The Role of International Cross-Cultural Experiential Knowledge in Enhancement of Students’ World-Mindedness

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Misato Yamaguchi, M.A.

Graduate Program in Education and Human Ecology

The Ohio State University

2011

Committee:

Dr. Merry Merryfield, Advisor

Dr. Binya Subedi

Dr. Andrienne Dixson
ABSTRACT

Today, global interconnectedness is not simply a dream of the future, but is a present fact of our lives. With the increasing complexity of a global society, there is a good reason for schools to take an active role in developing students’ competence to be effective players in the increasingly pluralistic, interdependent, and changing world in which they live (Kniep, 1986; Case, 1993; Merryfield, 2001).

Respected scholars generally agree that the primary purpose of global education is to prepare young people to live effectively and responsibly in a global society (Anderson, 1990; Lamy, 1991, Selby & Pike, 2000). In order to maximize the potential of global education and to fulfill its purpose, there is a need to branch out from the trend of global education research that investigates how teachers infuse global perspectives in K-12 classroom subject teaching or how higher education’s use of single destination or short term study abroad programs as a way to assist students in gaining a better understanding about the world, and investigate the process of students’ learning about it as well as development of world-mindedness beyond the classroom especially through
I conducted a qualitative study to investigate the ways in which students retrospectively understand their transformation toward world-mindedness during their participation in an educational global voyage program. The purpose of this study is to gain better insights and understanding about the changing perspectives students have about the world and their relationship to it as a result of international cross-cultural experiential learning. For the purposes of this study, world-mindedness is defined as the ability to perceive the world as a whole and to see one’s own position on a continuum of time and interconnected spaces (Alger & Harf, 1986; Case, 1993).

I used a qualitative inquiry method mainly for its naturalistic approach, attention to process and changes in informants’ experiences, and descriptive nature (Somken & Lewin, 2005). Furthermore, I employed purposeful sampling that used a pre-set criteria and snowball strategy to determine a program to study participants from whom I could gain the most useful information. In order to gain in-depth personal stories, data were mainly collected through three rounds of semi-structured, open-ended interviews with participants using videoconference (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The findings from the study revealed that the international cross-cultural
experiential learning through a global voyage academic program, The Friend Ship, helped the study participants to learn through firsthand experience and enrich their world-mindedness in the following ways: a) Building strategies to deal with difference by encouraging open mindedness and critical self-reflection; b) Heightening the importance of intercultural friendships and relationships in bringing the world alive; c) Combining theoretical knowledge and experiential knowledge to better understand the culturally diverse world; d) Complicating the way people interpret the world and envision its future through international cross-cultural experiential knowledge; and e) Life after the voyage: Practicing world-mindedness in everyday life by giving back and initiating change.
Dedicated to my family who always encouraged me to explore the world and expand my limits.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is a pleasure to thank those who made this dissertation possible.

I am grateful to my dissertation committee members and owe my deepest respect to my advisor and mentor Dr. Merry Merryfield who has given her guidance and support in many ways and encouraged me to grow as a scholar and an individual. Her extraordinary scholarship, passion, and commitment to global education have truly inspired me time and again throughout my doctoral work. For that, I am very thankful. I also would like to thank Dr. Binya Subedi and Dr. Andrienne Dixson. It has been a great honor to have them on my dissertation committee and I appreciate the many opportunities to learn from and work with them. The experience was empowering and it encouraged me to explore and believe in my potential and access my inner strengths. They are outstanding scholars of color whom I look up to as role models.

I would like to make a special note of thanks to my parents Minoru and Naoko and sister Mizuho for providing me their full support throughout my international journey and always having faith in me. I also would like to acknowledge my respect and
appreciation to my grandparents for teaching me the importance of hard work and
humbleness in striving for knowledge as a life-long learner.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my very special friends Dr. Brad
Maguth and Amanda Lin who have always been there for me during times of success and
times of challenges. Because of your friendship, I was able to reach this achievement.

