ABSTRACT

Title of Document:	"TAKE IT UPSTAIRS:" DECONSTRUCTING CULTURE AND GLOBAL COMPETENCY IN AN UNDERGRADUATE LIVING-LEARNING PROGRAM
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Popular conceptions of American college students traditionally include young men and women who live on a university campus in a residence hall. Today's university campuses do not always fit the traditional mold. Institutions have begun to explore drastically different learning and on-campus residence hall configurations that better meet students' needs and create a stronger sense of community. Living-learning programs (LLPs) are one alternative that college administrators utilize to better meet student needs.

This research investigates a single living-learning program called International House (IH), an LLP with the stated purpose of developing global competency skills in its participants. The research period spans one academic year, August 2009 to May 2010, with data collection continuing into the fall semester of 2010. Using

ethnography as a methodology, this research investigates the culture of IH, how the formal and non-formal learning experiences shape that culture, and whether the program develops global competency skills in its participants.

This study aims to fill existing gaps in living-learning program literature using qualitative methods – so far underrepresented in LLP research – and contributes to overall LLP discourse about the nature, culture, and effectiveness of existing programs. This research also contributes to the body of ethnographic inquiry because there is no evidence of published research uses the methodology to study living-learning programs. Finally, this investigation aims to add a further dimension to intercultural competency literature by examining the role of living-learning programs in developing competency.

The findings suggest that International House's culture is shaped by three main values: openness, cross-cultural appreciation, and a strong sense of community. According to student experiences, the intersection of the formal and non-formal learning experiences is most meaningful to them, or the "take it upstairs" phenomenon. "Take it upstairs," means that when students learn practical, concrete skills and then are given the opportunity to apply them in cross-cultural settings, their experience is more meaningful. This research also suggests that students show strong evidence of developing global competency skills. This is attributed to relevant, experiential activities intentionally designed to develop those skills in a multi-cultural environment with a strong community connection.

"TAKE IT UPSTAIRS:" DECONSTRUCTING CULTURE AND GLOBAL
COMPETENCY IN AN UNDERGRADUATE LIVING-LEARNING PROGRAM

By

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
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Dedication

To my family.

To the students and staff of International House.

Acknowledgements

When I started writing this dissertation nearly two years ago, I had no idea how challenging and rewarding it would be. So many different people assisted me, and I never knew how crucial each one of them would be when I started. Through five years of graduate school, I built a network of people who got me through. They all helped me in a different way, but all of their support combined and contributed to the successful completion of this degree and this research. I would like to acknowledge each of them and the role they played in this process.

My advisor, Dr. Steve Klees, has been an invaluable academic resource every step of the way. He started me on the right track – helping me frame research that made sense. Through countless meetings, phone calls, and timely (and honest!) reviews of numerous drafts, he coached me through the process. I am indebted to him for his support and trust every step of the way. I would also like to thank the other members of my committee for their feedback on my research design and this final report. Specifically, I wanted to acknowledge Dr. Karen Inkelas' input on my living-learning program literature review, Dr. Jing Lin's feedback on the cohesiveness and flow of my text, Dr. Noah Drezner's assistance in considering wider institutional contexts and developing a stronger student affairs angle, and Dr. Dennis Herschbach's feedback about bias and the student experience. Also, I want to thank Dr. Michael Paolisso who taught me about ethnography, inspired me to choose the methodology, and helped me through the process of being an ethnographer.

Next, I want to acknowledge the students and staff of International House Living-Learning Program. They accepted me as a member of their community

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Popular conceptions of American college students traditionally include young men and women who live on a university campus in a residence hall. Students, especially those at large universities, are personified as small fish in a large sea that fend for themselves as enrollments top the tens of thousands. These students take four to six classes every semester – isolated, unrelated general education courses in the early years followed by specialized major-related courses in the later years. For the quintessential college student, academic and social experiences are unrelated. Residence halls are reserved in the student's psyche as places to reside – purely social environments. This popular conception of a model student is constantly challenged on campuses across the country, calling to question what the college experience entails.

Today's university campuses do not fit the traditional mold. College administrators, facing increasing pressure from accreditation agencies, have started to assist students by guiding them throughout their academic careers. Institutions grapple with retaining students and providing high-quality educational experiences. Educators make attempts to link classroom and social experiences to provide a more holistic, less disjointed college environment. Universities have begun to explore drastically different living and learning opportunities that better meet students' needs and create a stronger sense of community.

Living-learning programs (LLPs) are one alternative that college administrators utilize to better meet student needs. LLP proponents maintain that these programs offer students an opportunity to bridge their social and academic experiences by providing a residential environment that links the two among smaller groups of students in interesting and dynamic ways (Zeller, 2008; Soldner & Szelenyi, 2008; Inkelas, 2008; Eck, Edge, & Stephenson, 2007; Inkelas, Zeller, Murphy, & Hummel, 2006; Inkelas, Vogt, Longerbeam, Owen, & Johnson, 2006; Pike, 1999). The introduction of LLPs as an alternative to traditional living and learning environments in higher education has caught the attention of the popular media. Fox News (Bonisteel, 2006) highlighted several LLPs in a recent series on the college experience, citing large universities as akin to "giant factories," and living-learning programs as a small scale, more personal alternative. The *New York Times* (Foderaro, 2005) notes that LLPs are gaining popularity and that they are created with the intention of making students more comfortable on campus. While living-learning programs are popular, scholars have only recently begun to scrutinize their goals and outcomes (Inkelas, 2008; Soldner & Szelenyi, 2008; Inkelas & Longerbeam, 2008; Inkelas, Daver, Vogt, & Leonard, 2007; Inkelas, et al., 2006).

This research investigates a single living-learning program. The subject of the study is a living-learning program (assigned the pseudonym "International House") housed in a residence hall (referred to by the pseudonym "Franklin Hall") on the campus of a large research institution in the mid-Atlantic (given the pseudonym "Atlantic University") located within ten miles of a major metropolitan area. The research focuses on the program for one academic year, spanning from August 2009

to May 2010, with data collection continuing into the fall semester of 2010. The qualitative research methodology is ethnography. Framing this work requires a contextual foundation, outlined in the next section.

Context

International House (IH) was founded as a formal living-learning program under its current title in 2002. The LLP is advertized on its website and program fliers as a "global engagement living and learning program" where students learn about cultures different from their own, and become more aware of global issues and diversity. The program spans two years, and students who complete all program requirements receive a notation on their transcripts. A majority of students live in Franklin Hall, but the director makes occasional exceptions on a case-by-case basis for students who want to live elsewhere. One of the primary goals of International House – as stated through program literature, presentations, and in courses – is to develop global competency in its participants. The program's recruiting brochure states: "Through [the program], students develop global competency skills." During the 2009-2010 school year, the program enrollment averaged about 90 students. The number fluctuated during the school year because students have flexible circumstances that affected their status in the program – such as students who graduated from the program in December and exchange students who only stayed one semester.

I was employed in International House as a part-time instructor during the research period, and the following academic year I worked as a graduate assistant. I

taught or co-taught one or two classes per semester. I assisted in planning and implementing programs, reviewed applications, attended events, and participated in regular staff meetings. My job duties required I work approximately 10 hours per week (as an instructor) to 20 hours (as the graduate assistant), though I often spent longer hours in the program offices working, observing, and interacting with students. My primary duty was to teach the classes. While I was considered part of the staff, the director and graduate assistant performed a bulk of the program duties outside of teaching during my research period. I was employed with the program for two years; my first year I collected the bulk of my data. Before my research and employment, I was familiar with the program. I know current and former program staff. I also did a smaller scale research project for a course where I interviewed students about their experiences, which sparked my interest in the program. The themes that emerged in these preliminary interviews revealed that participants were highly inspired by their experiences in the LLP, and I was motivated to learn more. It was through this experience that I learned this living-learning program presents an interesting research case, the reasons for which are explored at length below.

Rationale

This program offers an interesting research opportunity for several reasons. An investigation of this program contributes to the overall body of knowledge regarding living-learning programs. Inkelas and Longerbeam (2008) argue that so far a "patchwork" of research has been conducted about LLPs, which has limited the knowledge of these programs. They acknowledge that it is difficult to assess how well

programs foster student learning, how many different types of LLPs exist, and how outcomes differ between different types of LLPs. Inkelas (2008), Soldner and Szelenyi (2008), Inkelas and Longerbeam (2008), Daver, Vogt, and Leonard (2007), and Inkelas, et al. (2006) all ascertain that hundreds of LLPs exist on dozens of campuses, but little evaluation has been done. According to Stewart (2008), living-learning programs have depended on anecdotal evidence in the past, and she argues it is now time to provide empirical evidence that living-learning programs work. Inkelas (2008) adds that as LLPs become more popular and receive more funding, the pressure is up to start assessing them. She also notes that is difficult, however, to assess programs with both depth and breadth. Gahagan and Luna (2008) argue that institutions are requiring higher accountability, so LLPs need to be assessed using both qualitative and quantitative methods to gauge program impacts and link findings to institutional goals and strategic plans.   A good deal of research has emerged in the last two years focused on answering some of these questions (see the literature review). A vast majority of research to date, however, is quantitative.

LLP literature indicates living-learning programs have several projected goals. Many scholars maintain that LLPs are introduced in the name of reform (Inkelas, Soldner, Longerbeam, & Leonard, 2008; Zeller, 2008; Inkelas, Zeller, Murphy, & Hummel, 2006; Schein & Bowers, 1992). For example, Inkelas, et al. (2008) state, "Living-learning…programs have captured the imagination of postsecondary reformers interested in revitalizing undergraduate education and improving student learning outcomes" (p. 495). Zeller (2008) affirms that, "The past two decades have witnessed an undergraduate reform movement championing a renewed focus on

enhancing student learning" (p. 68). LLP proponents overwhelmingly concur that LLPs are designed to link participants' academic and social – also referred to as curricular and co-curricular or in class and out of class – activities through a residential experience (Zeller, 2008; Soldner & Szelenyi, 2008; Inkelas, 2008; Eck, Edge, & Stephenson, 2007; Inkelas, Zeller, Murphy, & Hummel, 2006; Inkelas, Vogt, Longerbeam, Owen, & Johnson, 2006; Pike, 1999). Inkelas (2008) adds that LLPs "represent a partnership for learning between academic and student affairs units on college campuses" (p. 9).

Living-learning scholars also assert that LLPs are designed to make large universities feel more personal by creating a sense of community with a smaller group of students on large campuses (Soldner & Szelenyi, 2008; Inkelas, 2008; Inkelas, Daver, Vogt, & Leonard, 2007; Inkelas, et al., 2006; Schein & Bowers, 1992). Zeller (2008) also notes, "Within these communities, learning is more experiential, heuristic, and active, with the intent of integrating the cognitive and affective elements of the student experience" (p. 71).

Scholars agree on several other desired outcomes of the LLP experience. A commonly cited purpose of living-learning programs is to increase interaction between both faculty and students and among students (Inkelas, Daver, Vogt, & Leonard, 2007; Pike, 1999; Zeller, 2008; Inkelas, Vogt, Longerbeam, Owen, & Johnson, 2006; Shapiro & Levine, 1999; Rowan-Kenyon, Soldner, & Inkelas, 2007). LLPs are designed to provide a more supportive environment in which to live and study, and "seamless" learning environments (Inkelas, Daver, Vogt, & Leonard, 2007; Inkelas, et al., 2006; Pike, 1999). Pike (1999) adds that LLPs also promote

greater student involvement and, "are explicitly designed to promote student learning and intellectual development" (p. 271).

As stated above, living-learning programs are becoming increasingly popular on college campuses in the United States. University educators initiate them to meet the growing and changing needs of their students, and LLP supporters claim that programs provide unique social and educational experiences for participants. Research indicates, however, that living-learning programs are not clearly defined, and that their goals and outcomes are not supported with empirical evidence. Scholars call for studies using a variety of methods in order to better understand how LLPs are carried out and to examine the participant experience in these programs.

This study intends to support and supplement existing LLP literature. An extensive literature review reveals that almost all published studies about living-learning programs are quantitative[1] (with one exception from a single author from the mid-1970s, see Magnarella, 1975; and Magnarella, 1979), and this study offers a qualitative look at an LLP that adds new perspective to this body of knowledge. Further, scholars have called for an in depth examination of LLPs to assess whether they are meeting their intended outcomes. This research addresses whether International House meets the outcomes identified by LLP scholars using qualitative methods. It also, however, assesses program outcomes.

In addition to this research's possible contributions to LLP literature, International House is an interesting choice for another reason. The stated purpose of International House is to build global competency among its participants.

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[1] Though it is important to note that several studies have relied on qualitative methods to create measurement tools, outlined at length in the next chapter.

Intercultural competence is a field of study that is gaining popularity and has an expanding body of literature. As people of different cultural backgrounds interact with increasing frequency and intensity in their employment, education, and social ventures, the outcomes of people's intercultural interactions are considered an important area of research (Ruben, 1989; Mak, Westwood, Ishiyama, & Barker, 1999).

Researchers argue that understanding intercultural competence in the present world climate is important. Arasaratnam (2009) states, "The idea of competency in intercultural communication continues to attract interest from both academics as well as professionals in today's culturally diverse society" (p. 1). Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman (2003) ascertain that, "Today, the importance of intercultural competence in both global and domestic contexts is well recognized" (p. 421) and that intercultural competence is key in "understanding and improving relations across cultures" (p. 422). Lustig and Koester (2003) agree there is both an international and domestic imperative for individuals to become more cross-culturally competent. Cultures are continually being linked as business and commerce among nations grow, political connections become greater, international trade increases and becomes more complex, international travel rises, and immigrants grow in numbers. The linking of cultures leads to an increasing need for understanding intercultural communication in work, educational, and social settings.

Scholars also argue that intercultural competency is increasingly important because the world's populations are becoming more diverse as people of different backgrounds interact and live together due to globalization, immigration, and travel.

Ruben (1989) argues: "As the world of commerce and government moves daily closer to the vision of the global village that not long ago seemed merely to be rhetoric, the need for a comprehensive understanding of cross-cultural competence has never been greater" (p. 236). Mak, Westwood, Ishiyama, and Barker (1999) further elaborate and note:

> Current trends in increasing world trade, globalization of skilled labor and internationalization of education have meant an increasing number of people moving between countries as skilled immigrants or sojourners for overseas work or studies. A major challenge for highly qualified expatriate workers and immigrants, and international students is to continue to be successful in their careers and/or studies. This challenge requires discrimination about what constitutes effective communication and learning ways of establishing interpersonal relations in the host society (pp. 77-78).

The study of intercultural competency is applicable to several different contexts. Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman (2003) maintain that intercultural competence is important in diverse settings such as overseas effectiveness, international management, study abroad, international technology and information exchange, and research on domestic intercultural relations across different groups (such as ethnicity, sex, age, and sexual orientation). Intercultural competency is also often linked to career success. For example, Korhonen (2003) ascertains, "Developing intercultural competence is about developing the ability to be effective in life and career in general" (p. 8). She also notes, "Successful companies and employees are those who see cultural diversity as an opportunity, as something that can be learned, managed, and made use of, and who are willing to develop their *intercultural competence* [sic] as part of their social and communication competences" (p. 1).

As the research above indicates, intercultural competency is an important, timely topic. International House provides a unique opportunity to study competence. The LLP, as stated earlier, aims to develop its participants' global competency skills. IH program literature specifies that those skills – identified by the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU) – include, "(1) The ability to work effectively in international settings; (2) Awareness of and adaptability to diverse cultures, perceptions, and approaches; (3) Familiarity with major currents of global change and the issues they raise; and (4) Capacity for effective communication across cultural and linguistic boundaries."

According to program literature, students develop competency in four steps. First, students self assess their skills to identify their strengths and areas they need to work on regarding global competency. Second, participants build their understanding in key areas such as intercultural communication, global issues, and understanding cultures in the awareness development stage. Third, in the engagement step, students are given the opportunity to use the skills they develop. Finally, participants transition to becoming globally competent professionals in a diverse society. In practice, the LLP staff actively works to develop its students' intercultural competency through formal and non-formal learning experiences. Students are required to take a program class together, and the program sponsors several field trips and events throughout the year – including a short-term study abroad trip to Turkey.

The students are also exposed to cross-cultural perspectives through their peers. International House has an extremely diverse study body. In addition to exchange students, several students are international students studying in the United

States for their entire undergraduate careers. Other students are first generation

American or naturalized citizens, so while they may be citizens of the United States,

these students also indentify with another cultural or ethnic group. The exact number

of these students is difficult to measure, but based on a student survey, the staff

roughly estimates 33% of the International House students are foreign born (this

number does not include exchange students), 22% have one or both parents that are

foreign born, and for 45% students, both they and their parents were born in the

United States. In similar institutions in the United States, close to 86% of LLP

participants and their parents were born in the United States (NSLLP, 2007).

Approximately half of the students in International House self-identify as Caucasian

(though many of these students represent different cultural backgrounds – such as

students from France or the Netherlands), and the remaining students represent

diverse backgrounds. The program also actively recruits diverse, internationally

minded students to the program. International House's students have significant

cross-cultural backgrounds. As a result, students are exposed to different cross-

cultural perspectives from their peers in classes, living with them (many have

roommates from different national, ethnic, religious, or cultural backgrounds), and

serving on program committees together.

     Intercultural competence is a complex, important concept with many

applications.   International House offers an ideal environment for investigating how

competency is cultivated because it offers several formal and informal avenues for

students to develop their intercultural competency skills.   Most research to date

(outlined in the next chapter) focuses on defining the term and outlining the skills that

make one competent. Other studies focus on measuring individual competency levels – or whether a person possesses specific identified skills – especially comparing between groups, and the development of assessment tools. Few studies, however, examine learning experiences designed to facilitate the development of intercultural competence. Using qualitative methods, the research proposed here attempts to investigate whether these experiences can facilitate the development of intercultural competence. In order to do so, I will use ethnography as my research methodology.

Ethnography is a particularly useful tool for investigating a living-learning program. As stated earlier, researchers have called for a greater body of qualitative inquiry to add a dynamic and informative element to the discourse regarding the effect of LLPs (Gahagan & Luna, 2008). Ethnography is a qualitative methodology that provides researchers the tools to examine a community, and to unfold the intricate layers of the cultural experience of its members. Culture (explored and defined later) is a multi-faceted, rich phenomenon that explains the human experience and how it plays out among different groups of people. How those intricacies are discovered and uncovered requires careful and systematic exploration. Researchers rely on ethnography as a qualitative methodology to unlock the mysteries of a particular culture. Elucidating the intricacies and making meaning of culture is the central goal of the ethnography, and researchers rely on the methodology to develop a greater understanding of the overall human condition. LLPs provide unique opportunities for ethnographic inquiry because participants live together, attend program-sponsored events together, and take classes together. Due to the interactive nature of the living community, LLPs develop a distinct culture. Since the purpose of

ethnography is to unravel the complexities of culture, it is an appropriate qualitative methodology to explore an LLP.

While the role of theory in ethnography is hotly debated (see Chapter 2), many ethnographers agree that a theoretical framework guides the data interpretation process (Agar, 1996; Bernard, 2006; Geertz, 1973; Snow, Morrill, & Anderson, 2003; Willis & Trondman, 2000). The theory that drives this research is the contact hypothesis (also referred to as contact theory), a theory of intergroup contact based in social psychology developed by Gordon Allport (1954/1979). According to Allport, as groups positively interact, the individuals in those groups can change their beliefs and attitudes about each other, eventually reducing intergroup prejudice. Contact alone, however, does not affect prejudice; rather the groups most likely need some type of intervention. Allport maintains that the interaction between groups requires four specific conditions to reduce prejudice (Pettigrew, 1998). The four conditions include: (1) equal status among groups and individuals, (2) common goals – which means that contact should be a goal oriented effort and that reaching those goals must be an interdependent effort, (3) personal relationships – as opposed to casual acquaintances, and (4) support of authorities, laws, and customs. If these conditions are met, perceptions among in- and out-group members change, and prejudice is diminished. Research in residence halls suggests that these living environments offer unique opportunities to study contact theory because of the nature of the contact among residents, and because they meet all of Allport's criteria (Nesdale & Todd, 2000; VanLaar, Levin, Sinclair, & Sidanius, 2005).

Contact theory has an enormous body of literature (Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), some directly related to this study. Contact theory scholars maintain that residence halls meet all four criteria for optimal contact (Nesdale & Todd, 2000), making them environments ideal for facilitating positive interactions among participants (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Research of undergraduate students suggests that those who live in more diverse environments had more positive intercultural interactions (Halualani, 2008). Intercultural roommate arrangements appear to foster positive interactions (VanLaar, Levin, Sinclair, & Sidanius, 2005). Directed initiatives also seem to facilitate positive interaction, especially in highly diverse living situations (Nesdale & Todd, 2000).

International House offers interventions specifically aimed at promoting positive contact and is a diverse living situation where students often live with roommates from different cultural backgrounds. Since all of these conditions have promoted greater intercultural understanding in previous contact theory research, it will be a useful framework for understanding how the conditions in this LLP facilitate greater global competency. International House appears to be a prime location for examining how contact theory works in practical situations. Further, Halualani (2008) asserts: "It is…important for contact researchers to examine how intercultural interaction is framed by universities and intercultural fields of study for our students. To what extent are institutions and academic fields of study constructing intercultural interaction…?" (p. 12). The proposed research on International House provides such an opportunity.

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International House uses an assessment tool to evaluate the students' level of intercultural competency at the beginning of the program, and the staff relies on informal strategies (such as questionnaires and conversations with students) to assess whether participants have gained the desired skills during and after their participation in the LLP. Little formal data is collected regarding the impact of the program. A study that examines the culture of the LLP and whether or not it facilitates the development of intercultural competency among its participants has not been formally conducted. Further, I did not find published ethnographies of a living-learning program in either LLP or ethnographic literature. An ethnographic study of International House, therefore, both provides useful information to the program's administrators and is a valuable addition to the LLP body of knowledge.

Research Questions

This research seeks to specifically answer the questions outlined below:

1. What shapes the cultural values, beliefs, and behaviors of International House?

2. Do the formal and informal learning opportunities contribute to that culture? If so, how?

3. Does the living-learning program experience facilitate intercultural competency in its participants? If so, how?

In answering these questions, this research attempts to address some of the aforementioned gaps in LLP, intercultural competency, and ethnographic literature.

Limitations

A major limiting factor of this research is that it focuses on a single small program at one institution. In light of recent calls to move away from single program studies of LLPs toward larger scale, multi-institutional studies (Inkelas, 2008; Soldner & Szelenyi, 2008; Inkelas & Longerbeam, 2008; Inkelas, Daver, Vogt, & Leonard, 2007; Inkelas, et al., 2006), this may be problematic. It can be argued that further research using larger numbers of LLPs and applying a variety of quantitative parameters is more useful. It may also be argued, however, that it is useful to take a more micro-level approach to examine the distinct features of individual LLPs to come to a greater understanding of how these programs are defined and implemented. I maintain that while it is valuable to examine larger scale outcomes of LLPs, macro-level comparisons are not necessarily the best or the only way to investigate living-learning programs. It is important to recognize that each program is unique and deserves to be examined as an independent entity. Soldner and Szelenyi (2008) demonstrate that a major feature of LLPs is their variety, supporting my assertion that qualitative studies are also useful for teasing out common themes that characterize the LLP experience. While quantitative research offers invaluable insight, the richness of the emerging themes and stories that arise from qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2007) are also valuable. Using a variety of models and conceptualizations guides investigation and provides different frameworks for understanding the impacts of LLPs because a single mode of investigation is neither necessary nor effective.

The program size may also be considered problematic from an intercultural competency perspective. Some scholars may argue that the small number of students and the uniquely diverse population of International House mean the findings are too

specific to apply to wider contexts. I argue, however, that this investigation delves

deeper into one living-learning program at a more nuanced level: illuminating how

one LLP strives to reach its stated goals of developing competency among its

participants. The implications of these findings are applicable in other settings.

Significance

The significance of this study is threefold. First, it aims to fill existing gaps in

living-learning program literature using qualitative methods – so far underrepresented

in LLP research – and contributes to overall LLP discourse about the nature, culture,

and effectiveness of existing programs. Second, this research also contributes to the

body of ethnographic inquiry because there is no evidence of published research that

focuses on the use of the methodology to study living-learning programs. Third, this

investigation aims to add a further dimension to intercultural competency literature by

examining the role of living-learning programs in developing competency.

Research Outline

Chapter 2 provides an extensive literature review of LLP and intercultultural

competency literature by outlining the history of both fields and contributions to date

as they relate to the research at hand. Chapter 3 explores the research methodology at

length, including its history, how it is carried out, and considerations for researchers.

It also includes the theoretical context that frames this study. Chapter 4 lays out the

specific perameters applied to this ethnography.   Chapter 5 describes International

House's program structure and elements – including physical space, programming,

and curriculum – as background to inform the narrative that follows. The major

elements of IH culture are introduced in Chapter 6, while Chapter 7 explores how

staff and students as participants in the program have a hand in shaping that culture.

Chapter 8 considers the role non-formal and formal learning experiences play in

shaping IH culture, and Chapter 9 considers whether the living-learning program

contributes to global competency development in its participants. Finally, Chapter 10

brings it all together, sythesizing the above findings and offering suggestions for

reasearch and practice.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter provides context for this research by reviewing relevant literature in the fields of living-learning programs and global competency. LLPs are examined first, starting with a history of programs in the United States and how those historical roots frame current conceptualizations of living-learning programs. Next, this study considers the major features of living-learning programs, including how they are structured and organized, followed by an historical review of LLP literature that focuses on program outcomes. The review of intercultural competency literature includes a chronological examination of research to date, tracing the three major trends in the field.

Living-Learning Programs

The Residential Learning Communities International Clearinghouse (2009), a website featuring a database of living-learning communities and resources to LLP scholars and practitioners, defines LLPs as:

> [A] residential education unit in a college or university that is organized on the basis of an academic theme or approach and is intended to integrate academic learning and community living. The unit may or may not be degree granting and may involve collaboration with formal academic departments outside the unit. It provides formal and/or informal, credit and/or noncredit learning opportunities (courses, seminars, tutorials, firesides).… Participation is usually voluntary (first page, second paragraph).

This definition offers high level of detail, but is fairly broad.

The National Study of Living-Learning Programs (NSLLP) (2007), a major multi-institutional, longitudinal study of living-learning programs in the United States, offers another definition of LLPs. According to the NSLLP researchers, LLPs share four common characteristics: students in LLPs live together on campus, take part in shared academic or co-curricular activities, use resources in the residence hall that are specifically designed for them, and have structured social activities that emphasize academics (NSLLP, 2007; Inkelas, Zeller, Murphy, & Hummel, 2006; Inkelas, et al., 2006; and Inkelas & Longerbeam, 2008). These characteristics framed the concept of living-learning programs to guide the NSLLP's (2007) definition of living-learning programs.

The NSLLP authors define LLPs as "programs in which undergraduate students live together in a discrete portion of a residence hall (or the entire hall) and participate in academic and/or extra-curricular programming designed especially for them" (pp. I-2). This definition is used here because (1) it is one of the few definitions offered in recent literature, (2) this definition is used widely by LLP scholars (for example, see Inkelas, Daver, Vogt, & Leonard, 2007 and Soldner & Szelenyi, 2008), and (3) the NSLLP study framework, data, and findings have informed numerous other studies. Fully understanding how LLPs operate requires moving beyond the definition, and the next section does so by examining the historical roots of LLPs and how they have evolved.

Learning Communities: From Inception to the Present

Living-learning programs are rooted in the learning community movement, and many scholars consider present day LLPs the product of learning communities

(Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews, & Smith, 1990; Lenning & Ebbers, 1999; Shapiro & Levine, 1999; Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, & Gabelnick, 2004). The history of living-learning programs, therefore, is intimately linked with that of learning communities, so the history of the latter is explored at length.

The term "learning community" is broad. Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews, and Smith (1990) argue that the term applies to specific programs and practices in American higher education. They link the learning community movement to modern living-learning programs and their definition informs the work of other learning community scholars (see for example, Shapiro & Levine, 1999). Their definition is used here to clarify the concept of learning communities:

> A learning community is any one of a variety of curricular structures that link together several existing courses – or actually restructure the curricular material entirely – so that students have opportunities for deeper understanding and integration of material they are learning, and more interaction with one another and their teachers as fellow participants in the learning enterprise (Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews, & Smith, 1990, p. 19).

Lenning and Ebbers (1999) note that the term "learning community" did not become prominent until the 1980s, but the movement has a much longer history. The history of the learning community movement may be traced through the works of several scholars (Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews, & Smith, 1990; Shapiro & Levine, 1999; Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, & Gabelnick, 2004), all of whom outline a comprehensive history of the learning community movement. All of the above authors attribute the philosophical, structural, and pedagogical work of John Dewey, Alexander Meiklejohn, and Joseph Tussman as great influences on how learning communities are defined and formed today.

Shapiro and Levine (1999) assert, "No discussion of the influences on learning communities would be complete without referring to John Dewey" (p. 17). In their historical account of the learning community movement, Smith, et al. (2004) note that learning communities were founded at a time when the first debates about the democracy and the aims of education raged in institutions of higher learning. John Dewey was at the head of that debate, they argue, and his conceptions of democracy and the way people learn are outlined in the book *Democracy and Education* (Dewey, 1916). "A democracy," Dewey argues, " is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience" (Dewey, 1916, p. 87). He asserted that knowledge is socially constructed, so education is a social process. Students should develop their intellect holistically, not memorize facts or learn specialized skills for a vocation. Learning, he argued, must be connected to one's personal experience. True knowledge acquisition happens only when students can assimilate their life experiences through active learning. Failure to do so leads to learning that is fragmented and irrelevant to the individual. A society that sets up boundaries between free intercourse and communication of experiences is not democractic. Further, Dewey noted that a democratic society allows for intellectual freedom by developing the diverse gifts of each individual, not by creating uniform educational experiences for everyone.

Smith, et al. (2004) argue that Meiklejohn was also central to the development and evolution of learning communities because of his ideas about the importance of "structure, curricular coherence, and community" (p. 27). Meiklejohn (1932), disillusioned with American higher education, used Dewey's conceptions of teaching

and learning as a foundation to start the first learning community called the Experimental College at the University of Wisconsin in 1927. He was particularly critical of the first two years of the college experience where large classes, lack of advising, outdated practices, outside pressures on the university, and poor teaching led to a fragmented, disjointed, "disarticulated" (Meiklejohn, 1932, p. 333) university learning experience. He argued that universities did not build intelligence and that students were unable to use what they learned in their later college experiences or apply to their lives after graduation.

Meiklejohn (1932) advocated for a common college experience built on a community that emphasized democratic teaching, learning, and planning processes. He sought to, "link together all significant fields in a scheme of intelligible relationships" (p. 48) in order to teach students to "universalize, to infer, to deduce, to connect" (p. 49) what they learned in the classroom and apply it to their later learning and their post-college lives. Students enrolled in his learning community their first two years and did not take classes. Instead, they read a series of "great books" and had discussions, writings, meetings, lectures, and activities that integrated all subjects and centered on their reading. A team of faculty members from all disciplines planned curriculum with students' input, led discussions, and evaluated student work. Reflecting on his experience in his book *The Experimental College,* Meiklejohn (1932) noted the experience was "both exciting and exasperating, both difficult and satisfying" (p. xix) and that "giving people freedom is not…simple" (p. 121).

According to Gabelnick, et al. (1990), "Meiklejohn is considered a father to the learning community movement because of his insights about the need to

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reorganize the structure of the curriculum" (p. 11). He ran the Experimental College at the University of Wisconsin from 1927 to 1932. The above authors argue that while the Experimental College was short lived, Meiklejohn was later credited for four ideas that endured: the use of great books in the curriculum, the importance of creating communities of learners, the value of curricular cohesion, and the impact of a residential component in learning communities.

While Meiklejohn was a student and contemporary of Dewey, the above authors (Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, & Gabelnick, 2004) argue that the two philosophers differed in their philosophies. Both Dewey and Meiklejohn were highly concerned with democracy in higher education, but Dewey was more concerned about democracy on the individual level and Meiklejohn applied his ideas about democracy to community based contexts. They also argue that Dewey's contribution to learning communities was more in the teaching learning process and less in structure, while his contemporary focused on specific structures of learning communities that guided later practice.

Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, and Gabelnick (2004) argue that "the next important chapter in learning community history unfolded in the 1960s and 1970s" (p. 34). During this period, several institutions in the United States saw the introduction of learning communities. The authors attribute the growth of these communities to innovation and experimentation in American higher education that came about due to the doubling of the higher education system and rapid establishment of community colleges. Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews, and Smith (1990) and Shapiro and Levine (1999) consider the Experimental Program at the

University of California at Berkeley – a direct product of Meiklejohn's Experimental College – as a notable contribution to the learning community movement.

Tussman, a friend and student of Meiklejohn, started the program at Berkeley – modeled directly on Meiklejohn's program. Tussman (1969) refers to himself as Meiklejohn's disciple, and notes that his program was a "direct spiritual descendant of the Experimental College," (p. 70) but he was "captivated, not enslaved" (p. 52) by his mentor's model. Tussman argued that institutions were suffering from a conflict between the university and the college. The university is an academic community organized for learning, operated by specialists. These specialists are so specifically trained that they have become too highly focused, each of them speaking in their own tongues and unable to communicate with other faculty or students. In contrast, the liberal arts college does not extend the frontiers of knowledge because it focuses on cultivating human understanding and skills of individuals for the purpose of career goals, not on developing the overall body of knowledge.

Tussman (1969) further argued that the upper grades acted as pre-training for graduate school, and the lower level suffered because it was neglected and exploited. In their first years, students received an education that was so fragmented and broken up that they developed neither the skills to be citizens nor technical skills to embark on meaningful vocations. His answer to these problems was to create a learning community that spanned the first two years of a student's college experience and acted as a full time integrated program of study. Like his predecessor, he utilized professors from all backgrounds to teach in his program. The curriculum centered on thematic units – also based on great books – and students attended lectures or

seminars, wrote papers, had conferences with faculty members, and completed a term project. The program lasted from 1965 to 1969. Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews, and Smith (1990) note that while Meiklejohn and Tussman's original learning communities lasted only a few years, other learning communities have learned from Meiklejohn and his successors about the need for meaningful curricular structures, the importance of shared values in the communities, and how to maintain communities in hostile environments.

Several learning communities appeared in the 1970s, according to Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, and Gabelnick (2004). They cite several programs and individuals as key contributors to the learning community movement. For example, Mervyn Caldwaller, the founder of a program at San Jose State University, brought the learning community idea to State University of New York – Old Westbury and later Evergreen State College. He is credited as being a leader of the learning community movement, "committed to learning communities as an idea that could be broadly disseminated" (Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, & Gabelnick, 2004, p. 43). Evergreen is considered a leader in learning communities because the institution, created in 1970, was driven by the principles of learning communities, and still offers "innovative interdisciplinary, collaborative and team-taught academic programs" (The Evergreen State College, 2009). In the mid-1970s, SUNY – Stony Brook and LaGuardia Community College introduced different course configurations, including clustered and paired courses, still used in many learning communities. During this period, programs were isolated and rarely interacted with each other.

According to Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, and Gabelnick (2004), the 1980s are the next distinct period of learning community history. They cite a conference at Rollins College in 1983 where learning community leaders convened for the first time as the start of a collective effort to collaborate on programs, policies, and planning. In the early 1980s, programs at the Universities of Maryland, Tennessee, and Nebraska as well as Rollins and Denison Colleges started, and the directors of several of these programs became leaders in the field of learning communities.   Few of these early programs survived, or were closed and started again, but they offered lessons on how to create and adapt different learning community models. The authors also note this period is marked by the appearance of the first studies of learning communities and the founding of the Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education. The Washington Center studies, supports, and offers resources to learning communities in the state of Washington and beyond, including the Learning Communities Resource Center (Washington Center, n.d.).

In the 1990s, learning communities were becoming more widely accepted, and were touted as the answer to many of the problems in higher education at that time. Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews, and Smith (1990) argue that Dewey and Meiklejohn's assertions that colleges were fragmented by specialization were still relevant in the early 1990s.   Lenning and Ebbers (1999) note that the higher education system still relied heavily on traditional lectures and rarely assessed student learning in a cohesive manner. Students were compartmentalized into departments, and they faced many more pressures outside their school responsibilities than they did two decades earlier. Administrators started to recognize that learning communities

could help institutions meet the demands of accreditation agencies by addressing many of these challenges and by encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration and different course configurations. The authors assert that Dewey and Meiklejohn's ideas have arrived, and they ask colleges to take on the challenge of creating new programs.

In their historical account, Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, and Gabelnick (2004) mark the twenty-first century as the beginning of a major national learning community movement. Learning communities now operate on over 500 campuses at all types of institutions. The above scholars note that the communities range from major campus efforts to small communities, and they have evolved to address a wide range of issues from retention to underage drinking to learning outcomes. The movement is also at a "crossroads" (p. 61). As learning communities become widespread, the authors pose questions about quality, impact, rapid expansion, sustainability, assessment, and meeting student needs as the learning community movement enters the next phase of its history.

Learning Communities and Living-Learning Programs

As stated earlier, learning communities serve as a foundation for living-learning programs. In the early 1990s, the first learning community typologies – important because they identified different types of learning communities – appeared in literature, starting with one outlined by Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews, and Smith (1990). Later models built on this typology (Love & Tokuno, 1999; Shapiro & Levine, 1999; Lenning & Ebbers, 1999), but the first models that differentiated LLPs

from learning communities appeared in 1999 (Inkelas, Soldner, Longerbeam, & Leonard, 2008).

Shapiro and Levine (1999) and Lenning and Ebbers (1999) first developed learning community models that differentiated living-learning programs as a distinct kind of learning community, and both models identified a residential component as the distinguishing feature. Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, and Gabelnick (2004) further illustrated the differences between LLPs and learning communities.

They classify LLPs – which they identify as programs where students live and study togeher, often with faculty offices in the living space – as a variation of the learning community. The authors also assert that Meiklejohn's *Experiemental College* "is one of the roots of the living-learning program tradition" (p. 90). The authors of the National Study of Living Learning Programs (NSLLP) (2007), the findings of which are examined in more detail below, argue that living-learning programs are the same as residential based learning communities, and add that LLPs are a unique type of learning communitiy because they have a less curricular focus and require students live together (see also Inkelas, Zeller, Murphy, & Hummel, 2006; Inkelas & Longerbeam, 2008).

Inkelas and Longerbeam (2008) also assert that differentiating living-learning programs from learning communities is not straightforward because, "there is not even a consensus on the term used to represent these programs" (p. 29) and note that LLPs have been referred to as residential learning communities, living-learning centers, living-learning communities, and other terms in the literature. Another challenge, they maintain, is that the vague terminology and lack of a comprehensive

census across program types makes it difficult to assess the number of learning

communities in this country. This paper supports the conceptualization of living-

learning programs as one type of learning community that includes a residential

component, proposed by the scholars above (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999; Shapiro &

Levine, 1999; Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, & Gabelnick, 2004; NSLLP, 2007;

Inkelas & Longerbeam, 2008).

Conceptualizing Living-Learning Programs

The previous sections outline the history of learning communities in the

United States and then differentiate LLPs from learning communities. This section

brings the discussion one step further and examines the specific nature of living-

learning programs. The NSLLP (2007) conducted the first national, multi-

institutional, longitudinal study of living-learning programs in the United States in

2004 and 2007. The researchers examined 555 programs at 49 institutions to assess

several aspects of the LLP experience. Using internet surveys, the investigators

collected data from over 22,000 students – about half of the sample participated in

LLPs, and the other half was a comparison sample of students who lived in residence

halls but did not participate in living-learning programs. Program directors also

provided information about the structures and features of the participating LLPs.

Universities participated voluntarily in the study and each institution self-indentified

the LLPs for investigation based on the definition provided by the research team.

Their findings, discussed at length below, inform the study of LLPs because they

provide a strong framework for understanding what constitutes a living-learning

program as well as how programs are designed and implemented on campuses across the United States.

One of the major goals of the NSLLP is to categorize different types of living-learning programs. Typologies, they argue, help researchers and practitioners respond to the variation, help program implementation, facilitate program evaluation and comparison, and help program administrators tailor programs to achieve desired goals (NSLLP, 2007; Inkelas & Longerbeam, 2008; Inkelas, Soldner, Longerbeam, & Leonard, 2008). In the 2007 report, the authors use program goals, titles, and directors' feedback to develop a thematic typology that organizes LLPs into groups based on program themes. Inkelas and Longerbeam (2008) develop a characteristic typology that organizes LLPs by their program characteristics such as size, resources available, budget source, supervising structure, and number of faculty involved. A cluster analysis reveals three distinct categories of living-learning programs: small academic affairs programs, small student affairs programs, and large mixed academic and student affairs programs. Inkelas, Soldner, Longerbeam, and Leonard (2008) use a cluster analysis to develop a generalizable typology that is both empirically based and includes programs' organization structures. Their analysis revealed three types of learning communities: (1) small programs with limited resources with a residential life emphasis, (2) medium programs with moderate resources and combinations of partnerships between academic and student affairs, and (3) large comprehensively resourced programs with academic and student affairs collaborations. Their typology includes not just themes or basic organizational characteristics, but also includes other facets such as budget, oversight, faculty involvement, academic coursework,

resources, and activities.   The researchers conclude that there is not a "one size fits all" typology model for living-learning programs, and that these typologies illustrate programs can be organized and classified in a variety of ways. Models such as these, however, do offer guidance in light of the great variation among programs on American campuses.

Soldner and Szelenyi (2008) investigate why certain residential programs are considered LLPs. They maintain that the structures and practices that define LLPs are not well understood. They use the 2004 NSLLP data set to examine the structural and programmatic make-up of living-learning programs and to explore what constitutes an LLP. They looked at several factors such as: the type of institutions, how many years the LLPs have been in operation, the number of students, where participants live in the residence hall, reporting structures, budget, funding sources, selection criteria, courses provided (if any), faculty and staff roles and level of involvement, and types of activities provided. The living-learning programs under investigation vary widely in each of the above areas, and the researchers question whether this variation is random or systematic.

Upon further analysis, Soldner and Szelenyi (2008) found some trends among living-learning programs.   When they examined the characteristics of LLPs based on course offerings and faculty involvement, they found that programs with more funding typically have more types of classes, older programs offer more classes, and programs that report to academic units are more likely to have classes, while those that reported to residence life units were less likely to have a wide variety of course offerings. LLPs with budgets over $30,000 attract larger number of faculty (or vice

versa), as do older programs and those that report to academic affairs. While they maintain that faculty involvement may not always be connected to strong academic goals, LLPs that teach their own courses have a tendency to have more strongly articulated and emphasized goals. The researchers ascertain that examining student and academic affairs partnerships may impact program outcomes. They conclude that when attempting to define LLPs, variety is more the norm than the exception. This makes defining LLPs difficult, and they suggest conceptualizing a narrower definition than the one offered by the NSLLP. Soldner and Szelenyi also note that a classification scheme based on faculty involvement, reporting structures, course offerings, and level of emphasis on educational goals may be most effective in defining what constitutes an LLP.

The work of the above authors reveals that conceptualizing the nature of living-learning programs in American higher education is complicated. Schein and Bowers (1992) and Inkelas (2008) support this notion, arguing that LLPs vary widely across campuses, taking many forms. Soldner and Szelenyi (2008) illustrate that identifying LLPs is not straightforward, citing wide program variation. The typologies presented by the NSLLP (2007), Inkelas, Soldner, Longerbeam, and Leonard (2008), and Inkelas and Longerbeam (2008) demonstrate that LLPs may be grouped either by theme, characteristics, or organizational structure. For example, a thematic typology groups LLPs by common program themes – such as internationally focused or discipline related programs. Characteristic typologies, however, group LLPs by program features such as size or supervising structure – meaning programs are supported by either an academic department or student affairs division.

Organizational typologies consider a combination of the above, grouping LLPs by considering several factors such as budget and number of faculty in addition to program characteristics.

Bowling Green University offers a resource for living-learning programs called the Residential Learning Communities International Clearinghouse (2009) that provides some guidance to those attempting to conceptualize LLPs. Maintained through a website, the clearinghouse catalogues LLPs in the United States and organizes program information in a database (despite the inclusion of the term "international" in the title, the database only includes one institution in Canada). Program directors create a profile and submit an online form to be included in the LLP in the database. The clearinghouse organizes each profile by institution name. The database includes over 180 programs, and the website also offers resources, such as links to the NSLLP and various bibliographies of research about learning communities and LLPs. Bowling Green's website also illustrates the different forms of LLPs, and how they are carried out in various contexts.

