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Virtual Transborder Service Learning as a Transformative Educational Pedagogy: A California, USA - Baja California, Mexico Academic Partnership in Sustainable Tourism

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Abstract

Service learning (SL) engages students in intentional, collaborative service experiences that promote civic citizenship. The COVID-19 pandemic forced traditional face-to-face SL courses to transition into virtual service learning (e-SL). This paper examines the academic and civic outcomes of an e-SL binational sustainable tourism course for undergraduate students. The course was designed to deliver disciplinary knowledge in sustainable tourism and transborder civic citizenship competencies in the following areas: 1) Ethos, 2) Literacy, 3) Inquiry, 4) Action, 5) Leadership, and 6) Partnership. A post-course student survey was deployed to assess student perspectives regarding the achievement of course outcomes. The findings revealed significant (positive) academic and civic transformations among the students due to the intentionality of the e-SL course design and implementation. Results indicate that e-SL in sustainable tourism education can be an effective pedagogy for inculcating civic learning, responsibility, and engagement among students and future professionals in the field of tourism.

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Abstract in Spanish

El aprendizaje de servicio (SL) involucra a los estudiantes en experiencias de servicio intencionales y colaborativas que promueven la ciudadanía cívica. La pandemia de COVID-19 obligó a los cursos tradicionales de SL cara a cara a hacer la transición al aprendizaje de servicio virtual (e-SL). Este documento examina los resultados académicos y cívicos de un curso binacional de turismo sostenible e-SL para estudiantes universitarios. El curso fue diseñado para impartir conocimientos disciplinarios en turismo sostenible y competencias de ciudadanía cívica transfronteriza en las siguientes áreas: 1) Ética, 2) Alfabetización, 3) Investigación, 4) Acción, 5) Liderazgo y 6) Asociación. Se implementó una encuesta de estudiantes después del curso para evaluar las perspectivas de los estudiantes con respecto al logro de los resultados del curso. Los hallazgos revelaron transformaciones académicas y cívicas significativas (positivas) entre los estudiantes debido a la intencionalidad del diseño e implementación del curso e-SL. Los resultados indican que el e-SL en educación turística sostenible puede ser una pedagogía efectiva para inculcar el aprendizaje cívico, la responsabilidad y el compromiso entre los estudiantes y futuros profesionales en el campo del turismo.

Keywords:

California-Baja California Border Region, civic capacities, global citizens, international e-service learning, sustainable tourism

1. Introduction

The application of service learning (SL) pedagogies in academic courses encourages active student participation in intentional and collaborative service experiences that help promote long-term community development and civic engagement (Bringle et al., 2016; Lillo, 2019; Tharp, 2012). The scope of student learning extends beyond traditional in-class assignments and group projects by providing opportunities to participate in organized service activities that meet community needs while linking these experiences to course content (Choi et al., 2018; Stolley et al., 2017). In Spring 2020, however, the COVID-19 pandemic forced educators across the globe to exit the familiar walls of the classroom and transition to teaching virtually. This of course posed added challenges for SL courses that rely heavily on developing student experiences with community partners; especially those in an international context as university-sponsored travel was stalled globally. While online learning was growing rapidly before the pandemic, virtual service learning (e-SL) had not seen the same growth;

rather it was a rare pedagogical practice which provided few resources for migrating SL into a virtual setting at the onset of the pandemic (Waldner et al., 2012), and merely shifting a course designed to be in-person to an online setting is often not enough to achieve the desired student learning outcomes. This is not to say SL courses cannot be taught in a virtual setting, but rather, to achieve optimum effectiveness, instructors must deliberately incorporate the intersection of technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge (Mishra & Koehler, 2006).

Whether virtual, hybrid, or in-person, SL remains an essential component of higher education that helps students to develop cross-cultural knowledge, gain understanding of social inequities, and develop civic engagement (Veyvoda & Van Cleave, 2020). When faced with the requirement to transfer their respective SL courses online in the Fall of 2020, the authors of this study chose to develop them into a single, binational e-SL course and sought to explore the effectiveness of such a curricular design in inculcating civic capacities among students through virtual community engagement and online learning. The course, which was jointly created and taught by the authors of this study who serve as faculty representing three universities—one located in Baja California, Mexico and two in southern California, United States—was intentionally designed to introduce students to professional knowledge relating to sustainable tourism as well as a suite of competencies, skills, and values necessary for them to be collectively-active and involved global citizens.

2. Literature and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Civic Capacities and Service Learning

Through SL, students develop required capacities to become community-engaged leaders by the application and practice of civic values and ethics in diverse settings (Merryfield, 2003; Smit & Tremethick, 2017). Furthermore, SL engages students in meaningful collaborations with local and global community partners for the purpose of identifying strategic solutions and actions for social change (Cookson et al., 2018; Guthrie & McCracken, 2014). According to Celio et al. (2011), students engaged in SL exhibit the following five significant gains through their experience: “attitudes toward self, attitudes toward school and learning, civic engagement, social skills, and academic performance” (pp.174-175). Celio et al. (2011) also note that “linking to curriculum, voice, community

involvement, and reflection” (p. 175) are the four elements that need to be considered for improving the quality of SL outcomes.