You are my family in Ohio who I will always treasure. Thank you. Lastly, I offer my
regard and blessing to my dear friends across the world for shaping who I am today and
inspiring me to select this topic for my dissertation.
VITA

1999 .................................. Tamagawa Seigakuin High School
2003 .................................. B.A. International Relations, St. Mary’s University
2005 .................................. M.A. International Training & Education, American University
2006 to present ..................... Ph.D student, Department of Education & Human Ecology, The Ohio State University

PUBLICATIONS


FIELD OF STUDY

Major Field: Education
Social Studies and Global Education
Multicultural Education
Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vita</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>xviii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>xix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of Problem</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guiding Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biography of the Research</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumptions</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of the Study</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of the Study</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW</strong></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Education</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements of Global Education</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues of Global Education</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural Communication</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements of Intercultural Communication</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues of Intercultural Communication</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices in Global Education and Intercultural Training</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices in Global Education</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice in Intercultural Training</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesizing Global Education and Intercultural Training</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative Inquiry</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design of the Study</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructivism paradigm</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phenomenological approach</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Selection</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposeful Sampling</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Access</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document analysis</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet-Mediated Interviewing for Data Collection</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collected Data</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning about Employed Data Collection Methods</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing Trustworthiness</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of Researcher</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Up Process</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of the Study</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### CHAPTER 4: CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background: The International Cross-Cultural Experiential Program</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profiles of Study Participants</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographics of Study Participants</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants Selected by Intercultural Development Inventory

Assessments ........................................................................................................ 177

Brian (USA) ................................................................. 177
Coraline (USA) ............................................................... 179
Beth (USA) ................................................................. 180
Shirley (USA) ............................................................... 182
VB (Bermuda/USA) ......................................................... 183
Andrea (Russia/USA) ..................................................... 184
Paola (Rumania/Canada) ............................................... 185
Luis (Spain) ................................................................. 186

Participants Selected by Snowball Sampling ................................................ 188

Gianluca (USA) ............................................................. 189
Misty (Mexico) ............................................................... 190
Luiza (Brazil) ................................................................. 192
Stoffer (Denmark) ........................................................... 194
Eng (Malaysia) .............................................................. 195
Manuel (Ghana) ............................................................ 197
Kuwame (Ghana) .......................................................... 198

Different Categories of Diversity Found in The Friend Ship Community .......... 199

Unequal Representations of Groups within Diversity ................................. 199
Unexpected Diversity ................................................................................. 203
Other Diversities ....................................................................................... 207

Acknowledging Different Types of Diversity ............................................. 211
Recognizing Commonalities beyond Differences .................................... 212

Example Routines and Activities of Life Onboard ...................................... 216

Day-to-Day Routine Activities of Life Onboard ........................................ 217
Academic Activities .................................................................................. 219
Non-Academic Activities ........................................................................ 224

Example Activities in Destination Countries ............................................. 227

Academic Field Program ........................................................................ 228
Independent Travel .................................................................................. 229

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS FROM THE FRIEND SHIP PARTICIPANTS’ EXPERIENCE .......................................................... 232
Finding 1: Building Strategies to Deal with Difference by Encouraging 
Open-mindedness and Critical Self-reflection

Finding 2: Heightening the Importance of Intercultural Friendships and 
Relationships in Bringing the World Alive
Recognizing the Similarities and Differences Among People and Cultures ................................................................. 323
The Process of Familiarizing Oneself with Different Culture and People ........................................................................ 324
Exploring One’s Engagement with The World ......................................................... 330
Gaining Awareness and Knowledge about Global Issues ............................... 331
Putting Think Globally and Act Locally into Practice ........................................ 332
Exploring and Expanding Identity ........................................................................ 334
Identity as a Multicultural In-between Person ........................................... 335
Identity as a Global Citizen ........................................................................... 343
Conclusion ........................................................................................................ 353

Finding 3: Combining Theoretical Knowledge and Experiential Knowledge to Better Understand the Culturally Diverse World

