VIRTUALLY THERE:

EXAMINING A COLLABORATIVE ONLINE INTERNATIONAL LEARNING

PRE-DEPARTURE STUDY ABROAD INTERVENTION

BY

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Abstract

As more guided study abroad interventions move online and into a collaborative format, it is important to not only examine the influence of students' social interactions as related to their intercultural development and experiences in the interventions, but also understand which variables influenced the success of an intervention. The purpose of this study was to identify factors that influenced students' intercultural development and experiences in a collaborative online international learning pre-departure study abroad intervention. To explore these questions I designed a collaborative online international learning intervention for pre-departure study abroad students.

Pre-departure U.S. study abroad students and international students coming to study abroad in the U.S. attended an online, collaborative seminar together over the course of six weeks in the fall and five weeks in the spring. Garrison et al.'s (2000) Community of Inquiry model influenced the seminar design and data analysis. A mixed-methods approach was used to gather data needed to study the intervention outcomes. Data was obtained from: (1) a needs assessment; (2) pre and post IDI® scores from intervention and comparison groups; (3) focus groups; and (4) online discussions. The three forms of data analysis used in this study, the IDI®, Community of Inquiry framework, and phenomenological review of participants' text, provided a layered understanding of the research questions. Data analysis suggested that designing and

sustaining a successful Community of Inquiry, as well as a successful online collaborative

learning environment, is not without its challenges. This research demonstrated several technical

and social challenges of building a Community of Inquiry and how a redesign of an intervention

can influence outcomes. Several challenges of collaborative learning and creating online

communities identified in Computer-supported collaborative learning research were also

apparent in this study. Overall, this study underscored several variables that influence learning

outcomes and experiences within a collaborative online international learning intervention.

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Sweet is the melody, so hard to come by.
It's so hard to make every note bend just right.
You lay down the hours and leave not one trace,
But a tune for the dancing is there in its place.
(Iris Dement, 1994)[1]

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[1] Dement, I. (1994). Sweet is the melody [Recorded by Dement, I.]. On *My life* [CD]. Warner Bros.

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Chapter One: Introduction

A university study abroad experience, in the broadest sense, is an educational program that takes place outside the geographical boundaries of a student's academic country of origin (Kitsantas & Meyers, 2001). The Institute of International Education (IIE) (2011) reported that there has been a steady increase in the number of American university students studying abroad over the last 20 years. Since the 1989/1990 academic year, the number of students participating in study abroad programs has tripled. Increasing nearly four percent from the previous academic year, 270,604 university students participated in a study abroad program for academic credit during the 2009/2010 academic year (IIE, 2011).

Statement of the Research Problem

Education abroad professionals, individuals that facilitate such experiences, historically believed that study abroad participants automatically gained global competencies, such as intercultural communication skill, and become more culturally aware simply by being abroad (La Brack, 1994). Based on recent studies (Paige, Cohen, & Shively, 2004; Cohen, Paige, Shively, Emert, & Hoff, 2005; Ingraham & Petersen, 2004; Shaheen, 2004; Vande Berg, 2009; Vande Berg, Connor-Linton, & Paige, 2009), we now know that this is not the case. Education abroad professionals face a fundamental challenge when sending students to learn outside the country. The duality of study abroad is that it can be a source of tension and conflict as well as an enriching experience and opportunity for personal growth (Fennes & Hapgood, 1997). Cultural differences, values, beliefs, and norms, can lead to cross-cultural misinterpretations. These differences are factors that can not only impede communication, but also affect a person's ability to adapt cross-culturally, gain global competencies, and attain greater intercultural development. Study abroad participants need to receive guided education and training so that they may

successfully navigate new cultures, in addition to learning to recognize and understand their own cultural beliefs and values as related to their experiences abroad (Paige, 1993).

To mitigate the dualistic challenge of studying abroad some programs offer intercultural interventions pre, during, or after the study abroad experience. Access to a diverse set of technological tools has enabled more and more of these interventions to be offered online. Diverse in their curricula and use of technology, online interventions include GlobaLinks' Learning Abroad program on global citizen development, the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities course on global identities, Willamette-Bellarmine Universities' joint course on intercultural skills development, and the University of the Pacific School for International Studies' *What's Up With Culture* website, among others (GlobaLinks, 2012; University of Minnesota: Learning Abroad Center, 2012; Lou & Bosley, 2008; La Brack, 2003). Although several studies of online interventions explore changes in students' intercultural development, no study examines the influence of students' social interactions as related to their intercultural development and experiences in the online intervention (University of Minnesota: Learning Abroad Center, 2012; Lou & Bosley, 2008; Romero, 2005).

Purpose of the Study

This study was an exploration into a collaborative online international learning pre-departure study abroad intervention. The purpose of this study was to identify factors that influence pre-departure study abroad students' intercultural development and experiences in an online intervention. Understanding these factors on a deeper level will help education abroad professionals design more effective online interventions for pre-departure study abroad students. The research questions posed were: (a) what is the influence of a collaborative online international learning intervention on pre-departure study abroad students' intercultural

development; (b) how do social interactions influence pre-departure study abroad students'

experiences within the intervention; and (c) what are the affordances and constraints of

collaborative learning in an online, international intervention?

To explore these questions I designed a collaborative online international learning

intervention for pre-departure study abroad students. The intervention's academic themes

include study abroad preparedness and intercultural communication theories. Garrison,

Anderson, and Archer's (2000) Community of Inquiry model is used to guide the intervention

analysis. The goals of this study were to explore the influence of social interactions in a

collaborative online pre-departure intervention as related to students' intercultural development

and their experiences within the intervention, as well as to understand the affordances and

constraints of this type of intervention.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

To understand the need for this line of inquiry, an overview of intercultural development and outcome assessment is provided, as well as a summary of key studies on guided and online interventions. Print and online publications, primarily published after 2000, were reviewed. Articles were sourced from well-known peer-reviewed journals, such as the *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* the *Journal of Studies in International Education*, and *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*. NAFSA: The Association of International Educators, the education abroad professional organization's website, was also scanned for applicable webinars, training materials, and conference proceedings. Several older articles and doctoral dissertations were included to provide further context to the literature review.

There are few studies in the field of education abroad that examine technology and intercultural development or computer-supported collaborative learning (CSCL) within the field of education abroad. Literature from online learning and transnational classroom education provide necessary context to the technological challenges of collaborative online interventions, as well as how technology is being used to promote intercultural engagement. This research was obtained from *Computer Assisted Language Learning* and the *Journal of Research in International Education*, among others. Finally, research pertaining to CSCL draws on a growing body of research available in journals such as the *International Journal of Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning,* the *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, and *Educational Technology Research and Development*. The review ends with an examination of Garrison et al.'s (2000) Community of Inquiry model as a framework to analyze social experiences that influence intercultural development and the students' experiences in the online

environment, as well as why it is an appropriate theoretical framework to use when exploring the research questions.

Intercultural Development

Intercultural awareness is a process of growth and development that is acquired as a person comes to understand and accept cultural differences encountered at home and abroad. As the field of education abroad shifts from a teaching-centered to a learning-centered paradigm, educators have come to learn that knowledge of a culture does not equate with cultural competence and being in the vicinity of a culture does not automatically lead to intercultural development (Bennett, 2008). The premise of intercultural learning assumes that fear of the "other" and cultural differences are surmountable and that encountering cultural differences leads to cultural development (Fennes & Hapgood, 1997). Studying abroad is a time to experience personal growth, stemming from interactions with host nationals, navigating a new culture, and confronting differing beliefs and values. Such encounters can often prove frustrating, confusing, and disheartening for a time. It is through repeated encounters with such experiences that students have the opportunity to navigate cultural differences, thus forming the foundation for further intercultural development (Savicki, 2008).

To gain intercultural awareness and to be an effective intercultural communicator, students must possess competencies that aid in understanding different cultures and facilitate transcending boundaries, as well as the desire to engage intercultural competencies to bridge cultural divides. Noted intercultural communications theorist Ting-Toomey (1999) identified several essential characteristics necessary for intercultural awareness, among them a high tolerance for ambiguity, the ability to manage stress, adaptability, and sensitivity. The development of intercultural knowledge and skills allows students to better interact with other

cultures (Brockington, Hoffa, & Martin, 2005). Increasingly, study abroad program

interventions are purposely designed to help students achieve greater intercultural development

(Vande Berg, 2009). When students receive intercultural training, it aids them in acquiring the

skills that can help them navigate new cultures successfully, as well as helps them to recognize

and understand their own cultural beliefs and values (Paige, 1993).

Measuring Outcomes

Measuring the success of study abroad is becoming an increasingly important matter for

education abroad professionals; however, assessing the impact and value of a transformative

experience presents many challenges (de Witt, 2009). Concepts key to transformational

learning, including cultural awareness and adaptability, self-awareness, flexibility, and

autonomous learning, are central to the growth of study abroad students, yet are difficult to

ascertain and assess (Savicki, 2008). In an attempt to quantify learning outcomes stemming from

intercultural experiences, a number of scales were created, such as the Beliefs, Events, and

Values Inventory (BEVI), the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Index (CCAI), the Intercultural

Development Inventory® (IDI®), and the Global Competencies Inventory (GCI) (Shealy, 2010;

Kelley & Meyers, 1995; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003; Mendenhall, Stevens, Bird, &

Oddou, 2008). Such scales are often used in conjunction with an intervention to further students'

intercultural development (Vande Berg, Quinn, & Menyhart, 2012).

A number of early studies were conducted on outcomes of study abroad indicating

increased interpersonal skills in study abroad returnees, increased foreign language capabilities,

and an increased interest in global affairs, as well as increased personal autonomy, independence,

and self-confidence (Kauffmann, Martin & Weaver, 1992; Wilson, 1994). Later studies

examined the effects of study abroad on intercultural development, intercultural sensitivity,

knowledge and skills, and academic outcomes (Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, & Hubbard, 2006; Rexeisen, Anderson, Lawton, & Hubbard, 2008; Engle & Engle, 2004; Patterson, 2006; Sutton & Rubin, 2004). These studies represent what is evident in the larger body of research on the intercultural development outcomes of study abroad students, which suggest that exposure to another culture is a necessary, although not always sufficient condition, for intercultural learning. The studies also highlight the challenges of ensuring that students achieve gains in intercultural development due to study abroad participation.

Guided Intervention

Research demonstrates that contact with other cultures does not automatically lead to intercultural competence (Cohen et al., 2005; Paige et al., 2004; Engle & Engle, 2004; Vande Berg et al., 2009; Vande Berg, 2009). The Georgetown Consortium study was designed to test the assumption that students abroad automatically achieve gains in foreign language acquisition and intercultural development. One of the purposes of the Georgetown Consortium study was to examine outcomes of study abroad students as compared to non-study abroad students (Vande Berg et al., 2009; Vande Berg, 2009). The researchers studied nearly 1,300 students across three colleges attending 61 study abroad programs, which included 190 host institutions abroad and several study abroad provider programs. Two learning domains were researched: foreign language oral proficiency and gains in intercultural development. Pre and post IDI® scores were collected from all students. The research team concluded that significant relationships existed between several factors and impacted students' intercultural development. Factors included second language acquisition, pre-departure orientation, and content courses taught in the host language. The study also found statistically significant positive intercultural development remained five months after students returned from abroad. Between pre- and post-tests, study

abroad students made further progress on the IDI® continuum than the control group; however, some study abroad students achieved lower IDI® scores than the control group because, when left to their own devices, they failed to experience successful immersion within the host culture (Vande Berg et al., 2009). Significant IDI® gains were also seen when (a) study abroad students took courses in the target language; (b) when their classes were not made up of an entirely host student population; (c) when students received cultural mentoring on-site; (d) when students felt that the host culture was different from their own; and (e) when students did not only spend time with other U.S. study abroad students (Vande Berg et al., 2009).

By examining pre and post IDI® results and comparing the scores with a list of program factors, researchers were able to tap into some of the factors that helped and hindered students' intercultural development. Based on the data gathered, Vande Berg et al. (2009) emphasized the importance of an on-site "cultural mentor" as potentially "the single most important intervention to improve student intercultural learning abroad" (p. 25). This large-scale study demonstrated that exposure to another culture is a necessary, although not always sufficient condition, for intercultural learning (Vande Berg et al, 2009).

Comprehensive, facilitated programming in study abroad programs is essential if students are to gain intercultural awareness (Deardorff, 2008). To address this challenge, several study abroad programs have designed interventions for students abroad. Studies into interventions have demonstrated that study abroad students achieve greater gains in intercultural development as indicated by the IDI® when interventions are applied (Engle & Engle, 2004; Vande Berg et al., 2009; Vande Berg, 2009). Interventions manifest as pre-departure and on-site training sessions designed to facilitate students' study abroad experiences and may include training in intercultural coping skills, theories about culture, and how to transfer theoretical knowledge into

real world situations (Paige et al., 2004; Cohen et al., 2005; Engle & Engle, 2004; Lou & Bosley, 2008; Romero, 2005; Shaheen, 2004).

Two of the early studies that examine the quantitative and qualitative benefits of guided intervention are the Maximizing Study Abroad study (Paige et al., 2004; Cohen et al., 2005) and the American University Center of Provence study (Engle & Engle, 2004). Around the same time as the Georgetown Consortium study, Paige et al. (2004) were developing and testing a comprehensive pre/during/post study abroad intervention. The study was designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the *Maximizing Study Abroad Students' Guide* as a curricular intervention to aid in second language acquisition, intercultural development, and culture learning strategies. Treatment and control samples included a randomized mix of 86 students from seven Minnesota area colleges and universities enrolled in study abroad programs in one of 13 Spanish or French speaking countries. Research instruments utilized included a background questionnaire, an exit language profile, interviews, and a pre and post IDI®. Overall, quantitative results did not indicate statistically significant changes between treatment and control groups; however, students who received the treatment did attain statistically significant positive changes in their pre and post IDI® scores. Qualitative data also suggested that the treatment had positive effects on students' study abroad experiences (Paige et al., 2004; Cohen et al., 2005).

Other studies further demonstrated the connection between a well-designed guided intervention and positive intercultural development. Engle and Engle (2004) researched a study abroad intervention targeted towards advanced French speakers and located at the American University Center of Provence (AUCP). The student population included American university students from a number of public and private institutions, all with high admissions standards. A long-standing program abroad, the AUCP already had components of a guided intervention in

place, among them a 15-week core course, *French Cultural Patterns,* experiential activities, individual housing with local families, and facilitated contact with the local community. The researchers administered the IDI® to yearlong and semester students as a pre-test and post-test measure to evaluate whether the *French Cultural Patterns* intervention had an influence on students' intercultural development. Results indicated that students' arrived with an average developmental orientation (DO) score of 19. Both groups demonstrated significant gains on the IDI® post-test. Engle and Engle's (2004) research provides a concrete example of the correlation between program design and quantifiable results, as well as how a thoughtfully designed on-site guided intervention can positively influence students' intercultural development.

These early studies were some of the first to suggest to researchers and practitioners alike that intervening in the learning of study abroad students is necessary if students are to make significant gains in intercultural development. The Engle and Engle (2004) study highlighted how an intervention influences development on-site while the Maximizing Study Abroad study (Paige et al., 2004) depicted a multiphase, self-study approach. Their results underscored that although authentic contact with the host country paired with guided intervention is a critical component of intercultural development, implementation is extremely complex.

Online interventions and study abroad. In 2011, one third of the global population was online, and 45 percent of those Internet users were under the age of 25 (International Telecommunication Union, 2011). In the U.S. alone over 6.1 million students enrolled in at least one online class during the fall 2010 term, an increase of 10.1 percent over the previous year (Allen & Seaman, 2011). The use of technology to create a virtual classroom serves as a medium for intercultural development because it affords the opportunity to make visible

(explicit) aspects of culture that are usually invisible (implicit). Websites and learning management systems (LMS) are some of the ways that researchers and practitioners are using technology to promote intercultural development.

Although affording participants flexible access, providing unguided intercultural training tools online does not necessarily produce positive intercultural development. Romero (2005) examined the influence of the *What's Up With Culture* self-guided, computer-supported online intervention on study abroad students' cross-cultural learning (La Brack, 2003). Designed for study abroad students at all program phases, the *What's Up With Culture* website is an independent, self-paced tool that features some of the standard intercultural communication and adjustment models. The site is segmented into pre-departure, while abroad, and returned phases and includes a variety of small activities to promote understanding (La Brack, 2003). Romero's (2005) study measured the value of the *What's Up With Culture* website as an orientation and training tool for study abroad students. Through e-journal entries, self-reports, and the administration of a post-program survey to 15 fall semester students attending a variety of Lexia International study abroad programs, Romero (2005) gathered students' interpretations of their general cross-cultural understanding, adjustment, and ability to communicate. By comparing e-journals of sample and comparison population, Romero determined that use of the tool positively influenced students' feelings of preparedness. Students reported that the tool helped them 'unpack' their experiences abroad. Despite positive self-reports, there were no substantial changes in students' cross-cultural adjustment or communications abilities (Romero, 2005). Romero's (2005) research provides an initial look into one of the first self-guided interventions available freely on the Internet.

Combining an online intervention with guided support can facilitate positive intercultural development. Lou and Bosley's research (2008) provides an alternative model to an online, computer-supported intervention. Rather than an informal, self-guided approach, Lou and Bosley (2008) designed a formal, online course administered while students studied abroad. With its foundations in a mid-1990's email correspondence course, this intervention combined students from the home university studying abroad with international degree-seeking students studying at the home university in a three-part (pre/during/post), credit bearing course designed to promote the growth of intercultural skills (Bosley, 2012). Home-based instructors facilitate the course, designed to take advantage of the *laboratory of the other culture* through a series of experiential and reflective writing assignments (Lou & Bosley, 2008). This ethnographic participant-observer model was designed to support the following learning goals: (a) "to understand the advantages and disadvantages of cultural study, including the contrast of internal versus eternal perspectives and the concept of critical self-consciousness; (b) to encourage critical thinking about culture and to develop perspective-taking abilities; (c) to examine similarities and dissimilarities between and within cultures; and (d) to explore forces that contribute to the development and changes of cultures…" (Lou & Bosley, 2008, p. 278). Visible to both instructors and peers, students were required to write weekly reflections, post them on the home university's Blackboard site, then review and provide feedback on their peers' posts (Lou & Bosley, 2008). An added benefit of the asynchronous learning environment, participants had more time to read, digest, formulate responses, and provide feedback than in a synchronous classroom environment (Hmelo-Silver, 2006; Hartman, 2010). Also, instructors were able to engage individuals and multiple groups to provide guidance and purposefully targeted intervention (Lou & Bosley, 2008).

The IDI® was used as a pre- and post-test, as well as a development tool for instructors. Instructors were aware of each student's individual IDI® scores, allowing them to provide feedback at the appropriate developmental level. Early assignments focused on the concept of *self* through activities such as culture shock reflections, cultural bump explorations, and experiential learning cycle activities. The remaining assignments moved students towards achieving the learning goals by conducting experiential and research based assignments involving the *other*. Quantitative and qualitative results indicate that students made positive progress in intercultural development. Students' writing over time demonstrated increased intercultural sensitivity and openness towards cultural differences, and post-test IDI® scores indicated an increase between a few points to 14 points beyond pre-test scores (Lou & Bosley, 2008). Overall, gains in participants' IDI® scores, coupled with the change over time in students' writing, suggest a successful intervention.

Technology as a Tool for Intercultural Exchange

A study abroad experience is not a reality for many students due to cost, academic inflexibility, or other barriers (Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2009). Perhaps the greatest affordance of a virtual classroom is the ability to transcend geographic boundaries in an efficient, cost-effective way. CSCL tools allow students to collaborate beyond the constraints of time and space, as well as access resources and interact with individuals from other cultures without leaving home (Lajoie, Garcia, Berdugo, Márquez, Espíndola, & Nakamura, 2006). Cunningham (2009) and West (2010) suggest that by connecting domestic and international students, the likelihood of critical thinking and reflection on the nature of the other is increased. Course discussion can be enriched by the diversity in opinions, experiences, and cultures of the

individuals, which brings deeper insight and awareness to intercultural issues (Cunningham, 2009; West, 2010).

Recent advances in technology provide a wide body of tools and resources that can promote learning and communication with a wider world (Bryant, 2006). Tools include blogs, wikis, social bookmarking and pinning, instant messaging, Skype, and social networking, among others (Bryant, 2006; Bell, Keegan, & Zaitseva, 2008). Online learning management systems (LMS), which often incorporate one or several of these tools, are one of the ways that researchers and practitioners are using technology to promote intercultural exchange. Quite often, virtual tools are used to supplement or replace an often difficult to come by *real* international experience, where *real* indicates a student leaving his or her home country in search of an experience abroad (Bell, Keegan, & Zaitseva, 2008).

Connecting Online Guided Interventions and CSCL

Despite the existence of online, guided interventions there is little research in the field of education abroad that examines the influence of collaborative learning in guided study abroad interventions. The Center for Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) (2012) at the State University of New York (SUNY) Global Center provides a rich set of resources for educators interested in creating virtual intercultural opportunities for their students; however, courses produced in collaboration with the COIL center focus mostly on academic courses outside the scope of study abroad. Sample courses include *Cross Cultural Video Production*, *Global Workplace: Intercultural Virtual Team Communication Project*, and *Social Control* (Rubin, n.d.; Dorazio, n.d.; Little, Titarenko, & Bergelson, n.d.). The literature on study abroad interventions examines learning outcomes, guided intervention, and methods of assessment. It does not explore peer interaction within interventions or collaborative intervention design, nor

does it examine the relationship between collaborative learning and intercultural development. The premise of this study is based upon the understanding that there is a social component to pre-departure study abroad interventions that previous research has yet to explore. Combining CSCL and an internationally diverse population with a guided pre-departure intervention could create a valuable learning experience for pre-departure study abroad students by providing them with opportunities to interact across culture and practice intercultural skills in a facilitated environment before they embark on their study abroad experiences. Studies of online interventions that combine diverse populations exist; however, collaborative learning in education abroad interventions requires further research. Studies beyond education abroad have documented the benefits and challenges of CSCL. This body of literature bridges the gap between education abroad research and the rationale for creating and examining a collaborative online international learning pre-departure intervention.

Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning

Computer-supported collaborative learning (CSCL) is a growing field in the discipline of learning sciences and socio-cultural constructivism (Suthers, 2006). Several factors influence CSCL including new technological tools for collaboration, the increased interest in constructive and sociocultural approaches to learning, and the need and desire for more engaging and effective learning environments (Johnson & Johnson, 1996; Kirschner, Martens & Strijbos, 2004). The primary focus of CSCL research is the understanding and analysis of how computer tools aid learning, facilitation of the sharing of knowledge and meaning making, and interaction between learners. The design of a CSCL environment and the technologies used to facilitate and mediate social interaction is directly connected to the underpinning philosophies of situated learning and reflect the unique aspects of the technologies that create new ways to support

collaborative learning (Stahl, 2006; Suthers, 2006; Resta & Laferrière, 2007). Similar to traditional collaborative learning, CSCLs require the learner to explicitly express questions, opinions, and lines of inquiry, all which lead towards the end goal of teaching and learning from each other (Suthers, 2006).

Computer technologies can act as powerful tools for cognitive development and knowledge construction, as well as extend learning beyond the classroom (Lajoie, 2000; Hmelo-Silver, 2006; Resta & Laferrière, 2007). They can provide multiple affordances[2] for learning and make certain kinds of social action possible (Stahl, 2006). An additional affordance of CSCL is the ability to support reflection by turning communication into visible artifacts (Suthers, 2006). Transcripts of group discussion allow learners to track group knowledge building and meaning making, as well as the opportunity to view their individual contributions to the group process (Seale & Cann, 2000). The shared artifacts of conversation and collaboration assist the community in deepening dialogue and reflecting on knowledge gained and the learning process, as well as provide an opportunity to reinterpret existing information (Wegerif & Mansour, 2010; Suthers, 2006). However, CSCL tools are only as useful as the benefits they provide (Hmelo-Silver, 2006). In purposefully designed CSCL environments, the tools are secondary and meant to support social interactions (Stahl, 2006). A successful CSCL environment is a combination of academic, social, and technological affordances.

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[2] Affordances, as defined by Norman (1988), are the perceived and actual properties of a tool, as well as how a tool could be used.

Understanding the challenges of online communities. Building and sustaining an online community where educational collaboration is expected is not easy. Real and perceived challenges influence the successful development of community, as well as outcomes associated with CSCL. Researchers have identified a multitude of social factors which relate to participants' satisfaction and learning outcomes, including (a) perceived sociability and bonding; (b) the influence of other participants' actions on an individual participant's attitudes and behaviors; (c) and the quantity and quality of posted comments (Muilenburg & Berg, 2005; Vonderwell, 2003; Volet & Wosnitza, 2004; Fung, 2004).