According to the Global Perspectives Institute (GPI) and the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), higher education institutions can play a significant role in increasing democratic participation by preparing students to become globally informed and community engaged citizens (Campus Compact, 2012). Nurturing a climate of civic learning, responsibility, and engagement requires strategic creation of SL courses, which, through planned teaching, research, service, and institutional architecture, can enable students to acquire a suite of knowledge, skills, and values necessary for them to be collectively active and involved citizens (Campus Compact, 2012). Utilizing a roadmap for a civic-minded campus, the course discussed in this research was developed using the following six Civic Capacities (CCs) and respective Student Civic Learning Outcomes (SCLOs; see Table 1 on the next page).

Civic ethos: When developing civic ethos, questions educators must ask include, how well does the course help students develop civic competencies and civic habits, both locally and globally? These competencies and habits include the demonstration of civil public argument and civic imagination. They also include the capacities and curiosity to listen, develop interest in and knowledge of local and global interdependencies, and the ability to work with others different from themselves on public problems.

Civic literacy: A primary question educators must address is how well does the course help students develop the ability to critically evaluate arguments and information relating to civil public argument and community significance? These competencies include the demonstration of comprehensive knowledge about local and global community affairs through information and communication technology.

Civic inquiry: A major component when developing an SL course is civic inquiry, which asks: are students in the course given multiple opportunities to do the work of civic engagement and civic contribution through real projects of impact and relevance; and how are the service opportunities linked to their academic learning?

Civic action: When referring to civic action, instructors must explore the ways in which the course provides opportunities for community and civic

engagement and integration in local and international contexts by asking questions such as do these activities include participation in community campaigns and/or other change-oriented societal activities?

Civic leadership: It is important to think about how the course will prepare our future leaders to integrate civic learning and applications into their personal and professional goals. This includes the extent to which the course structure includes a regular time and place for reflection about how such experiences might shape students' view of the world and their future careers and life work.

Civic partnership: Educators must think about how the course will help students develop new ideas, which they can contribute, document, execute and present, to academic stakeholders and SL organizations/sites. We must think of how the academic institution and global civic partner(s) provide long-term, positive experiences that link with global education, and ask ourselves to what extent we have improved the condition of the communities surrounding our academic institutions.

	SCLO 1	SCLO 2	SCLO 3	SCLO 4
Civic Ethos	Infusion of civic values into the customs and habits of everyday practices, structures and interactions	Grounding on the character of open-mindedness, civility, the worth of each person, ethical behaviors, and concern for the wellbeing of others	Promotion of a spirit of public-mindedness that influences civic engagement with local and global communities	Creation of structures that generate a more porous and interactive flow of knowledge between academia and community
Civic Literacy	Cultivation of foundational knowledge about fundamental principles and debates regarding civic practices and affairs, both within the U.S. and in other countries	Development of familiarity with key historical struggles, campaigns, and social movements that have influenced civic argument and civic imagination	Inculcation of the ability to think critically about complex issues and to seek and evaluate information about issues that have public consequences	Analyses of communication systems in order to plan and engage in public action

Civic Inquiry	Application of the practice of inquiring about the civic dimensions and public consequences of the subject of study	Exploration of the impact of choices on different constituencies and entities, both locally and globally	Deliberate consideration of differing points of views	Analyses of civic intellectual debates within the major or area of study
Civic Action	Demonstration of the capacity and commitment to participate constructively with diverse others	Collaboration to address common societal problems	Professional applications in a pluralistic society & world to improve the quality of lives and the sustainability of the planet	Development of moral and political courage to take risks to achieve a greater public good
Civic Leadership	Promotion of awareness that civic engagement is an essential part of social leadership	Grounding the role of leadership in making improvements to the physical and human condition of community/neighborhood residents	Development of solutions that have significant impact on the community's improvement agenda	Identification of leadership successes and failures, building on success, and analysis of the causes of failure
Civic Partnership	Creation of sustainable long-term partnerships with communities and civic bodies	Development of partnerships which reflect academia's commitments to community building and civic vitality	Integration of community experience into the learning of students through professional service opportunities that provide public forums for the dissemination of scholarly work	Improvement of the condition of the communities surrounding our campuses

TABLE (1): STUDENT CIVIC LEARNING OUTCOMES (SCLOs) ASSOCIATED WITH CIVIC CAPACITIES (CCs), ADAPTED FROM NATIONAL TASK FORCE ON CIVIC LEARNING AND DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT (2012, p. 15)

2.2. International Service Learning

The pedagogy of International Service Learning (ISL) has been adopted by educators from a wide variety of academic disciplines to promote global civic engagement, particularly among students pursuing baccalaureate degrees. In ISL, service learning curricula, activities, and experiences are intentionally co-created by educational institutions in partnership with local community organizations/agencies in an international setting, to provide opportunities for academic collaborations between students, faculty, and local individuals/representatives. ISL is different from the traditional pedagogical approaches of study abroad and international education (Bringle et al., 2011; Hartman & Kiely, 2014), as the SL experience “co-created by educational institutions and international community partners nurture unique intercultural learning environments in which classroom-based education and community engagement intersect” (Daniel & Mishra, 2017, p. 1).