Living-Learning Program Research

Early living-learning program research focused on single programs. Magnarella (1975; 1979) researched the intellectual atmosphere in a living-learning program at the University of Vermont as a participant observer, teaching an anthropology class and living in the dormitory with his family for the first two years of the program's inception. Using surveys and qualitative interviews with students and program staff, he compared LLP and non-LLP students. Both years he found that more living-learning program students rated their living accommodations, intellectual

atmosphere and growth, educational opportunities, and extracurricular activities in the LLP as better than in their traditional residence halls when compared to their peers in traditional dormitories. Surprisingly, a greater number of LLP students in both years rated community spirit as worse in their living-learning program than did traditional residence hall students (a finding not common in later investigations). More program students also perceived that they held more serious discussions, had greater numbers of extracurricular activities, and discovered new ideas.

Leean and Miller (1981) conducted a three year evaluation of the program at the University of Vermont to identify factors that enhance or impede student learning for the university administration by surveying LLP students. Their data revealed consistent and inconsistent trends over the study period. Over three years, LLP students consistently identified their friendships and the richness of the physical environment as the most positive aspects of the program, noted that their learning in program related classes was stronger than in non-program classes, and positively assessed their personal growth and development. Students also felt that they suffered from a lack of community feeling in the program – consistent with Magnarella's findings (1975; 1979).

In a case study of a living-learning program at the University of Illinois, Schein and Bowers (1992) supplemented over ten years of quantitative research to assess the program's academic credibility and quality of the academic community. Interviews with 100 students suggest that when comparing living-learning program classes to traditional university courses, a greater percentage of LLP students indicated that their classes had more personal methods of teaching, higher quality

teaching, and more student interaction and participation. The highest percentage of students also noted that their LLP courses were equally as demanding as their non-LLP classes. Additionally, over 50% of LLP students noted that their living-learning program was more friendly, intellectually stimulating, easy to deal with, and accepting of diversity and individual differences than the traditional residence halls. An empirical study at the University of Maryland compared students in a living-learning program to non-LLP students who lived in similar living situations as the living-learning program students (Arminio, 1994). The researcher notes that her findings imply that LLP students have more positive attitudes about community living concerns, their living and studying facilities, safety and security, and residence assistants' relationships to their residents.

The trend in later LLP research – in the late 1990s and early 2000s – examined multiple programs at one institution. Pike (1999) compared non LLP and LLP students in three programs at one university to investigate whether LLP students report a richer experience in their first year of college. He found that students in living-learning programs had higher levels of involvement, interaction, and integration as well as greater gains in general education. He also found that LLPs have a direct positive effect on the behavioral aspects of students' college experiences and an indirect effect on student learning and their ability to integrate the information they learn in their classes. Stassen (2003) also investigates three types of LLPs at a large university. Two of the three programs are selective and the third had no admissions criteria. After controlling for outside factors such as SAT scores, she found that first semester grades and retention rates are higher among LLP students

than non-LLP students, and that LLP students have strong relationships with faculty. She found little difference between the different types of programs.

Garrett and Zabriskie (2003) found that students in nine LLPs on one campus are more likely to have interactions with faculty. This is important, they note, because previous research illustrates that students who have a greater number of interactions with faculty are more likely to take responsibility for their learning, develop intellectually, be satisfied, grow academically, and are less likely to drop out. At Rollins College, according to Eck, Edge, and Stephenson (2007), a comparison of LLP students and non-LLP students revealed that LLP students were more likely to develop critical thinking skills and knowledge of wellness. They also deemed their courses as more effective and with more engaging pedagogy. Inkelas and Wiseman (2003) examined how different environments impact students differently by comparing seven LLPs – which they organized into three types – on one campus. When compared to non-LLP students, the researchers found living-learning students have a smoother transition to college, find challenging academic pursuits, and enjoy learning new perspectives. Their findings also suggest that the type of program is not associated with positive outcomes.

The mid to late 2000s saw a trend to start comparing LLPs between institutions. A pilot study for the NSLLP (Inkelas, Vogt, Longerbeam, Owen, & Johnson, 2006) compared a sample of living-learning students with non-LLP students and found that LLP students are more likely to discuss academic and career related issues with peers, to have mentoring relationships with faculty, to have positive perceptions of the social and academic aspects of their residence halls, and to view

campus racial diversity as positive. They also exhibited higher scores on learning

outcomes such as application of knowledge, critical thinking, and enjoyment of

intellectual pursuits.

The effects of living-learning programs on non-living-learning students who

live in the same dormatories guided an analysis of NSLLP data from about 3,000

students at four universities (Longerbeam, Inkelas, & Brower, 2007). The authors of

this study compared four groups of non-LLP students who lived in residence halls:

those who lived with non-LLP students, those who lived with fewer than one-third

LLP students, those who lived with one-third to two-thirds LLP students, and those

two lived with greater than two-thirds LLP students. They found that non-LLP

students seem to glean some benefits when they live with LLP students. Non-LLP

students found their residence hall climate more socially supportive and identified

having more positive diversity interactions when they lived with LLP students. The

researchers also found that the higher the proportion of living-learning students, the

greater the benefits to non-LLP students.

Inkelas, et al. (2006) investigated LLP and non-LLP participants' perceptions

of their growth in cognitive complexity at three universities. The researchers

compared traditional residence hall students and LLP students on the three campuses

using the I-E-O model (see NSLLP (2007) below). They found that students at all

three institutions were more likely than their non-LLP peers to find their living

environment more supportive, more likely to participate in activities related to

diversity, and more likely to experience growth in liberal learning – defined as

openness to new ideas and concepts. The researchers found no statistically

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significant difference, however, in perceived growth in cognitive complexity among LLP and non-LLP students. So, while statistical analysis of the data did not demonstrate significant relationships in cognitive related goals, it did illustrate that LLP participants experience benefits, and that those benefits do not differ across institutions.

The most recent trend in living-learning program research is that scholars have begun to assess the effectiveness of LLPs based on a variety of outcomes using empirical methods and large, national, multi-institutional data sets like those collected by the NSLLP (2007). Several recent LLP studies assess programs by type. Using the typology they developed, Inkelas and Longerbeam (2008) assess student outcomes and college environments associated with the different typologies they identified – either thematic or characteristic. They found that the thematic typology revealed inconsistent social and academic outcomes. The analysis of the characteristic typology, however, revealed that students in large programs are more likely to interact with faculty, more likely to rate themselves high on critical thinking and analysis skills, and felt they lived in more supportive residence halls. Participants in small academic affairs programs were more likely to use the program's resources and just as likely as their peers in large programs to experience a smoother transition to college.

Inkelas, Soldner, Longerbeam, and Leonard (2008) also assess LLP outcomes by type, exploring students' perceptions of growth in critical thinking, overall cognitive complexity, and appreciation for liberal learning in each type of LLP. They found little difference in critical thinking outcomes between small and medium sized

programs, but statistically significantly higher outcomes for students in large programs. For overall cognitive ability and appreciation of liberal learning, students in small and large programs outperformed their peers in medium programs. The authors conclude that medium sized programs may be the least effective because they have moderate resources and loose academic and student affairs partnerships, and that small programs – despite their limited resources – can also be successful.

The NSLLP (2007) examines LLPs using the input-environment-outcome (I-E-O) college impact model to assess how students' pre-college characteristics (inputs) and environments (participants' educational and social experiences) effect student outcomes (characteristics after the college experience). The study compares students who participate in living-learning programs to those who do not. For inputs, they found LLP students had slightly higher pre-college academic achievement, were foreign born or had parents who were foreign born, and had more highly educated parents. Analysis of environmental variables indicate most of the students in the study were first year students, but that LLP students required more need based aid, were more likely to discuss academic and socio-cultural issues with their peers, had more faculty mentorship, experienced more course related interaction with faculty, used residence hall resources more, and had more positive peer diversity interactions. They were also more likely to spend their time studying, attending class, participating in student government, attending arts related activities, and being members of cross-cultural clubs. For outcomes, LLP students found their transition to college life easier, reported higher growth in critical thinking and analysis abilities, had higher

confidence in their college success, were less likely to binge drink, had higher GPAs, and engaged in civic activities at a higher rate.

Another recent LLP research focus is for scholars to use the 2004 NSLLP data set for quantitative studies and report various findings regarding the effects of LLPs. Inkelas, Daver, Vogt, and Leonard (2007) examined the role of LLPs in facilitating the transition to college among first generation students, a growing population on college campuses. They found that first generation students in LLPs were more likely to experience a smooth transition to college – a significant finding because previous research has illustrated that these students are less academically prepared and less likely to finish their degrees. Brower (2008) found that students enrolled in LLPs drink less and suffer fewer consequences as a result of their own or others drinking than their peers not enrolled in living-learning programs. Rowan-Kenyon, Soldner, and Inkelas (2007) examine students who participated in civic engagement themed living-learning programs and compared them to LLP students not enrolled in civic programs and non-LLP students to see if participation in civically oriented programs effected students' sense of civic engagement. Students who participate in civic programs had higher mean scores of civic engagement, even when controlled for student attitudes about co-curricular involvement before entering college. General LLP students have a higher sense of civic engagement than non-LLP students, but not than students in civic programs. Co-curricular involvement outside living learning programs, however, also appears to account for a higher sense of civic engagement in all students.

The only recent research that does not fit the trend for LLP investigations was a study at the University of Maryland. A faculty advisor team implemented an assessment of 12 interdisciplinary LLPs (Stewart, 2008) through self-assessment and by surveying and interviewing current students. They found two major categories of best practices: (1) program content and culture which includes intentional community building, unique demanding academics, and diversity; and (2) organizations and systems which includes strong web presence, advisory councils, full time staff, strong and consistent leadership, and clear communication between academic and student affairs in regard to the program.

Lessons from Living-Learning Program Research

Examining the literature holistically reveals that LLPs are failing to meet several identified targets and succeeding in others. Earlier studies suggest that LLP students actually experienced less of a sense of community (Magnarella, 1979; Magnarella, 1975; Leean & Miller, 1981). More recent LLP research, however, suggests that trend is changing. Inkelas, et al. (2006) and Inkelas and Longerbeam's (2008) research illustrates that LLP students report more supportive learning environments. LLP students in Arminio's (1994) research sample had more positive perceptions of their environments than their non-LLP peers. The change in student attitude may be due in part to the changing nature of LLPs since researchers first started evaluating these programs.

There is also evidence that LLPs create supportive environments and increase student involvement. Inkelas, et al. (2006) and Magnarella (1975; 1979) found that LLP students have positive perceptions of the social and academic aspects of their

residence halls. Schein and Bowers' (1992) findings suggest that LLP students find their classes are more personal, their environment is friendlier, and that students are more likely to participate and interact. Additionally, the NSLLP (2007) and Pike (1999) maintain that students in LLPs report higher levels of involvement on campus, and Rowan-Kenyon, Soldner, and Inkelas (2007) found living-learning students were more likely to be engaged in civic activities.

Living-learning programs have additional measured, positive outcomes. LLPs increase interaction among students and between students and faculty. LLP students in Inkelas, Vogt, Longerbeam, Owen, and Johnson's (2006) research discuss academic and career issues with their peers and find faculty mentors. Inkelas and Longerbeam (2008) and Garrett and Zabriskie's (2003) LLP participants also reported higher levels of involvement with faculty. The NSLLP (2007) found greater faculty mentorship, more course and non-course related interaction with faculty and students, more peer to peer discussions about socio-cultural issues, and greater positive peer diversity interactions with living-learning students.

One of the strongest outcomes of living-learning programs is their effect on student learning.   The NSLLP (2007), Inkelas and Longerbeam (2008), Inkelas and Wiseman (2003), Inkelas, Vogt, Longerbeam, Owen, and Johnson (2006), Inkelas, et al. (2006), Eck, Edge, and Stephenson (2007), and Schein and Bowers (1992) all support that students in LLPs report stronger learning outcomes than their non-LLP peers. Students state they were more confident in their college success, show growth in their ability to be open minded, have high critical thinking and analytical skills, better apply their learned knowledge, show greater enjoyment of intellectual pursuits,

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and challenge themselves academically. Leean and Miller (1981) also note that LLP

students rate the classes in their program higher than non-program classes.

In several studies in various contexts, the above scholars cite numerous

positive outcomes of living-learning programs. LLPs appear to impact participants'

academic, social, and cognitive experiences on campus. One major observation in

regards to these findings deserves note. The positive outcomes could, at least in part,

be due to the type of student who decides to join a living-learning program, a notion

supported by several of the above cited authors (Garrett & Zabriskie, 2003; NSLLP,

2007; Stassen, 2003; Pike, 1999; Inkelas, Vogt, Longerbeam, Owen, & Johnson,

2006; and Rowan-Kenyon, Soldner, & Inkelas, 2007). It could be argued higher

achieving students decide to join or are invited to join living-learning programs. Prior

achievement such as high GPAs or test scores may confound the positive effects of

the living-learning program experience. While each of the above studies account for

previous student achievement, they all note that most of the students in their LLP

samples were higher achieving overall, so it is a factor worth noting.

Another interesting observation comes from Inkelas, Soldner, Longerbeam,

and Leonard (2008) who state that they discovered little difference in learning

outcomes between large and small programs – implying that effective programs can

be large or small with varying levels of academic collaboration and funding with little

impact on their effectiveness. Similarly, both Inkelas and Wiseman (2003) and

Inkelas, et al. (2008) illustrate that the type of living-learning community makes a

difference – not all LLP types share strong positive outcomes. Another consideration

worth noting is Arminio's (1994) observation that level of student involvement in LLPs may effect how students perceive their living-learning program experience.

Despite the above considerations – which also present possible avenues for future investigation – the research outlined above does indicate that LLPs have positive outcomes. They make a strong impact on student experiences at several types of institutions among many groups of students. The LLP experience, when compared to traditional residence hall living, appears to have a positive impact on participants' on-campus living and learning experience.

Summary

Living-learning programs are defined as "programs in which undergraduate students live together in a discrete portion of a residence hall (or the entire hall) and participate in academic and/or extra-curricular programming designed especially for them" (NSLLP, 2007, pp. I-2). Considered an offshoot of the learning community movement started in the early 1900s, scholars identified LLPs as a discrete type of community – characterized by their residential components – in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Shapiro & Levine, 1999; Lenning & Ebbers, 1999; Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, & Gabelnick, 2004). As this distinction became evident, LLP scholars moved to clarify how LLPs are categorized (NSLLP, 2007; Inkelas & Longerbeam, 2008; Inkelas, Soldner, Longerbeam, & Leonard, 2008) and structured (Soldner & Szelenyi, 2008). Researchers also attempted to isolate the effects of these programs through several different studies, finding that LLPs tend to have a positive effect on the student experience – especially when compared to non-LLP experiences (Magnarella, 1979; Magnarella, 1975; Leean & Miller, 1981; Inkelas, et al., 2006;

Inkelas & Longerbeam, 2008; Arminio, 1994; Inkelas, Vogt, Longerbeam, Owen, & Johnson, 2006; Schein & Bowers, 1992; NSLLP, 2007; Pike, 1999; Rowan-Kenyon, Soldner, & Inkelas, 2007; Garrett & Zabriskie, 2003; Inkelas & Wiseman, 2003; Eck, Edge, & Stephenson, 2007; Leean & Miller, 1981; Stassen, 2003; Inkelas, Soldner, Longerbeam, & Leonard, 2008).

Intercultural Competence

A disucssion of intercultural competency is remiss without first defining culture. According to Kuper (1999) the term "culture" is a bit problematic. It has entered into the vernacular so completely that it is often misunderstood and applied to a variety of phenomena. It can be used to identify communities where people live, entire civilizations, political establishments, or art and music. The author argues that in the context of cultural studies, these understandings of the term do not apply. Due to misunderstandings of the meaning of the term, I offer a working definition of the term.

Culture Defined

Geertz (1973) is considered by several scholars as the pioneer of defining and interpreting culture (Clifford, 1986; Snow, Morrill, & Anderson, 2003; Kuper, 1999). He notes that culture exists everywhere, articulated through people's behaviors. Culture and its meaning are public – not private or individual – which ensures people can obeserve and follow it. It exists in people's minds and dicatates what an individual needs to know in order to behave in an acceptable fashion in a society. Culture, Geertz argues, is often treated as a symbolic system where the elements are

isolated, relationships between elements analyzed, and then the whole system

characterized in some general way by using symbols, structures, and principles. He

also advises, however, that it cannot be treated as a concrete entity or reduced to

simply actions or behaviors. Geertz's work is recognized as important because he

provides one of the first comprehensive definitions of culture. While other writing on

the topic appeared before this – such as *The Patterns of Culture,* published by Ruth

Benedict in 1934 (as cited in LeVine, 1984) – Geertz's groundbreaking work

transformed the intellectual landscape regarding scholars' conceptualizations of

culture, changing it from a relatively unknown concept to a common topic of

discourse (Clifford, 1986; Snow, Morrill, & Anderson, 2003; Arasaratnam, 2007;

LeVine, 1984; Kuper, 1999).

Geertz's articulation of culture has informed many scholars. For example, his

notion of a shared set of beliefs is supported by Ting-Toomey (2002) – a widely

published and cited interculturalist (for an explanation of her contributions see

Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005) – who notes:

> Culture refers to a group-level construct that embodies a distinctive system of
> traditions, beliefs, values, norms, rituals, symbols, and meanings that is shared by
> a majority of interacting individuals in a community. Simply put, culture refers to
> a patterned way of living by a group of interacting individuals who share similar
> sets of beliefs, values, and behaviors" (p. 324).

Lustig and Koester (2003) add to the discussion about culture: "Culture is a

learned set of interpretations about beliefs, values, and norms, which effect the

behaviors of a relatively large group of people" (p. 27). They clarify their definition's

components by noting that learned means that humans are not born with it, but rather

culture is learned over one's lifetime through interactions. According to the authors,

a set of shared interpretations means that a culture exists as symbols in the minds of people, not in external or tangible objects, and that the meanings of symbols also exist in people's minds. Culture, however, is only formed if those symbols are shared by a group of people. These shared meanings ensure that people do things similarly. Culture is maintained by a set of forces embedded in the members of that culture. Cultures differ because of factors such as history, ecology (the external environment or shape of the land), technology and inventions, biology or similar genetic compositions among people, institutional networks or formal organizations in society that structure activities for people (like government), and interpersonal communication patterns – both verbal and non-verbal. Kuper (1999) also maintains that culture is learned and carried throughout a group, and is "a matter of ideas and values, a collective cast of the mind" (p. 227).

While they differ slightly and some authors add additional dimensions, many of Geertz's (1973) concepts are apparent in the above definitions of culture, such as its shared, public nature, and its existence in people's minds. Kuper argues that this conceptualization of culture is commonly accepted among contemporary scholars.

For the purposes of this study, culture – as supported Geertz and the above authors – is conceptualized as a shared set of values and beliefs that exists in people's minds. These values are transmitted both consciously and subconsciously, and expressed through publically shared behaviors that are commonly accepted and universally followed by the cultural group. These behaviors are, in turn, observable. Culture also acts like a "lens" for the individual, filtering what she sees and affecting how she interprets the values, attitudes, and behaviors of others. More specifically,

culture acts as a series of messages. Participants in a cultural group receive messages and interpret them through their own cultural lenses. Then they re-transmit these messages through behaviors and expectations, through a series of conscious and subconscious avenues. They share the meanings of these messages – or the values, beliefs, and behaviors – with other cultural members. Using this conceptualization of culture as a guideline, now the definition of intercultural competency is explored at length.

Intercultural Competence Defined

Arasaratnam (2009) argues that the definition of intercultural competence varies among scholars, and Fantini (2005) supports that there is little consensus about what the term means. Clarity of the term and how it is constructed is discussed below. Global competency, intercultural competence and intercultural communication competence (ICC) are often conceptually linked. Arasaratnam and Doerfel (2005) note that the history of research in the field of intercultural communication spans 50 years, and that ICC is a major focus of inquiry within the field of intercultural communication. Fantini (2005) maintains that the terms refer to the same phenomenon, and Lustig and Koester (2003) support a conceptual merging of the terms.   For the purposes of this study, the terms global competency, intercultural competency, and intercultural communication competency are used interchangeably.

Arasaratnam and Doerfel (2005) also provide clarity to the term intercultural communication. They define the term intercultural as ethnic, religious, cultural, national, and geographical variances, and communication as the verbal exchange of

ideas through use of language. Lustig and Koester (2003) state that intercultural competence is one's ability to communicate with people who do not have the same cultural background. They maintain that in order to understand intercultural communication, one must first understand the characteristics of all communication events. "Communication is a symbolic, interpretive, transactional, contextual process in which people create shared meanings"(p. 10). Cultural differences, the authors maintain, can effect the communication process, so understanding cultural differences is key to intercultural competency. When people from different cultural backgrounds attempt to communicate, they rely on intercultural communication. The authors define intercultural communication as "a symbolic process in which people from different cultures create shared meanings" (p. 44). Competent intercultural communication is difficult because "cultural differences create dissimilar meanings and expectations that require even greater levels of communication skill" (p. 62).

Lustig and Koester (2003) further explain the concept of competency in intercultural communication. They argue that competent intercultural communication consists of three components: (1) context; (2) knowledge, motivations, and actions; and (3) appropriateness and effectiveness. While these components constantly change, knowledge of these individual components increases the possibility of competence in intercultural interactions. Context characterizes settings in which people interact. They are not individual traits, but rather associations between individuals because no single trait applies in all cultural settings. Knowledge consists of one's cognitive information about people, context, and norms of appropriateness – including one's own culture. This includes two different kinds of knowledge, culture

general – or insight to the nature of intercultural interactions in general – and culture specific – or understanding of a particular culture. Motivations are the set of emotional associations people have as they communicate interculturally, including feelings and intentions. Actions consist of the performance of behaviors that are deemed appropriate and effective.

Lustig and Koester's (2003) third component of effectiveness and appropriateness are explored in other research. They define appropriate interactions as interchanges where the nature of behaviors between people interacting is considered proper and suitable within the cultural context. Effective behaviors are those that lead to the achievement of certain outcomes. The concepts of appropriateness and effectiveness are explored in other research. Fantini (2005) supports the notion that ICC should be both appropriate and effective, where Chen (1989) asserts that effectiveness and appropriateness are the variables that are most closely related to intercultural competency. Chen futher notes appropriateness consists of three characterisitics – one's ability to make sense of terms, wording, and statements (verbal), understanding through the use of messages (relational), and understanding how the environment effects message making (environmental). Jandt (2007) also argues that intercultural competency consists of effective and appropriate interactions, but takes it one step further.   He notes appropriateness consists of three types of skills: affective (intercultural sensitivity), cognitive (intercultural awareness), and behavioral (intercultural adroitness). He also maintains effective and appropriate interactions require one to acknowledge and respect cultural differences, to be aware of one's own cultural identity, to understand that cultures vary, and to

display actual skills such as effective social interaction, appropriate self-disclosure, and messaging skills. Table 2.1 below summarizes the above conceptualizations of ICC as they relate to each other.

Jandt (2007) maintains, "Intercultural communication competence refers to one's skill in facilitating successful intercultural communication outcomes in terms of satisfaction and other positive assessments of the interaction and the interaction partner" (p. 44). He continues: "Definitions of intercultural competence grounded in communication have tended to stress the development of skills that transform one

TABLE 2.1: A Summary of Intercultural Communication Competency Conceptualizations					
Lustig and Koester (2003): Three components of ICC	Fantini (2005)	Chen (1989): Effectiveness and appropriateness most closely linked to ICC		Jandt (2007)	
Appropriateness and effectiveness	Competent ICC is both appropriate and effective	Effectiveness: three characteristics	Verbal: ability to make sense of terms, statements, wording	Effective and appropriate ICC requires three skills	Affective: Intercultural sensitivity
			Relational: understanding of messages		Cognitive: Intercultural awareness
			Environmental: understanding of how messages are effected by environment		Behavioral: Intercultural adroitness

Knowledge: Cognitive information about interactions	Culture general
	Culture specific
Context: settings where people interact	

from a monocultural person into a multicultural person. The multicultural person is one who respects cultures and has tolerance for differences" (p. 46).

Wiseman, Hammer, and Nishida (1989) also examine intercultural competence within the context of communication competence. They note that cross-cultural competence is affected primarily by one's attitudes toward other cultures. The authors present three interrelated components of cross-cultural attitudes: (1) cognitive or how one views other cultures, composed of stereotypes and perceptions of those cultures; (2) affective or feelings of like or dislike about a culture and degree of ethnocentrism; and (3) conative (the authors' term) which is the social distance between a person and other cultures. The cognitive component effects communication messages because it generates expectations, constrains communication of the other, and confirms stereotypes. The authors argue that the greater the contrast between cultures, the greater the likelihood of stereotype enforcement. According to Wiseman, Hammer, and Nishida, the affective component is based on one's tendency to identify more with one's own culture over others. Those who exhibit high levels interpret strangers' behaviors using their own frame of reference by distorting meanings of their behaviors, but that a low level is critical to facilitate effective cross-cultural behavior. The conative component means that the more people have positive interactions with individuals of different cultural backgrounds, the more likely they are to have positive associations about people from different cultures in general because they collect more accurate information. People who exhibit greater social distance are more prejudiced when interacting with others, leading to less and less accurate information gathered and a greater chance of misunderstanding.

Arasaratnam (2009) supports and builds on the above scholars'
conceptualizations of intercultural communication competency. She notes that there
is a consensus in the literature that competence is related to knowledge, motivation,
and skill and is exhibited in effective and appropriate behaviors. Competent
communication, she maintains, achieves communication goals and exhibits
appropriate behavior in relation to contexts. While there was some conflict in earlier
research in the field (see, for example, Ruben, 1989), she also maintains that
researchers agree there are three main dimensions of ICC: cognitive, affective (or
attitudes), and behavioral – supported by the above authors' conceptualizations of
intercultural competency.

Some researchers define competence ouside the communication context.
Mak, Westwood, Ishiyama, and Barker (1999) note that intercultural competence is
complex. A person's preconditioned behaviors often do not translate when dealing
with individuals from a different country or culture. The authors maintain that in
order to be interculturally competent, one must develop sociocultural competency.
This entails becoming acquainted with the social values, roles, and rules that govern
interpersonal relationships among members of another culture combined with the
ability to effectively display those mores in social interactions.

Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman (2003) call to move away from defining
intercultural competency as attitudes or behaviors. They argue instead that
intercultural sensitivity and intercultural competence are intertwined. They define
intercultural sensitivity as one's "ability to discriminate and experience relevant
cultural differences," and intercultural competence as one's "ability to think and act

in interculturally appropriate ways" (p. 422), so their conceptualization moves beyond

communication. They further maintain that, "greater intercultural sensitivity is

associated with greater potential for exercising intercultural competence" (p. 422).

Fantini (2005) outlines the concept of intercultural communication as follows:

> Once intercultural contact has begun, ICC development generally evolves as an on-going and lengthy process, occasionally with periods of regression or stagnation, but more commonly with positive results and no end point. Different individuals bring differing goals and motivations to the intercultural experience that result in varying levels of competence. Some wish to achieve native-like behavior in the host culture; others may be content simply to gain acceptance; and for still others, mere survival may be adequate (p. 1).

The above research indicates that intercultural competency is a complex

concept. For the purposes of this research, the following assumptions apply to the

term, based on the above conceptualizations. Global competency, intercultural

competency and intercultural communication competency are used interchangeably

(Fantini, 2005; Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005; Lustig & Koester, 2003). Intercultural

communication competency refers to positive outcomes of intercultural exchanges in

cross-cultural settings, including those defined by ethnic, religious, national, and

geographic variances between communicators. Competent communication requires

understanding those variations and learning the social codes associated with them.

ICC comprises of three dimensions: cognitive, affective (or attitudes), and behavioral

(Lustig & Koester, 2003; Chen, 1989; Jandt, 2007; Wiseman, Hammer, & Nishida,

1989; Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005).

Intercultural Competency as Skill Identification

This study now explores how intercultural competency is measured. ICC

literature saw three distinct periods regarding measuring competency. As stated

earlier, Arasaratnam (2009) assserts there are three dimensions of intercultural

competency – behavioral, affective, and cognitive. A great bulk of early literature –

starting in the mid-1970s – attempts to identify the skills that constitute an

interculturally competent individual. Ruben (1976) provides one of the first attempts

at developing and using behavioral tools to identify and assess skills that indicate

communication competence in cross-cultural settings. He argues that observations

and analysis of behaviors using predetermined dimensions helps to predict future

behaviors and determines an individual's level of communication competency.

Behavioral assessment, Ruben argues, measures actual competency, not "intentions,

understandings, knowledge, attitudes or desires" (p. 337). Research up to that point

focused primarily on assessing communication competence in one's own culture, but

little work assessed intercultural communication competence other than anecdotally.

Compiling the work of communication competence researchers, the author identified

seven common behaviorally based dimensions of intercultural competence: display of

respect, interaction posture, orientation of knowledge, empathy, self oriented role

behavior, interaction management, and tolerance for ambiguity. He then developed

and tested a behaviorally based assessment to test individuals for those

characteristics.

Ruben (1976) defines his terms as follows. Display of respect, according to

the author, includes the ability to express respect and positive regard for another

person. Interaction posture is one's ability to respond to others in descriptive but

nonjudgmental ways. Orientation to knowledge requires acknowledging that

knowledge is individual in nature – or the recognition that there is not one true or

right form of knowledge. Empathy includes someone's ability to view and interpret experiences from another person's perspective. Role behavior is one's ability to perform tasks with flexibility, initiating new ideas and seeking clarification regularly. Interaction management is interpreted as the manner in which people manage their interactions, and whether they accurately assess their interaction situations. Finally, tolerance for ambiguity means one's ability to react to new situations with little discomfort.

Ruben's behavioral constructs are significant because they inform a great deal of future research and were later adapted and used in tools that measured intercultural communication competence. They informed a great deal of research in the mid to late 1970s (see, for example, Ruben and Kealey's (1979) research that suggests Ruben's behavioral characteristics are predictive of at least one aspect of cross-cultural adaptation). During this period, however, no formal tools were created to assess competency.

Measuring Intercultural Competency

The late 1980's saw a resurgence of research, but this work shifted the focus to measuring the skills related to cross-cultural competence. Ruben (1989) attributes a renewed interest in intercultural competence to failures in overseas projects. "Much of the impetus for the study of cross-cultural communication competence arose out of efforts to cope with practical problems encountered by individuals living and working overseas, and by their institutional sponsors" (Ruben, 1989, p. 229). Organizations looked to research in order to explain these failures, predict future failures, guide personnel selection, and design training for those going overseas – new trends in the

field at the time. Early research is mostly anecdotal, focused on psychological measures, and based on technical or job qualifications. Later research, he notes, was more productive and descriptive with a heavier focus on identifying patterns associated with failure, used behavioral tests to identify observable behaviors, and added cultural competency measures to traditional job related measures.

Literature during this period called for instruments to measure intercultural competence. Chen (1989) notes, "Although the study of communication competence can be indirectly traced back to Aristotle's rhetoric, until now only a very few scholars have dealt with this topic by considering cultural factors. In other words, there are very few studies of intercultural communication competence" (p. 118). Further, Koester and Olebe (1988) argued there was a push for "defining intercultural effectiveness and competence to develop measures of these constructs" (p. 233). Ruben (1989) called for more research into how cultural competence should be measured. He questions which type of instrumentation should be used, if data should be self reported, and if the measures should be behavioral or psychological. Up to that point, these authors maintain that the study of intercultural competency was hindered by lack of a practical tool to measure intercultural communication effectiveness.

During this period, Koester and Olebe (1988) developed and tested one of the first instruments to measure ICC called the Behavioral Assessment Scale for Intercultural Communication Effectiveness (BASIC). Their tool is based on measuring Ruben's (1976) seven characteristics in individuals as representations of the dimensions of the construct of intercultural competence. They maintain that their

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findings suggest BASIC is an effective tool because it measures actual intercultural communication, has the potential for assessment and prediction of effective ICC, includes perceptions of interactors themselves, and can be used by a wide variety of individuals in diverse settings. They note that behavioral models such as theirs are promising for measuring intercultural communication competence because these approaches assess actual intercultural communication, not individual predisposition or outcomes of interactions. They also allow for measures of universal and culturally specific behaviors.

Dinges and Lieberman (1989) maintain that situation and interaction centered studies are also important to understanding communication competence, but that research to date is either person centered, situation centered, or an interaction between person and situation. They sought to assess communication competence in certain situations and "measure the influence of situational factors on judgments of observers assessing the competence of persons culturally similar or dissimilar to themselves" (p. 372) by examining situational variables in response to stressful intercultural employment situations. Their findings suggest that the type of situation and other participants within the situation are more influential in determining ICC than participants' individual traits. It also suggests that certain situations require certain skills and others may not require the same skills. Their findings stress a situational as opposed to a person centered approach may be more effective in assessing ICC, a contradiction to the person centered models of past research.

Imahori and Lanigan (1989) move outside the behavioral realm during this period and present four axioms to support the re-conceptualization of ICC based on

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research to date in order to address some of the conflicts in the field regarding measurement. Previous researchers assert that ICC is a behavioral, attitudinal, or cognitive construct, but the authors' first axiom contends that intercultural communication competence is composed of all three. The second axiom states that ICC competency is determined by measuring both individuals' competency in a specific interaction. This axiom assumes that competency cannot be measured in a vacuum; rather it is relational and interactive, requiring ICC be examined from a two sided perspective. Imahori and Lanigan's third axiom states that a competent intercultural relationship should satisfy both the person experiencing a new culture and a host national. It also states that a competent intercultural relationship should approximate an interpersonal relationship and exhibit similar characteristics like intimacy, interpersonal knowledge, and commitment. The final axiom argues that competence requires measuring both appropriateness and effectiveness is essential to understanding how people achieve competent intercultural interactions. Using their four axioms, the authors develop a new definition of ICC competence: "Intercultural communication competence is the appropriate level of motivation, knowledge, and skills of both the sojourner and the host-national in regards to their relationship, leading to an effective relational outcome" (p. 277).

In order to measure their four axioms above, Imahori and Lanigan (1989) propose a model to conceptualize intercultural communication competence within the context of their newly developed definition. This model uses a dyadic approach in which members of both cultures involved in the interaction participate. Both members in the intercultural relationship possess three elements that contribute to

outcome of the relationship: competence, goal, and experience. Competence

includes: (a) knowledge of the interaction rules and culture general and specific

background; (b) motivation, or specific and general attitudes about other cultures; and

(c) the skills (recognized as Ruben's (1976) seven dimensions – see above) of each

person in the interaction. The authors contend that goals include the anticipated

outcome of the interaction. Experience includes taking into account prior success or

failure in mastering environments. The outcome of this model, according to Imahori

and Lanigan, is relational, and presumes that both parties contribute, and can be

calculated by assessing both and looking at discrepancies or similarities between two

the partners' scores. Their work is significant because it is one of the first pieces of

literature that suggests competency is comprised of all three constructs of ICC,

combines the constructs with effectiveness and appropriateness, and recognizes that

the success of cross-cultural exchanges includes the perceptions of members of both

cultures.

Measurement of Intercultural Competence: Critiques and New Directions

The next wave of literature regarding the measurement of intercultural

competence – spanning from the early 2000s to the present – offers critiques of

existing instruments and presents new measurement tools that address these critiques.

Measuring intercultural competence has become a popular exercise among

researchers and practitioners. Fantini (2006) provides a comprehensive list of

assessment tools currently available, and it includes over 80 tests.

During this period, assessment tools appear that measure constructs of competency outside the behavioral realm. For example, one of the most frequently cited tests is the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI). Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman (2003) developed the IDI to measure orientations towards cultural differences described in the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). The DMIS, developed by Bennett in the late 1990s, is a model for explaining how people construct cultural difference. The DMIS model is particularly useful in defining and conceptualizing intercultural competency (and later offers insight to how it is measured), so it is explained at length here.

The DMIS model assumes that as interactions between people and organizations become more sophisticated, so does one's competence in intercultural situations (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003). It is based on the constructivist view that states the richness of a life event is dictated by how people experience and perceive events. In the case of intercultural interactions, the complexity of how people experience events of cultural differences dictates how these events are interpreted. The model also assumes that each person has a cultural worldview, or perceptions of their own culture in relation to other cultures. Developing intercultural sensitivity entails gaining the ability to perceive and experience cultural differences in more complex ways.

Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman (2003) maintain that interpreting cultural difference can become part of one's cultural worldview – leading to more extensive understanding of other cultures and eventually greater intercultural competency. "Thus, the DMIS is not a descriptive model of changes in attitudes and behavior.

Rather, it is a model of changes in worldview structure, where the observable behavior and self-reported attitudes at each stage are indicative of the state of the underlying worldview" (p. 423). Each time one's worldview changes, his or her interpretations become more sophisticated. The researchers maintain that an individual rarely digresses from more complex to less complex.

The DMIS model outlines six orientations people move through in acquiring intercultural competence (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003). The orientations of DMIS occur in two major phases: ethnocentric and ethnorelative. The first stages of the ethnocentric phase include (1) denial, or the reality of other culture is not perceived or denied by the observer; (2) defense where one acknowledges cultural differences, but denigrates them in relation to one's own; and (3) minimization where one's own culture is seen as universal. The ethnorelative phase includes the stages of (1) acceptance where the person experiencing a new culture sees it as a complex and valid alternative to reality; (2) adaptation, where the new culture becomes comfortable and one is able to shift in and out of alternate views; and finally (3) integration where one's personal experience expands to include a worldview of other cultures.

In order to assess an individual's stage in the DMIS, researchers developed the Intercultural Development Inventory. Using qualitative and quantitative methods and a culturally diverse research team, the investigators developed and tested several versions of the IDI in order to eventually create what they maintain is a 50 item valid and reliable psychometric instrument. The inventory assumes that one's intercultural sensitivity is important to measuring one's intercultural competency, so it is designed

to measure "an individual's (or group's) fundamental worldview orientation to cultural difference, and thus the individual's or group's capacity for intercultural competence" (Bennett & Hammer, 2002, p. 1). Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman (2003) note that, "the final, 50-item IDI can be used with confidence as a measurement of the five dimensions of the DMIS…. This measurement should be useful for purposes of assessing training needs, guiding interventions for individual and group development of intercultural competence, contributing to personnel selection, and evaluating programs" (p. 441).

The myriad of other tests, each briefly outlined in Fantini's (2006) inventory, all conceptualize and measure competency differently. Many of them, however, are based on behavioral constructs outlined and explored by Ruben (1979) and the stages of the DMIS (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003).

One notable trend in the 2000s was the beginning of deep criticism of existing assessments. Arasaratnam (2007) maintains that while Ruben's (1976) behavioral work has a strong history, it has been used little in recent research and that it provides an unclear application for multiple cultures. Arasaratnam and Doerfel (2005) note finding and defining a model of intercultural communication competence and scale that translates well across cultures is difficult. Measuring variables in multicultural settings requires finding items that have minimal cultural bias and using research techniques that work in the cultural context in which the research is going on. This presents unique challenges to scholars seeking to measure ICC. Often this type of work requires testing of measurement items in relevant cultural settings before using them.

Arasaratnam (2007) also offers several critiques of the Intercultural

Development Inventory. She notes that the IDI does not effectively measure

competency because there is little research on whether sensitivity is a predictor of

intercultural communication competence, and that sensitivity is conceptually different

from ICC. While the researchers who developed the IDI (Hammer, Bennett, &

Wiseman, 2003) argue that the DMIS measures competence differently by measuring

constructs outside those commonly associated with intercultural communication

competence – namely behaviors and attitudes – other authors such as Greenholtz

(2000) advocate for the use of the IDI as an effective tool to measure intercultural

competency. Greenholtz maintains: "The dimension of cultural sensitivity has long

been recognized as playing a vital role in the success or failure of cross-cultural

endeavors" (p. 416).

Arasaratnam (2007) offers considerations for ICC measurement. She

maintains that ICC must be assessed in a world where globalization and migration are

commonplace, but that evaluation is challenging:

> The complex nature of intercultural communication continues to be a
> methodological challenge to the researcher. More so than in intra-cultural
> research, intercultural research engages the researcher at a level where the
> researcher's own (cultural) objectivity and ethnic identity are made relevant in the
> process of analysis and interpretation of data (p. 106).

She reviews several quantitative approaches to intercultural research, outlining how

construct, method, and item biases affect this unique form of research. Construct

means the measurement "does not account for all the relevant domains" (p. 104), but

also occurs when measures are transferred from one culture to the next. For example,

job satisfaction or financial security may mean something different in different

cultures. Method bias means that the way in which items are presented in a study

may not transfer across cultures. In cultures where people are used to answering five

item Likert Scales, or using computer based tests, then there is no method bias, but if

this is not the case, it can effect respondents' answers. Item bias means that a

measure may be inappropriate or irrelevant for a different cultural group. She notes

that it is important to translate items not only for language, but also for concepts.

Arasaratnam (2007) then recommends more rigorous methodological

standards, like more clearly defined variables, avoiding cultural bias as much as

possible, and including multiple cultural perspectives in research design to make sure

measures are both relevant and appropriate across cultures. She notes that in the past,

researchers have adapted several existing measures in order to measure ICC in

relationship to general communication competence. Findings indicate several aspects

of communication are independent of the cultural context. She argues this is not

always the best practice: "Even though it is encouraging to see that research in

interpersonal competence can be adapted to intercultural communication contexts, a

conceptual model of intercultural communication has to be based on culturally

diverse perspectives" (p. 113). This vein of research is often in Western settings with

Western participants. Past measures of intercultural communication competence are

not based on models of ICC that are developed from diverse cultural perspectives.

According to Arasaratnam, by trying to adapt a model of interpersonal competency

conceptualized in Western setting, researchers are often unwittingly imposing a

Western view. New models are needed that takes this into account, models that use

culture general methodologies. Cultural general methodologies assume that there are

common ways in which people perceive phenomena that span across cultures.

Researchers, she suggests, should use measures with cultural general parameters.

Arasaratnam (2009) argues:

> One of the most useful instruments in this climate of globalization and
> performance evaluations based on intercultural competency would be an
> instrument which not only evaluates one's intercultural communication
> competence but also performs well amongst participants from multiple cultural
> backgrounds (p. 1).

To address the criticisms of competency measures, Arasaratnam and Doerfel

(2005) (see also Arasaratnam, 2006) created a new model for testing competency by

developing and testing variables to measure ICC. The variables are developed

through qualitative interviews to determine the qualities of effective communicators

and characteristics of people who are interculturally competent (Arasaratnam &

Doerfel, 2005). The five variables that emerged as common characteristics among

the culturally competent include: empathy, motivation, attitude toward other cultures,

experience with other cultures, and listening or interaction involvement. Arasaratnam

(2006) defines empathy as the ability to participate in emotional and cognitive role

behavior. The concept of experience varies, but can encompass experience living

abroad, traveling abroad, specific training in intercultural competence, and close

personal relationships with people from other cultures. Listening is defined as

involvement in the interaction, while attitudes entail a positive, non-ethnocentric

outlook toward people from other cultures. Motivation, the author maintains, is the

desire to learn about and engage with people from other cultures. In testing these

variables in a quantitative survey, Arasaratnam (2006) found significant relationships

between the above characteristics and intercultural communication competency. She

found a positive, significant relationship between ICC and interaction involvement, motivation, and empathy, and no statistically significant relationship between empathy and experience.

Arasaratnam (2006) argues this model is a legitimate measure of ICC because it is based on the assumption that: "Each individual is a representative of his/her socio-cultural upbringing. Therefore, even one person's description of a competent intercultural communicator (based on his/her own perception) provides some insight into the culture that he/she belongs to" (p. 94), therefore, "People belong to communities where there are shared memories of historic events, cultural norms, and presumably a shared understanding of what ICC is from a perspective of the culture that they belong to because there is shared meaning between people of a culture" (p. 94). Later testing of the model (Arasaratnam, 2009) suggests that the instrument's variables effectively predict intercultural communication competence. Also, she uses a multicultural sample, which, she argues, offers stronger support for the instrument in light of her criticisms of other measurements.

Formal measurement and assessment of intercultural compentency has an interesting and informative history. In the early period, competency was measured using behavioral parameters, headed by Ruben (1976) who developed seven observable characteristics that define culturally competent individuals. The late 1980s saw a resurgence in calls for measurement, and featured the first behavioral assessment tool (Koester & Olebe, 1988). Research moved away from assessing individuals, and started to consider situations (Dinges & Lieberman, 1989). Scholars also began to streamline previous work, and argue that considering the affective,

behavioral, and cognitive dimentions or the components of effectiveness and appropriateness alone do not present an accurate conceptualization of compentency in intercultural interactions (Imahori & Lanigan, 1989).

