.

### **Conclusion**

Students seemed to engage in more meaningful ways by learning to reflect upon an experience and to consider multiple perspectives, such as viewing an experience



through the lens of both the home and host culture. The four interventions (homestay, service project, excursions, and classroom) served in many ways like a natural laboratory in which students could push themselves to learn more about one another and more about themselves to construe and reconstrue the meaning of things they experienced. The classroom, and in particular the instructor, provided opportunities for students to be both supported and challenged as they practiced this skill. They were supported when they were puzzled by cultural differences between themselves and host nationals or by cultural differences among themselves. Absent this intentional process, the assigned meaning would have remained superficial and limited.

## Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

It is not enough that we commit to intervening in our students' learning. (Vande Berg, 2007, p.397).

The purpose of this study was to examine the ways in which an instructor's interventions and guided reflections influenced students' intercultural development during a short-term study abroad experience. I conducted a mixed methods case study of a short-term study abroad program in Oaxaca, Mexico. I collected 10 students' pre- and post-program Intercultural Development Inventory and Cultural Intelligence Scale scores. I also observed the group in the classroom, on two excursions, and at their service site. By doing so, I addressed the following research questions:

1. What was the impact of this program on the participants' levels of intercultural sensitivity and cultural intelligence?
2. How did the instructor intervene to facilitate students' intercultural development?
3. In what ways did the interventions in this study abroad program influence students' intercultural development?

This study's findings suggest that a short-term, faculty-led study abroad program can have a positive impact on students' intercultural development. The major finding from the quantitative research is that students' scores on the Intercultural Development Inventory and the Cultural Intelligence Scale increased. The two major findings from the qualitative data are (a) guided reflections played a critical role in students' intercultural development, particularly their culture-general learning, and (b) the primary source of culture-specific and comparative learning was interaction with host nationals. In this chapter, I place these findings in context with relevant literature and research, discuss the

implications of the findings for practice, identify limitations, and make recommendations for future research.

## **Discussion of the Findings**

### **Students' IDI and CQS Scores Increased**

The first research question investigated the impact of the program on the participants' levels of intercultural sensitivity and cultural intelligence. Results from the students' pre- and post-program IDI and CQS scores produced the single quantitative finding from this study: students increased their IDI and CQS scores over the course of the study abroad program. Overall, students' pre- to post- study abroad scores increased by an average of 7.21 points (out of a total potential score of 145 points) on the IDI and by an average of 0.69 points on the CQS (out of a 7-point potential score per the CQ measure's four subcomponents quadrant). Seventy percent of the students in this study showed increases in their IDI scores over the course of the program and 90% of them had an increase in their CQS scores. This finding supports the argument that participants on short-term study abroad programs can increase their intercultural development. Analysis of the quantitative data also showed a moderate correlation between the students' pre- and post-program IDI and CQS scores.

Interview and document data revealed that a majority of students in this study developed and further honed the skills and confidence they needed to move from surface-level descriptive observations of their study abroad experience to more sophisticated interpretations and analyses. An example is Felicity, the student with the greatest IDI change score and the third-highest CQS score. She moved from a monocultural worldview of polarization to the more intercultural worldview of minimization. In her

final assignment, she wrote about self-discovery during her time abroad and how her attitudes toward herself and others had changed, saying: “I had never really checked my privileges in such a life-changing way until now.” Sanford’s (1966) challenge/support hypothesis would support the argument that Felicity’s large IDI and CQS gain could be attributed largely to her instructor. During the interview, Felicity repeatedly spoke about the ways the instructor challenged her to question her observations and to reflect on changes in her attitude throughout the duration of the program. She also spoke about challenging moments in the program, describing how she worked through those intense moments with the help of her instructor.