In a CSCL environment, learner enjoyment and social interactions are closely connected. Muilenburg and Berg (2005) identified eight types of barriers that influence online learning, with social issues among them. A questionnaire exploring 47 potential online barriers was sent 1056 participants. Participants ranged in age from 18 to over 60, and half of the sample attended their most recent online course in graduate school. Using a principal component factor analysis, Muilenburg and Berg (2005) identified the following categorical barriers to online learning: (a) administrative issues; (b) social interaction; (c) academic skills; (d) technical skills; (e) learner motivation; (f) time and support for studies; (g) cost and access to the Internet; and (h) technical problems. The researchers identified a strong association between online learning enjoyment and social interaction, indicating that positive social interactions were directly related to positive online learning experiences. Although this study provides a broad understand of the types of barriers that can influence online learning as indicated by a wide sample, it is difficult to apply the findings to a specific subset of the population, undergraduate students. Also, the high level overview does not examine social barriers more deeply or explore the different social

experiences in environments with built-in collaborative learning experiences (Muilenburg &

Berg, 2005).

An added challenge for CSCL environments is creating and maintaining social presence,

which is the ability of students and the facilitator to project themselves in a positive manner in a

non-traditional academic environment (Resta & Laferrière, 2007). Often, learning the content of

the online course is not problematic; rather the social interactions impede the success of the

overall learning environment. Vonderwell's (2003) study more specifically examines the

challenges of building community in an asynchronous, online learning environment for

undergraduate students. The sample consisted of 22 pre-service teachers participating in an

online course using a course management system. The course design included discussion forums

and a *Coffee House* where students could share and collaborate. By examining discussion forum

transcripts, Vonderwell (2003) identified issues related to participation and collaboration,

perceived challenges to forging bonds online, and posting expectations and behaviors.

Anonymity played a large role in negatively influenced peer-to-peer interactions. Citing

hesitance to reach out and connect with strangers, very few students contacted each other, and

the level of anonymity provided by the online environment allowed students to blatantly avoid

responding to questions or requests by other participants.

All participants indicated that they experienced difficulty interacting and forming social

bonds because they perceived the online environment as less personal (Vonderwell, 2003). They

also seemed not to understand the potential value of connecting, how asynchronous tools can

foster reflection, or how group discussion contributes to overall learning. Participants felt that

they did not learn from each other due to similar responses and that they could respond to

questions without waiting to view posts from other participants. In all, Vonderwell's (2003)

findings suggest instructors must carefully and purposefully design online learning environments to encourage collaboration and interaction. Merely providing the opportunity for discussion and collaboration does not mean students will actively engage in a CSCL environment. Since the publication of Vonderwell's (2003) study, collaborative technologies have become more sophisticated. Although this study highlights some of the challenges of facilitating successful social interactions online and offers several recommendations for increasing engagement, it does not provide information related to actual learning outcomes or the nature of the online interactions.

Further exploring the social challenges of building an online learning community, Fung (2004) conducted research to ascertain students' reported use of an online discussion forum and reasons for lack of active participation. The study surveyed three graduate level courses in education conducted at the Open University of Hong Kong with a 39 percent response rate. Although 83 percent of the sample indicated easy access to the environment, only 18 percent used the space frequently (Fung, 2004). Most participants indicated that lack of time prohibited them from engaging online. Reasons cited for not posting their own content included the lack of interesting questions posted by other participants and the lack of a sizable active posting population (Fung, 2004). This finding is similar to Vonderwell's (2003) study, suggesting that participants consider communication and collaboration extra effort rather than an enhancement to learning. Tools need to be employed purposefully and explained clearly or they will be viewed as barriers to communication, learning, and community development. If the benefits of using tools and engaging in a CSCL environment are not made clear to learners, they are more likely to reject the learning design (Resta & Laferrière, 2007; Hmelo-Silver et al., 2006; Hmelo et al., 1998). Overall, Fung's (2004) study found no evidence of substantial collaboration or

existence of a learning community. The benefit of this research is that it examines several

reasons why people do not actively participate in an online community; nevertheless, questions

remain as to whether the same results are applicable to an undergraduate population outside of

Hong Kong. A clearer understanding of what constitutes genuine discussion is needed, as well

an understanding of any analytical framework used to support the design of the questionnaire and

analysis of qualitative data.

Social interactions can be successfully fostered, yet still fail to stimulate shared meaning

and the co-creation of knowledge. In an exploratory study, Volet and Wosnitza (2004) examined

university students' pre and post appraisals of participating in an online course focused on

intercultural learning, with participants residing in multiple countries. Six participants from a

German university and five participants from an Australian university took part in a course that

consisted of weekly face-to-face class meetings in participants' individual countries, as well as

online interactions between the two groups. Much thought was put into scaffolding the social

experience. Content analysis of synchronous and asynchronous activity transcripts, discussion

threads, and chat logs indicated that considerable reciprocal social exchange occurred between

the two groups. Participants indicated that they did not feel anonymous in the online

environment; rather, they felt they were interacting with 'real' people. They reported finding it

pleasurable to work with each other and indicated that working with the 'other' helped them

better understand discipline specific knowledge, as well as to reflect on their own thoughts,

beliefs, and experiences (Volet & Wosnitza, 2004). Although the social indicators appeared

favorable, Volet and Wosnitza (2004) found little evidence of socially negotiated meaning

making. Participants never explicitly disagreed with each other or displayed signs of conflict,

which removed the opportunity to work towards shared meaning or co-construction of new

knowledge (Volet & Wosnitza, 2004). The surface social success of the course may have been due to the thoughtfully scaffolded design. Nevertheless, since the researchers did not discuss the relationship between the design of the course, the social experience, and learning outcomes, it is hard to draw conclusions about what aspects of the online environment facilitated the online community and why participants never co-constructed meaning or new knowledge.

These studies are a small sample of the larger body of research representing the challenges of building and sustaining an online community, and fostering collaborative learning environments that produce shared meaning making and the co-creation of knowledge (Muilenburg & Berg, 2005; Vonderwell, 2003; Volet & Wosnitza, 2004; Fung, 2004). It is not enough for an environment to be created and learners placed in that environment (Wegerif & Mansour, 2010). Collaborative learning cannot exist without a solid group foundation. Social processes that build a sense of community set the tone for future group cohesion. A solid CSCL environment requires a secure sense of community and strong social dynamic (van Aalst, 2009).

Understanding the challenges of CSCL tool use. Although CSCL tools offer many affordances, there are challenges to consider when employing these tools. Often educators conceive of new ways to utilize the technology for teaching and learning, yet many products are not designed with these goals in mind (Laurillard, 2009). Even if a technological tool is designed for teaching and learning, tensions can often result which impede learning (Hmelo-Silver, Nagarajan, & Derry, 2006**).** The most carefully thought out educational plans may fail because designers may not fully understand what it takes to integrate technology and CSCL environments into the classroom. How an instructor or designer believes a learner will engage with tools and the CSCL environment can influence the success or failure of an environment, as well as the learners' perceptions of the benefits and value of tools provided (Resta & Laferrière,

2007). Tension may exist between what tools can do and what learners want them to do, or the

tools provided versus the tools learners want to use (Hmelo -Silver, et al., 2006). Instructors also

need to understand when it is appropriate or inappropriate to use specific tools or have

discussions asynchronously. Otherwise, the resulting dialogue could become multiple

monologues and obstruct collaborative knowledge building (Hmelo et al., 1998; Kanuka, 2010).

Moving towards a CSCL environment is challenging and requires drastically rethinking

the teaching and learning process (Hmelo et al., 1998). In all, learners' prior knowledge and

experience, the design of the curriculum, the role of the instructor, choice of tool use, and group

cohesion must be purposefully addressed and carefully integrated to foster a successful CSCL

environment (van Aalst, 2009; Resta & Laferrière, 2007; Hmelo et al., 1998). Finally, CSCL

and tools must be integrated into meaningful activities that encourage group meaning making

and knowledge construction, and learners must be prepared to work in collaborative groups prior

to engaging in the CSCL environment (Hmelo-Silver, 2006; Wegerif & Mansour, 2010).

Summary of Findings

Education Abroad professionals now know that guided interventions are needed to foster

intercultural development (Vande Berg et al., 2009; Vande Berg, 2009). Recent research

examines several types of guided interventions, administered on-site or online, to address the

challenges of providing adequate support (Paige et al., 2004; Engle & Engle, 2004). Although

there has been rapid growth in the body of research related to face-to-face guided interventions

during the past ten years, several topics require further examination. Today, numerous online

learning interventions are in use to bring together far away populations, to explore new ways of

deploying orientation information, and to teach intercultural learning theories (La Brack, 2003;

Lou & Bosley, 2008; GlobaLinks Learning Abroad, 2012; The Center for Global Education,

2012). Nevertheless, researchers have yet to tease apart the factors that exist in a CSCL study

abroad intervention. This includes understanding the affordances and constraints created when

moving an intervention online and how they influence students' experiences in the intervention,

as well as their intercultural development. There is also a missed opportunity to explore the

influence of international collaboration when purposely designed into an intervention. Research

in the fields of collaborative learning and CSCL demonstrate that learning in an online

environment comes with many design and social challenges, among them encouraging the use of

tools, helping students to understand the value of collaboration, and social isolation (Muilenburg

& Berg, 2005; Vonderwell, 2003; Volet & Wosnitza, 2004; Fung, 2004). Yet, despite the

challenges, when collaborative learning is successful it can foster meaning making and shared

knowledge creation (Stahl, 2006; Resta & Laferrière, 2007; Hartman, 2010). Research

connecting the disciplines of education abroad and CSCL is needed to explore the influence a

collaborative online international learning pre-departure intervention on the online experience,

social interactions, and intercultural development. Only with this information will practitioners

better understand how to design and facilitate these types of learning experiences. It is now time

to understand the intervention environment, and not just its outcomes.

Frameworks for Learning

Garrison et al. (2000) suggest that socio-cultural interactions enhance the cognitive

aspects of learning and sustain the learning process. Changes in learning theory, with the unit of

focus moving from the individual to the group, inform multiple learning frameworks that

emphasize the situated nature of learning (Hmelo-Silver, 2006). Situating learning in a

community of learners emphasizes the social aspects of learning. Members of a learning

community share knowledge, learning expectations and educational goals, and build a sense of

community around these shared expectations and goals (Resta & Laferrière, 2007; Rovai, 2002; Lajoie et al., 2006). Moving away from an instructor-centered model of knowledge dissemination, in a community of learners model the impetus for learning resides with the students, through their reading, writing, and discussions (Lajoie, et al., 2006).

Another aspect of learning when viewed from a socio-cultural perspective is the potential to construct meaning individually and as a group. Through collaboration on learning assignments and activities, the group works together to construct shared meanings (Stahl, 2006). Meaning making is the process of discourse that occurs as learners negotiate differences of opinions and ideas during learning activity. The creation of shared meaning is a group achievement and a critical element of learning (Resta & Laferrière, 2007; Hmelo-Silver, 2006). Successful collaboration and meaning making, often with the aid of a facilitator, is the result of active participation and engagement in meaningful dialogue with the community (Resta & Laferrière, 2007).

The possibility for conflict exists when learners rely on each other to facilitate the learning process. Collaboration increases the cognitive and emotional load that learners must navigate to complete a learning objective. During the process of negotiating meaning, they may often argue and disagree before reaching consensus (Suthers, 2006). It is through the process of resolving conflict that learners achieve higher levels of learning, intellectual development, and meaning making (Hartman, 2010). Cognitive aids provided by technology can enhance the process of conflict and result in meaning making by requiring students to make their opinions, values, and ideas explicit (Suthers, 2006). Meaning making and group conflict-resolution can be further enhanced through the practice of reflection and analysis. When a group engages in collaborative reflection, they affirm the meanings defined through the group process, identify

how learning relates to prior knowledge, and facilitate the transfer of knowledge (Hartman,

2010). Reflection, like conflict, also encourages higher order thinking (Tenenbaum, Naidu,

Jegede, & Austin, 2001).

Theoretical Framework

Garrison et al. (2000) suggest that socio-cultural interactions enhance the cognitive

aspects of learning and sustain the learning process (see Figure 1). Learners collaborate and

actively engage in purposeful discussion and reflection to construct meaning and establish

mutual understanding. Viewed through this framework, learning is both a process and a product

of interdependent elements of social, cognitive, and teaching presences within an educational

experience. *Teaching Presence* relates to the design, facilitation, and processes necessary to

create purposeful and meaningful learning outcomes. This includes the facilitation of

instructional management, building understanding, and direct instruction. *Social Presence* refers

to the interactions and experiences that learners have within and outside of their social group,

including identifying with the community, sharing personalities and developing relationships

with other participants, and engaging in risk free expression. Finally, *Cognitive Presence* refers

to the extent to which participants are able to engage in the academic content through the

construction of meaning, reflection, and quality academic discourse (Garrison et al., 2000).
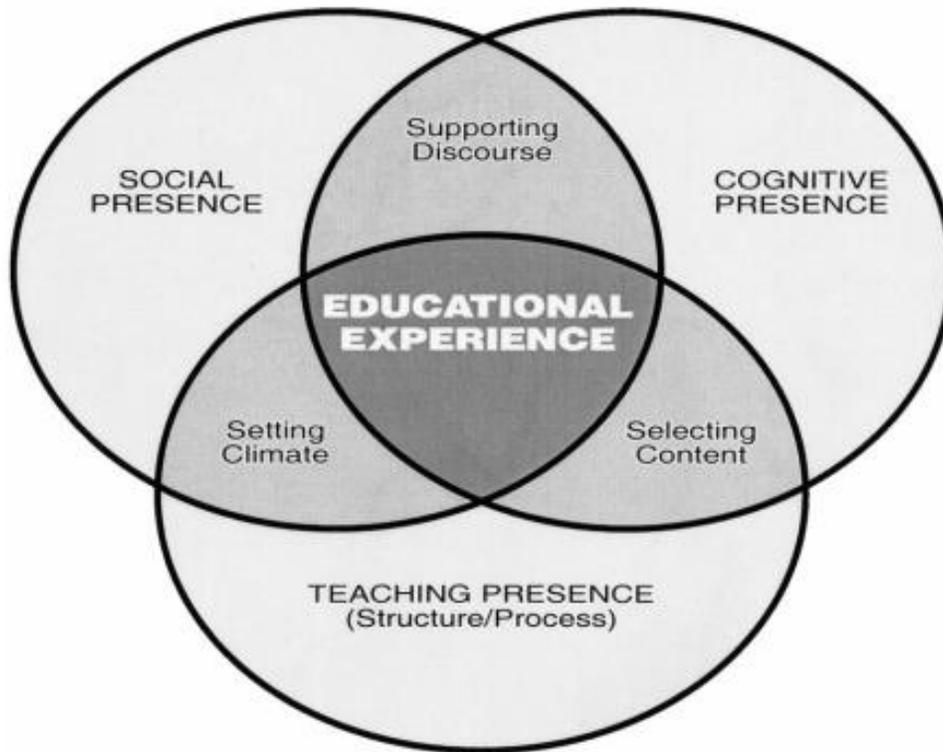
Figure 1. Community of Inquiry model (Garrison et al., 2000, p. 2).

The embodied conjecture of this intervention design suggested that significant learning would result from both course content and the social and intercultural interactions participants engaged in, with the intervention activities acting as a catalyst for these interactions (see Figure 2). The Community of Inquiry model of analysis provided a clearer understanding of the factors that students' experience and intercultural development in a collaborative online international guided intervention, as well as highlighted which factors were able to bridge across contexts.

Chapter Three: Intervention Design

Part of this study included the design and development of a collaborative online international learning intervention. Over the course of six weeks in the fall of 2012, and five weeks in the spring of 2013, pre-departure U.S. study abroad students going abroad and international students coming to study abroad in the U.S. attended an online, collaborative seminar together called *Experiencing culture: A seminar for sojourners*.

Design Conjectures

The design of this study employed the Community of Inquiry model to create an environment that connected the embodied conjectures to the intervention's intermediate and overall intervention outcomes (Garrison et al., 2000). The goal of the design was to bridge cognitive and social presences while employing an online intervention. Activities were both cognitive and social in nature in that they require students to reflect on their own identities and, through conversations with other participants, engage meaningfully across cultures. The following figure represents the relationship between the Community of Inquiry model and the embodied conjectures of the design, as well as seminar tasks and expected outcomes (see Figure 2):
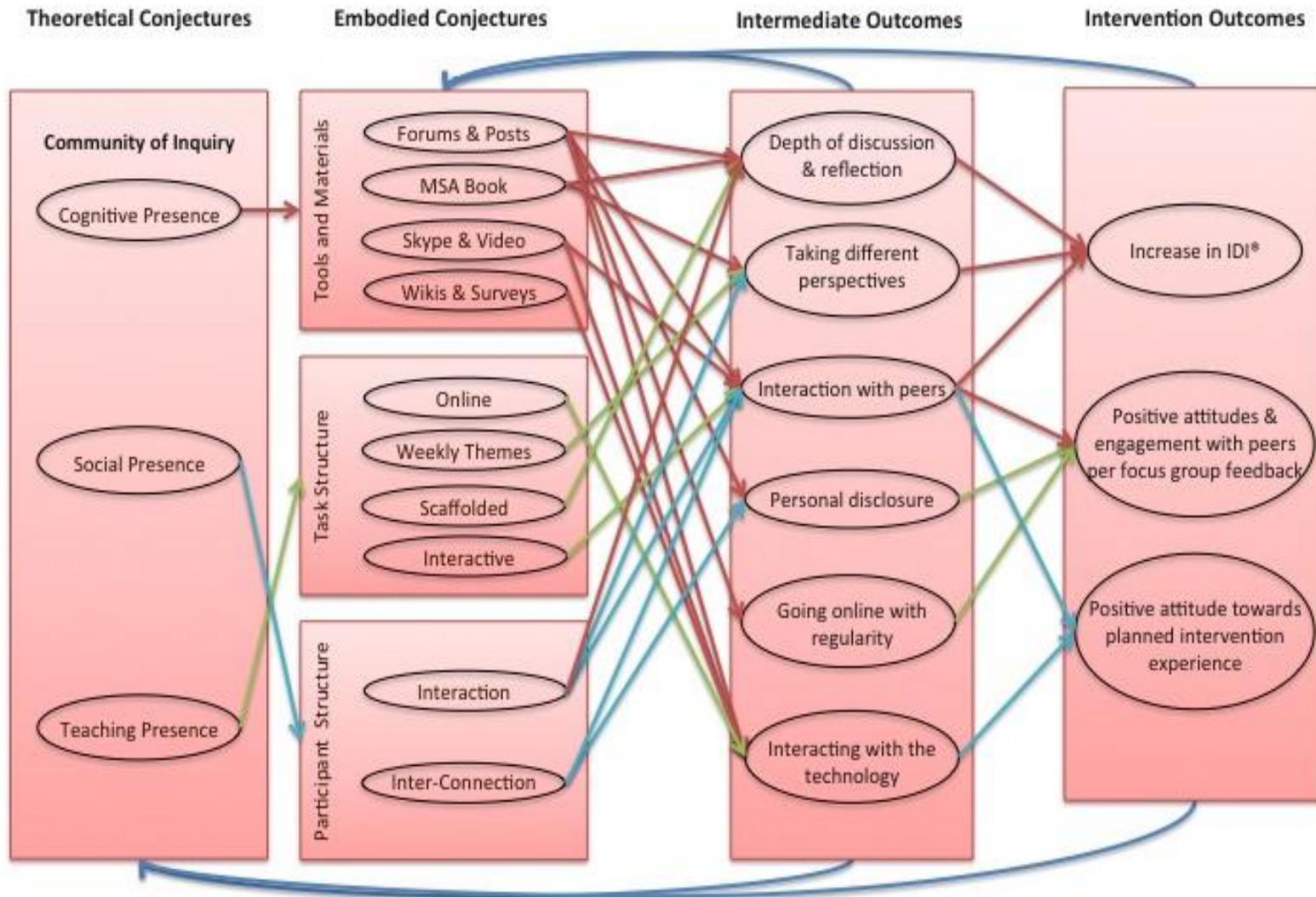
Figure 2. Embodied conjectures and expected outcomes.

The planned design, as described above, was expected to produce the following intermediate outcomes: (1) depth of discussion; (2) personal disclosure; (3) self-reflection; (4) alternative perspective-taking; (5) interaction with participants across cultures; (6) regular engagement with provided technology; and (7) regular online engagement. Each intermediate outcome was expected to stimulate intercultural development (Paige, 1993). I expected that the overall intervention outcomes were achievable if seminar participants first achieved the intended intermediate outcomes. Overall intervention outcomes included demonstrating positive progression on the IDI® continuum, positive attitudes towards the planned intervention experience, and positive attitudes and engagement with a wide cross-section of participants. Finally, the overall intervention outcomes would be determined as having been met by the following methods: (1) the identification of intermediate affordances and constraints as indicated by participants; (2) positive attitudes and engagement as indicated by participants; and (3) positive intercultural development as indicated by the quality of the action plan and positive IDI® continuum progression.

The seminar design reflected Garrison et al.'s (2000) Community of Inquiry model. This created an environment to explore if the intervention influenced students' intercultural development, to examine how social interactions influence students' experiences within a collaborative online international learning intervention, and to investigate their experiences in the intervention environment. Data sources obtained from the intervention were analyzed to highlight the affordances and constraints of a design that emphasized collaborative learning as a means to enhance intercultural development.

Design Elements

The design of this intervention took into consideration that intercultural skills are necessary in a study abroad context. The decision to combine inbound and outbound U.S. and international students in an intercultural learning environment is not new. Lou and Bosley (2008) combined outbound students currently studying abroad with inbound degree-seeking international students on the home campus in an effort to engage in intercultural dialogue. Their approach united inbound and outbound students; however, the two groups were pursuing different types of international experiences (Lou & Bosley, 2008). This intervention connected inbound and outbound students who were going to have the same type of international experience – a study abroad experience. The purpose of this decision was to create a group that had a common base element as an initial bonding platform, which could act as a catalyst for future sharing and heightened social presence.

Garrison et al.'s (2000) Community of Inquiry model influenced the seminar design (see Table 1). Communicating cross-culturally often results in confusion and misinterpretation, and it may require participants to confront differing beliefs and values (Savicki, 2008). The seminar was designed to facilitate cognitive presence by providing the opportunity for triggering events and subsequent exploration of these events. Each module was composed of a group activity and a group discussion that encouraged social presence through emotional expression, open communication, and group cohesion. Learning can be a highly social process, and the making of meaning, as well as integration through connecting ideas and creating solutions, is often a group process that drives individual knowledge building (Vygotsky 1978; Stahl, 2006). Participation in group activities and reflective dialogue allowed students the opportunity to jointly construct knowledge and then internalize what they learned collaboratively (Vygotsky, 1978). Another

important potential outcome of group collaboration is the opportunity for productive conflict, which in turn can produce cognitive triggering events. Piaget (1976) emphasized conflict as a means for promoting cognitive development. In this study, combining international and domestic students in a variety of weekly paired or group activities allowed for conflicts to occur in a structured environment where participants had the opportunity to confront difference and their own beliefs head on, a process that could lead to lasting learning and intellectual development (Piaget, 1976; Piaget, Brown, & Thamoy, 1985).

Key instructional management decisions were made to facilitate design goals. Conducting the seminar asynchronously online connected two groups who otherwise, due to time and scheduling differences, would not be able to learn together in person. A group discussion opportunity prompted by a facilitated reflection question followed each group activity. Hmelo-Silver, Chernobilsky, and Nagarajan (2008) indicated that sharing information is an important aspect of the group learning process. By reflecting on each activity, participants had the opportunity to interpret the meaning behind the assignment, relate their past experience to the assignment, and learn about the alternative experiences and interpretations of other participants, as well as how lesson activities might serve them while abroad. Group reflection provided the space to exhibit all forms of social presence. The technology of the group discussion forum acted as a mediating tool for information exchange and deeper understanding by creating an external space for collaborative dialogue (Wegerif & Mansour, 2010; Hmelo-Silver et al., 2008). The asynchronous nature of the reflective discussions allowed participants, especially those who were quieter in nature or non-native English speakers, to take time when formulating their thoughts, opinions, and feedback, which afforded more reflection (Hartman, 2010; Umaschi Bers, Beals, Chau, Satoh, & Khan, 2010; Hmelo-Silver et al., 2006.)