The 2000s saw a resurgence of literature concerning ICC assessment, focused primarily on the critique and development of measurement tools. By this time, assessment instruments had proliferated to measure ICC in a variety of contexts (Fantini, 2006) – many of them employing conceptual frameworks other than the behavioral domains used during earlier periods (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003). During the most recent period, scholars begin to present criticisms of these tools. These criticisms include the application of assessment tools across multiple cultures; considerations about construct, method, and item bias; lack of multiple cultural perspectives in existing tests; and acceptance of the conceptualizations of competency as commonplace (Arasaratnam, 2007). In sum, intercultural competence has historically been measured using specific constructs – such as behaviral parameters – using assessment tools tested through qualitative and/or quantiative methods. The above research illustrates that when considering an assessment tool, it is important to understand the conceptual underpinnings of that tool and what it measures – such as skills, behaviors, or attitudes.

When presented with the challenge of assessing intercultural competency, organizations and individuals are presented with a large number of tools – each of which tests competency levels using different conceptual frameworks and techniques.

The Merger of Living-Learning Programs and Intercultural Competency

This chapter detailed the major findings in both living-learning program and intercultural competency literature. These two distinct areas of study show virtually no overlap. This study, however, by examining International House – a living-learning program that actively seeks to promote global competency in its participants – offers insight to how the two may intertwine. The next chapter addresses the methodology that will be used to illustrate the nature of the intersections between these bodies of knowledge.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Ethnography is complex – with a rich history of theory and inquiry – and this chapter explores the methodology at length. First, this chapter examines the history of ethnography and how that historical framework has shaped conceptualizations of the methodology. Second, it addresses how ethnography is used. Third, it covers considerations that ethnographers bear in mind when embarking on this type of research. Fourth, it presents the theoretical perspectives ethnographers consider. Fifth, this chapter specifically outlines how ethnography will be used to research International House, including methodological matters and theoretical frameworks.

Geertz (1973) is a prominent and highly respected ethnographer. In his seminal work *The Interpretation of Cultures,* he offers a definition of the methodology. He notes, "Doing ethnography is like trying to read…a manuscript – foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventionalized graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behavior" (Geertz, 1973, p. 10). According to Geertz, the purpose of writing ethnographies is to create descriptions of a culture. He adds that the descriptions themselves are not the culture, but rather are part of a system of scientific analysis. The writings are merely interpretations of second or third order descriptions.

Geertz argues that in ethnography, culture is treated as a symbolic system where the elements are isolated, then the relationships between those elements are identified, and then the elements are characterized into a whole system in some

general way by using symbols, structures, and principles. "Understanding a people's culture exposes their normalness without reducing their peculiarity… It renders them accessible: setting them in the frame of their own banalities, it dissolves their opacity" (Geertz, 1973, p. 14). Culture is articulated through behavior, but the researcher does not make those behaviors seem too coherent or create systems that do not exist. "Cultural analysis is (or should be) guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses, not discovering the Continent of Meaning [sic] and mapping out the bodiless landscape" (Geertz, 1973, p. 20). In writing it down, an ethnographer creates social discourse and turns passing events into occurrences.

According to Geertz (1973), ethnographic description is interpretive – which means researchers attempt to reorganize the discourse from the public sphere into broader themes – with those interpretations changing as new things are learned. Interpretations are not meant to be predictive or be universally applied, but can speak to larger issues. The purpose is not to create sweeping abstractions, but to describe the subtle distinctions of the culture studied.

Agar (1996) argues, "Ethnography is an ambiguous term, representing both a process and a product" (p. 53). The product is usually a published text, focused on a social group, guided by theory and methods. Process, according to Agar, refers to how the ethnographer attempts a comprehensive understanding of some human group. Ethnography is a rich social science that is difficult to understand and explain, is a special approach to understanding the human situation, and contrasts with the hypothesis testing approach. Further, while primarily anthropologists traditionally

used ethnography, scholars in several disciplines now use the methodology (Van Maanen, 1988; Clifford, 1986; Bernard, 2006; Willis & Trondman, 2000).

More recently, Willis and Trondman (2000) asked, "What is ethnography for us? Most importantly it is a family of methods involving direct and sustained social contact with agents, and of richly writing up the encounter, respecting, recording, representing at least partly *in its own terms* [sic], the irreducibility of human experience. Ethnography is the witness-cum-recording of human events" (p. 5). Wacquant (2003) defines ethnography as "social research based on the close-up, on-the-ground observation of people and institutions in real time and space, in which the investigator embeds herself near (or within) the phenomenon so as to detect how and why agents on the scene act, think and feel the way they do" (p. 5).

According to the above authors, ethnography provides careful and systematic interpretations of culture through descriptive writings. The descriptions identify common elements and those elements are in turn characterized into a system. Recording the systems discovered creates a larger discourse for understanding broader human, social, and cultural issues. The interpretations change, however, just as culture changes. Both the descriptions and interpretations are based on the researcher's experience in that culture. Ethnography is rooted in social sciences, and requires a mixture of approaches – each of which contribute to broader understanding of the culture under investigation. Both the research process and the final written product characterize the methodology (Agar, 1996; Geertz, 1973; Willis & Trondman, 2000; Wacquant, 2003).

The Metamorphosis of Ethnography

According to DeWalt and DeWalt (2002), Frank Hamilton Cushing wrote one of the first recorded ethnographies. Commissioned by the Smithsonian Institute Bureau of Ethnology to study the Zuni Pueblo in 1879, he lived among members of the tribe for four years, though he published little. Before Cushing's experience, anthropologists usually compiled ethnographies using second-hand accounts from explorers and travelers. Cushing introduced a new way of conducting research when he lived with the population he studied. By the 1920s, field based research was the established norm for ethnographers. For the next hundred years, ethnographers conducted extensive research, living for years among the populations they studied, and wrote detailed accounts (some of the most notable include Franz Boas, Bronsilaw Malinowski, and Margaret Mead). Little early work focused on standardizing or conceptualizing the methodology (Madison, 2005; Van Maanen, 1988; Kuper, 1999).

As stated earlier, Geertz's (1973) work served as a foundation for the interpretation of ethnography. His highly influential book, *The Interpretation of Cultures,* published in the early 1970s, served as one of the first attempts to interpret the theory and practice of ethnography. His work served as a foundation for future inquiry in the field, streamlined the study of ethnography, and identified ethnography as a legitimate methodology (Clifford & Marcus, 1985; Clifford, 1986). Since Geertz published his seminal work that first outlined the intricacies of ethnography as a method, ethnography has since proliferated and reached wide acceptance (Behar, 2003). The field has also changed dramatically, and is constantly undergoing self-examination (Willis & Trondman, 2000). This section outlines how the practice of

conducting ethnographies has changed over time, and offers an interpretation of the methodology based on its historical roots.

As stated in Chapter 2, in the 1970s, Geertz laid a major framework for understanding how culture is conceptualized and studied. During that period, ethnography was tied almost exclusively to the field of anthropology. The 1980s saw further attempts to define and outline the meaning of ethnography. In 1984, for example, several prominent anthropologists met at the School of American Research to build on Geertz's work through a series of intense discussions that led to the publication of the widely cited text *Writing Culture* (Clifford & Marcus, 1985). The book and its contributors sought to help ethnography regain authority amidst what they recognized as an epistemological crisis. Clifford (1986), one of the book's editors, cites the changes causing the upheaval. He states that recent formal restrictions by groups or governments required ethnographers to examine their ethical standards and practices. He also notes that Western researchers had dominated the field in the past, but that their control over discourse and theory was waning. Additionally, according to Clifford, a cultural outsider traditionally assumed the role of researcher, but scholars were beginning to challenge that assumption. The text called upon ethnographers to reexamine how they represent themselves and others in their writing, to stop assuming they possessed the ultimate authority to speak for others, to offer descriptions of how they carried out their research, to respect older traditions while also creating new ones, and to share their theoretical frameworks (Clifford, 1986; Rosaldo, 1986; Pratt, 1986; Crapanzano, 1986). The book's

contributors, however, strayed little from Geertz's (1973) conceptualization of culture and how it is studied.

Considerations about ethnographic writing also entered the discourse in the 1980s. For example, Clifford (1986) notes that literary styles of writing were becoming more common. "No longer a marginal, or occulted, dimension, writing has emerged as central to what anthropologists do both in the field and thereafter" (p. 2). Also in this period, Van Maanen (1988) published a text titled *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography* (discussed at length below) that detailed various ethnographic writing styles – including their meanings and implications.   Further, scholars acknowledged that researchers from all disciplines, not just anthropology, were beginning to effectively use ethnography as a research methodology – a change welcomed in the field (Van Maanen, 1988; Clifford, 1986; Bernard, 2006; Willis & Trondman, 2000).

In 1980, Agar (1996) authored another book that explored the theory and practices of ethnography at length entitled *The Professional Stranger.* He published a second edition in the mid-1990s where he explored how the practice of ethnography had changed over the previous fifteen years. His discussion is particularly valuable because it offers a comprehensive perspective on the methodology. Agar (1996) stated that traditional ethnographies examined others ("them") from the perspective of an insider ("us"). Texts divided cultures into domains of human life such as economic structures and religious practices. In their published reports, ethnographers assumed a community would stay the same forever. Researchers worked alone while living among a group of people and observing daily life in their communities, crafting

an image of that group when they returned home. Fifteen years later, however, ethnographers started to question the traditional roles and practices of ethnographers, noting the hierarchical nature of the methodology.

By the mid-1990s, according to Agar (1996), ethnographers started to propose a new model for ethnography. Scholars in the field started to question how the ethnographer's perspective influenced her collection and interpretation of data. They also noted that communities and their cultures are fluid entities, not static entities as they were portrayed in the past (see also Smadar & Swedenburg, 1996). Ethnographers also started to realize that they carried a great responsibility to the members of the communities they researched, and owed it to them to represent them accurately. Agar also states that researchers began to include members of the community in the research process, sharing their findings with their subjects. They started to acknowledge and respect power structures and how they effected their representations of themselves and others. During the mid-1990s, ethnographers stressed methods more heavily, calling for some standardization so ethnography would be considered as rigorous as competing methodologies.

In the last decade, scholars have continued to scrutinize ethnography as a research methodology. During this time, Willis and Trondman (2000) started a new journal, entitled *Ethnography,* devoted exclusively to the publication of ethnographic research. In the first issue, published in 2000, they outlined their conception of ethnography. They argue that discussions about the role of theory dominated discourse (the role of theory in ethnography and how it is conceptualized is explored later in this study). They also noted that culture was still the central focus of

ethnographic writing, and that ethnographers continued to struggle with how power structures influenced their observations and writing.

In 2002, several prominent ethnographers convened in Berkeley to address past achievements in the field, reflect on current practices, and sketch a future for the new century (Wacquant, 2003). Using open dialogue to come to decisions, the conference participants addressed a major conflict between sociologists and anthropologists as practicing ethnographers. They concluded that while those fields represent the two distinct, dominant legs of ethnography, it was time to bridge the divide and welcome scholars from other disciplines so as to not alienate them from the discourse.   It is interesting that the conversation about the application of ethnography to other fields – started at a conference two decades earlier (Clifford, 1986) – was still unresolved in 2002. Berkeley conference participants also recognized local, multi-site, and global based research sites and valuable contributors to ethnographic discourse. During this period, according to DeWalt and DeWalt (2002), scholars also called for improvements of the use of ethnography as a method, including building researchers' skill sets.

Borneman and Hammoudi (2009) argue that the most recent debates in the field center on how ethnographers represent the cultures they portray in their writing and whether or not those accounts can be considered valid. Ethnographers also debate the level of authority the ethnographer can reasonably hold or expect as the sole interpreter of the culture under study (this issue is discussed at length below in the considerations section). While discourse about the practices of ethnography is still a prominent feature in literature (Behar, 2003), the above discussion allows for a

greater understanding of how ethnography has been conceptualized through time. The next section examines how researchers use ethnography as a methodology, and many of the above themes resonate over the following pages.

Ethnography as a Research Methodology

Agar (1996) offers an informative overview of how ethnography is carried out by differentiating it from what he refers to as more mainstream forms of research. Mainstream social science research, he asserts, pivots around the idea of hypothesis testing where a hypothesis – or "statement of predicted truth" (p. 113) – is used to test a theory's predictions by stating the relationship between groups of variables. The theory is a loosely connected set of generalizations. Subjects must be identified before the hypothesis is tested, and subjects are selected using a recognized sampling method. Once a sample is defined, variables are operationalized and data is collected, analyzed, and compared to the hypothesis.

Ethnography, Agar (1996) argues, is different from the above model. Ethnographers rely on direct, personal relationships within the communities they study. A hypothesis driven model does not allow for those relationships to form because these models rely on traditional data gathering. Researchers who use the ethnographic method cannot specify the types of questions they intend to ask, and their samples are not defined before inquiry starts – rather subjects must be discovered through observation. Ethnographers identify their variables as they go, relying on a holistic evaluation of how those variables flow through their various observations. Ethnographic researchers enter a research site with a firm idea of the

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theoretical framework that drives how they interpret the phenomena they observe and knowledge they hope to acquire. They then interpret what is happening in the culture around them through a series of observations and interviews. The researcher's experiences in the field serve as her source of data. Katz (2001) adds that ethnographers do not know the nature of the field until they go there, but once themes start to emerge, they look for models to guide their work. This summary offers a basic overview of ethnography, and the following text gives a detailed description of how ethnographers actually carry out their research.

The First Steps

The first step of an ethnographic study – like most other research – is to conduct a literature review. While some ethnographers argue that an extensive literature review can pollute the research process, many scholars argue it is an essential first step. Once a researcher has an idea for a project, (s)he finds out what has been done by referring to people in related fields and reviewing various forms of literature. After themes are identified through the literature review, ethnographers start to form questions that will guide their inquiry and determine if ethnography is the appropriate methodology to answer those questions. Following practical considerations like Institutional Review Board approval for research designs, the researcher then identifies a site where research may be carried out. Ethnographers also consider if their research design is practical with the resources available (including time, people, and money) (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002; Bernard, 2006; Agar, 1996; Madison, 2005).

Fieldwork and Fieldnotes

Once the researcher selects a site, she travels to the site and begins to collect data. The fieldwork experience comprises of several steps and elements. Van Maanen (1988) recognizes fieldwork as the process of living in and like those who are being studied, bringing together the fieldworker and members of the culture under investigation to make data collection more authentic. While Katz (2001) argues there is no one way to conduct fieldwork and that every ethnographer does it differently, looking to the work of different ethnographers helps guide practice. Also, there are some considerations and standard procedures outlined in literature.

Gaining entrée into a community can be a tricky process – especially if the culture under study is significantly different from that of the researcher – and several authors cover the process of doing so effectively (see, for example, Agar, 1996; Bernard, 2006; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Madison, 2005; DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). Suggestions include gaining access from a reliable, respected source as opposed to just showing up, starting with a small group of people, paying special attention to initial informants to ensure they are not peripheral ("deviant") community members (Agar, 1996), not bombarding subjects with too many questions and demands too early, avoiding sites that are very difficult to enter, and getting to know the physical and social layout of the field site (Bernard, 2006).

Often initial data are collected during the field experience through participant observation. In a text that focuses on participant observation in detail, DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) state, "Research involving participant observation as a method is not different from any other empirical research endeavor in that it is a way to take ideas

(theories and hypothesis) and hold them up against the real world to see if they can survive" (p. 92). Participant observation, they continue, is a method in which the researcher takes part in daily activities and rituals of a group of people as a means of learning about their lives. It examines two aspects of culture: the explicit (those which people can articulate) and tacit (those that are outside everyday awareness). A bulk of the fieldwork experience often consists of participant observations. They consider it the "foundation of ethnographic research" (p. 2), an assertion Bernard (2006) supports. Agar (1996) offers a descriptive definition: "[P]articipant observation means you are actually there, that you enter the world of the people you're working with rather than bringing them into your world. In this sense, participant observation is a *diagnostic* [sic] feature of ethnography" (p. 9).

On a spectrum of observation techniques, participant observation falls in the middle of the continuum, with complete participant on one end and complete observer on the other. When completely participating, the researcher becomes a full part of the group – without divulging she is engaged in research – while completely observing means the researcher observes and records what she sees, but interacts very little with the people around her (Bernard, 2006; DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). Agar (1996) suggests, however, that observation is the dominant feature of the method, not participation.

Participant observation, according to DeWalt and DeWalt (2002), often requires learning the local language, participating in a wide range of activities in a community, conversing with community members using everyday conversation, watching day-to-day activities to reveal greater cultural themes, and recording

observations in field notes (explored later). Bernard (2006) adds that it is a strategic

method that places the researcher at the center of action when collecting data,

involves experiencing the lives of people as much as possible, often takes a year or

longer, and involves cultural immersion where the ethnographer ceases being a visitor

and becomes a member of the community. The skills necessary for a participant

observer include building awareness of details of events going on, the ability to gain

and maintain rapport, effective writing skills, and strong memory for places and

events. The advantages of participant observation, note DeWalt and DeWalt (2002),

is that it enhances the quality of data, providing more complete, detailed reports that

allow for enhanced data interpretation. It also encourages the formulation of new,

more salient research questions that provide greater insight into cultural studies.

As stated earlier, a key element of the participant observation experience is

recording one's experiences in field notes. Field notes act as a detailed record of the

ethnographer's observations (Agar, 1996; DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). In a book

dedicated the topic entitled *Writing Ethnographic Field Notes*, Emerson, Fretz, and

Shaw (1995) discuss strategies to consider when recording and organizing field notes.

They advise starting with initial impressions, moving on to insights learned later

when observations seem normal to the researcher. They suggest recording key events

in an unbiased manner, but recording feelings and reactions to those incidents.

Researchers should then move beyond their personal reactions and record more

detailed observations, look for different forms of events, and identify emerging

patterns and their exceptions.

According to Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995), ethnographers can record field notes on the spot (referred to as open jottings) or remember what they see and record it later (called head notes). Both tactics have advantages and disadvantages. While open jottings are often more detailed and accurate, they can strain relationships, and it may be culturally inappropriate for the researcher to be taking notes in a notebook or on a computer. They recommend that notes – no matter when they are recorded – include details of key components of the observations and the researcher's reactions. They should initially focus on events and how they play out, not the reasons behind why they are happening that way. Sensory details can offer additional insight, and ethnographers are advised to avoid overgeneralizations. When using jottings to write up formal field notes (done after the observation period), the authors suggest it is more important to get everything in writing and polish it later. It is important to transcribe notes as soon as possible, though the viewpoint (such as first or third person) or the order in which it is reported (chronological order or starting with a high point) is up to the researcher.

Fieldwork is vital to the ethnographic process, but ethnographers also rely on other methods. As Van Maneen (1988) notes, "In complex settings, fieldwork, while a vitally important and core activity, is not likely on its own to provide a particularly balanced representation of a culture without being supplemented by diverse readings, broadened reflection, and (gasp) other research techniques" (p. 139). Often ethnographers use interviews after spending time in the field as a participant observer and recording observations in field notes. Agar (1996) asserts that observations *must* be enriched with interviews: "…[O]bservation is subordinate to what one learns in

interviews. Observations are a way to test what you've learned, ways to complicate
and contradict the encyclopedia and develop additional interviews and
conversations…" (p. 9).

Interviews

Interviews that serve as data sources in research projects take three major
forms: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured, and each type of interview
produces a different type of data (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Bernard, 2006; Berg, 2007;
DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002; Agar, 1996). Structured interviews follow a prescribed
script where all subjects are asked the same questions in the same order. Semi-
structured interviews include interview protocols to give researchers guidance, but the
interaction between interviewer and interviewee is more fluid as responses and stories
lead each interview down a different path. Unstructured interviews include no
research questions, only a general concept of the themes and interests that drive the
research. They function more as conversations between discussion partners, one of
whom is a researcher.

Each type of interview serves a different purpose. Semi-structured and
unstructured interviews often serve to inform structured interview questions.
Structured interview questions are most often used for quantitative studies, while
interviews with less structured formats are generally characterized as qualitative in
nature (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). This demarcation is not concrete – several
contradictions are available in both quantitative and qualitative studies.
Ethnographers, for example, often rely on all three types of interviews (Agar, 1996;
Bernard, 2006; DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002).

Interviews are defined as an "exchange" (Corbin & Morse, 2003, p. 342) or even a "dance" (Hoffman, 2007, p. 337) between the interviewer and interviewee. Creswell (2007) argues qualitative data falls into one of four basic categories: observations, documents, audio-visual materials, and interviews. Ninety percent of all qualitative research, however, uses interviews as the primary source of data (Roulston, Baker, & Liljestrom, 2001). According to Roulston, deMarrais, and Lewis (2003), interviews are a unique and dynamic form of research because the researcher cannot anticipate the outcome due to the less structured nature of the exchange between interviewer and interviewee. Further, Kvale (2006) contends: "In qualitative interviews, social scientists investigate varieties of human experience. They attempt to understand the world from the subjects' points of view to unfold the meaning of their lived world" (p. 481).

Scholars regularly discuss the nature of interviews. Many researchers conceptualize interviews by comparing them to everyday conversations. Berg (2007) argues that interviews are not like casual conversations because they are more focused, require that one person do most of the talking, carry the expectation that the interviewer will learn to overcome avoidance tactics that are commonplace in daily discussion, and necessitate careful listening. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) agree and add that researchers have an agenda and are more interested in some themes than others, which leads to an exchange that varies considerably from an everyday discussion. Also, unlike a regular conversation, the researcher records the exchange by taping it or taking notes. Rubin and Rubin (2005) ascertain that interviews are extensions of ordinary conversations because they are re-invented each time and

unpredictable. They vary from everyday exchanges, however, because they can require interviewers to come up with a predetermined set of questions (in the case of semi-structured interviews), subjects are intentionally introduced, they are more structured, and interviews require researchers to use more intense listening skills than they might use in their day-to-day discussions.

In order to select the subjects to interview, the ethnographer employs a sampling method. Ethnographers may choose sampling methods employed by other social scientists such as systematic sampling (choosing a number N – based on the desired sample size and number of interviews – and interviewing every Nth person on a list) or stratified sampling (dividing a population into demographic or other groups and selecting a random sample from within each strata – see Bernard (2006) for a full discussion about sampling techniques). Agar (1996) states that random samples are difficult to get in ethnography, and notes that ethnographers often rely on sampling strategies such as opportunistic sampling (choosing people who are willing and available) or judgmental (seeking people who know about the area under investigation). He argues that these sampling strategies are sufficient as long as the investigator is clear about the sample bias that will inevitably exist with these techniques.

Data Analysis

In ethnography, the data collection is comprised of participant observation and interviews. The ethnographer is then required to analyze her field notes and interview transcriptions to uncover themes that guide her understanding of the culture under

inquiry. Those themes are then composed into a narrative. Van Maanen (1988)

articulates the complexity and importance of this process:

> Human culture is not something to be caged for display, put on a slide for
> instruction, read from an instrument, or hung on a wall for viewing. The
> fieldworker must display culture in a narrative, a written report of the fieldwork
> experience in self-consciously selected words. Ethnography is the result of
> fieldwork, but it is the written words that must represent the culture, not the
> fieldwork itself (p. 4).

The process of sifting data and narrowing its focus can be difficult because the

ethnographer often gathers a great deal of information and several variables have

presented themselves. According to Agar (1996), it is a necessary step to articulate a

concise narrative. The goal, he maintains, is for the researcher to justify why she has

come to certain conclusions for potential skeptical outsiders. In analysis, researchers

may use formal or informal analysis techniques (explored below), but typically

ethnographers follow informal data gathering techniques such as observations and

unstructured interviews with more formal techniques. He notes the process functions

like a funnel with wide research interests narrowing as the process goes on: "As you

begin to focus your interest on certain topics, the funnel narrows. You may focus

because of a priori interest you brought to the field, because of what you learned in

the first period of fieldwork, or because of both. But still you are alternating learning

with tests of what you have learned" (Agar, 1996, p. 184).

Typically ethnographers code their observation and interview data to identify

and support themes. Bernard (2006) asserts researchers choose one type of coding

before they begin their work: inductive or deductive. Inductive coding means the

researcher becomes grounded in data and allows understanding to emerge, and

deductive means the ethnographer starts with a hypothesis before coding. During this

process, according to Borneman and Hammoudi (2009), the primary role of the ethnographer is to translate participants' words and texts (if available). They then come to a deeper level of understanding about the meanings they hold by using their intimate knowledge of the language and ways of the people they study.

Field notes are the ethnographer's main source of data. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) provide several suggestions for organizing field notes. They suggest reading them in total, coding them analytically, then bringing them together to identify theoretical ideas and themes. The researcher may use two types of coding – either open coding where themes are derived from the notes through what the researcher has observed or focused coding where the ethnographer uses pre-established codes and identifies those codes in her notes. Themes are determined by phenomena that repeatedly emerge and by what participants emphasize as important. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) offer a detailed description of the coding process:

> Qualitative coding is a way of opening up avenues of inquiry: the researcher identifies and develops concepts and analytic insights through close examination of and reflection on fieldnote data. Such coding is not fundamentally directed at putting labels on bits and pieces of data so that what 'goes together' can be collected in a single category; the ethnographer is indeed interested in categories, but less as a way to sort data than as a way to name, distinguish, and identify the conceptual import and significance of particular observations. …[I]n qualitative coding we identify, elaborate, and refine analytic insights from and for the interpretation of data" (p. 151).

Once the researcher has read and completely coded her field notes until no new themes emerge, she then continues to test those themes through formal and informal techniques. Throughout this process, ethnographers use memos. In initial memos, researchers start to write about emerging themes, and integrative memos start to link data together.

Narratives

Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) provide strategies for translating observed moments into detailed texts. The writing may take the form of a description of events or scenes, of dialogues between participants and researcher(s), or of characterizations of the dress, movements, and behaviors of those under study. Narratives may be organized as detailed sketches of events presented out of sequence by the researcher who assumes the role of distant observer, or they may be presented as episodes where the researcher recounts incidents chronologically.

As ethnographers bring their analyses together, they compose narratives that act as representations of the culture under study. In his text entitled *Tales of the Field*, Van Maanen (1988) outlines the various forms those narratives (which he refers to as "tales") take, including their underlying philosophies. It is up to the researcher to determine what type of tale best suits her needs by considering what style best fits her philosophical and personal style.

Van Maanen (1988) details three major forms of ethnography: realist, confessional, and impressionist. He notes that realist tales are the most familiar and regularly published form of ethnographic writing. They take the form of "an author proclaimed description and something of an explanation for a specific, bounded, observed (or nearly observed) cultural practices" (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 45). They are firmly grounded in the belief that the report should be as authentic as possible, and are driven by four conventions. First, the author is absent from the text, possessing ultimate authority and passing on objective reports not influenced by personal biases with little discussion of methods. Second, they include the mundane

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details of everyday life, and those details are plugged into various categories. Third, they include daily, routine events and the participants' points of view about those events. Fourth, realist tales illustrate and support existing theories as observations give way to interpretations.

The second type of narrative, the confessional tale, was inspired by a desire to articulate methodology to the narrative in order to establish its legitimacy (Van Maanen, 1988). These tales are characterized by three conventions. The author is present throughout the text, assuming an active role and establishing an intimacy with readers. The fieldworker also includes her point of view and shares her techniques for obtaining data – such as they cultural norms she learned. Finally, these reports take on a natural tone where researchers share their perspectives, but authors still attempt to remain unbiased. These tales, the author notes, are rarely published – those that are often follow previously published realist tales or become classified as autobiographies. They are, he notes, becoming more popular as authors attempt to share their perspectives with readers in order to show that the neutral world of researcher does not exist, and that there are many ways to interpret cultural data.

The last type of narrative, the impressionist tale, is the least common (Van Maanen, 1988). It paints detailed pictures of the research scene using stories and imagery. The first of four conventions that drive this style of writing is the author's identity. Events are recounted in order – including every detail – and the ethnographer is conscious of how readers may perceive the presentation. Impressionists also make sure to outline their learning process, introducing theoretical questions as they arise. Each participant is characterized individually in these tales,

and each is given a voice. Finally, the author sacrifices all control – she only illustrates what is present and uses a literary tone to tell the tale almost like a novel.

Ethnographies may also take additional forms. While he explores the three types of narratives above at length, Van Maanen (1988) also briefly introduces tales that examine the structures of society through the lens of the disadvantaged (critical), tales that are stripped of context and designed to exclusively to test theory (formal), tales the rely on emotionally-charged fiction writing techniques (literary), and tales told by both fieldworker and participants where participants are also cast in the role of researcher (joint). Bernard (2006) offers additional descriptions of other forms of ethnographic narratives. He identifies ethnographies that are written by researchers who are also members of the culture under study (native), that examine written verse to look for regularities in how people tell their stories (performance), that have a foundation in the Bible and aim to search for wider philosophical meanings in culture (hermeneutics), and that create hypotheses by linking concepts that emerge from the text to substantive theories (grounded theory).

Regardless of the technique the researcher employs, ethnographers represent what they see in a literary sense (Crapanzano, 1986). Ethnographers' jobs, however, are unique from those of any other researcher. They live and work intimately with the members of the cultures they write about, and their text represents a public display of their culture. The next section addresses some of the major considerations ethnographers face when they interpret and represent the cultures they study.

Katz (2001) asserts that ethnographers should ask "why" questions as opposed to "how" questions regarding their methodology and techniques, because the "why" questions give broader, richer answers to researchers' questions. His argument is particularly salient as this section leaves the "how" questions and attempts to address some of the "how" questions regarding ethnography. Further, Van Maanen (1988) states that method discussions of ethnography must include: "(1) Assumed relationships between culture and behavior (the observed); (2) the experiences of the fieldworker (the observer); (3) the representational style selected to join the observer and observed; and (4) the role of the reader engaged in the active reconstruction of the tale (the audience)"(p. xi). The text below explores these issues as it addresses the considerations for each step in the ethnographic process.

Bias and Ethics

Several scholars have considered bias. It can affect both the collection and interpretation of data. Agar (1996) assuages that ethnography is an arrogant enterprise because ethnographers assume they can effectively interpret cultures. Researchers should be aware, however, that they also carry their own cultural values – sometimes unknowingly – and they need to consider this background when embarking on the research process. "Some of your biases will be jolted into awareness; some will only slowly emerge; and some will always lurk unrecognized in dark corners. Fieldwork presupposes an interpretive framework; and an interpretive framework cuts into the world like a jigsaw, leaving much of the wood behind" (Agar, 1996, p. 99). DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) support this notion: "We need to be

aware of who we are, understand our biases as much as we can, and understand and interpret our interactions with the people we study" (p. 31). They argue that this process should start at the beginning of the research project, not during inquiry or at the end.

In order to acknowledge biases, Agar (1996) argues, the researcher should be able to support her assumptions about participants with a statement or behavior from participants – study of methodology alone is not sufficient. Agar also suggests actively examining and acknowledging one's source of bias (including professional biases), and she offers strategies for combating them, such as having more than one ethnographer conduct research or having someone study the ethnographer at work.

Another primary area of consideration for ethnographers is ethics – that is, how they treat subjects when they engage in the research process. Madison (2005) defines ethics as the moral principles of right and wrong that guide the researcher's inquiry. She notes that the American Anthropological Association has a code of ethics regarding research that ethnographers are morally bound to follow. The code includes avoiding harm and respecting individuals. Madison further argues that ethnographers must abide by basic ethical rules like obtaining informed consent, but that consent is not a one-time occurrence: "The informed consent is dynamic and continuous: The process should be initiated by way of dialogue and negotiation with those studied" (Madison, 2005, p. 114). In order to honor that dialogue, researchers should maintain an ongoing discussion about their research with participants, discuss how the research will affect participants once published, share how the research will

be documented, answer subjects' questions, and make sure participants can contact them.

Considerations During Data Gathering

Each step of the ethnographic research process has separate considerations for researchers to bear in mind. For example, DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) maintain that during their participant observation researchers must reconcile how they can function as both participants and observers. They will always experience some detachment and separation, but should determine to what level they wish to participate in the community under study. If they are required to engage in or observe illegal or dangerous activity, for example, they must decide to what level they will get involved and how that decision affects their research. They also argue that the researcher must speak the local language, adhere to cultural codes, and be effective cross-cultural communicators. The authors note that researchers often make mistakes and that some of those mistakes seriously jeopardize data, while others pave the way to greater cultural understanding. Personally, ethnographers may experience culture shock, homesickness, anxiety, and depression as they are removed from their culture and support network. The researcher's gender may also affect acceptance into the community as males and females have access to different aspects of life in any community, but also raises greater questions about risks and exploitation of both researchers and participants based on traditional gender roles.

Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) pose considerations for researchers to contemplate during the field note recording process. Different people notice different things, and the process of selection and marginalization makes the ethnographic

researcher's experience unique. The authors note that the very action of writing down

field notes often makes the researcher an outsider or a cultural alien. They also assert

that taking field notes is an interpretive process, not prescriptive, and that

ethnographers must always keep that in mind. If researchers acknowledge their

theoretical backgrounds and their stance towards those they write about, Emerson,

Fretz, and Shaw maintain, those interpretations become clearer.

Ethnographers face further considerations when conducting interviews.

Madison (2005) states:

> The ethnographic interview opens realms of meaning that permeate beyond rote
> information or finding the 'truth of the matter.' The interviewee is not an object,
> but a subject with agency, history, and his or her own idiosyncratic command of
> a story. Interviewer and interviewee are in partnership and dialogue as they
> construct memory, meaning, and experience together" (p. 25).

She proposes the Goren Model that explores the elements that influence the

interviewer-interviewee relationship. Under this model, researchers are conscientious

of the fact that the subjects are sensitive to information that threatens their self

esteem, that everyone remembers events differently, that people can represent

generalizations as well as truth, that etiquette may keep people from sharing certain

information, and that trauma, fear, and dread can surface in interviews and lead to

emotional shut-downs. Interviewers, then, are bound to respect their subjects and not

judge them or force them to divulge information. Madison also argues that every

interviewer is also subjective and may fall prey to some of the same issues that face

their interviewees. When choosing subjects to interview, Bernard (2006) notes that

the sample selected (dictated by the sampling technique employed) should be credible

and researchers should question whether they represent the population under investigation effectively and how they represent them.

Ethnographers are in a unique situation because they transplant themselves from their own community into another (Agar, 1996). When they arrive in the new culture, they often can choose how to represent themselves. Madison (2005) maintains that ethnographers can tailor what they tell participants, and that disclosure falls on a spectrum from full disclosure to not identifying oneself as a researcher at all. She argues that full disclosure is more ethical.   Any level of disclosure, however, has advantages and disadvantages and affects the researcher's ability to carry out inquiry in different ways. The ability to choose one's level of disclosure, she maintains, also carries a great deal of power:

> It is important to be aware of power differences and status. If you are oblivious to or refuse to accept the power and privilege you carry with you as a researcher, you will be blind to the ways your privilege can be a disadvantage to others. If you cannot see or refuse to see the rewards of your status, you will also be blind to the complex inequities and veiled injustices of those whose status is unjustly subordinated (Madison, 2005, p. 33).

This power comes from the researcher's ability to represent those being studied in formal texts, and that power relationship has a profound effect on the research process (Van Maanen, 1988; Clifford, 1986).

Narratives: Interpretation and Representation

After data is collected, ethnographers face further quandaries once the writing process begins.   The researcher must determine the audience for her narrative – either academics in a particular field, social scientists, or lay readers (Van Maanen, 1988; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Such decisions dictate how much conceptual

language from specific fields one uses, extent of the discussion about methods, and literary style. As Van Maanen (1988) notes, "To produce an ethnography requires decisions about what to tell and how to tell it. These decisions are influenced by whom the writer plans to tell it to" (p. 25).

A significant portion of literature is devoted to considerations regarding representations of the researchers and those under investigation in ethnographies. In fact, Borneman and Hammoudi (2009) argue this is one of the primary debates for modern ethnographers. As stated earlier, ethnographers hold a great deal of power over the members of the culture under study, and a great deal of the power stems from their ability to create representations of a particular culture. According to Crapanzano (1986), the ethnographer is like a translator, but unlike traditional translators there is no existing text from which to work. The ethnographer relies completely on texts of her own creation. She interprets and reports what she sees, while making sense of something foreign and unfamiliar. Since there is often no existing discourse about the culture under study, the ethnographer's text may represent the full authority on a particular group.

Clifford (1986) summarizes the issue of representation coherently when he states, "The writing and reading of ethnography are overdetermined [sic] by forces beyond the control of either an author or an interpretive community. The contingencies – of language, rhetoric, power, and history – must now be openly confronted in the process of writing. They can no longer be evaded" (p. 25).

Scholars note that ethnographers are responsible to the scholarly community to be fair, accurate, and as objective as possible when analyzing and interpreting data

(DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002; Madison, 2005; Borneman & Hammoudi, 2009).

Additionally, because they carry the lens of a scholar themselves, ethnographers must

acknowledge that the images they create of others in their writing are not neutral, and

that they carry a serious moral and intellectual responsibility to represent them

without distortion (Van Maanen, 1988). Many ethnographic researchers agree,

however, that ethnographers are no longer assumed to be objective, rather they are

assumed to be subjective – and required to acknowledge that in their writing

(Clifford, 1986).

Validity is a major consideration in all research, and ethnography is no

exception. Bernard (2006) states, "Validity refers to the accuracy and trustworthiness

of instruments, data, and findings in research. Nothing in research is more important

than validity" (p. 53). He notes that validity of a concept uncovered in research is

dependent on two things: the utility of the device used to measure it and the

"collective judgment of the scientific community that a concept and its measure are

valid" (Bernard, 2006, p. 60). DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) argue that validity in

ethnography is not always straightforward, but that, "Validity is a quality of any type

of observation that has to do with the extent to which the results of the observations

correspond to the underlying reality. In other words, the description accurately

represents the phenomenon studied" (p. 96). They argue that absolute validity in any

research setting is not possible, but that the research process should be dedicated to

ensuring that an ethnographer's observations are as valid as possible.

According to Geertz (1973), ethnographers should seek to move beyond what

someone is doing and what they are observing and offer detailed descriptions of what

is going on. They should shift the focus from mere observation to instead describe and interpret what actions might mean – what he refers to as "thick description." Culture, he maintains, is not concrete. It cannot be reduced to descriptions because descriptions themselves are not the culture, but they are anthropological, or part of a system of scientific analysis. The writings are interpretations – second or third order descriptions – and those interpretations come out only in thick description. Katz (2001), however, argues that the notion of thick description is vague, and that too much description can lead to little theory and evidence being forced to fit data.

Failing to accurately represent members of a culture – or the culture itself – has several ramifications (Madison, 2005; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). It can lead to faulty generalizations that ignore the differences and distinctions of a culture while inaccurately universalizing experiences. For example, when an ethnographer assumes the experiences of men and women are the same in a particular culture. Researchers may also apply values from one culture to another (ethnocentrism), apply models or categories universally – and not necessarily accurately – such as calling a local story a "myth" though a member of the community may not use that term, or apply dichotomous examples to events ("good" and "bad" or "regular" and "irregular") when a spectrum may be more applicable. Engaging in these practices imposes meaning on cultural phenomena, failing to attend to community members' meanings by dismissing or subordinating them.

Behar (2003) offers additional insight regarding why misrepresentations occur that extends beyond other conceptualizations and even challenges ethnography as a methodology:

Ethnography began as a method, which was discovered, perfected, and institutionalized in western centers of power, for telling stories about the marginalized populations of the world. It has its origins in the flagrant colonial inequalities from which modernity was born and in the arrogant assumptions that its privileged intellectual class made about who has the right to tell stories about whom (pp. 15-16).

Her assertion is particularly relevant for ethnographers, and forces them to consider deeper causes of power differentials. Borneman and Hammoudi (2009) support this notion, further arguing that many ethnographers' concerns regarding representation are causing the most recent crises in the field, and that crises can be traced to the methodology's colonial roots.

Smadar and Swedenburg (1996) add to these arguments, noting that ethnographers have a duty to challenge the notion that there is a normal cultural base by which they can study other cultures. Traditionally, they assert, the Eurocenter served as the common metric by which all other cultures were compared, but that new assumptions are now in order. As an alternative, they support the creation of a third space where cultural understanding becomes common – through the fusion of Diaspora and border. Diasporas merge cultures to create common connections and understandings of those cultures, and border refuses to acknowledge political lines, instead paying attention to cultural demarcations.

Scholars ascertain that one way to address issues of representation is to change the view of the narratives themselves. Rather than viewing them as static, researchers can consider them changeable – just as they have come to consider culture a changing entity. They should consider cultural representations as open to debate by fieldworkers and informants, and representations should be expected to shift just as the culture shifts. Ethnographers may also offer new interpretations based on

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continuing open dialogue with those under study, and should attempt to involve participants in the research and interpretation process (Van Maanen, 1988; Madison, 2005; Clifford, 1986; Smadar & Swedenburg, 1996).

Researchers suggest other strategies for avoiding misrepresentations. Madison (2005) advises ethnographers not to impose their ambitions or goals onto their work, not to over romanticize what they see, not to sensationalize meanings – removing them from their contexts – and not to become too detached but rather engage in meaningful dialogue to come to understandings about the culture under investigation. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) argue that writing must represent what community members see as valuable so that meanings are discovered, not inferred. In order to be more conscious of meanings, they suggest paying attention to terms of address and settings, and asking everyday open-ended questions. Researchers should also use participants' own naturally occurring descriptions, stories, terms, typologies, contrasts, theories, categorizations, understanding of gender roles, and explanations, rather than creating their own.

Reflexivity is another recommendation for researchers regarding representation that appears throughout the literature. Shacklock and Smyth (1998) note: "Reflexivity in research is built on an acknowledgment of the ideological and historical power dominant forms of inquiry exert over the researcher and researched" (p. 6). It requires being mindful of where theories and paradigms come from, and acknowledging that writing does not reflect reality but rather contributes to reality construction. Reflexivity also requires that researchers fully understand their methodological choices and how those choices affect positions of authority and

representation (Madison, 2005; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Emerson, Fretz, and

Shaw (1995) effectively summarize considerations for reflexivity when they state:

> Reflexivity is central both to how we understand the worlds of others as well as
> how we understand the research enterprise. Reflexivity, when applied to
> understanding of members' worlds, helps us to see those worlds as shaped not by
> variables or structures that stand above or apart from people but rather as
> meaning systems negotiated and constructed in and through relationships (p.
> 216).

Further, DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) note that reflexivity is a major consideration for

modern ethnographers and that it has changed ethnographic practices:

> Contemporary anthropology has seen an explosion in literature that is produced
> by individuals who find it important to examine how their own feelings,
> prejudices, and personal characteristics influence their interpretations of
> information. That is, ethnography becomes the interaction of the people studied
> (the Other) with the anthropologist (the Self) (p. 31).

As the above section illustrates, ethnographers hold a great deal of personal

responsibility to themselves and to the people they study. Their position as

transplanted community members casts them in a unique position to choose how to

represent themselves and culture they write about in their narratives. As a result, they

possess great power over the people they research. Ethically, they are required to use

that power responsibly by representing themselves and the people they study as

accurately as they are able. Doing so requires a careful examination of both the

history and practice of ethnography as a research methodology and how the

ethnographer uses that methodology throughout the research process. In order to gain

further insight on how that may be accomplished, ethnographers must consider the

theoretical perspectives that drive their work.

Ethnography's Theoretical and Philosophical Perspectives

Regarding theory, ethnographers grapple with two major decisions – *what*

theoretical framework will guide their research and *how* it will do so. This text

addresses the latter first. A prominent debate in ethnography literature questions how

researchers should use theory to guide their inquiry. Dating back to Geertz,

researchers have deliberated over whether theory should guide data collection and

interpretation or vice-versa – an argument well articulated by Becker (2000) who

states,

> Theory is necessary to all we know – to guide inquiry, to communicate our
> insights and experiences and understandings coherently and intelligibly, to allow
> for generalization and learning from experience. It is also dangerous… It can
> consume energy better devoted to finding out about the world. It can easily
> become an end in itself. It leads to logic chopping and other fruitless enterprises
> (p. 257).

Researchers who enter the field without a clear theoretical framework guiding their

research do so because they want to understand the culture from the perspective of its

members. They believe theory pollutes that process. This removes the possibility

that the ethnographer may truly become a member of the community, and leads to

forced or overlooked conclusions in the interest of "fitting" findings into theoretical

frames (Snow, Morrill, & Anderson, 2003; Geertz, 1973; Becker, 2000). Researchers

on the other side of the argument believe that theory informs and guides ethnographic

methodology, clarifies discoveries, and situates current inquiry historically so that

modern researchers can learn from those who came before them (Snow, Morrill, &

Anderson, 2003; Willis & Trondman, 2000). While theoretical discussions have

persisted for several decades, during the 2002 Berkeley conference participants

formally acknowledged that both theory and narrative oriented texts hold equal value,

and that various theoretical styles of ethnographic writing deserve the same respect (Wacquant, 2003). Becker (2000) argues that the decision regarding theory lies in the researcher, and that the decision often depends on personal style or preference and training. Once that decision is made, the ethnographer faces a decision regarding what theory will guide her methodology.