Of the three students whose IDI scores decreased over the course of the program, two had decreases of less than 1 point and the third had a 4.35-point decrease. Two of these students had participated in the program the previous summer; they were the only ones in the group to participate twice. During the interviews, both of these students compared this study abroad program experience to their experience from the previous year, and both cited their peer group as playing a significant role in preferring the previous program to the current one. This suggests that a lack of peer group cohesion may have played a role in their decreased scores. Another possible explanation for lack of IDI gain among the two returning participants could be unrealistic expectations, one of Paige’s (1993) intensity factors. This could help explain why some participants scored higher in their IDI and CQS scores while other participants’ scores declined.

Although the findings of this study are not generalizable because of the small size ( $N = 10$ ), it is helpful to put the results into perspective by comparing them with the outcomes of other studies on short-term study abroad programs. I am aware of no other

studies that have measured both CQS and IDI of participants, so I have compared my findings with studies that measured one or the other. In both cases, the IDI and CQS change scores in my study are higher than those in the other studies.

**Table 8**

*Comparison of IDI Change Scores*

| Source of data  | Number of participants | Duration of program | Average change score |
|---|------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Cressy Mexico program (this study)                      | 10                     | 5 weeks             | 7.21                 |
| Georgetown Consortium Project (Vande Berg et al., 2009) | 3                      | 1-3 weeks           | 2.56                 |
| Georgetown Consortium Project (Vande Berg et al., 2009) | 29                     | 4-7 weeks           | -1.30                |
| Nam (2009) Amsterdam program                            | 18                     | 3 weeks             | 2.10                 |
| Nam (2009) Asia program                                 | 21                     | 3 weeks             | 4.50                 |

Table 7 provides IDI data on change scores from this study along with two other studies of short-term study abroad. Findings from the GCP (Vande Berg et al., 2009) and Nam (2009) provided baseline numbers for average IDI gain during short-term study abroad. Authors of both studies emphasized the significance of interventions and, more specifically, the significance of guided reflections and culture mentoring on the increased IDI scores. The GCP authors supported this with data that showed lower IDI change scores among participants who did not receive an intervention.

Table 8 provides CQS data on change scores from this study and four other studies on short-term study abroad. All studies reported increases in participants' cultural intelligence. Findings from several short-term study abroad studies (Engle et al., 2014; Hyndman, 2007; Nguyen et al., 2018; Wood et al., 2014) provided baseline numbers for

average CQS growth. These support this study’s finding that intercultural development can occur in short-term study abroad programs.

**Table 9**

*Comparison of CQS Change Scores*

| Source of data   | Number of participants | Duration of program | Average change score |
|--|------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Cressy Mexico program (this study)   | 10                     | 5 weeks             | 0.69                 |
| Nguyen et al. (2018) Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands program                 | 79                     | 5 weeks             | 0.14                 |
| Engle et al. (2014) Guatemala, Barbados or Nicaragua                             | 105                    | 7-14 days           | 0.59                 |
| Hyndman (2007) multiple countries  | 100                    | 3-8 weeks           | 0.37                 |
| Wood et al. (2014) Hong Kong and Mainland China; Italy & Germany; and Costa Rica | 42                     | 2 weeks             | 0.68                 |

One possible explanation for why the IDI and CQS changes scores from this study are higher than others could be that the program instructor explicitly stated intercultural goals and learning outcomes in the syllabus. A second explanation could be that all participants in this study were also enrolled in the VCU Globe program, the intercultural living-learning certificate program described in Chapter 1 and through which the Mexico study abroad program was run. All participants in this study had already participated in at least one 1-credit cross-cultural course prior to studying abroad and could have been more primed for intercultural learning than students who had little to no prior intercultural coursework. A third explanation could be outliers in this small data set.

## **Purposeful Design and Facilitation of Guided Reflections**

The second finding in this study is that guided reflections were instrumental in facilitating students' intercultural development, particularly their culture-general learning. Data revealed that the majority of students' cultural-general learning came from the instructor's guided reflections. Guided reflections from a cultural mentor are essential to this type of learning because it can be adapted to multiple cultural contexts and includes shifts in attitudes and developing and refining skills (Paige et al., 2002).