Each activity used in the seminar was drawn from existing training and study abroad interventions (Lou & Bosley, 2012; Cohen et al., 2005; La Brack, 2003). These activities were then modified for online collaborative, asynchronous use. The specific activities were chosen because of widespread use, and they complemented the intercultural development stage of many study abroad students. On average, IDI® scores indicate that pre-departure study abroad students score within the minimization range on the Intercultural Development Continuum (Cohen et al., 2005; Nam, 2011; Patterson, 2006; Rexeisen et al., 2008). Minimization is a transitional, ethnocentric stage on the DMIS scale. Existing between ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism, the individual deemphasizes cultural difference in favor of his or her worldview or, if an individual is not part of the dominant culture, deemphasizing cultural difference is used as a coping strategy. Perceived cultural similarities are emphasized while differences are underemphasized, and individuals in this stage tend to take a universalistic approach towards different cultures (Hammer et al., 2003; IDI, LLC, 2012a). When working with individuals in this stage it is important to choose activities that emphasize cultural differences. Activities should increase an individual's cultural self-understanding, and focus on increasing awareness and understanding of cultural difference (IDI, LLC, 2012a). Each activity selected for the intervention focused on understanding a participant's individual culture, discussing cultural differences between group members, or both. The order of the activities was scaffolded to build trust, build upon the prior week's intercultural learning theories, and increase in social intensity with time.

Table 1

Community of Inquiry Model and Seminar Design

Elements	Design Decision
Cognitive Presence	- Activities engender productive conflict, connecting ideas, and creating solutions - Exchange information in group discussion forum mediates deeper learning - Exploration through alternative experiences and interpretations of participants
Social Presence	- Similar study abroad phase creates group cohesion - Group activities, discussions, and reflections encourage emotional expression, open communication, and group cohesion
Teaching Presence	- Seminar is hosted online with asynchronous and synchronous components - Facilitated discussion and reflection contributes to cognitive and social presence

Seminar Design

     Fall seminar. The fall seminar was conducted online using Sakai, one of Rutgers University's online course management systems. Participants progressed through thematic modules, completed readings, learned several intercultural theories, and interacted with their peers through group activities and discussion forums. Modules included: (1) Your cultural self; (2) The iceberg: Explicit and implicit culture; (3) Who are we? Understanding beliefs and values; (4) Core cultural values; (5) The ladder of inference; and (6) Creating an action plan. All assignments were based on standard training exercises used in the field of education abroad (Paige et al. 2004; Cohen et al. 2005; Cohen, 2009; La Brack, 2003). Participants used a variety of tools and materials as they progressed through the seminar including discussion forums, Skype and video tools, Wikis, and the *Maximizing Study Abroad Students' Guide*. Participation required one to two hours of time per week, depending on the nature of the week's module. The seminar was conducted in English and I was the facilitator. Depending on the sample of participants, weekly activity groupings varied. In general, participants would read background information posted in Sakai, participate in an activity, and then respond to discussion questions in a forum. The overall format of the fall seminar resembled the construction of a traditional online course developed in a learning management system designed for hybrid and online

classroom learning. Although participation in the non-credit seminar was voluntary, participants were encouraged to fully engage; however, there were no individual ramifications if they did not complete the assignments or partake in the discussions. The full fall syllabus and weekly descriptions are located in the appendices (see Appendix A). Sample activities and discussion prompts are also located in the appendices (see Appendix B).

Spring seminar. As with the fall semester, the seminar was not credit bearing and was facilitated by me. Feedback from fall participants was used in a partial redesign of the spring seminar (see Chapter 5). Although weekly topics remained the same, the seminar platform was moved from a traditional learning management system, Sakai, to a social networking system, Facebook, and more social facilitation was included. Activities were modified to fit the new platform.

Changes in design. The decision to move the seminar to Facebook came at the urging of fall seminar participants because several limitations in Sakai, such as the lack of notifications, lack of universal familiarity, and difficulty integrating Web 2.0 tools, deterred them from engaging with the seminar and participants (see Chapter 5). They suggested that moving the seminar to Facebook could increase sociability, and would be a more familiar platform to all participants. Facebook is a social networking website, with over one billion monthly active users, whose mission is to connect users with family and friends (Facebook, 2013a). A Facebook group is an online space within Facebook where a group of users can elect to share and discussion information privately (Facebook, 2013b). It is not necessary to be 'friends' with a person to interact in a Facebook group setting, and a closed group allowed the content to be private and only viewable to invited participants. Conversations, links, videos, or images posted to a group trigger a Facebook or email notification to all group members. Participants are able to

access the Facebook group on demand, from their computers or mobile devices, extending

learning beyond the traditional in-person and online classroom environments (Phillips, Baird, &

Fogg, 2011). Facebook as both a tool and a platform for education purposes is just beginning to

be used and explored by academics (Salavuo, 2008; Bosch, 2009; Mazman & Usluel, 2010; de

Villiers, 2010; Ryan & Sharp, 2011; Hurt, Moss, Bradley, Larson, Lovelace, & Prevost, 2012;

Irwin, Ball, & Desbrow, 2012; McCarthy, 2012).

Since Facebook is not a traditional learning platform, the seminar needed to be

reconfigured to take advantage of its social media and collaborative strengths. The limited

discussion space, in the form of status updates, necessitated the use of alternative ways to explain

the theme of the week. Rather than heavily rely on print, the first facilitated weekly post usually

began with a multimedia clip to introduce participants to the theoretical principles behind the

weekly theme. Several days later, an individual or group activity followed the media post. After

participants posted their responses they were able to interact with the group and offer feedback,

comments, and other reflections. The spring seminar also made use of optional resources for

participants who wanted to explore the weekly themes in greater depth. Each weekly theme had

a corresponding Pinterest pinboard with supplemental, optional resources for participants to

review. Pinterest is a social media and networking site that allows users to "pin" images, videos,

and other Internet objects to online pinboards (Pinterest, 2013).

Changes in content. The five-week seminar began after the group introductory meeting.

Based on feedback from fall participants, a week was removed from the spring seminar. They

suggested the sixth week was too much because it also coincided with end of the semester

obligations. The seminar's five themes included: (1) Your cultural self; (2) Exploring

stereotypes; (3) Dimensions of culture; (4) Communication contexts; and (5) Description-

Interpretation-Evaluation. Several weekly thematic titles were modified or reorganized;

however, most themes included content similar to the fall seminar (see Table 2). Two themes

were added to the spring seminar — Exploring stereotypes and Communication contexts. This

decision was made based on fall participants' feedback requesting the opportunity to learn more

about specific cultural differences. The only theme that did not carry over between seminars was

Week Six: Creating an action plan. The decision to remove this theme was based on the reduced

timeframe of the seminar as well as the complete lack of participation by the previous group.

Overall, the design of the spring seminar represents a departure from the traditional online

course. A full syllabus and weekly description of the spring semester are located in the

appendices (see Appendix C). Sample activities and discussion prompt are also located in the

appendices (see Appendix D).

Table 2

Changes and Reorganization Between Seminars

	Seminar themes	
	Fall	Spring
Pre-Seminar		Live online group meeting *-What's in a name*
Week One	Your cultural self - *Identity mapping*	Your cultural self - *Identity mapping*
Week Two	Explicit & implicit culture - *Iceberg* - *What's in a name?*	Exploring stereotypes - *Explicit/implicit culture* - *Addressing & modifying assumptions*
Week Three	Understanding beliefs & values - *Behaviors*	Dimensions of culture - *Continuum survey & values dialogue*
Week Four	Core cultural values - *Continuum survey & values dialogue*	Communication contexts - *Other communication styles*
Week Five	Ladder of inference - *Describe-Interpret-Evaluate*	Describe-Interpret-Evaluate - *Deconstructing inferences*
Week Six	Creating an action plan	

Chapter Four: Methodology

This study explored a pre-departure, collaborative online international learning intervention as a way to design a solution for a problem of practice within study abroad. In the hope of adding to the current body of research, the purpose of this study was to design and explore an intervention that combined online inquiry and collaborative learning to gain a better understanding of the factors that influence pre-departure study abroad students' experience and intercultural development in an online environment. The following questions composed the line of inquiry for this study: (a) what is the influence of a collaborative online international learning intervention on pre-departure study abroad students' intercultural development; (b) how do social interactions influence pre-departure study abroad students' experiences within the intervention; and (c) what are the affordances and constraints of collaborative learning in an online, international intervention? As design-based research, this study explored the relationship between social interaction and intercultural development, including the affordances and constraints of collaborative learning as built into an intervention design.

Participants

Participants were purposely sampled to include inbound and outbound pre-departure accepted students within Rutgers University Study Abroad. *Pre-departure* signifies the period of time before students studied abroad for a semester. The term *inbound student* indicates international students from universities abroad accepted to Rutgers University for a semester or year. The term *outbound student* indicates Rutgers students who would spend a semester or more studying outside the U.S at various universities around the world. *Accepted* indicates students who met Rutgers University Study Abroad admission requirements, including an English language requirement for inbound students. All students were scheduled to study abroad

the semester after the seminar. Several methods were used to recruit participants to this study.

Recruiting methods included advertising in students' online applications, emails to students and

university partners abroad, flyers for display in the Rutgers University Study Abroad office, and

conversations during individual student advising appointments.

The pre-departure study abroad seminar was conducted twice over the 2012-2013

academic year. The seminar was initially expected to occur only once, during the fall of 2012,

with the goal of recruiting a sample of 40 students. Instead, the seminar occurred over two

semesters, with smaller sample sizes in each term. Ten inbound and 10 outbound participants

were to participate in the seminar and another 10 inbound and 10 outbound students would act as

a comparison group. Students were to self-select to participate in the study by responding to

recruiting materials. The 40 participants were to be placed in either the seminar or the

comparison group based on a pre-determined placement rubric. The following criteria, in order

of importance, were to be used to assemble the target sample: (1) study abroad program- region;

(2) country of study abroad; (3) university of study abroad; (4) gender; and (5) grade point

average (GPA). The purpose of the selection criteria was to compose a diverse sample of

participants. An ideal sample would have included participants who were studying across as

many continents as possible, in as many countries as possible, with little overlap of host

universities, an equal male and female ratio, and GPAs ranging from the minimum of 2.5 to a

maximum of 4.0 or the equivalents. Utilizing this selection criteria I hoped to achieve a sample

as representative as possible, one that represents balance in gender and study abroad destination,

and the overall profile of study abroad participants.

Fall. Recruiting for the fall semester began in early October and shortly thereafter

several sampling issues surfaced. At the time of recruiting, there were 194 accepted pre-

departure inbound and outbound study abroad students. Of this population, 48 outbound and 19

inbound students indicated interested in participating in the research. Of the students who met

the selection criteria, only two agreed to participate in the intervention. Abandoning the

selection criteria and allowing students to choose between the seminar and comparison groups

increased the participant pool. Twenty-two outbound and 16 inbound students indicated they

would be willing to participate in the seminar. After attrition, eight outbound and seven inbound

students consented to participate in the seminar intervention and eight outbound and three

inbound students consented to participate in the comparison group.

Spring. The small sample size recruited in the fall semester necessitated a redesign of the

seminar with additional data collection. Recruiting occurred between January and the end of

February. There were approximately 226 accepted pre-departure outbound and inbound study

abroad students at the time of initial recruiting. All students upon acceptance to study abroad

received an invitation to participate in the study. An incentive to participate in the study was

offered: $40 for participating in the seminar and $20 for participating in the comparison group.

Out of the total population, 18 outbound and 11 inbound students indicated interest in

participating in the research and indicated a preference for their group placement. After attrition,

four outbound and six inbound students consented to participate in the seminar and seven

outbound and five inbound students consented to participate in the comparison group.

Seminar Demographics. Eighty-six percent of fall seminar participants and all of spring

seminar participants had traveled abroad, mostly for tourism, and the groups indicated little

difference in the number of trips or length of time spent abroad. Most of their cultural exposure

resulted from travel, academics, or their peers. All of fall participants and 70 percent of spring

participants planned to spend a semester abroad. Eighty-seven percent of fall outbound

participants and 67 percent of spring outbound participants planned to study in Europe.

Both groups had nearly equal representation between inbound and outbound participants,

yet gender composition between groups was unmatched. Almost two-thirds of each group of

participants identified themselves as Caucasian. The cultural composition of fall inbound

participants was slightly more diverse, with participants from four continents represented, as

opposed to only two continents represented in the spring. Nearly all participants in both

seminars were majoring in the Arts and Sciences. Seventy to 100 percent of inbound students

planned to learn in a foreign language, as opposed to 47 to 50 percent of outbound students (see

Table 3).

Table 3

Participant Demographics

	Seminar		Comparison	
	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring
Status				
Inbound	7	6	3	5
Outbound	8	4	8	5
Gender				
Male	7	1	3	2
Female	8	9	8	8
Ethnicity				
Caucasian	10	6	4	5
Non-Caucasian	5	4	7	5
Class Year				
1st-2nd	5	4	5	6
3rd-4th	10	6	6	4
Major				
Arts & Sciences	13	9	8	2
Other	2	1	3	8
Destination				
U.S.	7	6	3	5
Europe	7	3	8	2
Other	1	1		3

It is important to note that in the fall I also served as a study abroad advisor to several participants. Although this meant that I was responsible for facilitating the application process, at no time did I make the final admissions decision for this population. Additionally, since the fall intervention was initiated at the beginning of the pre-departure phase the timing did not allow for advanced relationship building between the participants and myself. My tenure at Rutgers Study Abroad ended prior to the completion of the fall recruiting cycle. Consequently, participants felt no pressure to participate due to my former role in their study abroad experiences. I had no prior relationship with spring participants.

Data Sources

A mixed-methods approach was used to gather data needed to study the intervention outcomes. Data was obtained from (1) pre-intervention needs assessment; (2) pre and post IDI® scores; (3) multiple focus groups; and (4) online discussions. The IDI® was administered prior to the intervention and immediately following the intervention to both the intervention and comparison groups. The remaining data was collected only from the intervention groups. As both seminar facilitator and researcher, I also kept a design journal to reflect on the seminar and document design changes.

Needs analysis. A needs analysis questionnaire was distributed to intervention participants prior to the beginning of each seminar (see Appendix E). The information gathered highlighted participants' prior skills, motivation, and knowledge, as well as technical needs. The data was reviewed prior to the start of the seminar so that any necessary design supports could be added if participants indicated a technical gap in knowledge or restricted access to any technology used in the intervention.

Intercultural Development Inventory®. To understand the stage of intercultural developmental for individual participants, pre and post IDI® assessments (see Appendix F) were collected to indicate quantitatively where students placed on the intercultural development continuum, as well as to gauge progress in intercultural development. Grounded in the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), the theoretical framework of Bennett's (1993) six-stage model of intercultural adjustment and the developmental stages that lead to intercultural sensitivity, ,the IDI® is a 50-item, self-reported online survey tool designed to measure orientations towards cultural differences. Scored on a five-point Likert-style scale, the IDI® is a statistically reliable and valid measure that is cross-culturally generalizable (Hammer, 2003). Each IDI® version has undergone in-depth reliability and validity analysis, which results in continued inventory improvement. Version two of the IDI® was administered to 4,763 individuals across 11 distinct cultural populations. Construct validity tests, factor analyses, and reliability analyses validated five of the DMIS scales used as the foundation of the IDI®: (1) Denial/Defense scale, with 14 items, had an alpha of .084; (2) Reversal scale, with 9 items, had an alpha of 0.80; (3) Minimization scale, with 9 items, had an alpha of 0.83; (4) Acceptance/Adaptation scale, with 14 items, had an alpha of 0.84; and (4) the Encapsulated Marginality[3] scale, with 5 items, had an alpha of 0.80. The final Developmental Score achieved reliability of 0.83 and the Perceived Score reliability was 0.82 (Hammer, 2009a; Hammer et al., 2003).

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[3] Based on further testing, the newest version of the IDI® does not include the encapsulated marginality scale (Hammer, 2009a).

Pre and post seminar IDI® Developmental Orientation (DO) scores were analyzed to understand whether participation in the seminar influenced intercultural development. Ten of 14 fall seminar participants completed both the pre- and post-test, five of which were inbound students. Within the fall comparison group, 11 participants, three of them inbound, completed both tests. In the spring, 10 students completed both tests, six of which were inbound students. One inbound student's results were not included because the post-test score was a positive outlier. Ten comparison group participants also completed both tests, five of them inbound students; however, an outbound student's results were not included because the post-test score was a negative outlier. Participants could receive scores between zero and 145 points, which correspond to the developmental phases of the intercultural development continuum (see Figure 3 & Table 4). One measure of intervention success would be positive progression along the intercultural development continuum as indicated by changes in pre and post IDI® assessments.
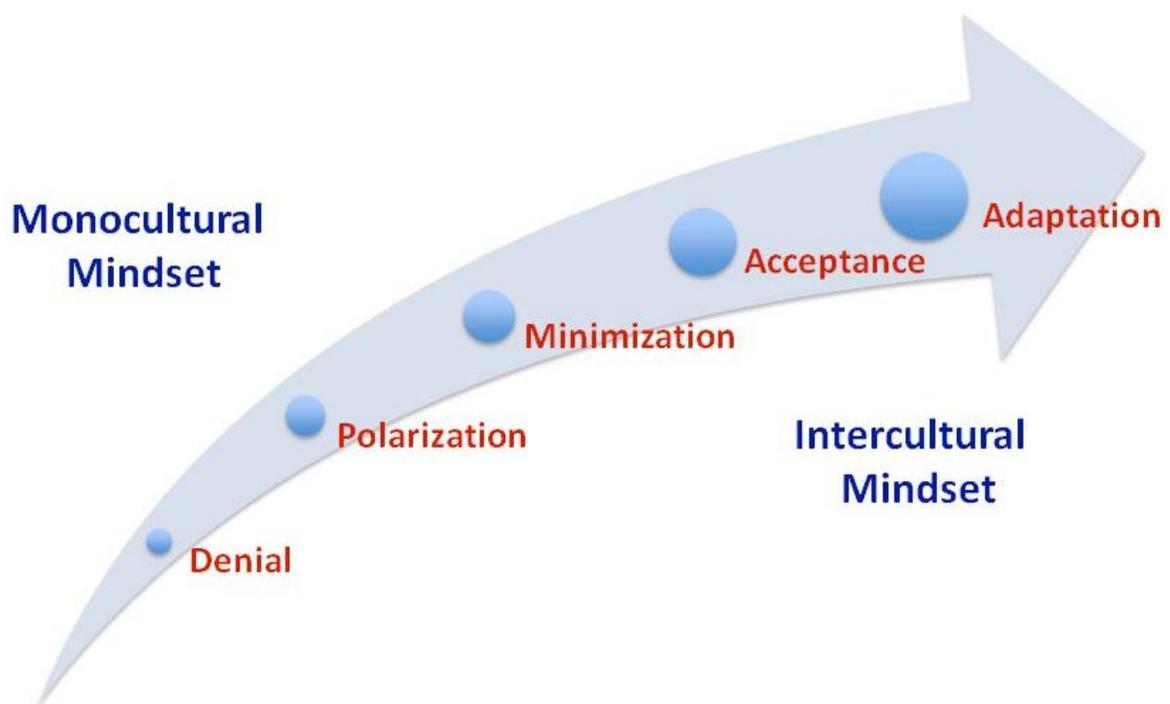

Figure 3. Intercultural development continuum (Hammer, 2012).

Table 4

Intercultural Development Continuum Scores

IDI Scores	Intercultural Development Continuum Phases
<55-69.9	Denial
70-84.9	Polarization: Defense/Reversal
85-114.9	Minimization
115-129.9	Acceptance
130-145	Adaptation

Note. (Hammer, 2012).

Focus groups. Data collected from a focus group midway through the seminars and at the seminars' end provided deeper insight into the affordances and constraints of the technologies and collaborative learning, as perceived by participants. These seminars served as a checkpoint to see how participants were responding to the intervention. Using web conferencing software with recording capability, the focus groups were structured conversationally to explore participants' experiences during and after the seminar. Guiding questions were open-ended, and participants could play off one another's answers. Focus group discussions were transcribed, and any participant who was unable to attend could respond to the guiding questions via email.

Data gathered from the focus groups provided information into participants' attitudes and levels of engagement while participating in the seminar, as well as perceived influence of social interactions on their intercultural development. Responses provided answers as to how social interactions influence students' experiences within a collaborative online international learning environment and what the affordances and constraints of collaborative learning were in this type of intervention. Discussion topics included: (1) seminar format and content; (2) perceived changes in intercultural knowledge; (3) community development; (4) online format; and (5) use of tools as related to intercultural development (see Appendix G).

Coding and Analysis

Data analysis was both quantitative and qualitative. The needs analysis data highlighted participants' prior experience with technology and online learning. This information was used to collect demographic data, as well as connect prior experience and interest with their seminar experiences. Pre and post IDI® continuum scores between intervention and comparison groups were used to identify potential changes in intercultural development. A two-factor ANOVA analysis determined differences between the intervention and comparison groups over two specific points in time. Focus groups were recorded and then coded deductively and inductively to explore participants' experiences online, perceived influence of social interaction on intercultural development, and their opinions on the affordances and constraints of the intervention. Qualitative data from online discussions and focus groups were used to highlight recurring themes related to the research questions. The data traced the progress of intercultural development and also highlighted how social interactions afford, constrain, and influence learning in an online environment. Focus group data provided insight into how participants' viewed the relationship between social interaction and intercultural development, as well as social interaction and experiences in a collaborative online international learning intervention. The connections between the research questions, data sources, and data analysis are outlined in Table 7 (see Table 7).

Data gathered from coding served as indicators, highlighting if the intermediate and final intervention outcomes of the embodied conjectures were met (see Figure 2). Garrison et al.'s (2000) Community of Inquiry coding scheme was used to code idea units in seminar discussions and focus group transcripts (see Table 5).

Table 5

Community of Inquiry Coding Schema

Elements	Categories	Indicators (examples)
Cognitive Presence	Triggering Events	Sense of puzzlement/Recognizing the problem
	Exploration	Information exchange/Discussion of ambiguity
	Integration	Connecting ideas/Creating solutions
	Resolution	Apply new ideas/Critically assess solutions
Social Presence	Emotional Expression	Emotions/Emoticons/Autobiographical
	Open Communication	Risk-free expression/Acknowledging others
	Group Cohesion	Encouraging collaboration/Helping/Supporting
Teaching Presence	Instructional Management	Defining & initiating discussion topics/Structure
	Building Understanding	Sharing personal meaning/Seeking consensus
	Direct Instruction	Focusing discussion/Diagnosing misconceptions

Note. (Garrison et al., 2000, p. 4)

Seminar discussions, emails between participants and the facilitator, and focus group data were coded by recurring themes observed by the facilitator (see Table 6). The themes highlighted participants' feedback related to their experiences, as well as the affordances and constraints of the intervention. In all, there were 3,415 codable units. To verify the coding schemes, a second coder coded 20 percent of each document, resulting in an inter-reliability rating of 95.75 percent.

Table 6

Emergent Analysis

Type	Categories	Indicators (examples; comments regarding)
Design	Technology	Platform/Online learning/Engaging with technology
	Technical Support	Questions on how to use the technology
	Structure	Seminar layout/ Incentives offered
	Content	Content of modules/Use of theory/Content requests
	Assignment Questions	Questions on how to complete an assignment
	Facilitator	Influence of the facilitator
Outside Influence	Education	School work and exams/Time of semester
	Personal	Illness/Employment/Time available/Obligations
	External	Hurricane/Power and Internet outages
Peer Experience	Structure	Parings/Time zone issues/Participation rates
	Social Engagement	Commonalities/Hopes & fears of speaking w/ others
	Value of Coming Together	Alternative perspective/Learn from & engage with
Reflecting	Reflections on Learning	Self-awareness/Cultural/Theory/Gained skills
No Code	No Code	Does not fit any coding category

The value of a mixed-methods study is the ability to combine quantitative tools for assessment with participants' own observations and experiences. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data also allows for further triangulation and reliability (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2010). A two-factor ANOVA with condition as the between subjects factor and time as the within subjects factor determined if there was any significant main effect for time, condition, or condition by time interaction. Correlational analyses were conducted across quantitative and qualitative data sets. Analysis was deductive, and open to emergent codes, themes, and critical incidents. Coding for Community of Inquiry presences provided a high-level overview of trends throughout the seminar. A phenomenological approach, one that studies the lived experience of individuals as related to specific phenomena, was used to analyze qualitative data (Groenewald, 2004). The following table details the relationship between the research questions, data sources, and data analysis (see Table 7).

Table 7

Relationship Between Research Questions and Data Analysis

Research Question	Data Source	Data Analysis
What are the affordances and constraints of collaborative learning in an online, international intervention?	Needs Analysis Focus Groups	Teaching Presence Phenomenological
What is the influence of the intervention on study abroad students' intercultural development?	IDI® Focus Groups	Two-factor ANOVA Cognitive Presence Phenomenological
How do social interactions influence students' experiences within the intervention?	Online discussions Focus Groups	Social Presence Phenomenological

Chapter Five: Results

The first section of data analysis provides a high-level overview of each enactment and group trends occurring throughout the seminars. Information is presented by participation trends, needs analysis, and IDI® results, as well as Community of Inquiry and emergent theme summaries. Richer, descriptive data based on individuals' seminar experiences are presented first by enactment, and then by research question, following the high-level overview.

