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Making Symbolic Meaning Through the Engagement of Intercultural Exchanges: The Relationship Between Intercultural Communication and Global Competency on a U.S. University Campus

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MAKING SYMBOLIC MEANING THROUGH THE ENGAGEMENT OF
INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGES: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND GLOBAL COMPETENCY ON A U.S.
UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

By

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ABSTRACT

This study reveals how participants in cross-cultural programs engage in intercultural communication with one another and reflect on global competency. Researchers agree that many U.S. students graduating from universities today are not receiving the necessary tools to successfully work abroad. This study has two major research objectives: to examine the engagement of intercultural communication between two people from different cultures and their reflections on global competency. Data were collected from 10 participants who were paired up with a person(s) of a different culture in conversation partner programs. Semi-structured interviews, qualitative analysis and software were other methods used. I use the symbolic interaction approach to examine the engagement of intercultural communication and how that relates to the global competency of students and community members participating in cross-cultural programs on a U.S. university campus. The symbolic interaction approach examines the symbols and meanings people have for things. Findings show that participants--U.S. and international students, scholars, and community members--engage in intercultural communication by two key methods: the initial cultural philosophy and the stating of cultural differences. Findings from the second research question, examining how global competency relates to intercultural communication, indicates that according to participants, self-awareness and cultural awareness are readily apparent.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“It is vitally important that professionals today perceive themselves as citizens of the world who are comfortable with diverse populations”
(Harrington & Vincenti, 2004, p.12).

Upon graduation many university students will obtain jobs that have dimensions of international work. Globalization in the 21st century has led the United States to increase relations abroad. Although university students take humanities and language courses, that does not mean they have the skills to effectively communicate with people from other cultures. According to researchers, many U.S. students graduating from universities today are not receiving the necessary tools to successfully work abroad (Hunter, White, & Godbey, 2006; Ippolito, 2007; Jurgens & Robbins-O’Connell, 2008). The reason is that different cultures and languages have different meanings for things and different ways of doing things; if these things are not known, there is a greater chance for miscommunication, unintended offences, and uncomfortable situations. To obtain the competency necessary to work in the international arena, researchers place responsibility on tertiary institutions (Brustein, 2007; Horn, Hendel, & Fry, 2007; Ippolito, 2007; Streams, 2009; Teichler, 2004).

Some researchers from the field of international education feel strongly that the university does not put forth a sufficient effort to prepare students for the global economy (Mestenhauser, 1998; Yershova, DeJaeghere, & Mestenhauser, 2000). Indeed, other researchers agree and suggest that attention should be paid to the development of the U.S. students’ international perspective (Breuning, 2007; Horn et al., 2007; Jurgens & Robbins-O’Connell, 2008; Reynolds & Constantine, 2007). In addition, Pandit and Alderman (2004) state that the international student is a vital resource for culture and diversity that is not being utilized to full potential. However, what Pandit and Alderman (2004) do not acknowledge is the need for these students to not only share their culture with faculty and students, but to also get the transitional help and intercultural communication that they need to be successful in a new culture.

When discussing intercultural communication within a university campus, one cannot proceed without speaking of the underpinning of its concept, university-wide

internationalization efforts. Internationalization of a university has many aspects that vary from campus to campus. Knight (2003) defines the term internationalization as, “the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education” (p. 1-2). Thus, without the overall mission of internationalization on a university campus, intercultural communication would have a more difficult time being utilized and recognized.

Based on a review of relevant literature, I have found that university campuses lack research into how the actual programs offered by centers within the division of student affairs influence internationalization efforts. Additionally, little is known regarding the type of cross-cultural programs that are offered, what they do, and how they facilitate interaction between the U.S. and international students on campus.

Research Questions

The form of internationalization I focus on is the fostering of intercultural communication and how that affects global competency on a U.S. university campus. More specifically, I examine intercultural communication through two cross-cultural programs provided at a large southeastern university. I choose these two programs because they are similar in how student contacts are provided, facilitated and monitored. This study explores meaningful relationships between U.S. students and community members and international students/scholars. The study examines the conversations and reflections of participants of cross-cultural programs on the university campus who engage in intercultural communication with one another and how that communication relates to global competency. The questions that guide my research are: *(1) How are participants engaging in intercultural communication within the cross-cultural programs? (2) What is the relationship between intercultural communication and global competency?*

Conducting a qualitative study with U.S. students/community members and international students provides many different perspectives to examine the effects of internationalization on a large southeastern university. The perspective I use to analyze the conversations is the symbolic interaction approach. *Symbolic interaction* focuses on the process of understanding meanings for things from someone of another culture.

Specifically, I examine participants' perceptions of their exchanges with one another. The symbolic interaction approach is discussed in detail in the Conceptual Framework.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The bodies of literature that I review come from the fields of higher education and international education. The topics that relate to my study are internationalization efforts in higher education and intercultural communication and global competence within the field of international education. The literature review covers aspects of internationalization efforts on U.S. university campuses and how they relate to global competency, the most current definitions of intercultural communication and global competency, and relevant empirical studies. The research study addresses key issues in by revealing how participants in conversation partner programs communicate with one another and how those intercultural communications relate to global competency.

Internationalization efforts in higher education

Researchers agree that the concept of internationalization in higher education is vague (Chavez, 2002; Galván, 2006; Pandit & Alderman, 2004; Schoorman, 1999; Yershova, 2000). Words like “internationalization” and “globalization” share many disciplines’ lexicons (Horn et al., 2007; Knight, 2001; Tierney, 2004). However, these two words have different meanings and substitution of one for another is an incorrect use of their concepts. To set the background, the word international according to Teichler (2004) and Tierney (2004) refers to “borders” and nations, whereas the term global is “borderless” or has very blurred borders. The concepts are put into further clarification in the realm of education by the understanding that from the process of internationalization comes globalization (Bartell, 2003; Knight, 2003; Pandit & Alderman, 2004).

On examination of literature in international education, terms such as global competency, intercultural competency, intercultural perspective, cross-cultural perspectives, intercultural communications, cultural competence, international perspective, intercultural dialogue, and internationalized curriculum frequently appear. A major challenge that the research has pointed out is that the use of certain language in the field of education is too ambiguous (Chavez, 2002; Schoorman, 1999). My research

specifically examines intercultural communication, which refers to the ability to communicate with people from different cultures (M.J. Bennett, 1998), and how that relates to global competency. However, I occasionally use the other terms mentioned above when appropriate.

Chavez (2002) illustrates an instance where definitions are not congruent. She argues that teachers and students need the same definitions or else communication, core mission, and sustainability in a program are in jeopardy (Chavez, 2002). Her study looked for the level of understanding in the concepts of culture and foreign language culture. The findings show that students do not have the same definition as teachers regarding the concept of culture for three reasons: first “lack of coherence and development”, second “the scope of cultural knowledge”, and third “the relationship of language and culture” (Chavez, 2002, p. 135). That is, students who do not have enough background or experiences to build meanings of foreign language culture continue to have a narrow scope of culture. If meanings of foreign language culture vary between teacher and students, there will be gaps in learning. A person can know a language well and not understand its culture. In other words, in relation to my study, students can be conversation partners, but without intercultural communication, the meanings they have for things may not be related to one another, resulting in more confusion than understanding.

The engagement of intercultural communication stems from a larger endeavor, which calls on the university to internationalize its campus. Knight (2003) defines the term internationalization as, “the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education” (p. 1-2). Many researchers agree that one of the main ways to internationalize a university campus is through international education (Horn et al., 2007; Knight, 2001; Schoorman, 1999; Teichler, 2004). Intercultural communication would have a difficult time being utilized and recognized without the overall mission of internationalization on a university campus. As Schoorman (1999) states, researchers agree that intercultural perspectives are tied to conceptualization.

In much of the research focusing on internationalizing university campuses, there is a lack of research into the actual university programs offered by departments and

centers on campuses. This is an important insight for my research of cross-cultural programming on the university campus because not only do many researchers agree on how the process needs to take place, but Yershova et al. (2000) believes that higher education content is one of the key missing components. Using a general program logic model, Deardorff (2006) lays out the components for what is needed for internationalization to have long-term impact, and lists specifics in terms of the model's input, activities, outputs, and outcomes. She suggests examples such as interested students, funding, and leadership along with curriculum and study abroad, which produce outputs. Outputs are defined as "the citing of numbers as indicators of successful internationalization efforts" (Deardorff, 2006, p. 243). The outcomes of the model determine the long-term impact of internationalization efforts. Deardorff (2006) is looking at internationalization of a U.S. campus on a holistic scale and my study focuses on program specifics. Researchers from both higher education and international education agree that more attention should be paid to the development of U.S. students' international perspectives (Breuning, 2007; Horn et al., 2007; Jurgens & Robbins-O'Connell, 2008; Reynolds & Constantine, 2007).

On a similar note, Horn et al.'s (2007) quantitative study examines universities that express internationalization efforts on their campuses. Practically speaking, this means that students who enroll in the university will be taught the tools to successfully work and communicate in the international arena. The authors examine 87 research universities and rank them according to the aspects of internationalization they deem worthy. The results list the actual universities that best met the list of indicators. The study also identifies the top five most important aspects of university internationalization, including international activity leadership and international faculty, which had been examined earlier by Schoorman (1999).

Schoorman (1999) agrees that faculty has an important role to play in the internationalization process at a university, and argues that not enough is being done on campuses and in university departments in the way of international education. She found that when a department places importance on international education, this links students and faculty to the "perceptions of the relevance of internationalization in their field" (Schoorman, 1999, p. 19). For my research, the Horn et al. (2007) and Schoorman

(1999) studies lack the analysis of the international outreach centers that I have been examining. I am aware that several of these studies are not directly related to my investigation into the concepts of intercultural communication and global competence. Nevertheless, I have decided to include dimensions of the aspects of internationalization in the literature review that I feel a successful campus cannot be without.

Reynolds & Constantine (2007) relate success after graduation to the level of intercultural competencies or skills students received, were exposed to, or engaged in while in college. Their data is obtained from 261 international college students from Latin America, Asia, and Africa, who were asked to complete voluntary questionnaire packets when they registered at their universities. The regression analysis shows that international students who have a higher level of host country culture anxiety do not get the jobs they are qualified for (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007). This article is beneficial to my research because affirms the importance of intercultural exchanges for international students. However, it does not identify the programs, events, and activities that these students were involved in.