Every participant in the study talked about ways the instructor made them think about things differently. The variety of guided reflections appeared to help reach students in varying stages of their intercultural development. Participants spoke about increased awareness of how culture influenced their observations and judgments, about seeing changes within themselves through the succession of weekly written reflection assignments, about possible changes in their professional pursuits as a result of reflection assignments, and about stepping back and reflecting on an experience as it was happening. In recognizing these things about themselves, participants demonstrated shifts in attitude and awareness, which is an important component of intercultural competence.

This finding demonstrates the applicability of Sanford's (1966) challenge/support hypothesis and Paige's (1993) intensity factors to study abroad interventions. As explained in Chapter 2 and illustrated in figure 5, the concept behind challenge/support is to tailor student mentoring and guidance to each student's level of intercultural development so that they remain in a "learning zone." Students who are overchallenged will move into a panic zone where no learning takes place. In an effort to return to the comfort zone, students may move away from the challenge by, for example, spending

more time with peers from their home culture. On the other hand, students who are underchallenged will move into a “comfort zone” where they are also unlikely to learn.

In this study, one participant appeared to have moved into the “panic zone,” possibly because of the intensity factors Paige (1993) identified as ethnocentrism and cultural immersion. Molly talked in the interview about feeling overwhelmed by the number of excursions and uncomfortable teaching English in the service project because she felt the group was inadequately prepared. About halfway through the program, she became physically ill and spent most of the rest of her free time alone at her homestay or with one or two other peers from the program. Despite participating in a program with U.S. peers from her home institution, she still appeared overwhelmed and exhausted by the cultural immersion. Unsurprisingly, Molly, who started the program with a polarization worldview, remained within the same monocultural worldview at the end of the program.

On the other hand, two students did not appear particularly challenged by the study abroad program and may have spent a considerable amount of time in the “comfort zone.” Both Bridget and Emma had attended the same program the previous year and, during the interviews, both drew comparisons and spoke of disappointments with the program the second time around. Of the 10 participants, Molly, Emma, and Bridget were the three whose IDI scores decreased (albeit minimally). The challenge/support hypothesis would suggest that the instructor could have provided more support for Molly while further challenging Emma and Bridget. Alternatively, program instructors might reconsider allowing students to participate a second time.



The majority of students appeared to remain in the “learning zone” during the study abroad program. In her final reflection assignment, Felicity wrote about self-discovery and about moments in which she felt an “intense vulnerability that would have never happened in my home country.” During the interview, she spoke about several intense intercultural learning experiences that may have been caused by intensity factors such as cultural difference, ethnocentrism, cultural immersion, lack of prior intercultural experience, visibility, and status. When asked during the interview about the role she felt the instructor played in her intercultural learning, she responded, “She would ask questions I would not have otherwise thought about.” She also credited the instructor with preventing her from going through an experience without reflecting upon it, asking what she learned, and what that might mean. She acknowledged that she would not have asked herself those questions, especially after excursions and the service project, when she was tired. It is probably not surprising that her IDI gain was the highest in the group. While these findings about the levels of challenge and support correspond with the IDI results, this study cannot demonstrate a causal relationship. It does, however, provide interesting insight.

This study demonstrates the applicability of Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning model to the process of facilitating intercultural learning on study abroad programs. Kolb’s model served as a conceptual framework for examining how the instructor’s guided reflections influenced participants’ intercultural development. As explained in Chapter 2, Kolb viewed experiential learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (Kolb, 1984, p. 41). Interview

data, document review, and observations revealed several instances in which the instructor guided participants through the process of experiential learning and, in the process, helped make subjective experiences central to participants' intercultural learning. Within each of the four curricular interventions of the study abroad program (homestay, service-learning, excursions, and classroom), the instructor designed assignments that moved participants through Kolb's experiential cycle. Specific guided reflection assignments for each of the four interventions are shown in Figure 7.

