In Search of the Global Graduate:
Transforming international experience into intercultural competence

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A Thesis
in
The Department of
Education

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts (Educational Studies) at
Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada
June 2006

Canada

Abstract

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This study considers the under researched area of the relationship between post secondary study abroad programs and the development of globally minded students, or global graduates. Employing qualitative research methodology, nine students from a Canadian university are followed through their experiences as participants in a pilot Study Abroad program. A brief summary of findings suggests that while the overseas experience is transformative, leading to varying levels and forms of intercultural competence in participants, the relationship between studying abroad and producing globally minded students may not be direct. This research concludes with a model for assessing learning outcomes in study abroad participants, as well as practical suggestions for program design that may increase the educational benefits of Study Abroad programs which may better support the development of global graduates.

Acknowledgements

A thousand thanks to Dr. Ailie Cleghorn. From our very first meeting to calm my fears about admission to the program to the final reviews of this thesis, she has been both encouraging and enthusiastic about my interest in academic international exchanges. A number of professional, academic and personal opportunities have fallen my way thanks to her support and interest in my goals.

Thanks also to Concordia's Department of Education for a flexible program that allowed me to explore a number of areas and themes in international education. While not a formal program option, many instructors encouraged me to pursue my interests in higher education, internationalization and globalization by providing opportunities in their courses for self selected readings and research topics, and supplemental academic activities.

Heaps of gratitude to my husband - my tech advisor, editor, biggest critic and best supporter. In three short years, we have worked full time, pulled off two Master's degrees, made it through PhD comps, and sailed through prenatal classes.

I think I've learned a lot here and a lot about learning itself. For example it isn't always obvious what has been learned, and this more subtle kind of learning is no less valuable than that which is obvious... moreover, learning is done best through comparison rather than by looking at something on its own, whether we're talking about countries, societies or people themselves.

~Study Abroad program participant

Since being here, I have encountered many different learning experiences; some expected while others not at all. The expectations I held of myself, this experience and other people have all been challenged and have consequently led to the revelation of biases and beliefs that I wasn't consciously aware I was holding. This is what I believe to be the essence of learning outside the classroom. Making new discoveries, arriving at new understanding and being generally more aware of one's position in the world.

~Study Abroad program participant

This latest turmoil takes the form of new understandings and new ways of thinking resulting from challenges that I have faced here. Turmoil may seem like an extreme label to give a process of learning that appears to be quite natural throughout life. However shifts in perspective or outlook are disruptive to everything that one believes to know and understand.

~Study Abroad program participant

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Introduction

Over the past decade, the goals of universities and higher education have evolved with rapid changes brought on by globalization (Altbuck, 2002; Natale, Libertella, & Hayward, 2001; Newman, 2000). In addition to the general educational goals of higher order cognitive functioning, critical thinking, enlightenment, and ethical and moral debate, universities are now also tasked with the additional responsibility of producing a new breed of graduates – 'global graduates'[1]. As the demands on, and responsibilities of, future citizens increase and shift with growing global cultural, political, and economic interconnectedness, higher education, government, and business have recognized that graduates of the future will need more than a superficial knowledge of other nations and cultures. It has been suggested that, in addition to an increased knowledge about the world, these future citizens also require an intimate understanding of the interconnectedness of our world (Cornwell, 2003; Gross-Stein, 2002; Gunesch, 2004; Nussbaum, 1996; Piper, 2002).

Key to accomplishing this task, universities across Canada have embraced the concept of internationalization. In addition to increased international student recruitment, internationalizing the curriculum, and a variety of international partnerships, central to most university internationalization strategies is an active

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[1] Globalization is frequently used to describe the interconnectedness of production, communication and technologies across the world, and the increasingly shared social space created by this connectedness. In this thesis I do not attempt to delve into the complexity of meanings associated with globalization; rather I use the term Global Graduate to refer to a student who has acquired intercultural knowledge and communication skills, an awareness of 'the other, and an expanded worldview gained from, or enhanced, through study abroad.

Study Abroad Program (SAP) (Knight, 2000)[2]. Most Canadian universities are now actively encouraging and supporting undergraduate students to leave their campus, and their country, to study abroad.

International experience = or ≠ global graduates?

The rationale in sending students overseas is that providing students with a short term study abroad experience develops skills and attitudes that will prepare them to make their way in a globalized world. Collectively and operationally these goals are increasingly presented in the literature, as well as in program objectives, as global or intercultural competence (ICC). ICCs are a loosely defined sets of skills, behaviours, and knowledge seen as essential tools for the new graduate (Deardorff, 2004a, 2004b; Fantini, 2000, 2001; Fantini, Arias-Galicia, & Guay, 2001). In other words, the rationale seems to be that an international experience leads to intercultural competence that in turn produces global graduates (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Global graduates model

Study Abroad Experience	→	Intercultural Competence	→	Global Graduates

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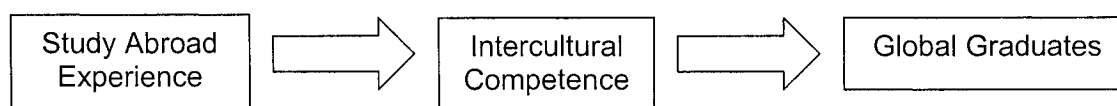
[2] Although the term Study Abroad is widely used to signify a short term international student exchange at the post secondary level, it has also gained popularity referring to variations of studying abroad; intersession courses delivered in a foreign country, field courses overseas, and internships abroad. For the purposes of this research, and in keeping with industry standards, Study Abroad refers to a short-term (one to two terms only) bilateral, international student exchange entered into by formal agreement between post secondary institutions.

However, this rationale is open to debate. Does simply sending a Canadian student overseas for a term cultivate these valuable competencies? Is the relationship between ICC and global graduates that direct?

Prompted by my own experiences working with Canadian and international undergraduate students studying abroad, this research explores the relationship between studying abroad, the development of ICC, and the link to global graduates. Specifically, this study first attempts to identify the individual skills, behaviours, and attitudes that make up ICC and lead to global graduates. Second, I examine the question of how the international experience provided by SAPs might foster ICC.

Why this, why now? The value of this research

In *Designing Social Inquiry* (1994), Gary King and his colleagues suggest that valuable social science research should satisfy two criteria; a research project should first address a question that is important in the real world and secondly should make a specific contribution to the literature on the topic (King, Kehone & Verba 1994, p.15). This research follows King's philosophy in both respects. First, the move to implement internationalization initiatives, and especially SAPs, has been a rapid and relatively new undertaking for post secondary education. It is difficult to find a university or college in Canada that is not allocating an increasing amount of funding and support to the development and promotion of these programs (Knight, 2000). In addition, federal, provincial, and even

municipal levels of government, as well as the corporate sector have also added support and resources for these initiatives by providing funding to outgoing participants[3]. Producing global graduates seems to hold promise for future society, employers, and the economy (AUCC, 2002, 2004; Cantor, 2001; Hunter, 2004). In this regard, research which explores SAPs and their link to global graduates addresses a very real and contemporary issue in higher education, civic education, and business affairs.

This study also fulfills King's second criteria, that a research project should make a specific contribution to the literature by addressing a gap in current research on international exchanges and SAPs. As post secondary institutions face growing pressures to quantify student success, there is an increasing demand for research that clearly points to the relationship between SAPs and learning outcomes. In particular, many scholars, universities and program supporters are calling for an urgent way to address issues of the identification and evaluation of skills and knowledge in order to justify program existence, funding levels, and the added value (return on investment) of student exchanges[4].

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[3] Several examples of these initiatives are available. For example, the federal department of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) provides start up funds for several exchange projects at Canadian Education Institutions. The Ministère de l'Éducation Quebec (MEQ) provides individual bursaries to students participating in overseas exchanges, and study abroad scholarships are available from such organizations and corporations as Scotiabank, Bombardier, and the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE).

[4] Natale et al (2001), Newman (2000), and Currie and Newson (1998) all argue that university's goals have become less associated with the core values of higher education – knowledge, liberation, and enlightenment - and more in line with the corporate goals of return on investment, meeting the needs of 'clients', growth, and competition.

However, despite this need, it appears that SAP evaluation research has been limited to what Stronkhurst (2005) calls *Effect Level 1*, or SAP participants' self perception of satisfaction and impact. This is supported by Sutton and Rubin (2002) who find that of current SAP assessments being conducted in the United States, 95% rely on self reported student satisfaction whereas only 15.6% include learning outcomes, and in particular gains in ICC, as indicators of program success (see table 1).

Table 1. Assessment of effects of Study Abroad Programs		
Are you assessing…?	Number of studies that assess based on this statement	Percent (%)of studies that assess based on this statement
Student satisfaction with the overseas experience?	43	95.6
Gains in language proficiency?	18	40.0
Gains in academic achievement?	16	35.6
Gains in personal development?	12	26.7
Gains in ICC?	7	15.6
Career related outcomes?	5	11.1

Source: Sutton and Rubin (2002)

Still other SAPs and institutions rely simply on numbers as a measure of program success; number of outgoing students, number of exchange agreements, amounts of external funding etc. While these types of evaluations have value in promoting the popularity of SAPs, they do not provide evidence of a link between the study abroad experience and learning outcomes.

Additionally, Deardorff (2004) points out that not only is there a shortcoming in the current methods used to evaluate study abroad experiences, but there is a second critical failing; a lack of specificity in what exactly to evaluate. Although 'intercultural competence' is an oft-cited outcome of SAPs, few universities have specifically defined the concept or its components and hence are not able to accurately assess it as an outcome. With these criteria in mind, this research takes up the current call for a clearer vision of a global graduate, a more defined conception of ICC, and more appropriate evaluation tools to assess learning outcomes and program success.

Developing research questions: What does the literature reveal?

Following an exploratory methodological approach, an extensive literature review provided the basis to develop research questions, as well as influence some aspects of research design. From the review of current literature in the fields of sociology, anthropology, education, and global communications, three main research questions were developed to examine whether and how the learning outcomes of study abroad experiences are contributing to the development of global graduates. The development, rationale, and operationalization of these research questions are outlined below and in the methodology section of this paper.

Research Question I. What is a global graduate?

If creating global graduates is the rationale behind study abroad programs, what is a global graduate? What are the behaviours, skills, and knowledge attributed to this new breed of graduates?

The Global Graduate – a conceptual model

In *Shared Futures: Learning for a World Lived in Common,* Grant Cornwell describes this new generation of graduates as 'geocitizens'; informed and critical of the web of political, economical, cultural, and ethical interdependence among nations and citizens of the globe (Cornwell, 2003). For Cornwell, 'geocitizens' understand that knowledge is rooted in perspective (or alternative perspectives). 'Geocitizens' collect and accept alternative ways of knowing and doing to

develop an expanded, inclusive base of knowledge. Much like the concept of triangulation in research, geocitizens rely on a variety of perspectives and sources of information to arrive at more reliable understandings and solutions in everyday situations,

> They [students] need to seek points of view globally; hence critical thinking becomes the project of triangulating the sources, clearly identifying the contradictions and incommensurabilities, building a reconciled narrative to the extent possible. (Cornwell, 2003, online)

Cornwell also suggests students need to be able to "read back and forth between the local and the global" (Cornwell 2003, online), they need to be equipped with an *insight of interdependence;* an awareness of the links from their local actions to global implications.

Similarly, Janice Gross Stein argues that students need to be able to *read, interpret* and *understand* the global environment,

> Virtually every important challenge we face is 'intermestic' or a complex intermingling of international and domestic forces...[students] need to understand not only why global connections work, but how they work too. (Gross-Stein, 2002, online)

This awareness of the increasing networks and links across societies, economies, and cultures, and the ability to link domestic actions to international events, solutions and outcomes signifies students or citizens equipped with a level of global literacy (Gross-Stein, 2002; Lutterman-Aguila & Gingerich, 2002).

International mindedness (Skelton, Wigford, Harper, & Reeves, 2002), 'citizens of the world' (Nussbaum, 1994) and transnationalists/culturalists (Gunesch, 2004) are yet other references to this bridging of the global and local or understanding that a fine balance exists between the two. The term cosmopolitanism has also been applied to the educational goals for this new generation of graduates[5]. Both Nussbaum (1994) and Gunesch (2004) urge education to equip students with the proper tools and knowledge to participate in global dialogues on shared problems and solutions. Nussbaum argues that to often students blindly accept that collectively and individually their perspectives, preferences and ways of doing are neutral and natural, or simply 'normal'. Cosmopolitan education then shifts the focus away from mindlessly accepting nationalistic values and practices to examining these same practices and values from the perspective of the 'other', "By looking at ourselves in the lens of the other, we come to see what in our practices is local and non-necessary, what is more broadly or deeply shared" (Nussbaum, 1994, p.5).

Regardless of the terminology, the concept of the global graduate is clear; graduating students need to be aware of their individual and collective role in shaping a globalized world, understand that local actions have global inplications, and that seemingly local practices, issues, and solutions share roots or may

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[5] Cosmopolitanism is an ancient Greek philosophy which promotes a community of humans as the primary loyalty over communities based on geography, culture, or language. Essentially cosmopolitan citizens are citizens of the world who regard 'human' as their primary identity and feel a responsibility to cultivate and support humankind over other communities or identities (Gunesch, 2004; James, 2005). Debates and critiques of this view span Politics, Philosophy, Sociology and Economics. It is not the intent of this thesis to delve into these debates, only to suggest that the concept of the global graduate has roots in the philosophy of Cosmopolitanism.

provide solutions across cultures and nations. Global graduates understand that as voters, consumers, decision makers, volunteers, or educators, there are critical links between their local actions and global reactions.

> The web of human interdependance in our era of globalization has a myriad of threads, some of which are political and economic, many of which are cultural, and the most profound of which are ethical and epistemological (Cornwall 2003, online).

In achieving this global awareness, students first need to see beyond their home country. They need to see a world of equally valuable human beings and varied perspectives. Here is where the experiences provided by SAPs can contribute to the development of these globally literate citizens – exposing students to the knowledge of the 'other' rather than a hegemonic, ethnocentric way of knowing that may result from having a narrow 'lens' from which to view the world.

What knowledge does a student require in order to read between the local and the global? What skills facilitate global literacy? What attitudes and behaviours make students receptive to a multiplicity of perspectives? In other words, what 'tools' does one need in his or her global backpack in order to achieve a level of cosmopolitanism?

Cross cultural skills, expanded communication skills, multiple language abilities, appreciation for difference, sensitivity to alternative ways of knowing all top the growing list of skills, behaviours and knowledge required of global graduates. (AUCC, 2002; Cornwell, 2003; Deardorff, 2004b; Dolby, 2005; Fantini, Arias-Galicia, & Guay, 2001; Gross-Stein, 2002; Gunesch, 2004; Laubscher, 1994;

McCabe, 1994). While there have been many research attempts in identifying specific skills and behaviours, there is no single coherent picture of what precisely consitutes a global graduate and more specifically, how to identify these characteristics in graduates.

In response to this, a second phase literature review was conducted to deconstruct the concept of global graduate and to explore links between study abroad experiences and global graduates. This exercise revealed a second important concept, global or intercultural competence. Presented in the literature as new (or altered) skills, behaviours and attitudes that result from studying or living abroad, ICC seemed to offer a connection between the abstract concept of global graduates and the very real experience of studying abroad. The identification of ICC as key in the process of creating global graduates presented the basis for a second research question linking the study abroad experience to the development of ICC.

Research Question II. What are intercultural competencies? Are students developing them through study abroad experiences?

