

Understanding How Program Factors Influence Intercultural Learning in Study Abroad: The Benefits of Mixed-Method Analysis

Andrea Paras

University of Guelph

Michael Carignan

Elon University

Ashley Brenner

Community College of Philadelphia

Jane Hardy

Wabash College

Jodi Malmgren

St. Olaf College

Melanie Rathburn

Mt. Royal University

Abstract:

With the proliferation of short-term study abroad programs at institutions of higher education, there is a need for more rigorous assessment of how these programs contribute to intercultural learning. This article presents a multi-institutional comparative study of students' intercultural learning in six short-term study abroad programs in Canada and the United States, employing both quantitative and qualitative methods. The study combines pre- and post-IDI survey scores with a qualitative analysis of student writing to present evidence about the impact of specific program features on students' intercultural learning, as well as an analysis of how the students themselves make sense of their experiences abroad. We argue that the extent of pre-departure intercultural training has a positive relationship with intercultural learning outcomes. Additionally, we present evidence that service-learning opportunities and intra-group dynamics contribute to students' intercultural competence. We conclude that mixed-methods analysis provides the most effective way of identifying how different program factors contribute to intercultural growth, when that growth occurs in a program cycle, and how program leaders can provide effective intercultural interventions to best facilitate student learning abroad.

Introduction

The proliferation of short-term study abroad in institutions of higher education has intensified the need for assessment standards for these programs, particularly since they are often resource intensive even though their value is not fully understood (Deardorff, 2014; Fisher, 2009). Though students often report having meaningful experiences in such programs (Passarelli & Kolb, 2012), it is worth exploring whether and what students are *learning*. Likely in response to the need for pan-disciplinary criteria for evaluating programs, educators increasingly rely on measurements of “intercultural competence” to assess the effectiveness of such programs (Vande Berg et al., 2012; Deardorff, 2008, 2006). Darla Deardorff, a leading scholar in the study of intercultural competence, has challenged educators to develop a new paradigm of international education assessment that is more learner-centered, holistic, customized, and authentic, and that focuses on process rather than results (Deardorff, 2015).

To better understand the program factors that contribute to intercultural competence development in short-term study abroad, we developed a multi-institutional study that includes six programs. Our study responds directly to Deardorff’s challenge by using a mixed-methods approach to untangle the process of students’ intercultural learning at all stages throughout a program. By combining quantified survey data with close qualitative analysis of student writing, we found that two factors seem to have a clear, positive impact on intercultural competence development among our subjects: (1) significant pre-departure training that provides students with a toolkit of skills for responding to cultural difference; and (2) whether the program had a major service-learning component, which seemed to provide more opportunities for meaningful intercultural experience, insights, and reflection. A third finding is that intra-group dynamics have a surprising impact, sometimes positive and sometimes negative, on intercultural growth during the programs we studied. The study joins a growing chorus of scholars who find that cultural interventions by experienced teachers and program leaders—such as pre-departure intercultural training, on-site discussion and reflection, and post-return reflection and writing—have the most significant impact on students’ intercultural development (Lou & Bosely, 2008; Benham Rennick, 2015; Paras & Mitchell, 2017). Our quantitative data from IDI survey scores and aggregate analysis of coded student writing bear out these conclusions (see Rathburn et al., forthcoming), but the qualitative analysis presented here provides important nuance that the quantitative data is unable to capture.

The paper begins by providing an overview of the concept of intercultural competence and how it has been utilized in assessments of intercultural learning in study abroad programs. We then describe our methodology before moving on to the data analysis and discussion, which proceeds in two sections. The first analytical section breaks down the stages of intercultural learning in study abroad programs, while the second engages in a deep qualitative analysis of how pre-departure training, service-learning, and intra-group dynamics contribute to students’ intercultural competence.

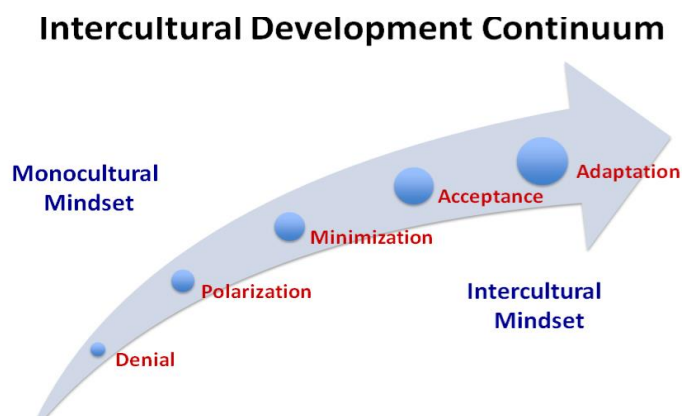
Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence has become a widely used paradigm for understanding how people develop cultural sensibilities and approach difference, such that there are now manuals for defining and assessing it (e.g., Deardorff, 2009; Hammer, 2011). The appeal of this paradigm seems obvious for study abroad assessment: it is rooted in measurable learning outcomes that are generalizable, i.e., not specific to any particular course, discipline, or location. For instance, Paige and Vande Berg

(2012) summarize several studies, including the MAXSA Project (Cohen et al., 2005) and the Georgetown Consortium Project (Vande Berg, Connor-Linton, & Paige, 2009), which identified certain standardized variables (Engle & Engle, 2003) that have effects on students' intercultural growth. The concept of intercultural competence has enabled educators and researchers to move beyond previous assumptions about the immersive model in favor of an “experiential/constructivist paradigm” (Vande Berg, Paige, & Lou, 2012).

As intercultural competence has gained traction, a broad, more stable definition has become available (Deardorff, 2006, 2009; Savicki, 2008; Bennet, 2008; McTighe Musil, 2006). Darla Deardorff (2006), for example, surveyed teachers and administrators of international education in order to identify commonly agreed upon qualities and characteristics of desired student learning outcomes. Two of the primary characteristics that indicate intercultural competence for most of the course-designers in Deardorff's study are (1) students develop an understanding of how perceptions of difference are conditioned by one's culture, and (2) students demonstrate an ability to shift their perspectives while encountering or engaging with a different culture. These characteristics overlap with the competencies in Vande Berg's (2015) four-phase developmental framework: cultivating cultural self-awareness, developing awareness of others, managing emotions, and bridging cultural gaps. This framework also emphasizes an awareness of how one's own culture shapes the way one perceives other cultures and vice-versa (i.e., shifting perspectives), which enables one to adapt behavior to fit certain intercultural circumstances. These concepts—self-awareness of one's cultural perspective and an ability to shift perspective to that of another culture—directly informed both the training modules used in most of the programs in this study and the criteria in our qualitative analyses of student writing.