One of the key outcomes of ISL is the development of global citizenship and civic leadership competencies among students (Tyran, 2017; Sattin, 2007). Research suggests that students participating in ISL demonstrate reinforced altruistic values, heightened tolerance, appreciation of racial, ethnic, and cultural differences, greater global awareness and cross-cultural understanding and ability to effectively collaborate with diverse others (Yang et al., 2016). Conversely, Kiely (2004) warns of ethical concerns that may accompany an ISL experience, wherein participation “can trigger extremely powerful reactions from students who begin to critically reflect on long-held assumptions about themselves, lifestyle choices, cultural norms, U.S. capitalism, careers, relationships, social problems, and the world around them” (p. 16). Faculty can mitigate negative experiences upon completion of an ISL course by incorporating deliberate coursework to help students turn their emerging global consciousness into meaningful action (Kiely, 2004). In doing so, ISL provides students with “...a clearer understanding of the fundamental necessity for profound social change. And this, in turn, contributes to a much more solid foundation for global understanding and global action than the original (well-meaning but simplistic) desire to serve” (Grusky, 2000, p. 866).

2.2.1. ISL and Sustainable Tourism

Recognizing the added benefits and student learning outcomes of ISL, the pedagogy has become popular among educators (Daniel & Mishra, 2017) in a cross-section of interdisciplinary academic fields, including Sustainable

Tourism Management. Sustainable tourism has the potential of contributing to local development while protecting the natural environment and preserving cultural heritage. Yet, tourism education has primarily prioritized economic growth and acquisition of wealth over addressing socio-cultural and environmental issues (Boluk et al., 2019; Jamal et al., 2011). The issues faced by the industry today call for global citizens who possess the virtue and skills to positively impact both the development of tourism and society at large (Matteucci & Aubke, 2018).

There is growing interest within tourism education for critical exploration into the complex issues of sustainability (see Boluk et al., 2019), and a growing number of researchers point to SL to achieve such goals (see Jamal et al., 2011; Mak et al., 2017; Matteucci & Aubke, 2018). In a field reliant on global citizens, signified by “awareness, caring, and embracing cultural diversity while promoting social justice and sustainability, coupled with a sense of responsibility to act” (Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2013, p. 1), ISL allows sustainable tourism educators to engage students in tourism-related social responsibility and engaged citizenship initiatives beyond transnational and political boundaries. Integrating ISL into sustainable tourism studies can provide pathways for students to gain insight into complex issues beyond their current geographical borders to join a global network of new cross-cultural leaders for sustainability (see Caton et al., 2014; Gretzel et al., 2014). It is argued, virtual service learning (e-SL) can allow for international partnerships leading students to become more informed global citizens.

2.3. Virtual Service Learning

Virtual SL (or e-SL) is described as a pedagogy through which SL takes place online, resulting in learning outcomes similar to face-to-face SL while creating a plethora of opportunities to connect students with communities across the globe (see Gasper-Hulvat, 2018; McGorry, 2012; Waldner, 2015). As such, e-SL can provide a pathway to achieving the beneficial outcomes inherent in SL courses for those unable to participate in traditional in-person coursework. This includes those with disabilities (Malvey et al., 2006), rural populations, those without a higher education learning institution nearby (Strait & Hamerlinck, 2010), or even shy or introverted individuals (Seifer & Mihalynuk, 2005). Guthrie and McCracken (2014) found that when combined with pedagogies that foster the development of critical dialogue, personal insight, and active engagement, e-SL can extend learning beyond regional confines,

culture, and identities to enable individual growth and increase capacities for understanding and awareness.

While at the outset of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, anecdotal evidence suggested many instructors saw online instruction as a barrier to achieving SL outcomes (for exceptions see Brandauer, Carnine et al., 2022; Brandauer Sabato et al., 2022; Figuccio, 2020), Waldner et al. (2012)—and the authors of this study—viewed it as an opportunity to minimize geographical constraints while learning to utilize online tools for increased community engagement. Prior to the pandemic, Gasper-Hulvat (2018) reported that undergraduate students who participated in an upper-division contemporary art history e-SL course demonstrated many of the same learning outcomes as a face-to-face SL course, including improved disciplinary understanding, transferable skill development, critical decision making, and emotional knowledge. Harris (2017) observed that through e-SL “the remote engagement allowed the students to reflect on the contextual validity of theory, develop cross-cultural insights and acquire knowledge and skills in problem solving which have implications for their future careers” (p. 115). This is not to say simply moving a class from face-to-face to virtual, without strategic planning will garner the same results. For instance, results from a recent qualitative study by Koris et al. (2021) indicated that the transition to e-ISL among Erasmus+ Study Mobility Program students at host universities in Europe during the COVID-19 pandemic in Spring 2020 resulted in them being “deprived of access to the cultural knowledge of the destination country as well as of the insights typically arising from face-to-face teaching and social interactions” (p. 475). This demonstrates the importance of *deliberate* e-SL course development.