The mean length of an individual fall seminar post was 180 words, with 71 posts logged during the seminar, and the length of an individual spring seminar post was 58 words, with 297 posts logged during the seminar. Participation rates varied between groups. The fall seminar group began with 15 and finished with 11 participants. The spring seminar group was composed of 10 participants. More spring participants persevered to the end of the seminar and with fewer withdrawals. A participation chart highlights how well each group met the intermediate outcome of regular online engagement (see Figure 4).
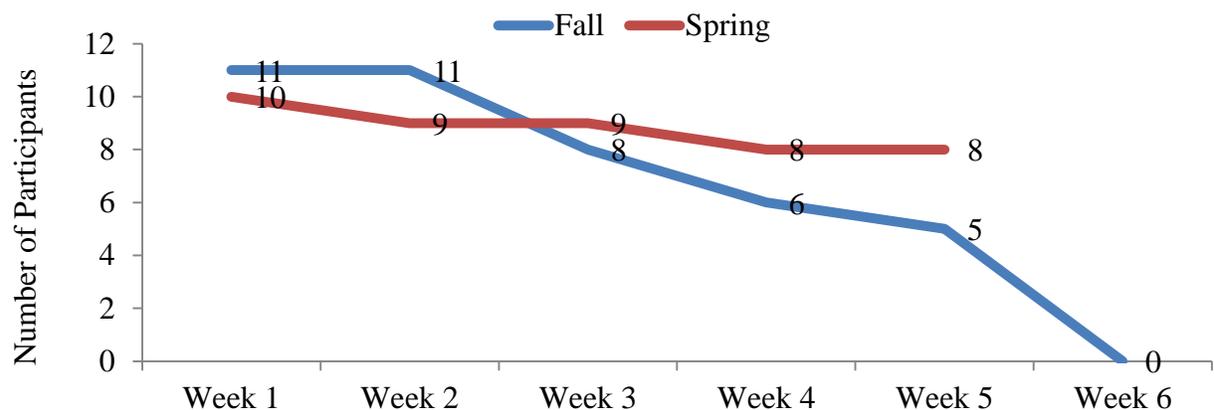
*Figure 4*. Seminar participation rates.

Needs Analysis

Before the start of the semester seminar, participants completed a needs analysis that was used to determine their technical profile and interest in seminar learning outcomes. Fourteen fall

participants and 11 spring participants completed these needs analysis. Seventy-six percent of

fall participants and 83 percent of spring participants were either extremely interested or quite

interested in the seminar learning outcomes. Seventy-three percent of spring participants

indicated no prior exposure to intercultural theories as opposed to 35 percent of fall participants.

Nearly half of all participants had previously taken an online course. In general, students in both

groups acknowledged the convenience and efficiency of an online learning platform, as well as

the potential for online learning to be engaging, enjoyable, and a helpful tool in the learning

process. Overall, the spring group made more positive mentions of online learning, whereas the

fall group indicated a higher preference for classroom learning.

All participants had access to the hardware technologies necessary to participate in the

seminar. Fall outbound participants indicated that they were *well* or *extremely well* equipped to

work within the platform, and all spring participants indicated the same. Both groups rated

themselves competent in the use of technology. Most participants felt that their technical

abilities prepared them to participate in the seminar. Results suggested that spring participants

were a slightly more tech savvy group, yet also included outliers with less overall technical

experience. The needs analysis revealed that participants felt they had the necessary hardware,

skills, and interest needed to participate in the seminar as designed. It also highlighted the need

to present intercultural content in a way that was beneficial to participants with varying levels of

knowledge.

Intercultural Development Inventory®

An analysis of pre and post IDI® results indicated if a final outcome indicator – positive

intercultural development as exhibited by upward progression along the IDI® continuum – was

achieved. Participants that completed only one of two IDI®s were excluded from the statistical

analysis. There were 10 usable pre- and post-test results from fall seminar participants. All fall

comparison results were usable. The mean pre-test IDI® score for the fall group was 91.49,

indicating that most participants were in the minimization[4] stage of intercultural development.

The overall fall comparison score was 93.33, which was also in the range of minimization. Post

seminar, fall seminar participants scored an average of 85.21, and comparison participants scored

86.55. Both groups' results were within the range of minimization. All spring seminar and

comparison group participants completed the pre- and post-tests. The mean pre-seminar score

for spring seminar participants was 87.43 and 88.31 for comparison participants. Both scores

were in the range of minimization. Post seminar scores averaged 90.47 (minimization) for

seminar participants and 82.56 (polarization[5]) for comparison group participants.

To look for differences, I conducted a 2x2 ANOVA with condition as the between

subjects factor and time as the within subjects factor. Each semester was examined

separately. There were no significant main effects of time $F(1, 39) = 2.58$, p=.12 or condition

$F(1, 39) = .46$, p =.50 for fall seminar and comparison participants. There was no significant

condition by time interaction $F(1, 39) = 2.78$, p=10.   IDI® scores for spring seminar and

comparison participants also showed no significant main effects of time $F(1, 18) = .08$, p=.78 or

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[4] Minimization is "an orientation that highlights cultural commonality and universal values and principles that may also mask deeper recognition and appreciation of cultural differences" (Hammer, 2009b, p. 4).

[5] Polarization is "a judgmental orientation that views cultural differences in terms of 'us' and 'them'. This can take the form of": (a) "Defense- an uncritical view toward one's own cultural values and practices and an overly critical view toward other cultural value and practices"; or (b) Reversal- an overly critical orientation toward one's own cultural values and practices and an uncritical view toward other cultural values and practices" (Hammer, 2009b, p. 4).

condition F(1, 18) = 1.49, p =.24. There was no significant condition by time interaction F(1,

18) = 3.80, p=.07. Overall, no group demonstrated statistically significant increases in

intercultural sensitivity over time. Tests indicated no effect for condition when developmental

orientation (DO) scores were compared in entirety and when compared by semester. This lack of

effect is partially due to the small sample size and may also be related to when the second IDI®

test was administered. It is also possible that the measure was not sensitive enough to trace

intercultural development over such a short time frame. Spring seminar trends were positive,

mostly due to one participant's results. In the final analysis, spring outliers were removed from

the descriptive statistics. The mean spring post IDI® score trended in a positive direction;

however, with or without the outliers, overall results were not statistically significant

(see Table 8).

Table 8

Pre/Post DO IDI® Results

			Fall			Spring	
	Condition	*n*	Mean	Std. Deviation	n	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test	1	10	91.49	8.43	9	87.43	8.35
	2	11	93.33	12.18	9	88.31	16.60
	Total	21	92.45	10.34	18	87.87	12.76
Post-test	1	10	85.21	12.52	9	90.47	13.92
	2	11	86.55	13.61	9	82.56	10.65
	Total	21	85.91	12.79	18	86.51	12.69

Note. Time 1 = Pre-test DO; Time 2 – Post-test DO
   Condition 1 = Seminar Group; Condition 2 = Comparison Group

Community of Inquiry Analysis

The Community of Inquiry coding template was used to code seminar transcripts, emails,

and the spring introductory meeting (Garrison et al., 2000). Data was organized by presence

subcodes to provide a high-level visual analysis of trends across the seminar enactments.

Qualitative data connected to the Community of Inquiry codes is presented in the sections titled

The Intervention Experience. Each Community of Inquiry presence can be mapped onto the

research questions: (a) cognitive presence with intercultural development; (b) social presence with the influence of social interactions; and (c) teaching presence with affordances and constraints of the design and environment.

Seminar transcripts, emails, and personal Facebook messages were coded to explore each presence of the Community of Inquiry model. Coding excerpts for cognitive presence revealed the extent to which each group was able to construct meaning, engage in dialogue, and promote reflection (see Table 9). This information helped to assess the influence of the intervention on participants' intercultural development by exploring the intermediate outcomes of the intervention. Cognitive presence mapped to the intermediate outcomes of depth of discussion, self-reflection, and alternative perspective taking. Integrating and resolving issues would suggest the presence of higher-order thinking. Identifying triggering events and exploring them were common cognitive processes across both groups. Spring participants demonstrated higher rates of cognitive presence in all categories, with the locus in exploration. Rates of resolution were the same. In both groups, coding for cognitive presence suggests (a) students that participated actively in the seminar demonstrated more overall cognitive presence; and (b) despite active participation, not all students progressed through all levels of cognitive presence and did not completely achieve higher-order thinking.

Table 9

Cognitive Presence by Term

	Triggering Events	Exploration	Integration	Resolution
Fall	18	54	19	5
Spring	26	112	23	5

Coding for social presence highlighted the degree to which the intermediate outcome of personal disclosure was achieved (see Table 10). Personal disclosure was evident in participants' emotional expression and open communication. This information was used to

explore how social interactions influence participants' experiences within the intervention. In both groups, emotional expression was the most prevalent of the three social presence categories; however, the overall rate of social presence between groups varied drastically. Even after reducing the length of the seminar by one week, and with fewer members, spring participants overwhelmingly demonstrated more social presence.

Table 10

Social Presence by Term

	Emotional Expression	Open Communication	Group Cohesion
Fall	65	44	6
Spring	135	104	28

Teaching presence was used to code the facilitator's excerpts (see Table 11). Some affordances and constraints can be extrapolated by examining teaching presence. Based on participants' requests for more instructor engagement, rates of teaching presence were increased in the second half of the fall semester. The high rate of instructional management was related to technical assistance and many emails reminding the group of activities and deadlines. Words of encouragement were also sent to assist the intermediate outcomes of regular engagement in the seminar. Spring rates of teaching presence were high in an attempt to increase participation rates and facilitate intermediate learning outcomes. Most teaching presence occurred in the seminar platform rather than through email.

Table 11

Teaching Presence by Term

	Instructional Management	Building Understanding	Direct Instruction
Fall	63	17	12
Spring	122	45	59

In summary, although fall participants wrote much longer activity responses, the increase in length did not coincide with increased cognitive presence. In fact, spring participants initiated more excerpts across all categories and exhibited significantly more social presence, despite

being a smaller group. Social presence, and the Community of Inquiry sub-categories

exploration, emotional expression, and open communication were most prevalent across both

groups.

Emergent Themes Analysis.

Responses to focus group questions, emails and the design journal were analyzed using

emergent thematic codes. Coding for recurring themes was used to provide a high-level analysis

of trends across enactments regarding participants' experiences with alternative perspective

taking, self-reflection, interacting across cultures, and engaging with the technology. Design

themes captured participants' technological and academic experiences throughout the seminar, as

well as affordances and constraints. Qualitative data connected to the emergent themes is

presented in the sections titled *The Intervention Experience*. Across both groups, topics related

to technology and structure were the most common, accounting for 19 to 20 percent of overall

emergent coding. The value of coming together was the third most coded category for spring

participants, 14 percent as compared to nine percent by the fall group. Comments about social

engagement and the structure of the peer experience averaged nine percent across groups.

Both groups reflected on what they had learned throughout the seminar at similar rates;

however, spring participants never shared these reflections with their peers in the seminar

environment. Fall participants mused in the public forum. The space for reflection within the

fall seminar environment could be attributed to the academic nature of the platform or the ability

to write longer posts; however, the lack of sustained response by peers meant that the reflecting

individuals were "speaking to the universe" instead of to each other, a necessary component

when creating shared meaning.

Using the Community of Inquiry as a lens for analysis captured the presence of richer experiences in the spring seminar as opposed to the fall. The emergent themes hinted at the categories that were most prominent for participants, such as exploring new ideas, bonding with others, and the design of the seminar. Although both analyses provided a high level overview of the seminars, as well as similarities and differences between enactments, they do not provide the voices of the participants. Examining the research questions through this lens provided a deeper understanding of what participants believed they learned, how they felt about social interactions, and what specifically afforded and constrained their learning and intervention experiences.

The Intervention Experience: Fall Enactment

Matters of intervention design and the use of online tools were intimately tied to students' intercultural development, social experiences, and engagement throughout the seminar. The following sections, categorized by research question, provide deeper understanding of the Community of Inquiry presences and emergent themes through the lens of participants' experiences.

Question one: What is the influence of the intervention on pre-departure study abroad students' intercultural development?

Despite the fact that there were mixed opinions on participants' self-reported intercultural development, participants acknowledged that they did learn from the seminar. Learning occurred in a variety of categories, including preparation and mindfulness, cultural general and culture specific information, cultural commonalities and difference, and identity and self-awareness. Through an activity that explored the origins of participants' names, Liam and Ava explored the hidden aspects of culture:

     Liam: Ava and I had a wonderful discussion about names and naming, and differences between Europe and Korea. I found it really fascinating to learn that to name their children, Koreans use Chinese characters, which carry meaning. The date of one's birth also plays a role. On top of that, there are professional name makers, whom the parents can hire. And so, Ava's name means, 'there is a sun.' While to Ava, and assumingly her parents too, the name has a lot of meaning, in my case the meaning that one can derive from the Hebrew origins of my name was of no importance. Aesthetic and desire of my parents were the sole motives of giving me my name.

     Ava: I realized how Christianity enormously affects everything in life including the way of naming. The similar thing [between our two cultures] is that parents have a significant role in naming. The main differences [were the] religion and tradition we follow[ed]. Since Liam's parents have faith in Christianity, he was named after one of [the] people from the Bible, an angel, though it's spelled [differently because] he's Polish. In contrast, because most of Korean's names are based on Chinese character, we request that the professional name maker [create a] name by considering all the factors about me, such as birth date and meaning of Chinese characters, based on Chinese Philosophy.

Liam and Ava's discussion provided a quality example of exploring culture through personal disclosure. However, only three pairs completed this exercise, so nearly half of fall participants did not have the opportunity to explore the hidden aspects of culture in a meaningful way.

     Closely linked to the observation of differences was the awareness of cultural difference and self-identity. The types of reflections were closely connected to the level of cognitive presence exhibited. During one of his paired activities, Noah "found it enjoyable to Skype with a girl from another country… communicating was fun because [they] each could recognize differences in [their] speech [patterns] and tendencies." Noah's reflection on explicit differences between cultures coincided with his low overall demonstration of cognitive presence. By only focusing on the explicit aspects of culture, Noah was unwilling or unable to connect and apply new information to understand culture on a deeper, more meaningful level. Emma, Charlotte, and Mia, participants with greater and more expansive cognitive presence, offered more nuanced reflections on culture. Emma stated that although she did not feel she experienced any

intercultural development she "learned that we all develop our unique personalities and cultural identities, but can still connect with each other on a different level." Meanwhile, Charlotte found that "everyone has a differing interpretation of cultural identity." Finally, Mia "learned that there are many ways to describe yourself, and that 'identity' consist of many things… People can see things from very different perspectives." Fall participants did provide statements that hinted at some type of increased intercultural understanding, although none of them reported outright feelings of increased intercultural development.

Despite not feeling any increases in intercultural development, participants did report becoming more self-aware after participation in the seminar. They thought they would learn more about other cultures: instead they were learning more about their own. Emma elaborated by stating, "coming to college, you don't normally have these 'learn and reflect on your identity' activities, and I felt that I got to see how much I've grown as a person since I came to Rutgers and the person I was really becoming." After creating her cultural web, Emma demonstrated cognitive presence through exploration and integration when she reflected on important aspects of her identity, as well as compared her identity to the identities of other participants:

> If I had to pick just one circle [as the most important part of my cultural identity], it would probably be 'free spirit'. I think of myself as a free spirit because I live based on my feelings more than thinking and I always follow my heart… My second circle would be 'bilingüe…' I feel that this is an important word to describe me because although these cultures may not be of my own background, I feel as though it is still a part of who I am and what I am passionate about. If I had to pick a circle that people normally wouldn't recognize about me, it would definitely be 'Russian/Italian-American.' One of things that frustrates me the most is that often times, people assume that I am simply 'White' or 'American' and that I don't really have a culture of my own. However, I feel that although it may not be obvious, I am a cultural person, and I am not simply what I appear to be.

While I was reading other diagrams in this activity, I found that many of us identified ourselves with different roles such as student, friend, etc. I thought this was really important because although not all of us come from the same place, we all can relate to certain aspects as our lives. For example, many of us come from different universities and other places, but we still all identify ourselves as students and are going through a similar time in our lives. Also, many of us can identify with being a friend or family member and have many of the same values regarding personal relationships… However, I found that although we all had some similar aspects of our cultural selves, each of us developed a unique representation of ourselves and none of us had identical cultural webs… I found that I could connect with each different person in some way whether it was [through] culture, interests, or personality (see Figure 5).
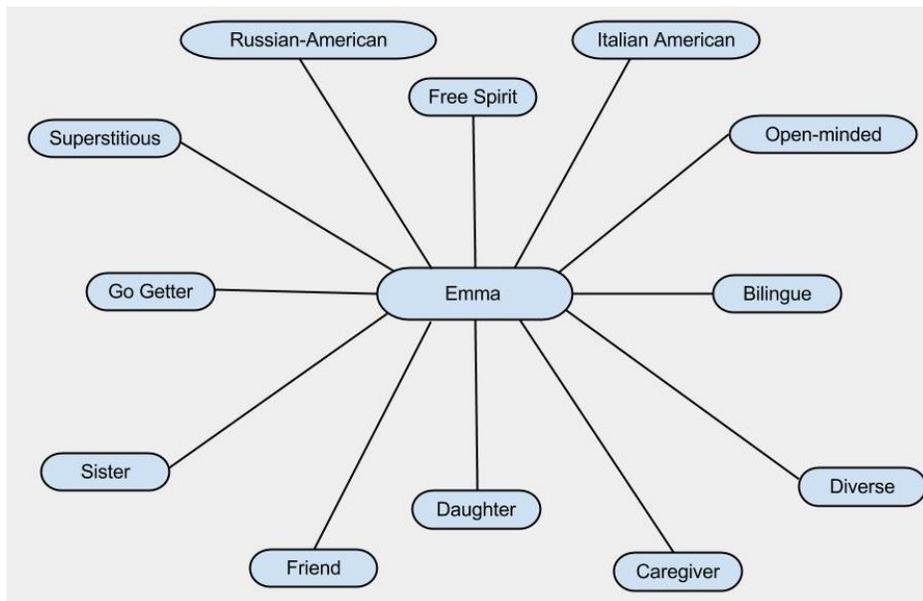
*Figure 5.* Emma's cultural web.

The cultural diagram activity turned aspects of individuals' hidden identities into visible

artifacts. Emma was then able to reflect on her own identity, as well as those of other

participants, in a meaningful way. Olivia, one of four participants to reach a point of cognitive

resolution based on the Community of Inquiry analysis, took away the following lesson:

> While we are abroad, we should remember how varied our responses to this [core cultural values] activity were. No matter where you go, there will be different values and traditions than you are used to and you need to understand and respect those to feel comfortable in your new habitat. In my opinion, the only true way to discover these differing values is by observing others in your new country and by trial and error. You could also do a little research before you go abroad, so you are prepared for some of the differences and do not offend anyone your first day there!

Her analysis of identity and how it could influence participants' experiences abroad was a very good example of cognitive resolution, yet such examples of higher order thinking were rare across the group.

   Social interactions and perceived intercultural development. Fall participants provided very little feedback on whether they believed other participants had influenced their intercultural development. Olivia and Jacob offered opposing opinions. Olivia believed interacting with other inbound and outbound students "was one of the biggest factors in this seminar," while Jacob did not think participants had any influence on his development. Olivia stated she had experienced an increase in intercultural development because the "seminar did get [her] thinking [and] because having to interact with people of different cultures and talking about the cultural subject makes you grow in that area." Noah found that interacting with other participants showed [him] "it is possible to create relationships and successfully communicate even though there are [challenges] like language and other cultural barriers." Several students felt that there was potential for a shift in intercultural development to occur if there were more seminar participants.

   Much of what fall participants learned was directly related to their interactions with other participants. The group found that social interactions provided culture-specific knowledge, and access to alternative perspectives. In Lucas's opinion,

> It was a really enriching experience to be able to talk to Olivia, as she is a [U.S.] student. She has already been to Rutgers and being able to understand her point of view… and how [her] culture is a little different from mine was helpful.

He also believed, and Charlotte concurred, that connecting inbound and outbound students in a pre-departure intervention was very important because it allowed outbound students to access less "Rutgers-centric" social experiences. In his opinion, the outbound students lived in a more mono-cultural environment and when abroad would be in a mono-cultural "third culture" environment, whereas inbound students coming to Rutgers would be a diverse group because of the number of countries they represented. Emma found "it was nice reading everyone's responses, and it was great how you got to hear about people not just from your own school, but others around the world. It was eye-opening and very informative." Jacob identified "hearing what people said about their own cultures" as the most valuable aspect of coming together as a group. He "enjoyed reading other peoples comments about their cultures [and] reading other peoples profiles because it gave [him] insight into their lives." Nearly all the fall participants found that connecting inbound and outbound students together provided some level of value.

Question two: How do social interactions influence pre-departure study abroad students' experiences within an online intervention?

Participants' experiences in the intervention were closely connected to their social interactions and engagement throughout the seminar. Seminar interactions included viewing content and comments posted by other participants. Social engagement included fostering a sense of community, an essential element in creating shared meaning or advancing knowledge. Social activities were designed into the seminar, yet were ultimately voluntary, as participants received no academic credit or financial incentive.

Seminar interaction. Checking back on other participants' comments and posts was a necessary part of the seminar design; however, the actions of fall participants differed from the expectation of the design's embodied conjectures. Only Jacob indicated that he checked posts several times in the days that followed his own post. Although this sounds positive, Jacob posted only once or twice over the six weeks, so his statement did not reveal how many of his seminar-mates' posts he actually viewed. Most other participants indicated they would sometimes check back to see posts made after their own posts. Noah would check as often as he would sign into Sakai to complete work; Charlotte initially read many posts then her readership declined over time; and Mia would view some posts based on the activity. Mia would also check older assignments and posts weekly, but she found that most of the time no one responded after the activity deadlines. Olivia and Emma acknowledge that they did not go back to view comments or posts as often as they should have. As for Lucas, he was usually the first to post to an assignment, and one of the participants demonstrating high social presence, but he would rarely return to see others' work or comments. Although Lucas disclosed personal information and encouraged group participation, he never went back to follow through with continuous social engagement. In all, too few participants were regularly, fully participating in joint discourse.

Social engagement. After the seminar, participants indicated that they did not have the social experience they expected. Their expectations versus the reality of connecting and interacting differed. Expectations included much more engagement and social connection with peers on both an academic and personal basis. Instead, most participants did not feel socially connected with their peers. Olivia felt connected to those who actively participated yet, as Emma noted, most of the group did not relate to each other due to the lack of overall participation. After the mid-seminar live meeting, Jack thought he might be able to relate better

to others because he "could place a face to the name." He also indicated that he felt more

comfortable with the prospect of sharing interests and going deeper into discussion topics. Only

one pair, Olivia and Lucas, connected to each other outside of the structure of the seminar,

speaking through email and Skype. Olivia indicated they discovered "that we have a lot in

common, and also I have given him a bit of advice about Rutgers and the U.S. in general." To

increase exposure to others, most of the group suggested rotating partners after each paired

assignment. Ava suggested "more frequent group meeting with two to four members might be

helpful so that they can get to know each other comparing the differences." Noah further

suggested,

> Make it so the partners need each other in order to complete assignments, so we would
> get on each other about doing them. I had no incentive, and no one besides you and your
> emails notified me about the assignments. If kids from my group emailed me, I would
> feel more compelled to work with them because they need me.

These comments indicated that participants did want to connect with each other, yet they

struggled to do so virtually. As an overall recommendation, despite several connectivity issues,

the group requested more personal, face-to-face interactions such as those experienced through

the Skype or live video sessions.

There were two factors that inhibited feelings of social connectedness, the lack of

participation by many group members and individual discomfort levels. As with many of the

participants, Jack noted that his level of motivation to engage in the seminar was low because of

the slow participation response rate of other participants. Mia elaborated further,

> I think it was a pity not everyone participated from the start (some of the participants
> never started in the first place)... I was supposed to do an assignment with two other
> people, knowing they would not respond because they did not participate once since the
> beginning of the seminar. This did not motivate me to do the assignment.

Mia's sentiment was confirmed by her overall low social presence. Olivia, one of the more

active fall participants was first motivated by her intrinsic interest in cultures, and second by peer

participation:

> I'm very interested in culture, so that was my first motivation. But when other kids also
> participated, that motivated me more. I think that the other participants are what
> influenced my experience the most. If I was with a group that didn't speak very much,
> then I didn't really enjoy it. If I was with others who put a lot of effort into it, it was
> quite enjoyable.