Figure 1. Intercultural Development Continuum (Hammer, 2011)



The well-established assessment tool used in this study is the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI). For two decades the IDI, originally developed by Mitchell Hammer, has been a widely used index that uses survey responses to determine one's orientation to difference along a spectrum of mindsets ranging from monocultural to intercultural (see Figure 1).

IDI survey responses are aggregated to give individuals a profile that plots their position (termed “Developmental Orientation” or DO) on the continuum. Denial characterizes responses that indicate an inability or unwillingness to acknowledge cultural frameworks other than one’s own. Polarization refers to a tendency that acknowledges and emphasizes difference that is judgmental, which can manifest in one of two forms: Defense refers to the tendency to be overly critical of other cultures while over-idealizing one’s own culture, whereas Reversal entails the over-idealization of other cultures while being overly critical of one’s own culture. Minimization characterizes attempts to gloss over cultural difference in an effort to find commonalities or universality. Minimization appears in the middle of the continuum because, while it represents an acknowledgement of difference and often an attempt to connect to those from another culture, the extent to which a difference is minimized can lead to misunderstandings of another’s values, references, and worldview. Acceptance depicts a deep understanding for how another’s culture informs their perceptions, interpretations, and decisions. Adaptation reflects an ability and willingness to alter one’s behavior in full acknowledgement of another’s culture so as to bring about a mutually engaged intercultural interaction. The IDI has been used in a variety of contexts, including study abroad, to provide subjects with insights into the ways they encounter and interact with difference with the implied understanding that they should “improve” their abilities, that is, move toward a more intercultural mindset. As an evaluation tool, it can be used, as we have done, in a pre- and post-program format to suggest whether the study abroad program contributed to growth or regression, or seemed to have little impact on intercultural competence.

Data Collection and Methodology

The programs in this study are all faculty-led, short-term study abroad experiences from institutions of higher education in Canada and the United States. The primary variables across the programs were the amount of pre-departure cultural orientation and training activity hours (from 0 to 12 hours) and the nature or features of the programs, some of which were traditional site-visiting, discipline-based study tours, while four programs included a service-learning component. See Table 1 below for a detailed overview of each of the six programs included in the study.

Students in all six programs were asked to take the IDI before any of their program’s activities began and again after their programs were complete. Out of a total of 81 students, 53 participants completed both the pre- and post-program administration of the survey, for a participation rate of 65%. The results of the surveys were categorized by meaningful increase, meaningful decrease, and no change.¹

¹ A change of seven or more points is considered to be meaningful.

Table 1. Descriptions of the different institutions included in our research study and features of the study abroad experience for each program of study (Rathburn et al., forthcoming)

Criterion	Community College of Philadelphia (CCP)	Elon University (ELO)	Wabash College (WAB)	Mount Royal University (MRU)	St. Olaf (STO)	University of Guelph (GUE)
Type of Institution	Public, urban, minority-serving institution	Private liberal arts university	Private, men's liberal arts college	Public, comprehensive university	Private, rural, liberal arts college	Public, research university
Field school course name	International fellowship program in Tanzania	Inquiry in Italy	Global health	Science in a global context: Honduras	Peruvian medical experience	India field school
Field school focus	Interdisciplinary studies	History	Global public health in Peru	Biodiversity and conservation	Health care	Ethics of international experiential learning
Number of participants	9	15	10	9	18	20
Duration of time abroad (weeks)	2	3	2	5	3	4
Hours of cultural orientation	<1	3	1.5	6.5	9	12
Service-learning component	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 2. The number of students across different institutions that showed a meaningful increase, meaningful decrease, or no change in their developmental orientation from pre-test to post-test IDI scores

<u>Institution</u>	<u>Number of students</u>		
	<u>Increase in IDI</u>	<u>Decrease in IDI</u>	<u>No change in IDI</u>
CCP	2	0	5
ELO	1	2	0
GUE	11	0	9
MRU	3	1	4
STO	8	1	1
WAB	0	0	5
TOTALS	25	4	24

Table 2 above provides a breakdown of the IDI results by institution, showing that just under half of participating students (n=25) had a meaningful increase in their IDI scores, while the other half experienced no meaningful change at all (n=24) and a very small number of students (n=4) actually moved backwards along the IDI continuum. However, it is important to point out that there was significant variability in these outcomes among programs. Three-quarters of the students who experienced an increase in their IDI scores were enrolled in one of two programs: the India Field School at the University of Guelph and the Peruvian medical experience at St. Olaf College. It is important to note that these were also the two programs that offered the highest levels of pre-departure intercultural training. While these numbers provide important information about changes at the aggregate level, they do not provide meaningful information about how various program features contributed to student learning or account for the differences among the six programs. For instance, the program focus of the India Field School was the ethics of international experiential learning, and the content of this program had students more directly engaged in learning about intercultural competence development compared with students in other programs. Nevertheless, even though we might expect students in the India Field School to have greater increases in their pre- and post-survey results, the IDI data alone does not help us to access the *process* of students' learning in this program. Furthermore, because the IDI survey was only administered at the beginning and end of the programs, the survey results only provide an indication of the presence or absence of intercultural growth between the start and completion of a program. This is useful information for the purposes of data triangulation, but alone it does not provide any information as to what specific program features contribute to intercultural learning or how the students themselves make sense of their experiences.

To access more nuanced information about student learning, we also collected targeted-writing samples—"reflections"—at four different points across the duration of the programs.² The prompts asked students to reflect on their own cultural identity and background, and on interactions with those who are culturally different; we collected 282 written reflections from 81 students. The first reflection was prompted before any pre-departure activity began. Students responded to the second prompt immediately before departure to the study-abroad destination, after all pre-departure activities were complete. The third administration occurred immediately after the travel component

² We refer to these reflections below as T1, T2, T3, and T4.

of the program was complete. The final prompt was administered several weeks later, around the time of the second IDI administration, after any post-return activities concluded. The same prompts were used at all six institutions at comparable points in each program's timeline.

The research team engaged in several iterative rounds of open coding of the reflections in order to establish a list of themes that emerged from the data related to the development of intercultural competence.³ After initial open coding, we used axial coding to identify emergent codes that aligned with the theoretical frameworks for intercultural competence, such as Vande Berg's (2015) four-phase developmental framework. This qualitative analysis provided important aggregate-level insights about the effects of different program features, particularly pre-departure intercultural training, on students' intercultural learning outcomes. (For a detailed presentation of these findings, see Rathburn et al., forthcoming.) However, we found we still needed to further probe the qualitative data to understand more detailed nuances about the students' learning: their process of intercultural learning, when this learning happened, and what most contributed to it.