Programs in Other Universities

This section explores other cross-cultural programming implemented on U.S. campuses. Literature was found on how another university sets up international and domestic outreach. Paige (2003) puts together an overview of the international programs at the University of Minnesota (U of M) using a conceptual model of internationalization. Paige (2003), a prominent figure in the field of international education at the U of M outlined the programs in his article that have been influential in the growth and development of university-wide support towards internationalization. He lays out the history of the university's internationalization process then reflects on the lessons learned and concludes that this insight may be a helpful guide to implementation of programs at other universities. So far, research has been sparse on the impacts of the programs at internationally based centers at universities. Paige (2003) clearly defines the programs and departments at the U of M, what the programs' goals and functions are the roles of key players, and his work on the curriculum.

The U of M's *Learning with Foreign Students Project* sounds similar to the two programs I am examining. The project is an ongoing effort by university faculty to put

the theory of internationalization to practice. This is done by helping U.S. students better understand how they are viewed by people in other nations, teaching about their own countries and cultures, serving as interviewees for ethnographic research, and providing opportunities for native students to develop their cultural learning and intercultural communication skills (Paige, 2003). Unfortunately, Paige (2003) did not get into detail on how the programs operate. Hence, more supplemental information is needed so that the success of the program can be validated.

Yershova et al. (2000) and Schoorman (1999) have also written about international programs similar to the ones in my study. For example, a university has developed a program that offers a certificate or minor degree that requires students to meet certain requisites in the international field of study. The university in my study has a certificate is relatively new, so it is beneficial to see how other universities are handling the issues that come with implementing new programs. This research suggests that a lot of what the cross-cultural programming wants to accomplish has most likely been done in other places and the knowledge already obtained should be used to develop the types of programs that will best fit the needs of the specific university.

Intercultural Communication

Intercultural Competency

Although I am not studying intercultural competencies per se, it is necessary to define a few key terms that are important in the progression of a global perspective. To be clear, the difference between intercultural communication and intercultural competency is described by J.M. Bennett & Salonen (2007): “The field of intercultural communication provides a particularly useful perspective for developing intercultural competence: It aims to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for effective and appropriate interactions across cultures” (p.48). It is understood that intercultural communication, or lack thereof, is one determinate of intercultural competence. Other determinates of intercultural competence are described by Deardorff (2004) as institutional strategies: “knowledge of others; knowledge of self; skills to interpret and relate; skills to discover and/or to interact; valuing others’ values, beliefs, and behaviors; and relativizing one’s self” (p. 14). Compared to Deardorff (2004),

Breuning's (2007) definition is much more broad, "the ability to see both unique aspects of cultures as well as commonalities between them" (p. 1114). So the logical progression in my study of intercultural communication is to first examine how students communicate in an intercultural context within a prescribed program by examining what is being communicated. Further research would study the intercultural competencies in relation to intercultural communication and global competencies.

Some of the most useful concepts on the types, levels, and differentiation of culture within the field of international education emanate from the work of Edward T. Hall (1980, 1981) regarding what is described as "*intercultural communication*." To get to intercultural communication, Hall (1981) outlines a theory of culture through forms of communication. Hall (1980) speaks about the notion of time and space being the catalyst for communication.

According to J.M. Bennett and Salonen (2007) intercultural communication is "about negotiating shared meanings" (p. x). Upon explaining culture and cultural meanings, Gudykunst (2003) touches on how symbols are used to make meanings and how those meanings must be understood by people of another culture for intercultural communication to occur. If persons of different cultures do not understand this communication of meanings it may lead to "greater uncertainty, frustration, anxiety, and conflict" (Gudykunst, 2003, p. 261). For the communication experience to go smoothly, M.J. Bennett (1998) explains the attitudes needed to make the communication interaction successful:

For this kind of [face-to-face, intercultural] communication to occur, each participant must perceive him- or herself being perceived by others. That is, all participants must see themselves as potentially engaged in communication and capable of giving and receiving feedback (p. 8).

Intercultural communication refers to the ability to effectively communicate across cultures (M.J. Bennett, 1998). This concept attempts to explain how people from varied backgrounds work through cultural differences without making inappropriate assumptions (M.J. Bennett, 1998). M.J. Bennett (1998) claims that intercultural communication is difference-based due to the cultural factor. The differences relative to my study are objective and subjective culture. To this effect, he posits that intercultural

communication almost solely uses subjective culture, his reasoning being, “interculturalists are concerned with language use in cross-cultural relationships, rather than in linguistic structure” (p. 2). M.J. Bennett (1998) explains examples of objective culture as, “social, economic, political, and linguistic systems”, whereas subjective culture refers to the “learned and shared patterns of beliefs, behaviors, and values of groups of interacting peoples” (p. 2-3). He deems subjective cultural exchanges are more likely linked to intercultural competence (Bennett, 1998). Along with M.J. Bennett (1998), Eisenchlas & Trevaskes (2007) also agree that intercultural communication stems from subjective culture as they explore ways to promote cross-cultural exchanges on university campuses. They believe that a starting point for students to appreciate cross-cultural exchanges is learning and understanding the everyday culture (Eisenchlas & Trevaskes, 2007).

Much of the research on intercultural communication has come from studies that show a growing concern for the implementation of internationalization on university campuses. This is due largely to the fact that one of the first formal introductions to intercultural communication for many people is at the university. For example, a comparative study by Jurgens and Robbins-O’Connell (2008) on U.S. and Irish universities helps to warrant my research and justify the practical importance of higher education’s role in fostering and facilitating intercultural communication skills among its students. The study compares international education in the form of intercultural opportunities and exchanges at two Irish universities and a U.S. university (Jurgens & Robbins-O’Connell, 2008). The researchers use data from annual reports and four full time staff of the International Programs offices. In the discussion, the authors note the difference between the American university and the Irish universities. According to the authors, when the Americans are the internationals, they do not participate in the campus activities the way international students do in the States. The authors describe this phenomenon as a lack of cross-cultural adaptation (Jurgens & Robbins-O’Connell, 2008). Americans at the Irish university stayed together and did not converse with others and because of this, they did not engage in the cultural activities the institution provided. According to the authors, the “uninvolved” attitude of the American students kept them

from experiencing the Irish culture. Further studies could be done on the U.S. students when they do converse with other students from different backgrounds.

Pandit & Alderman (2004) examine intercultural exchanges between international and U.S. students on American campuses. They argue that the international student is a vital resource for culture and diversity that is not utilized to its full potential (Pandit & Alderman, 2004). Their data come from a class of 78 U.S. undergraduate students who are given an active learning assignment and are asked to interview international students. The goal of the study was for U.S. students to “reexamine their own society and redefine the borders of their own cultural frame of reference” (Pandit & Alderman, 2004, p.128). To obtain this information, the authors use students’ reflection papers from the interview experience and a questionnaire given at the end of the semester. The findings show two learning outcomes: intercultural exchanges increased awareness of other cultures and provided a personal reflection of their culture (Pandit & Alderman, 2004). The article offers a rich insight into a U.S. student’s cultural awareness process, which is one of the first steps to becoming a globally competent citizen.

Students’ Perspectives

The literature review reveals empirical articles examining the student perspective toward intercultural awareness and understanding, and definition of culture and cultural adjustment. The studies examine students of domestic and international, K-12 and higher education backgrounds. My study has many similarities to Chamberlin-Quinlisk’s (2005) and Pandit and Alderman’s (2004) articles, especially in the sample collection context. We all use international and domestic students who pair up to communicate with one another. Chamberlin-Quinkisk (2005) uses the students from her Intercultural Communications courses and English as a Second Language (ESL) students from that university. Pandit & Alderman (2004) also utilize students from a university class, but these students must find an international student to interview. These studies were done with students enrolled in university classes within the division of academic affairs who had to accept the class assignment of being paired up with a culturally different individual. In my study, the participants willingly joined the cross-cultural program within the division of student affairs, were paired up by the program, and self-guided their meetings with one another.

Chamberlin-Quinlisk's (2005) study produced two themes: questioning assumptions and new perspectives. She concludes that due to schools emphasizing tolerance of "differences," students did not feel they had to make the effort to communicate:

Students assume that differences will be a great impediment to communication, so they do not make the effort. Realizing the differences are not so great, many students who participated in this project reassessed their prior beliefs and questioned their previous fears. (p.7).

Inasmuch, Pandit and Alderman (2004) state that the students in their study learned about other cultures and examined their own culture and where they stand in it. The American students were forced outside of their "comfort zone" by having to interview someone from another culture. The reasons the author's give to the discomfort is the American cultural understanding of privacy and not wanting to interfere in other people's business.

Unfortunately, some universities misunderstand or are misinformed regarding how to educate a student to be globally competent. In a commentary by an American study abroad student, Zemach-Bersin (2008) is disappointed in her university that told her she would become a "global citizen" by immersing herself in a foreign culture. She was ill prepared in the self-awareness of cultural representation as an American citizen and was totally unaware of how to present herself as a global citizen. She sums up her international education higher education experience as:

An international education that focuses on American-based discursive ideals rather than experimental realities can hardly be said to position students in this country for successful lives of global understanding. Rather, such an education may inadvertently be a recipe for the perpetuation of global ignorance, misunderstanding, and prejudice (Zemach-Bersin, 2008, p.2-3).

One has to wonder how many students and graduates do not receive the necessary tools from their universities to successfully exist abroad and are left with a sour taste in their mouths about international travel and the university's competence. The goal of my study is to try to prevent such experiences by demonstrating what is currently happening in a

cross-cultural program and what must continue to make sure students graduate with global competence.

Global Competency

Definitions of global competency differ between researchers; however, similar threads can be found within the types of competencies thought of as most important. I choose two definitions for this study. One defines philosophical needs and the other gives an overview of conceptual competencies. Romano (2002) defines global competency in a holistic perspective as “a continuum of behavior that begins with personal awareness of cultural differences and culminates in a person successfully functioning in another culture or country” (abstract, p. x). Hunter et al. (2006) cite Hunter’s 2004 definition of global competency and state certain characteristics that stand out in globally competent people such as “having an open mind while actively seeking to understand cultural norms and expectation of others, leveraging this gained knowledge to interact, communicate and work effectively outside one’s environment” (p. 270).