This dissertation also builds upon existing research on intercultural interventions by exploring the ways in which an instructor's study abroad interventions and guided reflections influenced students' intercultural development. With regard to the importance of having a cultural mentor to guide students in their intercultural learning, the findings from this study align with findings from the GCP (Vande Berg et al., 2009) and programs such as MAXSA (Paige et al., 2002), Willamette University and Bellarmine University's intercultural learning courses (Lou & Bosley, 2008), and CIEE's Seminar on Living and Learning Abroad (Harvey, 2013). Students can make greater intercultural gains with the support of a well-trained mentor who combines intentional and strategic interventions with guided reflections. Vande Berg, et al. (2009) refer to an instructor's purposeful use of guided reflection as a "double intervention." They found that students who were left to their own devices in design interventions failed to learn effectively, whereas students who were able to meet and work on their intercultural learning with a mentor made greater gains. Data and findings from this study support the growing literature (Bosley, 2018; Harvey, 2013; Jackson & Oguro, 2018) that emphasizes the importance of interventions in study abroad. This study demonstrates that interventions such as the four

identified in this study, combined with guided reflection, can have a meaningful impact on the intercultural development of short-term study abroad program participants.

### **Host Nationals Influenced Culture-specific and Comparative Learning**

The third finding from this study is that the majority of students' culture-specific and comparative learning came from host nationals. For culture-specific learning, a predominately content-driven dimension of culture learning, students benefited from their interactions with host nationals. Furthermore, the four curricular interventions of the program provided students with opportunities to engage in meaningful ways with a large variety of host nationals. Students learned from host families, from students they taught as part of their service project, from Indigenous speakers they met while on excursions, and from their Mexican instructors.

During the interviews, many students spoke about their homestay experiences and described observations and conversations about topics such as food, family traditions, politics, and migration. The host families provided students with a sense of family, which was important to the many students who described experiencing homesickness during the program. Others appreciated the rituals they shared with their host families, such as meals and socializing. Assignments such as host family interviews also provided students with opportunities to further their culture-specific learning.

The service project and excursions were two other interventions that contributed to students' culture-specific learning. All of the participants spoke in the interviews about how much they learned about Mexican Indigenous cultures as a result of their interactions with host nationals. Only the two participants who had studied abroad on the same program the previous year had prior knowledge about Zapotec Indigenous culture.

Discussions resulting from the guided reflections led to increased awareness among some students, who had not previously considered the ethical dilemmas involved in service learning. In processing this new information, many students became more aware of their own cultural identity. Similar to the homestay, the service-learning intervention gave students opportunities for in-depth discussions with a different group of host nationals.

The extent to which students in this study had opportunities to engage with host nationals contributed to a great deal of comparative learning. Many students' attitudes toward their own cultures shifted during the study abroad program, as revealed during the interviews and document review. Students developed more self-awareness of their own culture, and several students became more critical of elements of their culture and of their country. The in-depth encounters with different types of host nationals gave students opportunities to break from stereotypes they held about host nationals prior to studying abroad. This aligns with the assertion that encounters with cultural difference can result in positive frame shifting in all three areas of intercultural learning and development: knowledge, attitudes, and skills (Yershova et al., 2000). Paige et al. (2002) also identified this shifting of awareness as an important component of intercultural development.

This study demonstrates the applicability of Paige's (2005) dimensions of culture to both the process and content involved in developing intercultural competence. Paige's dimensions served as a framework for analyzing the three types of learning identified in this study: culture-general, comparative, and culture-specific. By examining the participants' primary sources for these three types of learning, this study was able to explore possible ways in which participants developed their intercultural knowledge, attitudes, and skills. The finding that students' culture-specific and comparative learning

came primarily from host nationals suggests that particular attention should be placed on types of learning and the different sources from which students develop their intercultural learning.

### **Implications of the Findings for Practice**

The intended audiences for this study are campus policymakers, faculty and staff responsible for the global education curriculum, education abroad administrators, and researchers of intercultural learning and development. Based on the findings from this study, this section makes recommendations for how to more effectively promote intercultural learning and development on short-term study abroad programs.