To assess this deeper perspective, we engaged in further qualitative analysis of a subset of student reflections. Specifically, we focused on the 51 students who completed both pre- and post-IDI surveys, as well as completed at least three out of four written reflections. For the initial round of analysis, each student's reflections were read chronologically by two different team members, each of whom indicated whether they observed evidence of intercultural learning as a result of the pre-departure training (that is, evidence of change between reflections T1 and T2).⁴ After these two initial readings, a third team member re-read all the reflections to confirm whether they had been categorized accurately, and to extract specific themes related to the students' process of intercultural learning. In this third reading, the team member also sought to identify evidence of intercultural learning as a result of the students' experience abroad (that is, evidence of change in reflections T3 and T4). Throughout this round of analysis, we also focused on identifying the specific program features that most contributed to students' intercultural learning. The results of this analysis are presented below.

Breaking Down the Stages of Intercultural Learning

Table 3 summarizes how the different stages of each program contributed to students' intercultural learning.

³ Among the five different researchers who participated in coding student reflections, we achieved an inter-rater reliability of 87.2%, as measured using a Krippendorff test.

⁴ Students were given the same reflection prompt at T1 and T2, which asked them to reflect on their own cultural identity and to provide a specific example of how they had responded to a situation of intercultural difference. Because the reflection response was the same at both times, we were able to assess whether there were qualitative differences in the depth with which students responded to these prompts, and whether there was evidence that students had integrated the pre-departure training into their answers at T2.

Table 3. Evidence of intercultural learning at different stages of the programs

(1) No change in IDI, but evidence of change between T1 and T2 (n=8)	(2) No change in IDI and no evidence of change between T1 and T2...	
CCP6 GUE4 GUE5 GUE6 GUE9 GUE17 MRU1 WAB4	<i>(2a) ...but evidence of change in T3 or T4 (n=2)</i>	<i>(2b) ...and no evidence of change in T3 or T4 (n=12)</i>
	CCP8 GUE13	CCP3 MRU7 CCP4 STO1 GUE1 WAB3 GUE14 WAB4 MRU3 WAB7 MRU5 WAB10
(3) Increase in IDI and evidence of change between T1 and T2 (n=11)	(4) Increase in IDI and no evidence of change between T1 and T2...	
STO4 STO12 STO17 GUE2 GUE8 GUE10 GUE11 GUE12 GUE18 GUE19 GUE20	<i>(4a) ...but evidence of change in T3 or T4 (n=10)</i>	<i>(4b) ...and no evidence of change in T3 or T4 (n=4)</i>
	ELO11 GUE3 GUE7 GUE15 GUE16 MRU8 MRU9 STO13 STO15 STO16	CCP1 CCP5 MR6 STO3
(5) Decrease in IDI		
ELO12 ELO16 MRU2 STO5		
Total n = 51. This includes all students who completed pre- and post- IDI surveys, as well as a minimum of three out of four written reflections.		

There are a number of important findings illustrated in Table 3. First, intercultural learning can start on campus long before the students get on an airplane to go abroad: 37% of students (n=19) demonstrated evidence of intercultural learning as a result of the pre-departure training (i.e., evidence of intercultural learning between T1 and T2, captured by the two left-side boxes in Table 3). The majority of these students came from the two programs with the highest levels of pre-departure intercultural training (University of Guelph with 12 hours and St. Olaf College with 9 hours). This finding provides further evidence that study abroad programs should include an extended, iterative process of guided pre-departure learning around the acquisition of intercultural skills in order for students to make the largest possible gains (Woods et al., 2017).

Interestingly, even though their written reflections provided rich evidence of intercultural learning during the pre-departure training, there was no meaningful change in the IDI results for 8 of these 19 students (i.e., box 1 in Table 3). A similar result was found for two additional students who did not experience a change in their IDI scores, but we found evidence of intercultural learning in their T3 and/or T4 reflections (i.e., box 2a). It is possible that these 10 students had difficulty translating their theoretical learning from the classroom into practice during their study abroad program, which explains why there was no meaningful change in their IDI surveys. However, most of the T3 and T4 reflections for these students provided nuanced evidence of intercultural insights

during the international portion of the programs, which indicates that their learning process continued, even though it did not translate into improved IDI results. This suggests that IDI survey results do not perfectly capture all aspects of intercultural learning that students experience as a result of participating in an international program. Rather than interpreting their IDI scores as a failure to meet intercultural learning objectives, we argue that our evidence provides a compelling case for combining quantitative assessments with qualitative assessments, to gain a more accurate and learner-centered picture of student learning. Written reflections provide an opportunity for program facilitators to identify student learning that is not captured through quantitative survey scores. More importantly, these findings provide strong support for the necessity of including a facilitated and iterative program of pre-departure intercultural training for study abroad programs—and our evidence suggests the more, the better. The content of this pre-departure training should include a combination of culture-specific and culture-general content, as well as provide students with a toolkit of reflective skills that they can use before, during, and after a program.

Second, both the pre-departure training and the “study abroad” portion of a program play a valuable role in students’ intercultural learning, although the impact of these different program components appears to differ among students. Of the 25 students who experienced a meaningful increase in their IDI scores (i.e., box 3), 11 students initiated their learning during the pre-departure training, while 10 students appeared to engage more in their learning during the international portion of the program (i.e., box 4a). The T3 and T4 reflections of the former group indicated that they continued to apply their theoretical learning during the experiential part of the program, and this resulted in significant improvements in their IDI scores. In contrast, the T3 and T4 reflections of the latter group provided evidence of students using their experiences abroad to make connections to the theoretical concepts they had previously studied. Even though these students may have had difficulty in seeing the relevance of the training at the time of the pre-departure course (as illustrated by the lack of change between T1 and T2), the experiential component of the program enabled them to more clearly see the connections between their theoretical and practical learning. For example, one student from the Guelph program wrote in the final reflection: “During the pre-departure course, I had no idea how the learned information from cultural activities would transfer over to my experience abroad. Reflecting back on the whole experience, those activities gave exposure and knowledge of possible situations I could face and how to handle it appropriately” (GUE10_T4).⁵ These students often made direct connections between the content of the pre-departure course and their learning in the T3 and T4 reflections, which indicates that their learning was not simply a function of being immersed abroad, but rather was a result of the groundwork that had been laid for their learning during the pre-departure training. The findings for both groups (in addition to the 10 students discussed above in our first finding) provide powerful evidence to suggest that program facilitators should not assume that the “abroad” portion of a program is the most important for student learning. Rather, educators should also emphasize the importance of the pre-departure intercultural training, because this provides a solid foundation upon which students will continue to build during their time abroad.