Olsen & Kroeger (2001) argue that the communication aspect of global competency is a hidden component because it involves subjective dynamic qualities. On one hand, I see the lack of a well-defined concept as a detriment to the globalization efforts on university campuses because ambiguity hinders the possibility of a strong vision. On the other hand, not every university has the finances, resources, or manpower to implement a university-wide internationalization doctrine. The plethora of variables that make up the university dynamics need to be considered when deciding on the standardized definition of global competency. McAshan (1979) explains the complexities and subjectivities of dissecting a competency:

It is possible to breakdown the global competency statements into a hundred or more sub-competencies...The global competencies are too abstract, and highly refined sub-competencies are too minute to be practical (p.63).

Sub-competencies refer to the competencies that are more specific than others.

The challenges involved in implementing a more responsive global education generally fall on stakeholders at the university (Horn et al., 2007; Schoorman, 1999; Streans, 2009; Teichler, 2004). The role of education is a competitive dimension in a

globalizing economy (Horn et al., 2007; Teichler, 2004). Streans (2009) sees the need for incorporating global competency on the U.S. university campus as an undeniable necessity for “advancement of higher education in the United States” (p. xii). A number of studies in higher education conclude that students who engage in dialogue and experiences with others from different cultures tend to be more open to examining their own culture (Chavez, 2002; Fantini, 2001; Jurgens & Robbins-O’Connell, 2008; Pandit & Alderman, 2004). The examination of one’s own culture is a global competency. Cultural awareness of one’s country and culture are the first steps to becoming a globally competent citizen (Pandit & Alderman, 2004). The challenge for a concise definition of global competencies is one that will have to be addressed more seriously as more universities seek to internationalize their campuses.

CHAPTER THREE

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Through the symbolic interaction framework, I examine U.S students and community members, and international students who participate in cross-cultural programs. I examine how they process interactions and how they engage in intercultural communication. The theoretical framework for this study is originally based on the work of George Herbert Mead, along with Robert E. Park, Herbert Blumer, and Everett C. Hughes. Patton (2002) describes symbolic interaction as:

...a perspective that places great importance on the importance of meaning and interpretation as the essential human processes in reaction against behaviorism and mechanical stimulus-response psychology. People create shared meanings through their interactions, and those meanings become their reality (p. 112).

I choose the symbolic interaction approach to understand the underpinnings of the social interactions that take place between two people from different cultural backgrounds. This approach is a widely used sociological perspective and not often used in the educational field. I am interested in what findings will emerge from this lens. A symbolic interaction analysis of the intercultural conversation process seeks to reveal how participants make sense of the information they are receiving and how they process that information. Becker and McCall (1990) describe the conversation process as being able to “incorporate the responses of others into their own act” (p. 3). The question that guided my analysis is from Patton (2002): “What common set of symbols and understandings has emerged to give meaning to people’s interactions” (p. 112)?

Three Premises-The symbolic interaction approach posits three premises on how people make meanings. First, people will make meanings out of objects that they come into contact with (Blumer, 1986). For instance, how people act toward their government is due to the meaning they have placed on the concept of government. Second, meaning is derived from or influenced by social interactions (Blumer, 1986). For instance, a person learns about the role of government from others. Third, meanings of objects are interpreted and because we communicate and interact with others, the meanings are readjusted as we communicate with others (Blumer, 1986). Other people have a different

meaning for the same object, so the person has to interpret both meanings and come up with a conclusion. For instance, a person knows the concept of their government, but they meet someone else who has a different concept of government. They now have to converse and interpret the meaning of government to come to an understanding of one another's perspective. This means that what is not said via spoken language can be widely interpreted depending on the culture (Hall, 1982). This can then affect how and what is said because the first two notions of symbolic interaction are not present and the participants move into the third premise which is the interpretive process dealing with the current encounters.

What understandings do people have or make that contribute to their communication towards each other? Becker & McCall (1990) use a metaphor of the "world" to help the researcher in collecting data that will prove useful: "Symbolic interaction emphasizes collective action. One special version of this has proved useful: the idea of a 'world', a more or less stable organization of collective activity" (p. 9). Social interactionists would see the collective activity as ongoing functions of society and society as happening in steps with people building meaning from each other and creating understanding that will be used in the next steps to social interaction.

Chamberlin-Quinlisk's (2005) article examines intercultural awareness in students using Mezirow's transformative theory: "the key to transforming access into opportunity lies within the participants' ability to engage in an interaction or event that brings their assumptions and beliefs into question and then have opportunity to revise their assumptions" (p. 3). This is similar to Mead's symbolic interaction approach that I use to analyze my findings. The similarities are in how a person processes information that may change their meanings or beliefs in an already conceived idea. The difference in the approach versus the theory is in the fields in which they are most often utilized. Transformative theory is used in adult learning in the field of education and symbolic interaction approach has roots in sociology.

I will use the three premises of symbolic interaction to analyze the examples of intercultural communication that correlate to the findings. The three premises of symbolic interaction (Blumer, 1986) are as follows:

- 1) Humans act according to the meanings they have for things.

- 2) Meanings are drawn from social interactions with others.
- 3) Meanings are readjusted through an interpretive process to be able to communicate with that person on the meaning at hand.

Each example will be examined for the original meaning he/she has for a notion, concept, phrase, or word. Then the meanings drawn from social interactions will be discussed. Finally, the readjustment of meanings and how much of that readjustment the person accepts will be examined and discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR RESEARCH DESIGN

Researcher's Bias

My interest for this study and extensive knowledge of the programs are due to the fact that the year before this study was completed I was the graduate assistant for the Intercultural Global Awareness Center (IGAC) and part of my responsibilities was to manage the Global Partner Program (GPP).

Program Descriptions

The two cross-cultural programs that were examined for the study are similar in goals and objectives to other conversation partner programs but cater to different student populations. The Global Partner Program (GPP) is a cross-cultural program within the Intercultural Global Awareness Center (IGAC). The GPP is managed by the cross-cultural coordinator and the Center's graduate assistant. The international students at IGAC are mostly graduate students whose fields of study span the campus. These students are studying advanced degrees in their fields where English is at least their second language. Based on my interactions with these students, most were more comfortable in English academia lexicons and not so comfortable in daily English speech. However, let not this lack of daily English speak force them to only talk about rudimentary ideas, they still wish to carry on intelligent and intellectual conversations with willing peers.

The Cultural Exchange Program (CEP) from the Language Study Center (LSC) consists of two coordinators who share the responsibilities of managing this program. The international students at LSC are there for an intensive semester of English language studies. Once these students pass the highly recommended test for international enrollment at English-based universities, the TOEFL, (Test of English as a Foreign Language) they can then apply to this or other universities in the country depending on their student visa status. These international students may be on their way to higher education degrees but they will need practice on the basic English vernacular.

Through the information obtained in the interviews, I found that managing the conversation programs is only one of the many responsibilities of a coordinator. The three coordinators also hold the titles of international educators, they manage and sponsor other Center events and programs, design and develop curriculum and assessments, teach classes and workshops, and collaborate across campus on internationalization efforts. Both the partner programs market to U.S. students/scholars/faculty/staff/community and international scholars/students.

Once the students have applied, the applications are matched up according to hobbies, interests, and/or language(s). An email is then sent out to the new partner set with contact information. For instance, with the guidance of the coordinator, the graduate assistant will send out a message saying congratulations to the new partners, suggest some places to meet, and review the stipulations of the program.

Program differences lie in the type of international students they accommodate. Most international students in the Global Partner Program are current graduate students/scholars at the university, while most of the students in the Cultural Exchange Program are potential U.S. university students/scholars working on intensive English language proficiency.

Participants

Participants of this study were either students of a large research university in the southeast or community members of the city in which the university is located. Through the program, students/community members are paired up with culturally different partners; however, not all partners met the interview criteria for the study, which are that partners were actively meeting on a regular bases or had been meeting for the length of at least a semester. Due to limited availability of participants, the original design proposed to interview conversation partners was only partially fulfilled. I was only able to interview two complete partner sets, and the other eight single interviews of participants because their partners were unavailable or unresponsive for the study.

Methodology

The qualitative methodology of this study lends an acute view into questions that are relevant to the field of international education. Furthermore, the concepts of intercultural communication and global competency are examined from the standpoint of these internationalization efforts on campus, i.e., the cross-cultural partnership programs.

Methods

Procedures

Once the approval from the International Review Board (see Appendix 1) was granted for the research study, I emailed participants and coordinators from both programs for interviews. Before the interview, the participants and coordinators read and signed the consent form (see Appendix 2 & 3). The data were collected through interviews of participants in two cross-cultural programs. Ten interviews were conducted using the semi-structured interview format. The participant interview was semi-structured and consisted of 15 questions (see Appendix 4) that asked the students about their conversations with their partners, examples of interactions, and the expectations of the programs. In addition, three program coordinators were interviewed for comprehensive knowledge about the internationalization efforts on campus and how their programs foster intercultural communication. The coordinator interview was also semi-structured and consisted of six questions (see Appendix 5). The information obtained from the coordinators enriched the findings section of the study.

Sampling procedure was criterion-based. My justification for this type of sampling was that the cross-cultural programs had a certain number of participants in their conversation programs, however, I needed participants who were actively meeting with one another and had been doing so for at least a semester. Limitations of the sampling procedure were the international students who have already left the country and no longer check their school-based emails, the students who did participate but were too busy to respond to my email, and unresponsiveness of conversation partners.

Measures

This study explores the relationships between U.S. and international students/scholars by investigating the engagement of intercultural communication. To do this, I find the perceptions before the conversation and after, if it influences them and how meanings are modified. To find the perception of awareness, I dissect the reflections of partner interactions and conversation using the social psychological theory called the symbolic interaction approach. A symbolic interaction analysis of the intercultural conversation process reveals how partners make sense of the information they are receiving and how they process that information. This was further explained in the previous Conceptual Framework section.

Qualitative rigor-I use several strategies to enhance the internal validity of the qualitative study. Two types of triangulation I use in this study are sources and theory. Source triangulation involves comparing data from two different stakeholders using the same methods. In this case, the different sources are the U.S. participants and the international participants. The other type of triangulation I use is theory-based, which uses multiple theories to interpret the data. The theory-based triangulation uses data from various stakeholders who have different perspectives about the program, which in this study are the participants and the program coordinators.