2.3.1. e-ISL

In developing countries particularly, there has been a trend towards virtual internationalization strategies, including models such as Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) or Global Virtual Mobility Program (GVMP), which were in place prior to the travel constraints posed by the pandemic (Fairlie et al., 2021; Fonseca, 2021; Gómez López, 2020). According to Gómez López (2020), since 2015 in Latin America the COIL model is considered to strengthen international citizenship skills while reducing security and financial gaps through internationalization at home. Based on a GVMP exercise that linked universities in Colombia and Spain, Fonseca (2021) found that students benefit from the experience through flexibility and access to different

learning styles and the opportunity for strengthening digital and collaborative skills with multicultural interactions at a low cost. The study also recognized that institutions may enhance the results of internationalization (and democratization) processes through information technologies, but there remained limitations related to levels of digital literacy, weak internet connectivity, and the overall digital divide. A similar study of students' perceptions of learning outcomes from a virtual sustainability course revealed students were generally dissatisfied with the transition from face-to-face to virtual modality, one factor being the ill-preparedness (and involvement) of the instructors to provide adequate curricular structure for supporting student engagement (Torres Martin et al., 2021).

Undoubtedly, the COVID-19 global pandemic necessitated e-SL courses to not only integrate information and communication technologies but also to modify, renew and adapt the pedagogy to improve learning processes in the virtual environment (Fairlie et al., 2021; Hurtado Talavera, 2020). The virtual setting allowed for a flexible environment for students juggling many new roles such as caregivers, helping children with online courses, becoming primary breadwinners, etc. Before [and now after] the pandemic, this flexibility was [is] an ongoing benefit to those taking online coursework who tend not to be the traditional age of on-campus students and are usually juggling a 40-hour work week among other responsibilities (Guthrie & McCracken, 2014; Strait & Sauer, 2004). In an attempt to better understand how the intentional development of an e-SL course can contribute student learning outcomes centered around civic capacities, this research explored the following questions:

Research Question 1: What were the students' perceptions regarding the achievement of intended Civic Capacities and Service Learning Outcomes after participating in the sustainable tourism-oriented Transborder Virtual ISL course?

Research Question 2: How did the design of the Transborder Virtual ISL experience influence student's satisfaction with achievement of SL capacities?

3. Methods

3.1. US-Mexico Transborder e-SL Course in Global Sustainable Tourism

The concept of sustainable tourism is defined as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities” (UNWTO, 2013, p. 10). For destinations, sustainable tourism involves multiple levels of stakeholders whose needs and wants must be taken into consideration in tourism visioning, planning, development, management, and marketing (McGrath et al., 2020) amid macro-level politics and power dynamics. This presents a challenge for sustainable tourism educators as conflicting stakeholder groups may hold differing views depending on the context. When this is translated into static, traditional classroom settings, tourism students are provided narrow understandings of sustainability (see Cotterell et al., 2019). Because of this the authors felt it imperative to continue a binational e-SL course format, even as courses went virtual, to provide students the opportunity to better understand the complex dynamics of developing sustainable tourism amongst differing cultural dynamics.

3.2. Course Setting

The cross-border region between California, United States and Baja California, Mexico is dynamic and complex. Specifically, the San Diego-Tijuana region is a territorial entity composed of several local and regional authorities located in and belonging to two different nations. Furthermore, this cross-border region is an area located between a developed country and a developing nation. The main cities in the region are San Diego, California, located in the southwestern part of the United States and Tijuana, Baja California, in the northwestern region of the Baja California peninsula in Mexico; both cities have approximately 5.5 million residents, making the region the largest metropolitan area in the U.S. (INEGI, 2015; US Census Bureau, 2017). From a transborder perspective, San Diego-Tijuana is not considered an integrated region, but is considered as two cities with a stronger interaction derived from their regional differences (Alegria, 2009). Researchers have identified common problems facing this cross-border region such as excessive urban growth, fragmented infrastructure development, and uneven development (Peña, 2021). These major problems contribute to pollution (water, air, land), poverty and violence (Hernández, 2021; Miranda & Hernández, 2022; Monte, 2021; Sosa, 2008). Recent

studies reflect the pandemic impact in the region (Brugués et al., 2021; Meda & Gutiérrez, 2021; Méndez Fierros & Reyes Piñuelas, 2021). Unsurprisingly, the views and interpretations of sustainable tourism development in this region differ among the various stakeholders creating an exemplary context through which to teach and explore the complexities of global sustainable tourism development.

3.3. Course Development

Academic student–community collaborations and networks offer opportunities for technology transfer, joint learning, and assistance for students and the community to engage directly in sharing sustainable tourism development strategies (Jamal et al., 2011). They enable students to develop civic competencies such as the ones noted in Table (1), which the authors used to develop a binational e-SL course using the six CCs as a framework. The authors and students of the course represented two public universities located in southern California in the United States, and one university in Baja California, Mexico. While the modality of the course was virtual, the course focused on sustainable wine tourism development in the Guadalupe Valley region of Baja California, Mexico.