⁵ The first part of the citation (“GUE10”) refers to the anonymized student, while the second part of the citation (“T4”) refers to the reflection number. All references to student reflections will be cited using this format.

In addition to understanding what contributes to students' intercultural learning, we also need to understand what happens when it appears that students do not meet intercultural learning objectives. To this end, we also read all the reflections of the students (n=12) whose IDI scores did not increase and who did not provide evidence of intercultural learning in their writing (i.e., box 2b), and we analyzed these reflections in light of their IDI survey results. Our third finding suggests that students do not improve their intercultural skills when their study abroad experiences simply reinforce their pre-existing beliefs and habits related to intercultural difference. In these cases, we found that the content of the reflections from T1 to T4 aligned with their pre-IDI scores. For instance, if a student started a program with a Polarization Development Orientation (which is a relatively low position on the IDI continuum), their writing consistently reflected perspectives and opinions that were consistent with a Polarization Orientation (and this was also reflected in their post-IDI score). For instance, one student wrote in the first reflection: "I have no hesitation in claiming that the United States of America is the best country on our planet" (WAB7_T1). In the fourth reflection, the same student wrote: "I occasionally joke that the quickest way to become super patriotic for [sic] the United States is to spend a decent amount of time somewhere else. I was extremely happy to be home" (WAB7_T4). Although the student spoke positively about the experience in Peru, the experience did not fundamentally change his outlook on his own cultural identity or how he viewed cultural difference.

There was one interesting outlier in this group: while nearly all of these students' Development Orientations were on the lower half of the IDI's Development Continuum, one student (STO1) started and ended the program with a very high Development Orientation in Adaptation. This student's reflections revealed that he/she had previously spent an extended amount of time abroad in another developing country, and demonstrated an ability to apply learning from that prior experience during the St. Olaf program. While there was no evidence to suggest that this student had gained any new skills, the St. Olaf program was nevertheless a valuable opportunity for intercultural learning, since the student was able to consolidate the skills that had previously been developed. Since students from all six programs are represented in this category, this outcome may have more to do with students' pre-existing attitudes about cultural difference and prior experiences, rather than being connected to program features. This serves as an important reminder that program facilitators should be keenly aware of the attitudes and experiences students bring with them into a program, so as to be able to identify learning activities that can best facilitate individual students' learning.

Similarly, it is also important for educators to recognize that it is possible for some students to move backwards along the IDI continuum, and our fourth finding indicates that written reflections provide meaningful information to educators about *why* this might happen. Our dataset included four students whose IDI results decreased, and in all instances, we were able to analyze the reflections to identify possible reasons for this outcome. In one case, the student entered the program with a strong sense of European identity and several prior experiences in Europe, combined with an unwillingness to critically reflect on his/her assumptions about the field school experience. During the field school in Italy, ELO16 claimed, "I think that because I am European and have spent significant amount of my life [sic] in Europe, I did not experience anything that surprised me" (ELO16_T3). This attitude prevented the student from seeing the distinct features of Italian culture (a topic which featured in the academic content of the course). Instead, ELO16

appeared to equate Italian culture with European culture: “I saw Italian culture not as multiple micro-cultures, like we learned, but as fitting into the larger context of European culture” (EU16_T4). Additionally, ELO16 exhibited an attitude of superiority in relation to peers: while the student’s classmates were shocked by having to pay for water in restaurants or access to public bathrooms, ELO16 wrote, “I’m used to [this], so I didn’t really care” (ELO16_T4). In the end, this student experienced a dramatic decrease in IDI score: even though ELO16 started the program with a relatively high Development Orientation at the Cusp of Adaptation, the student ended the program in mid-Minimization (a decrease of 32.41 points). In short, this case suggests that moving backwards can be the result of failing to question one’s own assumptions, as well as difficult intra-group dynamics (the latter will be discussed in more detail below). As such, educators should be aware of these factors as potential obstacles to intercultural learning and make efforts to counteract them in their programs.

In other cases, students wrote about their discomfort with or confusion about what they were experiencing or their lack of confidence in dealing with certain intercultural situations. It should not come as a surprise that a stressful or confusing experience could lead to a student “shutting down” or experiencing “paralysis,” which could in turn lead to a decreased IDI score (Mitchell & Paras, 2018). However, even when this happens, it is still possible for students to make meaning of these experiences. For instance, STO5 writes that there were some experiences that “served as triumphs where I felt like I had handled myself well,” but other experiences produced “a queasy feeling in my stomach” (STO5_T3). The student describes the experience of feeling guilty for not helping the bus drivers and guides load the students’ luggage onto the bus every day, but then goes on to write, “I do recognize though that there is a great deal of gender roles that I am not fully cognizant of” (STO5_T3). The reflection includes a detailed level of introspection and insight about why STO5 felt so unsettled in these interactions, and identifies that the student does not fully understand the intercultural dynamics at play. The student’s final reflection clearly identifies different facets of learning from the experience in Peru: “I’m more aware of my privilege . . . [sic] Something that I knew existed in theory, but I didn’t realize the extent until I could pass through airports with ease, or how my education wasn’t ever something that I questioned, nor was my access to clean water from a tap” (STO5_T4). This suggests that, even when students such as STO5 move backwards along the IDI continuum, providing the opportunity for reflection can still result in opportunities for learning. Furthermore, from an educator’s perspective, written reflections provide the opportunity to understand *why* students move backwards. In turn, this valuable information can inform program facilitators on how to support student learning prior to and during a program.

Finally, our analysis suggests that written reflections provide an effective and accurate way of assessing students’ intercultural learning. Out of 51 students, there were only 4 cases in which the reflections did not provide any insight about the process of students’ learning (i.e., box 4b). Even though all 4 students experienced an increase in their IDI scores, none of these students’ reflections could illuminate in more detail what contributed to this successful outcome. This is not to deny the improvements in these students’ intercultural orientations (as reflected in their IDI results). Rather, it may simply be the case that their learning cannot be detected in their written reflections. In some cases, the written response was simply too short or the student did not respond appropriately to the prompt. Given that these students represent a relatively small portion of the dataset (8%), this suggests that combining quantitative IDI scores with qualitative written reflections is an effective

way to assess students' intercultural learning, both from a teaching perspective and a research perspective.