Ethnography is based in the social sciences, and in the social sciences discussions about theory center on two major concepts: epistemology and methodology (Bernard, 2006; Trochim, 2006). Methodology-based theory considerations focus on the specific strategies and practices a researcher uses to understand the world. Epistemology, on the other hand, examines the philosophy of knowledge or how people know that they know. Epistemology encompasses three major schools of thought among social scientists. The first is the constructivist view that argues individuals construct knowledge, and the second is the positivist view that ascertains that an external truth exists, awaiting discovery, and the third is the critical view. These epistemological standpoints inform researchers' methodological decisions, and they choose methods in either the positivist or post-positivist (informed by constructivism) traditions.

According to Bernard (2006), Comte is credited with developing the positivist philosophy of social science in the early nineteenth century. Researchers have used the scientific method to explore human behavior for approximately two hundred years, and early social scientists such as Galileo, Bacon, Descartes, and Newton developed the process of scientific thinking. Positivism, however, was based on the notion that "people come to rely on empirical data, reason, and the development of

scientific laws to explain phenomena" (p. 13). Since positivists argue that reality

already exists but just needs to be discovered, they seek to establish laws to explain

that reality by engaging in logical, rational methods. The goal of positivist research is

to discover truth in an effort to control the natural world. Further, Trochim (2006)

adds that positivists emphasize the use of the scientific method to collect reliable data

in order to explain cause and effect relationships in the natural world to expand the

knowledge base.

In the early twentieth century, philosophers started to resist positivist notions,

introducing the post-positivist era of social science thinking. Bernard (2006) states

that Schiller presented the first major rebellion against positivism in the early

twentieth century called humanism. Humanists argue that reality is created, and that

studying humankind requires the use of nonscientific methods. Unlike positivism,

truth is not hovering on the edge of human experience waiting to be ultimately

discovered, but each experience is unique – existing in its own context. Rather than

laws to explain reality, humanist researchers search for the meaning of experiences

that can be used to understand experiences in other contexts. Humanists question the

positivist assertion that the researcher is purely objective, and argue that an inquirer's

experiences should be recognized and brought into the process. The humanist

challenge to positivism paved the way for other research philosophies such as

phenomenology, hermeneutics, and post-modernism (Madison, 2005; Bernard, 2006;

Trochim, 2006).

Post-modernists argue that positivists fail to account for power relationships in

their work, and argue that traditional positivist approaches perpetuate hegemonic

power relationships between those who hold knowledge and those who do not. As a result, positivism fails to account for alternate forms of knowledge, such as indigenous knowledge. The introduction of post-modernism marked the period of self-reflection for ethnographers in the early 1980s (outlined above) that started to call for greater self-reflection, questioned representation, and dialogic approaches between researcher and subjects (Madison, 2005; Tyler, 1986; Clifford, 1986).

Critical ethnography offers another theoretical perspective in the vein of post-modernism. Madison (2005) explains, "The critical ethnographer… takes us beneath the surface appearances, disrupts *status quo* [sic], and unsettles both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions by bringing to light underlying and obscure operations of power and control" (p. 5). Critical ethnographers scrutinize their purpose, their potential to do harm, possibilities for dialogue and collaboration, and how their work can best contribute to equity, freedom, and justice.

In modern inquiry, researchers are driven by particular philosophical traditions that dictate how they conduct their work. Rarely do researchers situate their work within a single philosophy (Bernard, 2006). Practicing inquiry within one conceptual realm would be quite difficult, as scholars are constantly constructing and reconstructing what knowledge means, how we conceptualize knowledge, and how we interact with knowledge. Every inquirer must justify where she stands in the positivist – post-modern continuum of theoretical perspectives. Additionally, it is important to note that positivist and humanist traditions are not necessarily divided by quantitative and qualitative, they can apply to either or both. Another debate in

modern ethnography is about the role that theory plays in the research process, explored next.

Contact Theory

The debate among ethnographers regarding the role of theory in their methodology is explored at length above. This study uses Becker's (2000) suggestion that theory should act as a guide (supported by Agar, 1996), assisting the researcher as she communicates her insights; and Bernard's (2006) assertion that in addition to epistemological theory, ethnographers must also consider methodological theory. The theory that informed these research findings was contact theory, developed by Allport (1954/1979) in the mid-1950s as a response to racism that grew out of segregation and anti-Semitism post-WWII. While other philosophers have addressed interactions between groups, Allport received the most attention and is considered the most influential. This is due in part to the fact that his model is theory driven, which was rare at the time it was developed (Pettigrew, 1998). Contact theory, according to Allport, is based on the premise that prejudice between groups can be reduced if groups have contact with each other. Allport defines prejudice as: "an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization. It may be felt or expressed. It may be directed toward a group as a whole, or toward an individual because he [sic] is a member of that group" (Allport, 1954/1979, p. 9). He believed that prejudice was a psychological phenomenon, deeply rooted in American history due to this country's legacy of slavery and anti-Semitism, which required an attitude of favor or disfavor combined with over-generalized and erroneous beliefs. Prejudice, he noted, was not

the same as prejudgments. Prejudgments only become prejudice if they do not

change when a person is exposed to new knowledge about people or groups.

People indentify with in-groups or out-groups (Allport, 1954/1979). In-

groups are those with which people identify, such as family, social, gender, cultural,

religious, or ethnic groups. Out-groups consist of individuals that do not fit in one's

in-groups. Prejudice consists of a person's negative perceptions of the people in the

out-group, and is caused by in- and out-groups being unfamiliar with each other.

People use beliefs to rationalize their feelings about the out-groups. They use

attitudes to act out prejudice, either through antilocution (sharing prejudiced thoughts

with like-minded peers), avoidance (avoiding members of specific out-groups),

discrimination (exclude members of out-groups in all ways), physical attack, and

even extermination (genocide).

As stated in Chapter 1, Allport (1954/1979) maintained that contact alone

does not lead to prejudice reduction, but that the contact needs to fulfill four

conditions: equal status, common goals, personal relationships, and support of

authorities. Over the last six decades, thousands of researchers have tested contact

theory in a variety of contexts (Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Pettigrew

and Tropp (2006) conducted a meta-analysis of the bulk of quantitative literature on

the subject, and their findings shed light on the utility of Allport's theory. The

authors foucused on whether or not contact does, in fact, lead to a reduction in

prejudice. In their comprehensive analysis of over 1,000 studies over a six decade

period, they found that while mere exposure (contact that did not fill all of Allport's

criteria) can lead to increased positive effects in the form of a significant reduction in

prejudice among groups, those with optimal conditions showed a higher likelihood of reducing prejudice.

The body of literature on contact theory is overwhelmingly large, but this review focuses on these studies that are particularly relevant to this research. Nesdale and Todd (2000) maintain: "The most influential social psychological approach to facilitating positive intercultural relations has been the 'contact hypothesis'"(p. 341). They surveyed students in Australia in four residence halls – where the student body consists of 40-60% international students – at several points during an academic year. In one of the residence halls, they facilitated programs to encourage contact intervention, and the other three halls did not have programs. The programs were intended to change contact from causal interactions (such as passing in the halls) to formal contacts. They maintain that residence halls are an ideal testing ground for contact theory because they are considered "mini-societies in which people eat, live, work and socialize, but in a comparatively small geographic area" (Nesdale & Todd, 2000, p. 345). Also, students do not know each other before they move into their halls. They found that those students who lived in the dormitory with intervention programs were more likely to have positive contacts with students from other cultures, though they did not experience more contacts than their peers who did not have intervention programs. Those who participated in the intervention programs displayed higher intercultural acceptance, but the effects were greater for Anglo-Australians than for international students.

Van Laar, Levin, Sinclair, and Sidanius (2005) also surveyed students living in dormitories in the United States to test contact theory. They found that in-group

students who lived with out-group students in interethnic roommate situations tended to show lower levels of prejudice than peers who lived with members of their own groups. Students in cross-cultural living situations also showed increased positive perceptions of people from other cultural groups in general – even if the group was not the same as their roommate's. The authors concluded that being roommates in a residence hall facilitated optimal contact conditions.

Halualani (2008) conducted over 80 qualitative interviews with students at a multi-cultural university. Most work regarding contact theory has been quantitative to date, but the author supports her selection of qualitative methods because quantitative studies examine contact outside the varied contexts of participants' lives and do not give the opportunity to hear from participants themselves. She found that students equated intercultural interaction with being on a diverse campus, not with individually engaging in intercultural interactions. The more diverse the situation, she found, the greater the likelihood students had positive contact outcomes.

As the research above implies, for undergraduate students, contact alone in diverse environments leads to more positive intercultural interactions (Halualani, 2008). Optimal conditions, however, better facilitate positive interactions (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), and residence halls meet all four criteria for optimal contact (Nesdale & Todd, 2000). Intercultural roommate arrangements also appear to facilitate positive interactions (VanLaar, Levin, Sinclair, & Sidanius, 2005). Directed initiatives seem to further facilitate positive interaction, especially in highly diverse living situations (Nesdale & Todd, 2000). According to the above findings, contact

theory appears to provide a strong conceptual framework for an ethnography examining a living-learning program.

This study illustrates that ethnography is a dynamic research methodology with solid historical roots, well established steps, a myriad of considerations, and strong theoretical base – all supported by a robust body of literature to guide ethnographers as they embark on the process. This chapter sought to outline the methodology and theoretical framework that drove this research, and the next chapter details how ethnography was specifically used to investigate International House.

Chapter 4: Ethnography as a Tool to Investigate International House

This research investigated the International House living-learning program using ethnography as the methodology. As I described in Chapter 1, I chose International House because previous interviews with IH participants sparked my interest in the students' experience in the program.[2] These interviews revealed that combination of the living and learning aspects of the program created a unique environment – one characterized by its own culture. This finding illustrated the appropriateness of ethnography to investigate the student experience in International House because the methodology is designed to investigate culture. Ethnography would allow additional nuanced themes to emerge that may have remained below the surface with interviews alone. This rationale is supported through the literature review presented in the second chapter and the methodological considerations in Chapter 3.

This chapter now supports the above rationale by discussing how ethnography was used to study IH. First, however, I open with my theoretical considerations (as they relate to this study) that serve as a foundation for the entire process. Theoretical discussions from an epistemological standpoint, according to Bernard (2006), require examining the researcher's philosophy of knowledge, so I start this chapter by exploring my epistemological standpoint.

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[2] I gained access to these students in part because the previous director is a good friend of mine.

Epistemological Considerations

As I embarked on the research journey, I found several conceptual frameworks helpful in me. I appreciate the logic and rationality of positivism. Because of my repeated exposure to this philosophy throughout my education, I defer to the perceived power of answers gained from systematic, objective research. I am drawn to the notion that reality exists, and it is my job to find and describe it. I have recently, however, challenged my positivist leanings.

I am conflicted with certain elements of the philosophy. Like a humanist, I am dubious that research is a purely objective process. Every researcher has biases that influence how she interprets the world around her, so research must be acknowledged as a subjective process. I appreciate the reflective nature of humanist research that accounts for the personal experience of the researcher, and personally believe totally objective research is impossible. My criticism of the objective nature of positivist inquiry forces me to reconsider my previous attraction to the positivist notion that reality already exists – floating around, waiting to be discovered. Objective research is unfeasible, therefore, because every person interprets reality differently, making a single reality impossible to find. The humanist concept of a unique reality dictated by context conceptually makes more sense. My conflict with positivism does not stop here.

Particular aspects of post-modernism also make sense to me as a researcher, forcing me to further challenge positivism. Like post-modernists, I am unable to ignore power structures in society and how those structures impact the nature of

human interaction. Researchers act as intermediaries between the information they hold, and possess the power to report that information as they see fit. I agree with Agar (1996), who asserts that with power comes responsibility. Positivists fail to account for power relationships in their work. Further, I agree with Clifford (1986), who argues that traditional positivist approaches perpetuate hegemonic power relationships between those who hold knowledge and those who do not. As a result, positivism fails to account for alternate forms of knowledge, such as indigenous knowledge. I fully support the post-modernist notion that research, and the writing up of that research, is an empowering process that can lead to genuine change. Clearly, my post-modernist leanings pose a direct challenge to my positivist tendencies.

My epistemological orientation, as illustrated above, is not straightforward. As noted earlier, Bernard (2006) argues that researchers rarely situate themselves within a single epistemological philosophy; I agree with his standpoint. As researchers grapple with constructing and re-constructing what knowledge means and how we interact with it, I maintain it is more important for us to identify where we stand on the positivist – critical continuum than it is to identify a specific epistemological orientation. My association and conflicts with each of the philosophies I described above illustrate where I position myself on that continuum, and guided me through the whole research process. In order to ground my epistemological considerations, I discuss questions of validity, because scholars maintain (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002) that the two are intimately intertwined.

Validity, according to DeWalt and DeWalt (2002), is driven in part by the researcher's goal for objectivity. They assert, "any observation that is carefully recorded is valid (that is, it truthfully represents the response of the observer)" (p. 96). Careful recording does not necessarily guarantee validity if an objective view is the researcher's goal. They note that there is a debate in ethnography regarding validity, with some arguing that validity is personal – or in the hands of the researcher's interpretations. The authors disagree, noting that objectivity is possible as long as the ethnographer is trained, self-reflexive, and uses several different approaches to interpreting data. I agree that these are important, but as my epistemological leanings above illustrate, I disagree that the researcher's goal must be objectivity. Therefore, I tend to lean toward the argument that validity is, in fact, bound up in part with my interpretations, though I do support that careful, truthful representation is essential. With these theoretical considerations, now I address how I use ethnography as a methodology to study International House.

The Fieldwork Experience

After I identified IH as a possible research site, gaining entrée was a seamless process. I met with the director of the program to get permission to study the LLP. He supported my efforts fully and was incredibly supportive, transparent, and helpful throughout the whole process. For example, he gave me access to students and allowed me to observe his classes and later read my manuscript to offer feedback and suggestions. This may be due to the fact that I knew the director professionally and his predecessor is a close friend of mine. Shortly after the director agreed to support

my research, I was hired as a part time instructor for the program for the following

academic year – the same period of my research (this is addressed later in detail

during the discussion about bias). In order to reciprocate for entrée into the

community, I openly shared my findings with him at every step. In some cases this

information proved very helpful to the program, informing changes and supporting

programming.

Seeking entrée with the director may pose problems because he is the ultimate

authority over the students. Since he had worked with the program for a year and a

half, despite misgivings about his status as a staff member, I believe he served as

what Agar (1996) recognizes as a reliable source with strong connections and

reputation. Further, without his approval, my research would have been impossible.

Once the director allowed my entrée to the community, I received approval from

Atlantic's Institutional Review Board. Some scholars note that doing a literature

review may bias the ethnographic process (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002; Bernard, 2001;

Agar, 1996), but I contend that it enriches and informs the process. I examined

living-learning program, intercultural competency, and ethnography literature to

frame my work.

I followed the strategies suggested by Madison (2005) and DeWalt and

DeWalt (2002) to build rapport among International House students. After gaining

entrée from a reliable and trusted source, I built rapport by starting with a small group

of students – in my case the class I taught – and entered the community as an

observer. I acted as a participant observer in my role as instructor and by observing

and participating in classes and events, as well as spending time in residence hall's

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common areas at various times during the day – by both observing and engaging students.

On DeWalt and DeWalt's (2002) continuum of participant observation, I tended to fall toward the role of observer, though my level of participation varied (when I taught, for example). I was not a full participant because the students knew I was a researcher investigating International House, and because I am not a student in the program. Also, while I visited students in their rooms and went to the second and third floors on occasion, I did not live in Franklin Hall. Sometimes I participated completely in events with students – for example, when I attended holiday parties and coffee hours. Other times I only observed and contributed little if at all – such as when I visited classes. Overall, my role tended to, as Agar (1996) recommends, fall more toward observer than participant. I fulfilled DeWalt and DeWalt's requirements of a participant observer by speaking the language (English), and participating in a variety of activities. I went to every class and student and staff planned gathering I could, attending events during all times of the night and day, every day of the week – interacting with everyone I encountered.

At times in my research process I appeared the cultural alien (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995) – such as days I sat in the classroom, did not participate, and took copious notes – but for the most part I think students were used to my presence in their LLP. Sometimes I experienced cultural divides, mostly due to my age. IH students teased me when I used dated slang or failed to recognize the name of certain musical artists, but for the most part I communicated well with members of the community. By the end of the academic year, I felt I had built rapport in the living-

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learning community. The director hired me as a graduate assistant for the 2010-2011 academic year – a position with significantly more responsibility. Students asked me out to coffee, invited me to their apartments after they graduated from the program, regularly visited me in my office just to talk, requested to be friends with me on Facebook where they often posted on my wall and sent me messages, emailed me, confided in me about everything from family problems to boyfriend issues, inquired about my future with the program, invited me to campus events, introduced me to their family members, and asked for advice, guidance, letters of recommendation, and feedback on every aspect of their job application processes. The students shielded me from very little – I saw them fight, snuggle, kiss, date, break up, laugh, sleep, and cry.

My experience as a staff member in an LLP is not unique. The very nature of a LLP changes traditional instructor-student relationships. As LLP staff, we work where students live. Participants see us regularly at all hours of the day. We participate in their social events. We make it clear in class and at events and program meetings that we are part of a community, and we open ourselves to hearing about the students' experiences. I have taught other undergraduate classes, and I never experienced as intimate a connection as I did with International House students. At the same time, there was a great deal I did not know about these students' daily lives in the residence hall, evidenced by conversations I had with Franklin's resident assistants (who were not in the program) about some students' behaviors that I never would have known otherwise.

During my observations, in cases where it felt appropriate and not obtrusive (such as during classes), I used a notebook to jot down my observations. In some

situations, however, like during social events or informal conversations, open jotting was inappropriate so I relied on head notes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). In both cases, I immediately typed and organized my notes on a computer. I used the technique outlined by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) where I was as unbiased as possible, recording events as I saw them, later recording my reactions to those events in memos or observer comments within the text. My field notes were what DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) identify as a record – or a systematic recording of events, observations, and information as it came to me, in chronological order. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw's (1995) description of "third person point of view" perfectly describes how I compiled my field notes:

> Writing in the third-person point of view is particularly effective for conveying other's words and actions. We suggest that they ethnographer write many of his fieldnotes from this perspective to report what he sees others doing and saying. Writing fieldnotes from the third-person point of view does not demand that the writer entirely avoid first-person pronouns or invariably absent herself from her fieldnotes. Within primarily third-person fieldnote accounts of others, the writer can include herself as a participant observer in the scene and insert her own responses in first-person asides (p. 55).

Despite having good rapport with students and being completely transparent about my role as a researcher, I was constantly challenged by issues of representation and by ethnical considerations. During student orientation – a bi-annual event that all program participants attend at the beginning and mid-points of the year – I let students know I was writing my dissertation about the program. I reiterated this in my classes and asked students to sign consent forms, but the participants did not always understand that I constantly wore my researcher hat during my interactions with them. For example, at an event toward the end of the year, a student asked me, "Did you finally get what you were looking for when you were taking all those notes?

What were you looking for, again?" Another day when I was observing a class, a student asked the director who I was and why I was always writing everything down. In the fall 2010 semester, a lengthy, animated discussion started after I asked about my ethnical considerations as an investigator of International House during a class about international research. I spent a long time clarifying my goals and explaining my role as researcher – even though I had talked about my research several times before. It reminded me to constantly re-examine how students perceived me and to remind them regularly that I wear my researcher hat at all times.

Researching students as their instructor presents real ethical concerns. In addition to my power as a researcher to interpret culture, outlined by Madison (2005), I am also in a power position in relationship to the students. I have the ability to award grades and, to some extent, affect programming decisions as a staff member. In order to address this, I fairly represented myself, but I also used my power responsibly (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002) and made it clear that students' participation in my research or what they told me did not affect their grades or their standing the program. I did not interview students until they completed the program, and I was clear to outline my research risks and benefits to students when they signed the consent forms.

Bias was another major consideration. Agar (1996) warns that researchers carry their own values, and I am no exception. One of the major biases I hold is that I work for the program. While my status as an employee (albeit a part time one) helped me gain entrée to International House in an intimate way, it also affected how I viewed the program and its students. I am deeply aware of the challenges,

frustrations, triumphs, and impressions of the staff regarding all aspects of the program administration. I am privy to the political factors that effected funding and program implementation. I was well versed in the day-to-day program operations. Sometimes in my conversations with students, they would report certain phenomena inaccurately (one student told me the residence hall is for upperclassmen, which I know is not true). Events like these affected my perception of students as experts, so I had to consciously check and re-check my perceptions of the students in my study. While my insider status enriched my research experience, it also presented a potential threat as I interpreted my data.

All of the venues where I interacted with students (listed above) helped build rapport, but also influenced me. I genuinely like International House students. I relate to them. I had three very positive experiences living abroad – in Brazil when I studied abroad as an undergraduate student and in Uganda and Thailand where I served as a Peace Corps Volunteer. I have traveled to dozens of countries for extended periods of time, and I share a love of travel and passion for learning about new cultures and places with these students that I do not even share with some of my family members and friends. My international experiences also lead me to believe that global competency skills are important. I strongly support the overall goals of the LLP and worked very hard to help the program achieve its goals. I also maintain that this process helped me reach the point that Bernard (2006) refers to as the point where I stopped being a visitor and started being a member of the community – an essential step for ethnographers.

To address bias, I forced myself to be constantly reflexive and consider how my biases affected my data gathering and interpretation, was sure to back up my assertions with data-backed evidence, and presented my findings as free of distortion and generalizations as I possibly could.   In my analysis, I grapple with these issues throughout. At the same time, I considered Madison's (2005) argument that it is also important to not become too detached. My theoretical perspective also significantly influenced my data interpretation and representation. So, in addition to considering bias and ethical issues, reflexivity required situating myself in an epistemological frame (Madison, 2005; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Shacklock & Smyth, 1998), which I have done above.

Interviews

Agar (1996) argues that interviews are a necessary supplement to fieldwork data. My initial interviews were unstructured daily interactions. After observing for one academic year – August through May – I interviewed nine students who had graduated from the program and received their notations in the Spring 2010 semester.[3]   I felt I had reached a clear saturation point after five interviews, and at nine I was certain so I did not carry out any further interviews. I conducted semi-structured interviews with an interview protocol (see Appendix I). I used an opportunistic sample asking interviewees as I encountered them at events or during visits to Franklin Hall in the fall of 2010 if they were willing to be interviewed. In

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[3] The decision to interview past participants was driven by ethics (I did not want students to feel in any way that what they shared would affect their participation in the program) and by my desire to have students who could reflect on their experiences.

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two cases, I emailed students who I did not encounter because I had completed seven interviews but wanted confirmation that some of my emerging themes were common. This sampling strategy is neither random nor ideal, and I ran the risk of sample bias. I follow Agar's (1996) assertion that random sampling in ethnography is nearly impossible, and that subjects can be discovered through observation. Further, Agar contends that judgmental subjects – those who know about the topic at hand – are particularly useful. Arguably, every IH student falls into this category because they all participate in the program. To address this issue, I only interviewed students who lived in Franklin Hall while they were in the program (two interviewees lived in another residence hall for one semester, and another lived in a different hall one semester and studied abroad one semester).

Since my sample was not random, I heeded Madison (2005) and DeWalt and DeWalt's (2002) suggestion to choose a representative group of students. I asked a diverse group of students who, by my initial assessment, held a variety of opinions about the program (a spectrum of negative and positive experiences), and chose some students who were highly involved in the program and others who were less involved. I interviewed over one-third of the class who graduated the previous spring. My subjects consisted of six women and two men – one is African-American, one is Asian-American, and seven were Caucasian. Three students identified themselves as Jewish (the others did not specify), one student is a first generation American, one is an international student, one is a naturalized citizen who moved to the US in middle school, and three speak a native language other than English. I interviewed one fifth year senior, one senior, and seven juniors – the juniors all joined IH as incoming

freshman. All of the students had studied at Atlantic for their entire undergraduate

careers, with the exception of one transfer student. The American students originated

from five different states, with four of them identifying the state where Atlantic is

located as their state of residency. Two assumed major leadership positions in the IH

student organization and were highly involved; two were very active on several

student committees; three were moderately involved – planning or assisting at about

one event and attending a fair number of events; and two attended a few events, but

rarely planned them or served in leadership roles.[4]

The interviews took on a fairly formal tone (Kvale, 2006). For example,

during an interview one student asked if she could eat her lunch and another asked if

she could check an incoming call on her cell phone – things I normally observed them

doing without asking permission in our daily interactions. I attribute the formality to

the fact that I asked interviewees to sign a consent form and to the presence of a

digital recorder and interview protocol where I took notes. The interviews averaged

45 minutes – with the longest lasting just over an hour and the shortest lasting 30

minutes. After conducting the interviews, I transcribed the interview recordings

myself,[5] and emailed the transcriptions to the interviewees to act as a member check.

I completed the interviews by October 2010. Five of the interviewees read them and

emailed me back with their comments. With the exception of one student who asked

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[4] Interviewees' level of involvement is assessed in the year I did my research. One student who was
   involved in few activities during the 2010-2011 academic year, for example, was highly involved the
   year before.
[5] The transcriptions were almost all full transcriptions. In a few cases, I summarized when a student
   spoke at great length about a subject completely unrelated to IH and I always omitted personal
   information (such as family or medical problems) to protect students' confidentiality in these
   matters.

that I correct a few grammatical mistakes, all of them agreed that the transcript was an accurate representation of our conversations.

I followed Kvale (2006) and Rubin and Rubin's (2005) suggestions in order to show my interviewees respect. In reviewing the consent form with my interviewees, I clearly outlined the risks of my research. The risks of this interview were low, however, because the nature of what I discussed with interviewees was not highly emotional, and none of my interviewees appeared uncomfortable with the subject matter. I took great pains to maintain the confidentiality of my interviewees because in a tight knit community like International House, it is likely participants may be able to identify a subject. I removed their names from all transcripts, removed the names of any people or places, offered to meet interviewees in private locations, did not divulge the identity of my interviewees with anyone, and removed any identifying features from my manuscript. While I shared my general findings with the director, I did not associate my findings with individual participants. My interviewees tended not to be worried about confidentiality – often sharing with other members of the community that they were interview subjects. On more than one occasion a student would remark, "I heard you interviewed [student] about International House." In all cases, the students were overwhelmingly agreeable about participating in my research, and did so without any compensation. Interviewees responded to my emails almost immediately, and they all showed up on time. I was often struck by how open and willing International House students were to share their experiences with me during honest and candid interactions. Despite my misgivings about how being a

staff member may affect my interviews, students did not temper what they said about the program. They were often brutally honest, in fact.

In addition to observation field notes and interview transcripts, I relied on program literature and documents, class assignments, and course documents (such as syllabi) as sources of data, the analysis of which I discuss in the next section.

Data Analysis: The Process of Funneling

Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) note that, "The goal of all data analysis is the summarization of large quantities of data into understandable information from which well-supported and well-argued conclusions are drawn. In other words, this is a process of reviewing, summarizing, cross-checking, looking for patterns, and drawing conclusions" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 163). In order to do so, I used Agar's (1996) concept of funneling where I entered the field open to any ideas that presented themselves to me, funneling them down as themes became apparent. At the end of my fieldwork experience, I had a mountain of data that required careful and systematic analysis.

To code and organize my data, I used a Mac computer program called TAMS Analyzer. The process of identifying my codes is best described by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) as open coding (see previous chapter) or by Bernard (2006) as "somewhere between inductive and deductive coding" where the researcher has a general idea of what she is looking for, but is "still in discovery mode [letting] themes emerge from the texts" (p. 494). While I was informed by my literature review, and my research questions framed my data collection, many themes I discovered as I went

along. These themes were determined, as Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) suggest, by synthesizing both the phenomena that repeatedly emerged and what participants emphasized as important. I used, as DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) suggest, participants' terms, categorizations, and explanations to name and organize the themes. I also used their suggestion regarding organization and presentation of the data in my text; namely quotes, vignettes, and cases.

One of the challenges I faced in synthesizing my data was timing. International House is constantly undergoing change (explained later). In the two years I worked for the program, a great number of changes were enacted in the programming and curriculum. While my research examines one academic year, acting as a snapshot to inform a greater understanding of the culture of International House, my experience with the program spans a longer period. Culture is fluid and ever changing, so ethnography must also accommodate. I cannot ignore the subtle insights I gained as I maintained employment in the program during the following school year. Therefore, I use some examples outside of the 2009-2010 academic year to strengthen and support the overall student experience in IH, operating under Agar's (1996) assumption that every interaction acts as a nugget of information for the ethnographer – creating an informed final report. I documented my research process with memos. As clear themes started to emerge in fieldwork, I made note of them in my memos and later explored those themes in my interviews. I also looked to student assignments to also explore evidence and examples of those themes.

I also took care to consider triangulation. Berg (2007) maintains that every research method "is a different line of sight directed toward the same point, observing

social and symbolic reality. By combining several lines of sight, researchers obtain a better, more substantive picture of reality; a richer, more complete array of symbols and theoretical concepts; and a means of verifying these elements" (p. 5). He argues that this approach requires using different methods to investigate one phenomena, and that the methods should provide different perspectives.

For this study, I combined several methods – participant observation, document and program literature review, and informal and formal interviews. Each of these methods provided a different glimpse at the IH experience. Participant observations, for example, allowed me to witness and interpret student behaviors – how they interact with staff and negotiate their physical space; their unrehearsed verbal responses; and their non-verbal interactions. Reviewing student papers, on the other hand, allowed me to review participants' reflective, rehearsed narratives. Each technique supports triangulation in different ways. I support DeWalt and DeWalt's (2002) assertion that participant observation helps generate hypotheses that are later tested and that inform interview protocols. The authors also maintain (and I agree) that each method has its strengths and weaknesses, but contribute to our overall understanding of the phenomena studied.

I address validity by being reflexive and presenting careful, truthful representation. Since I earlier argued that objectivity is difficult from an epistemological perspective, I am still bound to be as accurate as possible. I honored accurate representations by using several approaches to interpreting my data (such as member checks, asking members of the community to review my findings, and discussing emerging themes with my subjects) and by meticulously cataloguing,

organizing, and coding my data in a timely manner. Timeliness, I argue, is essential

because it does not allow representations to fall prey to memory. While still an

amateur ethnographer in every sense, I have had some training in the methodology

through my graduate studies. Training and reflexivity are the keys to validity,

according to DeWalt and DeWalt (2002). After analyzing my data, I started to weave

the text, the considerations for which I outline in the next section.

The "Tales from the Field"

Van Maanen (1988) and Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) argue that

ethnographers must consider their audiences when preparing their texts. My audience

is what Van Maanen (1988) describes as the collegial audience. While ideally I

would like my paper to be written in a tone that makes it accessible to the

undergraduate students of International House, for the purposes of creating a product

that fulfills my degree requirements, my primary audience is academic. My text

reflects my synthesis of the themes that emerged during the funneling process.

According to Van Maanen, it is important to consider what form that narrative takes –

either a realist, confessional, or impressionist tale – that will best represent data.

Based on Van Maanen's descriptions of each type of narrative, mine is

primarily a realist's tale. While my voice is present in the study throughout, and I do

discuss some methodological considerations – characteristics of a confessional tale –

my report follows the conventions of a realist tale such as categorizing details of the

everyday experiences of my students and using a theoretical frame in supporting my

observations. Van Maanen's description of the resultant tale resembles mine: "The

result is an author proclaimed description and something of an explanation for specific, bounded, observed…cultural practices" (1988, p. 45). He provides four conventions of these tales, and I follow most of them. First, I write with experiential authority, my data appear as mostly objective, and I do not discuss the fieldwork conditions. Second, I include details of everyday life, and plug them into categories and themes. Third, I include subjects' interpretations of my observations in the form of quotes and examples. Finally, I support my theoretical framework with field data, supported by members' reactions to those themes. I leave out some information, using only what is needed for my text.

In some ways, however, I diverge from Van Maanen's realist author. I am not absent or "tucked away" in my study – I tend to be "close at hand" like a confessional author. My methods are clearly outlined, and I occasionally describe occurrences outside students' reported or observed experiences. I tend to be more present (even autobiographical) in my tale, but I am still firmly grounded in the realist camp. I speculate most of my divergences are brought on by changes and expectations for ethnographers (see, for example, Madison, 2005; Trochim, 2006; Wacquant, 2003). Recent calls for greater reflexivity draw out my confessional side, but I am still grounded in the elements and underlying philsophy of the realists and their tales.

In this chapter, I laid out how I used ethnography as a tool to examine the student experience in the International House Living-Learning Program. I shared my epistomological considerations, my fieldwork experience, interview process, and data analysis and reporting techniques. Now, the following chapters bring that process – and its findings – to light. Chapter 5 examines the IH program's structure, Chapter 6

describes IH culture, Chapter 7 explores what shapes that culture, Chapter 8 investigates how the non-formal and formal experiences in the program shape its culture, Chapter 9 finally investigates whether the program facilitates global competency in its residents, and Chapter 10 brings synthesizes my findings.

Chapter 5: Program Elements and Structure

Upon first glance, little differentiates Franklin Hall from any other traditional[6]

residence hall at Atlantic University, or any other institution in the United States. The

building, like the vast majority of the buildings on Atlantic's campus, has a brick

exterior with white-trimmed windows. The landscaping is meticulous and well

maintained, featuring an array of flowerbeds and grassy areas. The building has four

entrances that only residents and employees can access with an identification card

swipe. Non-residents may enter the building by using call boxes at each of the

entrances that call the staff members' office phones, by knocking in the hopes that

someone will let them in, or by calling a friend in the building from a cell phone. The

structure is four stories, with the top three floors devoted to student rooms. The third

floor is for female students with a common study room, and the second floor is for

male students. The first floor is split with one wing devoted to each gender, divided

by a lobby that includes a common seating area, student mailboxes, and bulletin

boards – decorated by the resident assistants (RAs) – that highlight topics of interest

to students such as safety, area attractions, or campus services. Students live in

double, triple, or quadruple rooms. The fourth floor – a walk in basement – features a

small library with two computers, a laundry room, a handful of rooms for female

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[6] In addition to its traditional residence halls – where students live in single, double, triple, or
quadruple isolated rooms and eat in a dining hall – Atlantic University also has several alternatives
for its students such as apartments or suites. The campus' department of residence life operates
these alternative housing arrangements in partnership with private companies.   In contrast,
traditional halls are operated and maintained solely by the university.

students, and a common area with couches, tables, television, and chairs where students meet, relax, nap, study, and eat.

The hall is centrally located in the heart of campus – across from the student union, next to the main library, close to the student health center, and adjacent to the large, grassy mall area featured on many of Atlantic's promotional materials. The union is the major hub for all on- and off-campus buses and shuttles, and houses student support organizations such as legal aid and the student government. It also includes a food court, restaurant, small natural foods grocery store and deli, art gallery, movie theater, bowling alley, arcade, bookstore, and arts center that hosts non-credit classes such as pottery and yoga. Many organizations and entities host a myriad of events – from blood drives to conferences to career fairs – in the union's various ballrooms and meeting areas.

With a closer examination of Franklin, however, subtle differences that differentiate it from a traditional hall start to emerge. The third floor study room has a balcony that faces the mall, and – because the dormitory is situated on a rolling hill – features a breathtaking view of campus. The hall has a full functioning kitchen with refrigerator that all staff and students may use, rare in traditional residence halls at Atlantic. The building is also one of the few traditional halls with air conditioning in every room.

Franklin is an appealing place to live because of its location and amenities – and program staff and students often discuss this aspect of the residence hall. The program director cited Franklin's location as a program plus in student orientations during the summer, beginning of the academic year, and mid-year. In a Foundation

Essay – an essay first year students write within the first month of the program about why they decided to join IH[7] – one student noted, "I remember thinking to myself, 'Air Conditioning. Sweet,'" upon being invited to the program. Another student cited International House's "convenience," reasoning that it is, "in on-campus housing in the center of campus." During a summer orientation (for incoming students who have accepted their invitations, but not yet moved in), a student identified "location" as his first reason for choosing to participate in the LLP.

Interviewees often commented on the desirability of the residence hall. One noted that the residence hall he lived in before Franklin was "terrible," and cited no air conditioning as one reason why. Another provided a reason why she joined the LLP: "I knew that this was a good location. It was one of the nicer dorms." A third interviewee stated that some participants chose IH – in her view for the wrong reasons – because of its location and air conditioning, and a fourth noted, "And the housing was great. I didn't know where [Franklin] was on a map when I got the postcard,[8] but it just sounded nice to… [live] in this kind of environment. And then I found out where [Franklin] was and it was a plus to be in the center of campus." So, while students rarely identify location and amenities as a dominant reason for joining IH, it does factor into their decision-making processes. It also contributes to their overall satisfaction with the program when they participate.

The major difference between Franklin and the average American undergraduate dormitory is that Franklin hosts two living-learning programs, evidenced by large banners on the exterior of the building and signs at every entrance.

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[7] Please see Appendix II for the Foundation Essay assignment description.
[8] When students are invited to join International House as incoming freshmen, they receive a postcard that they mail back to the program staff, indicating they intend to join.

One of the LLPs is a department sponsored program that focuses on developing

students' writing skills. The other LLP is IH. The International House Living-

Learning Program staff consists of one full time director, a graduate assistant who

works an average of 20 hours per week, and a part-time instructor. The director and

graduate assistants work in four offices throughout the basement, and there is also a

classroom the two LLPs share for program related classes. LLP students occupy

about 140 of the approximately 178 beds in Franklin Hall, and students who are not

associated with either LLP occupy the remaining beds – *all* Franklin residents refer

to these students as "squatters" (this term is not derogatory – the "squatters"

themselves use this term, as do the resident assistants).

IH's international focus is evidenced throughout the hall. The basement

lounge is decorated with the winning photos from an international photo contest

sponsored by the campus study abroad office every year. The bulletin board is

decorated with subjects of global interest – such as current events, information about

local cultural attractions, and maps. The classroom is adorned with maps and items

from all over the world, donated by students and staff over the years, such as a mask

from Guatemala and a blanket from India. The International House staff office is also

decorated with photos of various international locations, and artifacts from all over

the world – most of which are gifts to the director from students. The third floor

study room also has posters featuring large photos of Indian dancers.

International House Students

International House hosts an incredibly diverse student body. The following tables detail the students' demographic information, including gender, citizenship status, university class standing, race, and country of origin.[9] The program hosted eight exchange students first semester, and nine the second semester. Of the 77 program (not exchange) students, 51 were new to the program and the remaining 26 students were returning. The program saw a great deal of growth, with a 41% increase in the number of program students over the year before. International House targets students in their first two years on campus, but accepts students in later years that are able to fulfill the two-year commitment.

Table 5.1: Gender and Citizenship Status* of International House Students, 2009-2010 Academic Year		
Gender	Number	Percentage
Female	58	64
Male	32	36
Total	90	100
Citizenship	Number	Percentage
US Citizens	57	63
Non-US Citizens	33	37
Total	90	100
* Provided by the University, based on student applications.		

Most of the students who participate in International House live in the same dormitory, but the director makes some exceptions for students who cannot live on campus, who want to move into a fraternity or sorority house, or who choose to move to other dormitories during their tenure in the program. The other living-learning program has an enrollment of approximately 55 students. There are very few students who live in the dormitory who are not members of either LLP. Students of both LLPs

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[9] Inconsistencies in the total numbers of students represented in the tables are a result of the sources of the data. Some was collected by program staff on questionnaires and was incomplete; the university collected other data.

Table 5.2: Class Standing* of International House Students, 2009-2010 Academic Year

Class	Percentage
Freshman	42
Sophomore	31
Junior	22
Senior	5
TOTAL	100

*Exchange students are not included in these numbers because their class status is not calculated the same at their home institutions.

Table 5.3: Race* of International House Students, 2009-2010 Academic Year

Race	Number	Percentage
African-American	8	9.2%
Asian or Pacific Islander	25	28.7%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0	0.0%
Hispanic/Latino	7	8.0%
White/Caucasian	44	50.6%
Multi-racial or Multi-ethnic	3	3.4%
Race or Ethnicity Not Included	0	0.0%
TOTAL	87	100%

*Self identified, collected on a questionnaire.

Table 5.4: National Origin* of International House Students, 2009-2010 Academic Year

Country of Origin (Alphabetical Order)	Number of Students
Barbados	1
Britain	1
China	6
Denmark	1
Ethiopia	1
France	2
Germany	4
India	3
Iran	1
Japan	6
Kenya	2
Korea	3
Latin America	7
Mixed	3
Mongolia	1
Nigeria	1
Philippines	1
Portugal	1
Singapore	1
Spain	1
The Netherlands	1
Turkey	2
United States	33
Uzbekistan	1
Vietnam	3
TOTAL	87

* Self identified, collected on a questionnaire. These numbers include exchange students and are listed as the individuals specified.

(and the few non-LLP students) live interspersed throughout the residence hall, though almost all of the students have roommates in the same LLP. Students may choose to study abroad at any point during their enrollment in the program (and the program staff highly encourages them to do so), and two students studied abroad in the fall semester and one in the spring. Three students also went on short-term winter study abroad trips, and several planned to go abroad the next year or once they completed the program.

Students are admitted to the program through one of two of processes. First year, incoming freshmen are invited to join the living-learning program. The program staff, assisted by other members of the university community who are familiar with the LLP's goals and the student body, review all the applications of the incoming freshman class and invite suitable candidates. Using a rubric, every reviewer reads the individual applications and determines if the student would be a good fit for the program. While this determination is partially made based on a student's academic performance in high school

Table 5.5: International House Students' Academic Majors,* 2009-2010 Academic Year	
Major	**Number**
Government and Politics	13
Foreign Language	12
Engineering	8
Anthropology	4
Biological Sciences	4
Psychology	4
Economics	3
Journalism	3
Communication	2
English	2
Hearing and Speech Science	2
History	2
Performance Arts	2
Mathematics	1
Architechture	1
Chemistry	1
Criminal Justice	1
Education	1
Environmental Science	1
Geography	1
Jewish Studies	1
Business	1
Undecided	1
Women's Studies	1
* Provided by students on a questionnaire where not all students provided answers, and 11 students indicated two majors.	

and on college entrance examinations, reviewers also look for evidence of a student's interest in international or global issues, cross-cultural interests, desire for diversity, or evidence of multicultural exposure in the applicant's family or academic background, extra-curricular activities, and/or essays. For the fall 2009 semester, International House extended 343 invitations, 32 of which were accepted by incoming freshman for the academic year. Staff requires students who are not incoming

freshmen to complete a short application, essay, and interview to be considered for admittance. Most of these students are accepted if the LLP staff determines they are a good fit for the program using the same criteria used for new admissions, though priority is given to incoming first year students (primarily because of space in the dormitory). Twenty-three on campus students applied for admittance in the fall of 2009 (a 77% increase over the previous year), 18 of which were accepted.

International House accepts students from every major, and the program's students represent a diverse set of majors housed in several different colleges on Atlantic's campus. Table 5.5 outlines the available information about students' academic majors during the 2009-2010 academic year. As the table illustrates, many of the program's students study Government and Politics or a foreign language. During the research period, those languages included Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Spanish, Arabic, German, and French. It is also worth noting that Atlantic University's Government and Politics program is strong and attracts students from all over the country.

International House students do not only participate in the living-learning program. Many of the students are also highly involved in other organizations on campus. Often the groups to which they belong have an international focus – such as a Japanese student organization or foreign language club. Two female students rushed and joined social sororities during the academic year of this study, and three were members of a service sorority. Students participated in marching band, dance team, intramural sports, advocacy organizations, and one ran for a major leadership position in Atlantic University's student governing body. Students are employed –

both on and off campus – some to make money to support themselves during their

studies, and others at internships or jobs intended to build their resumes. Many of

them serve as research assistants to professors in their majors, and several IH students

have received prestigious scholarships (such a State Department funded intensive

language study opportunities abroad) and fellowships (one student for, example,

worked in a summer program for the CIA). International House students are engaged

in their diverse community, and they are engaged in a wide variety of activities

outside the program as well.

Program Curriculum: International House's Formal Learning Component

In order to receive the formal "Global Competencies" transcript notation,

students are required to take a total of ten credits. Students enroll in a one-credit

colloquium class – open only to program students – all four semesters they are

enrolled in the program for a total of four credits. The program's website states:

"Each colloquium explores a different theme that directly relates to the goals of the

program: understanding culture and cultural differences, intercultural communication,

global issues, and strategies for future global engagement." Program staff teach the

colloquia courses in the residence hall. Students are also required to complete two

three-credit supporting area courses outside the program that are global or

international in nature for a total of six credits. The criteria for these course, outlined

in a student handout: "(1) Provides a theoretical foundation for the study of world

politics, cultures, and economics, (2) Examines in-depth a specific world region,

including its geographical, historical, and cultural landscapes, or (3) offers instruction in a foreign language." Students choose their own courses from a list of recommended classes or may petition for another class. Short-term study abroad programs (two to three week programs over the summer or winter term) fit the supporting area requirement. Students who study abroad for a semester or year are not obligated to complete any program requirements for the semesters they are abroad.