Olivia characterized an average social presence, which waxed and waned depending on her

social grouping. Finally, for some participants, active participation was thwarted by individual

feelings. Mia and Jacob indicated that they were nervous or felt awkward interacting with other

participants online or over Skype. They both contributed little social presence. Mia was nervous

during the live interactions because she felt a bit uncomfortable about her non-native speaker

status. Jacob, also one of the least active participants, noted that he felt weird working with

complete strangers:

> I find it hard to share much personal information with people I don't know and [it's]
> difficult [for me] to engage with people I don't know solely through the Internet… I
> think it is difficult to engage over long distances with people you don't know and that
> may be why it has picked up a little slowly, for me at least… Skyping with the group
> was, I just felt, a bit awkward… I am uncomfortable sharing personal details and was
> unable to get over this.

Ultimately, individual insecurities thwarted participation for several students, which due to the

small group greatly impacted the overall sociability of the community.

Question three: What are the affordances and constraints of collaborative learning

in an online intervention?

Fall participants experienced many technological challenges while participating in the

seminar. Some were controllable, and some were not. Conducting an intervention entirely

online assumes capacity to access the Internet, as well as the tools necessary to engage fully.

Fall participants experienced a number of barriers and challenges in this regard. During the first

week of the semester, Super Storm Sandy knocked out power to New Jersey for a week, flooding

was rampant, and homes and the university were evacuated (see Appendix H). Some outbound

participants were more deeply affected than others. Later in the seminar, several inbound

students experienced challenges with basic access. In Costa Rica, Jack experienced several

power outages during live meetings while Emily experienced home Internet outages and was

only able to access the Internet at work.

Use of several tools also proved problematic. Several live, synchronous meetings were

scheduled throughout the seminar, using Adobe Connect. Technical problems occurred only

moments after the first of these live chats began. Problems included not being able to connect

microphones or webcams, audio/visual feeds cutting in and out, the need to install plugins,

jumpy connections, and feedback from not using headphones. This resulted in greater frustration

levels for both the participants and the facilitator. Live sessions were where participants felt

most connected to their peers, and the technical challenges interrupted important social

development by constraining participant interaction.

Skype was another way that participants connected throughout the seminar. Participants

who had never used Skype reported needing little time to figure out the software. Beyond the

technological issues, connecting, scheduling, and attending meetings across time zones was also

challenging. Noah noted,

> [Using Skype was] motivating. It helped because it's much easier to communicate
> through applications like Skype. Although we needed to contact our partners to get their
> usernames and THEN we could set up a time to meet.

Overall, participants regarded the use of synchronous web tools as both motivating and not

motivating. Despite the technical and logistical issues of connecting synchronously, all

participants requested more synchronous time be built into the seminar. Participants

acknowledged that the technology allowed them the possibility to connect as long as there were

no technical problems. They also recognized the ability of technology to connect virtually with

participants from around the world.

Participants also offered many comments on Sakai as a platform, the use of various tools,

and the integration of tools into the seminar. Some participants experienced barriers when

navigating the platform and using tools, although others did not. Ava, Emma, and Mia were

among those participants who did not experience barriers navigating Sakai. Ava found the use of

tools convenient, and Olivia felt, for the most part, the use of technology was motivating. Jacob

acknowledged that most of the tools chosen were, for him, quite easy to use. Jack offered

interesting insight into how the use of tools was helping him develop. He found that using the

tools proved interesting because his first language was not English, which forced him to adapt

his thoughts and experiences into a new language and in a forum viewable by others. Jack liked

this challenge because he would have to do the same upon arrival at Rutgers and felt that it made

him more creative. Some participants did have initial difficulty figuring out new tools, such as

various GoogleDocs applications, yet they managed to figure out how to use them independently

of contacting the facilitator. The real challenge occurred when switching between Sakai and

GoogleDocs. The use of two platforms was necessary because Sakai did not offer all the

functionality needed. Most complaints regarding the seminar design resulted from switching in

and out of platforms, as well as accessing GoogleDocs. These technical challenges decreased

motivation in some participants.

Finally, participants had mixed experiences using Sakai. All outbound students were

familiar with Sakai because it was in use at the University. Inbound students were unfamiliar

with the platform. Mia, an inbound student, indicated "Sakai was very clear to me though I had

never used it before." Jacob, an outbound student, stated that he got lost in the barrage of

information posted in Sakai and emails from the facilitator, which decreased his level of

motivation. Despite completing most seminar activities, Ava commented that the layout of the

seminar made it difficult for her to focus, which could have attributed to her low overall

cognitive and social presences. Noah, a participant who had used Sakai before, offered the

following feedback regarding the discussion forum layout:

> The Sakai forums definitely influenced me negatively. I found it difficult to find where I
> was supposed to be posting… or who my partners were and how to contact them. Also, I
> found myself jumping around tabs and pages within Sakai, which was confusing. I lost
> interest quickly due to myself getting lost within the Sakai page and postings… because
> there were too many. I think Sakai influenced my level of motivation negatively because
> knowing that the assignments would take me some time, plus navigating around Sakai
> and finding the right place to post took more time. So, knowing that navigating Sakai
> would add even more time to the weekly assignments, it definitely negatively affected my
> motivation and engagement.

The design of a learning environment is both an art and a science. What works for some

participants does not work well for others. More fall participants found that the layout of

information in Sakai detracted from the affordances of the environment.

After the seminar, participants indicated that although their needs analyses suggested they

were technically prepared to work in an online environment, the reality differed. Jacob indicated

that he felt "very unprepared [because] I had never done anything like [this] before," while Mia

indicated, "I do not know if I was 'prepared,' but I could manage without [many] problems."

Olivia also felt somewhat prepared, stating, "I've actually never taken an online class, so [it] was

something to get used to." When Charlotte was asked how prepared she was to work in the

online environment, she revealed that she was at first scared because it was a new, unfamiliar

experience. Nevertheless, Charlotte appeared to have adapted well and contributed regularly.

After the seminar, most participants stated that they preferred functioning in a traditional

academic environment. Jacob acknowledged several benefits of learning online, yet suggested

that the medium also meant that it was harder to stay engaged. Emma reinforced this claim:

> I know it is becoming more common at Rutgers, and an unavoidable topic, but I really
> dislike learning online. I am an old fashioned, face-to-face kind of learner… I was not
> very motivated to participate as much as I would be if [class] was somewhere I had to
> actually meet face-to-face... [Online] makes it less motivating and less personal.

In general, fall participants' preferred learning and interacting that occurred in person rather than

virtually because they felt it was easier to form social bonds and stay actively engaged.

Several affordances and constraints of the technology and learning platform influenced

participants' experiences throughout the seminar. Sakai as a platform provided a layout that

resembled a traditional academic format. This included the use of modules, a written

introductory lecture each week, and a discussion forum with weekly reflective questions. It

provided participants with the feeling of being in an academic setting, as well as the space to

write long discussion forum responses in a manner that reflected academic writing. A constraint

of Sakai was that it did not include many of the technologies that afforded collaboration

(notification system, easy instant messaging, etc.). Multiple systems, such as GoogleDocs, had

to be pieced into Sakai as best as possible, which created a disjointed and confusing experience

to some. Sakai also lacked the feeling of sociability. Participants could not tell when other

students were logged into the instant message feature, they could not receive notifications

connected to their posts, and they offered no examples of emotional expression beyond what

assignments required of them. Many of the social experiences took place outside of Sakai, using

synchronous software such as Skype or Adobe Connect. The software afforded participants the

opportunity to connect as long as there were no technical problems. Overall, seminar

technologies afforded opportunities for cognitive presences, but constrained social and teaching

presences, which resulted in an overall depressed Community of Inquiry and participant experience.

Revised Design

Fall participants offered the following suggestions to improve the seminar: (a) to motivate participants with course credit, money, or other extrinsic motivation; (b) decrease the length of the seminar by a week; (c) include more opportunities for social interaction, including a live meeting at the beginning of the seminar; and (d) enhance the social experience and increase participation by considering the use of Facebook as a seminar platform, despite its less than academic format. Based on this feedback, the spring seminar was partially redesigned. The goal of the design was to bridge cognitive and social presences in a collaborative online international learning intervention. The embodied conjectures of the original model suggested that successfully combining cognitive, social, and teaching presences would result in the intermediate outcomes of (1) depth of discussion; (2) personal disclosure; (3) self-reflection; (4) alternative perspective-taking; (5) interaction with participants across cultures; (6) regular engagement with provided technology; and (7) regular online engagement; however, these outcomes were not realized. Barriers included sustained participation, seminar length, and design issues that caused technological and social impediments. Obstacles experienced in the fall seminar revealed that a quality cognitive experience and meaningful social engagement could not be achieved when design elements did not align, resulting in participants not achieving the intermediate or final intervention outcomes.

The Intervention Experience: Spring Enactment

Matters of intervention design and the use of online tools continued to be intimately tied to students' intercultural development, social experiences, and engagement throughout the

seminar. The following sections, categorized by research question, provide deeper understanding of the Community of Inquiry presences and emergent themes through the lens of participants' experiences.

Question one: What is the influence of the intervention on pre-departure study abroad students' intercultural development?

Spring participants' reported several types of perceived learning gains both during and after the seminar. This group offered considerably more reflection on their perceived intercultural development and learning experience as compared to fall participants. Learning occurred in a variety of categories, including preparation and mindfulness, cultural general and culture specific information, cultural commonalities and difference, alternate perspective taking, identity and self-awareness, as well as general theory. Their opinions on perceived intercultural development were mixed and were similar to those of the fall participants. Mary did not think she experienced any changes in intercultural development, and her overall cognitive presence showed similar results. Patricia, the participant with the second highest cognitive presence, stated that she was already taking a cross-cultural management course, and although she was constantly interacting with others and learning new things, she did not feel that she experienced a shift in development. Pam felt that although she experienced only a slight increase in intercultural development, a feeling contradictory to her very low cognitive presence, she now felt more comfortable speaking with foreigners. Susan, Barbara, and Linda, participants who demonstrated median cognitive presence, believed that they experienced an increase in intercultural development; however, they did struggle to explain the shift in more concrete terms. Linda felt that the seminar made her "more aware of the things [she says] and the way [she] act[s]," as well as changed her "way of thinking and [made her] more aware of [her]

surroundings." Most of her cognitive presence occurred in the exploratory stage. In comparison, more spring participants believed they experienced a positive shift in intercultural development.

The spring group was particularly fixed on stereotyping and demonstrated sensitivity to the fear of offending others. Early in the seminar the group completed the cultural web activity, and their reflections morphed into conversations about what heritage means, concepts of ethnicity, immigration, and Islamophobia. Participants displayed risk-free communication as they had an open conversation about ethnicity, yet Barbara was unaware of the stereotypes she was projecting. Barbara's cognitive presence never progressed beyond exploration. Patricia interjected several cognitive and social tactics to broaden her perspective:

Barbara: I think this is such an interesting cultural issue to talk about but also very complex. In my opinion, and from what I have experienced in France and throughout my abroad experiences, I think it depends on how people consider culture in different countries. For instance, in France some people are very proud to talk about their ethnicity and they would rather tell you they are Portuguese or Moroccan or whatever. On the contrary, other people will claim to be French and would only mention their ethnic origins as part of their culture, but they may take offense if [they are] not considered French. Does that make sense to you, and do you think it is the same in every country around the world?

Patricia: Personally, I have some Italian origins and even if I couldn't say that I have a strong Italian heritage, I just love saying that. I am French with some Italian origins as I believe being from different culture is quite fun!

Barbara: Moreover, I personally think that talking about origins is often taboo in France, and this because of immigration. I mean in America, the fact is you all are from an immigrant background, but we French people are not. And I get what you say Patricia when you like having Italian origins (I think it is awesome by the way, I wish I could have a richer cultural background), but I am convinced it depends [on] what origins you have. People are really proud of saying they have Italian origins because Italy is such a great country, culturally speaking and it is more than popular in France. But can we say the same about Maghreb, Sub-Saharan Africa, [and] some Central Europe countries like Romania, Poland, etc.?

> *Patricia:*   I would say it also depends of the person you are talking to. I mean I met some guys who were very proud to say that they came from Maghreb (I am actually living in one of the most diversified neighborhood of Paris). But what you are saying, Barbara, is quite right too... unfortunately! I believe there is currently paranoia about Islam in France. So, people from Maghreb are not always feeling comfortable dealing with narrow-minded persons.

> *Linda*:   Thank you everyone for giving your own personal insight! It really helps. I think that it's so interesting how so many people interpret that question differently. When abroad, I want to be really careful in the subject of ethnicity because I definitely do not want to offend anyone!

In the final focus group, Robert commented on how the previous discussion surprised him: "I think, because I don't want to offend anyone, I try not to assume things. I think I already had that mindset whereas, someone else posted [and] immediately made these judgments, [and] I was like, 'whoa'." This triggering event provided an opportunity for participants to explore alternative perspectives, share meaning, and integrate new knowledge.

It was perhaps this incident that made participants hyper aware of stereotyping. Patricia recognized "even if you don't like stereotyping others, you are always doing it, more or less, [because] stereotyping allows you to have landmarks," while Debra found it difficult not to make assumptions automatically. Debra, another participant with higher cognitive presence across all categories, surmised that learning to check her assumptions was important to do when interacting cross-culturally. Reflecting on an experience during a group activity, she stated that developing an awareness of assumptions and stereotypes is important,

> …Because it's something that you don't necessarily think about. You can stereotype without thinking about it so it helps to be aware of it. When I saw that my partner was a European person I was like, "oh no, they are going to look at me like I'm a dumb American" or something like that so, without really thinking about it or thinking about why I thought that, I just thought it. So I think it's good to sort of explore these things.

By examining stereotypes, Patricia learned to be more tolerant and patient in social situations.

She believed,

> …It is necessary to understand that we are all, more or less, influenced by stereotypes so when an individual is stereotyping, it doesn't necessarily mean that he or she is rude or wants to be offensive. Being patient and tolerant can be useful if we want to have the most pleasant and rewarding experience abroad. Basically, the seminar lets me [remember] that my culture can be extremely different from others. It is then a good opportunity to be aware, once again, that we are more or less stereotyping unknown people all the time. Thus, the seminar prepares future international students to be diplomatic as much as possible in the way we are interacting with people in general and in particular with culturally different people.

Robert acknowledged that a frank discussion about stereotypes did not occur often, so it was an important to have the conversation. He stated, "It's good to be aware of them, explore them, see what other people think." Linda exemplified the group's sensitivity to offending others by saying she learned "to be very careful not to offend anyone because even the smallest things here may be a big deal abroad." From this triggering event, a teachable moment, participants were able to overtly examine beliefs and values and hypothesize several ways this new information could influence their experiences abroad.

The seminar also allowed participants to become more aware by questioning their assumptions, acknowledging difference, and fostering a state of mindfulness. Patricia indicated that the issues discussed each week allowed her to understand how different her culture could be from other participants' cultures. Throughout the seminar, Debra was learning not to assume everyone shared her personal or cultural values, as well as how difficult it was not to rush immediately to assumption or judgment. Participants practiced stepping back and breaking down their immediate assumptions based on their own cultural frames of reference. In the Describe-Interpret-Evaluate activity, participants offered a variety of perspectives that helped

them become more aware of how their cultural beliefs, values, and experiences were influencing

their interpretations (see Figure 6):

> *Linda:*   My gut reaction to this picture was that the woman was sick or trying to protect herself from germs or perhaps the polluted air. I felt empathy for her for having to wear the mask to protect herself from getting worse.

> *Robert*:   I think seeing a sick old woman in general just made me a little sad.

> *Debra:*   I agree with Robert that seeing an old lady that is sick is sad. Also, if the air quality is poor in general, it makes me wish that there were a way to fix it easily so more people won't have to suffer.

> *Karen:*   I thought quite different from everybody. In my country every spring we had quite a strong sand wind, so many people use masks a lot. So, in my case, I have no special feeling about masked woman. Rather, I thought the old woman in front was quite poor because she is wearing apron outside the house. I thought that's because she is working at a restaurant or she is not afford to give attention on her clothes.

Figure 6. Describe-Interpret-Evaluate image.

An example of integration, Linda's seminar experiences taught her that while abroad she should

be mindful because "things don't always mean the same thing in another country as they do in

the U.S." After participating in the seminar, Debra mused,

> I feel I learned a lot about analyzing the way I think versus the way people from other cultures think. Specifically, I think it gave me some useful tools to help put myself in someone else's mind and consider their different perspective. I learned that I have a tendency to forget that not everybody will necessarily have the same mindset that I do, so it is important to be careful not to make assumptions and watch what I do and say. Obviously I am going to make mistakes, but I might make less if I am more wary, and the mistakes I make will hopefully be less serious or offensive…   I already knew that people from different cultures have different ways of thinking and communicating; that wasn't news to me; however, it wasn't something I necessarily considered extensively.

Not unlike the fall group, several participants were surprised by how much they were learning about themselves. Karen noted a particularly surprising and unexpected individual learning outcome. She stated, "Actually I felt more confused after attending this seminar. When I started this I had quite a concrete thoughts about my culture, but after this I found myself all mixed and confus[ed]." As represented by her feelings of confusion and her overall rate of cognitive presence, Karen's comment suggests she experienced multiple triggering events and had the opportunity to explore them, yet she was not always able to integrate this new information in meaningful ways.

   Social interactions and perceived intercultural development. Spring participants also had mixed feelings as to whether interacting with others influenced their learning or intercultural development. Several participants commented that the paired and live activities had the greatest influence on their learning, although a few participants did state that the material could be learned independently. Overall, spring participants felt adamant about the importance of connecting inbound and outbound students together in the seminar. Mary thought that "the most valuable part [of the seminar] was interacting with other people from across the globe… because there [were] two different insights throughout the activities and interactions," while Pam believed that the combination of participants provided balance. Supporting this feeling, Barbara believed "both are important because we need these two different points of view." Spring participants also commented that coming together was one of the enjoyable aspects of the seminar. It provided an opportunity to make friends and become comfortable interacting with other, as well as a platform for building cultural awareness. In Patricia's opinion,

> The seminar is an opportunity to meet new people and maybe future friends!... The paired activities [were] pleasant experiences where we [could] learn a little bit more about each other and feel more comfortable dealing with the other participants.

Linda found that sharing cultures and experiences with other participants helped build her awareness:

> The interaction with the other participants is making me a better traveler because I feel like I am being more mindful of other cultures and customs… They are the ones who have informed me of the cultural [differences between] countries and even within their very own countries.

One poignant teachable moment that Debra experienced occurred during a paired Skype activity, one that took place during her partner's exam period:

> Out of consideration for her, I tried to keep the conversation somewhat shorter. The activity was about coming up with different solutions for different situations depending on what sort of outcome we were hoping for. I noticed that she sort of let me lead the conversation and pretty much just agreed with what I said. Interestingly enough, this activity was during the high-context/low-context communication week. One of my majors is East Asian Studies, and one thing I have learned is that people from East Asian countries mostly use high-context communication and will hesitate to disagree outright and point out a mistake. My focus is on Japan, so I admit I don't know so much about South Korea, but I did wonder if she was just agreeing with me because she felt it would be rude to disagree or express a differing opinion. Whether it was because of this or because she wanted to get some sleep is something I will probably not find out, but it was interesting to think about.

This triggering event allowed Debra to explore the nature of her interaction and why the experience occurred. She then integrated knowledge from the seminar and her major as she looked for insight necessary to fully understand the event and interaction with her partner. Debra's experience exemplifies a teachable moment that occurred because of her interaction, with a seminar participant from another culture, as part of a community of inquiry.

Question two: How do social interactions influence pre-departure study abroad students' experiences within an online intervention? Participants' experiences in the intervention were closely connected to their social interactions and engagement throughout the

seminar. Seminar interactions included viewing content and comments posted by other participants. Social engagement included fostering a sense of community, an essential element in creating shared meaning or advancing knowledge.

Seminar interaction. The viewing habits of the majority of the spring group differed from those of fall participants. The decision to change platforms from Sakai to Facebook was partially responsible for increased participation. Patricia and Mary stated it best when discussing their viewing habits. When asked how often they viewed others' content, Patricia, the participant with the highest amount of social presence, stated, "I guess everyday, since I'm crazy about Facebook. I'm able to take a look at everyone's post and more than one time a day." Mary concurred, stating, "[I check] constantly. I was always so eager to see what was going to be said." Although Mary may not have commented on every post or completed every activity thoroughly, as indicated by her average social presence, she would still take the time to read others' posts: "I was more of a passive participant because I always read through all the comments daily; sometimes I would give feedback but other times I would simply read and keep scrolling." Yet, not all participants read every post. Debra stated, "I have sort of a low attention span, so I'll read the first two comments thoroughly, and the rest I will just skim and then answer the question. I didn't read mine thoroughly." Nancy would "answer a question after looking at one or two comments, but not after every one of them." Only Karen acknowledged that she rarely looked at others participants' comments after she posted. Regardless, viewership showed a drastic increase over the fall as indicated by the number of posts throughout the seminar.

The Facebook notification tool, something Sakai did not have, notified participants when new or follow-up comments were posted, as well as if one participant received a private message from another participant. Depending on how each person's Facebook settings were configured,

notifications could appear in the newsfeed, in the group notification center, or on participants'

phones. This usually prompted participants to go to the group and participate in an activity or

view comments. The only drawback to the notification system occurred when the newsfeed

settings would default to *most viewed* rather than *most recent*. This meant that until the post had

sufficient comments it would not appear at the top of the newsfeed. The setting caused Debra to

miss the start of many activities and posts, which in turn affected her social presences. She

commented, "sometimes the replies are hard to see if they are posted under the post whether or

not they show in your news feed or not." Debra also commented that, even though she would

miss some comment notifications, reading everyone's comments was not always necessary to

complete an activity. When it came to adding their own comments, participants took different

approaches. Patricia indicated that her approach was due to her motivation in the topics:

> Before starting this seminar I was already motivated, quite motivated about issues… I
> guess I always wanted to learn a bit more about each other, so each time one participant
> posted a message on Facebook I tried to reflect on what he or she said and then tried to
> respond to this post and well. I said try because sometimes I just couldn't, but I tried to
> reflect and to challenge myself.

As a participant who usually posted later into the activity, Debra found she would only comment

when she felt she could add something not already said:

> It depended on who responded before me and if I noticed [or] remembered the activity.
> If I had something new to add, I would write a lot more than I would if a bunch of people
> responded before me with the same thoughts. Other times I felt like I couldn't really
> contribute anything new because other people had already said the same things over and
> over again so I felt like it would be redundant if I just repeated what everyone else had
> said.

Depending on the participant and his or her posting habits, the notification system acted as both

an affordance and a constraint, either facilitating or inhibiting interactions.

Personal comments were much more frequent at the start of the seminar, when

individuals traded stories about their experiences, likes, and dislikes. This is where much of the

initial bonding took place. This initial momentum did not continue throughout the seminar. As

Robert said,

> You know I guess in the beginning I got to know these people personally a little bit
> more… We started talking about, "oh this person is going to Indonesia," [and] "oh, I've
> never been here." I thought that was really good, but then I guess it just started dying
> down, unfortunately.

After the initial online meet-and-greet, a few participants took the initiative to begin their own

threads. Debra thought this was because the seminar was like a classroom and "not a place to

socialize and make friend." She stated,

> Despite the fact that it was mostly on a social media site, I felt that the seminar was an
> academic setting and not a social one. Even after we were encouraged to chat amongst
> one another, I just felt like it would be unnatural and weird to suddenly start a new
> thread. I was afraid of being ignored or thought of as too forward, so I didn't try and
> instead focused on the assigned activities, which didn't really require me to talk to others.

Robert elaborated by suggesting that because of the academic, facilitated nature of the seminar it

would feel weird or presumptuous to post a comment; however, he did suggest that if one person

had done so others might have followed suit.

Social engagement. In terms of social expectations, spring seminar participants indicated

that they had the social experience they expected because they were able to interact with people

from other cultures; however, they did not become as friendly and familiar with each other as

they would have liked. Robert, Debra, and Pam noted that they may have felt more connected if

they had met in person, but they understood that the timing of the seminar, the distances, and

time zones between participants made such meetings impractical. Like the fall group,

participants cited a range of feelings of social connectivity; however, more spring participants

did feel connected. Karen and Mary were the two participants who felt the least social

connectivity, demonstrated some of the lowest social presence, and were also some of the group

members who participated the least. Mary wished that she felt more connected although she was

able "to interact with people from all across the globe," while Karen thought the lack of feeling

connected was because everyone had "different thoughts and cultures." Debra felt only

somewhat connected with other participants:

> [In the paired activities] both of my partners did not really participate; if they did, I did
> not see their comments. The only time I saw them was during our Skype meeting, and I
> did not feel that one Skype meeting was enough to make us friends, so I felt
> uncomfortable [Facebook] friend-ing them or contacting them. As for the other
> participants, the ones I was not partnered with, I hardly connected with them at all since
> there was really no reason to.