The course integrated the following components: course readings and lectures, guest speakers, collaborative activities, and self-reflection. The readings and lectures were rooted in sustainable tourism theoretical foundations and frameworks such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the intersections of sustainability and environmental and social justice in tourism. These were complemented by presentations and question and answer sessions with community members. The community members represented various stakeholder groups including academics, indigenous peoples (Kumeyaay), non-profit entities, business owners, and next generation workforce. The collaborative activities were designed to challenge students to develop and exchange ideas from a cross-cultural perspective. An example of this includes a community visioning project wherein students worked in binational teams to develop a community vision statement based on input from stakeholders to guide future development of tourism in the region. Students had to identify and navigate cultural communication nuances and differing technological accessibilities inherent in obtaining community feedback.

Within the parameters of the virtual modality of the course, the collaborative activities were intentionally planned to address the reciprocity component of SL, emphasizing the importance of relationships and recognition, interdependence, action, and influence among all stakeholders (Lowe & Medina, 2010) for sustainable tourism development in Guadalupe Valley. Community members made live virtual presentations describing their present conditions and challenges because of unplanned tourism growth and then, engaged in lengthy discussions and deep conversations with students regarding potential solutions for sustainable tourism in the region and collaborative strategies for implementing them at the local level. These meaningful interactions between the stakeholders and students enabled the building of reciprocal initiatives (Koliba, 2000) based on ‘real and continuous dialogue’ (Motley & Sturgill, 2014, as cited in Ross, 2021, p. 16), between the university/students and community members in Guadalupe Valley.

To address power imbalances that exist in regional decision making for tourism development, particularly from the perspective of indigenous inclusion, the course required students to engage in extensive virtual interactions with native Kumeyaay tribal members to understand their specific social needs and challenges and collectively conceptualize a sustainable tourism development plan involving all relevant stakeholders in the valley. Overall, the collaborative activities were intended to expose students to the core principles of transborder citizenship needed for sustainable tourism in the region, including reciprocity and obligation (Koliba, 2000) to underrepresented/marginalized communities, i.e., social inclusion, as well as civic- and professional-responsibility for giving back to the community through informed actions.

Finally, self-reflection is an important tenet of SL, and remains a critical component in a virtual context. The authors provided four prompts throughout the semester to guide student reflection on the connections between their service experiences and the abstract concepts of the coursework (Deeley, 2010). Sample prompts included the following:

- Before you interact with the community, what expectations, assumptions, and “prejudgments” do you have? Where did these come from, and why do you think you have them?
- Describe something you learned as a result of a disappointment or a “failure” during your service experience. How does this new learning translate into

your life beyond this class, i.e., how will you apply this learning after this course ends?

3.4. Methodology

The participants in this study were undergraduate students enrolled in a transborder undergraduate course on Global Sustainable Tourism Development during the semester of Fall 2020. This study used a cross sectional survey design. Guided by the framework of the six civic capacities, and material from a series of literature reviews of the current state of SL, ISL, and e-SL was used to identify survey elements, variables, and items to map student perceptions of achieving course outcomes. Demographic, social, and occupational details were also collected. The questionnaire was available in both Spanish and English and consisted of 62 Likert-type questions that measure skills useful for civic endeavors and values related to civic engagement.

The survey incorporated the following sections, included as both quantitative and qualitative questions: (1) Overall service learning experience contribution to intended course outcomes, (2) General understanding of sustainability principles, (3) Effectiveness of course activities in enhancing student understanding of issues present in the service learning location, (4) Student understanding of course content, (5) Effectiveness of community partner interactions (virtual) in expanding student understanding of binational issues present in tourism development in the Guadalupe Valley, (6) Challenges present in a binational, virtual service learning course, (7) Perceptions of the Guadalupe Valley and indigenous peoples (Kumeyaay). Students were asked to fill out the survey instrument electronically via Google Forms at the end of the last class period of the semester in December of 2020. The survey was used as a post-class evaluation wherein students were also asked for any comments or suggestions. Of the 32 students enrolled in the course, 27 filled out the post-course surveys.

Due to the exploratory nature of the current study, only Mean (*M*) and Standard Deviation (*SD*) scores were analyzed for the quantitative results (using both Qualtrics and Microsoft Excel software) while the qualitative data were examined through quantitative content analysis (using Atlas Ti, Icloud version). Content analysis is one of the most commonly used methodologies to study phenomena and is used to discover the underlying meaning of text through the quantification of the meaning of spoken or written language. For this research,

the following steps were taken: (a) preparing the data, (b) making notes listing the different types of information found in the open-ended responses, (c) defining the unit of analysis using themes, (d) developing a coding scheme to organize data in a comprehensible way (see Table 2 below). The category and coding scheme reflected the six dimensions supporting civic learning and democratic engagement integrated within course content. The frequency refers to the number of times responses reflected the category/code while the (+)/(-) represents whether the responses were primarily positive or negative.