#### **Curriculum Design for Faculty-led Short-term Study Abroad Programs**

With an increasing number of colleges and universities striving to internationalize, the curriculum design of faculty-led study abroad programs should be given more attention and support. The most important implication of the findings for practice is that programs need to include a variety of guided reflection assignments that help students reflect upon and discuss their experiences as they are happening, make sense of those experiences, extract new knowledge from them, and then test what they have learned through continued experiences. With participation in short-term study abroad programs increasing more than participation in semester and year-long study abroad programs, designing curricula with specific intercultural learning outcomes and specific guided reflection assignments aimed at meeting those outcomes is more important than ever. Short-term faculty-led study abroad programs have been criticized as being glorified tourism programs that fail to provide students with meaningful intercultural learning opportunities. While this is also important for longer term study

abroad programs, there are fewer opportunities for intercultural learning to occur on short-term programs, making it even more imperative to intervene as effectively as possible.

Another implication of the findings is that host nationals were the primary sources of students' culture-specific and comparative learning. The four curricular interventions in this study abroad program (homestay, excursion, service-learning, and classroom) provided students with opportunities to engage with a variety of host nationals in several different contexts. While the primary sources of learning may differ in other studies—depending upon the structure of the interventions and the instructor's accompanying guided reflections—this finding can help practitioners identify ways to target more effective intercultural development of all three competencies within intercultural competence: knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

### **Importance of the Instructor**

Challenging and supporting students at varying stages of intercultural development is difficult. As discussed in Chapter 2, experiential learning theory suggests just having an experience and discussing is insufficient: students need to have concepts and theories they can use to make meaning of those experiences. While the instructor in this study supported students' intercultural development through a variety of interventions and double interventions, a stronger theoretical and pedagogical understanding of intercultural development could help reach students at the more extreme ends of intercultural sensitivity and cultural intelligence. In other words, students with a more intercultural mindset, such as acceptance, could be challenged in ways that students possessing a monocultural mindset, such as polarization, could not. Instructors would

need to be trained in the IDI in order to identify their students' mindsets and to facilitate different types of learning to support and challenge their students.

When equipped with a theoretical basis for intervening in their students' learning, educators are in a much better position to foster intercultural development. Instructors who understand dimensions of culture learning and intensity factors know that culture-specific learning is less intense than comparative and culture-general learning and can build into their curricula strategies to both challenge and support their students. The instructor in this study demonstrated this type of planning, and the data revealed that many students increased their levels of knowledge and awareness toward host nationals and their peers, recognizing similarities as well as differences.

If teachers are to be the architects of designing and implementing experiential programs aimed at increasing students' intercultural learning and development, they must be supported with resources and training. Institutions can support their faculty by establishing a space for sharing mentoring materials related to the intercultural development of study abroad students. Exemplars of best practice within a specific context can encourage educators to reflect on their own practice and incorporate new ideas into their mentoring.

### **Comprehensive Versus Fragmented Internationalization**

Colleges and universities are better able to achieve their internationalization goals when all parts are working in unison as opposed to operating in silos. According to Mestenhauser (2011), "international education is a fragmented field divided by various administrative and instructional units, reporting to various structures, and fluctuating in emphasis from 'process' to 'product' learning" (p.2). An advocate of applying systems

thinking to higher education, Mestenhauser argued that an institution is better able to achieve its goals when all parts are working in unison. Until there is a greater recognition of international education as a field, international educators will continue to lack an adequate level of academic authority needed so that internationalization may be comprehensive.

Yershova et al. (2000) emphasized that an intercultural perspective is integral to developing the three major intellectual competencies: intercultural competence, critical thinking and comparative thinking. Unfortunately, this intercultural perspective is often absent or not given enough attention to the latter two. If thinking comparatively leads to cognitive divergence and a curiosity about ways of doing things differently, then adding an intercultural perspective would help a learner shift their learning from an inherently monocultural to an intentionally intercultural mindset. There is a need for integrating intercultural perspectives into curricular as well as co-curricular programs on campuses, and not solely on faculty-led study abroad programs. Until this happens on a comprehensive level, it is unrealistic to expect faculty and administrators to know and support ways of doing this.