Sharing findings with research participants, member checks and peer examination are other strategies that I use to enhance internal validity. Participants, the conversation partners and program coordinators, of the study were emailed when the findings and discussion section was complete. Participants who were interested in reading the results replied to the email and the appropriate sections were sent to them. Eight out of thirteen participants replied to the email and were sent the results. One participant, a program coordinator, followed up and brought to my attention that global competency and the quote “We’re all the same” do not go together because differences should be examined and understood, not overlooked, as is the goal of global competency. The comment was considered, more research was done on the concept of global competency, and the phrase was taken out. The amendment and participant’s explanation are found in the Discussion section.

Limitations

As the graduate assistant at IGAC, I find myself in two very different roles at the same time. Reminding students that I am approaching them as a researcher for my study and then asking them how they learned about the conversation partner programs feel like a contradiction. When students know that the researcher is also the person managing the program under study, they may not want to speak up about issues or criticisms they may have with the program.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS

Findings

Using the software NVIVO, codes were identified from transcribed interviews. Inductive and deductive processes were used to find connections and patterns within the codes. Patterns were organized into themes for preliminary findings. Guided by the research questions, the findings emerged. The findings produced themes that are elaborated on by examples from the interviews. See Tables 1 and 2 below. The examples are analyzed through the symbolic interaction approach. The symbolic interaction approach has three premises used to analyze each example from Research Question 1. These premises are: 1) humans act according to the meanings they have for things, 2) meanings are drawn from social interactions with others, and 3) meanings are readjusted through an interpretive process to be able to communicate with that person on the meaning at hand (Blumer, 1986). Discussion of the analysis is found throughout the premise examples. Conclusions are made at the end of each example.

Table 1. Preliminary Findings

Conversation Partner Process		
Pre-partner	During meetings	Reflection
cultural philosophy	partner influences	benefits
expectations	gift exchange	modifications of cultural philosophy
importance of interacting	stating cultural differences	learning from partner
	behavioral influences	partner influences
	new concepts	importance of interacting
	partnership	
	developing relationships	
Intercultural Communication	↔	Global Competency

The diagram illustrates the Conversation Partner Process across three stages: Pre-partner, During meetings, and Reflection. Themes are listed under each stage. Arrows indicate the flow of themes: from Pre-partner to During meetings, and from During meetings to Reflection. A double-headed arrow at the bottom connects Intercultural Communication and Global Competency, indicating their interconnected relationship. Additionally, an arrow points from Intercultural Communication to the 'importance of interacting' theme in the Reflection stage, and another arrow points from Global Competency to the 'importance of interacting' theme in the Reflection stage.

Table 1 shows the preliminary findings from analysis of the codes. The conversation partner process is examined three different ways: the person before they met their partner, the time during the partner meetings, and the post-partner reflections. The arrows allude to intercultural communication being found mostly in the first two stages, and global competency emerging mainly in the reflection stage. The arrows between intercultural communication and global competency illustrate the interconnected relationship of these concepts.

Some themes such as the *importance of interacting* are found at the pre-partner and reflection stage meaning that the participants had reasons to believe that this concept was valuable before they met their partner(s) and it continued through to the reflection stage where they able to justify their reasons. The symbolic interaction framework can

be seen through the pre-partner *cultural philosophy* stage, which led to social interaction with their partner(s) and a reflection on the *modifications to their cultural philosophy*.

Table 2. Study Findings

Research Question 1	Research Question 2
How are participants engaging in intercultural communication within the cross-cultural programs?	What is the relationship between intercultural communication and global competency?
Cultural philosophy	Cultural awareness
Stating cultural differences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual distinctions • Cultural distinctions • Cultural identity 	Self-awareness

Analysis of the data has found that participants in the cross-cultural programs engage in intercultural communication by two methods. First, as participants with interest in meeting someone from a different culture, they have a set of beliefs or a *cultural philosophy* upon coming into the program. Interwoven in the participants’ philosophical ideas are how to treat and act towards someone from another culture and the expectations that the program and/or the conversation partner are going to offer. However, some participants stated that they did not have any expectations coming into the program. Second, during meetings, participants engage in intercultural communication by *stating cultural differences*. This method of intercultural communication is explained in three sub-sections entitled “individual distinctions,” “cultural distinctions,” and “cultural identity.”

The second research question examines how global competency is changing by intercultural communication between participants in conversation partner programs. Participants from these programs are not only developing intercultural communication

skills, but they are also modifying their level of global competence. As the participants go through the experience of being conversation partners and especially after the experience is over, and they reflect on the experience, there is evidence in the findings that the participants are processing *self-awareness* and *cultural awareness*. These activities appear to influence global competency. The following section analyzes these findings through the symbolic interaction lens.

For the discussion of Research Question 1, the symbolic interaction approach will analyze the participants' communication process when engaging with their partner(s). Each finding will be examined within the three premises of symbolic interaction (Blumer, 1986):

- 1) Humans act according to the meanings they have for things.
- 2) Meanings are drawn from social interactions with others.
- 3) Meanings are readjusted through an interpretive process to be able to communicate with that person on the meaning at hand.

Discussion

Research Question 1-How are participants engaging in intercultural communication within the cross-cultural programs?

Table 3. Study Participant Pairs

Conversation Partners

NAME	GENDER	NATIONALITY	NAME	GENDER	NATIONALITY	PROGRAM
Brandon	Male	U.S. American	Han	Male	Chinese	GPP
Megan	Female	U.S. American	Ming Ue	Female	Chinese	GPP

Note. The cross-cultural programs acronyms are as follows: Cultural Exchange Partners (CEP) and Global Partner Program (GPP). Table 3 shows the two complete pairs of conversation partners that were interviewed. As much as the findings allow, I begin the Discussion section with the partner pairs and then discuss the individual participants.

Stating Cultural Differences-Individual Distinctions

These findings suggest a fine line between a conversation partner for the purpose of sharing culture and a friend who shares on a deeper level. Findings show that participants are able to distinguish their partners from their partners' cultures. They are able to compare and contrast the background and situations of the individual and know the difference between culture and personality. This is where cultural stereotypes are affirmed or negated, which results in a deeper understanding of the other person and themselves. The following examples examine stereotypes and how participants compare the stereotypes against their conversation partner(s) they have gotten to know on a more personal level.

Premise 1: Humans act according to the meanings they have for things (Blumer, 1986). Megan bases her knowledge of Asian students on the summer that she made friends with some visiting students from Macau. She notes the differences between former students and her current Asian conversation partner:

I worked with some students from Macau and we became close friends, my partner was not interested in pop culture. [She] is shy and it could be her personality or because of her weak English, it was hard for me to tell.

We can infer that Megan is saying her Macau friends were into “pop culture” and not shy like her conversation partner. She did contemplate that the language barrier could be a reason for her attitudes.

Noting a difference between his conversation partner and his other friends, Brandon, a U.S. student, considered a logical fact, “he’s a lot more shy because he doesn’t know a lot of people here.”

Han, an international student, also has a preset meaning of how American students should act. He explains:

My roommate [name] also has a international (from the perspective of Chinese student, international in this case refers to U.S. student) friend, his international friend is very shy, so if so ordinary people from China think that most American people are very open...very open-minded I mean, also there is maybe some very shy (laughs) I think.

Another insight gained from the study was that many of the participants I interviewed said that there is no “typical” type of person and a label cannot be placed on others as “typical” because, “there’s no such thing” or “he’s just himself” or “friends have different personalities.”

Premise 2: Meanings are drawn from the social interactions with others (Blumer, 1986). Students express possible meanings for the reasons why their partners act the way they do. The meanings they have for their partners have to do with the lack of communication with each other so they speculate over the reasons why their international conversation partners seem shy.

Premise 3: Meanings are readjusted through an interpretive process to be able to communicate with that person on the meaning at hand (Blumer, 1986). These students found familiar ground from their social interactions and connected through “human universals” as a coordinator of one of the cross-cultural programs puts it. He goes on to say that from the “common kind of universals...then there can [be] talk about more specific cultural nuances”. Taking Bennett’s (1998) concepts of intercultural communication, we would say that students find the objective cultural similarities between one another and then learn about the subjective culture. Bennett’s (1998) examples of objective culture are, “social, economic, political, and linguistic systems”,

whereas subjective culture refers to the "learned and shared patterns of beliefs, behaviors, and values of groups of interacting peoples" (p. 2-3). He deems subjective cultural exchanges are more likely linked to intercultural competence (Bennett, 1998). Based on the finding that students who learn about their partner's subjective culture and denounce the "typical" ethnic person, we can conclude that they are no longer looking at their conversation partner as a stereotype but rather as a person who has "human universals" and a unique personality.

As I mentioned earlier, most students interviewed said that there is no "typical" U.S. or international student or person; however, the few who did answer differently answered the following way. Ming Ue was able to meet with her U.S. conversation partner about four times. The meetings were social events such as a football pep rally, a football game, the official first meeting between the conversation partners at the Center, and at a regular Friday afternoon get together at one of the centers. Because of the social nature of a sporting event and a first official meeting, we can assume not much was shared on an intimate level. I am willing to believe that Ming Ue and her partner never got to know each other's subjective culture. So when Ming Ue says that her partner is like that of a typical American, she is justifying that by the objective culture that she knows her partner by. Ming Ue indicates that her partner likes fast food and football and has a part-time job. Fast food and football are U.S. American stereotypes and Ming Ue connects her partner to these because she was partaking in this culture with her partner.

Then Ming Ue notices the cultural societal difference between the U.S. and her home country of China, "I feel like there's huge differences, when I was in China we don't have a lot of part-time jobs and but like all the American people have like part time jobs I feel (laughs)." Because her partner worked part-time jobs here in the U.S. and Ming Ue didn't in China, she was able to make that statement work for her. It's not that Ming Ue and her partner did not want to get to know each other better, but their schedules became hectic so they saw each other less frequently. However, they would correspond to one another through a popular social networking site. Still, even though they are communicating with one another once in awhile, it is not enough to form a strong friendship. Chen (1995) explains the situation, "High uncertainty, due to lack of knowledge about each other, not only makes it more difficult for intercultural dyads to

share topics, but it also becomes natural for them to share less" (p. 468). This happened as Ming Ue and her partner stopped meeting with one another face-to-face and communicated via the Internet. We can conclude that without getting to know another person's subjective culture, partners are more apt to continue to think in the realm of objective culture, in this case stereotypes.