In order to move ahead to address the second research question, it was essential to operationalize the concept of ICC. Identifying the specific components of ICC would provide a basis to examine whether study abroad

experiences lead to the development of these competencies, and to their potential to produce global graduates.

Essential to arriving at an understanding of ICC was examining the myriad of approaches and conceptions from the variety of disciplines claiming a stake in Study Abroad research. In order to be as inclusive as possible, the following review of literature draws from the disciplines of Communication, Education, Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology, in order to frame the debate and paint a descriptive picture of ICC.

Intercultural Competencies – a descriptive model

One of the more prominent debates in current study abroad research has focused on identifying the specific proficiencies or competencies that signify a level of global literacy and in turn support the existence of SAPs. Collectively referred to as global effectiveness or intercultural, global, multicultural, or cross-cultural competencies, there seems to be little agreement among researchers and practitioners as to what exactly constitutes each, or how to measure or assess them (Bennett, 1986; Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Byram, 2000; Fantini, 2000, 2001; Landis, 2004; Stronkhorst, 2005; Vulpe, Kealey, Protheroe, & MacDonald, 2001).

Fantini, Arias-Galicia, and Guay (2001) express the concept of intercultural competence, by acknowledging the new era of globalization and the demands it places on, and requires of, citizens. Fantini and his colleagues suggest that these

demands require not only a new knowledge of the world and its interconnectedness but also the development of new "individual and interactional" abilities [p.1] Abilities that are,

> ...focused on how people engage in cross-cultural encounters. In such encounters, individuals face new options, each with a concomitant consequence; but the choices made when entering a new culture are better informed when the players possess cross-cultural skills, positive attitudes, and awareness, in addition to knowledge. (Fantini et al 2001, p.1)

Yet few have attempted to identify what these individual or interactional abilities 'look' like. Thus we are presented with the active and contested debate in the literature.

Before reviewing this debate, the inconsistency in terminology needs to be addressed. Global competence, intercultural competence and cross-cultural competence are all used interchangably in the literature in reference to the inventory of skills, behaviours and attitudes which are thought to lead to global literacy. For the purposes of consistancy and clarity, the term intercultural competency will be used throughout this research.

Byram, in Alred and Byram (2002), provides a framework for ICC that identifies several broad components viewed as fundemental to competence: *attitude,* regarded as relativizing self (awareness of one's values, beliefs and behaviors within a larger, global perspective) and considering others' values, beliefs and behaviors; *knowledge* of one's own and other's behaviours, beliefs and values;

skills to interpret and relate, and the *skills to discover* and to interact with new behaviours, beliefs and values. Of these components, Byram views attitude as fundamental to intercultural competence.

However, Fantini (2001) suggests that ICC is similar to the 'cultural competence' that is required to perform and succeed within one's own culture. He suggests that maintaining relationships, communicating effectively and appropriately, and negotiating cooperation with others leads to cultural competence, and intercultural competence is simply complicated by the variables of difference, specifically language, culture, and worldview.

Like Byram, Fantini (2000; 2001) suggests that ICC is demonstrated in attitudes, skills, and knowledge. However, Fantini adds three new dimensions; awareness, language and motivation. Awareness closely resembles Byram's knowledge of self and of other. However, Fantini asserts that awareness develops from introspection and reflection and is sharpened with contrasting values and perspectives found abroad.

The introduction of language presents a new factor to consider in achieving ICC,

> ...language and culture are dimensions of each other, interrelated and inseparable. Language, in fact, both reflects and affects one's worldview, serving as a sort of road map to how one perceives, interprets, thinks about and expresses one's view of the world (Fantini et al. 2000, p.27)

For Fantini, learning the language of the host culture permits students to move closer towards the end of an ICC continuum; learning a host country language is

necessary in experiencing a culture on that culture's terms. Without abilities in the host country's language, "important aspects of the host's worldview can never be accessed" (Fantini et al 2001, p.10)

Motivation is also a new dimension introduced into the ICC debate by Fantini. He describes motivation as affecting choices, interactions, participation and enthusiasm during encounters with the other. A student's motivation can vary from the superficial need to just get by in a host culture to a deeper desire to be accepted as a member of the host culture. A drive for acceptance will push students to continually adapt and grapple with a deeper understanding of the host culture. Fantini suggests that motivation should be considered as a continuum affecting the degree of a student's integration into a host culture.

Bennett (1986) was the first to introduce the concept of ICC as a developmental model that sees ethnocentrism at one end and ethnorelativism at the other end of the continuum. Denial and defense are characteristic of individuals at the ethnocentric end of the continuum while acceptance, adaptation and integration signal ethnorelativism. For Bennett, ethnocentrism is deriving one's worldview from the single perspective of one's own culture, while ethnorelativism, similar to Byram's attitude or relativizing self, assumes that "cultures can only be understood relative to one another" (Bennett, 2004, 46). Bennett sees empathy, the ability to surrender to, and accept alternative perspectives and ways of

knowing as paramount in moving along the ICC continuum towards ethnorelativism.

Bennett identifies six stages of the Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). The first three are associated with ethnocentric attitudes:

Denial: where one sees their own culture as the only culture. People at this stage are uninterested in cultural difference and may act aggressively when cultural differences are presented to, or imposed on them.

Defense: sees the world as organized into 'us' and 'them', superior and inferior. People at this stage are threatened by, and critical of other cultures.

Minimization: where differences are accepted yet minimized, deep cultural differences are not grappled with. People at this stage want to correct behaviour that does not fit into their worldview.

The following final three stages signal development towards ethnorelativism, where one's worldview adjusts to accept alternative ways of knowing:

Acceptance: one's worldview is examined in the context of other equally complex worldviews. People at this stage are curious and respectful towards cultural differences.

Adaptation: is exhibited by showing evidence that one's worldview has expanded to include patterns of thought from other worldviews. Behaviour is appropriate to particular cultures.

Integration: shows the ability to move in and out of different worldviews. Bennett explains that this stage is not better than the adaptation stage, but is common among minority groups, expats, or third culture children.

(Adapted from Bennett's DMIS, 1986)

Bennett's model creates a clear framework with which to consider ICC as an evolution based on exposure, experience and perhaps cognitive maturity. It also provides some considerations for SAP program design in terms of creating experiences and activities that assist students with moving along the development continuum. This aspect of program design will be discussed further in the Discussion section of this paper.

Other scholars suggest that intercultural competence requires certain behavioural or personality traits such as respect, empathy, patience, curiosity, and tolerance for ambiguity (Vulpe et al., 2001). In addition, Cushner and Karim (2004) argue that the psychological demands of entry into a foreign culture and then re-entry into the home culture demands both attitudinal and emotional strengths and qualities. Other external factors such as length of stay, destination, and prior exposure to foreign cultures have also been suggested as playing a role in developing ICC (Bennett, 1986; Dwyer, 2004b; Farrell & Suvedi, 2003;

Medina–López–Portillo, 2004; Sanders & Morgan, 2001). Still others argue that there is no prescriptive set of skills or traits that lead to competence in all international situations, nor can the development of ICC be blind to such factors and experiences as gender, age, or social class (Landis, 2004).

Intercultural Competencies – an operational model

A valuable, and Canadian, contribution to the debate on ICC is offered by the Canadian Foreign Service Institute (Vulpe, et al. 2001). In *A Profile of the Interculturally Effective Person*, the authors suggest that although there is a general, common understanding of intercultural effectiveness, little has been done to operationalize this understanding. In other words, what does an intercultural being 'look like', "…what is it that you do, or not do, say or not say, that would indicate to an observer that you are, in fact, interculturally effective?" (Vulpe et al 2001, p.1)

These authors move beyond the descriptive attributes of an intercultural being as described above, to identifying accompanying observable skills, knowledge and attitudes. Although developed with the intent to evaluate international personnel on assignment in the Canadian Foreign Service, the profile serves as a valuable guide to evaluate ICC in SAP participants.

The profile provides a three level classification; nine abstract major competencies that encompass many of the competencies already discussed[6]; 30 core competencies; and a third classification of associated behavioural indicators. It is this third classification that differs from previous ICC research by providing a practical basis to develop SAP learning outcomes, pre-departure programs, and evaluations.

Vulpe et al. also address some important caveats, namely "...no living human being will exhibit all these qualities and perhaps not even close to all of them" (Vulpe et al. 2001, p.11), and that not all competencies outlined are needed in all international or domestic situations. To my knowledge, this is the only research to date that begins to build an intercultural inventory consisting of observable behaviour indicators. For this reason, Vulpe's work provides a solid foundation for determining ICC in this research on SAP learning outcomes and will be drawn out further in the Methodology section of this paper.

A more recent attempt at arriving at consensus in the ICC debate and in identifying the skills, attitudes and knowledge that round out the interculturally competent being is Darla Deardorff's (2004) unpublished doctoral dissertation and subsequent publications (2004; 2005). By assembling known intercultural scholars and United States (US) based higher education administrators,

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[6] The nine core competencies are: Adaptations skills, an attitude of modesty and respect, an understanding of the concept of culture, knowledge of host country and culture, self knowledge, intercultural communication, organizational skills, and personal and professional commitment. For more on the classification see Vulpe et al., 2001.

Deardorff, arrives at a consensual definition and agreed upon key elements of ICC. However, whereas Vulpe's classifications involved consultations with experts from "...North and South, Western and non-Western countries and from several organizational fields" (Vulpe et al 2001, p.7), Deardorff's experts consisted only of US based academics and practitioners. Ironically, this may leave Deardorff's research rather limited or even ethnocentric in scope[7]. In spite of this possible limitation, as the first study known to document consensus on intercultural competence, Deardorff's findings and conception of ICC are helpful in understanding current thoughts on what students should be learning through study abroad experiences. Eighty percent of the experts and administrators in Deardorff's research were able to reach consensus on a definition and twenty-two essential elements of intercultural competence.

The first phase of Deardorff's research provides the consensual definition. Experts and practitioners agreed that intercultural competence was best described as the "...[a]bility to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Deardorff 2004a, p. 171). This was the only definition to receive one hundred percent consensus from administrators and a ninety-five percent acceptance from the intercultural experts.

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[7] It is possible that all the US based experts used in Deadorff's research are interculturally competent individuals who simply call the US their home. None the less it is important to note that this is a US based research project and as such may have limitations.

Additionally, Deardorff presses both the administrators and experts to address the question of what specifically constitutes intercultural competence. Participants were presented with a list of seventy-six commonly cited components from intercultural and study abroad literature. From those, twenty-two were singled out as crucial components of ICC. Included in Deardorff's inventory are the ability to adapt to varying intercultural communication and learning styles, deep knowledge and understanding of culture, sociolinguistic competence, culture specific knowledge and ethnorelative world view (see appendix 2 for a full list of the 22 items). Deardorff's research does much to inform the debate as to what constitutes intercultural competencies.

Having now examined ICC, the second part of this research question remains; are students developing ICC through study abroad experiences? The above literature reviews indicate that while there is plenty of cross disciplinary debate surrounding both global graduates and ICC, little research has centred on developing evaluation methods or inventories. Even less research has applied these inventories to students participating in study abroad programs. Based on this lack of an existing framework with which to evaluate ICC and the need for applied research in this area, several research design decisions for this case study were made. Primarily, an inventory of intercultural skills, behaviours and attitudes was developed in order to establish a means of identifying ICC in study abroad participants. In addition, in order to link ICC to the study abroad experience these skills and behaviours were examined pre and post study

abroad experience. The ICC inventory, research instruments, and findings are discussed within the Methodology and Findings sections of this paper.

Also noticeably missing from current study abroad research is how the experience of traveling abroad may lead to the development of ICC. Many of the skills and behaviours outlined in ICC literature, such as adaptability, ability to listen and observe, flexibility, tolerance, knowledge of culture, respect for other cultures and so forth, are not necessarily cultivated only in international settings. So why is it that so much confidence has been placed in the international experience to develop these competencies? What is it about encounters with the 'other' that seem to be central to the learning process?

Research Question III. How do study abroad experiences contribute to the development of global graduates?

This research now turns to a final question addressing the need to understand how the experience of studying abroad can provide a context for the development of ICC. Specifically what are the processes, catalysts, and events that might prompt the development of new behaviours and transform them into ICC?

As mentioned earlier, current research on the concept of ICC has focused primarily on identifying skills, behaviours and attitudes while little research has delved into the question of how students actually learn to become interculturally

competent. Understanding this process may provide important insight into developing more effective programs that enhance program effectivness and the development of global graduates.

After culling the literature on learning theories, Constructivist Learning theories and in particular Transformative Learning theory (TLT), seem to offer insight into the process of learning abroad. From the earlier literature review of ICC there is already suggestion that study abroad experiences are transformative. Bennett's (1986) model of intercultural sensitivity suggests a progression towards ethnorelativism. Likewise Vulpe (2001) and Dearorff (2004a) both imply that with the changes in behaviour, knowledge, and attitudes, a 'new' intercultural person emerges from the international experience. Essentially the ICC literature seems to indicate that intercultural competence is a transformative process.

Transformative Learning
> A defining condition of being human is our urgent need to understand and order the meaning of experience, to integrate it with what we know and to avoid the threat of chaos (Mezirow, 2000. p.3).

Constructivist learning theories place an individual's need to understand and organize new experiences at the core of learning (Fosnot, 1996; Wilson, 1996; Mezirow, 2000). Constructivists assert that cognitive growth, or learning, is a process of *assimilation* and *accommodation*. Learning takes place when an individual's existing cognitive structures fail in making meaning of new information and experiences *(assimilation)*. When existing

structures are unreliable, individuals are challenged to construct and integrate new meaning structures *(accommodation)* in order to understand, order, and create new meaning (Piaget in Fosnot, 1996). Chaos, conflict, and disequilibria are considered the catalysts for this cognitive re-organizing, and ultimately learning (Fosnot, 1996). Experiences that create personal, intellectual, and affective disequilibria are central to constructivist learning environments.

Transformative Learning Theory (TLT), considered a Constructivist approach, also supports the idea that chaos fosters learning. 'Disorienting dilemmas' or 'trigger events' are seen as welcome opportunities for an individual to critically reflect on the origins of their familiar ways of knowing,

> Our frames of reference often represent cultural paradigms (collectively held frames of reference) - learning that is unintentionally assimilated from the culture – or personal perspectives derived from the idiosyncrasies of primary caregivers (Mezirow 2000. p.16).

At the heart of transformative learning is understanding how one knows; becoming critically aware that embedded *habits of mind* such as values, identity, customs, and *points of view* shape what and how one sees the world (Mezirow, 1997). These frames of reference provide individuals with a basis to evaluate situations, experiences, and behaviours (Mezirow, 1978). These are what one relies on to determine "right and wrong...true and false...appropriate and inappropriate" (Mezerow, 1991, p. 44).

Learning or transformation can take place when new experiences, or trigger events, cannot be explained or understood using one's existing frames of reference[8]. The individual can then either reject the experience or transform perspective in order to accommodate the new experience. TLT explains this process of perspective transformation not as a change to *what* one knows (informational learning) but rather to *how* one knows.

> We have a strong tendency to reject ideas that fail to fit our preconceptions, labeling those ideas as unworthy of consideration - aberrations, nonsense, irrelevant, weird, or mistaken. When circumstances permit, transformative learners move toward a frame of reference that is more inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective, and integrative of experience (Mezirow, 1997, p.5)

These new experiences and opportunities to reflect on ways of knowing are abundant in overseas experiences. Individuals in foreign cultures are frequently confronted with situations where they must test existing meaning perspectives and develop new structures to make meaning and organize new cultural information and knowledge,

> The cognitive dissonance produced when students hear alternative voices, experience new social realities, and explore critical conceptual frameworks produces an extraordinarily pregnant learning environment (Peterson, 2002. p.176).