Category	Frequency	Code
Civic Ethos	7(+)	Empathy (4) Self-sustainable management (3)
Civic Literacy	33(+)	Recognized the importance of the place (18) Long term perspective (9) Multidisciplinary perspective (6)
Civic Inquiry	70(+)	Recognized the importance the place (15) Recognized the importance of indigenous people (14) Holistic thinking (13) Identify social impacts (10) Critical thinking (8) Multidisciplinary perspective (6) Long term perspective in management (4)
Civic Action	43(+)	Intergenerational environmental balance pledge (12) Need innovation in sustainable projects (9) Recognized the importance to do something (8) Recognize the cultural indigenous heritage to tourism (7) Intragenerational environmental Balance pledge (4) Interest visit the site (3)
Civic Leadership	22(-)	Needs more integration in group (22)
Civic Partnership	22(-)	Virtual work is limitative to complete the experience (15) It's important visit the site (7)

TABLE (2): FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES REFLECTING THE SIX CIVIC CAPACITIES

4. Results

The results of the study are presented as descriptive statistics, i.e., Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) scores of the quantitative questions, and a content analysis of the qualitative questions, which explored students' perceptions of the outcomes of the course upon completion. The purpose of this

study was to examine student perceptions of academic and civic outcomes of an e-SL, binational sustainable tourism development course, focusing on transborder civic engagement to ascertain whether or not students' perceptions correspond with the exhibition of civic capacities necessary for supporting civic learning and democratic engagement. Of the 27 respondents, 11 (41%) identified as male and 16 (59%) as female. Seven of the respondents (26%) were taking this class through a public university located in Baja California, Mexico, while the remaining 20 (74%) were students at universities located in California, United States. The majors represented by the respondents included variations of hospitality and tourism ($n = 11$; 41%), recreation and leisure ($n = 9$; 33%), business and marketing ($n = 3$; 11%), and sustainability ($n = 4$; 15%). The results support the benefits of pedagogical strategies with an active role for the student, such as SL, even in a virtual (e-SL) context.

4.1. Student Perceptions of CCs and SLCOs

When asked the extent to which they agree or disagree that the course contributed to developing each of the six CCs and respective SCLOs, the students' Mean (M) scores indicated positive outcomes in each of the competency areas. The strongest connection was with Civic Ethos, followed by Civic Inquiry (see Table 3 below). The highest factors within each competency area included being more tolerant of people, customs, and uncertainty; being more empathetic; and thinking about both the positive and negative impacts of economic activities. Through the qualitative data, students voiced concern for the way in which tourism development might impact community partners. One student wrote "the Kumeyaay [indigenous] people deserve more recognition for their interesting culture and should have more of a voice when it comes to tourism." Another wrote, "There is still so much potential for the valley to grow, but they have the opportunity to grow with the help and input from the community members."

Outcome	M	SD
Ethos	8.50	1.95
To be more empathetic and generate adaptive capacity.	8.64	1.92
To be more tolerant of people, different customs, and uncertainty.	8.73	1.67
To generate in me a genuine interest and desire to get involved in the search for solutions to the problems that are identified.	8.14	2.25
Literacy	8.00	2.32
To understand the importance of interdisciplinary work (different areas of knowledge).	8.36	2.19
To improve my communication skills.	8.00	2.51

To change my perception of the meaning of sustainability	7.64	2.26
Inquiry	8.17	2.14
To think about the possible negative and positive impacts of economic activities.	8.59	1.92
To find mechanisms to ensure responsibility, justice, and ethical behavior.	8.14	2.21
To develop evaluation and diagnostic skills.	7.82	2.22
To contribute to develop systemic thinking (identify causes and effect of actions).	8.14	2.21
Action / Leadership	8.05	2.19
To form a critical thinking and strengthen my ability to analyze.	8.05	2.19
Partnership	8.05	2.50
To improve my interpersonal relationships and make me more collaborative.	8.05	2.50

Note: Self elaboration

TABLE (3): SERVICE LEARNING OUTCOMES

4.2. Course Design and SL Capacities

The students were also asked about their satisfaction with the design of the e-SL course, specifically with the course activities (Table 4) and course content (Table 5). The Mean (M) scores indicated that students were overall highly satisfied with the binational e-SL outcomes and assessment activities of the virtual course. Unsurprisingly, lectures given by instructors received the lowest mean score (7.36), yet lectures by guest speakers received higher satisfaction rates (7.68). Of particular interest to this study is the high satisfaction level with integration of multicultural teams (7.73) and assessment activities (7.86). In congruence with the qualitative data showing student interest in the impacts of tourism development, students reported the highest satisfaction levels with learning about environmental and social impacts of tourism (8.54) and topics relating to the foundations of sustainable tourism development (8.18). The lowest satisfaction levels were reflected in learning about tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Decent Work (7.68) and Climate Justice, Climate Activism & Social Justice (7.77). It is interesting to note that the latter topics have also been outlined in the literature as largely absent from sustainable tourism conversations in both the academic and industry settings (see Baum et al., 2016; Dudley et al., 2020; Robinson et al., 2019), which emphasizes the need to continue seeking ways for students to engage more deliberately with these topics.

Overall, even in a virtual setting, students were satisfied with the course, and positively conveyed achievement of the six CCs and SLCOs. One student wrote, “there were a lot of learning experiences just by virtually meeting with the community representatives,” while another wrote, “you learn real issues

and trends in the current industry and it opens your eyes to all the variables in the tourism industry.” Overall, nearly 75% ($n = 20$) of the students would recommend this course to other students.