In addition to these findings about the different stages and processes of learning during a study abroad program, a number of themes emerged from qualitative analysis of the students' reflections. Specifically, pre-departure training and opportunities for service-learning made a significant positive impact on students' intercultural learning, and our qualitative analysis of the reflections provided more detailed information about both of these dimensions. An additional unexpected third theme emerged from our qualitative analysis of the reflections: namely, that dynamics *within* the student group (and not only between the student group and the host community) can positively or negatively impact students' learning. The discussion will now turn to these three themes.

Program Features and Students' Intercultural Learning

The Role of Pre-Departure Intercultural Training

The reflection prompt at T4 explicitly asked students to identify how the pre-departure activities contributed to their learning. Students across all programs spoke about context-specific knowledge they had gained through the pre-departure training. For example, MRU9 wrote about how the pre-departure course provided a better understanding of gender roles and inequality in Honduras, and many other students reported similar examples of the context-specific knowledge they had gained. This was to be expected, as context and culture-specific learning was often featured as an explicit objective of the study abroad programs as well as in the content of many of the pre-departure courses, particularly in those programs with low levels of intercultural training. However, in keeping with our definition of intercultural competence, we did not include culture-specific or context-specific content when we calculated hours of pre-departure intercultural training. This is because intercultural competence consists of a culture-general set of skills that can be applied across contexts, rather than culture-specific knowledge. While students' ability to identify areas of culture or context-specific learning is evidence that they gained a deeper understanding of their study abroad destination (which is a positive outcome if this was included in the program's learning objectives), we do not consider it as evidence that they gained intercultural skills.

In general, students in programs with higher levels of pre-departure intercultural training (and particularly those in the University of Guelph's India Field School) were able to identify in greater detail and with more depth how specific pre-departure activities impacted their intercultural learning abroad. This should not come as a surprise since educators already know that iterative cycles of reflection and experimentation have a greater impact on experiential learning compared with one-off activities (Kolb, 1984; Pugh, 2014). A major theme that emerged was that the pre-departure intercultural activities helped students gain a better understanding of their own cultural self-identities. The quote below provides an illustrative example of this:

The skills I learned in India go right back to the pre-departure course and its activities. The course solidified my cultural identity and facilitated recognition of the influence my cultural identity has on my actions. Without activities like the cultural identity iceberg, the nodding activity and discussions about how our perceptions are heavily influenced by what we have experienced, what we identify with and the groups we are socialised by; [sic] I would have been far less reflective about the way that my actions are and were internally influenced. The

course's ability to shape and help me define my cultural identity created a foundation for me to grow off to incorporate new skills and perceptions into my identity. (GUE4_T4)⁶

Interestingly, the pre-departure intercultural training sometimes led to the opposite result. Some students reported feeling more confusion than clarity about their cultural identities as a result of the activities:

I think that now learning more about culture has made it much more difficult for me to actually identify my cultural background and how it shapes me. (GUE9_T2)

I feel more connected to being Canadian now than I did 12 weeks ago, yet still unsure as to how to define it. (GUE6_T2)

Despite the two students' confusion reported at the end of the pre-departure training, both of these students' later reflections provide strong evidence of intercultural learning (and one of these students experienced a meaningful increase in IDI survey results). Thus, pushing students to question their cultural self-identities may result in short-term confusion, but long-term intercultural learning. Furthermore, according to Vande Berg's (2015) four-phase developmental framework, gaining insight into self-identity is considered a foundational aspect of intercultural competence, so our evidence suggests that the pre-departure training is an important place to help students engage intentionally in this process.

Students also reported that the pre-departure training helped them to develop skills to cope with discomfort or disorienting intercultural situations. As a result of the pre-departure activities, students were better able to moderate their emotional responses to these situations, as well as engage in a process of reflection about the possible causes of their discomfort. For instance:

I also think that by completing the activities in the pre-departure course which were intended to disorient and confuse us; like the form with various confusing questions, the twenty-questions game for which nodding meant no and shaking the head meant yes, and the activity where we were asked to make detailed profiles of individuals based on five items, I was able to become more comfortable with being uncomfortable, and understand that often there is much more to a situation or individual than is visible on the surface. The skills and concepts we practiced in these activities, especially the importance of understanding and working with the cultural differences, were important to me in my interactions with the [organization name] team members. If I had become discouraged by the slight communication barriers and the cultural differences between [local staff] and myself, I would not have made nearly as many connections or learned nearly as much as I was able to on this trip. (GUE17_T4)⁷

⁶ Similar observations were offered by IFS7_T3, IFS8_T4, IFS19_T4, and MRU2_T4.

⁷ Similarly, GUE9 wrote: The pre-departure activities from the seminar really helped shape my experience in India because they provided me with a lot of different tools that were really useful in navigating difficult and challenging events during the trip. In particular, I found that the day that [guest speaker's name] came in and ran the workshop on unpacking power and privilege to be very helpful, as it forced me to put myself in uncomfortable situations and it allowed us as groups to discuss the issues about volunteerism that we wanted to avoid while in India. I found that this workshop really helped me to prepare for some of the challenges I faced in India and the new and uncomfortable situations I had to deal with. (GUE9_T4)

Vande Berg (2015) identifies the ability to manage emotions in the face of disorienting intercultural situations as a more advanced intercultural competency. Our qualitative analysis of the reflections provides examples of how exactly students used the pre-departure training to cultivate these emotional management capabilities.

It is important to note that a couple of students included some criticisms of the pre-departure activities in their reflections. MRU8 thought that the pre-departure activities created expectations in students' minds about what they would experience, which were not borne out in reality (MRU8_T4). STO16 thought that it would be more useful to include reflection activities and intercultural learning lessons after the international portion of the program, rather than before, although this student acknowledged that others in the class had found the pre-departure training activities useful (STO16_T4). Both of these are legitimate critiques, and point to the necessity of ensuring that any pre-departure training activities be designed to help students question their cultural assumptions, rather than create new ones. Additionally, while it is often more logistically challenging to design program components after the completion of a study abroad experience, there is strong evidence to suggest that student learning is best facilitated when reflection continues after students return home (Perry et al., 2012).

The Role of Service-Learning

Four out of the six programs included a service-learning program element, and our analysis suggests that participation in service-learning was beneficial for students' intercultural development. A plausible explanation for this is that the daily face-to-face intercultural interactions experienced by students engaged in a service-learning environment yielded more opportunities for students to practice and cultivate intercultural skills. However, without a deeper qualitative analysis of the reflections, we are unable to assess how exactly these experiences contributed to student learning and how students themselves made meaning from them.