The first semester colloquium class serves as the program foundation by focusing on identity, defining culture and global competency, non-verbal communication, ethnocentrism, and awareness of personal orientations. The objectives of the course, taken verbatim from the syllabus, read:

> Through active participation in this class, students will learn to:
> • Explain the concept of identity and recognize identity complexities in themselves and in others
> • Define "culture" and think critically about the role of culture in our day-to-day decisions and interactions
> • Name key characteristics of global competency, including cross-cultural adaptation; Understand barriers to global competency, such as ethnocentrism
> • Describe the relationship between culture and communication.

The second semester course is taught in a series of workshops, each of which focuses on a major global issue such as poverty, gender discrimination, immigration, international development, sustainability, and globalization. The third semester class gives students an opportunity to learn about the options available to them as internationally minded graduates of the program. The final semester features a capstone where participants choose to complete either a research project, service learning commitment, or internship. Students choose capstone projects that allow

them to utilize and further develop their global competency skills, and write reflection or research papers to explain how they have done so. During the notation ceremony at the end of the year, each of the students' capstone projects is announced as they receive a certificate and program medallion they can wear at graduation.

International House, in its program literature and during program presentations such as student orientation, boasts an experiential curriculum. In addition to the capstone projects, which are highly experiential, the classes feature guest speakers, simulations, discussions, online discussions, debates, field trips (both on and off campus), and activities. Course assignments draw on students' experience, and include journals, reflections, policy memos, group projects, and presentations. There are no textbooks for the courses; instead the instructors combine older, foundational pieces[10] with newer texts such as policy documents[11] or newspaper, magazine, and journal articles. The staff consistently discusses the nature of experiential learning in staff meetings and informally with each other, brainstorming how to ensure the classes follow that learning model.

During the first year course, students use a formal tool to assess their own level of intercultural competence, and use the results of the test to make personal goals for further developing their own competence. As Arasaratnam (2009) notes, in order to understand how intercultural competency is assessed, one must first understand how it is conceptualized within the context in which it is measured. The LLP's goal of developing global competency is clearly articulated in the program

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[10] For example, first year students read Geertz's work to prepare for their class discussion about culture.

[11] The second year students read a document published by the Brookings Institution that highlights policy recommendations for international service in their first semester.

literature. The program's recruiting brochure states: "Through [the program],

students develop global competency skills." It specifies that those skills – identified

by the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU) – include, "(1) The

ability to work effectively in international settings; (2) Awareness of and adaptability

to diverse cultures, perceptions, and approaches; (3) Familiarity with major currents

of global change and the issues they raise; and (4) Capacity for effective

communication across cultural and linguistic boundaries."

The website states that International House "aims to help students develop

global competency skills," and that students develop that competency in four steps

(outlined in the first chapter). The student handbook opens with, "Over the next two

years, you and your peers in [Franklin Hall] will be provided opportunities to explore

diversity, develop intercultural communication skills, and broaden your

understanding of global issues." The handbook continues, noting that, "a formal

curriculum is in place to help you with your first steps toward global competency."

International House's mission states, "Through [its] curriculum and other learning

opportunities that enhance the [university] experience, students develop global

competency skills." The first line of the first year colloquium syllabus reads,

"[International House] is driven by a singular mission: to help you become globally

competent. But what does it mean to be globally competent? This course will

introduce you to key concepts and skills related to global competency."

Within this context, International House utilized a formal global competency

assessment tool called the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale (IES) (Kozai Group,

2008). The IES, "was developed specifically to evaluate the competencies critical to

interacting effectively with people who are from cultures other than our own" (Kozai Group, 2008, first paragraph). It is designed for use by non-profit organizations, government agencies, and educational instutions. Kozai Group (2009), the organization that administers the test, defines culture as "the entire set of values, attitudes, beliefs, prejudices, and social rules that govern the behavior of a group of people" (p. 3). The test is designed to test intercultural competency, articulated as follows:

> The Intercultural Effectiveness Scale (IES) focuses on how you get along with people whose cultural background differs from yours. The IES measures three factors of intercultural competency: How we learn about another culture and the accuracy of that learning; How we develop and manage relationships with people from other cultures; [and] How we manage the challenges and stress involved in interacting with cultural differences. These are the key competencies that lead to intercultural effectiveness (Kozai Group, 2009, p. 3).

The test assesses three dimensions of intercultural effectiveness (Kozai Group, 2008): (1) continuous learning, or level of interest in learning about self and others; (2) interpersonal engagement, or one's interest in learning about and nurturing relationships with those who are different; and (3) hardiness, or ability to cope with psychological and emotional stress. Each dimension is assesed on two different elements. The continous learning score includes a value for self-awareness and exploration, the interpersonal engagement score accounts for global mindset and relationship interest, and the hardiness score includes values for positive regard and emotional resilience. Scores from the six elements are rated on a scale of one to six, with one to two representing a low score, two to three a moderate value, and five to six a high value. The score is then combined to generate an individual's Overall Intercultural Effectiveness Score. Scores (for the education test) are calculated by

comparing participants with other undergraduate and graduate students who have also taken the test. Testers come from all over the world, but close to 60% of test takers are North Americans.

Once students in International House take the IES test – available in either written or online form for a fee – they receive a report of over twenty pages that outlines the participant's scores and how to interpret them (Kozai Group, 2009). Scores from each of the three dimensions are graphed to determine one's IES profile, either the Globalist, Scholar, Networker, Explorer, Observer, Individualist, Extrovert, or Traditionalist (for a complete description of each of the profiles, see Kozai Group, 2009). The report ends by making recommendations and outlining a plan test takers can follow in order to better develop their competencies.

In International House, students take the IES early in their first semester, and the program pays the fee. Completing the test is a course requirement, and students take the test online on their own time, and then students discuss their Overall Intercultural Effectiveness Score and profile in class. The instructor also provides them the opportunity to discuss their scores and critiques of the test. During the class period when the test is discussed, the instructor also reiterates the meaning and importance of global competency and what individual students may do to improve their competency, both as defined by the program and by IES. The program staff administers the test one time while students are enrolled in the program.

Non-Formal Student Learning

In addition to the formal curriculum, the program sponsors several field trips, events, and activities throughout the year. Either program staff or student committees plan these activities. Field trips include destinations like embassies, major international aid organizations, non-profit organizations with international foci, and cross-cultural events at local museums and organizations. During the research period, the director took students on one embassy visit per semester, and these visits typically include presentations about the host country. He also took students to a major international donor organization. Typically, program staff organizes these visits by contacting the agency or organization, and provides students a one-day subway pass. Space and budget constraints drive the number of students who are able to attend these events, and that number was generally capped at around 20. When the program sponsored a trip to a cultural festival, however, the director distributed subway passes to about 40 students. IH students are asked to sign up for these events, and the director emails the whole community a few days into each semester when the sign up sheets have been posted on a bulletin board outside the program office.

Program events include international movie nights, potlucks, coffee hours, guest speakers, panels, social events, intercultural talent shows, and team building activities. For example, in the fall, the program hosts an international potluck dinner where participants brought a dish representing their culture or a culture with which they are familiar. The program staff organized a study break social with hot cocoa and freshly baked cookies during finals. The program also sponsored an intensive study abroad trip to Turkey for three weeks during the winter term, giving priority to program students. In the 2010 Winter Term, twelve students traveled to Turkey –

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including four IH students. The director and graduate assistant taught the course (when I worked as the graduate assistant during the 2010-2011 academic year, I was the teaching assistant on that course).

Every International House student is expected to serve on at least one of five committees: (1) cultural programming which is responsible for planning program events; (2) global film and music which organizes three to four international movie nights per semester; (3) exchange student welcome which is responsible for organizing social and cultural activities that target exchange students but are open to all program participants; (4) global ambassadors, who attend outreach events on behalf of the program; and (5) athletics and recreation, a committee that organizes intramural teams and sporting events for program students. Second year students often assume leadership of the committees, and a student run group oversees all five committees. The student handbook notes, "You must demonstrate a commitment to community by actively serving on one of five committees." A page titled "Community Involvement" on the "Program Requirements" tab of the website, states, "Students should expect to attend meetings and contribute 15-20 hours a semester to helping their committee." Further, a question during interviews for on-campus students applying to the program, applicants are informed that involvement is an expectations and asked to elaborate on how they plan to be involved.

The student group (assigned the pseudonym "Connections") is registered as an official group at Atlantic University. As a result, the group receives an operating budget from the university's undergraduate student governing body (funded from mandatory student fees that every Atlantic student pays) and is eligible to apply for

additional funding on a case-by-case basis. During the 2009-2010 school year,

Connections experienced a major reorganization. Under the leadership of two

ambitious students, the group held elections during the mid-point of the year to fill

ten newly conceptualized positions: president, vice-president, treasurer, head of

communications, head of PR, and leaders for the five student committees. At the end

of the academic year, Connections organized an election for the next year, and its

members worked with the director to establish a stronger connection between the

student leadership and the program staff. Throughout the year, Connections

leadership independently planned and funded several events for students – including a

visit to a cultural event, a hike, and dinners where international students prepared

food from their country of origin.

The non-formal events give students the opportunity to interact with each

other through a variety of different venues within the parameters of the program.

Through these events, students work with people form varying backgrounds and

perspectives to plan events. Additionally, approximately one-third of the students in

the program are international students, so many American students live with people

from another country for one semester or one year. The international students also

participate in classes and activities. These interactions are also considered non-

formal learning opportunities in the LLP.

International House students are exposed to a unique living and learning

experience that is molded by their environment, living space, student body, and

formal and non-formal educational events.   In the process of living and attending

classes together, the students in International House form their own culture. The next

chapters explore the major focus of this research, which is how that culture is shaped.

Chapter 6: The Culture of International House

In November 2010, the director of International House sent an email to current students and alumni letting them know that the LLP was undergoing changes. Starting in the fall of 2011, the program would be housed under a different college, change its name, have a new faculty director and staffing structure, admit only incoming freshmen, increase the cohort size to 75 students, and have a much bigger budget. The curriculum was also changing – students would be expected to take a three-credit class every semester and the curricular goals would change from focusing on developing global competency skills to a social sciences approach with globalization as a central theme. To address student concerns, the email noted, students were invited to a town hall meeting the next evening with the dean of the college that originally supported the program, the newly appointed faculty director, and the assistant dean of the new supporting college.

The day the director sent the email, his office was flooded with concerned students, he received a barrage of emails, and students started to talk – and to mobilize. One alumna created a "Save International House" event on Facebook to get students (especially other alumni) to attend the town hall meeting – and over sixty people RSVPed in the first few hours. Immediately IH members – past and present – started to voice their concerns about the changes on the event page. They had a strong presence at the meeting, demanding the administration explain the rationale for their changes and challenging them at every turn.

After the meeting, they decided to take action. They did not like some of the changes and they did not want to see them happen. One student immediately emailed current and past staff, students, and alumni, stating she was creating a student advisory group that would meet with the assistant dean of the new college – and they did so within a week, presenting her with a list of things they wanted to keep for the new program. They also created a Facebook group to support the current director.[12] In two weeks, the group had over one hundred members, most of whom posted testimonials about how much they loved the program and how much it meant to them. One student wrote that he had serious struggles his first year on campus, but that IH really helped his transition to college when he joined as a second year student:

> I felt like I wanted to cry every day and on some days I did. I lived in a Freshman dorm and I was teased and insulted quite often because my name sounds [remotely like slang for male genitalia], because I didn't go out and party like everyone else, because I was different. As a result I was not doing so well academically because of the harsh environment…. Joining this program has changed my life significantly. People were able to accept me for who I am and treated me kindly and with open minds. This year, I had many stressful events, [but] everyone in the community has been more like a family member to me than anything. The community supported and comforted me and that emotionally helped me.

After talking to the current director and meeting with students, the administrators of the new program agreed to keep the program's name – an accomplishment that a student promptly posted on the Facebook page and emailed to all participants and alumni. The students seemed excited, but wanted more. One student commented on the posting, "[International House] NAME, but will they keep the original program

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[12] The group description cites an event from a Harry Potter book – when the forces of evil took over Hogwarts, ousting the headmaster Dumbledore, in the name of the Ministry of Magic – equating the director as "Dumbledore" and the new department as the Ministry of Magic. The group uses the word "Army" and the director's name in the title – in reference to a group of students in the book who form a secret alliance to bring back the old headmaster.

and how it works? Bureaucracy loves to word play..."

The students maintained their efforts. A group of International House participants contacted the student newspaper, and the daily published an article highlighting student frustrations about being excluded from the decision making process.[13] The staff editorial published on the same day lamented how campus administration does not respect student input in Atlantic's decision making, citing the IH example (and story). The newly formed student advisory board contacted the provost's office, asking for an audience with the primary decision maker in this process. The provost met with these students and they detailed the components of the program changes they did not like, offering a rationale for their assertions and providing alternative solutions. The students did not report any direct changes to the IH plan as a result of this meeting, but they did receive an audience with one the campus' top administrators.

Throughout all of this, students – past and present – articulated one message very clearly – they felt duped. Their program was undergoing major changes and they were not part of the process that drove those decisions. In the article, one student was quoted as saying, "There was a total lack of transparency in the whole process." The editorial stated that, "students were completely shut out of the process." It is no surprise the students felt that way. The program changes had been in the works for over a year,[14] and the students did not even know about them until the administration had already made a bulk of the major decisions.

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[13] I was interviewed and quoted in the article.

[14] The provost formed a committee that developed a request for proposals to replace International House LLP that was sent out to all faculty at the university nearly two years before the director sent his email, and the students did not know it. The new program grew out of this RFP.

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The change process was long and drawn out, with many associated events. That process, however, is not the focus of this study. The program changes and the participants' reactions, however, do shed light on the student experience in the program. Many qualitative researchers note an "ah-ha" moment – an instant during the research process that acts as a pivotal learning opportunity – where a phenomenon jumps out at them and makes itself clear. The students' reaction to the changes in their program was that moment for me. I was amazed that the International House students, once they learned of the program alterations, mobilized on behalf of their LLP. This series of events forced me to ask the question: What could drive a group of 18 to 20 year old college students at an institution with 35,000+ students – in the middle of completing end of semester projects, studying for finals, and preparing for the holidays – to take on the university's administration with such passion? The answer that suddenly became clear is that International House students "love" their program. In one interview, the interviewee's first words were, "I love [IH]." An exchange student created stickers that read, "I ❤ [Franklin Hall]," and distributed them to all the students and staff. Students had used this word to describe the program innumerable times, but I didn't realize until this moment that they really *love* their program.

In their Facebook testimonials, students made it clear that they felt passionately enough about their "beloved" program to defend it, noting they were "in love" with the LLP, had "found a home" there, found "family" in their residence hall, felt like it was a "safe haven," and "couldn't ask for a better program." On their assignments, students say they are "very excited," "lucky," "honored," "grateful," and

"thrilled," to be a part of the program. The program is: "fun," "cool," "great," "positive," "awesome," "beautiful," "safe," "wonderful," "special," "magic," "friendly," "amazing," "engaging," "exhilarating, joyful,… rewarding," "top-notch," "vibrant..., educational, exciting," "extraordinary," On several occasions students noted that joining the program was "the best decision" they had ever made.

Many students believe the program has a profound effect on them. Some state that the experience of being in IH, "changed my life." One wrote that the program helped her, "grow as a person." A participant wrote in an essay: "I definitely wouldn't have the same opportunity for growth as I have in this living-learning program. I am being pushed to force myself into new experiences and situations, and that will make me a better person later in life. The people I have met and the experiences I have had so far have been eye opening."

One student reflected that the program "really made an impact on me," and another said it had "tremendous impact on my college experience and my future plans… I cannot imagine my life without [IH]." "[IH] has shaped my college experience so much… I would definitely be a very different person if I had not joined [International House]," wrote another student. Interviewees stated, "When I graduate…and I think back on my experiences in college, [IH] will be a big one. It is something that I will remember that is really special to me," and, "I had an amazing experience. It is just one of those things that I think I'll look back on and [think], wow, I made really great friends, I learned a lot, I learned a lot about myself." One testimonial states, "If it wasn't for [International House], I would never have … felt comfortable being myself. [It] allowed me to break down every barrier I had up coming in as a freshman, and allowed me to just be myself, without any inhibitions." An

interviewee also noted that IH, "is probably my favorite thing about the university." IH students are devoted to the living-learning program throughout their time on campus. Alumni regularly come back for events, and they study, visit friends, and socialize in the residence hall.

International House students love their program, and it transforms their lives and college experiences, and their reaction to the program changes reflects that. The next section begins to explore the elements that bring IH students to have such strong feelings about their LLP by exploring the culture of the program. This chapter examines my first research question – which inquires about what comprises the beliefs, behaviors, and values that shape the culture of International House. Earlier in this study, I established a working definition of culture (see Chapter 2). To me, culture is a set of values, beliefs, and behaviors – transmitted subconsciously, shared, and followed universally by all members. These values dictate the behaviors of the members of the cultural group, and those behaviors are observable and then offer insight into the culture. Culture also effects how we see and interpret the world around us – including the actions and reactions of others.

Practically, this definition of culture means that people in a cultural group share a set of values and beliefs. They get messages – transmitted consciously and subconsciously – that tell them how to behave, what to believe, and the values their cultural group holds. They take in these messages and observe shared behaviors and they start to act the same way and share values and beliefs with people in their group. People are not aware of the source of all of these messages – or even their content – but they are usually able to articulate common, shared behaviors and occasionally

some of the values and beliefs. According to DeWalt and DeWalt (2002), there are two aspects of culture: the explicit (those which people can articulate) and tacit (those that are outside everyday awareness). In my experience observing IH culture, I found this to be true.

A Unique Culture

There are aspects of International House's culture that its participants can describe, and others exist outside their awareness – evidenced in students' inability to articulate all aspects of their culture. Participants maintain, however, that their LLP has a culture of its own. In a reflection essay, a student stated that International House, "is certainly a unique, one of a kind program." An interviewee argued that International House, "definitely has it's own culture," another agreed IH has a "unique" culture. An interviewee also commented on the culture's richness, "It is [like] the most rich, intense vegetable soup you will ever eat. It is just like a Paula Dean soup. It's got a whole lot of butter and good stuff in it. And it makes you feel good when you eat it, and it fills you up. You feel like you are ready to take on anything when you've had this meal." Students acknowledge that their LLP has its own culture and that they share that culture. How they characterize the values, beliefs, and behaviors of that culture is explored below.

An Open Culture

When I directly asked International House's members to describe their culture, students use the words "welcoming," "inviting," and "accepting" to describe their LLP. Overwhelmingly, however, students use the word "open" to describe the culture of International House. One argued on a Foundation Essay that Franklin is more "open and accepting than the average dorm on campus." In an informal interview, an exchange student commented that IH students are "very open." One student wrote an essay about IH for another class that she shared with me. She noted, "My first impressions of IH when I joined were that the group was accepting and welcoming, and I was surprised how relaxed, casual, and open people are to talking about a variety of topics." One interviewee noted, "[I]t is just a very open culture." Another said, "I feel like that is the culture within [IH], it's open."

IH participants describe what an open culture means. In a Foundation Essay, one student cited the "spirit" of the program as being that of "openness, understanding, the will and ability to view situations from multiple perspectives, and the desire to learn about others and the unfamiliar." Openness, according to participants, is also dictated by the student behaviors. Participants identified their peers as open or open-minded, and in an essay one person wrote, "[IH] students in general, are open-minded and willing to try and explore new things." Several interviewees said the same, one commenting that in the program, "Everyone seemed to be open to everyone's ideas. Even in class, everyone listened respectfully to what everyone had to say even if it was different from what they believed." Another noted, "I think it's because people in [International House] are more open in general. They

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are more willing to discuss different things or to go to events together." In a

reflection essay assigned in a colloquium, a student stated:

> I realize that people in [IH] do not judge others for their opinions, but they allow
> for open discussion. Even though the discussions can sometimes get heated, [IH]
> students never hold grudges against each other and value opinions. This is
> something that I think is a very important quality that people should share: the
> ability to develop your own opinions and values while being able to listen to
> others.

Some participants cite open-mindedness as essential. In their essays, students

supported this notion, remarking: "Something to remember when coming into the

[International House] program is the importance of an open mind. Without an open

mind it would be difficult to learn and interact with everyone here." "[Y]ou have to

be, genuinely have to be open-minded in order to get along and to establish the kind

of community that has been established at [IH]," and, "There are people with interests

similar to mine, and others that are completely different. Something to remember

when coming into the [International House] program is the importance of an open

mind. Without an open mind it would be difficult to learn and interact with everyone

here."

Many students also describe International House as "welcoming" and its

participants as "outgoing." Participants reach out and make people feel at home in

the program. One interviewee stated, simply, "It is a welcoming culture," another

called it, "inviting," while another noted that when he lived in International House,

students were outgoing and welcomed people to the program. He continued, "This

year I saw the same thing. When I dropped by to help [someone] move in, I saw a lot

of the [second year IH] members…just being welcoming and introducing themselves

to everyone. To the squatters and everything – kind of making a welcoming

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environment." Another interviewee noted participants share, "the desire to learn and outgoing-ness and open-mindedness." Another interviewee's comment supported this notion: "People in [Franklin] really go out of their way to know as many people as they can in the building whether they have class with them or not."

The culture of being open and accepting affects students' interactions. For one, students accommodate for differences. In a reflection essay from one of my classes, a student noted that members of the IH community accommodate her veganism:

> When I speak to people about my ideology of not eating or using animal products, most people give me snide remarks, but people in [IH] have always been accepting and even curious about my eating habits. Even Caitlin (you!) even have accommodated…me like when you specifically made your food at [an international potluck] vegan just so I would be able to have something to eat. This is something that I have always appreciated in [IH]; people genuinely care about each other. And this is not the first time that people have tried to include my values during [IH] activities, even when I didn't even ask (or mind) not having an option.

An interviewee (who is Jewish) had a similar experience regarding dietary considerations:

> "[In Connections], we had Hispanic awareness nights … and we made food. We took into consideration, well for me, I don't eat pork so we [did not] make a big pork dish. And I think German night, too. They had some pork things but they also had things so people who kept Kosher or didn't eat meat could try some, too.

On a similar note, one interviewee described the culture of the community as, "Accepting…that would be the main way I would sum it up is accepting of people from everywhere." When I asked her to elaborate, she added:

> They're accepting of different people from every background…from all over. Accepting of different ideas…. Specifically, my political views are a lot different than a lot of people on campus and in International House I felt that people were more apt to listen and give me a chance to say my side than some people are outside of the program.

According to students, one of the major values in IH culture is open-mindedness. They believe open-mindedness is a positive trait, and that it is an essential characteristic for participants. This value is manifested in certain behaviors – namely welcoming new members to the community, being outgoing and focused on meeting new people, willingness to try new things, accommodating for their friends' needs, and accepting different perspectives. In addition to openness, students identified other dominant values that characterize their program's culture.

Appreciation for Different Cultures

The culture of IH, according to its students, is one where participants exhibit genuine interest in learning about unfamiliar people, places, events, and perspectives. It is a culture of respect where people feel safe sharing their opinions and ideas in classes and social interactions, and allow others to do the same. While they may agree or disagree with their peers in the program, participants do not judge them and they listen to their viewpoints. IH is a very diverse place – its participants represent a rainbow of racial, national, and cultural backgrounds – and appreciation for that diversity is expressed through respect. Behaving this way is not only encouraged in IH, it is expected. Students have little tolerance for ethnocentrism or narrow mindedness about people from other countries.

Students identify a common interest in international issues and people from other countries. They also recognize that their living situation is very diverse and international in nature. "This community is composed of students who have expressed interest in international and intercultural issues and activities," a participant

wrote in an essay. One interviewee summed it up: "the culture of [International House] is people that are interested in international studies, outgoing, [have a] desire to know more about the world." She continued:

> The culture of [IH] is the international nature. …Whether you're international or whether you're American, which you're still considered international – we're all international. You have an interest in the world around that goes outside your borders. So not just domestic issues – you care about across the border. You care about what happens in the world…you care about it even though you're here at [Atlantic].

Another interviewee noted everyone is "either international or interested in something international." A third said, "either [students] are studying a different language or they're really interested in international relations or politics. Either they're from a different country, [or] their parents are from a different country." A student once told me, "The people are what make this community," adding that it is particularly important that they have a cross-cultural background. During a town hall meeting,[15] an American student noted that participants share a "global mindset," and an exchange student stated that the international nature of the program is what attracted him. Another wrote in an essay for another class, "Most [IH]ers are interested in global issues and learning about other cultures. Many of the members … show interest in going to cultural events."

Students describe what it is like to live in an international environment. One wrote in a reflection essay:

> The sheer volume of diversity in [Franklin] Hall means that by living here one is automatically exposed to various personalities, nationalities, and schools of thought. By simply hanging around the lounge, one can pick everything ranging from the intricacies of learning Mandarin to the cuisine preferences of Guatemala.

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[15] The program periodically holds town hall meetings to gauge students' experiences in the program and to check in with them.

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While a similar effect might happen [in other dorms], this is the only place where I can truly sense a culture of global awareness.

And an interviewee stated:

It is quite incredible to be part of one of the biggest melting pots on campus; a place where new culture and different perspectives are taught and experienced everyday, a place where so many languages are being spoken within such small proximity of each other… It's always such a blast for me whenever I walk down the hall and hear people conversing in French in one room, discussing homework in Danish right across from it and Japanese karaoke being sung right down the hallway. It's always an eye opening experience for me whenever I have a chance to discuss the aftermath of the most devastating earthquake in Japan or the lives of Korean pop stars or the lack of speed limit in Germany all in one day. I don't think I can truly live this immersive international experience anywhere else on campus….

The "international nature" is also exhibited, according to one interviewee, in the events. That interviewee noted that other halls host only ice cream parties, but IH also has Mexican nights. IH does not have just "generic American activities," but internationally focused events as well. He also added that participants actively share their interest in other cultures: "I just feel like if we're going to [town], the people from this community would be able to say, 'This is a really cool spot that nobody knows about [where] you can find out about *this* culture. Let's go to this restaurant, it is amazing Ethiopian cuisine.'"

Another dominant value in International House's culture is cross-cultural appreciation. Participants believe diversity enriches their community, and that learning new languages and about international issues are valuable activities. These values and beliefs are manifested in students' expressed desire to learn about new cultures, countries, and languages. They also encourage other students to outwardly express their cultural practices; host events that expose their peers to different cultural groups through food, music, and movies; make an effort to educate their peers about

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their cultural orientations; and show an interest in learning about the cultures of their peers in the program. In addition to cross-cultural appreciation, IH students also value a strong sense of community.

Student Bonding: "My Community, My Family"

Students express a genuine connection to their LLP. In a document search of all assignments, documents, field notes, and transcripts, students used the word "community" in reference to International House over 100 times. In a Foundation Essay, a student noted, "The sense of community that [International House and Franklin] foster is essential to the program and one of the most important parts of my college experience thus far." Another said IH is "a very supportive community." An interviewee noted that her previous residence hall "wasn't a community like it is here." In a reflection essay, one student used stronger language, citing the community element as essential: "This program would not work if it was not a community." Another student supported this notion in an essay: "The sense of community that [IH] and [Franklin] foster is essential to the program and one of the most important parts of my college experience thus far."

For students coming to campus – many of them for the first year – the connection to their community helps them transition to college. In a summer orientation, for example, students cited that they joined the program because they were looking for a "mini-campus." At Atlantic University, this is a legitimate reason. The university's student body numbers close to 40,000 students, and incoming freshman are often placed in huge lecture classes with upwards of 500 students in

their first years on campus.

Interviewees noted the same concern when they reflected on their reasons for joining IH. One said, "I thought it was a good idea to be in a program as a freshman here. It's a big school." Another added, "I guess I liked that I wasn't going to be just like another freshman in a huge dorm."   Creating a sense of a smaller community seems to be effective. An international student wrote in a Foundation Essay that, "I believe that belonging to a smaller community within the university has helped me have a smooth transition between my life in [my home country] and my new life in the United States." An American student wrote in a reflection essay, "I think I would have been lost in such a big university without [IH]."

Students in IH do not just live together in a residence hall; they socialize and study with each other. As a result of participating in this community, students experience what one student called "lasting friendships" in a class journal. These lifelong friendships are often with people from all over the world. In a reflection essay, a student wrote, "I have built friendships and made connections across country borders."   In a course with second year students, a participant said that that program participants create "international ties" as a result of being in the program. These ties are so strong that students stayed in contact with each other, and many of them visit former exchange and international students in their home countries. One student noted in an essay, "I knew I would meet international students but I did not realize that some of my peers would be the reason I traveled in the first place." In the summer of 2010, two students transitioning from their first to second year visited an international student at her home in South America, and another went to visit her

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boyfriend (who she met in the program) in Europe. One alumna went to visit an IH

friend in Europe over her holiday break in 2010 and two went to Scandinavia. One

student who traveled to Scandinavia said she was able to do so as a result of

welcoming exchange students into International House, "You can couch surf and they

show you around after you showed them around. Other students have told me that

they feel like they could go anywhere in the world and be able to find someone that

they know."

Exchange and international students also come back to visit. An interviewee

noted, "A lot of exchange students actually come back because they get into

[International House], they develop friends, [and] close relationships. They love it so

much and they'll come back and crash." She has a friend from Europe who has been

back to visit twice. At least four IH exchange students came to visit students in

program and stayed in the residence hall in the fall of 2010. American students also

host international students. During a town hall meeting, a student explained how two

international students from different countries spent Thanksgiving with his family

while they were studying at Atlantic, and an interviewee described taking two

exchange students fishing and hosting another in his house over the summer. Both

students expressed that these experiences were truly enjoyable for them.

When I asked an interviewee what aspect of the program had the biggest

impact on her life, she responded, "[T]he friends that I made. It was definitely a

pretty tight knit group." When I asked another interviewee to describe living in

Franklin, she answered – without hesitation, "It's like a really big circle of friends."

In an assignment for my course, a student wrote, "Living in [International House] has

given me the closest friends I have ever had and [all] from different backgrounds."

One stated that they have "bonded" with other participants, and commented about

some students' upcoming visit to her country in Asia: "I am also looking forward to

this winter, when I get to share my country with [my friends]. I am enjoying the

friendships that I have built during my time here, especially the exceptional bond I

have with my roommate."

The feeling of a common bond and sense of community affects the dormitory

living experience. Students report that they know almost everyone who lives in the

residence hall – even if they do not participate in the LLP. When I asked an

interviewee what it is like to live on the third floor in Franklin, she noted:

> There is definitely a bond on the floor. [When] you are walking to the
> bathroom… you say 'hi' to five people on your way. Versus, I live in an
> apartment now and it is really depressing. I am slowly starting to get to know my
> neighbors… It is a very different dynamic. In [International House], the study
> lounge in [Franklin] on the third floor is the place to hang out, where everyone
> studied together. We joked around. We had fun… it was just a lot of fun.

Another interviewee reflected on her experience of living in the dormitory:

> In [Franklin], there is no wall or anything that divides people. You have your
> own room, yes, but you can go up the stairs or take the elevator to all the different
> floors and just walk around the hallway or sit there, or sit in the basement and
> you'll see people and you'll have conversations and everybody knows everybody.
> Even if you don't talk to the person, you've seen their face so you at least can
> identify them…

Walking around the halls of the dormitory, it is easy to see why she feels this

way. Almost everyone keeps their doors open, and students are always sitting in each

other's rooms talking, laughing, and watching television. The above interviewee

described how living in Franklin affected her: "When you have that sense of

community, you always have people that care about you, that will talk to you. There

is no place like [Franklin] on this campus, I am convinced. And I miss it. Every day I miss [Franklin]. I do… I didn't realize how much I would miss it." On a Foundation Essay, a student noted that IH is similar to her very diverse neighborhood where she grew up: "[Franklin] is my neighborhood now and it reminds me a lot of my childhood. All I have to do is travel to the basement to try some exotic food or hear an unfamiliar genre of music. If I feel like debating on a topic of religion or politics all I have to do is step out into the hallway. I know from experience that not all dorms on this campus offer such a community where you can discuss and learn from your neighbors, and where you can feel like you belong to something."

The bond and sense of community have a profound effect on participants. Students identify Franklin as their "home" and International House as a "family." At the end of the 2009-2010 academic year, an International House student made a video where he walked around the residence hall, interviewing students and asking them to talk about what the program meant to them. Repeatedly, students used the words "family" and "home" to describe the program. The video received an overwhelmingly positive response. The creator posted it to YouTube and Facebook, and many students shared the link on their own Facebook pages. The president of the Connections student group showed the video to incoming students in the fall 2010 student orientation as a reflection of what the program means to them and to inspire the new students. Further, in a Foundation Essay, a student noted, "[The] living-learning community has already felt like my second home. Although not everyone living in [Franklin] is in the program, it's inspiring to inform them of such a hidden gem at the university."

While IH students overwhelmingly experience a positive experience in their LLP, and they benefit from a strong connection to the community, the program is still faced with challenges that threaten the quality of the student experience. As I stated earlier, students experience a close bond with other program participants. They are so close, in fact, that they often know the intimate details of most IH students' lives. When couples (of which there are many) in Franklin break up, the whole community knows about it. Several couples met, dated, and broke up during my fieldwork period. One student told me one of the driving factors that led him to move out of the residence hall was breaking up with his girlfriend in the program. When two friends have a falling out, it tends to cause wide rifts in the entire residence hall – where students feel compelled to form alliances for the student they support. During my research period, a fight between two strong program students (who were best friends their first year but had a major falling out over the summer) was well known among all International House students, many of whom reported being forced to choose a side.

In some ways, the LLP is similar to other residence halls. Students have roommate issues and need to move, residents make huge messes in the kitchen when they come home late in the evening, and participants complain that their night owl neighbors keep opposite schedules and play loud music that keeps the early risers awake all night. Also, like any other program with over 100 students, not every student is a gem. The students who fail to come to class, perform poorly on coursework, want to move out of the dorm, rarely attend events, or do not serve on a committee challenge the program staff. These students are outliers, however, and

while these students cause staff some heartache, I can only think of a handful that fall into this category.

Additionally, while most students feel there is a strong sense of community in the residence hall, that community experiences strain on two fronts. First, in addition to cultural and ethnic diversity, the dormitory also hosts students who represent a wide range of ages. During the research period, the roster included students as young as 17 and as old as 25. Exchange students present a particular challenge. They tend to come to the United States as upper classmen. These students are often puzzled by rules forbidding alcohol in the residence hall and at events, and their peers' inability to go to pubs with them. Franklin students range from new high school students leaving home for the first time to seniors (even graduate students) in their mid-20s who have been traveling and going to pubs since they were 15. Finding meaningful events to cater to a wide range of ages and maturity levels presents a serious challenge to program staff. Second, students are divided into clear cohorts from the beginning. They take classes and often live with students in that cohort. This causes a first year-second year divide that is often difficult to penetrate.

In addition to the programmatic elements that threaten the community feeling of IH, some students reported having a negative experience in the LLP. One of my interviewees, for example, spoke fondly of the program and noted that she had made many friends. She had a very negative experience in the residence hall her first year, one that she felt her resident assistant was ill-equipped to deal with. This greatly influenced her overall satisfaction with the program. She perceived that her peers felt a stronger bond with other students and a greater sense of connection than she did.

Similarly, a second year student confided in me during a recent conversation at the end of fall semester that she wanted to move out of the residence hall the following spring – her last semester (which she later did). When she told me this, I was shocked. She was one of our most involved, positive students in her first year and had assumed a major leadership position in Connections. I asked her to explain, and she said that she was experiencing her most strenuous course load, and expected the spring semester load to be worse. She told me that she really needed some down time and privacy. Since the community is so open, she explained, it creates an *expectation* that all students leave their doors open and socialize all the time. She said she was feeling a sense of isolation and pressure because she could no longer be as open as she was expected to be, or that she had been the previous year. She is also in her mid-20s (she was a transfer student and started college a bit later), so the novelty of the community was beginning to wear off. " [IH] is open," she told me, "that is what I love about it. But because it is so open, I can't close my door and have the privacy I need after a long day."

It is important to note, however, that despite these challenges, overall IH students express that they felt a strong sense of community and a connection to that community. The program staff spent a lot of time listening to students' concerns and worked hard to address these challenges – like starting a first year-second year mentorship program to address divides between the cohorts – which is a testament to their desire to optimize the student experience. Also, I can recognize only a handful of students who identified negative experiences or performed poorly in the program, such as those I cited above. Even those students who talked about needing to change

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roommates or expressed frustrations with the messy kitchen minimized those experiences. Interviewees overwhelmingly shared positive experiences with me. While the negative experiences were there, they did not emerge as common themes among students.

This text illustrates that IH students value a strong sense of connection to their community.   They believe that sense of community is important, and that their program is a unique and special place. As a result, students exhibit behaviors like maintaining strong friendships with program students, getting involved in the community through committees, calling the residence hall their "home" and fellow participants "family," and expressing love for IH.

A Summary of International House's Cultural Values, Beliefs, and Behaviors

International House is characterized by three major cultural values: openness, cross-cultural appreciation, and strong sense of community. Students in IH believe that being open minded, living in a diverse community, and feeling a strong sense of community are positive traits. They believe that these traits are essential to the community, and that their residence hall experience would be lacking without them. They actively work to maintain these values and beliefs by welcoming members to the community, encouraging outward expressions of cross-cultural experiences, accommodating for differences, and calling their dorm their home and the LLP participants their family. These values intersect in dynamic ways.

Intersections of Cultural Values

Elements of culture are not discrete or isolated, and of the values of cross-cultural appreciation, openness, and community identification intersect in interesting ways. The openness of IH students extends to being more aware and receptive to learning about and being accepting of individuals from different culture and ethnic backgrounds. "People in [International House] are very open and friendly to others with other cultural backgrounds," noted one student in a Foundation Essay. An interviewee commented, "Some of my closest friends in [IH] are nothing like me, but we share the common bond of being open-minded and learning about other backgrounds and cultures." "Our excitement for cultural learning and our willingness to explore our differences with one another has created a comfortable and fun learning and living environment," one student stated in a Foundation Essay. An interviewee described how the open culture converges with international understanding:

> I think as a culture that [International House] is a very open and accepting kind of culture. And I think that we're pretty open and accepting of everyone equally. Because you might have an exchange student that comes from somewhere completely different that you have no experience with, maybe, and then you have someone … you knew before. But, you are equally as accepting of what they have to say as the foreign exchange student, even if you think you might come from the same place as the student from [home]. I think we are just a diverse group that is really accepting of everyone and pretty open-minded.

Another interviewee stated:

> I have to say that the most important thing, through the classes and through just living with people from different countries, is to be open-minded. I see a lot of, we call them squatters – people who are not in IH but they live here. They are not really open-minded about the idea that there [are] people from different cultures living here. And, sometimes they don't give them a chance; they don't really… talk to them. But, once you talk to them you learn so much more about that you

didn't know. Rather than just [saying] they're from a different country, I can't really talk to them because there's this language barrier, there's this culture barrier…once you learn to be open minded, you take in a lot more…it is probably more beneficial.

An exchange student from Japan told me that she felt very welcome and accepted while living in Franklin, and that IH students were interested in learning about her culture.

In so many of the examples above, the undercurrent of cross-cultural understanding comes out, for example, the international nature of the student friendships and interactions in the residence hall. The strong sense of community connection also ties to openness. Students make close friends and bond – and often those friendships are initiated because they are outgoing and meet people. Then they maintain those close relationships and openness by – literally – opening their doors and allowing friendships to flourish.

International House students agree their program has its own culture, and the consensus among its residents is that the culture is one that they describe as open. But, digging deeper, it is clear that IH students value open-mindedness, cross-cultural appreciation, and community closeness. Those values are manifested in students' behaviors, and those behaviors include accepting and welcoming residents, reaching out to other students, and helping participants feel comfortable to express themselves openly. Their community is dear to them, so they work to maintain strong friendship. As a result, they feel bonded with their students and express a genuine love for their program with which they have a strong connection. The culture of openness also extends to the international element of the residence hall and LLP. Participants are

open to learning about new places and cultures and appreciate the international nature of their living space as an extension of being open-minded.

Explicit Culture

That outward behaviors, feeling of openness, and cross-cultural currents of International House leads to a bond with students in their community illustrates the explicit aspects of the program's culture (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). Students are able to articulate that the culture of the program is open, that the feel a strong sense of community, and that their LLP has an international element. They can also describe behaviors associated with these cultural values. The elements of the culture students are able to describe, however, are the explicit elements and only paint part of the picture of what it means to participate in the living-learning program. The next chapter, therefore, examines how this culture is shaped and transmitted as a clue to revealing the tacit elements of the culture – those messages students receive and transmit about how to behave in their living and learning space.

Chapter 7: Participants' Roles in Shaping International House Culture

The tacit aspects of a culture are outside the participants' everyday awareness. Tacit elements exist in the minds of the cultural group's members, and they are transmitted subconsciously (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002; Agar, 1996; Geertz, 1973). Unraveling the tacit elements of a group' culture, then, is tricky. If these messages about cultural values exist in participants' minds and they are not explicitly tied to concrete cues, exploring those elements requires uncovering phenomena that are not overtly stated or recorded anywhere. IH students describe behaviors (walking around and welcoming students on move-in day) or beliefs (living with exchange students is a good thing), but rarely can they describe underlying values of their LLP or where they learned those values. Students are able to explain the explicit aspects of their culture, but not necessarily the tacit ones.

One interviewee illustrates this beautifully when she explains that she can't describe the culture of IH, just how it feels to experience it:

> You just take a lot away from it. Like I said, the friendships you form like that bond is always there. I don't know. It is like traveling and not leaving your… dorm. You can get a taste of a little bit of everything, just from the people that are here and the different experiences. So, I guess that doesn't really describe culture or anything, but I don't know, that is what it feels like. That is what comes from my gut when I think about the culture of [International House].

Another interviewee expressed an intimate knowledge of the community's cultural values:

[Participants] know what the program's about. They know that they are going to learn, that they are going to take in new ideas, new culture. So, they have that mindset of being open-minded and conscious, being globally competent about meeting new people, learning new things. That's why they are so engaged in making it more welcoming for new people and trying to meet everyone and learn a little bit.

Both students clearly capture all the major cultural values of the LLP, but do not know why those are the shared values that shape their experiences. They do receive the message, though, that these are the values of their cultural group. Understanding tacit culture requires examining the messages participants receive and hypothesizing how those messages are received, conceptualized, used, and re-transmitted. This process is challenging, but careful examination of the incoming messages and the resultant observable, shared behaviors offer strong clues about how to get into the minds of International House students.

Clearly, International House students receive the message that the LLP values openness, cultural diversity, and community. They do not always know why the culture is characterized by those values. When I asked an interviewee why she thought IH students are more open, for example, she stated: "I feel like this is kind of drilled into your head – be open minded, be open minded, be open minded. Most people [think], I know, I know, I am already open-minded. But, it gets stuck in there. If someone repeats something to you enough times, it gets stuck." She did not describe how this message is "drilled" into students' heads or how it gets "stuck" there, but she accurately describes the process of cultural assimilation in International House (or really anywhere). This interviewee's inability to describe what shapes IH culture was common among the LLP's students.

An interviewee stated about the IH culture: "I don't think its anything that's

really explicitly taught in the program." This observation illustrates that students

know how to describe their culture, but it is difficult to describe how it is shaped.

Students are, however, able to describe events and phenomena where the cultural

messages are clearly communicated. An interviewee supports that these messages are

clear: "You are supposed to meet other people, and you are supposed to [get] out and

share your different experiences. I guess, for lack of a better term, 'Kumbaya' with

everyone…it makes it that much easier to live amongst the people." Students hear

that they are supposed to be open and welcoming and interested in other cultures, so

next I explore how and where they hear that message.

Program Staff and Literature as Message Makers

Some students speculate that their cultural messages come from the program

staff through different avenues. Literature is the most commonly cited source. One

interviewee stated, "I think the website and the brochures and just talking to you or

[the director] or any other student. That message is conveyed," and another said she

learned about the culture through, "[H]ow International House is advertised. So, you

learn through that, there is…a global living and learning environment. …[I]t is just

kind of something that I perceived when I was reading the [International House]

pamphlets." Since staff produces the literature – intentionally crafting the program's

message, I consider both in this section.