As mentioned, there are few research links between the development of ICC and TLT, although suggestions of perspective transformation are embedded in study abroad literature. Without inferring transformation, research suggests that specific overseas activities and experiences result in modifications to students' awareness and understandings (meaning structures) that change the way they

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[8] For Mezirow, trigger events are generally disorienting personal events such as death of a significant other, divorce, accidents, job loss etc. (Mezirow, 1991)

act and view the world (worldview). Many SAP case studies provide evidence of this (Dolby, 2005; Emanoil, 1999; Farrell & Suvedi, 2003; Faulconer, 2003; Laubscher, 1994; McCabe, 1994; Quezada, 2004). Although not the focus of the studies, conclusions reveal that the cultural disequilibrium from study abroad experiences, result in students developing new meaning structures that are inclusive of knowledge, values, beliefs, and perspectives of the host country.

It appears that Taylor (1994) presents the first research related to overseas experience that clearly makes the link between ICC and transformative learning. Taylor suggests that Mezirow's trigger events are not unlike the culture shock, or cultural disequilibrium that individuals face during sojourns abroad (Taylor, 1994).

In Taylor's *Intercultural Competency: A transformative learning process*, a hierarchical model of intercultural transformation is offered to describe the process of intercultural transformation. The six stage model reveals a series of strategies to pass through en route to intercultural competence[9]. There are several elements in this model relevant to SAP and the development of ICC. First is that participants must be prepared to accept change. Whether they are prepared based on past critical events/experiences, personal goals, or previous intercultural experiences, readiness for change facilitates transformation. Second is that cultural disequilibrium is crucial to transformation; it is the catalyst.

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[9] For a complete description of Taylor's see Intercultural Competency: A Transformative Learning Process in Adult Education Quarterly Vol. 44:3.

> A disorientating dilemma like cultural disequilibrium challenges the participants' meaning perspective, pushing them to learn new ways to bring balance back into their lives. (Taylor, 1994, p.169)

In *Trigger Event Meets Culture Shock* (2002), Lyon supports Taylor's findings connecting TLT's trigger events with the culture shock that many SAP participants experience while abroad. Lyon argues that both are essentially the same phenomenon, an unexpected experience that causes temporary disorientation and reflection. In other words those disorienting events and situations coined 'culture shock' by interculturalists are what transformative learning theorists consider catalysts for perspective transformation.

Third in Taylor's model, and contrary to Mezirow, is that critical reflection is not necessarily a crucial component to transformation. Taylor finds that in struggling to adapt to even minor changes, individuals develop new habits and routines,

> Over time these daily routines become habit - tacit knowledge - operating at a subconscious level. This suggests that the very act of taking on and practicing new habits, meaning structures may become altered outside participants' focal awareness (Taylor 1994, p. 171)

Lyon (2002) also finds evidence that the process and roles of reflection vary in intercultural learning. Her examination of studies that link cross cultural adaptation and TLT support Talyor's findings; both non-reflective and reflective thinking prompt transformation in intercultural settings. Additionally, Lyon finds that in some cases individuals did not use critical reflection to make meaning from their experiences until they were interviewed (post experience). This

suggests that critical reflection may need to be prompted or facilitated in some individuals.

As discussed above, SAPs seem to provide an ideal learning space for transformative learning. However, advocates of Constructivist theories, including TLT, caution that effective learning environments need to be structured carefully and strategically to control for the quality of experience and the appropriate learning. In fact, it has been suggested that un-mentored learning experiences can "... intellectually lead to nowhere" (Dewey in Lutterman-Aguilar & Gingerich, 2002, p.44). As an example, if a student faces a negative experience while abroad and is not supported or mentored through it, he or she may never learn from nor understand the experience within a broader context. In fact, further learning could be distorted, ethnocentric perspectives reinforced, or negative stereotypes confirmed (Lutterman – Aguilar & Gingerich, 2002; Dolby, 2003).

Although many of the conditions fostering perspective transformation and cognitive growth are present in the overseas experience (Sanders & Morgan, 2001; Lyon, 2002; Taylor, 1994) the haphazard nature in which they present themselves does not guarantee that all students experience or recognize important learning opportunities nor that they will learn from them. Additionally, if students are not prepared to recognize, reflect and act on these events and experiences, they may not have the skills or framework to convert experience to

learning (Boud, Keough, & Walker, 1985; Lutterman-Aguila & Gingerich, 2002; Montrose, 2002)

TLT offers a framework to explore the process of intercultural learning and the development of ICC in study abroad participants. In particular, it offers insight into how the intangible competencies such as ethnorelativism, expanded worldviews, cross cultural empathy, etc., are fostered or prompted by international experience. By providing opportunities for students to challenge their existing ways of knowing and confront their limited ethnocentric views of the world, SAPs hold the potential to develop expanded worldviews, deeper understandings of culture, and in turn ICC. However, the literature also suggests that preparation and mentoring are key to transformation.

The rationale behind study abroad programs, the concepts of global graduates and intercultural competence, and the processes and conditions involved in perspective transformation have all been explored in the above literature review. A foundation has now been established with which to examine the real life experiences of students studying abroad, to explore the development of ICC's in SAP participants, and to examine connections between study abroad and the creation of global citizens.

Methodology

The following chapter provides background information on the SAP and students that provide the case study for this research. Choice of research methodology, research design, data collection and analysis are also discussed in this section. As a general approach this study follows a qualitative, exploratory, case study methodology. It employs in-depth, unstructured interviews with informants as well as an analysis of informants' responses to a pre-departure questionnaire and written journal exercises as a means of data collection[10]. Each of the methodological choices and research decisions are discussed individually in the sections that follow.

Setting the scene; the SAP pilot project

Drawing from my personal and professional experiences working with SAPs at two Canadian Universities, this research focuses on a group of students who participated in a pilot SAP project in the Fall of 2006[11]. This SAP was not unlike the general SAP structure at most Canadian post secondary institutions; selection criteria and pre departure preparation were based on common industry standards, institutional exchange agreements were developed based on existing and frequently used agreements, project partners were in common study abroad

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[10] The use of students' pre departure questionnaires, reflective journals and interview responses as data sources were approved by Concordia's Education Department Ethics Committee. In addition, in accordance with ethics protocol, participants provided written consent for their use in this study.

[11] I consider the project a pilot SAP project as it is not an institutionalized offering at any of the participating partner schools. The original project description also stated the establishment of a long-term exchange program as a goal of this temporary study abroad project.

destinations, and the project provided the standard period of time overseas. As such this exchange project makes for an excellent case study opportunity with findings that can be generalized to post secondary SAPs in Canada. However it should be noted that while that the project's basic structure was similar to SAPs there were some variations in project design that may be considered innovative. For example, familiarization visits made by participating faculty from students' home university and a strong departmental/discipline focus (discussed below) are not necessarily common features of SAPs. While some of these innovations may have implications for the generalizability of this study, their use in this project, and any resulting impacts on student learning outcomes, may provide valuable insight for future SAP program design. Any implications from these variations in design will be drawn out in the Discussion section of this study.

In 2004, a pilot SAP project was initiated through a joint funding proposal for an international exchange between three Canadian and three European Union (EU) post secondary institutions. EU partners consisted of two Scandinavian and one United Kingdom (UK) university. Funding was provided by a Canadian and EU government agency. All six participating partners focused the exchange within their Education departments or faculties.

The primary goal of the three-year project was to develop ICC in participating students while at the same time building a successful exchange project which might be expanded beyond the initial three year period. Year one was devoted to

activities to develop communication, build relationships, and design common curricula themes across project partners. Year two included familiarization visits to provide opportunities for faculty to become familiar with partner school campuses, faculty, course offerings, and potential stage/ internship/practicum locations affiliated with the host schools[12]. Familiarization visits by visiting faculty also included opportunities to meet with, provide presentations, and answer questions for faculty and potential student participants. Additional year two activities included, developing common participant selection criteria, student recruitment, student pre-departure preparation, working with institutions to identify course equivalencies and credit transfer requirements, and preparing participating departments and host students for arrival.

In year three, student participants were mobile. Nine students from each of the participating partners were selected for the overseas exchange. Each Canadian partner received three students from each EU partner for a total of nine students from three different EU countries. Similarly, the EU partners received three students from each of the three Canadian partners. Also during this period, each school conducted a 'mini conference' where visiting faculty from each partner school, exchange students, and various representatives from the university administration (International Offices, Dean's offices and Department staff) participated in project presentations and discussions. The final half of year three was identified as the period to develop and conduct a project evaluation.

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[12] The term 'host school' is used to refer to the university hosting the student for the period of exchange. 'Home school' is used to refer to the students' degree granting university.

The opportunity to work with this pilot SAP project and a group of nine students from one of the participating Canadian institutions presented a case study opportunity to explore questions of what and how SAP's contributed to students' academic and personal development and whether SAP learning outcomes contribute to higher education's goals of creating global graduates.

Choosing the qualitative approach

Many incidental factors influence methodological choices and research decisions. Aspects such as time constraints, opportunity, access to resources, and participant availability often suggest or dictate the use of one method or rationale over another. However, the choice of the qualitative over quantitative methodology was a deliberate choice based on the nature of this research, and the desire to learn from the real and recent experiences of young Canadians studying abroad. Attempts to quantify the voices and stories of study abroad participants would not allow for innovative approaches to explore insights, experiences and learning outcomes that may be beyond the awareness of student participants. In Qualitative Research for Education (2003), Bogden and Biklen outline five central characteristics of qualitative research. While all five aligned with my research goals and personal ideology, three in particular seemed crucial[13]. First,

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[13] In addition to the three features mentioned here, Bogden and Biklen also suggest that the use of natural settings as data sources, and the use of descriptive data rather than numbers are important elements of qualitative research (Bogden & Biklen, 2003).

> Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products. How do people negotiate meaning...how do particular notions come to be taken as what we know as common sense? (Bogden & Bicklen 2003, p.6).

This focus of process over outcome is important in exploring not simply whether there is measurable change in participants but also what change takes place. Qualitiative approaches allow us to examine both the tangible skills and intangible impacts of overseas periods, as well as the question of how the exchange experience might foster the development of intercultural competence in participants.

Second, because participants' 'voices' are rarely heard in study abroad research and literature, it is vitally important to let their voices direct the research and reveal themes and trends. Qualitative research's inductive nature allows for explorations within the data, "[y]ou are constructing a picture that takes shape as you collect and examine the parts" (Bogden and Biklen, 2003. p. 6).

Lastly, the qualitative approach of focusing on understanding how informants make meaning of their experiences is essential to this study. In order to accurately portray shifts in informants' perspectives, and the changes in attitude and behaviour associated with developing ICC, qualitative methods offer the most appropriate approach.

Exploratory Case Study Methods

Exploratory

I consider this research project exploratory for two reasons. First, it is beyond the scope of this project to evaluate SAP success. Rather, this project seeks to explore means of identifying ICC in SAP participants and how study abroad experiences in general might foster ICC. By exploring a means to assess ICC, this research aims to inform future SAP program decisions and future research on assessment and outcomes in Study Abroad.

In *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (2003), Yin describes exploratory case studies where fieldwork and data collection may be undertaken before defining research questions and hypotheses. Although the framework for this research was in place for some time, it was the literature reviews, and to some extent, preliminary data collection that revealed research directions and research questions.

Case Study

Anderson (2002) describes case study research as a method of empirical investigation interested in a specific and contemporary phenomenon in real-life context. The primary goal of case study research is not whether an event, trend, behaviour, or result occurs but rather in understanding how and why it occurs. Bogden and Biklen (2003) add that case studies are a "detailed examination of one setting, a single subject, a single depository of documents, or one particular event" (Bogden & Biklen 2003, p.54). As such, the group of nine students

experiencing studying abroad for the first time not only provides the basis of this research, but also the unit of analysis, for a case study of a real life experience currently underway at a Canadian university.

Research Instruments

During the ICC literature review, the specific sets of skills, behaviours, and knowledge linked to ICC were summarized, categorized and used as the basis of a pre-departure questionnaire and post-experience interview questions.

Pre-departure questionnaire

All students participating in the pilot SAP project were encouraged to complete an internet based pre-departure questionnaire as part of their pre-departure preparations (See appendix 1 for the questionnaire). In addition to prompting the students to begin considering questions of identity, host culture knowledge, personal and academic expectations, the questionnaire was also intended to gather demographic information on participants. Participation was voluntary; thirty-one students completed the exercise including eight of the nine informants involved in this research.

Although the questionnaire was designed for multiple purposes, some questions and corresponding responses were useful in illustrating pre-study abroad attitudes and behaviours. In other words the questionnaire provided baseline ICC data prior to students' study abroad experience.

Post-experience interviews

Within a month of their return to Canada, personal, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the nine research participants. The objectives of these interviews were, first, to identify self reported changes in skills, attitudes and behaviours associated with developing ICC; second, to probe for shifts in attitudes and behaviours that might be beyond students' awareness and third, if shifts and changes did result from the experience, to explore the catalysts.

As noted above, interviews were conducted in a semi-structured style. Interview questions based on the ICC literature review were prepared to guide, but not determine, the course of the interviews. This format, of having broad general questions, provided a consistent base of questions and similar pattern to the interviews while allowing for flexibility in the direction of the conversation. One of the benefits of this style was that it permitted the interviewer to pursue interesting topics, themes or directions as they spontaneously arose as opposed to following a predetermined set of questions that may have impeded new observations. In fact, several of the early interviews revealed insights not previously considered which were then incorporated into future interview questions and explored further.

Another positive aspect of using broad topics/questions is that the students were provided with room to approach the question or frame their responses in a very individual way. For example, with the question "tell me about your practicum,

what stands out as memorable moments during that specific overseas experience?", some participants focused on overcoming language barriers and learning alternative approaches to sending and receiving messages. Other students spoke at length about cross-cultural definitions of physical risk, while others discussed previously unconsidered approaches and practices in Education that they hoped to integrate into their own practice. All provide valuable insight not only into the development of ICC but also with regards to the range of how students individually interpret, develop, and apply new meaning and perspectives from their shared overseas experiences.

It should be noted that prior to interviewing the nine students participating in this research, interviews were first conducted with their counterparts, from the Scandinavian schools prior to their departure from Canada. These early interviews served as an opportunity to test interview questions and format and gain preliminary insight into the development of ICC in project participants. Results from the Scandinavian student interviews may be used periodically in the Findings and Discussion section of this thesis to contrast the Canadian study abroad experience.

Reflective Journals

As a credit requirement, the nine informants were required to submit monthly reflective journal entries highlighting formal and informal learning opportunities, knowledge and insights gained, interpretations of cultural misunderstandings,

and reflections on cultural differences[14]. These candid reflections not only provided supporting data for the identification of ICCs but also connected descriptions of events that prompted cultural or personal conflict, musings, and internal deliberations leading to new understandings and perspective shifts. The informants' journals provide clear examples of catalyst events that encouraged perspective transformation.

Analysis of Data

In *Fundamentals of Educational Research*, two approaches to data analysis are outlined. The first approach suggests relying on the literature and theoretical framework of the study to determine themes and coding categories. The second suggests allowing the data to reveal patterns, topics and reoccurring themes as a method to sort, categorize and interpret data (Anderson, 2002).

In part, this study attempts to operationalize theoretical understandings from the ICC literature, and in particular, uses the literature to provide a preliminary basis for coding the interview and journal data. However, given the nature of this research (qualitative and exploratory), coding categories were expanded throughout the data analysis to include emergent themes and patterns. In a sense, the two approaches were merged to create a flexible coding strategy that encouraged opportunities to identify behaviour, attitudes and skills not yet identified in existing ICC literature.