A significant number of students identified improvements in cross-cultural communication skills as one of the main benefits of their service-learning experience. For students in the University of Guelph's India Field School, the pre-departure course included a training component that explored different communication styles, and it was clear from the reflections that students made direct connections between the pre-departure training activities and their experience at their service-learning placements. For instance:

The main cultural skills and insights I gained from the field school had to do with feeling as though I had improved my communication skills, and particularly my ability to communicate across cultures. This was primarily a result of having daily interactions with the daycare staff at my placement . . . The class activity on different communication styles was also helpful in creating self-awareness among the class about which communication style they use, and potentially how they do not want to come across in conversations. For me, the activity allowed me to think critically about how my communication style may come across in different cultures, as well as the positives and negatives of using my communication style. (GUE2_T4)⁸

⁸ IFS8_T3, IFS9_T3, and IFS12_T3 also made reference to what they learned about communication styles while working in their placements.

What is notable about this student's reflection is that the focus is not on language difference per se, but rather on being able to adapt to different high-context or low-context cultural situations. The intercultural training activities around communication styles allowed students to focus less on obvious language differences (of which there were plenty for students in all programs), and become more attuned to more subtle markers of cultural difference in communication.

In addition to communication styles, the service-learning component provided opportunities for students to directly observe other invisible dimensions of culture, including different attitudes toward time as well as different values around professional practices. Again, the presence of pre-departure intercultural training seems to have a significant influence on how students identified and adapted to different practices, and it is worth quoting the following University of Guelph student at length to illustrate this:

From my first day at my placement, all of the information given to me regarding my duties while at [name of organizations] had been written off, and changed dramatically. This, along with the way this conversation took place, portrayed a very polychronic way, in contrast to my cultural tendency to be monochronic . . . If it were not for our cultural activity regarding the high vs. low context culture, I would have taken this repeated submission as I was doing a poor job with this task, rather it was due to our cultural differences in regards to how tasks are presented . . . This was further seen during the daily schedule at my placement as I was told to arrive at 9:30AM Monday-Friday, in which I arrived by 9:25AM, however, this was also reciprocated to all employees, but rather they did not show up until 10:00AM, as I later found out that 9:30AM translates to 10:00AM to them. I later realized that the cultural tendencies like formality, punctuality, schedules, my our sense of time, [sic] etc. creates a lot of anxiety for myself, which I had not had the opportunity to test or question when I simply live in a culture that prides itself on these attributes. During my time in India however, I had learned that these tendencies are not fixed, and are rather just a cultural trait. (GUE11_T4)

It is helpful to compare the above student's reflection with that of a student from Wabash College, who also observed different values around professional practices and was similarly challenged by the anxiety this provoked:

During my time with the doctor, I was able to see how a completely different culture interacted with medical professionals. I was astonished at how the citizens treated the doctor. The people would take calls on their cell phones during the appointment and treat him, by my cultural perspective, in a manner that was less than respectful. However, the doctors thought that this was normal and it seemed not to bother them. The lack of respect and/or medical protocol made me feel very stressed because treating the doctor in the United States like this is very counter-cultural and would be seen as rude. After some reflection, though, I do realize that this [is] just a cultural difference and is completely acceptable, yet to me is very disorienting and stressful. (WAB4_T3)

Even though the second student's program at Wabash College included far less pre-departure intercultural training (i.e., 1.5 hours) than the University of Guelph program (i.e., 12 hours), the opportunity to work for an extended period of time in a professional setting seemed to facilitate some deep intercultural insights. The difference is that, in the case of the first student, the pre-departure training provided theoretical concepts that allowed the student to clearly identify the dynamics of the workplace, whereas the second student struggled more (albeit it appears ultimately

successfully) to identify these dynamics as products of different cultural values. In both cases, we also see the students learning how to manage difficult emotions through these experiences, which we have already identified above as a higher-order intercultural skill.

Service-learning experiences may be particularly important for students who work in placements related to their intended professions, such as was the case for STO1 during the Peruvian medical experience organized by St. Olaf College:

My experience in Peru also reinforced for me the importance of cultural competence in a healthcare setting. There were several instances where we had to take the lifestyles of the Willoq community in mind (the strain placed on their backs by the work they do, the way they view medicine, etc.) in order to more fully understand their life experiences and provide better care to them. Furthermore, remaining cognizant of the Willoq community's cultural aspects assists us in comprehending why they do not make use of water filters in the way that we, as Americans, believe that they should. Because the Willoq community internalizes messages about the benefits of clean water differently, their prioritization of the use of water filters is completely different. (STO1_T4)

Working in health-related placements provided the opportunity for both STO1 and WAB4 to practice shifting perspective and adapting behavior in a relevant professional setting. For students who did not engage in service-learning opportunities, opportunities for intercultural interactions were often limited to ordering food in restaurants, observing a cultural performance, or watching a cooking demonstration. Our qualitative analysis indicates that while the students found these to be useful experiences (and we in no way intend to suggest that they are *not* useful to a certain degree), they simply do not have the same scope or potential for facilitating the kind of deep intercultural learning that more extended service-learning programs offer. This is not to say that students should be simply thrown into community-based service-learning programs without adequate training beforehand. Obviously, students should be provided appropriate profession or discipline specific preparations in advance of a placement, as well as training around the ethics of community-based service, particularly in the context of developing countries (Simpson, 2004; Tiessen, 2014). However, we conclude that service-learning programs provide particularly rich opportunities for intercultural learning, which should be supported with as much intercultural training as possible (in addition to relevant professional training).

The Role of Intra-Group Dynamics

An unexpected theme emerged from our qualitative analysis, namely that group dynamics *among* student participants appeared to have a significant impact on student learning. Several students mentioned the importance of feeling comfortable with their peers and how this benefited their learning. The pre-departure training contributed to this by providing time for students to get to know each other, as well as begin to trust each other. For instance, GUE2 writes:

There were many pre-departure activities which helped me prepare more effectively for the field school, and that I was able to call upon throughout the field school. One memorable activity was the guest speaker who came in and added an element of theatre to thinking critically about voluntourism. Acting out undesirable situations which we may encounter abroad helped me to think ahead in terms of how to adapt to said situations. These activities informed my preparatory learning for India, but also helped me feel closer to the rest of the

class which I felt was vital to having a positive experience in India. Being able to feel vulnerable around my classmates was necessary for me to feel comfortable talking over uncomfortable or confusing situations that occurred during the field school. (GUE2_T4)

A similar observation was expressed by a student participant from St. Olaf's Peruvian medical experience. STO12 observed that the semester-long pre-departure course "was integral to the comradery [sic] we had within our group" and that "getting to know each other and learning to trust each other" was beneficial for the time spent in Peru (STO12_T4). When students travel to an unfamiliar environment during a study abroad program, positive group dynamics can help them cope with the feelings of discomfort and vulnerability that they may experience.