In conclusion to the analysis on stereotypes, it can be said that when participants understand one another, they no longer view their conversation partner as a stereotype and they are able to view them as an individual. Getting to know someone means getting to know more than their objective culture. The level of subjective culture varies for everyone but as Bennett (1998) posits, intercultural communication is most successful when subjective culture is exchanged. Yet Bennett (1998) would also consider a possible alternative explanation that would take into account the possibility that the "understanding of one another" was a false sense or even a test of foresight that was specifically observed to confirm a presumption. However, despite the problematic nature of stereotypes, he does concede that they are necessary in the field of intercultural communication because of their ability to wield cultural generalizations (Bennett, 1998). With this knowledge, it is suggested that further studies should be done to examine the role of subjective culture in breaking stereotypes.

Table 4. *Individual Study Participants*

Single Interviewed Conversation Partners

NAME	GENDER	NATIONALITY	PARTNER (NOT INTERVIEWED)	PROGRAM
*Abe	Male	Chinese	Male U.S. non-traditional student	CEP
Ashur	Male	Syrian	Middle-aged U.S. local couple	GPP
Becca	Female	U.S. American	Female Korean graduate student	GPP
*Victoria	Female	U.S. American	Male Saudi Arabian student	CEP
**Marge	Female	U.S. American	Male Colombian student	CEP
**Mike	Male	U.S. American	Male Columbian student	CEP

* Abe and Victoria have participated in one or both of these programs before and have had previous conversation partners that at times, they reference in their interviews.

** Marge and Mike are married and live and work in the local community. They request one conversation partner together.

Ideally, I wanted all participants and their partners to be interviewed. However, due to varying circumstances only two conversation partner pairs were interviewed (see Table 3), the rest were individual conversation participants whose partners were not available or unresponsive (see above Table). The study was conducted during the summer so some partners were out of town, some partners had moved back to their home countries because they had graduated, and some participants did not return my email. Future recommendations for a qualitative study would be to collect data when the university is in full session, either the fall or the spring semesters. Also, meeting with the conversation partners during one of their meetings, that way the researcher can make contact with both participants and set up interview dates to combat the non-response to email requests.

Cultural Philosophy

One of the ways intercultural communication is engaged is through the use and modification of the initial cultural philosophy that the participant brings to the program. The findings show that every person had a perspective on why they wanted to participate. International and U.S. students/community members shared in these perspectives.

Premise 1: Humans act according to the meanings they have for things (Blumer, 1986). Ashur derived his meaning of U.S. friendships from a culmination of American media throughout childhood and more recently from a U.S. graduate school orientation conference about U.S. culture. He explains what he was told at the conference: “American people like friends. You [an international student] are a friend but there is always this distance, they will not make you very close.”

Premise 2: Meanings are drawn from social interactions with others (Blumer, 1986). This did not deter Ashur, instead it challenged him even more to connect with U.S. people and challenge the conference statement. Ashur believes that some people “build this distance,” but he also believes that “if you work hard and if you explain yourself better,” you will have a good friend.

Premise 3: Meanings are readjusted through an interpretive process to be able to communicate with that person on the meaning at hand (Blumer, 1986). Through social interaction with his conversation couple, Ashur was able to revise the meanings he had for U.S. friendship culture. Ashur points to many reasons why he became such good friends with his conversation couple. The couple had background knowledge of his geographical region and continued seeking information. Another reason he believes the friendship went so well was when they were discussing issues that were controversial or could be debated, they could approach the discussions on neutral ground. So no matter what they believed to be true, they approached it without bias. Ashur explains:

Being neutral, this is the most important thing. If you want to be biased, no discussion will happen at all ‘cause from the beginning he [your partner] will be very strict and defending his point of view. But if you listen to the [inaudible] and try discussing things slowly and from points of interest that doesn’t make the other guy feel bad or feel [inaudible] this is how discussions should work I think. ...In Arabic my father always says [to] me that if you are in circle don’t try to

pass the circle, try to extend the circle, sooo, the same works in discussions you know.

Up to now, findings have shown that cultural philosophy is an underpinning of the ways in which students and community members communicate with people from different cultures, which are constantly being reevaluated through social interactions.

We can conclude that initial and continued interest and approach of one another's culture can have a strong influence on the level of intercultural communication being shared. In this case, it was when both parties expressed interest in another's region, language, and culture as well as being able to communicate about many difficult topics by being neutral on the subject.

Stating Cultural Differences-Cultural Differentiation

Another type of intercultural communication found between participants in the conversation partner programs is the process and communication of comparing cultural differences. The following example illustrates how conversation partners must adjust their meanings for certain topics, how strategies for intercultural communication came into play so that a relationship could be started, and how cultural differences affect relationships.

Premise 1 Humans act according to the meanings they have for things (Blumer, 1986). Being from different cultures, Victoria and her conversation partner have different meanings for many aspects of their objective culture. The differences that posed the most challenges to the formation of their relationship were gender status and expectations. When asked about connecting with her partner Victoria explains:

Umm, that can be difficult, especially in this situation with my most recent conversation partner. He, like I said at the beginning, he was very difficult to have a conversation with because we disagreed on so many levels, particularly when it came to gender status.

Premise 2: Meanings are drawn from the social interactions with others (Blumer, 1986). Once Victoria and her partner realized the differences in meanings they had regarding this topic, they were then able to learn the meanings their partner held. Patton (2002) points out that similar categories of understanding that give meaning to students'

interactions are called *adjustment techniques*. One of the adjustment techniques that Victoria and her partner used to communicate with one another in the beginning was with “easy conversation,” such as the weather and aspects of the city they both live in. When they felt more comfortable, the conversations moved into linguistics, which then led into sharing personal stories, experiences and aspirations. Other adjustment techniques that were used while engaging in intercultural communication were having other people around and in on the conversation to hear others’ perspectives. They would also meet for short periods of time or end the meeting earlier if either of them was getting frustrated or uncomfortable. Victoria explains:

We both sort of had to compromise and we did that by being patient, only meeting for you know certain amounts of time, when the conversation got tense we knew that we should pause and like reevaluate and come back to it another day. We tried changing the subject a couple times, which was helpful, but difficult because his English skills were not as good as they are now. Just having other people involved too so that you can have the conversation bounce off of multiple people instead of just two, I found that to be very helpful to have a group conversation that way if things sort of died out you had another conversation topic to go off of.

Premise 3: Meanings are readjusted through an interpretive process to be able to communicate with that person on the meaning at hand (Blumer, 1986). The social interactions between Victoria and her conversation partner led them to modify their meanings through an interpretive process. In Victoria’s case, the interpretive process meant that she could better understand her partner’s background and how her partner perceived aspects of each of their cultures. Even though she had her own meanings for gender status, she readjusted herself using the techniques previously mentioned to communicate with her partner and her partner’s meaning on this particular topic and from what she tells me, her partner did the same.

Before effectively communicating they had to decipher the meanings each one had for the same word, concept, or ideal. Through social interaction they learned one another’s meanings so that they could now understand where the other one was coming from. The interpretive process allowed them to modify the meanings and made them their own. Keep in mind these new modified meanings may still not align with their

partner's meanings, but the two different environments or "worlds" as Blumer (1986) would say, have been communicated to each other. We can conclude that adjustment techniques can assist in increased understanding; however, even though the partner has understood a meaning, this does not mean the partner will make that meaning his or her own.

Stating Cultural Differences-Cultural Identity

Lie (2003) explains *cultural identity* as common definitions and a system of symbols known to all in that culture. Individuals must relate back to one of their known cultures: "A cultural identity at the individual level is derived from a cultural identity at a group (community, region, nation) level" (Lie, 2003, p. 52). A blend of cultural and individual distinction is expressed in the following example. When coming into a program that incorporates different cultural interaction, each person is likely to identify with the culture they feel most comfortable representing. The philosophy behind this choice stems from how people want to be identified within their cultural realms. Abe, a student from China, related very well to the Chinese students on campus but did not necessarily want to be only recognized as a Chinese student. He posits three categorical distinctions of student identities: U.S., international, and Chinese. There are three categories to him because he is studying in the U.S., which means the word international stands for all countries other than the U.S., China is specifically one of those other countries. The following example takes us through the thought process of a student deciding on how and which cultural identity to portray at the U.S. university he attends. The question under consideration is: how does cultural identity affect the engagement of intercultural communication between him and his conversation partner?

Premise 1: Humans will behave according to the meanings they have for things (Blumer, 1986). Abe is a Chinese student studying in the U.S. who prefers to be seen by others as an international student not just a Chinese student. Abe explains:

I think I need conversation partner and I need to umm meet more and more, meet as many international students as possible. Because in my view on one side there are American students on the other side it's international students. Although Chinese students are a lot on this campus I don't think I have to be, I think I have

to behave in the way international students behave, not like, *not only like* Chinese students. Chinese student always like to get together, we share the same culture, it's very easy for us to communicate but I think this circle of group, this circle of communication is very small compared to other students their social circle. I think we need to break this circle and step forward to the bigger culture. That's it, yeah.

Interviewer: So what you are saying is that you can identify with the Chinese students that are here and also but maybe (Abe: yeah) rather be fit into an international student?

Abe: Yeah, um hmm.

Abe sees a difference between the Chinese culture and the “international culture”. He sees the “international culture” as encompassing all other cultures besides the one he is in at the time.

Premise 2: Meanings are drawn from the social interactions with others (Blumer, 1986). Abe socially interacts with peers and professors from his department as well as his U.S. conversation partner and other Chinese students. Through this social interaction with many different types of people, he has found that he would like to be identified as an international student. Abe also finds it difficult to communicate with U.S. students and feels he has more in common and a better time communicating with other international students:

Their [the U.S. students'] English are quite beyond our [speaking for the other Chinese and/or international students] level so when they talk to us we have to carefully choose the subject [inaudible]. When they discuss politics or umm for example entertainment things I'm not ahh, able to understand all of them, only a few of them. Umm, and I think it's easier for me to talk to the non-U.S. friends because we're all internationals, maybe the experience staying outside the home country is something to share.