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[14] The journals were first sent to students' instructor as assignments as requirements of a for-credit course. Upon students' return, permission was granted to use the journals as a source of data for this study.

Limitations

Regardless of choice of methodology there will inevitably be limitations to a study. Choosing qualitative measures over quantitative raises questions of objectivity; preconceived notions, expectations, and researcher biases that can influence data collection and data interpretation. However, with an awareness of these issues I have remained conscious of where and how researcher bias can creep into interview methods and into the interpretation of findings. Conscious of this I hoped to minimize, as much as possible, issues of objectivity.

The case study method is also not without limitations. Reliability, validity, and generalizability are often called into question. However, incorporating multiple data collection methods and sources – pre-departure questionnaires, semi structured interviews and informant journals – allows for a more holistic understanding of study abroad phenomena and minimizes questions of reliability and validity.

Although the design of the international exchange project did not allow for a random selection from a general population for this study, participant selection criteria were based on industry and institutional standards (grade point average, academic, professional or personal references, maturity levels, and expressions of interest) and as such contribute to the generalization of findings. Given that this particular case study closely resembles SAPs at most North American post-

secondary institutions, results could be extended, at least tentatively, to study

abroad programs in general[15].

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[15] The structure of this exchange project mirrors a general North American SAP format - length of time abroad, selection criteria, credit transfer methods, etc. Examples of similar programs are available at most Canadian Universities.

Findings: Listening to the voices of returning participants

The following section examines the data provided from students' pre-departure questionnaire responses, reflective journal entries, and re-entry interviews. From the literature review presented earlier, five broad areas of competencies were identified; adaptive traits, cultural knowledge, communications skills, awareness, and cognitive skills. Corresponding observable behaviors, skills, and attitudes were then placed within the above categories creating an ICC inventory (see appendix 3 for the complete inventory). This inventory is used in this section to present the research findings and identify the presence of ICCs in participants both pre and post study abroad experience. Excerpts from questionnaire responses, journals, and interviews are used to illustrate findings and highlight the richness of students' overseas experiences and learning.

Conclusions drawn from the findings, as well as links to the research questions, are drawn out in the Discussion section of this thesis. In accordance with research protocol, the identities of the participants in this project have been concealed. Students' quotes appear without reference and may have been edited slightly in order to mask any identifying features.

Sample population demographics (see table 2)

Using the demographic information collected from the pre-departure questionnaire, of the eight informants who completed the questionnaire, seven had previously traveled abroad, and two of those had lived abroad for extended

periods. Further information on students' travel experience was discussed during personal interviews where it was determined that, in most cases, travel outside of Canada included family trips or school trips to US, European or Caribbean holiday destinations. Three of the students who had traveled previously had traveled alone or with a small group of friends. Interviews and pre-departure information indicate that, in general, participants' foreign travel experience was limited. It should be noted that the students' home university is located in a metropolitan area where students would receive considerable exposure to multiethnic and multilingual communities both on and off campus. However, it is beyond the scope of this study to examine the influences of this home based experience on the development of ICC.

The participants' ages varied only slightly as did levels of education. All informants were pursing studies in Education. All were born in Canada. Six had Canadian raised parents while three informants had a parent raised outside of Canada; this could suggest increased exposure to language and cultural differences. The information gathered from the pre departure questionnaire suggests that this project's informants represent a fairly homogenous group; undergraduate students, same cohort, similar educational interests, and a similar level of exposure to different cultures or to the experience of being the 'other'.

Table 2. Informants' demographic information [16]

	Informant 1	Informant 2	Informant 3	Informant 4	Informant 5	Informant 6	Informant 7	Informant 8
Have you traveled abroad?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Have you lived abroad?	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Where?	N/A	Worked/ lived on a cruise ship	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Asia and UK
For how long?	N/A	6 mos, (x2)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.5yrs and 3 mo.
Your current age	22	25	26	25	24	21	24	26
Number of years university education	1	3	4	2	4	2	3	5
Where did your mother grow up?	Canada	Canada	Canada	Canada	Canada	Canada	Canada	Caribbean
Where did your father grow up?	Canada	Canada	Canada	Canada	Canada	Caribbean	Caribbean	Southern Europe

ICC Inventory

As mentioned earlier, based on the literature review of study abroad research, five broad areas of competencies were identified:

- adaptive traits
- cultural knowledge
- communication skills
- awareness
- cognitive skills

Specific observable skills and behaviours associated with intercultural competence, identified in Deardorff's (2004) and Vulpe's (2001) research, were then placed within the above categories in order create a means to determine the

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[16] Eight of the nine informants completed the voluntary, internet based, pre-departure questionnaire.

presence or development of ICCs in this case study's participants. The full list of inventory items is found in appendix 3. Using the inventory as a guideline, the following section presents the data collected from participant pre-departure questionnaires, interviews and journal entries to assess the presence of ICCs pre and post study abroad experience.

Adaptive traits

Adaptive traits may be viewed as a set of personal qualities that facilitate an individual's comfort level, receptiveness, and ability to acclimatize to an unfamiliar environment. Particular to the development of ICC, possessing these traits prior to traveling abroad, or developing these qualities while abroad, may facilitate adaptation to new cultural, living and social conditions. Students who hold or have developed adaptive traits should have exhibited some or most of the following traits while abroad:

- Avoided negative evaluations of the local/ withholds judgment
- Displayed a sense of humour about the frustrations of living in another culture
- General openness toward intercultural learning and to people from other cultures
- Humility; did not give the impression of self importance or superiority
- Remained flexible, tolerated and engaged in ambiguity
- Respect for other cultures
- Sense of curiosity and discovery
- Learning through interaction; participated in local events, read local papers, attempted language, engaged in host culture leisure activities

Pre departure

While the pre departure questionnaire could not assess all adaptive traits, several questions were intended to determine if participants possessed some of

these traits prior to departing for their overseas experience. Responses reveal that all respondents appeared to have some tendencies towards adaptive traits before departure. However, none of the students exhibited all traits and most seemed to have varying degrees. For example, when questioned about their behaviour in unfamiliar settings, six of the eight respondents replied that they would quickly ask questions to try to understand the situation before taking action. Two students responded that they would quietly observe members of the host culture looking for clues to the appropriate behaviour or action. Both responses signal a tendency for being open to intercultural learning and learning from others, respect for other cultures, and a sense of curiosity and exploration. Additionally, all participants anticipated a good portion of learning to take place outside the classroom especially in the realm of cultural learning,

> I expect to learn soooo many elements...about their way of living,
> their culture and the way they see the world...just to name a few.

However, when asked about the flexibility and ambiguity in their day to day routines six respondents indicated that their days are routine, structured and well planned whereas two students replied that they preferred flexibility and spontaneity to their days. This suggests that most students preferred structure and routine over flexibility and ambiguity, which is one of the adaptive traits outlined in the ICC inventory[17].

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[17] It should be noted that students' interviews revealed that prior to the overseas experience, most participants also held part time jobs and other commitments in addition to their full time studies. This may be more reflective of their response to schedules and routines than a lack of flexibility or acceptance of ambiguity.

Post experience

It appears that while the ability to manage the ambiguity and spontaneity of international travel and new routines may create initial stress, students were able to overcome the 'chaos' and tolerate changing schedules, new rules, cues and environments,

> More surprisingly, the things that I love (loved?) about home (and everything that exists in my life there) also seemed to have faded into a distant past. Friends, routines, and schedules have all surfaced in country X, ending the apparent chaos...

Interviews and students' journal entries provided a myriad of examples of decisions, actions, and behaviours consistent with the adaptive traits required to succeed in their host countries. Interesting to note was that students seemed to unknowingly possess many of these traits prior to departure. In other words, students were genuinely surprised by their abilities to cope, make decisions and generally succeed in stressful and unfamiliar environments. These traits appeared to be latent or unused in their familiar home environments but were invoked when placed in challenging situations. As a result many students returned reporting higher levels of self esteem and self confidence. Other students' comments indicated that these traits developed or were enhanced by overseas events.

> One of the differences between Canada and country Y is how they give [academic] advice...I felt even more confused and panicked at the end of the advising session then when it began...The trick was not to expect her to answer my questions, but to help me arrive at the answers on my own. In the end, I found that my attitude changed. The fact that the teachers trusted me to find the answers by myself made me feel like more of an expert. I also realized that I could solve many of the problems with my paper myself.

In addition, many students exhibited the traits of discovery and curiosity and took on additional projects and explorations, both personal and academic, to uncover areas of particular interest. After spending time in an early childhood educational facility abroad with a special needs child, one student was moved to investigate the host country's educational philosophy and practices regarding inclusion. Another student was intrigued by the similarities in language and identity issues found in the host country with that of Canada, and out of interest, wrote an essay comparing the two.

It does appear that without exception students felt the greatest amount of learning took place outside of the classroom in encounters and interactions with host nationals and with their Canadian peers.

> ,,,talking to people may not be only how I leaned the most about country Z but also about Canada. And not only about other people, but also about myself.

In addition, journals and interviews were ripe with examples of how students downplayed their own knowledge in both an attempt at humility but also out of awareness for the value of difference.

> ...the different classroom structure was difficult to interpret and adapt - there it was less structured, didn't know when things were due, who was teaching what. But I think it was just difficult because it was not what we are accustomed to - not that it was wrong.

Cultural Knowledge

Cultural knowledge can be explained as having an awareness and understanding of the embodied values, traditions, experiences and worldviews of a specific culture. It has been suggested that increased cultural knowledge leads to an increased understanding of the growing interconnectedness of nations (Cornwell, 2003) and fosters ethnorelativism (Bennett, 1986). From the ICC inventory, cultural knowledge was identified by the following criteria and behaviour:

- Can succeed on a factual quiz on host country (government, national heros, religious beliefs, languages, historical events etc.)
- Can describe essential do's and don'ts of local culture
- Makes use of local "cultural interpreter" to assist in understanding host culture and how their own behaviour is perceived by others
- Knows that values, behaviours and appearances vary from culture to culture and are equally valid
- Can describe some examples of the influence culture has in domains such as power, relationships, social structures etc.
- Demonstrates an understanding of the cultural iceberg; invisible values, visible manifestations of values
- Can give examples of things in host culture that are logical in context but perhaps not so in their home culture

Pre departure

On the pre departure questionnaire, informants were asked if they had prepared in any way for living in their host culture, five responded negatively. Those who indicated that they had prepared showed a range of depth of preparation from reading a guidebook, trying to learn basic words/phrases, to researching judicial, political, and intellectual traditions of the host country. When asked to rate their knowledge of host country on a variety of issues including customs and

traditions, history and politics, and cultural strengths and weaknesses, informants' responses varied slightly but in general admitted to and indicated a lack of general cultural knowledge.

Deeper cultural understanding, explained as an 'embodied feeling for culture' (Bennett & Castigioni, 2004), implies more of a sensory experience than simply an accumulation of facts and data about a given culture. The authors describe this embodied feeling as, "the interface between physical sensation and conscious awareness" (p.250). Geertz (1973) also suggests that understanding culture requires a deep understanding of context, and of the social and relational structures that accompany culture. When asked to identify four characteristics or values which truly reflect both their own Canadian culture, informant responses indicated a very basic understanding of deeper cultural knowledge. Likewise when asked for values and symbols thought to reflect their host culture. Their responses pointed toward a limited understanding of culture based on the manifestation of cultural values rather than on the values themselves .

Figure 1. Cultural Iceberg

Observable manifestations of culture (tip of iceberg) →

Unarticulated, subconscious origins of the visible cultural cues (below the surface) →

Religious rituals   Literature   Food
Gestures   Paintings   Styles of dress
Eating habits   Music   Facial expressions
Holiday customs

Religious beliefs   Childraising beliefs
Work ethic   Understanding the natural world   Values
Concept of leadership   Importance of time   Concept of self
Concept of fairness   Nature of friendship   General world view
Notion of modesty   Concept of personal space   Concept of beauty
Rules of social etiquete

(Adapted from the School of International Studies, online cultural training program)

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For example, students listed playing hockey (or other arena sports), Molson Beer, Peacemakers, friendly, diverse, affluent, not-American, and 'like to have a good time' as typical Canadian values.

Post experience

> Country Z thinks this way and the Canadians think that way, its just different. I didn't think they [host country nationals] were right or we were right, but I thought that I should really try to do it and understand their way.

Responses on the pre departure questionnaire suggested that most students did not have a clear understanding of the concept of culture in terms of the cultural iceberg model. This was also evident in students' journals,

> As time progresses I become aware of ever evolving differences between my Canadian culture and that of country Z. First there is the bathroom. Most public restrooms charge a small fee. Second, my own bathroom has no enclosure at the bottom of the shower so when I take a shower the water accumulates all over the entire floor...Third...[host nationals] prefer to hang their clothes up to dry...

This quote from a student's journal demonstrates a superficial understanding of cultural differences as simply behaviours or actions which appear strange, foreign, or out of place to the student. However, it does appear that with prolonged exposure to and more comfort with the host culture, deeper cultural questions are probed. One example of this is provided by a student who is at first grappling with the idea of nudity in a public place (sauna) which later evolves into questioning the varying conception of sexuality across cultures. The following journal entry demonstrates a progression in the approach to cultural knowledge,

Week 1. The sauna...is a small room which uses hot rocks and water to create a hot steam. The heat is said to relax one's body. While, we in Canada are not completely unfamiliar with the sauna, the host country nationals take this idea one step further...way further. They sit naked. Naked! It does not matter who is present. Men, women and children take saunas together!

Week 2. I had my first experience with the sauna, which was remarkable to say the least...We went from the sauna into the sea and then into a hot tub...I did not go in naked. A few students did but I was not as confident; I have since decided I would like to try the sauna again but in the nude...while in country Z, I really want to make a good attempt to do as they do.

Week 6. One guy asked me why I was so uncomfortable going naked [in the sauna]. I told him I was uneasy for a couple of reasons. First, in Canada we associate nakedness with sexuality...he told us that I had completely misinterpreted the sauna. I asked him "if you don't find a naked girl sexy, what do you find sexy? His reply: "It's the clothes they wear, the way they dress" ...he thought a girl without clothes on was just a girl in the sauna. Neat!

The sauna was discussed at great length during the interviews with students who had studied in Scandinavia. Each had wrestled with the concept of the sauna, nudity and sexuality during their stay. By the end of the overseas experience all had explored, to varying degrees, host country and Canadian conceptions of nudity and sexuality and questioned the roots of the conflicting conceptions. In most cases, new understandings resulted from discussions with both fellow Canadians and host nationals, demonstrating attempts to view culture beyond manifested cultural views, comfort in using cultural interpreters, and participating (within their own comfort levels) in the unfamiliar activity.

As mentioned before, and supported by Vulpe (2001) exceptions were present and not all students exhibited all competencies. Some students were quickly able

to provide glimpses, in both their journal entries and later interviews, below the tip of cultural iceberg, making connections between outwardly observable behaviours and attitudes and larger embedded societal or cultural values.

> Many of our classes, and class discussions seem to involve much more student direction and flexibility in terms of type and breadth of topics discussed...I have also noticed many groups of students around campus who have "work meetings" to discuss school work or discipline related topics. This atmosphere which has involved professors to a lesser degree, creates a sense of equality, connectedness and a community of learners. In some way these reflections may be reflective of broader cultural values here in which no one is better than anyone else.