While having a positive group dynamic is not sufficient for producing intercultural learning, the example of EU16 suggests that difficult group dynamics can certainly detract from a student's intercultural growth. As mentioned above, a consistent theme throughout EU16's reflections were in regards to having a strong European identity and how this distinguished him/her from other students in the program. Furthermore, in both the T3 and T4 reflections, the student was consistently critical of the behavior of other students during the program in Italy:

I felt more comfortable with the culture than I normally do in America. I think, too, because I speak Spanish and am familiar with European culture, I was able to communicate [basic information] with Italians. They saw me less as an American and more as someone who didn't speak Italian . . . I do think that it increased my annoyance with my classmates who didn't understand the culture and persisted in American customs . . . In America, people can make their decisions [in a store] without talking to the salesperson. In Europe, though, people interact with the sales people who have apprenticed in sales. I started talking to the salesperson and the other students were a bit uncomfortable thinking that the salesperson was too forward. I, however, felt we were being rude and ignoring her. (EU16_T3)

Similarly, in EU16's final reflection, the student wrote about how there are different attitudes towards drinking alcohol in Europe and criticized other students in the program for failing to appreciate this:

I engage in that culture. To others, the legal ability to buy drinks meant abusing the permission. They engaged in American culture in Europe (not that Europeans don't get drunk, but binge-drinking and getting drunk is very much a part of American college culture). They didn't really experience the European culture, they just brought their culture to Italy. (EU16_T4)

It is possible that EU16 had a better appreciation of different aspects of Italian culture than his/her classmates due to prior experiences in Europe, and this student also had, by far, the highest Development Orientation (i.e., at the Cusp of Adaptation) among the program's cohort at the beginning of the study abroad program. There would have been tremendous potential for this student to act as a cultural mediator for other students, as well as to continue to build on a relatively advanced initial Development Orientation. Instead, what appears to have happened is that the difficult intercultural dynamics between this student and the rest of the group, in combination with EU16's confidence that he/she already understood European culture, overshadowed any potential intercultural learning that the student could have experienced through interactions with local Italians.

This intra-group dynamic was so powerful for this student that it may have contributed to a major decrease of 32.41 points in the post-IDI score, so that the student ended the program in the middle of a Minimization Orientation.

It is helpful to contrast EU16's writing with that of GUE3, who also perceived some unhelpful intercultural behaviors among classmates, but used this observation to improve his/her own intercultural strategies.

One observation I have seen during my time in the field school with various other classmates is that some people prefer to stay in their previous cultural bubble that they left behind instead of trying to immerse within the local culture where they are working. Canadians simply stay in groups with other Canadians in order to make their time easier in India so they don't feel left out and isolated, but ironically by doing this these same people isolate themselves from the culture they are entering and do not put in much effort to learn the local language, the local customs or culture. They simply observe from afar with their Canadian lens and forget about adopting an "Indian" lens in order to truly understand the ways in which the locality works . . . This observation has pushed me to engage with locals more and to regularly ask them questions about themselves, about their lives and about the system they are a part of. (GUE3_T3)

Unlike EU16, GUE3 provided evidence of intercultural learning at T3 and T4 and experienced a meaningful increase in IDI survey results. This indicates that difficult intra-group dynamics between students do not necessarily lead to a decrease in intercultural competence if the student is able to identify and respond appropriately to the cultural differences that may produce perceived negative behaviors.

Thus, there is evidence that extended pre-departure intercultural training can help to mitigate some of the potentially harmful effects of difficult group dynamics. Students who were able to identify cultural differences within the group were better able to manage their emotions in response to what they perceived as inappropriate or negative behavior among their peers. For example:

I had several insights related to culture during the field school. The first being that there is just as much diversity within my own group (students), as there is between distinct cultures. We had discussed this concept in class, that the group's diversity is often overlooked, or not considered as significant enough to analyze, however I found that reflecting on this diversity influenced my overall experience of the field school. I was better able to accept the various way in which others reacted to the environment or events after reflecting on our group's diversity. At the start of the trip, I assumed that many people would respond similarly to me. This created several conflicts including not being able to wrap my mind around some of the behavior that was occurring. After considering our own diversity though, these conflicts dissipated enough for me to recognize how different we all are, and how that is okay. (GUE6_T4)⁹

⁹ GUE6 also comments on this intra-group dynamic in the T3 reflection: "I have genuinely tried to reflect inwards whenever I become emotionally reactive to my classmates' behavior. It is difficult to be around others all of the time, but this in itself has been a valuable learning experience. When the attitudes of others become more negative or whiny, I often get annoyed and mentally respond with a "put up and shut up/get over yourself/make the most of it" mentality . . . This course and time in India however, has allowed me to check myself instead of worrying about

It is difficult to say conclusively whether difficult group dynamics themselves can impede intercultural learning, or whether this is a function of an individual student's attitudinal disposition or maturity level in dealing with perceived negative behaviors amongst peers.¹⁰ Nevertheless, what is notable about these findings is that intra-group dynamics were mentioned by students who provided evidence of intercultural growth either in their reflections or through improved IDI scores, and difficult group dynamics appear to have played a significant role for at least one of the students who moved backwards along the IDI continuum. However, students who did not provide any evidence of intercultural learning (either in their reflections or IDI results) did not refer to group dynamics at all in their reflections.

Because this finding was unanticipated, we cannot draw any definitive conclusions about what specific factors or program features contribute to intra-group dynamics in study abroad or how exactly they relate to the development of students' intercultural competence. Rather, we can only suggest that this topic provides a promising direction for future studies. The existing literature on group dynamics and learning is mostly concerned with the detrimental effects of poor interpersonal interaction and how to ameliorate those with enhanced awareness, workshops, and team-building exercises (Gascoigne, 2012; Elmes, 2019). To our knowledge, Woods et al. (2017) and Brenner (2016) are among the only scholars to consider the effects of group dynamics specifically within the context of study abroad experiences. Brenner (2016) addresses biographical factors such as age, professional background, and intercultural attitudes, some of which derive from Kiely's (2005) acknowledgement of the role of such factors. Likewise, Woods et al. (2017) conclude that pre-departure training about behavior can help students navigate and mitigate potential conflicts. But there appears to be no fulsome literature on the intersection of group dynamics, intercultural competence, and study abroad, which suggests a need for both theoretical scaffolding and scientific study. We suggest that some potential avenues for further investigation related to intra-group dynamics could include factors such as program size/number of participants, biographical background or other personal aspects of participants, age and relative age of participants, academic background of participants, amount of pre-departure activity that builds interpersonal relationships, number and experience of faculty involved in pre-departure training, number and experience of faculty traveling with the students, number and professional types of in-country partners, and the amount of homestay versus in-group time.