### **Limitations**

The first limitation of this study is that generalizations cannot be made because of the small size ( $N = 10$ ) and the absence of a control group, making this a purely heuristic study. A second limitation of this study is that all students were also enrolled in VCU's Globe program, the intercultural living-learning certificate program described in Chapter 1 through which the Mexico study abroad program was run. The students in this study



had already participated in at least one 1-credit intercultural communications course prior to studying abroad and therefore could have been more familiar with intercultural learning concepts than students who had no prior coursework in intercultural communications.

Another limitation pertaining to the characteristics of this study is that most participants were students of color, which differs from the traditional study abroad student demographic and thereby limits generalizations with other studies. The experiences of students of color studying abroad often differ from those of White students, as was made evident during my student interviews. Several students of color spoke about standing out physically in the host country and shared stories about host nationals touching their hair and referring to them as “*negrita*” or “*morena*.” However, when participants described these instances of standing out, they also spoke about processing those experiences with their peers in the group who were also students of color. Previous studies exploring the intersection of study abroad students’ racial identity development and intercultural competence (Cressy, 2004) found statistically significant correlations (Stallman, 2009) between the two. Nontraditional study abroad participants may experience different intensity factors than those who have historically studied abroad.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

To build upon the findings from this study, a study with a larger sample size should be conducted. Alternatively, this study could be replicated with a different VCU Globe instructor and students traveling to Mexico. A different instructor might produce different results in students’ IDI and CQS scores as well as in the students’ primary

sources of learning (host nationals, peer group, and guided reflections from the instructor). Findings conducted from a study similar in design could help strengthen the theoretical argument that a study abroad program designed with curricular interventions and guided reflections can positively impact students' intercultural learning and development.

A second suggestion for future research would be to conduct a study that compared the intercultural development of students enrolled in global certificate programs with those who are not. Findings from such a study could help inform colleges and universities of programmatic ways they can support their students' intercultural learning and development. The Georgetown Consortium Project (Vande Berg et al., 2009) did compare the intercultural sensitivity of students who studied abroad with those who did not; it found that students who studied abroad had higher scores.

Finally, a study exploring the different ways nontraditional and traditional study abroad students experience intensity factors would help study abroad administrators and practitioners more effectively intervene in all students' intercultural development. Given the increase in student diversity among short-term study abroad programs, findings from such a study could contribute to the field in meaningful and practical ways.

### **Conclusion**

In this study, as the students reflected upon their experiences studying abroad, they recounted myriad ways in which they had changed over the course of the program. They acquired new knowledge, increased their awareness of cultural differences that existed within their host country as well as within their own, and acknowledged shifts in

their attitudes. Findings from the study support these reflections. Findings from this study also emphasize that these changes were not automatic, or simply a result of living with a host family or teaching English. Rather, they arose out of structured reflective practices intentionally built into the curriculum.

Dimensions of culture (Paige, 2005) and the experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984) helped to provide a better understanding about what and how the students in this study learned and Sanford's (1966) challenge/support model as well as Paige's (1993) intensity factors helped to provide insight into the ways through which the instructor facilitated the students' learning. The implications of these findings point to the importance of carefully designing an immersive experience that fosters meaningful reflections of the intercultural experience. Interventions help to provide the opportunities for immersion and guided reflections should be the process through which students transform their understanding of their immersion experiences. Engaging in this dialectic between reflection and action helps give students a stereo perspective that motivates learning.

To successfully facilitate these types of experiences, it is crucial for program administrators to understand how various program elements build on one another.

Theoretical constructs such as those described above, as well as instruments such as the Intercultural Development Inventory (Hammer, 2009) and Cultural Intelligence Scale (Ang et al, 2007) can provide instructors and administrators with the resources and knowledge to develop meaningful interventions and guided reflections that target both the content and the process of students' intercultural learning and development.

Finally, the relevance of this study comes at a time of great conflict within the United States with regard to racial justice, equity, and inclusion. Universities are challenged to position themselves toward creating communities where a sense of belonging is strong, accessibility is valued, and equity and diversity are promoted. Appiah (2006) describes these increased efforts toward equity and inclusion as cosmopolitanism, in which we have a moral obligation to live respectfully and humanely in a world where people do not all value the same things or organize their lives the same way.