Program Literature

Students say they receive the message to be open-minded to new cultures and

build a sense of community through program literature. A close examination of the

literature and brochures reveals that the message of community building clearly comes through. The program's webpage (a resource that almost all students said they accessed immediately upon being invited to or learning about the program) states that the LLP experience, "fosters a close-knit and supportive community." In the Program Requirements section of the website, students are informed that, "Being a member of a community means being actively involved in promoting its wellbeing and reflecting its values." Similarly, the "Community Involvement" section of the 2009-2010 Student Handbook reads "You must demonstrate a commitment to community by actively serving on one of five committees." This "commitment to community" is communicated through other literature as well. On a student handout highlighting program requirements and expectations distributed several times during the year, participants are informed that, "To earn a…notation, students must demonstrate a commitment to community." Students are also told, via the website, that they will be, "living with and form strong relationships with other people in the program."

Program promotional materials reveal that students who participate in the program, "live in [Franklin Hall], creating a community interested in learning more about the world's cultures" – this message connects the community and international program values. The message of community commitment comes through clearly, and respect for an international environment is also communicated. International appreciation comes through very strongly in other ways as well. The program goal of developing global competency is featured prevalently on all program materials, and promotional pamphlets commonly refer to international or cross-cultural experiences.

In all of his program presentations the director makes the global competency skill development goal clear, and students are able to articulate that goal.

Openness is communicated less directly in the program literature. I found only one reference on the website, which notes that IH students are "curious about other people, places, and perspectives," which indirectly assumes openness. I found evidence of expected behaviors in this realm the student handbook on a committee title – Exchange Student Welcome. The committee description in the student handbook notes that the committee's purpose is to "ensure exchange students feel well-acquainted with our community," and encourages its members to "speak with exchange students to gauge their interests and find ways of fostering interaction between all students in the program." This statement encourages people to welcome others to the community – a behavior associated with openness.

Students recognize program literature as a principal source for their cultural messages – especially regarding openness – but I found little evidence that the message come from this source. I am not surprised that students initially identified literature as a source of their program messages. The literature is a concrete explanation – something they see every day – where the tacit aspects of their culture are invisible and subconscious. This discussion about literature also assumes students read the program's brochures and website, which is not always true.

Students also attributed learning about IH's cultural values through the program staff directly, so next I explore how staff communicates the program's cultural values through their expressed expectations and behaviors. The messages

explored here do not account for classroom experiences because that element of the

program is explored in the next chapter.

Program Staff

During student orientations, the director clearly states that students are

expected to be involved in the community (either by serving on committees,

participating in or planning events, or serving on Connections leadership). Students

appear to receive that message:

> I feel like that's what you guys and I know specifically [director] wanted, just
> because I remember how hard [the director] was working for it. That's what [the
> director] wanted. It is… inclusive, I feel like [the director], you guys made it that
> way! Not just [the director], but you and [previous GA] and everyone else who
> worked in [IH]. You guys made it that way. You wanted people to work
> together. You wanted a strong little council where they self govern themselves.
> You guys wanted that and that's what you made. That's why everyone in [IH]
> right now knows each other.

An interviewee supported this, noting he felt "prepared" to meet new people because

he thought it was expected of him when he came into the program, and he learned

that expectation from the director.

The director sends this message a in a variety of ways. He emphasizes at

large group events and again in class that students get out what they put in. He also

believes that students who put in more effort tend to have more positive, rewarding

experiences in the program, and he makes that clear to students in his interactions

with them. During a fall orientation, the director shared the program's formal goals

during a PowerPoint presentation, but added that another goal of the program is to,

"build friendships with people you live with." During the same orientation, he told

students that community involvement is an expectation, in addition to the course

requirements. "We work hard and we want you to give back to the community," he said, also noting, "[Franklin] is an oasis. Don't destroy it…don't go out and destroy property. Keep alive the spirit of community." He also consistently told second year students during their orientations to break out of cliques, to maintain a high level of involvement, to make new friends, and to reach out to first year students. These examples illustrate that community building is intentional, and the expectation that students take part in, respect, and build a community is clearly communicated to students. In our numerous conversations, the director and I often discussed the importance of community and how he worked hard to build community through instilling a commitment in students and consistently communicating its importance.

In addition to his explicit statements, the director makes his commitment to the community clear through his behaviors. He is deeply committed to the program. He works very hard to improve the LLP's programs, and works incredible hours. It is not unusual for him to stay in Franklin Hall until late in the evening or work on the weekends. He welcomes students as they move in the residence hall, emails them and encourages them to stop by check in with him (and he chats when them when they do), and encourages his staff to do all of the same. His efforts at creating a strong community are intentional – he expresses that openly, and his personal investment in ensuring students have a positive experience is clear to an observer.

Students also report having a closer relationship with IH staff than they do with their professors and or other university staff. In a town hall meeting, a student expressed feeling like the IH staff genuinely cared about her well being, an

experience she did not have with faculty.[16] In the meeting with the new department

heads, one student expressed that she had learned more from and felt closer to the

director than she ever had to any other educator in her life. The fact that he worked in

the program residence hall made an enormous difference to students. His presence

and high level of accessibility was tremendously important to students. I often sat

with students as they cried and shared their personal struggles with me. Students

confided in me, asked my advice, went out to coffee with me, visited me often after

they graduated from IH, emailed me, and requested to be friends with me on

Facebook. The director often met with students to counsel them on everything from

transitions to college to sexuality issues to course struggles. While my teaching

experience at Atlantic was limited (three years before I joined IH, then two years in

IH), I felt I had significantly stronger relationships with IH students than I did in my

classes not associated with the LLP. We work where the students live. They stop by

regularly to check in, chat, and share news. This perception of closeness with staff

also sends a message to students – that the staff members are there to listen to them,

and that they support and value them as members of the community.

These examples illustrate how staff sends a message of valuing community,

but does not yet describe how staff sends a message of openness. An interviewee,

however noted that staff fosters a culture of openness through open dialogue about

the program:

> I guess that I like that you [referring to the staff] are so open to feedback …I
> think that that's a really big thing. Because I know that a lot of people certain
> semesters we would write things on evaluations or we would talk about things
> after class and we felt the same way and then we saw those changes made, which

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[16] I do not refer to IH staff as faculty because none of them possessed PhDs and were not classified as
      faculty by the university.

was really nice. That doesn't happen a lot.

Staff regularly seeks student feedback – either informally, through town hall meetings, or on course evaluations. We spent many hours discussing students' experiences in the program in staff meetings and informally. The director works long hours to ensure that students are having a positive experience, and many of the changes to the program (the addition of the capstone experience in the final semester, for example) are the direct result of student feedback. The director shared the metamorphosis of the curriculum with me, and he cited student feedback as one reason for many of the changes he and the previous director made to the course content and focus. Students see these changes and how seriously staff takes their input, and this sends them a clear message that IH is an open and accommodating place. They also see that the staff openly encourages them to take ownership of their experience through participation in its student led, run, and funded group.

Soldner and Szelenyi (2008) and Shapiro and Levine (1999) note that no LLP fits into a model exactly, and that they are customizable – these scholars consider this a strenghth of these programs. Customizability is key in IH – the LLP's staff constantly seeks to enact changes that will better meet student needs and program goals. Additionally, the program has been subjected to numerable changes brought on by the insitution that are out of its control (the major changes I highlight in the introduction to Chapter 6). In the two academic years I worked for the program, we were under three different academic departments and as many supervisors. We had to change several aspects of the program – from our payroll deposit form to our

letterhead – several times. As a result, change is a salient feature of the International

House experience.

The program has had five different directors since its inception ten years ago,

with one director working half time for about a year. During this period, the program

suffered – due more to the fact that the half time director did not have the time or

resources to devote to running the program and responding to program needs – than

to her abilities. At the end of the 2006-2007 academic year, students created an "I

hate International House" Facebook page. The director who started the following

year worked to improve the program's image on campus, meeting with every member

of the Facebook group personally to see what she could do to improve the program.

For personal reasons, she left the program after only a year and a half,[17] and the

current director was working as a graduate assistant when she left and he was hired to

replace her. The students I interviewed started the program under the previous

director. Since they started the program, enrollment numbers doubled and the

curriculum had changed significantly. One of the interviewees even referred to the

program as having a "chameleon" quality because it changes so much – and continues

to do so. Students recognize that staff members are flexible and accommodating in

the face of change, and they learn to be more open as a result.

Staff sends its cross-cultural appreciation message a bit more subtly than the

community and flexibility messages. Besides the international flare of the

decorations, students who frequent the office observe many books about cross-

cultural communication, different regions of the world, and global issues. The

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[17]   Students responded favorably to this director and her efforts. Many of them liked her a great deal
    and recognized her efforts to revive the spirit of the program. She still communicates with many
    of the students in the program via Facebook, and joined program pages during the transition.

graduate assistant, director, and I all studied and worked abroad. The graduate assistant and I speak one other language, and the director speaks two. We share our experiences openly with students, and talk at length with them about their countries of origin (if they are international or exchange students), encourage them to study abroad, and practice speaking in the languages we know. The director and I both study international education. I meet with students and email them to support their Peace Corps applications since I was a volunteer, and we write innumerable letters of recommendation for students who want to pursue international study, career, service, and other activities. Students can find pamphlets about almost any study abroad opportunity outside our office – and the program sponsors a short-term course abroad. The director also maintains a weekly listserv that goes out to participants and alumni that highlights cross-cultural and international events or opportunities – such as volunteer possibilities in China or a panel about women's issues in Afghanistan. Staff communicates that they value international experience and they encourage students to take opportunities when they can, but they do not prevail in public presentations. Most of what students know about the staff's international backgrounds they learn in one-on-one interactions.

The messages to participants from the program and literature do not necessarily scream, "be open minded" like students say it does. The messages sent from program literature and staff do let students know that they are expected to be active members of the program, and that as a result they will form strong friendships and a sense of community. When students arrive at Franklin Hall and move into their rooms, they come understanding that they are expected to be involved in their

community and will be living with people from different cultural backgrounds. Most incoming students learn this through the literature or in interactions with the director. Later, staff supports that expectation when they provide students the opportunity to actively participate in the community through committees. All of this is amidst the subtle message that international experience is important, valuable, and the program's goal.

One interviewee shared another important insight about what shapes the culture of IH. She described Franklin as a welcoming place, and when asked why it is like that, she responded: "Part of it is an expectation from the staff of [International House], but the other half of it is the student, the individual wanting for themselves to meet other people…and the will and the want to be part of that. That makes a difference." This quote is particularly insightful because it pinpoints something that may shape the messages students receive – the nature of the participants who choose to participate in the program. This is a theme that consistently emerged again and again, so it is discussed at length in the next section.

Participants as Message Makers

Examining IH students as message makers (and receivers) requires reviewing the selection process that gets them to the LLP, their reasons for joining the program, and their pre-program experiences.

Selection

International House intentionally selects its students. The staff and other reviewers examine thousands of applications from Atlantic's entire incoming

freshman class and invite students that they think are well suited to the program.

They consider all majors and try to maintain a gender balance. The application

review rubric classifies desirable candidates as those who are strong academically,

but emphasizes international experience or interest in learning about new cultures and

people. Reviewers are asked to look for evidence that potential participants are

involved in international or intercultural organizations, intend to study a second

language, are non-native English speakers, have chosen internationally centered

majors, express an interest in being exposed to diversity, have international travel or

study experience, and whose family members come from countries other than the

United States. Students who are selected from on-campus are required to write an

essay about their international interests, and staff inquires about these interests in an

interview. The outcome of this process is fairly clear – the staff invites students who

they perceive are interested in cross-cultural issues. They intentionally weed them

out from thousands of applicants.

When a student is selected to enter the program, he or she receives a postcard

in the mail and decides whether to join the program as an incoming freshman. This

postcard highlights the opportunity to join a smaller, international community, and

directs students to a website. Overwhelmingly, students note that they access this

website to determine if they want to join. One of the first phrases students read on the

homepage of the website is: "[International House] students, whether or not they

already have some international experience, are united by a common interest in the

rest of the world." The indirect message here is that many of the students do, in fact,

have international experience, and if they do not they are interested in international or

cross-cultural issues. An interviewee supported this notion, commenting, "The people who are signing up for [International House] – I think, if they are signing up for the program, they have [to want]… to meet other people and want to have the experience of sharing the classroom with students from other countries." The program extends close to 300 invitations, and yields about 30 acceptances from those invitations.

Students do not always jump at the chance to join the program. LLPs have become popular relatively recently and many of the students' parents hesitate when their children receive the invitation to IH. They worry they will not have a "traditional" college experience or that they will be isolated. During a tour of the building with a mother and her son, the parent expressed genuine concern that her child would be pigeon holed with one group of students if he participated in the program and would not make as many friends. She asked dozens of questions to the staff and students leading the tour about what the program has to offer and how students feel about the program.   I assumed parents expressed these concerns because they did not participate in or know peers who participated in LLPs during their college years.[18] Though, during a conversation with a student, I dispelled this assumption. She told me that her father participated in a major focused LLP program when he was in college and he had a miserable experience. As a result, he actively tried to talk her out of joining International House. This experience is common. In a class, a student noted that her high school guidance counselor had warned her not to join IH because she would be caught up in an overly academic environment. Others

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[18] I realize I am making an assumption here that the students' parents went to college themselves. While IH does have a few first generation college students in its ranks, overwhelmingly participants' parents attended college.

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note that they had to be convinced to join. A European exchange student said the exchange coordinator (who is familiar with the IH LLP and knows alumni from the same region in Europe who have had positive experiences) talked to him extensively about the program, but he only joined after she repeatedly assured him it was worthwhile.

Some students' parents openly support their decision to join (though this is far less common). During move-in day, I had a long conversation with a parent who explained that she had to prod her son to join, and another student told me her mother talked her into joining IH. Often parents and students in these cases note that the student needed to be persuaded to join. The parent in these cases is the one who understood the value of cross-cultural opportunities. The parent I talked to during move-in, for instance, is a translator and lived in several countries. Students join against the recommendation of a parent or high school teacher because they find the value in cross-cultural exposure or they join because they are prodded by a guardian who does. International House chooses its invitees, intentionally targeting those who have an interest in cross-cultural issues. Only about one in ten students who receives that targeted invitation accepts, however. Those who do either want cross-cultural exposure or their parents want to expose them to a diverse environment and talk them into joining the LLP.

As a result of the recruiting efforts, the program boasts an incredibly culturally diverse student body. In addition to the diversity statistics collected by the program and cited in Chapter 5, several students provided additional evidence through my interactions with them that they have significant international

backgrounds. For example, a student who appears as a "Caucasian American" student on the program's demographic information sheet is a student who was born in Eastern Europe, lived in three countries, speaks four languages, has family living all over the world, has traveled extensively, and was granted US citizenship in his last semester on campus so identifies as an American.

Recruitment yields a diverse group of students who appreciate cultural differences. These students are well positioned to both send and receive messages that culture is something to be honored, appreciated, and featured. They are also come from a variety of different backgrounds so they are also well positioned to offer something to an international community. The next section explores this more by examining students' reasons for joining and what they hoped to get out of the program.

Reasons for Joining the Program

Throughout the research period, I found instances where students directly stated their reasons for joining the program, and their interest in international issues was a dominant theme. Overwhelmingly students cited their desire to meet people from diverse backgrounds, and several expressed that a diverse group of friends was something they lacked before. One student wrote in an essay that in her high school, "I failed to find many more students with a certain ethnic background that would teach me more about their cultures, I was waiting for an opportunity to find out more about others. The [International House] invitation came to me at the right moment." She noted that she joined to find that diversity that was lacking in her high school. In a class, a student commented that she had lived all over the world and always

attended diverse schools. When she entered Atlantic her classes were homogenous, so she joined IH to find the diversity to which she was accustomed.

Some students noted that they transferred from previous institutions because they lacked a diverse student body, and joined IH because of these experiences. One participant wrote, "I attended the [another university] in fall of 2008 but ending up transferring out. The student population is just too homogenous. I felt unwelcomed and in the end, could not acclimate along with the students." Another stated, "[My previous university] was 85 percent white so very little chances were given to interact with international students of diverse cultures. I was a lot of people's first Asian friend even though I'm only half Asian and it bothered me to be looked at as a demographic as opposed to a person."

Another common reason students cited was the desire to learn about other cultures. "In my case, the purpose of joining [International House] is to learn more about other cultures and enrich my experience of communication with people from different cultures," stated one student in an essay. Several students also expressed an interest in wanting to share their culture with others or to break down stereotypes. The quote below from a students' essay illustrates a common theme – students often join the program for a variety of reasons, most of which are intertwined with valuing international experiences:

> In such a diverse and intermingled world, it is a basic necessity to be globally competent. It is a core requirement to understand different cultural barriers and overcome them. "Globally competent" is the word I would use to describe why I wanted to join [International House]. This trait is a desired feature for everyone in such a globalized world. The program…would allow me to attain this trait and allow me to have a head start in this present day globalized world. Moreover, this program deals with understanding different cultures – in other words, being globally competent.

Students cite many other reasons for joining the program – such as the resident hall's ideal location, wanting to take the opportunity presented by the university, or the prospect of having a notation. Several decided to participate on the recommendation of friends or family members – during the research period, two of the students had siblings who were program alumni. Some hoped to learn skills that would make them more marketable, while others had attended events in the past and wanted to be a part of the action. Aside from the dominant desire to meet people from other cultures, another dominant theme was the chance to live in a smaller, more personal community. "I was extremely nervous about not being able to acclimate myself to college life and the smaller, more cozy environment provided by the living-learning program seemed like the perfect place to make my start," commented one student in an essay.

Another key element of the program's participants that I feel compelled to note is that many of them enter the program feeling lost or rejected in their lives – from both college and pre-college experiences. In addition to the examples I furnished at the beginning of Chapter 6 about students who found a much needed on-campus community after initially struggling, many subjects felt lost or out of place before joining the program. Some students transferred from other colleges or had trouble meeting people – or finding like-minded people – until joining the program. Others lived on campus at Atlantic before and felt that they could not find the connections to other students they were seeking in a college experience. Students also expressed that they felt out of place – often because of their racial or ethnic background – in high school or college and sought people who understood their

experiences. Some experienced mild discomfort like they were lacking something, but others suffered horribly, such as being subjected to blatant racism in their dorms and classes. One interviewee told me, "I was interested because… my freshman year I lived in [another dorm]. They put my in an upperclassmen dorm and it was hard to meet people." After joining IH, however, he felt he found that connection. In a Foundation Essay, one student who joined her second year on campus stated:

> While I've been able to find the same level of conversation in the hostels of Europe, I was never able to find that sort of conversation here until five weeks ago, when I began to live here in [Franklin]. I believe the most beautiful thing about the conversation and the feeling of belonging in a place with like-minded people, is that it is part of my everyday life. I didn't have to travel anywhere to get this mentally stimulated. These wonderful experiences are now a part of my free time.

The students who feel lost or displaced express how they found their niche in IH. For example, one student wrote in her testimonial on the Facebook page:

> My first year on campus was probably one of my worst years because in high school I was very involved with programs and sports… My first year in [IH] was probably one of my best years at [Atlantic University] because I had a first hand experience of a diversity of cultures. It literally felt like all the countries were bundled up in one single space, and everyone was able to express freely his or her own culture without being embarrassed or shy. The atmosphere was welcoming and that was something I did not get when I first came to [Atlantic]. I had such a disappointed view of [this university] my first year, but made a 180 when I joined [International House].

Students who come to the program describe what they would like to get from the program. In their Foundation Essays – written by the approximately 50 entering students – subjects expressed their goals and how the program will help them reach those goals. Twenty-four students expressed an interest in an international job or career path – such as Peace Corps or the State Department. Seven expressed an interest in or declaration of an internationally focused major, and seventeen wrote that

they plan to or are studying a foreign language (either formally or independently). Fifteen students noted they want to study abroad, and fourteen expressed an interest in travel.

An examination all of the students essays and assignments from the academic year of study revealed that a majority of the students expressed a desire to develop cross-cultural skills, including the desire to meet, befriend, or better understand people from different cultural backgrounds – or learn about their own culture. In a Foundation Essay, a student noted, "I would like to meet people who not only share my own beliefs, but others who challenge my way of thinking and perceiving cultural interactions. My main reason for joining this program was to meet people from around the world." And another student expressed:

> I think that a huge obstacle that I must overcome when I talk to people of different cultural backgrounds is taking the time to understand the role that religion plays in their lives. And if religion has no place or is subordinate to other areas, I must discover the focal point for them. A prominent goal that I have… is to find a way to relate to other religions while still being faithful to my own.

Students are excited to be in IH so that they can fulfill these goals – either through networking, practicing language or cross-cultural skills, or by being exposed to new possibilities. These goals provide insight to students' interests in cross-cultural or international interests that they had before they joined IH. Later I discuss instances where students specifically noted that their life, career, or other goals changed *as a result* of participating in the program.

Students join the program because they want to learn about new cultures or share their own. Specifically, they want to meet people from diverse cultural backgrounds – often because this was missing in their lives before. They come with

internationally focused goals, and appreciate the opportunity to fulfill those goals in the program. They also join because they want a smaller community on a large campus, and come to the program feeling dejected. These students come to IH seeking a community where they feel a sense of belonging and where they can find peers who share their interest in culture. When they find that community, it is no wonder that they report feeling "bonded." After being rejected from other communities – often because of race or ethnicity – they are relieved to have finally found a peer group that accepts them. Participants send the message that they want a community that appreciates all things international. The students' reasons for joining and their pre-program goals, then, seems to explain their receptivity to the messages of community and cross-cultural appreciation, but do little to explain open-mindedness. The next section explores students' experiences before the program and how they might explain how students interact with IH culture.

Student Experiences Before Joining International House

Many International House student were born and lived in countries other than the United States, their parents were born outside the United States, and many have family who live all over the world. Some self identify as bi-cultural (most of whom have one American parent), and many have family members (who entered their families through marriage or adoption) from other countries. Several originated from a community in the United States that was multicultural and diverse or their parents introduced multicultural activities when they were children. Those who did not come from diverse communities are often interested in learning about other cultures as a result of that lack of diversity. Many students speak languages other than English at

home, some speak more than two languages. One student explained in a Foundation

Essay:

> I am curious about anything outside of my countries. Why I say my countries is
> because I do not belong in one country. I was born in [an Asian country] and
> lived there till early in elementary school. Then I moved to [another country]
> when I was 12 years old. I went to elementary school, junior high school and
> high school in [a major metropolitan city in Asia]. Basically I was born in [one
> country] and raised in [another]. I have culture value of both side and I
> understand and speak both language[s]…. I went to school in both countries so I
> know the lifestyles in both countries. Understanding both sides, I know there are
> many differences in culture, sense of value and lifestyle between those two
> countries even though those two countries are in Asia.

Another noted in his:

> My grandparents are pure [European] apart for my paternal grandmother who is
> [Arab, from a former European colony]. On her side of the family, my mother
> was raised in central Africa, where my uncle was born, the one that today lives
> in [a US state]; on my father's side, I have one uncle married to [an Asian
> woman] and living in [an Asian city] and another one in [a US city] married to
> an American. For my siblings, both are [European] since our parents are
> [European], and to add to that, they are also American since they were born
> [one state] and the other [another]. I am [European] by my parents, born in
> [South America] … and I lived most my life in Asia. When I was two and a half
> we left [South America] to stay for four and a half years in [Europe]. Then it
> was three years in [South Asia] in an American school and four in [Southeast
> Asia, but in the European schooling system]. Then one year in [Africa] before
> coming to the USA three years ago. Thus I have lived all around the globe and
> experienced firsthand how it is like to be in a foreign environment surrounded
> by people with a culture different from mine.

Experiences like this are common among international house students. Speaking

another language, living in two to three countries, and having grandparents on another

continent is more common than not among IH students.

Students also express a passion for learning about new cultures, people, and

places. Some develop this interest in their childhood, and describe growing up in

diverse neighborhoods, having diverse friends, enjoying maps, watching

documentaries, or going to cross-cultural events. Participants also trace their passion

for learning about other cultures back to their high school years, often identifying a specific teacher, class, peer group, student organization, study or travel abroad, or event as the driving force behind their passion. In an essay, one student remarked:

> In my senior year of high school, I took an AP [history and geography] course in order to learn about other cultures, how they developed, and their current events. I learned about religions, population issues, and migration patterns. This course encouraged my interest in cultural learning and confirmed my decision to choose my majors of [a foreign language], and government and politics with a concentration in international relations.

The word "passion" – referring to a passion for learning about new cultures and cultural groups – was used often.

In interviews, assignments, classes, and informal interactions, students identified close to 300 international or intercultural experiences in their lives outside the program. Some of the experiences were positive (like making friends from other countries or participating in a mission trip), others were negative (such as bias, racism, or being ridiculed). Participants cited travel, language study, volunteer and work experience, living and studying abroad, meeting and studying with people, learning in high school or elementary school, tasting new foods, attending events, and their families as sources of these lessons. Travel (mostly international) featured prominently. These experiences and lesson varied greatly. One student wrote in her journal:

> I think that very often people that travel abroad have the assumption that they are better than the people whose country they are visiting. This assumption separates them from these individuals, and the separation makes it impossible to truly understand the local people. I experienced this lesson first hand when I travelled to [Central America]. Throughout the trip, we [stayed] with local people instead of at the resorts that Americans typically stay at during their visit. At night we would sit around the dinner table and learn from our hosts about old legends, folktales, and customs from the area. Because we did not separate ourselves into

the "better" resorts, we were able to experience [that country's] culture first-hand and get much more out of the experience.

And another commented in an essay:

It is extremely easy to insult somebody without realizing that you have done so and I have been guilty of this myself. Cultures vary within the US and when I traveled to [another state] I made a statement that is often used as a joke in [this state]. However, the person I said it to did not understand the joke and was very insulted. It was an extremely awkward situation and I felt terrible. Experiences like this teach you that you must be careful what you say especially when using colloquial terms.

While the types of experiences varied, one theme came through very clearly. During these experiences outside the program, students learned a cross-cultural lesson that had changed the way they interacted with people – most often how they interacted with people whose culture differed from their own. They note that assumptions they had were shattered and that they started to understand how someone else sees and experiences the world. One student shared one such lesson in a Foundation Essay:

My senior year of high school I worked at a restaurant. The women who prepared all the food were Hispanic immigrants, and in the beginning, I didn't like them. I thought they were mean and judgmental and I was very much afraid. There was really no reason to be, however. I realized a few weeks later, as I became more experienced with the job and made less mistakes, that they were really not all that mean; they were simply tired and this job was more serious to them than it was to me, so they didn't really have the time or patience for mistakes.

I think it is important here to draw attention to what I just said; these women were tired, and they were tired in a way in which I had never quite been introduced to before. They were all immigrants, mostly from [South and Central America], and the reason they were in America was to make money. They all worked at least two jobs, and were constantly fighting for more hours. They each had several small children, but that wasn't an indicator of if they were married or not. They were always working so hard, often for unappreciative employers or customers harboring some inner racism or class prejudice, yet they never mentioned any of this. They might share glances or quickly utter some Spanish phrases, but mostly, they were always laughing and joking through the tiredness, through the incessant displeasure of this life that was not home to them.

I remember being shocked when I found out that several of these women wanted to live in America, no more in fact, than I in [South or Central America]. That, in fact, they were counting down the days, months, years till they could return home to their family, to their language, to…their own culture.

This example clearly illustrates how IH participants learn salient lessons – either through having a positive relationship with people from other cultures or by experiencing stressful events associated with cross-cultural issues that opens their eyes to the experiences others must also face. They come to the program having experienced something in their lives that taught them a cross-cultural lesson – and often that lesson challenged their assumptions and led them to view an individual, group, or organization differently. In essence, these students have experiences that make them more open-minded. They do not always explicitly state this, though in some cases they do. For example, a student wrote about how emigrating to the United States as a young child taught her about the importance of being open minded:

Coming to a new country and adapting to its culture is not an easy thing to do. It takes a lot of courage and strength. This is why I feel that it is very important to understand a different person's background and culture because it will help a person become more open and understanding towards that person. If my peers in school had known my situation and background, they would not have ridiculed me like the way they did. Keeping to your own race and culture leads to nothing but ethnocentrism and racism.

Examining participants' previous experiences illustrates that people who chose the program come in with a certain mindset. Clearly they value cross-cultural experiences. The data also suggest, however, that participants show a strong pre-disposition for open-mindedness as a result of their past experiences where they learned a major intercultural lesson. They learned through previous cross-cultural interactions how to keep their assumptions at bay when they misinterpret that

interaction due to their assumptions. They learn, through experience, the importance, value, and benefit of being open-minded.

When I asked students about this phenomenon of a pre-disposition for open-mindedness (which I often did), many agreed that students come to the program with the mindset of openness. For example, one interviewee surmised: "A certain kind of people are attracted to the program and typically it is outgoing, open-minded, excitable people." They are attracted to the program because their pre-program intercultural experiences make them receptive to both the cross-cultural appreciation message and the open-mindedness message. They are also sending the message that those are things they value when they participate in the program.

This finding presents an interesting twist. It requires examining International House students as message receivers. People receive the messages of their cultural group and their individual cultural lenses help them to interpret and re-transmit them. As I noted earlier, their significant intercultural experiences make them well positioned to receive the message of cross-cultural understanding and open mindedness. Even feeling rejected influences their receptivity to receiving the community message. International House students come well prepared to receive two of the three major cultural value messages in their community. The implications for this are discussed more below.

The Explicit and Tacit Aspects of International House Culture

Culture, as I have defined it, is comprised of the values, beliefs, and behaviors of a group of people. Those values are then transmitted – consciously and

subconsciously – to the rest of the group and appear in the group's behaviors. Those behaviors are observable and shared by all of the members of the group. Members of a culture can articulate behaviors and values that shape those behaviors, and this is understood as the explicit aspect of any culture. The tacit aspect is outside a cultural group's awareness – these are the subconscious messages. In the case of International House, the culture I describe in Chapter 6 is the explicit aspect of the culture as it is understood and explained by its participants. It is a culture of openness where international experience and cultural differences are valued. Participants are open to learning about new cultures and open and accepting to the cultural differences of the programs' participants. As a result, they form lasting friendships and a strong sense of community identity.

This chapter, on the other hand, explores the tacit aspects of International House culture. According to the interviewee quoted earlier, the message "be open-minded" is "drilled" into students. This is the message they receive and re-transmit to their peers. While students attributed the source of the message to program literature, I found little evidence of that in the program's promotional materials, handbooks, handouts, or website. Similarly, staff sends a clear message that students are to be committed to their community, but not a direct message of openness. Students themselves, however, do appear to shape some of those messages. They represent diverse backgrounds, they come to the program with a desire to meet students who see the world through different cultural lenses, and they have myriad cross-cultural experiences from which they have learned significant life lessons. IH

students show strong evidence that they have learned the value of being open-minded before they even enter the program.

The data illustrate that students tend to be open and accepting of new cultures and of people's differences in general. They also come seeking a community and like-minded friends. This finding suggests that students are receptive to sending and receiving the openness, intercultural appreciation, and community messages. For the sake of argument, however, bringing together a group of diverse, open-minded students with many international experiences may or may not lead to an open and welcoming place where students feel free and safe to express themselves.

This pre-disposition for open-mindedness, inspired by significant cross-cultural experiences, and a desire for community does not completely explain the strong sense of community or the love of International House that its participants express. It does not capture the sense of identity intertwined and dependent on rich cross-cultural experiences. It also does not explain how the experience of participating in the program may shape participants and their culture. This past experience does offer insight, but it does not paint the whole picture. That is why I take the student experience one step further and explore non-formal and formal learning in the program to further unravel what shapes the culture of International House.

When I asked a student about how the program shapes students, she commented, "[International House], the environment, being around [open-minded] people… and actually experiencing living with everyone brings out [open-

mindedness] even more." I will expand on this in the next chapter when I examine

the role of programs in shaping IH's culture.

Chapter 8: Non-Formal and Formal Learning Experiences

The IH curriculum consists of non-formal and formal learning experiences. I classify formal learning experiences as those that happen in the classroom, a direct result of the classes that are designed and taught by the program staff. Non-formal learning includes guest speakers, field trips, and events associated with the program. The staff plans some of these experiences, while students plan others. Chapter 5 details the types of non-formal and formal events that IH sponsors. I also consider living in the residence hall a non-formal aspect of the learning environment in IH. The last chapter examined how students and their interactions with staff shape the culture of IH. This chapter seeks to investigate whether the non-formal and formal learning experiences also shape the program's culture.

Formal Learning Experiences

The two-year formal curriculum centers on developing students' global competency and enriching their experience in the LLP. The first year class teaches students about personal identity as a stepping-stone to understanding the cultural lenses of others. The director teaches that course, and in the first class of the semester he stated that studying identity is important for students because they "can't understand how complex other people are until you understand how complex you are." Students then learn about the concept of culture – how it is defined and

conceptualized – then they assess their own cross-cultural competency with the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale (also described in Chapter 5). Students also learn about cross-cultural communication, global competency – including the term's definition and skills required – and finally they learn about cultural theory. Students recognize this class as a formative experience in the IH program. When discussing the role of formal learning in the program, participants attribute this class as their source of learning for their foundational skills. This class is not necessarily students' favorite class, but they identify it as the source for learning the program's core values.

I observed one section of that class almost every week in the fall semester of 2009. The class varies greatly – the instructor included activities, games, videos, simulations, group projects, and several guest speakers. For example, in a lesson about identity, the director asks students to share the meaning and origin of their names as well as their cultural background with a partner in the class during an icebreaker. For the same unit, he invited a world-renowned musician, diversity consultant, motivational speaker, rapper, and poet to speak to students. The poet first performs a poem about identity. He then engages students in an interactive activity that encourages them to examine their own identity and how they perceive others by writing down their perceptions of each other, and then asking them to interpret the perceptions of others. In the following class, the instructor askes the students to take a few minutes to reflect on their sense of their own identity, reminding them of the poet's warning, "if you are not grounded in who you are, someone will do it for you."

For the unit on defining and understanding culture, the instructor asks students to read Geertz's book (refer to the literature review for a description). In class, he

brings several definitions of culture taken from a variety of other scholars. He asks

students to create their own definitions of culture in a small group. Each group

member is then required to write his or her definition on a note card and the director

strongly encourages them to carry it with them everywhere they go. He also asks

them to produce these cards again later in the semester so they are grounded in their

understanding of the concept of culture. In another class, he does an activity where

he and an alumna who has already taken the class perform a skit. They do not speak,

and the woman follows the man, eats after the man, and sits at his feet. After the

skit, students share their assumptions about the culture (which most students assume

is sexist). Following the discussion, the instructor gives them a handout detailing the

culture illustrated, and it illustrates that the culture actually honors women by making

the men walk first, try her food as a sign of respect and to ensure her safety, and

letting her sit close to the Earth – a highly respected location in the fictional society.[19]

The students then discuss how their assumptions are based on their own cultural

lenses and how those lenses interfere with their ability to see other cultures without

the bias of their own culture to guide them.

At the end of the semester, the director asks the students to identify the three

most valuable lessons they learned and to highlight course experiences that facilitated

their ability to learn those lessons. This assignment offers insightful feedback about

how the course impacts its participants. Generally students gave very positive

feedback about the course content and the instructor's choice of activities and

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[19]   I once asked some second year students to share their favorite IH class activity with me, and they
      all identified this activity.

teaching style.[20] Many students identified a specific course reading as a source of their most meaningful learning, others cited a specific activity. One student wrote:

> The last topic that I thought was very important was intercultural communication. I thoroughly enjoyed this topic because of how much I learned about other cultures. In class we discussed communication through different senses. Since I have had a lot of miscommunication because of cultural differences I enjoyed hearing the stories and learning more about gestures and cultural tendencies.

While these examples are very common, there was little consensus on one particular activity or article that was most meaningful. One theme that clearly emerged, however, was that students felt they learned how to better define culture and that as a result they have a clearer understanding of the concept, and they cite several sources of this learning.[21]

Learning about culture was students' most valuable lesson they learned in their class. According to one journal:

> The definition of culture was an important idea that we covered. This is due mainly to the fact that it is such a hard concept to simply define. Therefore, people do not usually stop to think about what culture really is. While many usually think of culture as being a society's unique traits and customs, it goes much deeper than that. It involves the nature of the people of a certain society and the historical aspects of that society that shaped the way it is presently. Also, in this lesson the idea was stressed that culture is everywhere, even when it goes unnoticed. This was an interesting concept for me to think about. I personally never really felt as though I have a very distinct culture, especially in comparison to the many interesting people that I have met here in [International House] and [Atlantic University] in general. However, I have come to realize that just because I don't notice my culture doesn't mean that it does not exist.

Many students agree – culture is a complex term, difficult to understand and define. "In the class period when we discussed The Meanings of Culture… we split

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[20] I do want to note here that students may have reported a positive experience, even though they may not have enjoyed the course or felt that they had a meaningful learning experience. Since they are graded on this assignment, it may affect their feedback about the class.

[21] Overwhelmingly, students reported enjoying the class (see note 18). Even in cases where they did not, they still shared that this is a major lesson they learned.

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up into groups and attempted to define culture. This activity was actually a lot harder [than] it sounded because culture means different things to different people; some think primarily of race while others think of origin of birth or gender." Several students also reported a change in their understanding of the concept of culture. One wrote:

> Before joining [International House] and taking this class, I thought I had an idea of what a culture was, or at least its definition. To me, culture was just what made different groups unique and different. For example, my American culture was what made me American, and a Chinese person's culture was what made him or her Chinese. Looking back, I realize that my view of Culture was not incorrect, but it was very basic and only made up a small fraction of the meanings of culture.

A different student's definition also changed:

> Culture is a word that is carelessly used by many people. Before taking this class, I did not truly know what it meant. In class we got into groups and actually thought about what culture personally meant to us. I now know that culture is the reactions, relations, traditions, and interactions of people that are passed down from generation to generation. In the words of [the director and instructor], culture is habits of heart, mind, and association. I really love this definition, because it shows that people are able to determine and create their own culture. Although there are aspects of my culture that are innate, such as my [African] ethnicity, I chose my…religion and my social environment, which is [Atlantic University].

The above examples also illustrate that the students have developed the ability to provide their own very clear, highly insightful definitions of culture. Their definitions, in fact, parallel my own understanding and conceptualization of culture.

The appreciation of and ability to define culture extends to other areas of the program. An interviewee recognized culture as shared values, and all of the other interviewees were able to provide a definition of culture when I asked them. A common reaction among interviewees I found particularly interesting was their visible exasperation when I asked that question. One said "oh boy" when I asked her

to define culture. All but one interviewee felt that they had to discuss the meaning of culture too often throughout their time in the program. One noted that in IH classes, "I felt like I was reading, 'what is culture?' every week." Students discuss the meaning of culture in their classes outside the program, and one even used the analogy that the concept was "pounded into our heads." In one of the initial second year classes I taught, I asked students to review their understanding of culture, and I felt like I had a mutiny on my hands. They practically refused to do the activity – gently, but firmly letting me know that they had a very clear idea of culture and that they thought the activity would be a waste of their time. I decided they were correct and we did a different activity.

In the first semester of the program, students are enthusiastic about understanding and defining culture, but later (as early as the first semester of their second year) they are exasperated by what they perceive as constant requests to define the term. An interviewee explained the process to me:

> It is one of those questions they ask you from the very beginning. It is like *the* essential question from every day at the beginning of the new semester, from…[IH] classes. What is culture? How do we define culture? And so, you hear the first semester and it is kind of like, oh, okay. Then you hear it the second semester and its like, okay, we are doing this again. And the third and fourth semester, you are like: How many times are we going to do this?

She noted that IH students are "haunted" by the concept of culture. While they may tire of describing and defining the concept of culture, however, it is obviously a lesson that resonates with participants during and after their experience in International House.

Staff background and knowledge are also key in the formal learning process. As I noted earlier, the staff have experience in international settings. They also have

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strong content knowledge – they are widely read and trained in the areas they teach. They have backgrounds in teaching experiential education, and practical experiences where they have developed their skills, knowledge, and abilities. The practical experiences are particularly interesting and relevant to students. For example, students responded very positively to a funny example that I shared in the first year class of a major cross-cultural communication breakdown I experienced when I was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Thailand. They specified this story as a highlight of the class on their evaluations. Students in my class used to beg me to share Peace Corps stories in class.

Staff also shapes the open-mindedness message in the classes. First, they themselves exhibit open-mindedness in their interactions with students and when facilitating discussions. Second, they constantly challenge students' assumptions. For example, in a workshop about global poverty, I openly challenged students' assumptions that all single mothers on welfare choose not to work and they have more children only to collect more benefits. The director constantly reminded them to be open to new experiences and perspectives, and also sent more subtle messages – like telling students that class participation was "challenge by choice" and that they are not forced to answer questions or participate in discussions.

International House students' experiences illuminate how the formal educational element of the program shapes the program's values. IH students have a clear grasp of the concept of culture. They know how to define it and the exhibit a clear understanding of how it affects the way they see the world and how they interact with others. They acknowledge their cultural lenses and that those lenses influence

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the cultural values of others. The implications for the LLP culture are twofold. First, since most program participants have had many different cross-cultural experiences (illustrated in the previous chapter), they know that there are uncountable numbers of cultural groups, and thus, innumerable different ways of seeing the world. Second, and more importantly, IH students realize that their vision of the world around them is isolated and influenced by many factors – upbringing, religion, background, region of origin, and language to name a few. They realize that their peers are influenced by the same elements, and that they cannot make assumptions about the behaviors and values of others. Students also show an appreciation for those who extend them the same courtesy. In short, IH participants' understanding of culture facilitates their ability to be open-minded toward others and teaches them to value open-mindedness. A student made this connection in a journal:

> First, one important aspect of understating culture…[is] to define it. If we are able to define culture we have a clear idea of what culture is to us. In [one] class we were divided into groups where we then made a list of all the things that culture was and put it into a definition. The definition that my group was able to put together that said, "Culture is the values and customs of a particular group of people." We came the conclusion that culture was what a society of a group of people placed value on and the customs and traditions that they practice. By understating culture you allow your mind to be open to learn different ways of life other than one's own.

The formal learning in the International House Living-Learning shapes the message of open-mindedness through the message of intercultural appreciation in a learning environment where open-mindedness is stressed and modeled. Formal learning, however, does not appear to contribute to the community building message other than by physically bringing students together regularly.

The formal curriculum is difficult to plan. The staff consistently struggles

with how to best make the class relevant and experiential – especially for a group

with varying levels of international experience as well as a wide range of ages and

maturity levels (relative to other undergraduate classes). In past years, the classes

took a much more culture specific approach, focusing on one region or country at a

time. This approach was very unpopular with students, however, and the staff felt it

was too specific and that the students learned few skills. In response, the class shifted

to a culture general approach, focusing instead on culture theory, developing skills,

and conceptualizing terms. The underlying philosophy behind the change was to

equip students to enhance their experience of living in an internationally rich

residence hall, but especially to arm them with the skills they could use in all aspects

of their lives. The response was mixed. Students under the new model often argued

they wanted more culture specific information. In my second year course I eventually

introduced a few culture specific activities (such as asking students to bring in an

artifact that represented their culture) based on this feedback from students, and these

class days were the most popular on course evaluations.

An interviewee brought this up in our conversation:

> The classes, a lot of them, at least for the first year were focused on being open-
> minded. I feel like a lot of people are here because they already are, kind of
> open minded. So, it might be a little bit redundant. But, I personally I thought
> that more of the class would be about learning geography so we all knew where
> everything was. Keeping up with the news or something. It was a lot different
> than that, so, I guess something I learned more just by living here. But, the class
> definitely gave some food for thought on different subjects.

It is interesting to note that she also states that the class taught her to be open-minded.

She brings up an interesting point about learning more from the living environment

than from the class. The next section examines this by looking at the role the non-formal learning plays in shaping IH culture.

Non-Formal Learning Experiences

As I noted earlier, I classify non-formal experiences as the learning components of the program that happen outside the classroom. I consider student and staff planned events, but I also include student interactions – as a result of them living together – in this category.

Events and Field Trips

Events play a key role in the students' program experience, and students clearly associate these non-formal experiences with facilitating a welcoming environment. One interviewee noted: "The events [are] very welcoming. We welcome people from [other residence halls] and for coffee hour, anybody is allowed to come. People are supposed to bring friends and so I think everybody just gets into that mode. Everybody's welcome here, you know, it just kind of spreads that way." An international student poignantly described how IH events affected his experience in the program in his Foundation Essay:

> People in [International House] are very open and friendly to others with other cultural backgrounds. Their helps indeed accelerate my process of accommodating American culture and the system of American university. I also join[ed] the [Franklin] soccer team, which let me feel happy for being involved…and accepted by others. In only less than two months here at the university, [International House] has put together tons of events. All of which have been mentally stimulating and thought provoking, even if it is just eating German meatballs.[22] From each event, I take away a message of teamwork,

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[22] This refers to a "German Night" event sponsored by Connections where several IH German Exchange students prepared German food for all of the students in Franklin.

understanding, and acceptance, which help me develop global skill sets that will benefit me in the future.