However, there were some concerns and suggestions for improving the course. For instance, students would still like an opportunity to visit the community/site in which they are providing the service learning. It will remain a challenge for instructors to find innovative ways to replicate in-person experience virtually. In addition, students suggest more intentional group integration among students from different universities and stressed the need for a highly structured course design when in a virtual context as it is easier to become disengaged when not face to face.

Binational SL Outcomes	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	7.63	3.01
Integration of multicultural teams	7.73	3.03
Service-Learning deliverables	7.50	3.02
Service-Learning reflections	7.68	3.00
Activities and Assessments	7.63	2.57
Other assessment activities	7.86	2.42
In-class activities and exercises	7.41	2.72
Lectures	7.36	2.73
Lectures by guest speakers	7.68	2.38
Lectures by professors	7.05	3.08

Note: Self elaboration

TABLE (4). SATISFACTION LEVELS (ACTIVITIES)

Impacts of Tourism	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	8.54	2.27
Environmental Impacts of Tourism	8.64	2.19
Social Impacts of Tourism	8.45	2.36
Foundations of Sustainable Tourism	8.18	2.28
Sustainability – Principles & Theories	8.14	2.27
Introduction to Tourism Development	8.23	2.29
Tourism Issues and Application	7.98	2.36
Environmental Racism, Tourism and Environmental justice	8.18	2.30
Intersections of Sustainability & Social Justice in Tourism	8.23	2.35
Climate Justice, Climate Activism & Social Justice	7.77	2.60
Influence of COVID-19	8.05	1.91
Tourism and the SDGs: Decent Work	7.68	2.64

Note: Self elaboration

TABLE (5). SATISFACTION LEVELS (CONTENTS)

5. Discussion

5.1. Intended Course Outcomes

The primary purpose of SL courses is to instill intentional capacities, competencies, skills, and values among students to become civically engaged leaders and global citizens (Merryfield, 2003; Smit & Tremethick, 2017). To achieve these intended outcomes, the teaching, learning, and community engagement components of SL courses should be strategically planned to deliver the following six Civic Capacities: civic ethos, civic literacy, civic inquiry, civic action, civic leadership, and civic partnership (Campus Compact, 2012). Through the integration of the (six) capacities within course curricula, SL courses can provide students a roadmap for civic engagement while applying these competencies toward finding community-based solutions for addressing social problems (Daniel & Mishra, 2017).

The results from this study indicate that the deliberate development of course activities and interactions, combined with opportunities to engage with community partners – even virtually – can provide positive outcomes toward the attainment of the civic capacities attributed to the value of SL courses. Although lacking the face-to-face component of traditional SL, e-SL is shown to have significant positive impacts on students' intellectual and emotional levels and deliver profound learning outcomes equivalent to those provided by on-site experiences (Gasper-Hulvat, 2018). The current findings contribute to the scholarship of e-SL by providing evidence that binational/transborder e-SL courses with intentional curricula and purposeful course design are successful in developing global civic citizenship competencies including social responsibility and cross-cultural skills among undergraduate students. Such competencies and skills are critical for future leaders in finding solutions for sustainable development challenges facing binational/transborder communities.

The quantitative results suggest that the intentional curricular design of the course was successful in delivering all six CCs to students in a highly satisfactory manner, with the strongest positive outcomes specifically observed in the areas of Civic Ethos (empathy, adaptability, appreciation, tolerance) and Civic Inquiry (awareness, collaboration, understanding). These findings are congruent with Yang et al (2016) observations that ISL is “capable of introducing students to altruistic values, helping them to appreciate the cultural differences

between different cultural and ethnic groups, and enabling them to collaborate with peers and others in working toward service goals” (p. 428).

The quantitative results were supported by qualitative data with participants conveying the formulation or strengthening of competencies of ethos, literacy, inquiry, and action. For instance, civic ethos is attributed to the strengthening of empathy or as one student wrote: *“be aware, think of the best for the planet and less is more.”* Personal commitments to sustainability, or self-sustainability were reflected in statements such as: *“More open minded and aware of my doings”* or through the recognition of the importance to move to action: *“I previously knew sustainability was important, but through this course I now have the tools to contribute to it.”* The qualitative results also revealed that students recognized the significance of analyzing binational sustainability issues from adaptive management perspectives that are both long-term and multidisciplinary (Civic Literacy) and identified the importance of community-based holistic thinking for the implementation of sustainable tourism projects (Civic Action). Student responses highlighted that while international e-SL courses and programs offer opportunities for life-enriching global and cross-cultural education, they also provide complacency-shattering or soul-searching experiences that evoke their desire “to serve, to help, and to extend a hand in solidarity” (Grusky, 2000, p. 866) through global civic action.

5.2. Intentional Course Design

The curricular structure of the binational e-SL course presented in this study was intentionally designed to promote engaged global citizenship and social responsibility among all participants, i.e., students, community partners, and research scholars, within the context of transborder sustainable tourism development. Through virtual engagement activities, collaborative work and reflection, the e-SL course purposefully integrated the six CCs and related student learning outcomes (pertinent to ‘traditional’ SL/ISL) for the participants to become collectively-active and binationally-involved citizens.