Interviews with the Scandinavian students revealed that students had turned similar observations from classrooms, practica, and day-to-day activities into understandings of larger cultural values and norms. One particular cultural insight came from participating in a 'group' project with Canadian peers,

> ...students here [in Canada] don't know what it means to be in a group...here [in Canada] they divide the workload and present individually. When they present they say "I" instead of "we". At home it is very important to learn to be part of a group - share, and discuss. It seems that the system here stresses individuality, independence, don't trust others to do work, and competition rather than cooperation and collaboration. We see that also in the daycare staff and even in how the children are educated.

However, only a few of the Canadian case study participants made these kinds of cultural observations. Others continued to view host country culture by observable behaviours and activities,

> I discovered that teachers in country X are far more different than those at home...teachers here are more direct in what I feel is a rude way, when dealing with students.

Although interviews revealed that students were not necessarily aware of culturally appropriate behaviour or do's and don'ts in their host countries, journal entries revealed numerous situations where students had made decisions based on host culture expectations and norms for behaviour[18]. This suggests that students adapted to culturally appropriate behaviours and expectations with ease, and almost subconsciously. One student recounted an experience that arose while trying to find common North American spices in a local supermarket. Because everything was in the host country's language, spice names were unrecognizable. The student called home from the market to try and get translations,

> Well, my mom began laughing very hard [on the phone] and soon I too was laughing hysterically. Until, of course I noticed everyone in the store had stopped what they were doing and were staring at me. "Mom" I said, "You have to help me stop, everyone is looking at me, Host country nationals are quiet and they think I am freaking out, they think I am crazy"... [host country nationals] are very quiet, they would never make a scene like that.

However, there was indication that in a few situations, the structure of the pilot SAP project may have produced attitudes and behaviours, in some individuals, along group lines. As explained earlier, Canadian students abroad were clustered in groups of nine. Three students from each partner school studied at each of the EU partner schools. With the common experience of being a Canadian abroad, and a participant in the pilot SAP project, many students

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[18] When asked, during interviews, for examples of if/how they had changed behaviours to match host culture expectations or behaviour, most students could not think of any situations where they adapted or altered their own behaviour in respect of, or to accommodate the host culture norms.

quickly aligned themselves with 'like' people (the Canadians) and created social and cultural bonds within this small group. In the case of the Scandinavian schools (because of language barriers) these nine Canadian students lived together, studied together and had limited contact with host national students.

In some situations and for some students, it appears that although individuals were aware of culturally appropriate behaviour, concerns within the group outweighed concerns for those outside the group. In other words, a group mentality emerged and dominated over individual personality and sense of correctness. For example, one student recounted an evening where Canadian students were invited to a traditional host country celebration. Although students had participated in cultural discussions earlier where they learned that host country conventions dictate that elders are served or provided food before others, when it came time to eat, the Canadians hesitated, looked at each other for approval, and then headed off as a group to the buffet before anyone else. Additionally, when questioned about what impressions the Canadians might have left behind with their host country peers responses were "loud, obnoxious at times, a bit unruly", "maybe more "American" than "Canadian". Observations taken from the interviews and other personal encounters with the informants do not indicate obnoxious or unruly behaviour as the norm with this group. In some cases sex and age seemed to play a role in whether students joined or distanced themselves from this group mentality[19]. This group mentality also emerged in the

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[19] It is not within the scope of this thesis to discuss at length, group conformity or the influence of group mentality on behaviour, simply to identify behaviours that manifested while abroad.

Scandinavian participants at the Canadian school in this case study. Upon arrival participants quickly aligned themselves with their home country peers and remained in these groups despite efforts by project coordinators and faculty to integrate them with other project participants and host school classmates. As demonstrated by the below interview quote from one EU participant, this collectiveness may have prevented students from quickly adapting to their surroundings,

> We really had a tough time in the first couple of weeks, we are so thankful that we had each other. We pretty much stayed in the room and slept and read, kinda locked ourselves in our rooms. It is twice the fun and half the stress when you share the experience.

There was also evidence from the EU students that resisting integration, also may have served to reinforce stereotypes and enthocentric thinking,

> To succeed it feels like we [Scandinavian students] had to give up a piece of who we are and the way we do things - we don't agree, why do we have adapt to Canadian way?

And,

> We [Scandinavian students] have not adapted to Canadian ways - we are adapting a little bit but we want to do it like we do at home, it is not just us learning, the teachers and everyone else here are learning too. By doing it our way they can see different ways of doing...

Communication skills

Communication skills in the context of international interactions are identified as the ability to adapt to varying intercultural communication and learning styles, and the ability to get one's point across and achieve communication goals. Associated behaviours, skills and attitudes include:

- Attempts, and shows development of, host country language (varies from local greetings to fluency)
- Employs a variety of means at communicating across language
- Can provide examples of differences in verbal and non verbal communication styles
- Socializes with host nationals avoids isolating oneself with others from home ('expats' or, in this case, other Canadian participants)
- Wins the confidence and trust of local people
- Understands communication norms and protocols of host country
- Sociolinguistic competence (awareness of relation between language and meaning in societal context)

Pre departure

The ability or tendency to adapt to varying intercultural styles was not directly assessed on the pre departure questionnaire. However students were asked to suggests topics of conversation that they might engage in or avoid during casual encounters with their host national peers. Responses were very general and did not indicate prior consideration of culturally appropriate or inappropriate communication norms that might impede or facilitate intercultural communication. Neither did the responses suggest an awareness that communication styles might differ from their own experiences.

To gauge students' ideas about the interconnectedness of language and culture students were asked how important they thought learning their host country's language would be to understanding its culture. Five of the eight respondents indicated that language was "very important" to understanding culture while three replied "not at all". However, two of the students that replied 'not at all' were departing for the UK and likely not anticipating language as a factor contributing

to cross cultural communication. In general, students' responses suggest an awareness of the relationship between language, meaning, and cultural context.

When asked whether they had abilities in their host country language, four of the five respondents (students departing for the UK excluded) replied that they did not have any host country language abilities. However, all students anticipated being able to "carry a conversation" in their host country language before returning to Canada.

Post experience

> However one eventually learns from such a situation [being placed in an ECE centre unable to communicate] by finding alternative ways of communicating: signs, gestures, facial expressions, body language, physical contact, using short sentences or different words etc. This of course can make the generally emotionally exhausting day in an early childhood environment even more tiresome.

For the students who traveled to Scandinavian countries, there was strong evidence of newly developed communication skills and alternative methods to communicate across multiple language barriers. These encounters with language took place primarily in the field placements as the courses and social situations all occurred in English.[20] All students indicated that they were overwhelmed at first by the task of communicating to young children without the appropriate language skills but quickly developed their own techniques of interacting and communicating with children,

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[20] For ease, the project taught all courses in English. This meant that students in Scandinavia had no host nationals in their classes. Additionally students were housed together presenting limited opportunities for language learning or encounters. Students also explained that host nationals were fluent in English and preferred to practice on them rather than teach them native language.

> I knew that not being able to speak [host country language] would present challenges for me during my practicum...I quickly learned that communicating verbally was not an option, so when interacting with the children I relied on physical activities such as sport and hand games.

And,

> Consequently [after becoming aware of language barriers in the practicum settings], I started to think of possible ways I could communicate with the children. As a result, the children and I developed a kind of common ground where we communicated through non-verbal signals.

Additionally several students relayed these experiences into new understandings of language, meaning, and teaching in a multicultural, multilingual classroom.

> I learned two most valuable tools in this area [bi/multiligual students]. The first is to use the children's native language to help them learn a new one. It shows them that you are making an effort to pick up words in their language and not just vice versa. The second is to treat them as competent English language speakers

> When I reflected on my frustrations on not being able to communicate with the children or even understand them, I thought about the strains teachers can afflict children of a different language if they are not paying attention to the barriers and limitations of language. I can only imagine how infuriating it can be for a child not to feel understood or to be able to communicate with those around them.

Even for those students studying in the UK, language did play a role in their cultural and communication development.

> You quickly learned which terms were appropriate for different situations, toilet, for washrooms, the tube for the metro...also, and especially, in asking questions, I had to consciously change the way I asked questions and watch my inflection and intonation...these were slight differences but very important in getting message across.

All three participants studying in the UK also commented on the societal value, or hierarchy, which their host culture placed on the variety of accents heard daily. In fact one student commented that variations of the British accent, signifying your

region of origin, "...weighs heavier on other's perception of you than does your station in life". In addition students showed an increased awareness of differing communication styles regardless of their host country destination,

> ...when they say something in country Z, they really mean what they say - we say things so casually like I'll call you later, or we should grab a coffee something - like its no big deal. You would never say lets grab a coffee sometime to a host country national unless you really meant it.

Group dynamics was mentioned earlier in the Cultural Knowledge section of the findings, but is worth raising here in terms of cross-cultural communication. As indicated by the ICC inventory, socializing with host nationals is important for developing not only an awareness of culturally specific communication and behaviour, but also for language development. However, the tendency to seek out, and group with others from home is a common dilemma in SAPs. It appears that this project was not the exception. Regardless of country of origin many students found comfort in the familiar and did not venture too far from their group of compatriots. As a result cross-cultural communication especially among students' host national peer group was limited. For others there were deliberate attempts to distance themselves from their peer group and engage more with the 'other'.

> ...the Canadians largely seem content to hang out with each other. I'm probably the only one from our group that has gone out of my way to make contact, spend time with and learn from country Z host nationals.

In terms of language acquisition, none of the students reported being able to 'carry a conversation' in their host country language during their stay (UK

participants excluded), which was a goal for most prior to departure. However many had examples of attempting the language, in markets, during practica, and at local services, but levels of fluency remained very basic.

Awareness

Awareness brings a cognitive dimension into the assessment of ICC. Being conscious of one's values, beliefs, behaviors, and roots of knowledge requires, introspection and reflection (Fantini 2001), as well as processing, perceiving and interpreting skills (Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Byram, 2000). These have been identified in the ICC inventory as:

- Understands others' world views; that assuming others are like 'us' can create misunderstandings
- Cultural self-awareness and capacity for self-assessment; questions their own way of doing things
- Deep knowledge and understanding of culture (one's own and others') – can articulate how they are a product of their own culture (values, behaviours, attitudes)
- Attempts to 'try on' new behaviours or perspectives of the host culture
- Cross-cultural empathy
- Recognizes that strict adherence to personal ideals may cause problems in new culture

Pre departure

Because being aware of embedded values, cultural notions and ways of knowing entails comparison (Cornwell, 2003; Dolby, 2005; Fantini, 2002; Gross-Stein, 2002), students' previous exposure to and interaction with foreign cultures was surveyed prior to departure. Seven of the eight respondents had had no prior contact with nationals of their host country. One student indicated email/internet contact approximately once a month with a host country resident. However seven

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students responded that they had regular, in most cases daily, face-to-face contact with people from other ethnic backgrounds. This would suggest that, for the majority of respondents, exposure to alternate worldviews and different ways of knowing occurs on a frequent enough basis to provide opportunities for more than a superficial awareness of culture and some initial progression along Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity.

Although awareness is difficult to determine through self-reporting or a questionnaire format, several questions on the pre-departure questionnaire attempted to probe for awareness levels in students prior to their overseas experience. For instance, responses to questions about Canadian culture and values, already discussed earlier in the Cultural Knowledge section of the findings, revealed that students had a superficial understanding of culture in general as well as of the host and home culture.

In addition, students were asked to provide some examples of 'unwritten rules' (embodied cultural knowledge) that may help their international peers adapt and succeed in Canada and in their studies. On 'unwritten rules' to Canadian culture, responses included "don't know", "don't worry we are pretty accepting" and "be polite". On the unwritten classroom rules, "Work hard, take notes and go to the library", "the written rules are sufficient [for success]" and "go to all your classes and get involved" were typical responses. Only one student's response indicated

awareness that there may be "unwritten rules" that foreign students, entering Canada and the university learning environment, may not be aware of.

> ... listen carefully to the professor, they will basically tell you what you need to know. Make sure you understand clearly professors' expectations (this will help with your assignments). Meet with them, ask lots of questions early and often to get to know your professor quickly (extra hints are dropped with the extra relationship time). You may have to suffer some boredom, it's up to you to try to find something positive or interesting to occupy your focus. Make that focus the goal of your learning for that class...

Additionally, seven of the eight students replied "yes" when asked if they intended to use the same strategies for success in their host classroom as in their home classroom. Again, only one student response showed a consideration that expectations, techniques, etiquette, and concepts might differ across cultures,

> No, I think that I will wait to see what the classroom atmosphere, my peers and instructors are like and then decide. Perhaps these strategies [ones employed in the home classroom] will be useful and perhaps there will be different ones to consider. I am expecting that there will be differences in how I am expected to think, work and share my ideas.

From students' journal entries and re-entry interviews, opportunities to explore cultural manifestations and their origins were abundant while abroad but not always acted upon. Perhaps the students were simply not equipped with the right tools either to recognize these learning opportunities or to grapple with deeper cultural meanings? This suggests an area that could be more directed in SAPs, that could better prepare students to move along the intercultural continuum. This point is drawn out in more detail in following sections of this thesis.

Post experience

> As soon as I walked in my first day of 'stage', I automatically stopped and realized I didn't know how things were done - how to interact with parents, how to address children. But for an instant I assumed that I knew how it worked so I took a step back and watched for a while and asked questions before applying my Canadian assumptions of the way things should be.

As with other categories on the ICC inventory, levels of awareness varied among participants and in many cases were developing as a reaction to events, interactions, and exposure to other perspectives while abroad.

Some students exhibited an awareness of their own and others' origins of knowledge early on in the experience. This may suggest existing awareness prior to departure that the students may have been alerted to, or was enhanced by overseas encounters and follow up reflections. From a week one journal entry, one student comments on the origins of knowledge after realizing the diversity of values and perspectives among the Canadian participants.

> As I reflected on the differences in what I considered common knowledge, I understood that these differences are a result of our past experiences that have shaped our attitudes and expectations...I think it is extremely important to be aware of how one's own experiences, situation, and background affect any new understanding.

Understanding the concept of culture seemed to be the one category where gains were least evident. With few exceptions, it appeared that although students were aware and open to the experience of difference, they did not push themselves to consider day-to-day differences in the larger context of societal

and cultural values or traditions. As previously discussed in the Cultural Knowledge section of the findings, in many cases cultural observations remained in the realm of cultural manifestations and observable behaviours without making links to cultural and societal influence. However, there were exceptions and certain conditions that prompted students to grapple with a deeper understanding of culture,

> ...one of the most interesting things I have observed this far is how the values I have seen in country Z society are not only reflected but promulgated among young children.

It appeared that students in all host destinations were presented with many unique opportunities to critically assess their cultural assumptions in the context of being faced with conflicting norms. Whether it was the issue of sexuality and nudity, the concept of exposing children to physical 'risk', approaches to higher education and early childhood education, or the recognition of the diversity within their small group of Canadian peers, students were continuously presented with situations that required them to consider alternative worldviews, the origins of these alternative perspectives and the influences of culture.

Examples of this fill the pages of students' journals and often dominated interview conversations,

> I was shocked at how different the Canadians were. I assumed that we would have common knowledge/perspectives etc...the experience of having so much diversity in our own group taught me about my own assumptions of Canadians and Canadian education.

On different approaches to classroom management,

My home school seems so ultra organized in comparison - admin wise. It [course structure and classroom environment] is a much different approach to efficiency, being prepared, and knowing ahead of time. It was so laid back there that I was always searching for structure. But maybe that is just my socialization. Everything always worked out in the end, just not necessarily the way I would have done it at home.