An interviewee added, "I just think that it is such a welcoming environment. I like that…you and [the director and] people in [IH] make an effort to recruit new people but also to have events for alumni that alumni can come back and do stuff and I think that is really important." Alumni do report feeling welcome to come back, and I often saw them at events (thought typically the same alumni returned repeatedly). An alumna told me that when she goes back to Franklin, it feels like she is going home to see her family because she is warmly welcomed on her return.

Students also feel that the events give them the opportunity to bond with other students. For example, one student wrote in an essay that, "attending the various cultural events also serve as a means to bond and get to know people in a universal or previously encountered situations – something new for everyone and one to look forward to as I experience the next few semesters as a member of [International House]."

Students believe that events are what set their program apart from other LLPs and organizations on campus. One student's Foundation Essay noted, "In the few short weeks I've lived here, I've been offered a number of opportunities to learn new things that other college students aren't given. I attended the Turkish Festival, as well as the trip to the Finnish Embassy, and the showing of 'L'Auberge Espagnol' [an international film night selection]." While there is a consensus among students that events are a pivotal part of their learning experiences, however, no one type of event stands out as the students' favorite.

Field trips are very popular among students:

> Looking back at my [International House] experience, I feel that field trips have been by far the most cherished memories. While activities in and around [Franklin] Hall have been a tremendous success from the movie nights and cultural dinners to larger events such as [potlucks], there has been much excitement, but none that compares to the field trips.

At the beginning of every semester, the director posts sign up sheets for each trip at 9:00 am and emails students to let them know. Students flock to sign up, often in their pajamas. Those who do not live in the residence hall make a special trip that day. The director offers to write IH students an excuse letter so they can attend events (though faculty are not obligated to honor them). Some students attend events rather than their classes and consciously suffer consequences – such as missing quizzes that jeopardize their grades. The field trips also bring the students together. In a town hall meeting, an exchange student said he leaves the field trips feeling "enlightened and bonded."

One field trip that really stands out as a bonding experience for students is a daylong scavenger hunt based off the popular television show "Amazing Race." During the first few days, students move into the residence hall, teams of first year students – led by one or two second year students – travel to the nearby city with an all day subway access pass. They go out equipped with a program provided lunch and a set of clues to find a series of cultural sites. They compete with the other teams, racing to take a group photo at each location. They also meet staff members who present them with challenges they have to complete as a team (such as trivia questions or site-specific tasks). Alumni and interviewees consistently refer to that day as one of their fondest in the program, and identify the friendships they form as the tightest.

Staff led events and field trips shape the feeling of openness and contribute to the overall feeling of community by intentionally bringing students together and by giving them a venue to get to know each other. Team-building events like Amazing Race and high ropes course trips intentionally facilitate those bonds. The field trips and events are also international in nature, though this aspect of these trips does not stand out nearly as much with students. Even though participants connect trips and events more to the feeling of community and openness they experience in IH, the international nature of these events subtly communicates to them that the program values exposing students to cross-cultural experiences.

All of the events and programs are done on a shoestring budget. Staff salaries consume over three-quarters of the total program budget (not unexpected). I was amazed at what the director was able to do with a few dollars. He was very strategic in his spending – focusing a larger amount of resources on a few key events and experiences (such as beginning of the semester welcome events like Amazing Race and the Notation Ceremony[23]). That is why student planned and organized events are key to the program. As a recognized student group on campus, Connections receives a small operating budget – funded by student fees – and can apply for grants and other funding on an event-by-event basis. Without this source of funding, the number of events would be quite small.

Connections Student Organization

Connections, despite being a student run organization, receives considerable

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[23] During the Notation Ceremony, students are awarded a certificate and presented with a medal to wear at graduation. Their parents and other family members are invited, and the director highlights their Capstone projects.

staff support. Sometimes that consisted of using the director's position to help secure

meeting space, but often it was more involved than that. A staff member[24] serves as

the group's advisor – a role that requires a high level of prodding and attendance at

every leadership meeting. In those meetings, the leadership is constantly reminded to

meet deadlines, plan events, update the program calendar, meet with their

committees, meet with each other, write policies, encourage participation, submit

necessary paperwork, create budgets, make long term goals, and communicate events

to the rest of the community. They receive guidance on every aspect of their

operations, and in the past major events like the annual cultural talent show failed

because the staff allowed the event to fall to students alone. This level of

involvement on the part of the staff illustrates their strong commitment to the

community in their devotion to the success of its events.

Additionally, some of the student-planned events are disorganized and poorly

planned. For example, in the fall of 2010, a hike planned by the Athletics and

Recreation Committee was rescheduled three times (twice due to conflicts with other

events and once because the funding was not secured in time). The location changed

several times, and the final location was not determined until 7:00 am on the day of

the hike.[25] The staff constantly struggled with allowing Connections to be a

completely student inspired enterprise, weighing the advantages and disadvantages of

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[24] I served as the Connections advisor for one semester, and the director assumed that role the rest of
the time I worked at International House.

[25] Ironically, this was the semester I assumed leadership of Connections – a role I assumed with
confidence but slowly realized I was not suited for. I tended to take a much more "hands-off"
approach, allowing failure to act as a lesson in leadership. With that approach, failure happened at
a much higher rate than before – the director and I agreed that the events were fewer and of lower
quality that semester. The director tended to be much more involved, and I think the students
appreciated that in the long run. Notably, however, I did receive a card from the members of the
leadership thanking me for working as their advisor when – for personal reasons – I stepped down
and passed the baton to the director.

allowing students to have full control and its subsequent effects on the community. While on several occasions the students did a wonderful job completely on their own, at other times staff genuinely worried about things like safety and the long-term effects of poorly executed events on program morale.

Another key element that influenced student events is the members of the Connections leadership board. Both years I worked for the program, a strong student who was highly committed to the program assumed the role of president.[26] Each president showed a considerably different leadership style. One took a purely business approach (his words) – which was highly effective but that he felt was less popular among students, especially compared to the president the following year. This student also admitted that he learned leadership skills that will serve him for a lifetime, but that he and another member of the leadership did a bulk of the work. The other president was more personable, but had difficulty motivating the leadership. She took a more holistic approach and was more inclined to encourage individual members to plan their own events. She also had several members with poor attendance on the board, which made leading the organization a challenge. Both presidents passionately supported the organization, and expressed frustration with board members who lacked the level of commitment they each expected and personally displayed – a clear testament to their commitment to community.

Shapiro and Levine (1999) argue that living learning communities offer students more opportunities to develop leadership skills. I found this to be true in the case of the Connections presidents. One shared his experiences with me, and a lot of

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[26] This is an elected position. During the research period, the student originally elected president stepped down and the vice president assumed her role.

what he told me reflects some of the issues I discussed above:

> As president … I have been heavily involved in reshaping our club from the beginning of this semester: the task of harnessing the amazing diversity of ideas and backgrounds of our participants to create a fuller, more involving experience for all has been a challenging, albeit fulfilling undertaking. Two months into the semester, our living-learning community has already put on several well-planned, superbly-executed events that go a long way to show the effectiveness of our organization. …Working as a team is paramount in expanding our organization, and everyone involved has sharpened their teamwork, organizational, and leadership skills. I am quickly finding out that there is much toil and effort behind even the smallest of enterprises, and given the scope of [Connections] and [International House], these two months have been a superb exercise in management. I've even been accused of plunging too far into the business leader role: [the director] has pointed out that it might be more beneficial to the community for me to "Act less like a CEO, and more like a diplomat." This is certainly a personality trait that I wish to improve upon.

The incredible growth and leadership skills he developed clearly ring through here.

Participating in Connections does not impact all students the same way. Students who actively participated in the leadership or on committees tended to identify participation in the student group as a major source of learning in the program, while non-participants did not. The former president quoted above, for example, was not active in the group at all his first year, but assumed a major leadership role the next year. He told me that joining the group really helped him feel connected to other students and the LLP. Arminio (1994) shares this finding – arguing that students in her sample who regularly attended program related events have stronger positive feelings about the LLP than students who were less active.

Students are required to participate in the committees. The program website reads, "Every student must demonstrate commitment to community by joining the [International House] student organization: [Connections]." The message here is that acting on those committees is a way to exhibit one's individual level of commitment

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to the community. Once a student shared during a town hall meeting that the director "makes" them join. Students know this is expected of them. IH participants, however, suffer no formal consequences if they fail to participate. The director occasionally uses a students' involvement in committees as an informal gauge of their overall commitment to the program – citing lack of participation, for example, in disciplinary meetings with students. Students who participate in committees report greater satisfaction in the program and a greater sense of connection to the LLP and its students.   He told me that his philosophy is, "going to classes in not enough." He expects them to show an investment in the community. He also stated that they program lacks the "administrative capacity" – essentially the time – to enforce student involvement in the committees, and that Connections is not organized enough to do so systematically. Additionally, since the leadership changes every year it would be difficult to maintain. Asking students to develop an incentive structure that penalizes their peers for non-participation has the potential to cause social rifts, and jeopardize the sense of community.

Despite the inconsistencies and challenges, Connections funds and plans events throughout the year, and often these events are well attended (though in my experience the quality of the event planning was the biggest predictor of attendance). These events act as a tool to facilitate student interaction and create a sense of community cohesiveness. One student wrote in an essay:

> I believe that just because [IH students are]… required to live in [Franklin] Hall with other exchange and international students, does not mean that we will all be interacting with each other, which is supposed to be the experience of a living-and-learning community. Because of the various committees that have been made, [IH] has made a lot more progress in interacting with all its students. More activities have been planned and organized because of these

committees such as the German Dinner, Latino Dinner and Drumming Lesson, various movie nights, and the trip to [a local haunted house for Halloween].

Interviewees also recognized the Capstone as a meaningful source of learning in the program. Arguably, this could be attributed to the fact that their service learning, research, or internship experience marked their last – and most recent – experience in the program. Program alumni cited major lessons and personal growth as a result of their Capstones. They remark that they come out of the Capstone experience feeling that they have learned to be more open-minded. A student who volunteered at the on-campus health center assisting a doctor for his service learning experience, for example, noted that he learned not to make assumptions about how students contract sexually transmitted diseases after watching several students come in for tests and explaining their reasons. One completely changed her career path as a result of her service-learning project. This is tricky, however, because the Capstone straddles both non-formal and formal learning experiences. I argue that while the Capstone is a requirement of the formal curriculum, most of what the students report as influencing them actually happens during their individual non-formal experiences.

Another notable formal-informal component of the program students cite that adds to their sense of bonding and connection to the community is a class assignment called "Mix-and-Match." Students are required to attend cultural events either sponsored by the program or outside events. They receive points for each event – sometimes dependent on their level of involvement. A student receives more points for an event he or she planned. Students enjoy this assignment. In fact, it started as a first year assignment and was extended to the first semester second year class because students enjoyed it so much. Students also tended to attend far more events – usually

with their peers in the program – and that they feel a stronger bond when they do so.

They also note that these cultural events broaden their horizons and teach them about

a new culture or group. I took my students to an African-American step show last

year, for example, and the students who attended noted that they were transformed by

the event. They had not seen a step show and they reported learning a great deal

about African-American culture. One African-American student went with us, and

she later told me that she was proud to introduce students in the class to an aspect of

her culture that was familiar to her and new to them, and that her culture is not always

recognized in the community.

Non-formal events and field trips contribute to a culture of openness in

International House, and they also facilitate a sense of community and bring

participants together. Through planning and attending events, students become better

acquainted with the students in the program, learn more about them, and feel more

connected to their community. Their efforts at planning and funding events – a cited

program expectation – also gives them an opportunity to show their commitment to

community. Non-formal learning, then, directly contributes to the culture of

community. These events do not, however, appear to contribute much to the

community's cross-cultural appreciation and open-mindedness values. Some students

recognize that they are provided the opportunity to try something new – German food

for example – but a much more salient feature of these opportunities for students is

the bonds and sense of community they facilitate for them.

Living as Non-Formal Learning

While not all students participate in the non-formal events, a vast majority of

IH students do experience living in the residence hall (especially in their first year).

Some students had a strong presence in the community, had formed close bonds with

other students, and enjoyed the LLP, but attended few if any program events. I found

these students shared the impact of the program through their Facebook profiles (I am

friends with many IH students on the site). They posted innumerable photos of

themselves embarking on various adventures. Most of the people featured in their

pictures were other IH students. These students spent a great deal of time socializing

with other students, but just not at IH events. The living aspect of the non-formal

learning was more applicable to these students than the events.

Students believe that their ability to be open-minded was facilitated by living

with and meeting other students in the program. "Living with students from

Germany, Holland, Denmark, Japan, and other countries has brought a whole new

level of awareness to me," a student shared on an assignment. From an essay:

> All in all, by living amongst like-minded students, the program has already
> taught me so much about people. For instance, quite a few people here have left
> this country; nonetheless, that only my fuels ambition and desire to learn more
> about other cultures and yearning to explore the world. By living here and
> basking in the wealth of inter-cultural knowledge, they have the opportunity to
> create friendships and bonds that will carry over national borders.

Another quote from an assignment, where the student is discussing the development
open-mindedness:

> What better way can one achieve this, than by living with a diverse group of
> people? The fact that we live with each other greatly enhances our learning
> experience. In fact, I would go as far as to say that living is learning, in that I
> learn just as much about the practices, perspectives, and beliefs of others from
> different cultures as I do in the classroom. For instance, after living and
> interacting with certain people at [Franklin], I was introduced to new food,
> different music, and even hairstyles. I have to admit that I act differently, for
> example because I am affected by some of the exchange students. Now and then

I even say words from other languages unconsciously, as if they were incorporated into my speech.

Another student shares the same:

In the first half of my first semester of [International House] I have learned that relating to people from other cultures is a lot easier than I thought. We may come from different countries or think differently but we're all here in this living and learning program together. With that common link we truly form our own unique community where we can hopefully gain insight on the world around us, each other, and ourselves.

Finally:

Since joining [International House], I have had the opportunity to interact with people of different cultures, and through these interactions I have learned a great deal about their countries, philosophies, and political ideologies. I can see my network of friends increasing as well as my appreciation for the similarities and differences that we share.

A common thread woven through all of these students' reflections – their clearly stated message – is that International House students learn to be open-minded by living with an incredibly diverse, well traveled group who share an interest in learning about global issues and new cultures. They live and participate in program activities with other IH students. They start to genuinely like the people they live with – because they share a sense of community and they have formed strong bonds – and so they start to appreciate those different perspectives from their new friends. They also learn quickly that people from different regional, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds see and experience the world from a different cultural perspective. Because they have formed strong friendships with other IH residents and like them as people, the LLP participants are open to learning about new cultures and open to experiencing what people from different perspectives have to teach them.

The data illustrate that students' non-formal learning experiences have a strong hand in shaping International House's three main values. Events and field trips contribute more greatly to openness and community than they do to intercultural appreciation, but the living environment strongly enforces all three. When I asked students to explain if they learned more from formal or non-formal learning experiences, almost always students cited non-formal. However, when I asked them to articulate some of what they learned from the program, they almost always provided examples from the formal courses. While initially this confounded me, in the end it illustrated the most dominant theme, by far, that surfaced regarding the student experience in their learning environment: the convergence of formal and non-formal learning.

Formal and Non-Formal Learning Intersect

Once confronted with the disconnect between students' identified source of learning and the examples they provided, I decided to explore this at length in informal interviews and later in my semi-structured interviews. First, every interviewee noted that the culture of IH is characterized by openness, community, and global appreciation. Regarding the learning, one interviewee told me that the formal learning component "supplemented" the non-formal aspects, and – combined with her extensive travel and study abroad experiences – enhanced her pre-existing values. This is best described by the concept of "take it upstairs." In several different, totally unrelated, unconnected incidents[27] students used this *exact* terminology to explain what happens to them in the LLP. The discovery of this term and its associated

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[27] This may have also been common terminology shared among students in their living space, and since I spent little time there I may not have heard them sharing this concept with each other.

meaning was a rich moment in the ethnographic process for me. It gets to the core of what students find valuable about the living-learning program experience.

"Take it upstairs" refers to students' experience with formal and non-formal learning in International House where they process learning from the class and apply it to their life in the LLP. In other words, they apply the skills and knowledge they learn in the their formal learning environment to the interactions they have with peers in their living space. This theme emerged when I asked students to tell me what they would change about the program, given the choice. In every interview, respondents stated that the convergence of living and learning components was key in facilitating meaningful student interactions and they suggested never changing this aspect of the program:

> Really from the informal stuff, I learned more, but I guess in the class I became more conscious that I was doing it. I think it was just all the interactions I would just do things like differently, but I wouldn't realize I was doing it until we got to class and would talk about it and we were like, oh yeah. I had a conversation like that. Or, I don't know, specifically, but it was just that the class, just really engrained it and debriefed.

Similarly, I heard:

> I try to take in what I learn in class and use it when communicating with other students. So, class I would say is the learning aspect and interacting with other students is the more you get to utilize what you learn and try to practice those skills – communicating despite the language barrier, despite the culture differences. You try to use those skills you learn in class. But I think that class really helped because you got to hear different people's opinions and you got to…express your opinions and how you feel about different issues and the cultural differences. I have to say it is a combination of both [living and learning], definitely. Because without the class, I mean, it would probably be interesting. You would still learn a lot, but you wouldn't really get the chance to think about it as much as you would by going to class, your experiences.

Students connect the formal component of the program to their ability to effectively interact with their peers. They attribute the feeling of community they experience to

the fact that they learn meaningful, applicable skills in the courses that they later

utilize in interactions with their peers. They also learn to appreciate other cultures

and communicate in cross-cultural interactions with peers in the program. They "take

it upstairs." While students report that they learned more from their peers (supported

above), they are only able to do so because of their formal course.

When I asked students if the program would have the same impact on them if

it consisted of exclusively living or learning, the resounding answer was, "NO." One

interviewee was quite adamant, illustrated in his quote below (note the use of the

"upstairs" analogy):

> I totally believe that it absolutely wouldn't. No. It would absolutely not work…
> You could still discuss. You could talk about how China and the US are
> cooperating or not cooperating on global warming. But, that's really what it
> would be. A class would come together. You would discuss this, just like I think
> a lot of [other classes] are about. You may come to talk about a topic but then
> everyone just goes their separate ways. Here, you know, we'll talk about
> something and a lot of time we will end up talking about it upstairs… in the off
> hours. This happens all the time, we'll discuss everything. We'll discuss the war,
> we'll discuss global warming.

Another interviewee concurred:

> I think that living together is obviously really powerful, but I don't think people
> would be as aware. I do things and then I would come to class and realize that I
> was doing them. And I don't think people would be as aware of what they where
> doing. And I don't think that it wouldn't facilitate as close a community. And
> people would just be living together. Oh, they live down the hall, but I don't
> really know them. Whereas, if you have a class, you really get to hear about
> their experiences. It's not that you wouldn't talk, but it is just a different kind
> of…not venue, but forum.

Students interpret their LLP experience as "all encompassing," or a "full

experience," and yet another said that the formal/non-formal merge not only leads

participants to be open-minded, but sets an expectation. "Basically, you are spending

most of your time with people. You don't hesitate to open up and learn about people,

you don't really have a choice. Not that that's a bad thing; it is just kind of how it is. You are in class with people you are living with, so you will learn [about other cultures]."

I also found strong evidence of this theme in students' essays and interactions with me. One wrote, "What I learn in the classroom complements what I learn simply by living in [Franklin] Hall." Students who do not live in the residence hall may have a positive experience in IH, but feel that their experience lacks. One of my interviewees joined the program after being assigned to her residence hall,[28] and notes that she did not feel the same bond, closeness, and feeling of community until moving into Franklin – and that being in the hall is an essential component of community bonding.

The dominant theme of the non-formal/formal learning intersection sheds light on how the formal and informal learning opportunities contribute to the culture of IH. This chapter illustrates that both the formal and non-formal experiences in the LLP contribute to the culture, but the real key is in the interaction between the two. Students maintain that facilitating a strong, bonded community of open-minded, diverse people who appreciate other cultures relies on the intersection of the formal and non-formal learning components. Students feel the class facilitates the informal learning. The interactions they cherish among their peers with whom they live are facilitated by the skills they learn formally. However, the data also suggest that those skills would not be nearly as meaningful if students were not given the opportunity to practice them in real life settings. Adding tightly cemented friendships to the mix

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[28] The former director used more flexible admissions strategies to increase enrollment, but by the time I joined the program practices like this were uncommon.

ensures that students are motivated to use those skills because they want to get along

with their peers and maintain a strong community.

Shortly after the data started to illustrate how the program's different learning

components contribute to its culture and I had my revelation about the formal/non-

formal learning element, I stumbled upon an ethnography my student had written

about IH for a class that she shared with me during my first few months of field work.

I promptly read it and filed it away, but it was not until I read it a second time that I

had another revelation. She summed up most of the themes I have shared so far

beautifully and I was struck about how the answers to my questions had been sitting

in a file on my computer for almost the entire research period:

> The general mindset of [International House] students separates them from
> other groups. [IH] students in general, are open-minded and willing to try and
> explore new things. Most [IH]ers are interested in global issues and learning
> about other cultures. Many of the members are active in other groups on campus
> and show interest in going to cultural events. Field trips … are made available
> to students and …[a] majority of the [IH]ers signed up for multiple excursions
> this semester. The members of [IH] generally use English to communicate with
> each other… and [t]hey interact in a structured setting once a week, half of the
> group at a time. In unstructured settings, the group interacts constantly because
> [IH]ers live in the same dormitory and share the common areas such as lounges
> and the kitchen.
> The group's identity is reinforced by the shared [living] facilities and
> required colloquia. [IH] is seen as a group of people who are active,
> enthusiastic, and eager to learn…. Members of [IH] live in the same building so
> they interact with each other continuously. There is plenty of lounge and study
> space, a basement for events, classrooms, and faculty offices all in the same
> building. Members of [IH] are surrounded by their support system and
> reminders of events and ways to be involved on campus. The building helps to
> unite the members of the group because they are a self-contained community; it
> is easier to be a cohesive unit when everyone is together in one place.

I was refreshed to learn, that this student's interpretation of her culture also supported

what I had found regarding the community's values and how they are communicated.

Now I examine whether the living-learning experience facilitates the development of

intercultural competency among International House students in the next chapter.

Chapter 9: International House's Role in Facilitating Intercultural Competency

The goal of International House Living-Learning program is very clear. The program literature states that the program's purpose is to develop global competency skills in its participants. Every aspect of the LLP's programming seeks to achieve this goal. Student are aware of this – when the director asks students to explain the purpose of the program at events and in class, they are always able to articulate this goal. They specifically use the term "global competency" and note that the program's purpose is to develop this in students. This chapter seeks how the program attempts to meet this goal.

The director of International House required all first year International House students to take the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale (IES) assessment early in their first semester (which was during the research period). The next year, he abandoned that practice because the IES was too expensive and, in his opinion, offered little insight to students' development over their time in the program. He attributes this partly to the fact that he does not really use it as an assessment (because it is too costly to issue a second time), so he is not given the opportunity to see the growth that students experience in the program. He used it to help students make goals and reflect on their level of global competency at the beginning of the program.

Students rarely referred to the test, and those who did often expressed discouragement about their scores or their dislike of the instrument in general. Some students did discuss it on their assignments, however, and noted that they learned how they might better develop their global competency skills. For example, one student commented on a Foundation Essay:

> Despite my heavy interest in cultural relations and histories, I did not score very well on the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale. From this test alone, one would think that I am a weak-minded person who does not like interacting with people whom are different from me culturally. I am unsure as to whether this test was inaccurate or if I have been wrong about whom I am as a person for so long, but regardless it did provide me with possible ways in which I could grow as a global citizen

In this way, I found IH's use of IES virtually ineffective in assessing students' competency – mostly because it did not function as an assessment, rather as a self-reflection tool. While the IES offered few insights to students' global competency, I found evidence elsewhere to assess students' skills and to determine how the program helped them to facilitate those skills.

Global Competency in the Context of International House

Before I discuss whether International House students develop their global competency skills, I am going to review program elements that influence how to assess this aspect of the LLP. As I noted in Chapter 2, the terms global competency, intercultural competency, and intercultural communication competency are used interchangeably. The concept is complex and contended, but scholars agree that global competency is important as the world becomes more diverse and globalization forces more cross-cultural interactions, and that global competency skills are useful in

innumerable different settings – such as work, study, and travel. It has three dimensions: cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Lustig & Koester, 2003; Chen, 1989; Jandt, 2007; Wiseman, Hammer, & Nishida, 1989; Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005; Mak, Westwood, Ishiyama, & Barker, 1999; Ruben, 1989)

For the purposes of clarifying whether the IH program helps its participants to develop global competency skills, I use the program's definition of the term. This definition, informed by the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU), is: "(1) The ability to work effectively in international settings; (2) Awareness of and adaptability to diverse cultures, perceptions, and approaches; (3) Familiarity with major currents of global change and the issues they raise; and (4) Capacity for effective communication across cultural and linguistic boundaries." I use this definition in order to assess the whether students develop their global competency skills in the context of IH.

It is important to note here, however, that the director makes sure to communicate that the program *seeks to develop* students' global competency skills, but cannot claim to make them competent. He notes that he hopes they start to learn skills, gain awareness of culture and cross-cultural issues, and then develop and use those skills for the rest of their lives. He said IH can only provide a foundation or the first steps in a lifelong process of becoming globally competent.

Evidence of Global Competency Skills Development

Teasing out students' global competency from the data was not easy. They

expressed how they had developed these skills in a variety of ways. Some expressed

them in the form of goals they now had as a result of living in the program, stating:

> Being a part of [International House] I have met people from many different
> cultures and I am learning more about cultural differences than I did reading
> books. The friends that I have made so far really made me feel like I am traveling
> the world everyday that I learn something new about their culture. Some of my
> futures goals include learn[ing] conversational [Asian language], continuing
> taking classes that increase my understanding of global issues and awareness.

And:

> I plan to use this [International House] program to help me understand and accept
> different people and their beliefs. I also want to stop perceiving people based on
> stereotypes; instead I want to approach them with an open mind swept clean of
> negative presumptions and get to know them.

Students believe the program changed them and taught them generally to be more

global competent: "Before I began at [Atlantic University], my interest in cultures

was passive. I observed, I listened, I gathered pieces of knowledge I liked, but I never

before actively attempted to relate any of the experiences I went through.

[International House] has both inspired me to and facilitated the process of doing

this."

Other participants specified skills they had learned or aspired to learn as a

result of being in the program. Students listed tolerance, appreciation for diversity,

open-mindedness, openness, valuing the opinions and perspectives of others,

acceptance, adaptation, and flexibility (clear connections to the community's values

are of note). They developed their ability to listen to others, to understand non-verbal

communication, to identify their own cultural backgrounds and how it impacts them,

and to appreciate the cultural perspectives of others. IH students can define and identify ethnocentrism, stereotypes, and judgmental behaviors. They have developed an interest in global affairs and an increased interest in learning about new cultures. While these identified skills and interests show evidence that students may be more globally competent, yet just stating skills does not necessarily mean someone can use those skills. I looked for evidence beyond skills students identified.

Students understand the concept of global competency. They learn about it in class. They read about it, do activities in class where they define it and identify people they think are globally competent, and they review the concept several times throughout their IH experience. As a result, students clearly understand the concept. For example, in a journal, a student wrote, "Global competency is being active and making a contribution to society. In class, I learned about the four aspects of global competency." The student followed this statement with a definition that clearly articulated all four components of global competency as they are defined in IH program literature. Another wrote in a reflection paper:

> Most of the vocabularies concerning Globalization, such as "globally competent" and "cosmopolitan" are tricky and difficult to define. Do they refer to someone who travels around the world all the time, who is knowledgeable about many different cultures and can speak five different languages? Of course these qualities are highly evaluated, but it doesn't necessarily have to be exactly that way. I think "globally competent" is an ability to see and understand foreign cultures from an unprejudiced and unbiased view and to communicate with people from different background without any invisible barrier. International experiences and knowledge can in fact make you globally competent, but after all it is rather the very fundamental and almost cliché morals, like "do to others what you would like to be done to you," that plays an important role in building a true relationship.

Earlier, I illustrated that students have a clear understanding of the definition of culture, and were able to conceptualize how it affects one's way of interacting and

seeing the world. Students are also able to connect developing competency to understanding culture:

> Culture is another elusive topic that is hard to define. Yet, culture surrounds us all. It is everything and anything that influences your thoughts, actions and feelings of a group of people. Culture can also be defined as "a learned set of values and traditions that passes generationally and evolves overtime." Although culture has many definitions it shares several main concepts… Many definitions share such qualities as collective and shared values and norms, shared heritage, traditions, and social context. Thus, culture is extremely important because each culture has similarities and differences and understanding these differences and similarities are important to peace and important components of global competency.

Participants realize the importance of developing global competency skills:

> Lastly, and most importantly, the idea of Global Competency, which was covered in class, was immensely important. Being globally competent is an essential life skill that will become handy at some point in every person's life. It includes understanding and accepting the differences in other cultures, as well as being able to easily adapt to those differences. It is not necessary to know every single fact about every part of the world, but acquiring a set of tools that will help you to relate to these cultures and avoid ignorance is essential to succeed. Part of adapting to new cultures is coming to the understanding that there is no universal set of rules… Every culture is different and no culture is right or wrong in the way they go about its lifestyle. Therefore, understanding these differences and accepting them is an essential life tool.

International House students can identify skills that are key to being globally competent, they can define what it means, and express why it is important – all crucial to the process of developing competency skills. Being able to articulate the elements of competency, however, does not necessarily suggest that students are actually able to *do* these things. In order to pick apart if students are gaining skills that are – or may lead to – becoming competent, I looked for stronger evidence. I looked for events, occurrences, and interactions where students clearly used their global competency skills, or examples that illustrate a deeper understanding of the concept beyond definitions and skill identification. I also categorized the evidence

based on the four components of global competency as defined by IH. Within each

category, I assessed whether students had developed skills within the three

intercultural competency domains identified by researchers (see the Table in Chapter

2): affective (which is demonstrated in intercultural sensitivity), cognitive

(demonstrated awareness), and behavioral (demonstrated adroitness).

Evidence of Ability to Work in International Settings

I found very few examples of students who developed skills necessary to work

in international settings. The second year, second semester course "Pathways to

Global Engagement" focuses on helping students apply what they have learned to

their lives after the program. It allows students to explore different "pathways" they

may pursue and use the skills they have learned such as international development,

research, advocacy, and service. My course evaluations from two semesters reflected

that students enjoyed learning about international service above all other topics. This

may be due in part to my own background in and passion for service. Students are

exposed to the possibilities of pursuing internationally focused careers or given the

opportunity to explore how they may apply what they have learned in the program to

their future careers. There was not a great deal of evidence that supported that they

had actually learned competency skills in those classes, however, that related

specifically to their ability to work in international settings.

In some cases, students expressed this on their assignments. In most cases,

however, these were expressed in the form of goals:

> I intend to become as familiar and competent as possible with worldwide
> cultures and foreign affairs so that I can participate in the global economy and

take part in international business in the future. Products and services are no longer restricted to the people of one culture, state, or geographical area. And with advances in technology and communications, we live in a world with a global economic system in which we need to take part in order to be truly successful and productive, regardless of industry.

Another goals-based example:

> I am hoping that this program [will] prepare me for a career that will center on international relations. I know that if I found a job that allows me to travel and interact with those around me, I would be ecstatic. I don't see myself as being content with the average nine to five job. I want to be out in the world, hopefully making a difference. I am hoping that this program will provide me with the tools needed to be qualified for such a career. These essential tools would include how to interact with unfamiliar cultures, understanding the differences from one society to another, and being able to adapt to new situations

While examples like these do not necessarily illustrate skill development, they do clearly show that students are aware that they will need to develop global competency in order to be successful in their careers, and it shows they are able to articulate those skills. They have also expressed an interest in and a need for developing those skills.

A final example of this illustrates the same:

> If I want to be an international journalist, I must have first-rate intercultural communication skills. First, I can't make assumptions. Second, I can't rely on observations alone; I need to talk to the people involved. Third, I must be sensitive to the communication norms of other cultures. For example, I may think that someone is being suspicious in withholding information, but he or she may not be responding because of what that person perceives as rudeness on my part.

Some students plan to use their global competency skills in future jobs. One student, for example, noted that she planned to use her global competency skills in an upcoming internship. An interviewee stated that he had used his global competency skills during his service learning capstone. He did not, however, articulate those skills or provide examples. In Chapter 7, I illustrated that International House students show a desire to engage in internationally focused careers. In my interviews,

I asked students to explain how their participation in the LLP had influenced their career choices (see Appendix I), and they gave concrete examples. One interviewee told me that he had decided to become a doctor, another told me she wanted to be a teacher – and both attributed their experience in IH as the root of those decisions. I did not find many examples of students using global competency skills in international (or any) workplaces – due in large part to the fact that I did not see them working.

This finding is not particularly surprising nor is it alarming. Most of these students have just started their college careers. They may be interested in pursuing international careers or anticipate working in diverse settings, but they have not yet had the opportunity to do so. It is encouraging, however, that they are able to clearly and accurately express the skills necessary to do so. It is equally impressive that they show an interest in wanting to develop these skills and view them as important. So, while I am did not find examples where students developed skills specifically connected to their ability to work in the international workforce, they are aware of the skills that will benefit them when they embark on their careers after graduation.

Evidence of Awareness of and Adaptability to Diverse Cultures, Perceptions, and Approaches

Evidence in this category the most prevalent. As I noted in Chapter 8 and earlier in this section, students clearly understand the concept of culture and how their cultural lenses – and the lenses of others – impact their worldview and how they interact with others. Developing global competency skills takes that one step further, however, because being competent means that one is able to *adapt to* different

cultures and the perceptions and approaches that result. Students developed strong

competency in this realm. One wrote in an essay:

> I have learned that culture does not always have to be on an international level. It has a seemingly infinite number of levels that are both descriptive and prescriptive of all aspects of society. For example, I come from [New England], where things are wicked cool and wicked everything. Now that I am down here, I try to avoid that "w" word which does not seem to exist anymore. I am learning the cultural colloquialisms that are specifically unique to this campus. Not many people outside of campus could hear the word "[panther]" and realize it as both the symbol of praise at sports games and the symbol of a desperate Thursday night at the bar. The minute intricacies of culture make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to look at a situation without our own cultural perspective. We [all analyze] problems, local or international, through a cultural lens.

This example clearly shows that this student not only developed the ability to

understand how his culture affects how he sees the world, but also how others see and

synthesize what they are experiencing. He shows strong evidence of having

developed affective and cognitive skills that make him able to communicate with

individuals from a different cultural background.

One international student described in an essay how she developed

competency skills by overcoming her discomfort after joining IH and subsequently

being thrust into cross-cultural experiences that challenged her personal sense of

cultural identity. Her example illustrates how she has become more sensitive and

aware:

> Being a part of [International House] is a special experience in many ways, particularly for an exchange student like me who has spent most of her life in a pretty much homogeneous nation. Living with people representing varying cultures, some of them fairly new in this country like me and the others being brought up here, I have come to realize one big fact: I am [Asian]. This may sounds awkward, but when I was [in my home country] I didn't necessarily recognize myself as [an Asian] because we all look similar, we all speak the same language and we share the same culture. It is only when you are put in a situation where you can see the difference between you and the others that you realize the existence of your root and start thinking about the very fundamental question;

who am I?   This search for identity can lead some people to an extreme nationalism and nostalgia for home, but in my case, I stayed relatively subjective. If we keep our eyes and minds open, we can always learn from each other to improve ourselves. I believe difference and diversity are things that shouldn't be ignored but appreciated.

My earlier finding – highlighted in Chapter 8 – where students identified living with and meeting people from different cultural backgrounds as a major source of non-formal learning appears relevant again here. Overwhelmingly students furnished concrete examples of learning and using global competency skills in all three realms as a result of interacting with diverse students in Franklin Hall:

> My roommate last semester was an exchange student from [Asia]. In order to learn about her culture and be respectful it was necessary for me to be open to her culture and not constantly compare it to American culture. As a result of considering ethnocentrism, I was able to learn from her as well as be respectful and share my culture too. [Before that] I was hesitant to ask the exchange students questions about their lives and their home countries. I was afraid of being considered rude or intrusive. [M]y roommate…erased my fears. She taught me that it is perfectly fine to ask questions about people's cultures and most people actually love answering the questions.

Concerning this aspect of cultural competency, students' skill development is strong. They are aware of diverse cultures, and they explain how different cultures affect every human's perceptions of the world and their approaches to dealing with that world. They also know how to behave appropriately in these situations. This is not surprising since students also identified their interactions with diverse students in Franklin as some of their most meaningful learning experiences. This section illustrates, however, that those interactions also lead to global competency skill development.

One example that I found particularly interesting was a story an interviewee told me. She lived downtown in a major metropolitan area for the summer after she

graduated from the IH program. Before participating in IH, she reported, when she

rode in taxicabs in the city she was often frightened or mistrusting of her drivers. She

said she also assumed they were typically uneducated and engaging them in

conversation would not be interesting. After completing the program, however, she

got into a taxicab and engaged the driver in conversation. She learned a great deal

about him – he was from East Africa and had a Master's degree from his home

country but was unable to work in the US because his degree was not recognized.

She said she would no longer make assumptions about taxicab drivers – all because

she had taken the time to talk to that driver. When I asked her what inspired her to do

that, she noted interacting with her peers in IH gave her the confidence to approach

people from different cultural backgrounds, taught her not to make assumptions, and

gave her the tools to ask informed questions about his culture by breaking down her

fear and allowing her to engage in a constructive, open conversation. I was amazed

how clearly her anecdote illustrated how she had gained practical global competency

skills, and she attributed them directly to her interactions with and learning from her

peers in the program.

The intersection of non-formal and formal learning offers some key insights

here as well. Students cite their interactions with students as a major source of

learning. They also identify the convergence of non-formal and formal program

learning as a key program element, and participants become more globally competent

as a result of their cross-cultural interactions. Therefore, the data strongly suggests

that students' ability to apply their learning – or "take it upstairs" – as they would

say, also facilitates their ability to develop global competency. This phenomenon is explored later in this chapter.

Evidence of Familiarity of Global Issues and Currents of Change They Raise

My data suggests that students' global competency skill development is this area is present, but not a dominant theme. Students show a budding interest in learning about new cultures.   For example, one student told me, "I have…begun reading websites, mostly travel sites, about other countries." While this does not necessarily point to learning about major global issues, comments like this indicate an overall interest in bringing one's learning to an international level. Participants expressed an increased interest in reading the newspaper or news websites, some students said that when living in Franklin they are expected – even pressured – to do so. Students have applications on their smart phones for major news sources, they read newspapers online, and I often discuss major current events with students informally and in class. During a discussion about the cultural considerations of President Obama's visit to China in class during the fall of 2009, for example, most of my students were well informed about the event.

Courses lead to competency in this area as well. In a conversation with two students, they told me that the class on global issues in the spring of their first year had the biggest impact on them because they learned about global topics like sustainability and globalization, and that learning really opened their eyes to international issues. As a part of this course, students are expected to complete a current events assignment where they find articles that highlight a topic of interest or

one covered in their workshops. They write a summary of the article, discuss its repercussions for the greater global community, and share what they learned. All of these experiences work to facilitate a greater understanding of global events and how to learn about these events.

An interviewee told me that when she reads the news and sees news from a country that is significant to a friend with a different ethnic or cultural background (the numbers of which she noted had increased significantly since participating in IH), it seems more relevant and she "pays closer attention" to these events and what effects they have on the economy, trade, and politics. In addition to learning about issues from printed or online sources, students also learn about global issues from each other:

> One friend in particular…taught me so much about [her] culture and country that I find myself spewing off facts that I forgot I even knew. The most inspiring conversation I had with [her] was about racism. I understood racism from the American perspective and knew that there were similarities across the world, but I was stunned to hear that in [her country] racism is defined by nationality. [People from certain countries] are looked down upon in [her] society. From this one experience, I learned that many social problems are widespread which in return showed me how valuable [International House] is for future peace and global competency.

This theme was not nearly dominant as some others, but students in IH gain a greater appreciation for learning about international issues and a higher propensity for learning about those issues – either by reading about them or discussing them with their peers. That learning shows a behavioral and awareness change, but does not show clear evidence of affective development. While students may start reading the news and become more aware of issues, they did not exhibit the skills necessary to interpret and understand their wider implications in a global context. The course gave

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them background in several international issues, and their interactions with peers encouraged them to pursue that learning to the next level. While the evidence for competency development in this area is not as strong, it was still present – though more so in the behavioral and awareness domains.

Evidence of Capacity for Effective Communication Across Borders

Similar to students' ability to adapt and understand cultures and cultural perspectives that differ from their own (the second area explored above), the data provide strong evidence that students learn cross-cultural communication skills. They learn these primarily through interactions with their peers, but they also learned these skills from classes. In a Journal, one student expressed:

> [I]ntercultural communications is something I thought was very interesting to learn. People from different cultures interpret messages differently. To prevent misunderstandings or potentially even offend people it is important to know how to interact. Entering a culture without knowing about differences can be frustrating for both sides. In this class we learned about some of the body language in different countries. For example the OK-sign, which means money in Korea and the thumbs-up, which means good in North America but something not nearly as positive in South-America. I think it is good to know that signs like that are not universal, so I will not accidentally offend someone.

During the class to which this student is referring, students got into a lively, animated discussion about these non-verbal communication signs and how they are interpreted in different cultures. Participants shared examples from living in the residence hall where they thought a gesture meant something and learned it could be interpreted many ways. They shared examples of misunderstood and misinterpreted winks and nods. They were able to illustrate the importance of not making assumptions about

these non-verbal gestures, a skill that this – and many other students – identified learning in the class. Another student wrote:

> [T]he barriers of communication between different cultures are not only the gap between languages, but also the gap between cultures. For example, when someone is in an intercultural communication, he can understand what he has listened, but he cannot understand the joke and gestures, because understanding the jokes or gestures requires the knowledge of the corresponding cultural background. Besides universal gestures and customs of speaking, every culture has their unique communication style, which is the biggest challenge for intercultural communication.

Students also learned to better communicate through their interactions with students in the program. One wrote in an essay: "While living with international students for the past year, I have witnessed actions that I have not understood and had conversations that were confusing at times. In situations such as these, I ask polite questions in order to learn more about others' culture and clarify any confusion." An interviewee explained to me that one of the skills she had learned in the program was her ability to communicate with people from other cultures. When I asked her to elaborate, she described the process of having a conversation with someone from another cultural background as a "sharing process." She explained that being open-minded, respectful, and listening were key to successful interactions. I then asked her if she had the opportunity to develop and practice those skills, and she said she had many opportunities to do so in IH.

Students had interactions in their living environment where they learned about effectively communicating with people from different cultures, and learning often stemmed from some sort of miscommunication. I often witnessed students communicating with people from other cultural backgrounds outside the program at International Coffee Hours. These informal social gatherings – scheduled every week

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in Franklin Hall – were open to everyone. They attracted American and international and undergraduate or graduate students interested in meeting people and practicing speaking English. IH students attended Coffee Hour voluntarily, and many of them went every week if their schedules permitted. While sometimes they only interacted with each other, I often observed them interacting with students from all over the world, asking specific and insightful questions – the differences between the college experience in their home country and the United States or government policies on maternity leave are two examples. Students are highly sensitive to cultural differences and how it affects their ability to communicate. They are aware that everyone communicates differently and they showed the ability to skillfully communicate in cross-cultural settings.

The evidence in this area also shows how the intersection of non-formal and formal learning assists with this aspect of global competency development. In the case of the discussion about non-verbal communication in the form of gestures, students were given the opportunity to reflect on and share experiences from their learning environment. This facilitated the development of global competency skills, and gave them the opportunity to "take it upstairs" and apply it further to their living experience – in this case in their cross-cultural interactions with their peers. Despite the positive examples that emerged during my interactions with students, I did observe some examples where students displayed behaviors I would not classify as globally competent, and I explore those next.

Contrary Evidence

In some cases, IH participants felt they did not learn to be more globally competent, or they displayed behaviors that acted contrary to global competency skills. One interviewee told me that she did not feel that she developed global competency skills as a result of being the program, but that she already had them. She said the program made her more aware that she was competent, but that she does not credit the program with developing the associated skills. Another interviewee stated the same:

> I don't think so. I have always been really open-minded. In a way, it is kind of broadened what I know, but it hasn't changed how I feel about it. Maybe it makes me want to know more, but it's not I didn't want to learn anything before and now…so it kind of opened the door of what I don't know maybe that's kind of a change. I thought, oh yeah, I know about these countries and I know what they do, but [International House], is more about well, you don't know who they are. You know, a lot about the country itself but not about the people. That was showing me what I didn't know.

According to this subject, she had the global competency skills, but felt that her experience in International House taught her more about specific countries and the people from those countries. This interviewee did note, however, that learning from people about their own countries put a more personal face on the learning in her courses that focused on international issues.