As with the fall seminar, although participants were able to learn about other cultures, they did

not feel that they had enough time to develop deep bonds with other participants.

Engagement was still an issue for the spring group; however, the participants with the

most social presence, Barbara, Linda, Pam, Patricia, and Robert, felt the most socially connected

to the group. Barbara stated,

> I do feel socially connected with other participants. Some of them added me on Facebook
> as we will be in the same international program next September. The interaction with
> other people from different cultures was good. Socially speaking, it provided more than I
> could expect.

Linda concurred. She found,

> [Talking] with people from all over the world and that was amazing. Because we spoke
> several times a week to each other and did the web activity at the beginning, I knew
> something about them and felt connected. I felt like it was hands on because I got to
> really interact with the other participants.

The ability to engage with participants from around the world allowed her to explore other

cultures. "Interacting with them, hearing their opinions, and hearing them speak of their culture

was what influenced [Linda's] development." In general, the confluence of inbound and

outbound participants emotional expression and open communication facilitated learning about

other cultures.

Many of the inbound students ended up becoming Facebook friends with each other to discuss their upcoming experience at Rutgers. This made sense because inbound students would be part of an exchange student community at Rutgers, and the intervention allowed some of them to create a network ahead of their study abroad experience. There were fewer instances of Facebook friends between inbound and outbound students, although several of the outbound students wished they had initiated and received more friend requests. Patricia indicated that connecting via Facebook, the live group meetings, and Skype facilitated feelings of social connectedness. Nearly all participants reported that the most enjoyable and most authentic part of the seminar occurred during the paired Skype activities because they could react to non-verbal cues (Karen), chat more broadly (Patricia), and have discussions that were more spontaneous (Robert). Most participants wanted more Skype activities built into the seminar design because, as Mary commented, they could "build a relationship and become [more] socially connected," which suggests participants placed value on the ability to connect with others.

Much like the fall group, individual nerves, hang-ups, and fears affected the social dynamics of the spring group. Initiating conversation threads, or being the first to post to an activity, made Debra and Karen a bit nervous. In general, Debra found that she was anxious about interacting with new people. She described her posting tactic as follows:

> I usually wait until someone else responds so I can kind of get an idea of what way I should respond. I guess because sometimes I'm not sure so it's easier to wait and see what everyone else is saying before I try to say something. Sometimes it takes a while for other people to respond, so I wait because I don't want to be the first person.

By the mid-seminar focus group, Debra agreed that it was becoming slightly easier to participate the more she interacted and posted. What proved especially interesting was some participants' heightened sense of offending others, which led to nervous posting habits. As Karen explained,

I found a lot of pressure when I tried to make a first comment about somebody else's posting, because I worried about whether I'm just making some offending thing about him or her or kind of things. So I just worried about [it] and tried to be safe.

For Debra, a specific instance exacerbated her fear of offending others and cemented her posting habits:

During the first [activity] about stereotypes, I was paired with a woman from France. We talked for quite some time and often went off topic. I think this is partly because making assumptions about each other opened up an opportunity to talk more about what we were really like and what our countries were like. She didn't really have an accent, so it was easy to sort of forget she was foreign, even though the meeting revolved around our foreign-ness to each other. At one point, I became comfortable and mentioned something about gay marriage. I do not remember exactly what it was that I said about it, but I suddenly remembered she was French, not an American from the Northeast, and she might not be comfortable with the subject of gay marriage… I felt somewhat anxious and uncomfortable for the rest of meeting. Even though she was polite and pleasant, I regretted what I had said and I felt I should be more careful not to assume that everyone I talk to feels the same about certain things. This somewhat influenced how I acted during the second meeting. I was afraid of getting nervous and blathering, so I was careful to stay on topic and not really talk about stuff that had nothing to do with the topic.

Evident in her social presence, Debra's initial interaction and subsequent nervousness influenced the remainder of her posts. The intermediate outcomes of the intervention required depth of discussion, alternative perspective taking, interaction with peers, and personal disclosure; yet, in each Debra acted cautiously. She could not give or receive open communication because she was afraid to take social or cognitive risks. This could have become a teachable moment, used to propel group intercultural development forward had I, as the facilitator, known about the incident before the end of the seminar. Even Robert, one of the most active and gregarious participants, acknowledged his fear of being judged; however, he offered a more positive outlook:

I feel like it's pretty easy because we're all coming to this seminar with the goal of trying to understand each other better, so I feel like no one is really going to judge you. If you offend someone they'd be like "Oh…" I mean if someone offended me I'd be like, "Oh, this is the whole point."

Nevertheless, participants indicated that they had positive social experiences despite being nervous. Patricia stated, "Personally, I was both thrilled, and a little bit nervous about meeting each other online especially as I am sometimes a little bit shy, but it was okay because the group was very nice and open minded and so it was okay."

Question three: What are the affordances and constraints of collaborative learning in an online intervention?

Many of the design suggestions from fall participants were taken into account and used to modify the seminar for the spring. Offering credit for the seminar was not an option due to University regulations. Instead, participants were offered a $40 Amazon.com gift certificate for completing the seminar. Spring participants indicated that while the gift was nice, and provided a sign-on incentive, it was not the main motivator for participating in the seminar. Meeting other study abroad students and learning about other cultures provided greater, intrinsic incentive. In fact, many students said they forgot all about the incentive until the very end. Despite the incentive, seminar participation rates were still not absolute. Pam suggested that the informal, non-obligatory nature of the seminar still played a role in declining participation rates throughout the length of the seminar. Patricia concurred that a formal academic environment would have provided an appropriate stressor, which could have led to higher participation.

Most fall participants also suggested that the length of the seminar should be decreased by a week, so the spring seminar lasted only five weeks. Participants were surprised by how quickly the seminar passed. Every spring participant that responded indicated that the length and pacing of the seminar was just right, or they wished for it to be longer. Patricia originally thought that five weeks seemed like a lot of time, but then she found that the "intensive format encouraged [them] to reflect on issues more actively." Karen thought the seminar should be

longer so participants had more time to gain skills, and Debra felt that she was learning about a lot of interesting things about topics that she wanted to explore further.

The biggest change to the seminar was moving the platform to Facebook and redesigning the content and activities to complement its design strengths. Facebook, as a social media site, is defined by users' relationships, short interactions, and elevated use of multimedia to convey ideas, thoughts, and feelings. Prior to the spring seminar, a significant amount of time was spent configuring the flow of the seminar so as not to repeat the mistakes of the fall semester. All spring students were familiar with Facebook and had active accounts, although individual usage habits varied. Also, unlike Sakai, it was a familiar tool to all participants. Inbound students agreed that using Facebook was preferable over Sakai. None of the participants struggled with using Facebook. Patricia remarked, "We are the new generation and we are used to using all of these tools. People are usually quite connected to Facebook, so it's a good tool since we are able to read posts every day and to interact every day… It's maybe more friendly and cool than an academic platform." All participants indicated that hosting the seminar online was the most appropriate way to conduct the seminar and combine people from around the world. Debra stated, "I don't see any other way to conduct the seminar if not on Facebook. Facebook is versatile and has a lot of things it can do, like posting images and videos instead of a bunch of links. It is not perfect, but it's probably the best way." Linda appreciated the use of Facebook because it democratized the learning experience. She stated, "I think it is very effective and perhaps more effective than in class learning because everyone has a voice and maybe feel more comfortable than talking in person." Karen concurred, stating, "In the seminar, I found that there are a lot of activities through Facebook so everybody can see others talking together." Patricia, another inbound student, noted:

> For me, the format of the seminar is good. I would be less comfortable if we should interact online each week (I am always a little nervous when I have to speak to others in a foreign language). So, posting messages on Facebook is a way to answer questions without being nervous.

Hosting the seminar on Facebook removed the cognitive load associated with learning a new tool, and had the added benefit of providing a safe, familiar discussion space to share and explore potentially sensitive topics.

Beyond sheer practicality, Facebook and the use of other online tools added motivational and academic value. Linda thought using "Facebook was obviously essential and Skype made the experience that much more real and hands on," while Mary found "the seminar tools easy to use and the way that they were all mixed and incorporated into the seminar was really interesting. The tools had a huge influence on my experience because otherwise it would have been really difficult to cope with what was going on." None of the spring participants voiced concerns regarding switching between tools, even though more tools were used (e.g., YouTube, Skype, voting mechanisms, and Pinterest, among others). There were no complaints despite many of the participants being new to several tools, such as Skype and Pinterest. Moreover, spring participants suggested that the tools had a value added element, were motivational, and helped them to understand content. When Debra did not understand a term or concept, she referenced the links and videos posted by the facilitator. She stated,

> I feel like using the tools did add to the seminar, since they were free services available to everyone. I felt that the articles, Pinterest, and YouTube helped me understand the subject matter and did a good job of giving thorough explanations… The links gave me the information necessary to understand what the activity was even about. They were also interesting and sometimes even entertaining.

The use of YouTube videos to explain intercultural theories was particularly helpful for both Patricia and Susan. Patricia found herself watching the assigned YouTube videos used to

explain visually or elaborate on weekly intercultural theories and browsing through Pinterest

boards for significant periods of time:

> The videos I watched were well done so it was easier to reflect on issues afterwards. It
> was an interesting way of learning, which I haven't experienced so far. [The tools] made
> the activities more interesting and convenient.

Overall, the additional tools enhanced the learning environment by providing stimulating ways to

learn new information and continue to explore topics of interest independently, which were

freely accessible to all participants.

The use of social tools such as Facebook, GoToMeeting, and Skype also enhanced

interactions between participants. Linda felt the tools added to the seminar by giving

participants more ways to interact with each other. She wrote, "I feel like it is making us

communicate better and get a better sense of each other." Similar to the fall group, spring

participants favored learning and interacting through Skype the most. Taking into consideration

the recommendations from the fall, more GoToMeetings and Skype sessions were added to the

spring semester, including a synchronous introductory GoToMeeting. Robert felt that engaging

through Skype afforded the most direct learning experience because of the real-time interaction it

afforded. Skype also viewed as the most interactive tool used because, as Patricia noted,

> We were able to develop, to communicate, especially via Skype. It was more interactive
> than via Facebook because sometimes you read others posts but, as Susan said, you [may
> not] respond to [them] so you're not very active in communication with others.

It afforded the opportunity for participants to connect synchronously and visually across great

distance. However, as with the fall group, scheduling paired Skype meetings and attending other

live sessions continued to prove difficult due to differences in time zones. Partners occasionally

would not be able to connect; therefore, they missed the opportunity to participate in a paired

activity. Some of the participants suggested building in more time to set up meetings, which

would counteract the constraint associated with coordinating meetings asynchronously.

After the seminar, only one participant indicated that she did not feel technologically

prepared enough to engage in an online seminar. Barbara found the online platform and use of

tools not motivating, as well as a significant barrier in her experience. Other participants did

experience a few technical problems, but none as great as Barbara or the fall participants.

GoToMeeting did not always work smoothly for all participants, like Debra, Barbara, and Susan.

Auditory feedback was also still an issue when participants neglected to wear headsets with

microphones. Despite these challenges, almost all participants indicated that the technologies

employed did not create any barriers.

Needs analysis results from spring participants indicated the group was slightly more

amenable than fall participants to an online learning environment. After the seminar, Linda and

Robert indicated they were pleased with the results. Linda was particularly surprised by her

experience. She stated, "I was hesitant about learning online, but this just proved to me that you

could learn equally if not more online." Although the design feedback from the spring semester

was mostly positive, certainly more so than the fall, most participants still favored a traditional

learning environment. Debra appreciated the advantages of an online learning environment – its

flexibility and space for prolonged thought – but found the environment less personal and easier

to forget. Susan acknowledged that the success of an online learning environment is dependent

on the participants:

> I think it's a good way to learn but it depends on your participation. You also can
> [choose] not participate… I think learning in the class is a good way [to learn] because
> you may participate more actively and you're also more connected with each other,
> especially social[ly]… face-to-face.

Both Barbara and Mary disliked learning online because they were able to procrastinate and they missed out on nonverbal aspects of communicating. Similar to the fall seminar, spring participants still found it easiest to engage and connect socially in a traditional learning environment. However, they did seem to have more positive opinions regarding learning academic content online.

Moving the seminar from Sakai to Facebook created different affordances and constraints. Hosting the seminar on a platform that was for many part of their daily routine afforded both familiarity and increased usage. As a social networking platform, the design of Facebook was inherently social. The notification system continuously prompted participants to stay involved in discussions. Although these features encouraged social presence, Facebook newsfeed settings could also cause participants to miss out on discussions until near the very end and create a disincentive to contribute. The platform also provided easy integration of several multimedia resources, including YouTube and Pinterest, which kept participants informed and engaged. Unlike the fall group, spring participants felt that the tools supported social connections. Skype continued to be the preferred way participants interacted throughout the seminar. Participants felt that the ability to connect across distances synchronously afforded them the ability to build relationships. This was despite the fact that multi-person synchronous meetings were still problematic, although somewhat less so than in the fall.

Summary of Results

Findings from the fall and spring interventions described the ways in which the intervention and concurrent social experiences influenced students' measured and self-reported intercultural development. Examining the Community of Inquiry model, the analysis of seminar transcripts, and focus group discussions underlined how participants' technical and social

interactions were connected to cognitive presence, social presence, and perceive intercultural development (Garrison et al., 2000). Furthermore, the feedback obtained from participants highlighted several affordances and constraints in a computer-supported collaborative learning experience.

Chapter Six: Discussion

Designing and sustaining a successful Community of Inquiry and a successful online collaborative learning environment is not without its challenges. This research highlighted some of the variables that influence learning outcomes and experiences within a collaborative online international learning intervention. Both enactments of the pre-departure intervention provided participants with different experiences, as well as revealed several affordances and constraints associated with the tools used. Although neither intervention produced the expected outcomes, lessons learned provide insight into understanding what components are necessary to produce a successful online collaborative international learning environment for pre-departure study abroad students.

Design Limitations

Limitations of this study included small sample sizes, the self-selection of students choosing to participate in the study, and small comparison groups. Overall, neither the recruiting plan nor the intended sample size culminate as expected; however, such self-selection represents one of the very challenges of conducting a not-for-credit pre-departure intervention. University students straddle a line between periods of life, childhood and adulthood, and learning theories, pedagogy and andragogy. Andragogy, associated with adult learning styles and non-formal education, represents an approach to learning which is reflective in the recruiting outcomes of this research. One of the reasons adult learners choose to participate in an educational experience is the innate desire to learn the skills or knowledge being presented. Participation is often voluntary and based on people's interest in the content of the material (Brookfield, 1991). This study was voluntary and thus more inline with an adult learning experience. In reality, it was determined that students who choose to participate in optional training were those who

demonstrated greater interest in the subject matter; thus the sample is representative of the reality of participation in an optional intervention.

Limitations associated with this study signified that the results of this research are not generalizable to a larger population; however, since this study was exploratory in nature, the limitations allow the research to stay manageable in scope. Recent literature also indicates that many guided interventions currently in practice have the same limitations, which suggest that guided interventions are designed for custom, localized environments. This research can be scaled up and expanded upon to compensate for its current limitations. At present, the sample limitations were appropriate for an exploratory study.

Discussion of Results

The three forms of data analysis used in this study, the IDI®, Community of Inquiry framework, and phenomenological review of participants' text, provided a layered understanding of the research questions. None of the intervention or comparison groups displayed significant positive progression on the Intercultural Development Continuum. Qualitative analysis using the Community of Inquiry framework and participants' text exposed additional layers of cognitive and social presence that were present in the two intervention enactments. In both groups, the data suggests students who participated actively in the seminar demonstrated more cognitive presence, felt more socially connected, and experienced a more positive intervention experience. The quality of participants' reflections was also closely tied to individual cognitive presence. Spring participants displayed higher cognitive and social presence across nearly all categories, suggesting a much richer intervention experience.

Further exploration into participants' experiences yielded mixed results, including in-group variations and clear differences between enactments. Both groups agreed that interacting

with other participants was the most educational, developmental, and enjoyable aspect of the

seminar. Their experiences and engagement within the intervention were intimately connected

to the social interactions they experienced. This was despite technical difficulties and the lack of

overall social connectedness experienced by some participants. Factors that inhibited social

connectedness included participation rates, individual insecurity, and technological challenges.

Technologies used in the seminars greatly influenced the learning and social experiences

between groups. Different technologies offered different affordances and constraints for

supporting a Community of Inquiry. Choice of platform and integration of tools influenced

motivation and perceived socialness, as well as perceptions of the value-added affordances of

technology in a CSCL environment. Administering two enactments of the intervention, and

observing the differences that ensued after modification, highlighted the importance of aligning

the design and technology that afford the embodied conjectures if the expected learning

outcomes are to be achieved.

Assessing intercultural development. One of the expected outcomes of the intervention

was participants' positive progression along the Intercultural Development Continuum. This did

not occur for either group. IDI® trends in the spring were positive, yet not statistically

significant. Although participants' self-evaluations of their intercultural development were

mixed, when active students reflected on what they had learned throughout the seminar, their

comments indicated a growing awareness of other cultures and alternative perspectives, as well

as increased mindfulness. An understanding of these concepts is a step towards developing

intercultural awareness (Hammer, 2009a). Also, the intervention may have been too short for

participants to register statistically significant positive IDI® progression. IDI, LLC, the

organization that manages the assessment, suggests that 30 to 50 hours of dedicated effort to

increase intercultural competence is necessary for a person to progress positively one

intercultural development orientation or more along the continuum (IDI, LLC, 2012b). At most,

each enactment of the seminar amounted to 15 hours of concentrated effort. Also, a second post-

test administered a month into the study abroad experience may have shown differences between

intervention and comparison groups, or between enactments. Alternatively, the amount of time

spent abroad could eclipse such a short intervention. Each of these variables can be tested in

future studies.

Assessing intercultural development is a complex phenomenon and there may have been

undetected changes in participants' development. Participants, especially in the spring semester,

discussed important intercultural topics. Their reflections regarding what they had learned over

the course of the seminar demonstrated that they were thinking in ways that suggested increased

intercultural competence. Discourse suggested that some participants were beginning to think

about their own experiences and intercultural issues in more complex ways. Furthermore,

participants indicated that they learned important intercultural theories from the content of the

seminar, and more importantly their perceived intercultural development was the result of their

interactions with participants of other cultures.

Addressing a Problem of Practice

Although several studies of online and collaborative interventions in education abroad

investigate changes in students' intercultural development, no study examines the influence of

students' social interactions as related to their intercultural development and experiences in the

interventions (University of Minnesota: Learning Abroad Center, 2012; Lou & Bosley, 2008;

Romero, 2005). Additionally, none of the existing research offers suggestions as to which

variables influenced the success of the intervention. Practitioners interested in developing their

own successful collaborative online international learning pre-departure interventions need research exploring these issues. To address this problem of practice, I designed and deployed two enactments of this type of intervention for inbound and outbound study abroad students.

Lessons concerning what worked well and what did not are important for understanding a complex problem of practice. This research demonstrated several technical and social challenges of building a Community of Inquiry and how a redesign of an intervention can influence outcomes. Several challenges of collaborative learning and creating online communities identified in CSCL research were also apparent in this study. As suggested by Muilenburg & Berg (2005), there are strong associations between learner enjoyment online and social interaction. As the fall enactment demonstrated, seminar participation waned, peer interaction was isolated, and cognitive presence suffered because, ultimately, participants found it difficult to connect to the learning environment and each other. Much like Vonderwell's (2003) students, participants found that the level of anonymity made it too easy to ignore each other. The experience of trying to work in a flawed CSCL environment was too impersonal.

Conversely, more spring participants cited positive experiences in the online CSCL environment because they experienced more positive social interactions, mostly due to the social affordances of the platform. Although social and cognitive presences were somewhat improved between enactments, spring participants' feedback mirrored some of the challenges identified in previous studies. Similar to Vonderwell's (2003) population, participants were hesitant to reach out to each other because they felt that the seminar, although on Facebook, was still an academic environment in which further bonding was not appropriate, and they also were nervous interacting with strangers. Participants also felt that intercultural learning was stymied because their responses were too much alike. These feelings suggested that learners were not able to

appreciate subjective cultural difference, and they were not academically prepared to work in an environment that was more self-directed and interdependent (Vonderwell, 2003; Palloff & Pratt, 2001). Finally, much like Volet and Wosnitza's (2004) findings, spring participants did find it pleasant to work with each other, acknowledging the benefits associated with learning from peers about other cultures, although there was little evidence of conflict resolution and shared meaning making. Although there were instances of critical cognitive presence, full higher order thinking associated with collaborative learning was not realized.

It became clear after two enactments of the intervention that the structure and technological choices made during the design phase of an online CSCL directly influenced participants' experiences as well as their cognitive and social presence. Transferring this lesson to an online, collaborative pre-departure seminar, the benefits of cognitive tools must outweigh the costs of their use (Hmelo et al., 1998). Different technologies provide different affordances and constraints, which in turn influence intercultural development, support for a Community of Inquiry, and how well participants learn from each other. Computers as cognitive tools also make certain kinds of social action possible (Stahl, 2006). The use of technology can afford connections between people from around the world, providing access to intercultural perspectives and different learning experiences that would otherwise have been unavailable prior to departure. Tool use can provide a voice to all participants and facilitate connections, provide flexibility and space for prolonged thought and reflection, and can provide a value added element in terms of motivation and understanding content. However, despite these affordances, participants in both semesters still favored a traditional learning environment. Vonderwell (2003) connects this favoritism with Palloff and Pratt's (2001) findings that the traditional, face-to-face format of learning does not prepare students for online learning, which can require more

self-direction and interdependence. Students approached online assignments with an individual, task-based focus rather than a communal or collaborative focus (Vonderwell, 2003). Favoring a traditional learning environment, despite appreciating an online one, suggests that students were not academically prepared to work in an environment that was more self-directed and interdependent (Vonderwell, 2003; Palloff & Pratt, 2001).

Additionally, technological constraints, such as connectivity, lack of embedded collaborative tools, and disjointed flow can discourage participants and thwart the success of an intervention. When designing a collaborative online international learning pre-departure intervention, practitioners must be sure to choose technology that aligns with the embodied conjectures and learning outcomes of the experience, choose technologies that are familiar to participants and afford the actions desired, and support the trifecta of presence needed to create a Community of Inquiry. If the technologies employed do not afford the social connections necessary to create a collaborative community, neither enhanced cognitive presence nor shared meaning making will be realized.

Implications for practice. Research into this intervention model adds to the current body of research in study abroad pre-departure interventions, as well as provides an understanding of several factors that may influence collaborative online international learning interventions hosted online. It also suggests that the IDI® may not be an appropriate choice of instrument to measure changes in intercultural development for interventions of less than 30 to 50 hours. Current intercultural development and guided intervention studies in education abroad research focus only on reporting students' IDI® scores. This study examines the overall learning environment of a collaborative online international learning intervention by exploring the social factors that can influence students' experiences in the seminar and their intercultural

development, as well as the possibilities afforded by incorporating current technologies. It also highlights the cultural benefits that could ensue when combining inbound and outbound pre-departure study abroad students in a collaborative learning environment − if the environment is well designed and supported. Finally, this study is also a tale of factors that inhibit the creation of a successful online Community of Inquiry. It may be used as a reference for practitioners, providing practical guidelines and insight into the implications of design decision so that they may implement collaborative online international learning interventions with their own study abroad populations.

Designing differently. Future enactments of this intervention need to take into account lessons learned. First, the seminar must be offered for credit and consist of more than 30 contact hours. In both enactments, participants indicated that intrinsic motivation was not always enough to sustain motivation and encourage quality academic learning or reflection. Sustained, quality participation is necessary to foster a successful Community of Inquiry (Garrison et al., 2000). Also, the hours allotted to a five or six-week seminar are not enough to positively influence intercultural development orientations (IDI, LLC, 2012b). A well-designed, three-credit semester course consisting of 45 contact hours could help participants develop in significant ways. Designers can also experiment with a pre-during-post study abroad intervention format; however, there is a caveat to formalizing the intervention experience. As spring seminar students indicated, participants may not feel at liberty to socialize and develop bonds in an academic environment even if the platform is informal in nature. Special care should be taken to balance the instructional and cognitive needs with an environment that affords social presence.

Second, the platform and tool integration used in the spring semester would remain the same based on participant feedback and technical familiarity; however, more time and opportunities for virtual face-to-face interaction would be incorporated as it was these experiences that participants in both enactments indicated as the most enjoyable and educational aspects of the seminar. Despite the positive feedback related to this component, combining inbound and outbound participants was not enough in itself to cause significant shifts in intercultural development or shared meaning making. Activities that facilitate deeper connections, foster conflict and resolution, and require participants to work towards a shared goal need to be incorporated into the overall design.