On the concept of physical 'risk' in early childhood practices,

Children really seem to be able to explore their boundaries, parents and educators really encouraged children to explore, challenge and push their physical abilities rather than teach them to be afraid of what might be [as in Canada].

There were also a multitude of examples how students were able to 'try on' and empathize with the other,

It was so frustrating for me as an adult not to be able to communicate at all with my [host country] daycare students - it made me realize what it must be like to be an immigrant child in a Canadian daycare. What is the problem with having a sign that says toys/jouets and whatever other languages exist in your students' worlds? First it makes you feel welcome, second it makes you understood and third it shows respect. I'll have everything in 10 different languages or however many are in my classrooms.

Cognitive skill

Cognitive skills associated with intercultural behaviour, or in facilitating intercultural competence, include the skills to listen and observe, cognitive flexibility, the ability to switch frames from etic to emic[21], and ethnorelativism. Operationalized, these competencies can be observed by the following behaviours,

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[21] An emic perspective considers the 'native's' or host national's interpretation of, or reasons for, beliefs, actions and attitudes. It attempts to understand what things mean to the members of the culture. Etic perspective is the 'outsiders' interpretation of the same customs/beliefs.

- Can provide examples of how host culture has enhanced their own cultural understanding
- Have sought out local interpretations and understandings of situations, issues, and solutions
- Identify or describe how some of their own values could/may have caused misunderstandings in their host culture(ethnocentrism)
- Describe situations or understandings that indicate levels of ethnorelativism

Pre departure

Of the categories in the ICC inventory, cognitive skill was the most difficult to assess on the pre departure questionnaire as it specifically looks at whether skills developed as a result of overseas experiences. However there were several questions that explored ethnorelativative/ethnocentric thinking prior to the overseas experience. As previously discussed under the awareness category, the questionnaire revealed that few students had considered alternative ways of doing, in both academic and social settings, indicating ethnocentric tendencies.

Post experience

> The challenging nature of this experience helped me learn to recognize other people's worldviews, understand the experiences that influence these worldviews, and consider this in the context in which we interact.

Many informants provided examples, whether in their journal entries or personal interviews, of the development of ethnorelative attitudes and behaviours. These cognitive shifts were in most cases preceded but what Mezirow has coined a "trigger event" such as encounters with children and educators during practica, discussions and debates with host nationals or other Canadians, or during an unexpected or unfamiliar incident or event. One student comments after

experiencing what they considered 'risky' physical activity (climbing trees) at a

daycare facility,

> My first instinct was to get them to stop but then I realized that my
> [host country] educator was completely comfortable with the
> behaviour. I could see that [host country] children were so confident
> because they have been allowed to take risks and push
> themselves. Bravery and risk taking is actually encouraged in their
> curriculum. Self esteem and confidence soars under those
> conditions. These are things that would never, never, NEVER
> happen or be allowed here - we are just too scared....what if, what
> if - we are always scared of what *might* happen.

Interestingly, ethnorelative behaviour was not consistent. Some students

displayed ethnocentric attitudes and behaviours under some conditions but were

able to relativise a situation under other conditions. In addition, students showed

varying levels of enthocentric-ethnorelative behaviour. In some cases, students

were oblivious to their ethnocentric points of view, while others were very aware

of the origins of their attitudes and interpretations and were alarmed to discover

ethnocentric attitudes cropping up,

> ...and the people I did see [in the students' residence] were not the
> 'students' I had anticipated. A personal bias surfaced as my notion
> of 'student' was challenged. Young, white and chipper North
> Americans are who I thought I would be sharing the building with
> (could *I* have possibly held such blatantly ethnocentric views!!)

Others still, recognized ethnocentric attitudes in their own Canadian peers. On

recounting a decision/conclusion made by a group of the Canadians on how to

integrate more with host national students one student wrote,

> ...our discussion somehow finished on a rather *positive* note that
> the Scandinavian students should initiate more interaction with the
> Canadians. But hold on. Firstly I don't think it's a good idea to make
> the Scandinavian students feel like they have to make small talk to
> us especially when (out of shyness or respect for privacy) their

culture generally seems to be against it. Some Canadians seem to expect to make friends here on their own terms.

This evidence of varying levels of ethnocentric/relative behaviour supports a continuum of enthocentrism much like Bennet's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity.

There is also additional evidence supporting Bennett's model of development. Whereas some participants were deeply perplexed and, most times, enlightened by the challenges presented to their worldviews, others exhibited a more superficial awareness. In some cases, participants were unable to achieve a level of analysis to interpret an unfamiliar event or perspective and thereby attach deeper meaning or perspective shift. For example, one Canadian participant commented, on experiencing a field placement in the host city's 'ghetto',

> Individuals who live in this community are immigrants... I was determined not to let my preconceived notions of the people [living in this area] influence how I saw them. It was clear from day one that this area was misrepresented by the [host country] society. The streets were not scary at all, with playgrounds, basketball nets and courtyards. In addition, the people were normal individuals with the same needs as everyone else.

Rather than wrestle with the limitations of this student's own worldview and conflicting conceptions of 'ghetto', immigrants, multiculturalism or 'normal', the student chose to end the analysis of this event by finding fault with the host country's perception of members of this community. This indicates lingering ethnocentric perspectives; judging the host culture's worldview according to the student's.

On the other hand, there were also examples of students grappling with the inclusion of 'others' ways of knowing and validating the others' knowledge,

> ...what if I were to have to write in a foreign language? I am an educated person, would I be unqualified to work with children because my writing is messy and my words not familiar? A pedagogical philosophy should allow for different skill sets. Carefully listening, negotiating and cooperating to experiment with differing ideas.

Additionally, there was evidence that students approached conflicting perspectives and new ways of knowing and doing with different levels of critical thinking. Some students embraced or rejected new methods unquestioningly. For example, the quote below from one of the Scandinavian students studying in Canada suggests that without considering cultural context, the student has flatly rejected Canadian ways of doing.

> I would never put my children in Canadian daycare, never. Everything they do is so different from back home [Scandinavia]. There is no sponteinaty, too rigid with rules and routines, here they are so obsessed with safety and routines; you must follow so many rules and laws.

Alternatively, some students weighed home country traditions and values in the context of their host country and arrived at different conclusions.

> Canada is too large, and too sparsely populated to allow for the same type of institutionalized, universal social coverage that is present in Country X. Therefore, it may take more creative and less expensive solutions in order to better serve the Canadian public both socially and pedagogically.

And from a Scandinavian student on Canadian diversity,

> I learned so much about accepting diversity. We don't see so many cultures at home. We learned so much from people we met from other countries, learned how different it is in different countries and

> to get rid of prejudices...when we first arrived we wondered where all the Canadians are? We knew it would be multicultural but we didn't expect it so much, but it is a really really good thing. Canada seems to accept diversity in a very positive way. Immigrants are regarded much differently here; it is impressive to be an immigrant.

On several occasions participant interviews revealed that some students were able to gain insight into their own culture from observations of their host culture. Being able to step back and observe 'Canadians' out of their usual context, and against the backdrop of a foreign culture, inspired some critical thought by some participants.

> ...being removed from the familiar gives you a new perspective and lets you consider things in a new light on new levels - personally, socially, academically. Reflecting is thrown around so much in education and I always thought I was doing it but I now feel like I can reflect in a new broader way - not just in a Canadian or even home city context.

For example, interviews revealed that some students were uncomfortable with the Canadians' behaviour at times calling it 'more American than Canadian', 'loud, obnoxious' and on occasion without regard for the host culture's expectations and norms. Several students were left contemplating if the same behaviour occurs in Canada but goes unnoticed in a sea of like behaviour. This suggests that some participants were able to view their home culture and their group's behaviour on a much broader comparative scale. In the case of the Canadian students, they were now able to view Canadians not only alongside Americans, but now in the broader context of Scandinavian and UK culture.

Additional findings

In addition to discovering data which fell within the ICC inventory, the interviews

and journal entries revealed several other areas of development and learning, or

practices which had impact on ICC development. The following section highlights

many of these areas.

Values clarification

> There were personal qualities that I wanted to believe were more
> present in my character than they actually are, and others that I
> wanted to pretend didn't exist at all. Conceptions surfaced that
> allowed me to better understand my personal value system and the
> factors that influence it.

Several students described the impact of their international experience on their

values in domains such as environmental concern, child rearing, relationships,

community, consumerism, and conceptions of 'normal', risk, and sexuality. Some

students experienced striking contrasts and, at the time of interviews, were

making dramatic personal changes while attempting to settle into life at home.

Others expressed that their international experience helped them to simply gain a

clearer understanding of their personal values.

> It seems that whatever values I had before leaving were reinforced
> and enhanced by my overseas experience. It's a test for your
> values, a test of who you think you are.

Relationship changes

Students described a number of relationship changes that they faced upon

returning to Canada. International experience led to change in perspectives and

consequent changes in relationships. Pre experience relationships were sometimes seen as obstacles that no longer fit with their new needs, revised goals, and shifting perspectives. Other students recognized how much their own perspectives had changed when they realized how critical they were of the opinions and interests of former friends, now considered "narrow-minded" and "uninformed."

Discipline related knowledge

Being exposed to alternative perspectives and approaches was commented on regularly by students. Regardless of host country, students were aware that they were receiving information from broader sources than what they receive from the classrooms at home. One student comments after a classroom lecture and discussion on democracy and children's rights,

> I think these themes come back on so many occasions because they are both driving philosophies behind current educational and child care practice [in host country] and because these are themes that these instructors have identified as important to share and discuss...these are not perspectives from which we have looked at in education at home.

and,

> I found the lectures to be somewhat more interesting than the ones at home, likely because they were less frequent and introduced points of view that I had not seen, or seen from, before.

In addition several students commented on specific teaching practices that they would try to incorporate into their own styles and methods.

> Teachers [at my practicum] redefined what team teaching was for me. I did not observe any competitiveness among staff members; they all seemed to learn from one another and benefit from each other's experiences and strengths.

Students also developed a sense of what it means to function in a new culture without language fluency and without familiarity with the standards for behavior and were able to translate that into empathy for the experiences of immigrants in their home country classrooms. Students also gained significant insight into their own prejudices related to immigrants, marginalized, and 'at risk' student groups. Comments suggested that these experiences and resulting perspective shifts provided new insights as they developed ideas for teaching, and for advocating for children in their own teaching practices and philosophies.

> Throughout the past few weeks I have reconsidered many of my ideas about early childhood education. The reason for this is that I have been exposed to the way education is done here in my host city. I have been observing a lot and comparing what I see to what I normally do at home.

One student remarked that with a new understanding and appreciation for the myriad of experiences and influences that shape individuals' worldview, this awareness will better serve the relationships they build between children, parent, and teacher.

Similarities across difference

Without exception, all students seemed somewhat surprised at finding the familiar in the 'other'. Anticipating difference (often based on stereotypes), students often remarked at how 'familiar' the other international students or host nationals were, "They all want the same things, school, love, family, somewhere to live…and *then* money".

> One of the first things that dawned on me as I walked through my new neighbourhood…was that people are the essentially the same

no matter where you go. This may seem to be a fairly big generalization. I'm still not sure if it is...people do what they need to 'make it' or live in their community: working, obtaining food entertaining themselves, and fitting in with a mainstream (or not). The difference is just in what kind of work, what kind of food, and what their particular culture dictates as the norm. While I realize the world is not this simplistic, I was struck by how much people around the world share in common.

Strangeness in the familiar

Even though I was with a bunch of Canadians, same age, same interests - I didn't feel like I was that similar as the rest of them - we didn't really share a common Canadian behaviour or perspective. I actually learned a new "Canadian culture" from the other students - the Canadians were harder to understand sometimes than the host nationals. I often found that I was making more observations about the Canadians than country Z.

For the most part, students were surprised at the level of diversity among the small group of Canadians that they were sharing their overseas experience with. Several remarked that there had been an expectation, prior to departure, that a common thread would be obvious among their small group; nine Canadian students, same cohort, similar socio-economic background, all raised under the Canadian educational system, all with similar academic and career goals, all eager to participate in this overseas opportunity. Yet, most students described being taken aback by so much 'difference' within their group of Canadians,

Here we are, all from the same country (albeit a large country), sharing many of the same cultural influences, and yet there is a multitude of beliefs and values that exist among us. The lesson here is that we all hold personal values and beliefs that influence our experiences and expectations.

In fact many commented how surprised they were that communication and interpersonal relations were more difficult cross-Canadian than cross-culturally.

Reflective journals

According to Mezirow critical reflection is crucial to perspective transformation.

> We transform our frames of reference through critical reflection on the assumptions upon which our interpretations, beliefs, and habits of mind or points of view are based. We can become critically reflective of the assumptions we or others make when we learn to solve problems...Self-reflection can lead to significant personal transformations. (Mezirow, 1997, p.7)

Others have also suggested that reflection is crucial to turning experiences into learning, which in turn allows individuals to apply these experiences in new contexts (Boud, Keough, & Walker, 1985; Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Lutterman-Aguila & Gingerich, 2002).

As mentioned earlier, informants were asked to submit monthly reflective journal entries chronicling their in and out-of-class learning experiences. The only structure imposed on the activity was that journal entries should be submitted monthly and it should be reflective. Content was left to individuals to decide upon. As with many of the areas already identified in the ICC inventory there was a wide range of comments, observations, and reflections showing varying levels of ability or a continuum of development. Some students chronicled experiences and highlighted observable differences. Others used the journals to grapple with conflicting cross cultural behaviours. Still others sorted out changing values, altering perspectives and new understandings of self and other. Discussions during interviews suggest that, for some, the reflective activity provided a structure to, and an awareness of, the informal learning that was taking place,

> I thought the journal turned out to be quite a good idea. Through writing them I felt like I was acknowledging all the other learning I was experiencing in addition to the in-school stuff. This helped me appreciate the different contexts and forms of learning, as well as to make some real sense of the ways I was feeling and changing. Many of these changes will stay with me, some won't so much, but in giving me some structure, focus and motivation to think, plan, and reflect the journals were quite directive.

Out-of-class learning

> Learning certainly does not only take place in classrooms. In fact, you can learn a lot from slightly inebriated young men in small town night clubs (often as they try to get acquainted with the young attractive Canadian women you came with)

A review of participants' journal entries revealed that, without exception students, wrote and reflected on out-of-class experiences as the primary source of new learning and understanding. On the few occasions that students wrote about classroom experiences it was to contrast new approaches and philosophies with their more familiar Canadian knowledge.

Career/future goals

> The topics covered in the Globalization course uncovered for me both a career path and an area of research...academically this experience went beyond simply furthering my understandings in educational theory and helped me explore other personal academic interests and goals.

Several students had experiences abroad that had an impact on their future plans and career goals. For many, the next goal was to finish the program and go abroad again. For others, future plans became much clearer as a result of the experience. Two in particular had new plans to pursue a Master's program and had clear ideas on the area of research they were interested in. One of those

students was also planning to do a doctorate. Two others had clear visions of opening their own education facility prompted by ideas and initiatives that stemmed from their practica experiences.

Motivation

From the ICC literature review, only Fantini (2001) discussed the impact that motivation may play in developing ICC from study abroad experiences. He suggests that motivation for being abroad can affect levels of participation and enthusiasm, as well as affect choices and interactions made abroad.