On a few occasions, students inadvertently made generalizations or enforced stereotypes. For example, an interviewee said that "typical American" activities in traditional dorms other than Franklin tend to be boring (a clear generalization on two fronts), and made a comment about how Spanish people like going to the beach (a stereotype). I also often had to discuss assumptions or stereotypes with students in class or on their assignments. During discussions in the workshops classes, I had to challenge students' assumptions regularly. While these occurrences were rare, they

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were present. Also, sometimes IH students liked to tease each other, and used their culture as the focal point – like joking with an Asian student that he does well in school because of his ethnicity. To a certain extent these examples show students are bonded and close and that they have transcended their stereotypes. I did observe these instances and felt they were worth noting.

Summary: The Four Aspects of Global Competency Development

According to the definition of global competency that frames International House's programs and curricula, the data illustrate that in two of the four areas – understanding the cultural perspectives of others and intercultural communication – students show strong evidence of having developed competence. In the area of familiarity with global issues, the evidence that students have developed competence is not as strong, but present. Concerning developing the ability for working in the international workplace students showed little actual skill development, but they did express a strong interest in doing so and identified the skills necessary. The finding regarding workplace skills was less surprising because students are not working yet, so arguably a strong interest in developing those skills (combined with the desire for pursuing internationally minded careers) may be sufficient at this point in their undergraduate careers.

The students' experiences, therefore, appear to illustrate that students are developing competency skills in three of the four areas the program identifies, and have a strong foundation for developing the fourth. They are showing evidence of having developed these skills in all three domains in those two key areas, and in some

domains in the other two. This discussion, however, does little to elucidate *how* they are developing them. In the next two sections, I revisit the theoretical frameworks I introduced earlier in an effort to conceptualize why International House works to positively develop students' intercultural competency.

Contact Theory and International House

As described in Chapter 3, Allport's (1954/1979) contact theory supports that as in-groups and out-groups interact under ideal conditions, members of opposing groups start to reduce their prejudices of each other. The groups people identify with – such as individuals from the same social, familial, gender, culture, or religious groups – are their in-groups. Out-groups, according to Allport, are those that do not fit into those in-groups. IH students live in a diverse environment, so they are exposed to a large number of out-group members. The evidence presented in this and previous chapters illustrates that clearly students are breaking down their prejudices about members of their out-groups – evidenced in both their non-formal learning and their global competency development. They change their assumptions about people, and they become open and accepting of their differences. Most of them identify their interactions with their peers in the residence hall as a major source of their learning about members of out-groups, so contact theory appears to apply in the case of International House. That is, students in Franklin support that they reduce their prejudices of members of their out-groups through their interactions in the LLP. The question still remains – how?

The answer may be that the key component of contact theory is the four conditions that lead to prejudice reduction, and Allport maintained that these components are required for the reduction to occur. Those include (1) equal status among groups and individuals; (2) common goals – which means that contact should be a goal oriented effort and that reaching those goals must be an interdependent effort; (3) personal relationships – as opposed to casual acquaintances; and (4) support of authorities, laws, and customs. Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) further argue that environments that meet all four are significantly more likely to facilitate prejudice reduction. According to Nesdale and Todd (2000), residence halls meet all of the conditions, making them ideal environments to apply contact theory in a practical setting. Their research, however, focused on a traditional residence hall.

International House more strongly fits into the above criteria. While the first criterion applies equally to Franklin and a traditional hall, the last three are different in IH. Students share a stronger, closer bond with their peers in the LLP, and their goal of maintaining an open, welcoming community to perpetuate that bond is one of their major cultural values. Further, International House not only has the support of IH staff in creating and maintaining a welcoming, open community, but the staff actively works to create that sense of community through classes, staff expectations, and support. Further, the stated and well understood aim of the program is to develop global competency, so staff support further perpetuates the possibility of ending prejudice through those aims. The LLP, therefore, clearly fits the criteria for optimal interaction.

Nesdale and Todd also found that (2000) residence halls with directed interventions intended to change casual contact to formal contact are more likely to experience prejudice reduction. International House's non-formal and formal learning opportunities provide students ample opportunities to do that. Further, these interventions are specifically geared toward intercultural understanding – no doubt compounding their effects. The international nature of IH also works to supplement its optimal conditions. Halulani (2008) maintains that students who live in diverse environments were more likely to experience positive interactions, though it is important to note that individual interactions had less of an impact than being on a diverse campus. Atlantic is a diverse campus, and Franklin is even more diverse – adding an additional level of support to the optimal conditions of IH. VanLaar, et al. (2005) suggest that intercultural roommate arrangements are more likely to foster positive interactions. Both of these conditions apply to IH, though not every student lives with a roommate of a different cultural background.

Contact theory, then, appears to offer at least one explanation for how International House students develop intercultural competency skills. Students in the LLP experience optimal conditions – even more so than their peers in traditional residence halls. Through this experience they begin to transform their assumptions of out-group members (as evidenced earlier in this chapter), of whom they are frequently exposed to in International House. The international and cross-cultural nature of the residence also contributes to facilitating positive interactions, as do the intentional interventions – in this case classes, events, and field trips.

Contact theory illustrates the effects of the IH environment. Contact theory does not, however, explain a burning question that arose innumerable times. International House is immensely diverse. Its participants have significant international and cross-cultural experiences. While students are developing their global competency, particularly as the program defines it, students' backgrounds may influence this. I was constantly faced with whether these students are developing their global competency *relative to their previous experience.* The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) appears to offer some insight to this question.

The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity and International House

In examining my data, I grappled with whether some subjects' participation in International House LLP facilitated their intercultural competency skills development because they entered with a high level of competency. In fact, when I asked students if they had developed these skills, they often said they had them before they entered the program. I had a difficult time measuring global competency development among students with a variety of cultural backgrounds. For example, IH hosts "Student A" – an Asian student raised in three countries whose father worked as a diplomat for his home country and who speaks three languages fluently, and "Student B" who is a Caucasian student from the mid-Atlantic who attended a private school with 98% Caucasian students from similar SES and religious backgrounds and joined IH because she felt she wanted to be exposed to a more diverse group of friends. Clearly these students did not come with the same level of cross-cultural understanding when

they entered the program. I felt comparing Student A and Student B directly was

problematic. Student B may make greater strides overall in becoming competent, but

end up at a lower stage of global competency development when compared to

students like Student A. So, clearly a one-to-one comparison was problematic. Also,

I could not ignore that Student A's previous background may confound the effects of

the program. I needed a theoretical model that took students' previous backgrounds

into account, but that also allowed for some variation in the final assessment of

students' learning. Contact theory offers insight to the environment, but I needed a

model that explained global competency development on the participant level. I

found that in DMIS.

To review, the DMIS – introduced in Chapter 2 – is a model that explains how

people construct cultural difference (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003). Based in

constructivism, the model explains how people experience, perceive, and interpret life

events. When individuals experience cross-cultural interactions, they interpret those

events according to their own cultural perspectives and history of intercultural

interactions. As an individual has more intercultural interactions, the reaction to

those events becomes more complex and sensitive as his or her inventory of

appropriate cross-cultural behaviors grows. The DMIS is based on several

assumptions: Ethnocentrism, according to Paige, et al. (2009), is a natural behavior

and reaction to other cultures. Also, responses to other cultures are dependent on the

individual's level of intercultural development, and the tool measures subjective

responses to culture. The DMIS has two stages – the ethnocentric stages and the

ethnorelative stages – with three steps in each stage (see table 9.1 below). Individuals

move through the stages in order, and very rarely digress. Moving from the ethnocentric to ethnorelative stage signals a significant shift in cross-cultural awareness. Examples of an individual's behaviors or attitudes can help assess what stage that person started in and progress he or she has made through the stages (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003; Paige, Cohen, Mikk, Chi, & Lassegard, 2009).

The DMIS offered real insight as I started to seriously consider how students' previous experience might affect their global competency development. The stages of development in this model best describe IH students' level of global competency development *within the context of their previous experience.* I realized that students start at different steps of the model, and they move through different stages – and this process is facilitated by exposure to a variety of different cultural perspectives in IH. Teasing this out is based on qualitative methods not formal assessment (which is not supported by the researchers who conceptualize the model).[29] The LLP has no formal assessment process, and certainly not one that compares their global competency at the beginning and end of the program. I know students very well on a personal level and I learn more about them from their essays and in interviews, but I did not formally assess them. I can, however, use my qualitative data to support the use of the DMIS as a theoretical frame to assess what happens to students as a result of their participation in the IH program.

Earlier in this chapter, I shared the major themes that emerged as I examined students' global competency development. Students have developed concrete skills

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[29] Arguably, this could be due to the fact that the scholars who developed the DMIS also developed a test to assess an individual's level of development. They charge a great deal of money for an individual to take this test and for people to be trained to administer the assessment and interpret the results.

in three of four areas of global competency development (as defined by the IH

program), and they show strong interest in learning about the fourth. Students are

developing global competency skills, but DMIS helps tease out how on two fronts.

First, it provides some insight as to what extent students have developed their

competency. The Asian student I highlighted in the "Evidence of Awareness of and

Adaptability to Diverse Cultures, Perceptions, and Approaches" is one example of

TABLE 9.1: DMIS Stages and Steps*		
Stages	Steps	Description
Ethnocentric Stages	Denial	Unaware of cultural differences and unable to acknowledge those differences, understand only outward expressions of culture (such as food), cultural differences of others considered "wrong," often the result of little interaction with other cultures
	Defense	Cultural difference is wrong or inappropriate and threatening, expect others to act like you, perceived superiority of one's own culture
	Minimization	Minimize cultural differences, focus on cultural similarities, perceives that others are the same and ignores differences – even though those differences clearly exist, one's own culture assumed universal
Ethnorelative Stages	Acceptance	Aware of cultural difference – though seen as merely present and no longer negative, an interest in learning about other cultures though a rather shallow understanding of cultures
	Adaptation	Learning about new cultures becomes comfortable, ability to shift in an out of alternative cultural viewpoints, ability to empathize with others from other cultures
	Integration	A worldview of other cultures, internalization of intercultural frames of references, one's own cultural identity – while strongly established – is marginalized

* Source: Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman (2003); Paige, et al. (2009)

this. She admits she grew up in and lived in a very homogeneous society her whole

life. She openly admits she was ethnocentric. Through participating in the program,

meeting students from all over the world, and by interacting and learning from them, her perspective changed. On the same assignment, she later elaborated on this process:

> On the surface we are different but at the same time, I have learned that we human beings are fundamentally the same no matter what the nationalities are. It is interesting to note that many of the situations where we cannot get along with each other are not the results of cultural differences, but more of personalities. It might be true that the culture in which one grew up has something to do with the person's personality, but the natures of humans, like kind, evil, social, lazy are universal. Once you get to know the inside of the person, it's a matter of preference and trust that builds a relationship, but not the physical features, accents or the passport they carry.

Her essay shows evidence that she has moved from denial to minimization. While aware of cultural differences, she tends to minimize them, citing universality and similarity.   The final stage she presents in her essay is still in the ethnocentric realm, but she has made great strides overall in becoming more globally competent.

An example from my interviews further illustrates the utility of the DMIS model in determining how the extent to which students developed their global competency skills. As I noted earlier, several students initially responded that IH had not helped them develop global competency skills because they entered the program with those skills. They then provided concrete examples of having learned skills, and attributed them to the program. I examined one example of this disconnect using the DMIS. One interviewee told me she felt she came equipped with a strong base of skills that helped her interact effectively with students of different backgrounds in the LLP. When I asked her what she learned as a result of participating in the program, however, she said:

> I... learned a lot more about interacting with people from different backgrounds. I guess I just never really thought about it before, I just kind of did it because people are

people and you just interact with them – I don't know – as you go. But, after [IH], I thought more about it, or why people react to things the way they do or why people say things.

She notes she started to pay attention to how she interacted with people, and to be more sensitive to their cultural differences. She also said she was motivated by living with international students. This student shows evidence of having moved from the minimization to the acceptance stage. She came to the program ignoring difference, but left having gone over a major cross-cultural hurdle and moving into the acceptance phase.

Comparing the Asian student to the interviewee without DMIS may lead one to assume that the interviewee changed little as a result of the program – especially since she minimizes her own learning. Perhaps she does that, however, because she compares her skill development with that of her Asian peer. Since the interviewee did not enter the program with an overt ethnocentric cultural orientation, she assumes she learned little compared to those who experienced more drastic transformations. Assumptions aside, while the interviewee started with a less-ethnocentric orientation and experienced less overall growth (in terms of the number of stages she gained), she, in fact, reached a higher level of cross-cultural learning. This comparison illustrates how the DMIS can be used to describe the level of growth students experience regarding their global competency development.

The second area where the DMIS is helpful regarding global competency assessment in International House is in accounting for students' previous experiences. In Chapter 8, I noted that students come to Franklin Hall with a myriad of cross-cultural experiences. Since some students came with significant experiences, I wondered how this factored into their global competency skill development. DMIS

helps to explain these students' skill development as well. These students, like my interviewee above, come to the program at a higher step in the process of their personal development. Student A that I highlighted earlier is a good example. I knew him well throughout his time in the program. In our extensive conversations,[30] I saw evidence that he entered the program at the acceptance stage and had moved to the adaptation stage, growth he attributes to his participation in IH. While this appears a relatively "short" step, it is significant. He has almost reached the highest stage of cross-cultural understanding, according to Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman (2003) – as an undergraduate student.

I realize these examples are a bit problematic. I do not presume to be able to formally assess students' levels of global competency before and after entering the program, I only informally use DMIS as a theoretical frame to elucidate the changes students experience regarding their global competency development. In this regard, DMIS is extremely helpful in answering the "how" question – that is, how does International House develop students' global competency skills – especially in students who perceive themselves as already fairly competent? First, IH provides opportunity for cross-cultural interaction through its culturally diverse student body. Exposure, according to Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman (2003) is required to move from one step to the next.

Second, the IH curriculum specifically teaches cross-cultural skills. A learning guide for educators directed at helping students progress through the stages of DMIS encourages different types of activities to promote growth at certain stages

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[30] He participated in the program sponsored Turkey study abroad trip. During the 2010-2011 academic year I was the teaching assistant on that trip and we got to know each other quite well during our time abroad.

(Paige, Cohen, Mikk, Chi, & Lassegard, 2009). The authors note, for instance, that learners at the minimization stage need culture specific knowledge to jump the major hurdle to the ethnorelative stage. The International House curricula focus heavily on culture general knowledge. Therefore, IH is developing global competency skills with interventions directed at doing so for learners at this stage.

Finally, DMIS illustrates that students are making strides in their intercultural competency development *regardless of their backgrounds*. Even though students may come in to the program with significant cross-cultural skills, they are still able to develop their skill sets – their learning just takes a different shape. The activities in the formal curriculum may benefit students who have reached a higher stage less than their peers who are lower on the scale, but their interactions with students in and outside classess develops everyone's skill set by providing role models and adding to the overall cultural diversity (an asset in DMIS).

International House and Intercultural Competency Development

Investigating how the living-learning program experience facilitates intercultural competency in its participants is addressed in two parts. Student experiences suggest that in two of four program specified parameters, the program helps students develop strong intercultural competency skills. In one area, students' skill development is not as strong, and in the fourth area students express a strong desire to learn those skills but little evidence of having done so. Overall, the program does facilitate participants' skill development for intercultural competency. These findings are not overly surprising in a program that values and celebrates open-

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mindedness and cultural differences. How it does so, however, is very insightful.

The how part of the question is answered by examining two theoretical frameworks:

contact theory and the Developmental Model for Intercultural Sensitivity. Contact

theory explains the effects of the environment, suggesting that students reduce

prejudice, a recognized sign of competency, through their contact with other students

in optimized conditions – in their case a diverse residence hall with directed

interventions. In the case of IH, optimal conditions are even stronger due to the

nature of the directed interventions and the closeness of the community.

DMIS explains competency developing on the participant level, suggesting

that students with a variety of cultural experiences benefit from the IH program and

add a cross-cultural component to the program's student body that enriches the

learning of others. It answers the how question because the model also suggests that

IH is able to develop participants' cross-cultural competency because it provides non-

formal and formal activities specifically directed at doing so, because it provides

exposure to a variety of cultural experiences, and because it allows students from a

variety of cultural backgrounds to grow and develop their competency skills.

DMIS and contact theory intersect in one interesting way. Both demonstrate

the importance – and impact – of intentional interventions *directed at developing*

intercultural competency. From a theoretical perspective, International House LLP

appears to facilitate intercultural competency in its programming most effectively

through the use of these interventions. This finding is significant because it has

serious practical applications. The next chapter synthesizes and discusses the

implications of this and other major findings.

Chapter 10: Conclusions

In order to synthesize the findings in this text, I find it useful to revisit my research questions. They guided this research and provide direction to its interpretation:

1. What shapes the cultural values, beliefs, and behaviors of International House?

2. Do the formal and informal learning opportunities contribute to that culture? If so, how?

3. Does the living-learning program experience facilitate intercultural competency in its participants? If so, how?

The first question is overarching, encompassing the whole investigation of International House. In seeking the answer to that question, I found clear themes that illustrate what shapes the program's culture in my ethnographic research.

The Cultural Values of International House: What Shapes Them

International House's culture is shaped by three main values: openness, cross-cultural appreciation, and a strong sense of community. I present a summary of selected beliefs and behaviors that emerge as a result of those values in Table 10.1. In my conceptualization, culture is characterized by a series of messages that participants receive consciously and subconsciously about how they are supposed to

act, the dominant belief system, and what the culture values. They then interpret and re-transmit these values to the community through their own messages and behaviors. Behaviors give clues to the explicit nature of a culture, but there are also tacit elements that exist outside a participants' awareness. It was in unraveling these tacit messages that I got to the heart of what shapes the culture of International House.

Table 10.1: Dominant Cultural Values in International House, Illustrated with Selected Examples of Beliefs and Behaviors That are a Result of Those Values

Values	Selected Beliefs	Selected Behaviors
Openness	Being open minded is a positive trait	Welcoming new members
	Open-mindedness is expected in International House	Being outgoing, making an effort to try to meet new people
		Willing to try new things
		Accommodating for differences
Cross-cultural appreciation	Diversity is a positive community trait	Taking classes that focus on international issues or language study
	International experience is valued and celebrated	Choosing an internationally focused major
	Cross-cultural experiences are beneficial	Welcoming students from other countries
Strong sense of community connection	Feeling a strong connection to the community is a positive trait	Foster strong relationships with other participants
	A strong community is essential for a positive International House LLP experience	Active participation in the community – either through planning or attending events
	Working hard to maintain the sense of community is important	Expressing love for International House, calling the residence hall "home" and other participants "family"

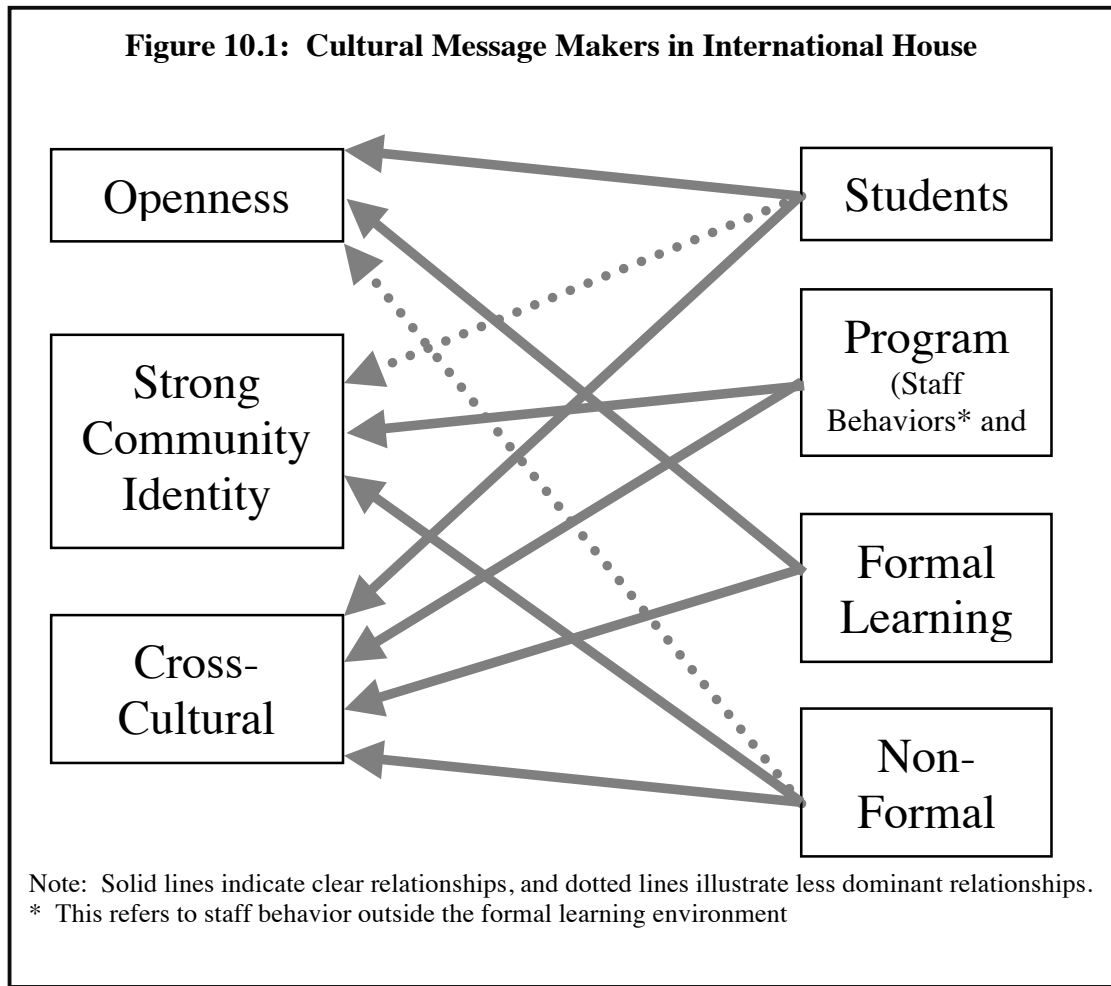IH students have several message makers in their cultural environment: the program, non-formal learning experiences, formal learning experiences, and other students. Each of these message makers sends different messages, and some of those messages are stronger than others. The program (through non-course related interactions with staff and program literature) sends a clear message that community

and cross-cultural experiences are to be valued, but the openness message is subtle.

Students receive strong messages that open-mindedness and cross-cultural experiences are valued and positive in their formal learning environment. Their non-formal experiences send message in a variety of venues. When they participate in field trips and events (both by planning and attending), students establish a strong sense of community bond, but openness and cultural appreciation are more subtly communicated. The strong message of cross-cultural appreciation comes through in the non-formal interactions they experience in their living spaces. Other students communicate the values of open-mindedness and intercultural understanding – due in part to their previous experiences. They send a subtle message that they are seeking a community previously absent in their lives. A summary of the message makers that shape International House is provided in Figure 10.1.

The figure illustrates how different message makers shape the culture of International House LLP. Combined with the first figure, these findings address the first and second questions. One major point that warrants further discussion, however, is in the role of IH students as message receivers. These findings explain how cultural values are transmitted to students from four sources, but it does not address how students are situated to receive those messages. These students come to the program strongly believing in the importance of cross-cultural exposure and open-mindedness. They are well programmed to receive these messages positively, and subsequently re-transmit them. This is an element of the cultural message sending-

receiving phenomenon that cannot be ignored. Conversely, it can also be argued that

just because students enter the program with this well positioned to send and receive

Figure 10.1: Cultural Message Makers in International House

Openness

Strong
Community
Identity

Cross-
Cultural

Students

Program
(Staff
Behaviors* and

Formal
Learning

Non-
Formal

Note: Solid lines indicate clear relationships, and dotted lines illustrate less dominant relationships.
* This refers to staff behavior outside the formal learning environment

these two messages that they will, and it certainly does not explain the strong bond

that they feel as a result of being in the program. The community building message

clearly comes from staff in the form of an expectation when students enter the

program, fed by students' desire to find a community of like-minded peers, and

encouraged through their interactions in their living space – which is also

characterized by a sense of openness that allows these bonds to form and solidify.

The question of how the students' previous international and cross-cultural

experiences affect my findings plagues me. It is important to grapple with this question and consider the students' previous experience (especially as it enters into their assignments and conversations with me). The bottom line is that ethnography, as a methodology, is not designed to answer this question. Ethnography is, however, better than most methodologies at getting behind the scenes and elucidating how the students' current and past experience contributes to openness and community building. No method perfectly separates causes to their component parts, but ethnography comes close. Students' previous experiences present numerous possibilities for future research, but my burning question is not one that can be answered completely here.

In a context of culture and what shapes it, one major limitation emerged as I investigated IH. Students are voluntary participants in this program. Members of cultural groups do not always have that luxury. Our guardians engrain most of our cultural values in us from the day we are born. In that way, students complicate the process of unraveling culture even more. If the messages they receive do not resonate with them (that is, they do not feel compelled to digest and re-submit these messages), they can leave the program. This increases the likelihood of an audience receptive to IH's messages. Retention in the program is extremely high – nearly 95% - so this is not a major issue but again worth note.

A major finding absent in Figure 10.1, however, is the intersection of the formal and non-formal, or the "take it upstairs" phenomenon. When students learn practical, concrete skills and are given the opportunity to apply them in significant cross-cultural settings, their experience is more meaningful. This finding should not

be taken lightly. IH program staff work hard to consciously create relevant,

experiential activities that intentionally supplement the students' experience in the

LLP. It is a time consuming, imprecise exercise. It is one that requires being well

acquainted with the students, and this is made possible by the nature of the living-

learning program, the location of the offices, and the staff members' intentional

community building efforts. If any of these elements were absent, the effects of the

"take it upstairs" phenomenon may fade.

These representations illustrate that the community itself is what forms the

culture – with each entity working together to shape the values that then shape the

beliefs and resultant behaviors. This finding unravels the source of IH's cultural

messages and the level to which each of these message makers contributes to the

message transmission, offering interesting insights to the cultural environment in IH.

From an ethnographic point of view, the significance of this study lies in the nature

and source of these messages and the picture they paint of the LLP. Another

interesting element to this cultural picture, however, lies in the international nature of

the community and how it plays out in the living-learning program's culture.

The International Element

The intercultural essence of International House dominates in every aspect of

its programming and environment. Diversity and multi-cultural perspectives permeate

every element of the program. From the décor to the physical appearance of the

students to the content of the curriculum, it is abundantly clear that International

House is just that – international. This has two major implications. First, this

international element, as I discussed at length, shapes this culture. Therefore, students are subjected to the message of internationalism the moment they walk into the door – through the environment, new and returning students, and staff. This begs to question if their responses to me as a researcher – even to the program itself – is to overemphasize cross-cultural appreciation or the effects of the program on their intercultural communication abilities when discussing the program because they know they are expected to learn and appreciate these things. It is worth considering whether this cultural appreciation is planted in their heads, or worse they pretend to appreciate it more than they do because they want to fulfill my expectations. I seriously doubt this is the case because of students' strong sense of belonging and love for their LLP. I also cannot answer this question here as it is completely beyond the scope of my research, but I do have to consider it as a possibility.

Second, the international element plays out in a profound way. Despite the misgivings expressed in the previous paragraph, these students *are* becoming more globally competent. They are developing real skills and abilities, and practicing them in an intercultural environment. As a result, they fine-tune those skills, and some of them reach very high levels of cultural sensitivity as spelled out by the DMIS. They are reducing prejudice (according to parameters outlined in contact theory literature) and learning salient lessons about how culture affects people and how they see the world. They are becoming effective cross-cultural communicators – invaluable in their personal lives and for their careers. They understand more about different countries, and they have a greater awareness of global issues. The implications for peace and cross-national mutual understanding are staggering and cannot be

underestimated. These effects, again, are unfortunately beyond the scope of this research, but are extremely promising. This second point also adds a practical element to this study. The importance of intentional interventions, especially from a theoretical perspective, cannot be underestimated or underemphasized. Directed intercultural interventions in diverse environments make a difference for global competency development. They have a clear impact on students' intercultural communication competency.

Summary and Suggestions

In sum, all of the program's elements shape the culture – each one playing an important role and playing off each other. Field trips, events, living and learning together, office location, and strong student-staff relationships – all matter and contribute to the culture. All the things that shape that culture, then, also create an environment where developing global competency skills are possible and where this happens. The intentional, targeted, specific, appropriate activities that the program provides its students have a tremendous impact on the development of these skills. That is not to say that the program could not benefit from continued development in this area, so I offer suggestions for practice next, followed by suggestions for future research.

Suggestions for Practice

Regarding program practices, since DMIS provides an effective theoretical framework for evaluating students' competence, the use of the Intercultural Development Index (or IDI, outlined in Chapter 2) assessment tool in IH is most

likely appropriate. It offers a more systematic measurement of competence, and would allow the director to compare students before and after they participate in the program. This would not only control for students' previous experience and provide concrete feedback about whether the program meets its major goal. Considering the incredible expense of the IDI (including training, interpretation, and administration), especially when compared to the overall program budget, this suggestion may be impossible. Also, recent criticisms of the tool's appropriateness in cross-cultural settings, are also worth noting (see arguments by Arasaratnam (2006) presented in Chapter 2). There are also many other tools, several of which use DMIS as their guiding principle. In lieu of using IDI specifically, perhaps the director may consider a different assessment. Administering the test when students enter and leave is key.

DMIS related findings may also be helpful is in curriculum development. If administering the IDI is not possible, staff may consider DMIS when making curriculum decisions. This can be done in two ways. First, they may consider tailoring the class activities based on an informal assessment of where students stand in their classes. If, for example, most students appear to be in the ethnocentric phase of their intercultural development, culture general activities may be best. Given a more advanced group, however, culture specific may be more beneficial. In a mixed group, a balance may be best. Staff is already stretched quite thin, however, so changing the curriculum with each group may be a wildly impractical suggestion. Minimally, since IH students are incredibly diverse and many have already had significant cross-cultural experiences, a wide variety of activities that provide growth for students at various phases would be beneficial. I suggest staff intentionally target

these activities to the different phases. Second, the program would benefit from an assessment of what stage they would like students to end up and provide activities directed specifically at that stage to promote greater growth overall. For instance, if the classes had provided more culture specific knowledge during the research period, perhaps I would have seen even greater individual growth.

Regarding general practices, International House LLP appears to be doing all the right things, so I have few suggestions in this realm – other than to keep offering students learning opportunities that supplements their living environment. While this appears a highly promising finding, this suggestion is actually quite discouraging. As of the fall semester 2011, the last cohort of International House students who are operating under this model will graduate, and the program as it is conceptualized now – for all intensive purposes – will end.[31] At the start of the 2011-2012 academic year, only a shell of the International House program will remain. I had absolutely no way of anticipating this unsettling development when I embarked on this research. Even if I had known, however, I most likely would have chosen IH as a site anyway (though it may have looked a bit different). When I decided to pursue this research agenda, the love IH students felt for their program inspired me. The outpouring of support that students showed for their beloved program and director in light of these drastic changes inspires me even more. It is moving to watch their transformations during their time in the program and to see them form strong bonds with their fellow students. It was also moving to watch them mobilize and take on Atlantic's administration in the interest of saving the program.

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[31] I describe the major program changes at the beginning of Chapter 6.

Atlantic University's provost cited lack of academic rigor as the driving factor for ending the program – specifically the one-credit classes and the absence of a faculty director. Unfortunately, other than sample course syllabi and descriptions of events, the program had little empirical data – other than data on recruitment, retention and demographics – to contradict that claim. The data they provided showed a program with growing numbers and a retention rate of over 90%. None of this made a difference. The university's higher administrators saw a program that looked weak on paper. It consisted of one-credit classes,[32] was run by a young director with little experience and a Master's degree, and had little empirical evidence to back up its claims that it was making a difference. The real issue was that nobody on IH staff was a professor. IH's shoestring budget prohibited the program from hiring of a faculty member – even in a token role. The administration completely glossed over the fact that the director devoted almost every ounce of his emotional and professional energy to the IH LLP. They did not involve him in the process until they made a final decision, and then it was only to ask him if he was on board with the new program. I take this opportunity to suggest that the program would benefit from formal, empirically based evaluation to provide solid data in cases like this (and this can be a contribution). While my personal feelings about how events unfolded in IH are clear, this serves as a jumping off point for my next suggestions, targeted at administrators.

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[32] Students expressed that the one credit class is one of the things they like about the program. It allows students with rigid course and major requirements to still participate in the program, where a three-credit class requirement every semester may not. Students like the diversity of majors, and attributed that diversity to the one credit classes.

Administrators need to clearly define what they hope to gain from the living-learning programs they initiate. If they intend to provide these programs to develop specific content knowledge, a faculty member is mostly likely important. If the cited purpose is to build community, however, that role does not necessarily need to be filled by a professor with a PhD. Students benefitted greatly from a full time administrator who sent a clear message that community building is important, provided opportunities for that community to grow and flourish, and fostered strong relationships with students. In fact, participants noted that the director was the key to a positive experience in the program. They cited his regular presence in the residence hall as a full-time employee and the proximity of his office to their living space as the major contributing factors. If administrators initiate living-learning programs for the purposes of retaining students, again, community building and staff-student interactions are more important. If administrators want students to develop practical skills and give them the opportunity to use them, a faculty director may not be essential. With strong content knowledge, a curriculum that is closely tailored to the students' experiences and opportunities that allow non-formal and formal to intertwine, students develop strong skills. My suggestion should not be interpreted to read that faculty members do not matter. I wholeheartedly support faculty oversight in these programs (no doubt IH would have benefitted – and warmly welcomed such support), but I simply want to make the case that students can reap rewards from LLPs that have no faculty involved at all. University administrators should consider closely whether professors – already burdened with courses, advising, research, and service obligations – are the best candidates to run LLPs if they intend to use these

programs to build community. When faculty are involved, unless they can devote

most of their energy to the LLP (which is unlikely), they should give administrative

directors real voice in planning curricula and activities, especially if their goal is to

build community or practical skills. A full time program administrator is essential in

LLPs.

The decision to overhaul International House came at an interesting time at

Atlantic University. During the research period, the institution instituted new general

education requirements (to be initiated fall 2012) as a part of its re-vamped strategic

plan. Students will be required to take courses that focus on "cultural competence."[33]

The plan also highlights the importance of experiential education, and notes that the

institution will focus on providing students opportunities for cross-cultural

interactions. The timing of these changes offers interesting insight. As the university

turned its sights towards cultural competence, International House (historically a

small, underfunded, and ignored[34] program) fell into the limelight. Ironically,

however, IH already focused on cultural competence, and – as this research illustrates

– developed competency in its residents in an experiential, cross-culturally rich

environment. The administration's decision to end a program that was working (as

opposed to strengthening it through small changes – like hiring a faculty director and

increasing the course load) appears baffling. The administration had little empirical

evidence about whether the program was meeting its goals because this research was

not yet completed. Rather than conduct the research themselves, however, the

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[33] A term the institution uses, and the definition of the term almost exactly parallels International
House's definition of global competency.

[34] In my previous research in the program, a common theme was that students perceived that the
administration did not know IH existed.

administrators decided to cut the program without stepping a foot into the residence hall and without initiating any contact with students whatsoever. This decision begs to question where the administration's priorities truly lie. Do they *really* want to develop students' global competency? The decision to end IH suggests otherwise. Therefore, I next suggest that administrators table their assumptions – perceptions about the academic rigor of certain programs based on staffing and course structure may or may not be accurate. Talk to students and administrative staff because they deserve to be heard, then assess program efficacy and make programming decisions.

These suggestions infer that my findings are generalizable. I support the dominant view shared by ethnographers (and other qualitative researchers) that they are not. My findings are a snapshot of International House culture during the time I engaged in my fieldwork. I am only using my findings to inform a broader picture in the form of suggestions. My suggestions for future research, offered next, mirror my suggestions for practice.

Suggestions for Future Research

First, I suggest more qualitative studies of living-learning programs. Due to the intimacy of the living and learning experience and the clear culture that emerges, ethnography as a methodology is a good fit. The richness that results from these narratives adds an essential element to discourse that is currently well supported (but overrepresented) by quantitative inquiry. Some of the findings here are congruent with LLP research. International House links students' curricular and co-curricular experiences, fosters a sense of a smaller community on a large campus, establishes a more supportive environment, and facilitates greater faculty-student interaction.

These findings parallel other LLP researchers' findings, and also support scholars' projected goals for these programs. Where this research lacks in this realm is that it offers no insight regarding IH student involvement compared to their non-LLP peers and little on the quality of student learning (this focuses only on the learning related to the ICC outcome) (Zeller, 2008; Soldner & Szelenyi, 2008; Inkelas, 2008; Eck, Edge, & Stephenson, 2007; Inkelas, Zeller, Murphy, & Hummel, 2006; Inkelas, Vogt, Longerbeam, Owen, & Johnson, 2006; Pike, 1999; Schein & Bowers, 1992). These findings are consistent with LLP research, and support goals often mentioned by administrators who initiate these programs. Further research will continue to investigate whether these goals are being met and how LLPs affect the college experience. Regardless of methodology, the chameleon (to use a participant generated term) nature of these programs makes them dynamic sites for research of any kind.

Next, I call for a comparison of faculty directed and non-faculty directed programs. Perhaps the need for faculty intervention can be met with a voluntary faculty oversight board that provides guidance, suggestions, and feedback. Alternatively, perhaps the outcomes of programs like IH will be greater with a professor at the helm. Similarly, research comparing student experiences programs with full and part time staff could offer additional insight on the effects of directors. Some of this has been explored in quantitative studies. Soldner and Szelenyi (2008), for example, consider faculty and non-faculty led programs, as well as director's level of involvement in LLPs. They examine these interactions almost purely from an

economic perspective and they do not consider qualitative studies of student experience or student outcomes.

Third, the importance of the student effects emerged numerous times – especially regarding their diverse cultural backgrounds. Regarding global competency, more work is needed on how significant cross-cultural experience before targeted interventions influences the effects of those interventions. Also, students as cross-cultural message senders and receivers offer potential for further research. Fourth, the significance of the targeted cross-cultural interventions was both surprising and promising. This provides incredible potential for future inquiry – including (but not limited to) content and nature of these interventions, and considerations (again) for student effects. Environmental considerations are also worth considering. Do these interventions need to happen in environments that meet all four contact theory criteria or in living-learning programs, for example, or can they have wider applications and similar positive effects? Also, studies of these interventions in less diverse environments or diverse environments without directed interventions also present further research possibilities.

Fifth, environments that facilitate community offer interesting research possibilities for contact theory. Studies could investigate whether these environments strengthen contact criteria *and* whether those with directed interventions within these environments facilitate greater prejudice reduction. Nesdale and Todd (2000) found that directed interventions did not increase contact among their subjects, but it did facilitate greater prejudice reduction. LLPs like IH that facilitate strong communities, however, may be the source of greater interaction – another possibility for inquiry.

Further, Nesdale and Todd also suggest that interventions had more impact on Caucasian, non-international students. The international students in my sample appeared to experience transformations regarding their ICC development, so this may be another area of further investigation.

Finally, interventions directed at developing global competency appear to have a large impact on student learning and experiences. Further studies into the type of interventions or the nature of these activities (even informed by DMIS) present strong possibilities.

Methodological Considerations

Reflecting on the methodological process and this final product highlights several other points to consider here. Regarding process, while I grappled with post-modernism and the perspectives it adds to ethnographic research, my approach falls almost exclusively in the positivist camp. I used my data to find the "truth" – in this case the student experience in International House. I did not examine the program with a critical lens. For example, I did not account for how power and privilege play into the student experience. The international students in the LLP are those whose families can support them at full tuition level with no loans for at least four years abroad. This is unfathomable for most families in most countries in the world. Also, many students are children of diplomats from foreign countries. Their parents have the educational and financial resources that make it possible for them to live in the United States and send their children to college here. This report in no way accounts for all of the students at Atlantic University who must live at home because their families lack the resources for them to live on campus or those who never make it to

college at all. Finally, communicating across cultures and working in international settings – stated goals of the IH program – are activities that are often exclusively activities for those in power positions and dictated by Western discourse and research (this text included). Future research may consider and account for these dynamics.

Concerning the final report, this text paints a very positive picture of International House. Readers find that students in the program have overwhelmingly positive experiences. Critical readers may question whether this report is *too* positive, so I feel compelled to address this. Feedback from outsiders about my final research product often questioned whether I was too biased. As I noted earlier, I like IH living-learning program. I think the students are exceptional, and I support the program's vision. This bias may have inadvertently affected how I analyzed my data. In order to address this concern, I re-evaluated my data. During my original coding and analysis stage, I created a code set specifically for examples of students' negative experiences at the beginning of my analysis period. I searched again for those coded statements and observations, and my qualitative software produced less than twenty examples (compared to over 6,000 positive ones). This can be attributed to the fact that students may have shielded me from their negative experiences in the program – either because I was a staff member or because they like me.

Feedback from International House students and staff about my analysis and final text, however, was positive.   Participants agree that my report is spot on, and that it captures the essence of their culture and experiences. This suggests that while International House students experience conflict in their program (typical of any on-campus living situation), but that conflict is not a dominant feature of their program.

One of my dissertation committee members framed it well with this comment: "While the final picture of International House is rosy, the common themes *are* rosy." I cannot ignore my bias or students' perceptions of me, nor can I ignore how these aspects of the participant-researcher relationship may have influenced my data collection and analysis. I also argue, however, that I cannot ignore the themes that make up the student experience in International House – and negative experiences are simply not one of those themes. It is important to acknowledge that these findings focus on the 2009-2010 academic year, and the students' perceptions of the program may be different (especially with the changes IH is undergoing).

Conclusion

International House Living-Learning Program has a unique culture, characterized by the residence hall where participants live and the learning experiences they share. In my research of this program and the students who love it, I learned that this LLP is not a program among the legions of living-learning programs popping up all over the United States. It is not a merely a response to university administrators who seek to retain students and enhance student learning. IH challenges the popular conception of the college student experience. Participants do not feel a clear divide between on-campus living and isolated classes with tens of thousands of fellow students. This study suggests that this program makes a real difference in the lives of its students – giving them a cross-cultural community where they connect with their educators, gain real skills, and build lasting friendships. This

study illustrates that when IH students display their "I ❤ Franklin Hall" stickers, they

mean it.

Appendices

Appendix I: Student Interview Questions

1. When did you start the program? When did you complete it?

2. Why did you decide to participate in the [International House] program?

3. How much of what you learned was in a formal setting? Informal setting?

4. What are the benefits or rewards of the [International House] program?

5. What skills you have used the skills you learned in the program? Can you give examples?

6. What aspects of [International House] had the biggest impact on your life?

7. Has your participation in the [International House] program influenced decisions you have made regarding your major, your career choices, or other aspects of your life?

8. Would you recommend that other students consider enrolling in the [International House] program? Why or why not?

9. Have your attitudes or beliefs about other cultures changed as a result your [International House] experience? Can you give specific examples?

10. How has your understanding of culture changed as a result of participating in the program? Of global competency?

11. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with [International House]?

Appendix II: Foundation Essay Assignment Description

WHAT IS THE FOUNDATION ESSAY?
The foundation essay chronicles your start to the [International House] learning experience. Through this essay, you explore what inspired your interest in learning about the world and its peoples, and what you hope to accomplish by participating in the program. You can use the foundation essay as a reference point as you plan for global competency development. In the essay, you are expected to connect your experiences, passions, and knowledge prior to coming to [International House] to your current learning and future goals.

WHAT DO I INCLUDE IN THE FOUNDATION ESSAY?
Below are a series of questions to consider as you write. Do not try to answer all the questions, and do not write your essay in a question-and-answer format. The questions are simply to help generate ideas. As always, your essay should be coherent and include an introduction, body, and conclusion. It is advisable to use the [university's writing center].

- What life experiences sparked your interest in learning about and living with other cultures, or increasing your awareness and understanding of global issues and people of different cultural backgrounds?
- Did extracurricular experiences such as travel, service, employment, athletics, or family history increase this interest?
- What did you learn about yourself from the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale (IES)? What goals did you set in your learning contract? How do you plan to accomplish your goals?
- What questions about identity, culture, and global issues did you have coming into the program? How might you go about seeking answers to these questions while in the program?
- What do you plan to accomplish while in the program? What skills and competencies might you want to pursue? How might you design a plan of action toward accomplishing these goals? What kinds of people (faculty, staff, students) do you want to meet and learn from in your time in the program?
- What have you learned so far here about living and learning with people from other cultures?

LENGTH AND FORMAT:
The essay should be 4-5 pages, double-spaced; Times New Roman, 12-point font; 1" margins on all sides. Be sure to include a title, page numbers, and bibliography (if necessary).

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