In this dissertation there is a critical discussion about a particular kind of learning intervention that originates from conflict. Intercultural communications as a field arose out of the rubble of World War II. Developing intercultural competence is about deferring judgment, openness toward alternative perspectives, and increased self-awareness, all of which are also core competencies needed to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion both at home and abroad. By intentionally intervening in our students' intercultural learning abroad and continuing the application of those intercultural skills back home, universities can help to create and to promote a more equitable and just society.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Participant Consent Form**

#### **Consent form for Questionnaire, Inventory, Survey and Interview: Student**

#### **Intervening in students' learning abroad on a short-term study abroad program**

You are invited to be in a research study about the impact of guided reflections on students' intercultural development. You were selected as a possible participant because of your enrollment in GLED 391: VCU Globe Mexico. This study is being conducted by Kim Cressy, an Ed.D. candidate from the University of Minnesota –Twin Cities, Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development.

#### **Background Information**

The purpose of this study is to examine how guided reflections influence your experience abroad and, more specifically, your intercultural competence.

#### **Procedures**

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire, the Intercultural Development Inventory, and the Cultural Intelligence Survey. You will also be invited to be interviewed regarding your experience as a study abroad participant. This semi-structured interview may take 60-90 minutes and will be audio recorded.

#### **Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study**

The study has no inherent risks and no immediate benefits to you. Your participation will allow the researcher to better understand the experiences of students studying abroad on a short-term program and to share this information within the education abroad field.

#### **Confidentiality**

The records of this study will be kept confidential and only the researcher will have access to them. In any sort of report that might be published, a pseudonym will be assigned. All data regarding your participation in the study will be linked to that pseudonym and reported either anonymously or under that pseudonym. Audio interviews will be accessible only to the researcher and will be destroyed upon completion of this study, but no later than December 2021

#### **Voluntary Nature of the Study**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Virginia Commonwealth University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

#### **Contacts and Questions**

If you have any questions, now or later, you are encouraged to contact the researcher of this study, Kim Cressy. You may contact her at (804) 678-8717 or [cres0059@umn.edu](mailto:cres0059@umn.edu). You may also contact the researcher's adviser, Gerald Fry, at [gwf@umn.edu](mailto:gwf@umn.edu) or (612) 624-0294.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, MN 55455; (612) 625-1650.

*You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. I have asked any questions I had and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

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

Signature of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B**

### **Interview Protocol for Students**

1. What led you to enroll in the VCU Globe Mexico program?
2. Why did you choose to study abroad on a short-term program?
3. What you have learned about Mexican, Zapotec, and US cultures that you didn't know prior to this program?
4. What does it mean to be interculturally competent?
5. How, if at all, did the content of your instructor's classes help you to become more interculturally competent?
  - a. Prompt: What role has she played in your intercultural learning?
6. What have been some of your most powerful intercultural learning experiences?
7. What else, if anything, do you wish you would have learned during this program?
8. How have outside activities (excursions and non-school related activities and interactions) contributed to your intercultural learning? Please provide some concrete examples.

#### Concluding questions

9. What have been the most valuable things you gained from participation in this program?
10. Is there anything else you think I should know or that you would like to share about your experience in the class meetings or about the study abroad program in general?

## **Appendix C**

### **Interview Protocol for Instructor**

1. How did you become involved with leading the VCU Globe Mexico program?
2. What are your prior intercultural experiences?
3. How would you describe your facilitation of students' intercultural learning during this program?
4. In what ways do your students have an opportunity to debrief about their intercultural encounters?
5. What do you do to encourage intercultural learning among your students?
6. What training, if any, have you received on facilitation of intercultural development, either formal or informal?
7. In terms of intercultural learning, how do you feel your classes are going?
  - a. What do you feel has gone well?
  - b. What has been difficult or challenging?
8. What other factors that we have not discussed do you feel have influenced your students' intercultural learning?