Although students' motivation for going abroad was not directly assessed in this study, there was indication from pre departure responses, interviews, and encounters with informants and host school faculty that students' underlying rationale for participating in the pilot SAP ranged from the opportunity to travel and live independently, to the opportunity to learn and see things from the perspective of another culture. In addition, although the courses taken abroad by students were for credit, in some cases students could not use these particular credits towards their degree. Although not conclusive, it does appear that those students who were intent on making the overseas experience a learning opportunity rather than a travel or social opportunity, and were motivated by course credits, did engage more with their host culture, had more meaningful reflections and may have developed higher levels of ICC.

Discussion: Interpreting the findings, implications, and recommendations

The following section will elaborate on the above research findings and draw out conclusions while weaving in recommendations for policy, practice and further research.

Evidence of ICC in participants

The development of an ICC inventory was fundamental to identifying and assessing competencies in returning SAP. Compiling skills and behaviours associated with ICC, from a variety of disciplines, provided a necessary framework with which to observe the presence of ICC in the context of an international student exchange or SAP. Applying the developed ICC inventory to an international exchange program at a Canadian university, this research found evidence of ICC in returning participants. Findings also support an ICC development continuum much like Bennett's Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. In other words, levels of ICC varied among participants with some students exhibiting not only greater ICC but also exhibiting associated behaviours and attitudes in a more consistent fashion. Demographic information on participants does not suggest age, previous travel experience, cultural contact, sex, or education levels to have had an identifiable effect on this.

An opportunity exists for future research which can draw out variables that may increase one's propensity for ICC. Research utilizing a larger sample size with a quantitative analysis may provide indications that some experiences, conditions, or pre existing skills or attitudes may facilitate the development of ICC. This type of information would be valuable for SAPs in terms of working to develop these skills and attitudes prior to students' departure thereby facilitating higher levels of ICC on return.

Additions to the ICC Inventory

In addition to finding support for the ICC Inventory, this research revealed additional learning outcomes from students' overseas experiences:

- Students were genuinely surprised at finding the familiar in the 'other' and strangeness with the 'familiar'. This observable attitude could serve to indicate a level of 'awareness' in the ICC inventory indicating a broadening worldview.

- As confidence levels increased in participating students, so too did attempts to grapple with cultural differences and alternative ways of knowing and doing. Interviews and journal entries point to independent travel and living, successes in a foreign culture and language, and overcoming individually perceived obstacles, as potential sources of the increased confidence levels. As confidence rose, students commented that they were more likely to engage with host country nationals, 'try on' new perspectives, values and behaviours, and question their existing

frames of reference. This may suggest that previous independent travel and living experiences or pre existing confidence levels could affect the development of ICC. It also suggests that one SAP experience may not be enough to reach high levels of intercultural competence.

- The international experience, in particular the practicum experience, provided unique comparative opportunities to question issues, approaches and practices associated with the students' discipline which often provided reflective opportunities for wider societal/cultural understandings. This point will be drawn out in further discussions.

Rethinking pre-departure training

Levels of cultural knowledge and a deep understanding of culture showed the lowest levels of development in participants. These lower levels may be reflective of the short time participants spent abroad (three to four months). SAP literature supports that longer stays in host cultures show increased levels of some ICC indicators, including cultural knowledge (Bennett, 1986; Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Dwyer, 2004a). However, orientation courses, field trips, and structured out of class learning could also be incorporated into the SAP experience to increase students' knowledge of history, politics, and demographics of the host country.

Cultural training or more culture focused pre-departure sessions may provide the initial awareness and framework for students to better explore and grapple with deeper cultural concepts while abroad. At present, many pre departure sessions

focus on preparing students to travel abroad rather than learn abroad[22]. However, some universities have begun to require for-credit study abroad courses both pre and post study abroad experience, to provide a more culture and learning focused approach. For example the University of Wisconsin and Oklahoma State University have transformed their pre-departure orientation session into a for-credit, full term Study Abroad Orientation courses. The course syllabus introduces students to current study abroad and intercultural research, theories associated with cross cultural communication, cultural adaptation and learning, and provides reflective strategies and ethnographic training for understanding and interpreting new cultural experiences[23]. Likewise, The Intercultural Project, a UK based research consortium, has advocated and created a similar intercultural module for UK students participating in SAPs. Intercultural awareness raising activities include familiarizing students to diaries and portfolios as tools to intercultural learning, examining issues of cultural identity, conformity, subcultures, macro-communities and sociolinguistics, and identifying expectations, motivations and potential outcomes of the study abroad experience (Hall & Toll, 1999; Toll, 2000).

Whereas this pilot SAP project incorporated a reflective activity (journals) as a mechanism for some students to wrestle with new understandings and

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[22] This is based on an informal survey of the Mobility listerve hosted by the Canadian Bureau for International Educatoin (CBIE).
[23] See http://www.uwlax.edu/oie/SA/orientation.htm and http://osuoutreach.okstate.edu/ieo/sis/sa/documents/Introduction%20to%20Study%20Abroad%20 Spring%202005.pdf for more information and course syllabi.

experiences, there were missed opportunities to push students to a deeper level of understanding or critical thinking by not commenting on journal entries. In other words, responding to rhetorical questions, statements, and conclusions drawn by students within their journal submissions might have prompted them to seek our or consider deeper meanings or alternative conclusions.

> To facilitate transformative learning, educators must help learners become aware and critical of their own and others' assumptions. Learners need practice in recognizing frames of reference and using their imaginations to redefine problems from a different perspective (Mezirow, 1997, p.10).

Implementing a mentoring aspect to the journaling exercise may have prompted higher levels of ICC and in particular deeper cultural understandings.

In addition, some students pointed to the re-entry period, when students return to their home culture, as another opportunity to enhance overseas learning. Several students commented that the post experience interview questions and discussions served to prompt students to consider and articulate their experiences abroad in terms of intercultural and personal development. Others suggested that it would be the return to the familiar that would prompt reflection of the experience,

> I think that I am more different than I think that I am. I think when I get home, I will recognize how this experience has changed me.

Perhaps the re entry period has been a neglected opportunity for SAPs to challenge participants to test their new perspectives and understandings,

strengthen developed ICC, and create a place for dialogue and continued learning?

Does international experience = intercultural competence?

While there is evidence that the international experience did in fact prompt ICC, it is unclear as to whether international experience is a necessary mechanism to develop ICC in students. A review of the individual items in the ICC inventory reveals that it may be possible to develop many of the skills, attitudes and behaviours without the international experience. Does learning empathy, tolerance, and a variety of communication tools require a term abroad? Can understanding culture and exhibiting ethnorelativistic attitudes develop within one's own culture?

Many universities have begun to offer certificates in cross cultural learning, or even mandatory second language and culture courses in efforts to develop some intercultural competencies in the general student population. In addition, the increasing number and diversity of international students at Canadian universities is creating multicultural campuses. The presence of these students should be seen as a resource to developing ICC in Canadian students. Increased contact and involvement with international students and using international students as 'voices' or resources in the classroom, could facilitate the development of competencies prior to departure or for those students who have limited opportunities to study abroad. In-service work, development projects and

international research projects as part of the undergraduate experience could also provide some of these competencies. Further research should consider if these kinds of experiences and value added components to undergraduate education could produce the same kinds of results as international experiences. In other words, is it the experience of *encountering* the 'other' or *being* the 'other' that facilitates ICC?

Like attracts like: Integrating visiting students with host students

Findings from this research support a consistent trend and challenge to SAPs; exchange students tend to seek out other exchange (or international) students, and in particular students from their home region. In this particular exchange, because of the project structure, Canadian students were grouped together while abroad, many participants knew each other prior to departure, and many participants lived and traveled together while abroad. Many participants embraced the group and found comfort in the familiar, while a few distanced themselves from their Canadian peers explaining that the intra-cultural and group demands were a source of unexpected stress or that they recognized that it limited cross-cultural encounters and intercultural learning.

> The hardest (most stressful) part was the social setting – all Canadians, university educated, same general age and socio-economic background, all girls. I assumed that we would share quite a bit in common, same perspectives etc., but dealing with the Canadians was the most difficult part of the experience.

As mentioned earlier, the group dynamic also produced a 'pack-like' behaviour on some occasions where ethnocentric group behaviour seemed to prevail over individuals' understanding of right and wrong in the cultural or situational context.

While SAPs do not encourage participants to seek out other participants, they do not necessarily provide strategies or opportunities for integrating exchange students with host school students. There are some attempts at social encounters but to the author's knowledge there have not been initiatives to integrate students with facilitating ICC as the goal. As an example, it could be very beneficial for both students preparing to go abroad, and visiting exchange students to enroll in a for-credit study abroad course as discussed earlier. A truly cross cultural audience could then struggle with understandings and conceptions of culture, debate the origins of enthnocentrism, discuss ICC, and acknowledge new perceptions and ways of knowing. Visiting students could share their cultural mis/understandings and use their peer host nationals to help wrestle with new cultural experiences and perspective transformation. At the same time nationals would be developing a sense of what is to come and how to learn from their impending study abroad experiences.

Out-of-class experiences: A fertile ground for new understandings

Without exception, students were clear on the value of out-of-class experiences in terms of providing learning opportunities. In addition, out-of-class encounters and events seemed to provide the best opportunities for students to develop ICC.

This contradicts a common practice and approach to SAP programs that places the emphasis on classroom learning. Overseas courses are carefully scrutinized for content, contact hours, and workload in order to assess equivalency and assign credits. In most cases, importance is placed on selecting equivalent courses rather than complementary courses or courses that are unavailable at the students' home school. Rarely is time or credit given for students to learn from the out-of-class experience.

However, for participants in this study, their home institution took a different approach and encouraged students to seek out and attend to the learning that would take place outside the classroom. In addition, these students were awarded credit for reflections and independent research that took place outside of traditional academic pursuits. Hence students were aware that value was being placed on their reflections, personal and cultural learning,

> Extending the concept of learning beyond the classroom seemed a natural extension; one that I was aware of and in fact paying attention to. However, consciously putting this concept into practice and being attentive to opportunities opened a world of knowledge that I tended to pass me by. I think this exercise in extending the concept of learning enabled me to examine what I considered my own values to be, understand what they are in actuality and reflect on the differences between these two conceptions.

This quote from one of the student participants clearly indicates the opportunities provided by out-of-class experiences for value clarification, comparative and critical thinking, and the development of ethnorelative attitudes.

Assessing the value of SAPs programs through the narrow lens of the academic experiences is a limiting view of how and where learning takes place. Constructing a new learning space from overseas out-of-class experiences provides a learning environment unlike any available on home campuses. Designed with intentional learning goals, the out-of-class experience can present numerous points for critical thinking within and outside a student's discipline, and provide opportunities to discover and challenge ethnocentric ways of knowing. Findings and the literature suggest that SAPs should place more value on the out-of-class experiences by supporting and incorporating ethnographic projects, practica experiences, structured reflective and mentored activities, individual or personal research projects, or other for-credit activities that place value on the out-of-class learning experiences.

Connecting international experience to students' discipline

One of the current criticisms with SAPs is that, in many cases, programs simply send students abroad without the experience necessarily adding a new dimension to their studies. Students are often times attracted to a destination rather than a scholar or a program, and as mentioned earlier students are rarely required to think comparatively about their discipline while abroad or have the flexibility to choose complimentary courses.

> One of my undergraduate students spent the past semester in Australia studying philosophy and history. She took no courses, however, in Australian or Asian history, politics, or culture. She took no new language, nor any course about the aboriginals in Australia and their relevance to the Canadian experience. Why did she go to Australia? There was no scholar of international reputation whose

courses she wanted to take. Where is the value added? (Gross-Stein 2002, online)

However, a unique feature of this pilot SAP was a discipline related practicum in the host country. Students made these experiences the focus of many of the journal entries, and interview discussions, indicating that these experiences not only provided comparative opportunities but also occasions to examine conflicting practices, approaches and philosophies in their field. The practicum added the discipline related value that seems to be lacking in many SAPs.

> The schools there give students more rights and freedoms. Children set their own limitations. If they can get up a tree they can get down. From this they learn when to stop, they know their limits. In Canada children test their limits by acting out that's because we don't let them explore their limits.

In addition, students commented on the differing classroom approaches, resources, and philosophies that they were exposed to in their host institutions. This suggests that there were new elements or 'added value' introduced to their education by simply taking courses in the overseas university.

The catalyst for perspective transformation: Cultural disequilibrium

Whereas Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) seems to provide the best framework for understanding how international experiences prompt ICC, applying TLT in the context of studying abroad may also offer new elements to the theory.

First, in a broad sense, studying abroad is the disorientating experience which Mezirow suggests is a requirement for change (Mezirow, 1978, 1997). However,

in the case of this study's participants, perspective change was initiated even prior to the overseas experience. The experiences of several students indicated that pre-departure preparations and the actual departure laid the foundation for later perspective transformation. Students were faced with differing notions of the study abroad experience from parents, peers, and partners creating disequilibria between students' own perspectives on studying abroad and the perspectives of others.

Second, rather than attributing transformation to specific dilemmas or trigger events, the catalyst for perspective change seemed to be general cultural disequilibrium. This disequilibrium was almost always present for students while abroad. As Taylor (1994) suggests, the students' reactions to constant intercultural challenge and their struggles to regain balance and routine were a driving force behind transformation. Pre-existing meaning schemes were constantly tested in order to bring balance into their overseas lives. Students not only chronicled these events in their journals, but also used these experiences as testing grounds to make new meanings and try out new behaviours.

In addition and as mentioned earlier, several students reported shifts in perspective and new understandings upon re-entry to their home culture. Others anticipated further learning to take place as they tried out their transformed perspectives in the Canadian context. At the time of interviews, several students were experiencing challenges with personal relationships, individual goals, and

academics as they attempted to incorporate their overseas experience into their lives at home. This suggests that the re entry to one's home country may also serve as a trigger event and/or that perspective transformation continues well after the initial trigger event has passed.

Transformation and ICC: By nature or design?

Advocates of constructivist learning, including experiential and transformative learning, are clear in suggesting that critical to learning are structured and intentional opportunities and activities (Boud, Keough, & Walker, 1985; Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Mezirow, 1997; Montrose, 2002),

> What makes this an educational enterprise is not so much the activity in and of itself, but the analysis of the activity through personal reflection, discussion, writing, or projects that help the learner transition from the experience to integrated meaning and finally to subsequent understanding (Montrose, 2002, p.6)

Findings from this study suggest that studying abroad does prompt perspective transformation and ICC to varying levels in participants without intervening activities. However, both the literature and participants experiences suggest that with some direction and participation, by the host and home schools, intercultural competencies could be developed even further.

As mentioned earlier, it is not uncommon in short term exchanges, for exchange students to find other students of similar language and cultural backgrounds rather than seek out host nationals, opportunities to encounter difference and be the 'other'. In addition for some students, comfort with the familiar or fear of the

unknown may inhibit them from participating in new experiences and advancing intercultural learning. However, creating opportunities and placing SAP participants in learning experiences such as field placements, encounters with host nationals, and other intentional activities, deliberately exposes participants to trigger events that may further their development of ICC.

In addition, while TLT advocates critical reflection for transformation, Taylor (1994) argues that it may not be a necessary mechanism. However, this study's findings suggest that it does appear to assist with the development of ICC. In this project, the reflective journal activity created a time and a space where participants examined bias, stereotypes, cultural disequilibrium, and the origins of their own (and other participants') perspectives, which lead to cognitive growth, learning, perspective transformation, and new or more inclusive worldviews.

David Boud, in *Reflection: turning experience into learning* (1995) suggests that in educational events such as field trips, reflection is needed at various stages: at the start in anticipation and preparation for the experience, during the experience as a way of comprehending new and conflicting information, and following the experience as a way to consolidate understanding. He further explains that reflection needs to be guided and purposeful to challenge students' existing frames of reference or prompt critical abstract thinking

> ...reflection as we have described it is a pursued with intent. It is not idle meanderings or day dreaming, but purposive activity directed towards a goal (Boud et al., 1985. p11).