Future research. Does a collaborative online international learning pre-departure study abroad intervention provide what is necessary to foster intercultural development across a multi-national community? Creating community and fostering intercultural development are complex matters and no single study will resolve the question. This study and those that came before highlight the substantial challenges related to creating successful CSCL environments. The research presented here offers some insight into how social interactions influence participants' experience and development, as well as the affordances and constraints related to choice of platforms and cognitive tools. Future studies need to include larger samples and examine the above-mentioned design variations. Also necessary are studies that explore the design and curricular components of developmentally successful online, guided interventions. For example, a study that used the Community of Inquiry model as an analytical framework to explore the Willamette-Bellarmine Universities' joint course on intercultural skills development would

determine if the researchers created a successful Community of Inquiry, as well as highlight

techniques used to encourage collaboration and foster intercultural development

(Lou & Bosley, 2008).

Conclusions

Michael Vande Berg, one of the Georgetown Consortium study researchers, always

includes a particular slide in his presentations on guided intervention. The image is of a college

student being tossed, arms flailing, into the deep end of a swimming pool. Vande Berg (2010)

uses the image to symbolize the traditional goal of an education abroad experience – that of

immersing students as fully and quickly as possible into the host environment – the "sink or

swim" approach. The image is then associated with the traditional belief that immersed students

learn easily and happily in the deep end of the pool, without a single drowning victim among

them. He then asks, "When students drown, what did they really learn and who is really to

blame?" (Vande Berg, 2010). Designing a collaborative online international learning pre-

departure intervention is more than its final outcomes. What occurs cognitively and socially

within the intervention is equally important to understanding what constitutes its success. As

with studying abroad, practitioners cannot assume that placing students within a CSCL

environment will result in automatic higher order learning, quality collaboration, or a successful

Community of Inquiry. Purposeful design and greater understanding of the factors that influence

an online Community of Inquiry are imperative to the successful creation and deployment of

collaborative online international learning interventions. Practitioners need to provide pre-

departure study abroad participants the learning experience of being virtually there, not halfway

there.

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Appendix A

Fall Seminar Syllabus

Experiencing culture: A seminar for sojourners
Fall 2012

Instructor Information

Instructor	Email	Office Location & Hours
Carrie Wojenski	carrie.wojenski@rutgers.edu	Rutgers Study Abroad, hours by appointment

General Information

Description

Time spent abroad, whether for work, school, or pleasure can be a transformative experience, one that challenges commonly held beliefs and assumptions about the world. Exposure to another culture, even one that you have visited numerous times, has the potential to change your thinking and perspective. While it is possible to grow without guidance, you are much more likely to more thoroughly and effectively process and understand your time abroad if you are exposed to some form of facilitated learning prior to departure. Using a culture-general approach, this workshop is designed to provide you with the tools, skills, and theories needed to successfully navigate and more deeply appreciate new cultures.

Course Objectives

Course objectives include:
- Better understanding yourself and your own culture;
- Gaining an understanding of various intercultural theories and how they may impact your time abroad;
- Learning how to actively experience and critically analyze from multiple perspectives new cultural environments;
- Prepare to take advantage of learning opportunities during your time abroad.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this program you will be able to:

- Understand your personal culture and how it impacts your view of the world;
- Understand yourself as a cultural being and as a meaning-maker;
- Develop an awareness of how your behaviors may impact others', as well as how your personal cultural beliefs and values are not universal;
- Reference several cultural frameworks and intercultural theories and understand how they might apply to your time abroad;
- Engage in meaningful interactions with people from other countries and cultures.

Expectations and Goals
The format of this seminar is meant to be casual, but academic. Participants are expected to share prior knowledge and previous experiences with the group. The successfulness of this seminar and what participants take away from the seminar experience is highly dependent on active participant participation. This seminar is a collective effort, which requires your shared thoughts, experiences, values, and ideas. Engagement with others' ideas is fundamental to the success of the seminar. The abilities to share, listen, and respect are critical.

Since what you choose to share is inherently personal in nature, it is expected that the group will set and adhere to an agreed upon set of norms designed to create a safe space for sharing. In turn, participants are expected to think thoughtfully and critically about the materials presented and how the materials may relate to previous and future experiences.

Discussion Forum Expectations
Discussion forums are meant to be an ongoing dialogue between you and other seminar participants. The due dates indicated mean you should have submitted your first post, *as well as* follow-up posts to your other seminar-mates. Remember, how much you put into this seminar determines how much both you and others get out of it.

Attendance
The success of this seminar is also contingent upon participants attending all scheduled online meetings, and completing all scheduled assignments. The seminar is designed to build upon itself; therefore, it is required that all participants follow the seminar's carefully planned schedule.

<u>Course Materials</u>

Readings
Brief, weekly readings will be posted in the seminar website. You are not required to purchase any texts for this seminar. Participants will be expected to share knowledge gained from the readings with other seminar participants. Readings will be sourced from the following texts:

Cornes, A. (2004). *Culture from the inside out: Travel and meet yourself.* Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, Inc.

Paige, R. M., Cohen, A. D., Kappler, B., Chi, J. C.; Lassegard, J. P. (2009). *Maximizing study abroad: A students' guide to strategies for language and culture learning and use – second edition.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota: Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition

La Brack, B. (2003). *What's up with culture?* Retrieved from http://www2.pacific.edu/sis/culture/

Optional Text
The above reading materials are mainly sourced from the text *Maximizing study abroad: A students' guide to strategies for language and culture learning and use – second edition*. Readings from this book will be made available in the seminar website. Purchasing the full text is optional.

Maximizing Study Abroad

Paige, R. M., Cohen, A. D., Kappler, B., Chi, J. C.; Lassegard, J. P. (2009). *Maximizing study abroad: A students' guide to strategies for language and culture learning and use – second edition.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota: Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition

Activities
Planned activities are chosen to enhance group cohesion, reinforce the internalization of intercultural theories, and emphasize learning through experience. Some of the activities may ask you to step outside your comfort zone. Every effort will be made to create a safe environment and give you the tools and skills needed to succeed in the activities. How much effort you put into the activities will determine how beneficial they are to you. Your willingness to be open-minded and participate is greatly encouraged.

Reflection
The ability to reflect on your beliefs, assumptions, and values; as well as your experiences throughout the seminar will aid you in developing your awareness of other cultures and your intercultural skills. Reflection will occur continually throughout the seminar by way of assigned activities, group discussion, and shared experience.

Assessment and Evaluation
As this seminar is not offered for credit, no official assessments will be taken; however, as part of the learning process, participants will be required to complete pre and post Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI®) questionnaire. Only the instructor has access to your assessment results.

Technical Requirements
This seminar uses Sakai as its learning platform. Throughout the semester, you will be learning about and using various online programs and tools. Many of these are Web 2.0 tools that are found on free, public websites. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the appropriate technology capabilities to successfully complete assignments and activities.

Logging into Sakai
Approximately two weeks before the seminar starts I will make the Sakai site available. Sakai can be accessed by going to http://sakai.rutgers.edu.

Rutgers students should already be able to access Sakai and familiar with how to log on. Other students will receive an email indicating your Guest Log-on information. Your username will be your email address and you will be issued a temporary password. To log in, select Guest Account in the upper right side of the screen. If you have difficulty logging on, go back to the homepage and select Password/Email Address Help on the left menu bar. To change your password, go to *For other users, who have registered in Sakai with an email address*, enter in the email address from which you received your Sakai invite, and then reset your password.

The seminar will appear in a tab called Experiencing Culture: A Seminar for Sojourners. It should automatically appear during sign on. If not, you will need to add the tab. Email me for instructions.

Aside from logging into Sakai you will need to log into several other websites. These include Gmail and GoogleDocs, VoiceThread, and Skype, among others.

- You will need a Gmail account to access GoogleDocs. Gmail is a free email service. If you do not have a Gmail account please create an account now.

- Skype is a free text and video-based chat service. If you do not have a Skype account please create an account now.
- VoiceThread is a free voice blogging service. If you do not have a VoiceThread account please create an account now.

Being that this is a multimedia course, you are going to need some additional equipment above and beyond your computer. Required items include:

- **A headset microphone.** The headset is important if you plan on having two-way conversations. If you play audio through your speakers, you might create echo or feedback. I recommend USB headsets where possible.
- **A webcam.** Many computers now have built-in webcams. If your computer does not have a webcam you can either choose to purchase an external webcam, for example the Logitech C310 webcam, or you can choose to only transmit audio when Skyping with your partner(s).

Course Schedule

This seminar will begin on November 5th and end on December 21st. You will be required to complete a pre-seminar questionnaire prior to November 5th.

Week	Topic	Reading	Exercises
BEFORE November 5th	Getting Started	*Introductions* module Pre-seminar assessment	1) Log into Sakai and introduce yourself. Check back to see what other's have written *DUE: Before November 4th* 2) Complete the IDI®. Instructions will be send via email *DUE: Before November 4th*
WEEK 1 November 5-11	Your Cultural Self	Paige et al., p. 43-46	1) Cultural diversity diagram activity *DUE: Wednesday, Nov. 7th, 9pm/20:00 EST* 2) Discussion Forum Post, Part I *DUE: Wednesday, Nov. 7th, 9pm/20:00 EST* 3) Discussion Forum Post, Part II *DUE: Saturday, Nov. 10th, 9pm/20:00 EST* 4) Indicate your availability for an "in-person" online meeting to be held in Week 3

Week	Topic	Reading	Exercises
WEEK 2 **November 12-18**	The Iceberg	Paige et al., p. 46-51 La Brack	1) Iceberg activity- located in GoogleDocs *DUE: Wednesday, Nov. 14th, 9pm/20:00 EST* 2) Group Discussion Forum Post, Part I *DUE: Saturday, Nov. 17th, 9pm/20:00 EST* 3) Paired interviews- What's in a name? *Complete by: Wednesday, Nov. 14th* 4a) Discussion Forum Post, Part II *DUE: Saturday, Nov. 17th, 9pm/20:00 EST* 4b) Discussion Forum Post, Part II Responses *DUE: Saturday, Nov. 17th, 9pm/20:00 EST*
WEEK 3 **November 19-25**	Who are we? Understanding Beliefs and Values	Paige et al., p. 52-61	1) Behaviors activity- Sakai wiki *DUE: Wednesday, Nov. 21st, 9pm/20:00 EST* 2) Attend online meeting *Time/Details: To be announced*
WEEK 4 **November 26-December 2**	Core Cultural Values	Paige et al., p. 63-70, 74	1) Core cultural values activity *DUE: Wednesday, Nov. 28th, 9pm/20:00 EST* 2) Paired discussion- Core cultural values *Complete by: Friday, Nov. 30th, 9pm/20:00 EST* 3) Discussion Forum Post and Response *DUE: Sunday, December 2nd, 9pm/20:00 EST*
WEEK 5 **December 3-9**	The Ladder of Inference	Paige et al., p. 113-117 Cornes, p. 38-40 *Complete by: Wednesday, December 5th*	1) D.I.E. group activity *BEGIN BY: Thursday, December 6th* *DUE: Saturday, December 8th, 9pm/20:00 EST*
WEEK 6 **December 10-16**	Creating an Action Plan	No readings	Action plan activity 1) Organize how you want to communicate *Complete by: Tuesday, December 11th, 11pm/22:00 EST* 2) Create Action Plan- GoogleDocs *DUE: Saturday, December 15th, 11pm/22:00 EST* 3) Sign up for Focus Group session *DUE: Saturday, December 15th, 11pm/22:00 EST*
WRAP UP **December 17-21**	Wrapping Up	Post-seminar assessment	1) Reflection essay *DUE: Saturday, December 21st, 11pm/22:00 EST* 2) Complete the IDI®. Instructions will be send via email *DUE: Saturday, December 21st, 11pm/22:00 EST* 3) Attend Focus Group meeting *Time/Details: To be announced*

Fall Seminar Design

Fall seminar content drew heavily on resources and discussion prompts from the

Maximizing Study Abroad text (Paige et al. 2009) and the *What's Up With Culture* website (La

Brack, 2003). The seminar's six modules included: (1) Your cultural self; (2) The iceberg:

Explicit and implicit culture; and (3) Who are we? Understanding beliefs and values; (4) Core

cultural values; (5) The ladder of inference; and (6) Creating an action plan. Prior to the start of

the seminar students signed onto Sakai to set up their user profile and introduce themselves to the

group via the discussion forum. Participants were asked to include information about where they

came from, their hobbies and interests, why they chose to participate in the seminar, and what

they hoped to gain from it. Each subsequent week included a brief reading and one or more

activities.

The theme around week one was an exploration of cultural self. Through shared wikis on

GoogleDocs, students were asked to create cultural webs indicating significant parts of their

identity (e.g. student, sister, progressive, religious, nerd, Italian-American). Participants then

reflected on their own identities, how those identities might change while abroad, and the

similarities and differences between the cultural webs of others in the group.

During week two participants completed a common intercultural activity called The

Iceberg. Participants were divided into groups of four and asked to place certain cultural features

above or below the iceberg water, symbolizing the visible and hidden aspects of culture. When

placement discrepancies occurred they were asked to explore the conflicting viewpoints and

explain their rationales. In the discussion forums participants were also asked how easy it was to

place these cultural features, why differences of opinions might exist, and how this lesson would

translate into a study abroad experience. As a second activity, participants were split into

inbound/outbound pairs for an interview exercise. Using a medium of their choice, pairs were asked to explore some of the cultural values and nuances behind something that on the surface is very simple, a person's name. They might discover that a name is a window into cultural aspects such as nationality, education, social class, sports, aspirations, or religion. Pairs then wrote about the experience and what they learned in a group discussion form.

In week three, participants explored their own and each other's beliefs and values. Participants were first asked to practice categorizing different beliefs and values as personal, cultural, or universal behaviors. They then reviewed each other's categorizations and took part in a discussion about the challenges of classifying different behaviors. Participants also reflected on how their categorization of behaviors might be in conflict with their host culture's classifications. The discussion also reviewed how misunderstandings could result from a mismatch of categorizations. Towards the end of the week participants were invited to a live GoToMeeting conversation to discuss their experiences in the seminar thus far.

Week four continued the theme of behaviors and values. Participants read about Hofstede's (2001) dimensions of culture and rated themselves on a continuum of each dimension. The results were then composited into a profile of the group. In the same inbound/outbound pairs, participants discussed their own continuum results, and explored aspects of their individual backgrounds that may have influenced their system of values. In the discussion forum the group came back together to discuss how the composite chart helped them to understand both their own value systems and those of others. The group also used this time to discuss how the lessons drawn from this exercise could be applicable.

In week five participants learned about how easy it was, when in other cultures, to make incorrect assumptions based on their own cultural frames of reference. As an exercise to

highlight this lesson, participants were split into inbound/outbound groups of four to practice a

Describe-Interpret-Evaluate (DIE) exercise. This common intercultural activity helps

participants acquire the skills needed to evaluate new scenarios or experiences before jumping to

conclusions. Each group was presented with an ambiguous photograph. First they described the

situation in purely observable terms, without imparting their own assumptions on the image.

Second they described what they saw from their own cultural perspectives, as well as created

alternative interpretations of the image. Third, the group evaluated what they felt or thought

while viewing the image. The groups worked together through this exercise to develop the skills

needed to more objectively interpret a new cultural experience.

        Week six was the final week of the seminar. The final activity required participants to

compose an action plan that could be used while abroad. Using a Google wiki the group was

asked to define what they had learned, and how they wanted to use their new knowledge and

skills abroad. After the seminar finished participants were invited to a live GoToMeeting

conversation to discuss their experiences in the seminar.

Appendix B

Fall Seminar Sample Activities and Discussions

Week 1: *Activity*- This next activity helps you reflect on the cultural groups and categories to which you belong. Take a few minutes to complete the diagram below. In as many circles as you can, write a word you feel describes you or is a significant part of who you are or how you choose to identify yourself to others. Feel free to create as many circles as you need.

Discussion- Now, take some time to review other participants' Cultural Diversity Diagrams. Note what words they chose to describe themselves with.   Think about how a person's individual categories make up a cultural identity, shaping out sense of who and what we are. Please consider the following reflection questions and post a response, as well as comment on others' posts.

- What insights have you gained about cultural identity?
- How do others' cultural categories and identities relate to your own? Are they similar? Are they different? Does it matter?
- What did you expect to find when reading others' Diagrams and discussion posts?
- What did you learn? What surprised you?

(Paige, et al., 2005, p. 44)

Week 2: *Activity*- This week we are going to do two related activities. The first, *Iceberg,* is located in the tab on the left side bar. The second, *What's in a Name*, is also located in the tab on the left side bar. Both have an interactive component and a Discussion Forum component.

Iceberg: The items that appear below are all features of culture. Keep in mind that observable behaviors belong above the surface of the water, while the invisible aspects of culture belong below the surface. Now, in your color, rewrite the item in the left column to show whether it should be "above" or "below" the water. If you disagree with a group member's placement of the feature, create a new text box with the word (in your color) and indicate why you disagree. Be sure to come back to your Iceberg to see your group mates' inputs. *To see a sample Iceberg refer to mine, listed under Iceberg_Carrie* (LaBrack, 2000; Paige et al. 2005, p. 46-51, 117).

Name game: You have been separated into groups for the following exercise. Identify your partner and schedule a time for the two (or three) of you to talk via Skype. Each of you should answer the four questions and then try to identify some of the cultural aspects your names reveal. You might also share what, if anything, the other person's name means to you. The four questions are:

- Who named you?
- Why are you named what you are named?
- What does your name mean to you?
- What does it mean to other people?

(CIEE, 2011)

Discussion-

Iceberg: Please have a small group discussion regarding the Iceberg activity. Consider the following:

- Did you place some items above and below? If so, why?
- Were some items difficult to place? Which? Why?

Did you find that group members had different opinions when it came to placing the items? Discuss why that might have been and explore what could have caused the differing opinions (LaBrack, 2000; Paige et al. 2005, p. 46-51, 117).

Name game: Write 2-4 paragraphs discussing the results of your interview and post it in the Discussion Forum under the letter of your Pairing. You don't have to answer all of the following questions, but here are some you may want to think about:

- What did you learn about your partner's name that surprised you?

- Was there anything your partner said about his or her name that you still don't understand?
- Can you identify 2-3 cultural influences that you share (for example, the role your family and religion played in you and your Partner's names)?
- Can you identify 2-3 influences that are different (maybe your name shows the influence of your mother's ethnicity, or your father's profession, while neither of these influenced your Partner's name).

Read through other pair's posts. In the Discussion Forum have a discussion about the purpose of this activity. There are no right or wrong answers! Themes to consider include:

- Why did we do this activity?
- What did this activity mean to you?
- How might you use what you have learned during your time abroad?

(CIEE, 2011).

Week 3: *Activity*- Read the list of behaviors and indicate if you think the behavior is universal, cultural, or personal. If you feel that there is more than one answer, think of some examples to show how this may be true (Paige et al. 2005, p. 52-54)

Discussion- When you were completing the Behaviors exercise, did you feel that any of the examples could fall under more than one category (personal, cultural, universal)? Which one(s)? Why?

Can you think of any other behaviors that you have witnessed at home, on campus, abroad, or even in the media that you have a difficult time classifying as one of the above types of behaviors? Please describe the behavior and have a discussion with the group as to its potential behavior classification. You may agree or disagree with one another, regardless be sure to support your position (Paige et al. 2005, p. 52-54).

Week 4: *Activity*- Below is a description of some core cultural values, presented as contrasting value orientations. Since little about humans can be thought of as either/or choices, these values are placed on a continuum. Using the contrasting values described, think about where your own personal values fit and mark the appropriate box. While chances are that you are relatively high in one value and low in another, you may be high in both, even if they are frequently viewed as opposites (Paige et al. 2005, p. 63-67).

Discussion- In pairs, on Skype, the Sakai chat room, or somewhere else, talk about where each of you placed yourselves in the continuum. Questions to consider include:

- Do you have any marks on the far ends of the value continua? If so, that means you have a strong value orientation in those particular areas. Think about how this might be a source of strength for you, but also consider how your values could be a challenge in your host culture.
- Were there certain values where you felt strongly about both sides of the continuum? Sometimes, the situations we are in require us to behave in different ways, for example, being very focused on activities at times but focused on people at others. How might this be a source of strength for you in your host culture?
- In what ways were your responses similar or different to your partner's responses? Discuss with your partner why you chose that placement. Can you pinpoint aspects of your background and personal history that may have influenced your system of values and beliefs?

Next, please post in the group discussion thread to discuss the Values activity. I will make a chart of the group's composite responses, to be posted by Friday. Take a look, reflect on the conversations you had in your pairs, and hold a discussion with your seminar-mates about what you see reflected in the groups' responses.

- What do you see reflected in this composite chart?
- How does this help you to understand value systems?
- What should we remember from this exercise while abroad?

Week 5: *Activity*- The next activity will provide you with some experience in applying the D-I-E technique to various situations. In your group's discussion forum is an image. After looking at the image, please fill in your own brief description of what you see. The task for the group is:

- To agree on a single description
- Based on the description, suggest two interpretations
- For each interpretation, suggest both a positive and a negative evaluation

Week 6: *Activity*- Together, the entire group will create an action plan. An action plan will allow you to clearly define what you have learned, and how you want to use new knowledge and skills abroad.

Step One: Use Monday and Tuesday to organize how you want to communicate with each other. Modes of communication may include, synchronous or asynchronous group chat, group emails, a synchronous online conference call (the Meetings tab), or some other form of communication.

Step Two: Spend Wednesday through Friday generating ideas on under the prompts listed in the GoogleDoc.

Step Three: Finalize your GoogleDoc Action Plan on Saturday and Sunday. Use the following list to help guide your Action Plan:

1. My goals while abroad are to…
2. List how you will achieve each goal.
3. As a result of the seminar, I want to incorporate the following knowledge during my time abroad…
4. List five tools/skills you would like to use while abroad as a result of this seminar
5. Choose the skill or tool that you would like to use first and enter it below.
6. List the potential roadblocks to implementing this skill or tool.
7. Discuss how you might overcome these roadblocks.
8. Describe in detail the action you will undertake and the steps you will take to ensure that it will happen.

Appendix C

Spring Seminar Syllabus

Experiencing culture: A seminar for sojourners
Spring 2013

Instructor Information

Instructor	Email	Office Location & Hours
Carrie Wojenski	carrie.wojenski@gse.rutgers.edu	Online, hours by appointment

General Information

Description

Time spent abroad, whether for work, school, or pleasure can be a transformative experience, one that challenges commonly held beliefs and assumptions about the world. Exposure to another culture, even one that you have visited numerous times, has the potential to change your thinking and perspective. While it is possible to grow without guidance, you are much more likely to more thoroughly and effectively process and understand your time abroad if you are exposed to some form of facilitated learning prior to departure. Using a culture-general approach, this workshop is designed to provide you with the tools, skills, and theories needed to successfully navigate and more deeply appreciate new cultures.

Course Objectives

Course objectives include:

- Better understanding yourself and your own culture;
- Gaining an understanding of various intercultural theories and how they may impact your time abroad;
- Learning how to actively experience and critically analyze from multiple perspectives new cultural environments;
- Prepare to take advantage of learning opportunities during your time abroad.

Learning Outcomes

- At the end of this program you will be able to:
- Understand your personal culture and how it impacts your view of the world;
- Understand yourself as a cultural being and as a meaning-maker;
- Develop an awareness of how your behaviors may impact others', as well as how your personal cultural beliefs and values are not universal;
- Reference several cultural frameworks and intercultural theories and understand how they might apply to your time abroad;
- Engage in meaningful interactions with people from other countries and cultures.

Expectations and Goals

The format of this seminar is meant to be casual, but academic. Participants are expected to share prior knowledge and previous experiences with the group. The successfulness of this seminar and what participants take away from the seminar experience is highly dependent on active participant participation. This seminar is a collective effort, which requires your shared thoughts, experiences, values, and ideas. Engagement with others' ideas is fundamental to the success of the seminar. The abilities to share, listen, and respect are critical.

Since what you choose to share is inherently personal in nature, it is expected that the group will set and adhere to an agreed upon set of norms designed to create a safe space for sharing. In turn, participants are expected to think thoughtfully and critically about the materials presented and how the materials may relate to previous and future experiences.

Facebook Post Expectations

Facebook discussion topics are meant to be an ongoing dialogue between you and other seminar participants. Please try to comment to posts every other day or so- adding your own reflections and commenting on your peers' posts. Remember, how much you put into this seminar determines how much both you and others get out of it.

Attendance

The success of this seminar is also contingent upon participants attending all scheduled online meetings, and completing all scheduled assignments. The seminar is designed to build upon itself; therefore, it is required that all participants follow the seminar's carefully planned schedule.