Through daily interactions with all types of people, Abe finds that he relates better to international friends than he does with U.S. friends. However, Abe's first interaction with a U.S. American was his conversation partner, a non-traditional student in his 50's whom Abe connected with on various levels. Abe explains:

He is the first American I really deeply contact with, so my first impression about American people was very very positive, umm, but after I have communicated with other American people I realize he is one of the nicest guys among American people.

Abe did not find other Americans who connected with him as much as his conversation partner did, especially among the younger U.S. students. Abe has observed the way U.S. undergraduate students think about certain ideals compared with how graduate international students think of certain things, for instance, having fun or working hard, and finds them to be mutually exclusive to his own thoughts on the subject. Abe explains:

Sometimes they are fine, the freshman U.S. young students, to us but umm, in general when we discuss, our international students, we find we prefer to contact, to stay with those older guys experienced adults, but for those freshman, you know I do TA work and I know the American students are not very hard-working, they like to play very much but they don't always pay attention to their study. So when we think this situation we make some analogy we think that American students don't pay attention to their studies so how can they pay attention to this conversation partner program?

Abe derives the ideals of U.S. undergraduates, especially freshman, from his social interactions with them and finds that he does not relate with them on the level that he is seeking.

Premise 3: Meanings are readjusted through an interpretive process to be able to communicate with that person on the meaning at hand (Blumer, 1986). Abe modified his meaning of cultural identity by seeking to be known as an international student instead of just a Chinese student. We can conclude that students can decide on how they want to be culturally identified in a host country. Due to lack of common interests, students may prefer to communicate with certain types of cultural groups rather than others. There is not enough evidence to state if cultural identity affects how one interacts with others, however there is evidence to suggest that cultural identity does affect whom one prefers to connect with. In Abe's case he feels he is communicating with not only U.S. conversation partners but also non-Chinese international peers.

Research Question 2-*Based on the engagement of intercultural communication, what is the relationship to global competency?*

In discussing research question 1 above, I discuss the process and engagement of intercultural communication. Turning to Research Question 2, I discuss the relationship on global competency based on the engagement of intercultural communication. As previously mentioned in the literature review, global competency is a culmination of awareness and understanding of one's self and other culture(s) to communicate and function in a different society and culture (Fantini, 2001; Hunter et al., 2006; Romano, 2002). Intercultural communication is one key aspect to becoming globally competent (Hunter et al., 2006). Two themes emerge from the findings on how intercultural communication relates to global competency: *self-awareness* and *cultural awareness*. In addition, the themes were found to overlap and connect to each another. In research question 2, the analysis and discussion section use the symbolic interaction premises, however, complexity of global competency does not lend itself to a strict outline structure as the previous research question did. The reason being, participants, when interacting with one another, experience more than one competency. Therefore, I feel it is important to view the examples through all of the competencies he/she is going through, rather than one at a time. Consequently, the premises are not stated forthright; instead they are woven into the analysis. The following examples examine the themes relating to global competency and the interrelations between competencies.

Cultural and Self Awareness-Challenging stereotypes

Stereotypes were discussed in the *individual distinction* sub-section from research question 1. In that section, the participants were processing the notion of individual vs. stereotype and getting to know their conversation partners as individuals, detaching the stereotypes that go along with them. In the following section, participants reflect on the benefits of challenging and breaking the stereotypes and how they relate that to global competency. In the following examples, participants reflect on how they and others can become more open and accepting of other cultures and in doing so broaden their global perspectives.

Brandon views the breaking of stereotypes as one way to learn about international students and teach them about himself and his culture:

It allows you to understand somebody else and where they come from which is like a big part you know, a lot of people may not understand something so they're quick to judge other people based on what hear and stereotypes so as far as what we can actually learn, we can learn a lot from other people, other people's cultures so they can also learn from us, they can be tolerant, they may have a view of us and I think those stereotypes are broken when we interact with each other, the more interaction we have with each other the better it is for everybody as far as being able to just know the person and not know the stereotypes that are attached to those people.

Brandon focuses on the benefits of international students breaking stereotypes they have of the U.S.; Victoria reflects on how time and interaction can help people "see" each other:

...some stereotypes may or may not be true, but having a personal interaction with somebody makes a world of a difference, you don't have to operate based on those stereotypes. A lot of times it's easier on how the human brain works, when you actually sit down and take the time to get to know somebody and you can see change happen.

Victoria focuses on changes in perceptions and perspectives while Megan when asked the same question focuses on cultural awareness and personal reflection:

To learn more about yourself!!! Also to learn that there are other ways of thinking and acting and one or the other is not necessarily correct or false or better or worse, if you understand the other you gain a better understanding of the familiar.

Through social interaction and self-reflection, participants have modified their meanings on stereotypes. They were able to realize what they have learned about their culture and another culture and state it in a way that will help others become more globally competent.

The reflections of the participants are current with the research on the topic of global competency. Hunter et al.'s (2006) definition of global competency states certain

characteristics that stand out in globally competent people such as, “having an open mind while actively seeking to understand cultural norms and expectation of others, leveraging this gained knowledge to interact, communicate and work effectively outside one’s environment” (p. 270). The reflections from the participants offer useful information that continues to validate the research in this area. We can agree with previous research that part of being globally competent is an awareness of other culture(s) and one’s own culture that contributes to the ability to communicate empathically and effectively.

Cultural Awareness-Ashur’s story

Ashur’s conversation partners, U.S. community members Adam and Jodie, plan on moving to a Middle Eastern country to study language and become immersed in the culture. Since Ashur is from the Middle East, he helped them learn about the cultural differences and how to transition into the different culture. According to Ashur, moving to a very different culture had Jodie, “worried about how to deal with women back home [the Middle East], how she should act and you know.” Jodie knew a few things about the culture from her husband but Ashur said she wanted similar information from multiple sources to feel more comfortable. So Ashur and Jodie sat down and had a long discussion, Ashur noted:

I told her some things and I said look I need to be fair and talk to you frankly and I said many things that I know she may not like but she should hear that because that is how things work you know?...She got more confident and more comfortable... she told me to teach her [how to wear a hijab] but she doesn’t need that, my mother never put hijab, my sisters don’t, but if you go to some very conservative areas you should show that type of respect, so I showed her how to do that and it’s good.

Through social interaction Jodie was able to derive meaning from cultural differences she knew little about. With that new knowledge she felt more inclined to step out of her comfort zone. Ashur noted the global competency that she was gaining:

It’s good because she’s American and she wants to go to that area and she’s learning how to respect people there and this natural impact I think she got it not

just from reading but from maybe my explanations to her, and how [inaudible] works and how people respect each other, live with each other.

Through intercultural communication, Ashur feels that he has been able to influence and assure his conversation partners, especially Jodie. His efforts were justified when he got a call from Jodie a week later and she said she had been reading a book by an American author living in the Middle East and the things she was reading about were matching up with what Ashur and her husband had been telling her. Information becomes more plausible when multiple sources relay similar information. We can conclude that when multiple sources relay similar information it becomes more plausible to accept the information that leads a person to becoming more globally competent.

Ashur was able to be an influencing factor in Jodie's concept of a culture she didn't know much about. In this case, Jodie's meanings for culture were modified through social interaction with her conversation partner. The knowledge Ashur shared made her more comfortable, enough so that she was assured about the fact she and her husband were going to transition relatively smoothly into a country and culture they had never experienced before. This is a testament to being globally competent, the ability to function in another country and culture (Fantini, 2001; Hunter et al., 2006; Romano, 2002). But the true test of their increased global competency will not come until they actually enter the new environment.

Cultural Awareness-Connecting through differences

Mike and Marge are community members who take a conversation partner each semester because they find the experience to be a good chance to make lasting connections and show what their culture has to offer. The following example describes the global perspective that the couple work from and want to share with their conversation partner and other international students. Marge describes what they can offer to their partner and the lasting exchange that she hopes they have:

I just think (says it in a loud whisper-like she is revealing a secret) you have to reach out when you can and I just think [our city] is so good about that, I mean you have such an opportunity in this little burg in [our state] to reach out and meet people and learn things. [It's] just a part of who we are, we've always got

somebody from somewhere as a part of our life and I hope Saul will remain part of our lives. I have no doubt that I will see him one day.

Mike and Marge invite their conversation partner, Saul, to dinner parties, backyard barbeques, and lunch outings where their partner has a chance to observe and participate in the local customs. The attitude of Mike and Marge is an example of how the Global Partner Program Coordinator describes community member enthusiasm, “the group of people that we get from the community have been a part of this or similar programs or maybe hosted an exchange student.” She goes on to say that the experience is positive and enjoyable so they continue the outreach.

Mike and Marge reiterated many times throughout the interview their awareness of the global perspective. They find the differences in their conversation partner to be the interest in the conversation, however they can take those differences and link them to things they and others can relate to. Marge explains:

He was worried because [his country] gets such a bad rap in the media, you know it's nothing but drugs and violence and several times in our conversations he has asked us well what's our perception of his country. He was worried that he would be viewed as drugs and violence. Yeah, you know, it's nothing more farther from the truth but...yeah I mean every, you know, we're all so much the same, it matters not what country we come from, we want the same things, we all have the same...he can't wait to get back to his wife and his baby. I know how hard it's been for him the last few weeks, you know, [he] found out [his wife] was pregnant, so eager to be home with her.

When they communicate through the cultural differences they are able to step back and view their conversation partner as a human being first and relate to what the Cultural Exchange Program Coordinator describes as the human universals. To Mike and Marge, differences seem to be a catalyst to understand the similarities between them, for instance, they'll say “his culture is not that different to ours,” because he's traveled to the United States before, even to this town before, he has relatives here, “so there's not a whole lot of blank staring at one another.” Which means to me that they both have something of common interest to talk about, relatives, the city, the country. Ashur also agrees with Mike and Marge and has this to say about similarities and differences:

...There is not that much difference in us and when you look at the core principles we are very similar and this is very important [inaudible] because...we begin to think we are too much different but...all simple people [inaudible] similar hand. They have similar perspectives in life; you know, work hard and love your family, love your friends and be a good [inaudible].

Mike, Marge, and Ashur give examples that focus on the human universals that are common to us all. However, global competency is not just about finding the similarities between one another, it is also learning about the differences and accepting those differences and learning the meanings for things of the other culture. Once the findings of this study were shared with the participants, the Global Partner Program Coordinator responded to this particular analysis as follows:

I just did training for our staff on the Developmental Model [of Intercultural Sensitivity from M.J. Bennett (1993)] and talked a lot about stages and examples, and this 'we are all the same and human' isn't the case for developing global understanding because it minimizes cultural differences/similarities and the richness of learning and development that they bring into becoming globally competent.