This would suggest that the mere fact that opportunities for reflection are present in SAP experiences does not mean that students will recognize or use them; nor does it mean that their reflections will lead to learning without some guidance. In other words, SAPs may need to create and mentor reflective opportunities. Planned reflective opportunities and activities should draw students out of the experience, guide reflection, stimulate participants to draw meaning from disequilibria, and assist students in examining the roots of their ways of knowing. Provoking and mentoring critical reflection from overseas experiences creates a framework for perspective transformation and ensures learning from cross cultural experiences.

Adding structure to such a spontaneous event as living and studying abroad may change the very nature of the experience if not done cautiously. Structure should be added following learner-centred, collaborative, or problem based learning approaches, where learners have an active role in their learning. For example, prior to departure, participants could identify a comparative research project, personal or academic, to explore while abroad. In, *The Stay Abroad: Objectives, Strategies, and Outcomes* (1995), the authors suggest having students take a hand in their own overseas learning by having them set clear objectives and strategies for personal, professional and academic growth. Students are responsible for creating a clear action plan, recording or journaling growth

experiences, and are prompted to review progress at various stages of the period abroad. (Covey, 1995)

In general, by shifting the current focus of pre-departure preparations from preparing students to *travel* abroad to preparing students to *learn* abroad, incorporating reflective activities and mentoring while abroad, and having structured de briefing or re entry activities upon students return, may enhance transformative learning opportunities and provide critical elements to move students along an intercultural competence continuum.

Transforming study abroad participants into 'global graduates'

Looking back to the initial question posed by this research, *"Do study abroad experiences contribute to the development of 'global graduates'?"*, the findings reveal a disconnect between the two. While this study suggests that study abroad experiences do foster the development of ICC, the literature reveals that possessing ICC and being a global citizen are not one in the same. While study abroad may facilitate ICC, and ICC do provide many of the skills, traits, and behaviours associated with global graduates, there is a crucial link missing. While global graduates exhibit qualities, characteristics, and perspectives associated with ICC they also require an insight of interdependence, the ability to read and interpret global networks and that trans-cultural perspective which allows them to cross back and forth from the local to the global.

Under present structure and design, SAPs do not provide the critical link that provides students with an understanding of global conditions and connections and their role in shaping them. This knowledge may be better imparted at home, pre and post experience. Perhaps university and SAP programs need to begin to prepare students to understand the global environment and grapple with domestic and global forces that shape problems and solutions before they study abroad, monitor and mentor this learning while abroad, and assist students integrate new understandings and knowledge upon return. Gross Stein (2002) advocates that,

> ...students need to know something of the **major global challenges** they will face in the field they are working in – whether it is global banking, global warming, global public health, or global patterns of poverty, that skip from Africa to India to downtown Vancouver and Toronto. They need to sharpen their intellectual and analytical skills against the challenges that will almost certainly be global, with local spillover. Every student should be encouraged to grapple with at least one global challenge before they finish their undergraduate education...(Gross-Stein, 2002, online)

According to Gross-Stein, this is done through a reformation of university core curricula and SAPs[24].

While efforts to internationalize the curricula are underway at many Canadian universities, exactly what activities and initiatives are needed is still unclear. Research examining and evaluating curriculum internationalization is needed to make that link between university education and global graduates.

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[24] See Gross Stein's keynote address to participants of the University of British Colombia's Global Citizenship Conference.

Further research

While study abroad and internationalization initiatives at Canadian universities are increasing, research on outcomes, strategies, innovations and other aspects of the experience are lagging. In addition to the calls for further research mentioned above, this research has stimulated several additional questions.

1. While this research identifies short term impacts of a study abroad experience, what are the potential longer term effects on ICC, participants' learning, career, personal or academic choices?

2. Reflecting upon what was learned while studying abroad cannot possibly be considered complete upon arrival home. In fact, it is likely that realizations or new meanings that are constructed through the experiences are just the beginning of new understandings. How can post experience learning and development be identified, assessed and facilitated?

3. It was suggested above that guided reflection and mentoring while abroad could provide an important mechanism to enhance the development of ICC in participants. Is this the case? Is it best done by distance (home institution) or at the source (host school)? What are possible methods for overseas refelection?

4. Findings from this research suggest that pre-departure preparations are missing their mark. Preparing students to *learn* abroad rather than simply *travel* abroad will do more for engaging students in overseas learning and provide participants with the tools they need to achieve higher levels of ICC. Is this the case? What elements of pre-departure preparation are necessary for this?

5. This research supports the value and learning potential of the out-of-class learning experience. How can this experience be structured yet maintain its spontaneity? Can university credit be given for *experience*? In this project, reflective journals were evaluated for credit. What other methods might be used to evaluate the out of class overseas experience?

6. It was suggested that culturally diverse campuses could foster ICC in students. How can the campus be drawn into the classroom? Can a multicultural campus (or community) environment produce ICC? How would/does this compare with a study abroad experience in terms of developing ICC?

7. Participants in this project, were placed in western, developed countries. What impact does studying abroad in a developing country have on ICC?

8. Participants in this research were residents of a particularly ethnically diverse campus and community. What impact does prior exposure to diversity have on ICC?

Conclusion: Still searching for 'global graduates'

At the onset, this research project identified three main areas of interests and three corresponding research questions; What is a global graduate? Are university study abroad experiences contributing to the development of 'global graduates'? If so, how?

Using an exploratory case study of nine recently returned study abroad participants, this research began by examining the notion of the global graduate. Literature revealed that the term global graduate is a conceptual model rooted in ideas of cosmopolitanism and globalization. In order to explore the link with study abroad experiences, the conceptual model needed deconstruction to uncover observable skills, behaviours, and attitudes consistent with the notion of the global graduate. Intercultural competencies were explored to arrive at an operational model (intercultural inventory) with which to assess returning students as potential 'global graduates'.

While the inventory revealed that students had developed (to varying degrees) intercultural competencies as a result of their study abroad experiences, the critical, or causal, link between sending students abroad and creating global graduates was absent. This suggests that while study abroad experiences provide a valuable foundation, the experience in itself is not sufficient in developing global graduates. Several recommendations were made to expand and enhance SAPs in order to bridge the gap between the two. Finally examining

study abroad experiences within the framework of TLT revealed that the cultural disequilibrium experienced by participants when immersed in a foreign culture provided the mechanism (trigger events and disorientating dilemmas) for intercultural learning in university students.

With the general conditions and experiences of the nine participants similar to those offered by most SAPs on Canadian campuses, the results of this research could be considered representative of, and generalizable to, other SAPs and student experiences. However, individual variations, responses, and understandings were also present suggesting that as a case study, research findings are supportive of SAPs and the value they bring to the undergraduate experience, but not conclusive. Rather, this research provides a jumping off point from which to further explore ICC, study abroad program design, and the overseas experiences of study abroad participants. Further research to elaborate on this study should consider variations in research design such as, a larger and random sample, variations within the demographics of the population to account for intervening variables, and control or comparative groups. None the less, with the significant and continued growth of SAP's in Canada, this study adds a valuable contribution to the lagging research examining these experiences in terms of their added value to Canadian undergraduate education.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Pre-departure Questionnaire

Please write your own personal responses to the questions below. Be as honest as you can be – if you don't know an answer, its important that you say so. Your responses should reflect how you feel right now, before going abroad.

Section 1:

Student number:

Have you traveled abroad before?
Yes   No

Have you lived abroad before?
Yes   No

Where did you live abroad?

How long did you live abroad?

Your age:

Number of years of university education:

Where did your mother grow up?

Where did your father grow up?

In what country are you spending your term abroad?

Have you been to this country before?

Yes   No

What are the three things that you are **most looking forward to** about studying abroad?

What are the three things that worry you **most** about going overseas?

Section 2:

1.   What languages do you speak? Rate your level of competence.

English	fluent	can carry on a conversation	can understand a bit
Host country (if language is not English)	fluent	can carry on a conversation	can understand a bit
Other	fluent	can carry on a conversation	can understand a bit
Other	fluent	can carry on a conversation	can understand a bit

2.   Have you taken **any** language training in your host country language?

Yes   No

3. To what extent are you hoping to learn the language of your host culture?
   - To be able to read/understand street signs, posters etc,
   - To be able to ask directions, order a meal etc
   - To be able to carry on a conversation
   - To be able to read a newspaper
   - To be fluent

4. How important do you think learning your host country's language will be in understanding the culture?

5. Do you know people from your host country that you currently interact with on a regular basis? How often and in what way do you interact?
   _ times per month;
   in-person   via email/internet   via regular mail   other:

6. Do you know people from ethnic backgrounds different than your own that you interact with on a regular basis? How often and in what way do you interact?
   _ times per month;
   in-person   via email/internet   via regular mail   other:

Section 3:

1. If you have lived away from home for an extended period of time before, check as many of the following that affected you while abroad. If you have not lived away from home before check as many that you *might expect* to affect you while abroad.
   - Missing family and friends
   - Missing family holidays or celebrations
   - Missing favorite TV shows
   - Not hearing/knowing news from home
   - Not able to find/eat comfort foods
   - Adjusting to new schedule and routines
   - Constantly dealing with unfamiliar situations
   - Language/communication barriers
   - Not knowing the cultural "rules" in your host country
   - Difficulty understanding or disagreeing with host culture's perspective/customs/social norms
   - Being the 'outsider'
   - Making cultural 'mistakes'
   - Getting lost
   - Other – list:

2. At home, is your day usually:
   - well planned and scheduled
   - flexible and impromptu

3. When you find yourself faced with a new experience,
   - do you like to have the full details before deciding to participate or

- do you dive in and hope for the best
- other – explain:

4. If you find yourself in a new or unfamiliar situation,
   - do you ask questions to find out what you need to understand the situation
   - wait and hope that someone else asks questions
   - find out what you need to know by watching what everyone else does
   - avoid uncomfortable/unfamiliar situations
   - other – explain:

5. Can you provide an example of how you usually react in unfamiliar situations?

6. Do unfamiliar surroundings and routines,
   - make you a bit anxious
   - excite you
   - other:

7. What are the three things (people, places, activities, food etc.) you believe you will miss *most* from home when you are abroad?

8. What are the three things (people, places, activities, etc.) you believe you will miss *least* from home when you are abroad?

9. My greatest single challenge overseas will be:

10. Rate your knowledge of your host country's:
1 means no knowledge, 5 wealth of knowledge

Customs and traditions	1	2	3	4	5
History & politics	1	2	3	4	5
Education system	1	2	3	4	5
Approaches to ECE	1	2	3	4	5

11. Have you prepared in any way for living in your **host** culture? How, be specific?

12. What do you think are some of the strengths of your **host** culture?

13. What do you think are some of the weaknesses of your **host** culture?

Section 4:
1. What are some of your **home** country's strengths?

2. What are some of your **home** country's weaknesses?

3. Name four characteristics or values that truly reflect the citizens of your home country.

4. Are there other characteristics, behaviours or attitudes that you think foreigners commonly associate with people from your country?

5. What would you tell an incoming international student are the "unwritten rules" to your **home** culture?

6. How would you explain, to an incoming international student, how to succeed in your **home** university classroom – what unwritten 'rules" and strategies do you suggest?

7. Are these the same strategies you will use in your host country classroom?
Yes   No   explain:

8. Are you anticipating learning taking place outside of the classroom?
Yes   No

9. If yes, what do you expect to learn and where?

10. The name of this exchange project is Education for Global Competencies. What, in your opinion, are global competencies?

11. You have been invited to join a group of students from your host school to a 'night on the town:
- What topics of conversation would you choose?
- What topics might you avoid?

12. What are your own personal learning goals for your study abroad experience?

Section 5:
1. What would you say is the biggest issue in Early Childhood Education (or your chosen discipline if it is not ECE)?

2. Is this a global issue or an issue only in your home country?
Yes   No   other:

3. Within ECE (or your discipline) do you have a particular area of interest?

4. Is this something that you will/can explore while abroad?

Appendix 2 - Key components to ICC (Deardorff, 2004)

- Understanding others' world views
- Cultural self-awareness and capacity for self-assessment
- Adaptability - adjustment to new cultural environment
- Skills to listen and observe
- General openness toward intercultural learning and to people from other cultures
- Ability to adapt to varying intercultural communication and learning styles
- Flexibility
- Skills to analyze, interpret, & relate
- Tolerating and engaging ambiguity
- Deep knowledge and understanding of culture (one's own and others')
- Respect for other cultures
- Cross-cultural empathy
- Understanding the value of cultural diversity
- Understanding of role and impact of culture and the impact of situational, social, and historical contexts involved
- Cognitive flexibility – ability to switch frames from etic to emic and back again
- Sociolinguistic competence (awareness of relation between language and meaning in societal context)
- Mindfulness
- Withholding judgment
- Curiosity and discovery
- Learning through interaction
- Ethnorelative view
- Culture-specific knowledge/understanding host culture's traditions

(Adapted from Deardorff, 2004)

Appendix 3 - Intercultural Inventory

Adaptive traits – Coping with cultural change
- Maintains a positive attitude that contributes to staying motivated
- Avoids negative evaluations of the local/ withholds judgment
- Displays a sense of humour about the frustrations of living in another culture
- General openness toward intercultural learning and to people from other cultures
- Humility; does not give the impression of self importance of superiority
- Tolerating and engaging ambiguity
- Respect for other cultures
- Sense of curiosity and discovery
- Learns through interaction; participates in local events, reads local papers, attempts language, engages in host culture leisure activities

Cultural knowledge - culture-specific knowledge/understandings
- Can succeed on a factual quiz on host country (government, national heros, religious beliefs, languages, historical events etc.)
- Can describe essential do's and don'ts of local culture
- Makes use of local "cultural interpreter to assist in understanding host culture and how their own behaviour is perceived by others
- Knows that values, behaviours and appearances vary from culture to culture and are equally valid
- Can describe some examples of the influence culture has in domains such as power, relationships, social structures etc.
- Demonstrates an understanding of the cultural iceberg; invisible values, visible manifestations of values
- Can give examples of things in host culture that are logical in context but perhaps not so in their home culture

Communication skills - ability to adapt to varying intercultural communication styles
- Has attempted, and shows development of, host country language (varies from local greetings to fluency)
- Employs a variety of means at communicating across language
- Can provide examples of differences in verbal and non verbal communication styles
- Socializes with host nationals avoids isolating oneself with others from home ('expats' or other Canadian participants)
- Wins the confidence and trust of local people
- Understands communication norms and protocols of host country
- Corrects social faux pas when committed

Awareness – understanding of the origins of knowing and doing

- Understands others' world views; that assuming others are like 'us' can create misunderstandings
- Cultural self-awareness and capacity for self-assessment; questions their own way of doing things
- Deep knowledge and understanding of culture (one's own and others') – can articulate how they are a product of their own culture (values, behaviours, attitudes)
- Attempts to 'try on' new behaviours or perspectives of the host culture
- Cross-cultural empathy
- Recognizes that strict adherence to personal ideals may cause problems in new culture

Cognitive skills - ability to process, interpret and relate

- Can provide examples of how host culture has enhanced their own cultural understanding
- Have sought out local interpretations and understandings of situations, issues, and solutions
- Cognitive flexibility – ability to switch frames from etic to emic and back again
- Identify or describe how some of their own values could/may have caused misunderstandings in their host culture(ethnocentrism)
- Describe situations or understandings that indicate levels of ethnorelativism