Course Materials

Readings

You are not required to purchase any texts for this seminar. Participants will be expected to share knowledge gained from the video posts and articles with other seminar participants. Ideas and statements will be sourced from the following texts:

Cornes, A. (2004). *Culture from the inside out: Travel and meet yourself*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, Inc.

Paige, R. M., Cohen, A. D., Kappler, B., Chi, J. C.; Lassegard, J. P. (2009). *Maximizing study abroad: A students' guide to strategies for language and culture learning and use – second edition.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota: Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition

La Brack, B. (2003). *What's up with culture?* Retrieved from http://www2.pacific.edu/sis/culture/

Activities

Planned activities are chosen to enhance group cohesion, reinforce the internalization of intercultural theories, and emphasize learning through experience. Some of the activities may ask you to step outside your comfort zone. Every effort will be made to create a safe environment and give you the tools and skills needed to succeed in the activities. How much effort you put into the activities will determine how beneficial they are to you. Your willingness to be open-minded and participate is greatly encouraged.

Reflection

The ability to reflect on your beliefs, assumptions, and values; as well as your experiences throughout the seminar will aid you in developing your awareness of other cultures and your intercultural skills. Reflection will occur continually throughout the seminar by way of assigned activities, group discussion, and shared experience.

Assessment and Evaluation

As this seminar is not offered for credit, no official assessments will be taken; however, as part of the learning process, participants will be required to complete pre and post Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI®) questionnaires. Only I have access to your responses.

At the end of the seminar you will also be asked to participate in a focus group interview. Your feedback will help evaluate the seminar and the experience you had as a participant.

Technical Requirements

This seminar uses Facebook as its learning platform. Throughout the semester, you will be learning about and using various online programs and tools. Many of these are Web 2.0 tools that are found on free, public websites. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the appropriate technology capabilities to successfully complete assignments and activities.

The social media and networking website Pinterest is also used as a secondary website for this seminar. Pinterest is a "content sharing service that allows members to "pin" Internet images, videos and other objects to their online pinboards." Each weekly theme will have a corresponding pinboard with supplemental, optional resources for you to review. My hope is that these pins will allow you to further your exploration into the weekly theme should you choose.

Logging into Facebook

Approximately two weeks before the seminar starts I will make the Facebook site available. Instructions on how to join Facebook can be found by clicking here.

The seminar will appear as a Facebook group called Experiencing Culture: A Seminar for Sojourners. It should automatically appear during sign on. If not, please contact me.

Logging into Pinterest

Instructions on how to join Pinterest can be found by clicking here. The seminar pinboards are located under my educational account, using the profile name *cwojenskigse*. If you figure out how to add your own relevant pins to the weekly pinboards please feel free to do so.

Other Technical Needs

Aside from having a Facebook you will need to have a Skype account too. Skype is a free text and video-based chat service. If you do not have a Skype account please create an account now.

Finally, when we have live, face-to-face meetings, you will be using GoToMeetings.com. This service is free. The first time you log in you will need to download the software. Please allow yourself 5-10 minutes to complete the download process. For more about GoToMeeting, click here.

Being that this is a multimedia course, you are going to need some additional equipment above and beyond your computer. Required items include:

- **A headset microphone.** The headset is important if you plan on having two-way conversations. If you play audio through your speakers, you might create echo or feedback. I recommend USB headsets where possible.
- **A webcam.** Many computers now have built-in webcams. If your computer does not have a webcam you can either choose to purchase an external webcam, for example the Logitech C310 webcam, or you can choose to only transmit audio when Skyping with your partner(s).

Course Schedule

This seminar will begin on Monday, April 1st and end Sunday, May 5th. You will be required to complete an IDI® and a pre-seminar questionnaire prior to April 1st and an IDI® and focus group interview after May 5th.

Week	Topic	Resources	Exercises
BEFORE April 1st	Getting Started: Introductions and IDI® Live meeting	IDI®	1) Log into Facebook and introduce yourself. Check back to see what other's have written and feel free to comment *DUE: Before April 1st* 2) Complete the IDI®. Instructions will be send via email *DUE: Before April 1st* 3) Attend online meeting *Time/Details: To be announced*
WEEK 1 April 1-7	Your Cultural Self	- YouTube video Intercultural training: How self-awareness leads to cultural awareness - Paige et al., p. 43-46 - Pinterest board Week 1	1) Watch the video *DUE: Tuesday/Wednesday* 2) Cultural diversity diagram activity *DUE: Thursday/Friday* 3) Discuss and reflect *DUE: Saturday/Sunday* 4) Indicate your availability for an "in-person" online meeting to be held in Week 3 *DUE: Saturday/Sunday*

WEEK 2 **April 8-14**	Exploring Stereotypes	- <u>Vimeo video</u> Be conscious of your stereotypes - Paige et al., p.57-61 - <u>Pinterest</u> board Week 2 - Exercise based on Perdue's International Extension curriculum: <u>Exercise 10 Assumptions</u>	1) Watch the video and Make assumptions *DUE: Tuesday/Wednesday* 2) Partner activity *DUE: Thursday/Friday* *3)* Complete poll; Discuss and reflect *DUE: Saturday/Sunday*
WEEK 3 **April 15-21**	Dimensions of Culture Live meeting this week!	- <u>YouTube video</u> Dr. Fons Trompenaars on culture - Cornes, p. 103-104 - <u>Pinterest</u> board Week 3	1) Watch the video *DUE: Tuesday/Wednesday* 2) Complete questionnaire; Discuss and reflect *DUE: Thursday/Friday* 3) Describe a holiday; Discuss and reflect *DUE: Saturday/Sunday* 4) Attend online meeting *Time/Details: To be announced*

WEEK 4
April 22-28
	Communication Contexts	- Paige et al., 126-127
		- <u>YouTube video</u>
		  Low and high context cultures
		- <u>YouTube video</u>
		  Managing cultural differences
		- <u>YouTube video</u>
		  Cultural dimensions
		- Paige et al., 130-132
		- <u>Pinterest</u> board Week 4
			1) Watch videos
			DUE: Tuesday/Wednesday
			2) Identifying contexts activity
			DUE: Thursday/Friday
			3) Partner activity; Discuss and reflect
			DUE: Saturday/Sunday

WEEK 5 **April 29-May 5**	Description- Interpretation/Analysis- Evaluation	- <u>Article</u> The DAE model - <u>Blog</u> Description-Interpretation-Evaluation - <u>Pinterest</u> board Week 5	1) Read the <u>article</u>; Respond to Facebook questions *DUE: Tuesday-Thursday* 2) Read <u>blog</u> post *DUE: Thursday/Friday* 3) Reflect on your own experience; Comment *DUE: Saturday/Sunday* 4) Indicate your availability for an "in-person" online meeting to be held after the seminar *DUE: Saturday/Sunday*
WRAP UP **May 6-12**	Wrapping Up Live meeting	IDI®	1) Complete the IDI®. Instructions will be send via email *DUE: Sunday, May 12, 11:59pm/22:59 EST* 2) Attend Focus Group interview *Time/Details: To be announced*

Spring Seminar Design

The spring seminar began with a live, online introductory meet-and-greet session. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the outline and expectations for the seminar. It also provided an opportunity for participants to become familiar with each other, through an icebreaker activity, before they were expected to delve into potentially personal topics. This decision resulted from the advice of several fall participants who felt sharing with strangers limited their participation. Once they experienced the first videoconference participants felt more comfortable sharing with each other.

Week one involved an exploration of cultural self. Using their medium of choice, participants were asked to create cultural webs indicating significant parts of their identity (e.g. student, sister, progressive, religious, nerd, Italian-American). Participants then reflected on their own identities, how those identities might change while abroad, and the similarities and differences between the cultural webs of others in the group.

During week two participants explore stereotyping. To ease into this potentially sensitive discussion, participants were first asked to try to make some assumptions about the facilitator, such as ancestry, family composition, and hobbies, and to explain what they assumed and why they assumed it. Participants were then divided into inbound/outbound pairs for an exercise on assumptions. During the first five minutes of a video chat, participants were asked to sit silently and record their assumptions of the other person based on the following questions: (1) the number one genre of music on the partner's music device; (2) the partner's opinions about pets; (3) the type of food the partner eats; and (4) any other assumptions possible. Once five minutes passed, the participants shared their assumptions and engaged in a discussion about how they came up with the assumptions made. The group reassembled and they completed a poll on how

many assumptions they correctly guessed about their partners. Finally, as a group participants

discussed the problems of indulging in assumptions while abroad, how it felt to make and receive

assumptions, and ways to check assumptions before acting or judging.

In week three participants explored Hofstede's (2001) dimensions of culture and rated

themselves on a continuum of each dimension. The results were then composited into a profile

of the group. With the group, participants discussed their own continuum results, discussed

similarities and differences, and explored the aspects of their individual backgrounds that may

have influenced their system of values. They also used this time to discuss how the lessons

drawn from this exercise could be applied abroad. As a final, culture-specific activity, each

participant described a personal holiday of their choice and explained how it reflected their own

cultural values as related to one or more dimensions of culture. Towards the end of week

participants were invited to a live GoToMeeting conversation to discuss their experiences in the

seminar thus far.

During week four participants explored communication styles, specifically the

differences between low and high context communicators, by identifying low and high context

statements. Then they were placed into inbound/outbound pairs to review four situations,

discuss what their immediate replies to each situation would be and why, then work together to

brainstorm other possible responses to each situation using low and high context responses.

Their summaries were shared with the group.

In the final week of the seminar participants explored how easy it was, when in other

cultures, to make incorrect assumptions based on their own cultural frames of reference. The

final activity required participants to apply the Description-Interpretation-Evaluation technique

to a variety of ambiguous images. After the D.I.E. exercise, participants shared a recent situation

they experienced, from daily life or a experience interacting with a seminar-mate, and describe the possible hidden explanations that could help interpret the event. Several days after the seminar ended participants were invited to a live GoToMeeting conversation to discuss their experiences in the seminar.

Appendix D

Spring Seminar Sample Activities and Discussions

Week 1: *Activity*- Draw and upload your own cultural web (or use another media of your choice). What does your web say about you? Was it hard to fill in the circles? If you had to pick just one circle what would it be and why? How might your circles change when you're abroad?

Discussion- What do you notice about each other's cultural diagrams? How do they relate to your own diagram? Are they similar/different? Ask questions about each other's diagrams. What did you learn? What surprised you?

Week 2: *Activity*- Ok, I will now pair you up. Schedule a time to Skype for 30 minutes over the next two days. Spend the first five minutes looking at each other in silence. Record your assumptions about the following: 1) The number one genre of music on your partner's iPod/mp3 player/radio/etc.; 2) Your partner's feelings about pets, 3) Type of food that your partner eats; 4) Write down as many other assumptions you make in the span of five minutes. After the 5 minutes are up, share your assumptions with each other. Talk about how you came up with the assumptions you made, how often you make assumptions based on your personal preferences. Take the Facebook poll to indicate how many assumptions were correct about your partner.

Discussion- How many of you made four correct assumptions about your partner? Three correct assumptions? Two correct assumptions? One correct assumption? Zero correct assumptions? We all make assumptions, which may often have foundations in certain stereotypes, but some people are more aware that their stereotypes should be open to modification. Think about the assumptions you hold. What are the problems of indulging in assumptions while abroad? Describe and reflect on this paired activity. How did it feel to make assumptions about others? How did you feel when you heard the assumptions made about you? How were your assumptions incorrect and how might such assumptions influence your experience abroad? What are some things you can do to check your assumptions?

Week 3: *Activity*- Below is a description of some dimensions of culture and core cultural values presented as contrasting value orientations. Since little about humans can be thought of as either/or choices, these values are placed on a continuum. Using the contrasting values described, think about where your own personal values fit and mark the appropriate box. While chances are that you are relatively high in one value and low in another, you may be high in both, even if they are frequently viewed as opposites. Take the survey below and then go back to the poll to view the values profile of our group.

Discussion- Some things to think about: Do you have any marks on the far ends of the value continua? If so, that means you have a strong value orientation in those particular areas. Think about how this might be a source of strength for you, but also consider how your values could be a challenge in your host culture. Were there certain values where you felt strongly about both sides of the continuum? Sometimes, the situations we are in require us to behave in different ways, for example, being very focused on activities at times but focused on people at others. How might this be a source of strength for you in your host culture? Can you pinpoint aspects of your background and personal history that may have influenced your system of values and beliefs?

Activity- Now, review the dimensions of culture. Describe a holiday (personal, national, religions – your choice) and show how it reflects your cultural values in one or more dimensions of culture.

Week 4: *Activity*- This week we will talk about the nuances of communication styles, or how we prefer to give and receive information. Two broad categories for communication are low and high context communication. What happens if you are a low context communicator and you go into a high context culture or environment? Or vise versa? It might be difficult to understand what is going on, or to get your message across. Let's first practice identifying low and high context statements by completing the questionnaire below.

I will now pair you up for the next activity. Schedule a time to Skype for 30 minutes over the next two days. With your partner review each of four situations. First, tell your partner your immediate response to what you would say or do in the situation and talk about why. Then, brainstorm other possible responses to the situations.

Discussion- Come up with several responses and share them under the appropriate Facebook post comments section. For each scenario list:

1) Your immediate response and why
2) Possible responses

Week 5: *Activity*- Let's try using the DIE model to understand a few pictures. Each day I will post three photographs. Please work together through the DIE method. Today we'll try part one, the Description, if you see one of your seminar-mates interpreting/analyzing or evaluating at this stage kindly help them to shift their perspective to only describing the images… Now let's try to interpret and analyze the three images… Finally, let's try to evaluate the three images.

Discussion- Here is an example of a student using the DIE/DAE method in a real life scenario while at home… Can you tell us about a situation that you recently experienced and then describe the possible hidden explanations that may help explain this event? Use either something you experienced in your daily life or an experience you had with one of your seminar-mates.

Appendix E

Needs Analysis

Thank you for taking a moment to complete this survey. As well as being a study abroad

advisor, I am also a doctoral student at Rutgers' Graduate School of Education. For my

dissertation, I am planning on creating a voluntary online seminar that would connect Rutgers

and international students in the pre-departure phase of their study abroad experiences. In order

for me to better understand students' interest in the topic, as well as technological needs, I would

be grateful if you would complete the survey below. Your participation in the surveys is

voluntary and has no impact on your admission or acceptance to a Rutgers Study Abroad

program.

<u>Interests</u>

Which type of student are you?
    ☐ U.S.   ☐ International

Please indicate which country your university is located in?
    ☐ Choose from drop down menu

How interested are you in the following (circle the appropriate response):
Learning about tools, skills, and theories needed to successfully navigate and more deeply
appreciate new cultures.

1	2	3	4	5
not at all	*a little*	*moderately*	*quite a bit*	*extremely*

Understanding your personal culture and how it impacts your view of the world.

1	2	3	4	5
not at all	*a little*	*moderately*	*quite a bit*	*extremely*

Understanding yourself as a cultural being and as a meaning-maker.

1	2	3	4	5
not at all	*a little*	*moderately*	*quite a bit*	*extremely*

Developing an awareness of how your behaviors may impact others, as well as how your
personal cultural beliefs and values are not universal.

1	2	3	4	5
not at all	*a little*	*moderately*	*quite a bit*	*extremely*

Learning about several cultural frameworks and intercultural theories to understand how these might apply to your time abroad.

1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*
not at all	*a little*	*moderately*	*quite a bit*	*extremely*

Engaging in meaningful interactions with people from other countries and cultures.

1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*
not at all	*a little*	*moderately*	*quite a bit*	*extremely*

Please use the space below to further tell me why you are interested in participating in this seminar.

_____

_____

<u>Intercultural Experience</u>

How many times have you been out of your home country?

☐ Choose from drop down menu

     What is the average length of time you have spent outside of your home country?

     ☐ Choose from drop down menu

     On average, what was the main purpose of your visits?

     ☐ Choose from drop down menu

Have you ever visited the country you plan to study abroad in?

☐ Choose from drop down menu

     If so, for how long and what purpose?

Do you consider yourself as having come from more than one culture (bi-cultural)? If so, please describe.

_____

_____

Please take a moment to describe your experience with other cultures.

_____

_____

Please take a moment to describe any exposure you have had to any intercultural theories.

_____

    _____

Technical Experience

Please take a moment to complete this survey about your experience with technology. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Your responses will help me to understand a bit about your background using technology.

General questions:

	Yes	No	Not sure
I have own or have access to a computer.			
I have internet access in my home/dorm/apartment.			
I have taken an online course before (i.e. using Sakai, Blackboard, Moodle, WebCT, etc.).			

Do you use a Mac or a PC?

☐ Mac   ☐ **PC**

Which is your primary Internet browser?

☐ Internet Explorer ☐ Safari   ☐ Firefox

☐ Mozilla   ☐ Google Chrome ☐ Netscape

Access to Hardware and Software:

	Yes	No	No, but I am willing to sign up for a free account
I have a Gmail account.			
I have Skype on my computer.			
I have a Facebook account			
I have a Pinterest account (Spring only)			

	Yes	No	No, but I am willing to borrow or locate one on campus
I own or have access to a computer headset with microphone.			
I own or have access to a webcam.			

How would you rate your overall ability to use technology?

☐ I can use technology without assistance whenever I need to.

☐ I need minimal assistance when using technology.

☐ I need a lot of assistance when using technology.

☐ I cannot use technology without assistance.

For each skill please rate your ability:

I know how to use Sakai (fall) / Facebook (spring)

1 *2* *3* *4* *5*

not at all *a little* *moderately well* *well* *extremely well*

I know how to use Pinterest

1 *2* *3* *4* *5*

not at all *a little* *moderately well* *well* *extremely well*

I know how to use GoogleDocs

1 *2* *3* *4* *5*

not at all *a little* *moderately well* *well* *extremely well*

I know how to use a chat room

1 *2* *3* *4* *5*

not at all *a little* *moderately well* *well* *extremely well*

I know how to use a discussion board/forum

1 *2* *3* *4* *5*

not at all *a little* *moderately well* *well* *extremely well*

I know how to use Skype

1 *2* *3* *4* *5*

not at all *a little* *moderately well* *well* *extremely well*

I know how to operate a computer headset with microphone

1 *2* *3* *4* *5*

not at all *a little* *moderately well* *well* *extremely well*

I know how to operate a webcam

1 *2* *3* *4* *5*

not at all *a little* *moderately well* *well* *extremely well*

Please describe your overall view regarding learning online?

_____

_____

Appendix F

IDI® Sample Item

Respondents choose from the following five-point Likert-style scale responses: (1) Disagree; (2)

Disagree somewhat more than agree; (3) Disagree some and agree some; (4) Agree somewhat

more than disagree; and (5) Agree. Please note, only sample items are listed below because of

proprietary laws.

Sample items include:

1. It is appropriate that people do not care what happens outside their country.

2. If only other cultures were more like ours, the world would be a better place.

3. People are the same; we have the same needs, interests, and goals in life.

4. I have observed many instances of misunderstanding due to cultural differences in gesturing or eye contact.

5. I can look at the world through the eyes of a person from another culture.

6. I do not feel I am a member of any one culture or combination of cultures.

(Stallman, 2009).

Appendix G

Focus Group Protocol

A maximum of an hour and a half will be allotted for the following focus group protocol

1) Over the past six weeks, describe your levels of motivation to engage in the seminar.

2) In what ways did the seminar meet, or fail to meet, your expectations?

3) Which expectations were met/unmet?

4) Did you learn what you hoped to learn?

5) How was the pace of the seminar?

6) How much choice did you feel you had throughout the seminar?

7) How much control did you feel you had throughout the seminar?

8) Did you have any friendships with other seminar participants prior to the start of the seminar?

9) Describe your experiences and interactions with other seminar participants.

10) Tell me about the development of the group's social connections throughout the seminar.

11) In what ways did you connect with other participants outside the structure of the seminar?

12) What social opportunities/challenges did you experience as a result of participating in this seminar?

13) How did your interactions with other seminar participants influence your development?

14) How did your interactions with other seminar participants influence your overall experience?

15) In what ways did the seminar facilitator influence your experience in the seminar?

16) In what ways did the seminar facilitator influence your learning throughout the seminar?

17) How would you describe the layout of the seminar and the weekly modules?

18) What changes would you suggest?

19) What would you have kept the same?

20) How often did you log into the seminar?

21) How often did you actively participate in the seminar?

22) How often did you passively observe in the seminar?

23) What did you do when you were passively observing?

24) How long did it take to complete each week's module?

25) How many of your of the other participants' posts and GoogleDocs did you explore?

26) Describe the intensity of engagement within the seminar.

27) How effective was the seminar in achieving its posted learning goals (refer to Seminar learning goals:

   At the end of this program you will be able to:

   a. *Understand your personal culture and how it impacts your view of the world;*

   b. *Understand yourself as a cultural being and as a meaning-maker;*

   c. *Develop an awareness of how your behaviors may impact others', as well as how your personal cultural beliefs and values are not universal;*

   d. *Reference several cultural frameworks and intercultural theories and understand how they might apply to your time abroad;*

   e. *Engage in meaningful interactions with people from other countries and cultures.*

28) Describe your level of engagement throughout the seminar.

29) Describe your level of enjoyment.

30) What aspects of the seminar were or were not enjoyable?

31) What do you think could have made this seminar better?

32) Describe any shift in intercultural knowledge that you may have experienced as a result of participating in this seminar.

33) How did your understanding of your upcoming study abroad experience change as a result of participating in this seminar?

34) What aspects of the seminar do you feel influenced such change? In what ways?

Appendix H

Academic Accommodation Following Hurricane Sandy

November 9, 2012

From: Richard L. Edwards, Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

To: Members of the University Community

Subject: Academic Accommodation Following Hurricane Sandy

We have heard from many members of the Rutgers community that significant numbers of students continue to struggle in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. Homes and communities have been damaged or destroyed, power and water services have been disrupted, fuel supplies have been restricted, and, most tragically, scores of people have died. Many of you live in areas that continue to be affected by the storm and its aftermath, which has made it difficult for you to prepare for and to attend classes or to complete your assignments.

For those of you who have experienced hardships in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, we urge you to avail yourselves of the academic assistance that is always available for our students. Take advantage of academic support services, including those within your department or School, and make appointments to visit your professors to talk about issues you are having. Discuss with them the possibility of making up work, acquiring additional time for assignments, and, as a last resort and only in instances of real hardship, arranging for a temporary grade that will permit you to complete your coursework during the winter recess. Please note that the final recourse with each of these remedies is up to individual faculty members, but we urge you to communicate with all of your professors about any distress you are suffering as a result of the hurricane. Like you, our faculty members have experienced the effects of this historic natural disaster, and most are eager to assist you during this difficult time.

Because so many students have contacted us with concerns that hurricane-related hardships are affecting their GPA and academic performance, Rutgers is implementing a **one-time policy** that will allow undergraduate and pre-professional students adversely impacted by the hurricane to have their Fall 2012 course grades converted to Pass/No Credit ("Pass" is a grade of C or better). If, after exhausting all of the options available for academic support, you feel that you cannot do your work because you continue to be affected in the storm's aftermath, you can go online and fill out a Grade Conversion Application: https://sakai.rutgers.edu/convertpf.jsp. In the application, you will be asked to describe briefly the hardships you have experienced that are directly related to Hurricane Sandy and that continue to have a significant impact on your academic progress during this semester. Should you choose to have ALL of your grades for the Fall semester 2012 converted to Pass/No credit (you cannot select individual courses for the grade conversion), **you will need to complete the Grade Conversion Application before midnight on Monday, November 19, 2012**. If you do choose this option and complete the online application, you cannot reverse your decision later.

Please note that this option should not be taken lightly. You should first consult with academic counselors in your department or School to understand the full ramifications of such a decision for your particular academic major or career path. For example, in some cases, courses without an assigned letter grade can negatively affect applications to some professional programs and graduate schools. If you opt for the grade conversion, however, a footnote on your transcript for Fall 2012 will reflect that the grade conversion was part of a University-wide program for students adversely impacted by Hurricane Sandy in Fall 2012. Nevertheless, some programs, including law schools, treat grades of P as equivalent to C. In addition, a conversion to Pass/No Credit may adversely affect students who are on financial aid probation.

This program is designed to be confidential with respect to the decision you make about using the Pass/No Credit option. If you choose the option of a Grade Conversion, you are not obligated to share your decision with anyone, including your professors. Note that if you opt to convert your grades and you additionally take a temporary grade, your final grade, after you make up that temporary grade, will also convert to Pass/No Credit.

As President Barchi stressed this week, this has been an extremely challenging time for so many people in New Jersey and in the tri-state area. But the storm and its aftermath have also shown that the Rutgers community is resilient, and we will continue to work together through this difficult period (R. Edwards, personal communication, November 9, 2012).