As much as Mike and Marge are accepting of other cultures, there was not enough evidence to conclude that they modified their interpretations of their partner's meanings into their own, as the third premise of symbolic interaction states (Blumer, 1986). Furthermore, to be globally competent a person needs to be able to successfully function and communicate in another culture. Since this study is limited in the examination of that aspect of global competency, we must base our analysis on how participants deal with cultural difference of their conversation partner.

When pressed, the differences Mike and Marge mentioned were that their partner lives in a different country and that here in the U.S. he doesn't have a car. The latter difference affected Mike and Marge because they had not taken that into consideration when they asked him to meet them at a restaurant across town. Later in the interview Mike brings it up again, "we had no idea, we basically make him drive in another country and find his way to this place, we just assumed he had a car...we felt sooo bad, of course we drove him back..." Through intercultural experience, Mike and Marge have expanded

their view of cultural assumptions and will keep in mind the car situation with their next conversation partner. We can conclude that similarities are found when people look for them and that no matter how much one knows about cultural differences, there will be something new to learn. That “something new” that is learned is part of becoming globally competent. In closing, Fantini (2001) has a statement for intercultural competency that I believe can be used with global competency as well, “One is always in the process of ‘becoming,’ and one is never completely ‘interculturally competent’” (p. 29).

Cultural and Self Awareness-Broadening the global perspective

The next example shows how intercultural communication can broaden the global perspective. Becca, a U.S. student, is influenced by the sharing of her partner’s culture and the ability to piece together memories of her childhood in a culture similar to her partner’s. The following example illustrates many competencies working together to broaden her global perspective.

Becca had such a faint memory of her childhood in a different county that when her partner began explaining the culture it triggered Becca’s memories and she was able to modify them through adult eyes. Becca explained how her partner has influenced her. Becca can remember bits and pieces of culture when she lived in an Asian country with her family as a young child while her father was in the military, “I have a memory of people there, but I don’t really remember that much so I have just these glimpses of what people are like there and they’re very like childish interpretations of what people are like.” Before Becca met her conversation partner she states that she did not know many people from Asia so she’s been basing her meanings or understandings of Asia from her childhood and various accounts growing up.

As Becca socially interacts with her conversation partner, she learns meanings of culture through their interactions. She doesn’t have much previous knowledge to compare it with so much of what her partner says about the culture Becca will take at “face value”. Becca explains:

She taught me a lot about culture there and things that I might have like judged as weird and now I kind of look at it like, oh, well that makes sense it works for them over there and if I lived over there it would work for me. You know?

From the wording of her statement we can infer that if Becca had heard about a cultural difference in Asia before meeting her conversation partner she “might have [like] judged [it] as weird”.

Since communicating with her conversation partner, Becca has not only modified but also expanded her meaning or understanding of the Asian culture. She is able to reflect on how cultural differences are relative to regions. Her mentality is one of, “what works for you may or may not work for me and that’s all right.” She explains:

So definitely taught me a lot about Asia and I guess like if you want to look at it from a broader perspective, taught me about like looking at people like anything that’s new and realizing that it’s like that for a reason. Umm if I meet someone from like Serbia I could be like oh, they seem a little bit different, but I’m sure it’s because in their culture that’s what works for them.

There is not just one global competency that fits Becca’s experience, she has added to her background knowledge of another culture, she empathizes with other cultures, respects differences, and has self reflected on how she fits into her culture. We can conclude that global competencies are not just single factors that stand-alone, they are notions that are interwoven into one another, affecting one another.

Coordinators’ Perspectives

This section describes how the coordinators of the cross-cultural programs approach and foster intercultural communication in their programs. Furthermore, the coordinators share their experiences of internationalization efforts that they are a part of on the university campus. I include this information so that the programs can be seen through a holistic perspective and the connection between student affairs and literature on internationalization efforts of U.S. campuses come to a crossroads.

According to the coordinators, partners experience personal challenges while engaging with one another. One of the coordinators’ responsibilities is to foster

intercultural communication between the conversation partners. The GPP Coordinator explains intercultural communication as it underpins the program's theoretical point of view:

We believe that there is a deeper and more meaningful knowledge that comes with intercultural communication that uses both general and specific culture issues. If a person has intercultural competence, they claim to know how to engage cross-culturally.

Likewise, the coordinators of Cultural Exchange Partners (CEP) explain intercultural communication from the practical point of view:

...make them [the partners] aware that yeah there's going to be cultural differences and a lot of similarities but to be aware that we come from different perspectives and cultures and to be open to that and to be aware that differences will emerge and don't get too overly sensitive and emotional.

Fostering intercultural communication and internationalization efforts

The next section explains the logistics of the programs with specific focus on the fostering of meaningful engagement of intercultural communication. For example, CEP has just incorporated a weekly get together at their Center. The regular weekly meetings consist of drink, snack, presentations, and music--things that make for a welcoming atmosphere for partners with busy schedules. The groundwork is now laid for progression into deeper conversation topics. One of the CEP Coordinators explains: "we try to foster that to know where they have something in common you know just in general and then from there I think they jump from how maybe they do things in different cultures."

As stated earlier, the programs pair students from different countries with U.S. student/community members for the purpose of sharing culture and building friendship. The programs help international students become more aware and involved on the campus and in the community. Another benefit is the transitional assistance international students receive from their partners. The programs also benefit U.S. students by exposing them to a different culture without having to travel. Peripheral findings show that participants join conversation partner programs for their *own individual interests*

and/or for *social exchange*. The U.S. student also has the opportunity to learn about their own culture as well as their partner's culture. One of the CEP Coordinators shares an example where U.S. students are challenged to think about their culture and language:

...a lot of Americans that come in [to the Center], they'll be trying to explain a grammar point or an idea that's in English and a student will have a question about why this phrase is, why is the structure of the phrase like that and most Americans will have a moment of clarity were they say 'I have no clue why my language does this!'

Upon analysis, the student is reflecting on how to explain something taken for granted in the English language. The question, "why are things done this way?" is what the coordinators want all participants to cogitate on. When this question is pondered, students begin the process of learning about themselves and their culture.

The CEP coordinators are noticing a change in the global awareness of students and one attributes this to the competency certificate that has recently been initiated campus-wide. One of the coordinators explains:

Honestly, it's [the program's] going to get bigger and bigger because our university with its [certificate program] is starting but I think it's going to grow [with] this whole obvious awareness finally the university is getting it, getting more globally competent. Intercultural competence is a scale that's necessary now you know it's not just like an elective...everybody, everybody need[s] awareness of the world.

Now that global competency is catching on, there is much to be done to lay a strong foundation of internationalization.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Summary and Insights

The study examines the engagement of intercultural communication between international and U.S. students/community members and its relationship pertaining to global competency. Although the conceptual framework is not commonly used in this field, the symbolic interaction lens is advantageous to examine the problem through a different light. New information or unknown perspectives are likely to show up when examination occurs through a different theory or approach. Findings illustrate intercultural communication as a process and indicate the influences on global competence on the participants, more specifically how it can positively increase awareness of a person's global competence.

The first part of the research question, how participants engage in intercultural communication, has produced findings that are process-oriented. In other words, upon analysis of the data, a logical progression emerged. Data illustrate that when interacting with others from a different culture, participants rely on their cultural meanings for things, but at the same time they interpret new ways of doing things. In addition, findings show that when participants have the opportunity to really know one another on a more personal level, they focus more on the cultural specifics, finding more things in common, encompassing and even embracing the differences between one another. The "more personal level" or feeling comfortable with one another has various meanings for every partnership. In some cases, time was the important factor; another set of partners focus on the qualities that most humans find important and connect through that notion. However, if the partnership doesn't reach that comfortable level for whatever reason, the relationship is based on only what they know through objective culture, and they tend to view one another through cultural stereotypes. People have cultural identities and according to this study, they can choose which culture they want to be associated with, when in a certain culture and around various groups of people. Further research should be done on more participants to compare similar cultural identity perceptions.

The research focus is on U.S. and international students' intercultural exchanges as they converse and become friends with one another. In my study, I try to understand the meanings students make when they converse with people of different cultures. My international participant sample size is four students and out of that, three of them were Chinese. It would be naïveté to think that this did not affect results, however, the researcher can use these results as rigorous and reliable data. Rather than expecting similar results if this study were done using other international students, qualitative researchers do not think about reliability in the traditional sense but rather that the results are dependable and consistent within the data collected (Merriam, 1998).

Another insight gained is a recurrent underpinning of a continual process of intercultural exchanges that build meanings off of one another. Furthermore, the intercultural exchanges engage students and community members in an interpretive process that modifies their original views of international perspectives. Likewise, I think that it is important to note that how students communicate across cultures will also show how they are *not* communicating. More studies can be done to increase the level of intercultural communication in university students and how to get students to communicate effectively with one another.

The second research question illustrates how global competency may be influenced when partners communicate cross-culturally. "With global citizenship and civic engagement as core missions in higher education, intercultural competence becomes central across the disciplines" (J.M. Bennett & Salonen, 2007, p. 50) and intercultural communication is part of that intercultural competence. The findings show that students and community members process aspects of global competency. The two types of global competence that participants process when asked about what they learned from their partner(s) and the benefits of understanding someone different are self-awareness and cultural awareness. Hunter et al., (2006) states that, "cross-cultural awareness and interaction are also key aspects of becoming globally competent..." (p.275). Indeed, the influence on global competency as it relates to the engagement of intercultural communication of conversation partners is the learning of another's culture, open communication between one another, and a process of self-reflection on one's own culture. Of course, we cannot claim that there is a causal link between intercultural

communication and global competency. However, these results suggest the possibility of an important relationship between the two, and raises some possible ways in which cultural competency may be influenced through intercultural communication.