Conclusion

Our study has a number of limitations. First, it was not possible for us to disentangle the potential effects of particular variables. Although we collected demographic information about gender, we were not able to account for whether or how the gender of students mattered. For instance, even though one of our cases was an all-male college (Wabash College), we could not determine whether the learning outcomes of the students in this program were due to gender, the level of pre-departure orientation, or other program factors. Likewise, we could not determine whether the cultural proximity of the destination country influenced students' learning outcomes,

others. I'm certainly not perfect at it, but I have genuinely began reflecting inward when I get those feelings and instead try to evaluate what is evoking that response in me . . . By reminding myself that other people also bring their own culturally influenced behavior with them, I have started noting the similarities and differences among similar others." (GUE6_T3)

¹⁰ We are grateful to Lynne Mitchell for this observation.

although we might hypothesize that more culturally distant destinations might provide more opportunities to encounter cultural difference. Additionally, we still need to examine how different kinds of service-learning models might contribute to variation in intercultural learning outcomes. It is likely that students who spend an extended amount of time in one placement would have richer learning opportunities compared with students who only spend a day or two. Our analysis did not account for differences among the four service-learning programs. Given the growing field of international service-learning scholarship, including studies of intervention strategies (Sturgill & Motley, 2014), intercultural competence development (Deardorff & Edwards, 2015), and building reciprocity with local partners in service learning (Pettit et al., 2017; Tiessen, Lough, & Cheung, 2018), we believe we have much to learn by further exploration into our programs' structures of interaction and activities. Finally, our findings related to effects of intra-group dynamics were unexpected, in that they only emerged in our final round of qualitative analysis. Given that we did not initially design our study to account for intra-group dynamics, a subsequent study should further explore these effects, as well as investigate the impact of the other variables mentioned above.

Nevertheless, despite these limitations, our analyses yield two sets of robust conclusions. First, from looking at both the IDI scores and the students' writing, participants were more likely to have meaningful intercultural growth if they were in programs that had higher amounts of pre-departure cultural training or if they were in a program that had a service-learning component. The general trend of IDI increases in those programs—and in the India Field School in particular—aligns with these students' ability to articulate in writing greater cultural self-awareness and deeper, more detailed, intercultural insights. Our analysis of the written reflections suggests that higher levels of pre-departure intercultural training provided a bigger toolbox of concepts that students used to understand and interpret their experiences abroad. Their writing also indicates that their service-learning placements provided many more rich, intercultural opportunities, which made growth more likely compared to their counterparts in the other programs. Our findings also suggest that program leaders should attend to intra-group dynamics and the intercultural differences among their students, just as much as the intercultural dynamics between the student group and the host community.

Because our analysis suggests that different program factors have a significant impact on the growth of students' intercultural competence, we conclude that not all programs have the same potential to facilitate intercultural learning and growth. Educators should be aware of which kinds of program factors and interventions are most likely to lead to improved intercultural competence, as well as factors that may impede that sort of learning. The ability to integrate intentional and structured intercultural training may depend on the features of a program, the willingness of an institution to support efforts to include intercultural training, as well as a program's specific learning objectives. For some programs, it may not be feasible to include a dedicated component of the course to intercultural training or service-learning, or program leaders may prefer to focus on other learning objectives such as historical content or professional training. However, it is common for institutions to advertise their study abroad programs in terms of the intercultural skills that students will be able to cite on their resumes as a result of their participation, regardless of whether intercultural training is explicitly included as part of a program's curriculum. Given our evidence that intercultural learning is less likely to occur without facilitated intercultural training, educational institutions should not assume that intercultural competence is an inevitable outcome of students' participation in study abroad programs, nor should they advertise intercultural skills in their

programs *unless* intercultural training is actually included as a meaningful component of a program. If it is not possible for programs to offer extended pre-departure preparation courses, it may be useful to consider alternative formats, such as hybrid models in which students complete some intercultural training online.

These conclusions point to another set of recommendations and research questions pertaining to the role of the educator in students' intercultural development. In experiential learning abroad, it is primarily the program leader's responsibility to create an effective learning environment that achieves the right balance between challenge and support. If we understand correctly that skilled interventions yield more powerful intercultural growth opportunities for students, the extent to which this is possible relies heavily on an educator's own intercultural knowledge and skills.¹¹ It follows, therefore, that educational institutions should provide professional development opportunities to study abroad instructors, particularly if they lack prior knowledge and experience with intercultural training pedagogies. As Deardorff (2014) argues, "faculty need a clearer understanding of intercultural competence in order to more adequately address this in their course (regardless of discipline) and in order to guide students in developing intercultural competence."

Second, our study points to the utility of combining quantitative and qualitative measures of students' intercultural learning. While there are numerous studies that assess students' learning using the IDI or other survey instruments (e.g., Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Cushner & Chang, 2015) or using qualitative measures such as reflections (e.g., King, Perez, & Shim, 2013; Lee et al., 2014; Woods et al., 2017), it is less common to combine and integrate these different measures.¹² Furthermore, most studies focus on learning outcomes or results, rather than tracking the *process* of intercultural learning as we have done here. Deardorff (2015) has challenged educators to identify a more learner-centered assessment paradigm, which entails considering "learner growth as a transformation process within a broad context of factors and influences" (p. 18). As such, any forms of assessment must include evidence taken from real-world settings, which is then analyzed in a holistic way tailored to the circumstances and needs of individual students. Our study responds directly to this challenge by tracing the varied learning processes of individual students within the broader context of several program factors.

By blending the quantitative IDI results with qualitative analyses of student writing, our study yields nuanced data that helps us better understand (1) what happens when students go abroad and (2) how program leaders can better target intervention opportunities. The IDI survey results alone provide some evidence for our assertion that certain program features (i.e., iterative pre-departure training and service-learning components) correlate to greater intercultural growth. But combining that with deep qualitative analysis of students' writing tells us *how* those features contribute to growth, *when* that growth seems to be taking hold, and *how* program leaders might intervene when they better understand what participants are experiencing as they experience it. In other words, our study reveals the processes and program factors that are at the heart of transformational learning in study abroad.

¹¹ We are grateful to Mick Vande Berg for feedback about this point.

¹² Exceptions include Jackson, 2015; Paras & Mitchell, 2017.

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