Results indicate that students were highly satisfied with the binational e-SL outcomes of the course based on the topical readings and lectures, guest speakers, collaborative activities, and self-reflection assignments employed for delivering the six CCs. The findings align with Grusky’s (2000) observation that student opportunities for critical analysis, study, and reflections are crucial for e-SL to effectively deliver deliberately-identified transformative civic

citizenship outcomes. Findings from our study exhibited that the binational SL outcomes of the e-SL course were successfully achieved through the intentional course design that emphasized and focused on multicultural integration, community-based collaborative activities and discussions, and structured reflections. The results of this study are in alignment with those of previous studies which suggest that intentionally designed SL courses contribute toward significant social change outcomes through deliberately planned interactions and engagement between students and community partners with a combined focus on addressing social problems (Cookson et al., 2018; Guthrie & McCracken, 2014).

5.3. Lessons for the Future

There are changes to our day-to-day lives that were first made during the COVID-19 pandemic out of necessity but continue today. For many higher education institutions, conversations about offering/keeping more courses offered virtually abound. Rather than resisting such formats, this study, while small in sample size, provides a roadmap for developing an e-SL course that, through deliberate design, can achieve both SL student learning outcomes centered around civic engagement and student satisfaction while being offered in a virtual format.

Regarding the design of the course, results indicated that there were specific components which were perceived as more satisfactory by students within the binational e-SL context. For instance, the mean satisfaction for lectures by the course professors received the lowest rating by a relatively large margin, although the guest lectures from transborder community stakeholders and scholars and the binational integration/activities, conducted to deliver the CCs and learning outcomes, were perceived to be highly satisfactory. Contrary to similar studies (see Koris et al., 2021), this study revealed that purposefully designed elements of the course, mainly social networking and interactions amongst binational students, community stakeholders and faculty, both during and beyond the classroom were critical for successfully delivering the intended global civic competencies and related learning outcomes. Civic Literacy had the lowest mean score among the competency categories in our study, with “to change my perception of the meaning of sustainability” receiving the lowest rating in the category. This indicates that when designing a course in this context, educators should develop alternative pedagogical strategies for

disseminating course information, especially regarding the explanation of key course concepts relating to sustainable development and tourism management.

Other key findings include lower mean scores in the civic leadership and civic partnership competencies. Despite being an upper division-level undergraduate course, it was the first SL course – virtual or otherwise – for every student who participated. The competencies with a lower score are considered higher-level outcomes, meant to build off the foundation of the first three (ethos, literacy, inquiry). This finding showcases the importance of implementing SL courses earlier into a student's educational pathway. The problem, as noted by Burke and Bush (2013), is that most of the students take SL classes later in their college careers, and therefore have less time to reflect upon the experience. The fundamental purpose of the e-SL course described in this research was to support the development of binationally-engaged civic citizens, who think critically about and reflect upon the status quo of transborder regions. Therefore, it may be beneficial to incorporate transborder SL classes earlier in the undergraduate curricula and have the students engaged for their entire educational experience rather than just the last year.

5.4. Limitations

This study addressed gaps in the literature by exploring e-SL as a pedagogical tool for achieving student learning outcomes related to transborder civic engagement. While unique insights were gained through the CC framework, care should be taken when interpreting the results of this study. First, the study design limits the generalizability of our conclusions. While the sample was diverse in terms of the demographics of students, the sample size was small and research with a larger and wider range of participants may refine and/or challenge these findings. Specifically, future studies could include quantitative designs with larger heterogeneous samples which could examine the potential moderating effects of variables such as year in school, ethnicity, different levels of baseline knowledge, and experience with service learning-based courses. In addition, the cross-sectional and exploratory nature of the study precludes assertions of causality. To further evaluate and extend the study findings, future investigations could employ longitudinal designs to examine changes in student's perceptions toward e-SL courses throughout their higher education experience. Finally, future studies could utilize the baseline data from this research to advance educational and learning theories to better understand the outcomes of changes that have occurred in the structure of higher education

as we recover from and prepare for future global interruptions to traditional learning environments.

6. Conclusion

Undergraduate level tourism education programs (and courses) generally prioritize the economic growth potential of the industry, oftentimes with peripheral curricular and civic engagement connections to socio-cultural and environmental issues, whereas, sustainable tourism development requires globally-minded citizens who can contribute to responsible economic development while equitably prioritizing social and environmental justice (Boluk et al., 2019; Jamal et al., 2011; Matteucci & Aubke, 2018). While e-SL may be seen as based on superficial social interactions, the modality, when course components are intentionally designed, can have significant positive outcomes that enable students to develop critical thinking skills and become informed and actively engaged global citizens (Harris, 2017). E-SL programs and courses in the discipline of sustainable development are most effective when intended global citizenship competencies and student learning outcomes have the overarching goals of promoting intercultural interactions and cross-cultural problem-solving, with resultant transformative implications for future professional growth.

Overall, it may be concluded that, compared to face-to-face SL courses, intentionally designed e-SL curricula can be equally effective in delivering civic capacities, skills, and values for instilling global citizenship competencies among students.

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