Implications for practice

In the study, some U.S. American students and community members stated that they were able to actively self-reflect on their cultural relativism for the first time. Within the conversation partners, the international students will most likely have already examined their cultural relativism because they are currently functioning in a foreign country. U.S. students who have not been abroad or conversed with a person from another culture are realizing their cultural position in society and in the world. From this study and my work with the conversation programs, I can say that the U.S. students and community members who have had a positive experience in one of these programs are enthusiastic about sharing their experiences with others. Cross-cultural coordinators should take into account the successful partnerships and hone in on how U.S. participants can be utilized in a sustainable manner. U.S. conversation partner participants have many experiences to share and for the most part when talking with them they become “cultural navigators,” giving mini lessons and tips of what to do and even more importantly what not to do. In another sense they become the cultural liaison between their partner’s culture and the U.S. person potentially interested in other cultures. Besides, many people would rather hear real-life stories from people like themselves than “do-and-don’t” lectures from a PowerPoint. Conversation partners who have been meeting regularly and are feeling successful in their friendship should invite a newly matched conversation pair out with them so that the new pair can see how valuable and enriching the friendship can be.

The cross-cultural coordinators can facilitate some group events as well, that way there is a feeling of camaraderie within the program and it becomes a support system for those who are struggling. Another strategy that coordinators may want to think about is giving a training to the students and community members prior to program participation. This way the possible participants feel more vested in the program and know what they are getting into before they are assigned to a partner and become a “no-show.” These

propositions can apply to other similarly functioning programs at other universities that seek to provide their students and community with the tools necessary to communicate with people from other cultures.

This study contributes to the body of knowledge by the in-depth analysis of intercultural conversations within cross-cultural programs on a U.S. university campus. As described in the program description portion of the study the two cross-cultural programs have similar overarching goals of assisting the transition of international students into the U.S. culture and fostering ways of intercultural communication between cultures. However, their objectives are different because their international student demographics are different. Nonetheless, I have outlined some program objectives specific to the conversation partner program that will assist both of the programs within this study. Based on the information obtained, I posit that cross-cultural programs should incorporate the following recommendations for increased engagement of intercultural communication:

- Rigorous selection in partner matching to ensure an interest-based initial relationship that the partners can start from.
- Fostering and accountability from the coordinator(s) of the conversation partner program to ensure that intercultural communication between partners is enriching.
- Education of participants on intercultural communication so they know how and what to look for when communicating.

Sustainability-The biggest challenge is not to force students into learning about other cultures but to entice them into wanting to know more. A student will easily lose sight of the personal and professional benefits of intercultural experiences if it becomes “just another requirement” on top of everything else they are trying to accomplish for graduation. I think the key is to entice the audience with what they can get out of it: friendship, cultural experiences from others and from themselves. If they don’t know what they’re missing they’re not likely to go out and find it. I believe the conversation partner programs should continue to be self-selecting and I make these recommendations on ways to encourage students to participate:

- Tap into students’ interests in world culture, affairs, and issues

- Market to incoming students who are looking for ways to engage in campus activities and events
- Utilize the skills and experiences from students who have experienced other cultures abroad

These recommendations are ways of strengthening the internationalization efforts on university campuses. If not implemented already, universities should consider cross-cultural programs, like the ones examined in my study, which focus on intercultural exchanges. It is apparent from this study and previous research that to be globally competent one needs to have awareness of cultural differences and be able to communicate with people from different cultures (Hunter et al., 2006; Romano, 2002), which is what the cross-cultural programs foster. It cannot be denied that graduates need to be well equipped with the cultural competencies or skills needed to be successful in a diverse world. According to researchers in the fields of international and higher education, knowledge on this topic is structured on the notion that international education helps to understand the way our world is shifting and will be inevitable in the times ahead.

APPENDIX A

HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL LETTER

Note: Copied from email.

Office of the Vice President For Research Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742 (850) 644-8673 · FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 4/13/2009

To: Melissa Evenson

Address: 1627 Marcia Ave Tallahassee, Fl 32310

Dept.: EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS AND POLICY STUDIES

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research

The Impact of Internationally based programs on U.S. Student International
Perspective

The application that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and two members of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be Expedited per 45 CFR § 46.110(6) and has been approved by an expedited review process. The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required. If you submitted a proposed consent form with your application, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting research subjects. If the project has not been completed by 4/8/2010 you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the Committee. You are advised that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report, in writing any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others. By copy of this memorandum, the Chair of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations. This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446. Cc: Thomas Luschei, Advisor HSC No. 2009.2060

APPENDIX B

FSU BEHAVIORAL CONCENT FORM-PARTICIPANTS

Title of Research: Intercultural Communication within cross-cultural programs on a U.S. university campus

Researcher: Melissa Evenson

This study is conducted by Melissa Evenson, a Master's student in the Socio-cultural and International Development Education Studies program in the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL.

You are invited to be in a research study of university student intercultural viewpoints. You were selected as a possible participant because you met all of the sampling criteria. The criteria being: you are involved in an internationally focused program, in particular a program that matches international students/scholars with U.S. students/scholars/community members, and conversation partners have been meeting regularly for at least a semester. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Background Information:

There are international challenges that college graduates will have to face. Universities are seeing the economic benefits of internationalization and because of this are becoming increasingly competitive for students' accountability in the international dimension. Researchers conclude that the concept of internationalization in higher education is vague and more attention should be paid to the development of U.S. students' international perspectives. My research question is: *What is the impact of speaking to a person from a different culture and how do we process the meanings from conversation?* What do we take away from the experience?

Procedures:

This research study is designed to examine the experiences of participants in internationally focused programs. Melissa Evenson, a graduate student at the College of Education, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida, is conducting this study to learn more about the intercultural exchanges between two people of different cultures.

Participation in the study involves a one-hour interview and a short follow-up interview. The follow-up interview can be administered in person or via email. The interviews will be conducted at a setting that is mutually agreeable to the participant and the researcher. The interviews will be audio taped by the researcher and later transcribed for the purpose of data analysis.

Participation in this study also includes one to two observations of the conversation partner meeting. The researcher will observe the meeting at the participant's convenience.

The researcher is willing to share the findings with the participants upon request.

Risks and benefits of being in the Study:

Potential risks or discomforts include possible emotional feelings such as embarrassment when asked question during the interview.

The benefits to participation are possible reflections of conversations such as increased self-awareness and cultural empathy.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private and confidential to the extent permitted by law. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. Tape recordings that are made will only be accessed by the researcher and the transcriber(s) and will be used for educational purposes and erased nine months after the study is finished.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University. Each participant is free to withdraw consent and discontinue participation in this project at any time without prejudice from Florida State University.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Melissa Evenson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have a question later, please contact Melissa at melissaevenson@gmail.com or 863-557-3077 or student’s advisor, Dr. Thomas Luschei at tluschei@lsi.fsu.edu or 850-645-7198.

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 FSU IRB at 2010 Levy Street, Research Building B, Suite 276, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2742, or 850-644-8633, or by email at humansubjects@magnet.fsu.edu.

You will be offered a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

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

Signature

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX C

FSU BEHAVIORAL CONCENT FORM-COORDINATORS

Title of Research: Intercultural Communication within Cross Cultural Programs on a U.S. university campus

Researcher: Melissa Evenson

This study is conducted by Melissa Evenson, a Master's student in the Socio-cultural and International Development Education Studies program in the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Background Information:

There are international challenges that college graduates will have to face. Universities are seeing the economic benefits of internationalization and because of this are becoming increasingly competitive for students' accountability in the international dimension. Researchers conclude that the concept of internationalization in higher education is vague and more attention should be paid to the development of U.S. students' international perspectives. My research question is: *What is the impact of speaking to a person from a different culture and how do we process the meanings from conversation?* What do we take away from the experience?

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The researcher is willing to share the findings with the participants upon request.

Risks and benefits of being in the Study:

Potential risks or discomforts include possible emotional feelings such as embarrassment when asked question during the interview.

The benefits to participation are possible reflections of conversations such as increased self-awareness and cultural empathy.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private and confidential to the extent permitted by law. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. Tape recordings that are made will only be accessed by the researcher and the transcriber(s) and will be used for educational purposes and erased nine months after the study is finished.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University. Each participant is free to withdraw consent and discontinue participation in this project at any time without prejudice from Florida State University.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Melissa Evenson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have a question later, please contact Melissa at melissaevenson@gmail.com or 863-557-3077 or student’s advisor, Dr. Thomas Luschei at tluschei@lsi.fsu.edu or 850-645-7198.

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 FSU IRB at 2010 Levy Street, Research Building B, Suite 276, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2742, or 850-644-8633, or by email at humansubjects@magnet.fsu.edu.

You will be offered a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

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

Signature

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Participant Interview Questions:

1. Tell me about your FSU history.
2. How did you hear about the International Center program? Or why did you want to join International Friends Program (IFP)?
3. What do you learn from your partner?
4. Can you give me some examples of what you and your partner discuss when you meet?
5. How can you connect with your partner when he/she describes something that is foreign or new to you?
6. In the few discussions that you've had together do you feel you partner is an example of the typical American? Why or why not?
7. How does your IFP friend differ from your other friends?
8. Is it important to you to interact with (international/U.S.) students?
9. In what ways do international students influence U.S. students?
10. Was there something in your conversation that was said or done to make you act differently towards your partner?
11. What were your expectations coming into the program?
12. What did you get out of the program that you didn't expect?
13. What are the benefits of understanding someone different from you?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me that we have not covered?

Any additional thoughts?

Thank you for your time.

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR COORDINATORS

Interview questions for coordinators

1. What is the Center's definition of intercultural communication (I.C.)?
2. How are participants of IFP/Conversation Partners engaging in intercultural communication? (What does I.C. look like?)
3. Why do participants join?
4. What does one gain from the I.C. within this program? (Why is it important?)
5. From this university, which population(s) is most likely to join? (Is this university "standard" in this regard?)
6. What does the future hold for this program?

That is all the questions I have for you, is there anything else you would like to tell me that we have not covered?

Any additional thoughts?

Thank you for your time.

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BIOGRAPHICAL STETCH

Melissa Evenson was born in Fargo, North Dakota, the daughter of Robert and Debra Evenson. She attended North Dakota State College of Science in Wahpeton, ND and received a Liberal Arts degree, then transferred to Minnesota State University, Mankato, MN and received a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education. Her interest in teaching and cultural studies took her to Thailand where she taught workshops with fellow teachers for a summer. Upon returning she took a teaching position as an eighth grade reading teacher for three years in Okeechobee, FL. Her interest in multicultural and comparative education brought her to Florida State University where she is obtaining a Master's Degree in Socio-cultural and International Development Education Studies.