Introduction ........................................................................................................ 354
Acknowledging the Benefits of Theoretical Knowledge Regarding Cultures and Intercultural Communication ................................................................. 355
Acknowledging the Pitfalls of Theoretical Knowledge Regarding Cultures and Intercultural Communication ............................................................... 358
Growing as an Intercultural Communicator through Real-life Experiences ......... 364
  Acknowledging the Importance of Real-life Implications .............................. 364
  Acknowledging Diversity as the Norm ......................................................... 367
  Finding a Middle Ground .............................................................................. 369
  Developing Personal Strategies for Successful Intercultural Communication ........................................................................ 375
  Acknowledging the Obstacles in Conducting Successful Intercultural Communication .................................................................................. 380
Acknowledging the Benefits of Cross-cultural Experiential Learning in Understanding Different Cultures and Intercultural Communication .............. 384
Acknowledging the Cross-cultural Experience as the Ultimate Challenge in Becoming Cross-culturally Competent ......................................................... 388
Acknowledging the Pitfalls of Cross-cultural Experiential Learning in Understanding Different Cultures and Intercultural Communication .................. 394
Conclusion ........................................................................................................ 397
Finding 4: Complicating the Way People Interpret the World and Envision its Future Through International Cross-cultural Experiential Knowledge

Introduction ........................................................................................................... 401
Recognizing Changes in Worldview ...................................................................... 401
   Becoming Familiar with Different Cultures and the World through the Exposure to Diversity .......................................................................................................................... 402
   Acknowledging Lack of Knowledge and Understanding about Different Cultures and the World ....................................................................................................................... 405
Learning about the Similarities and Differences among Different Culture .......................................................................................................................... 410
Interpreting the World Through Cultural Differences and Similarities .................. 414
   Interpreting the World through the Differences Among People, Cultures, and Countries .................................................................................................................... 416
   Interpreting the World Through the Similarities Among People, Cultures, and Countries .................................................................................................................... 418
Developing New Perceptions Toward Differences in the World ............................. 420
   Identifying the Negative Aspects of Presence of Differences .................................. 421
   Identifying the Positive Aspects of Presence of Differences .................................... 426
Exploring Factors that Divide and Unite People .................................................... 430
   Identifying the Factors that Divide People .................................................................. 431
   Identifying the Factors that Unite People .................................................................... 435
Exploring the Possibility of a United World Despite Differences and Dividing Factors ..................................................................................................................... 440
Developing a Shared Vision for an Ideal World ...................................................... 446
Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 453

Finding 5: Life after the Voyage: Practicing World-mindedness in Everyday Life by Giving Back and Initiating Change

Introduction ........................................................................................................... 455
Being a World-minded Role Model for People at Home .......................................... 456
   Acknowledging the Challenges of Verbally Communicating the Experiential Knowledge Gained on The Friendship with People at Home ............................................. 456
Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 453
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Collected Data ................................................................. 136

Table 2. The FriendShip Program ............................................... 174

Table 3. The Demographic of Study Participants ...................... 176
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. The Transformation Process ................................................................. 11

Figure 2. Inductive Data Analysis ........................................................................ 153
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, the world continues to experience an increasing trend towards globalization. Globalization is the worldwide acceleration of interconnectedness in various areas including politics, economics, culture, and the environment. It is not necessarily a new trend in world history, and yet it has been greatly stimulated by the advances in modern technology and science such as satellite telecommunication (e.g. telephone, television, and Internet) and air transportation since the early 1970s (Anderson, 1990). People in different parts of the world share a sense
of connection as the result of experiences such as the increasing mobility of people and products, increasing diversity within societies and communities, engagement in instant worldwide information exchange via modern communication technologies, competition for a finite set of resources, and concerns for global issues. In this era, a person must have world-mindedness that is the ability and disposition to see the world as a whole and consider the interests of all. World-mindedness is critical to working successfully with others in collaboration for the betterment of the world (Alger & Harf, 1986; Case, 1993, Merryfield & Wilson, 2005).

According to my review of the existing literature on global education, the majority of studies focus on how teachers infuse international elements or global perspectives into their classroom subject teaching. On the other hand, only a few explore the process of how students’ mindsets are transformed toward world-mindedness. It should be noted that there have been more studies done on global education practices in classroom settings than on alternative approaches such as learning through firsthand cross-cultural experience. Moreover, global education is generally targeted at K-12 levels. As a result, higher education is often overlooked in global education practice and research (Anderson, 1990; Kniep, 1986; Merryfield &
Wilson, 2005; Selby & Pike 2000).

On a related topic, there has indeed been research on study abroad programs in higher education. Although they often focus on students’ learning or changes brought about by the experience, many of them are quantitative studies using pre-and post-test evaluations and do not always address the process of how new abilities such as increased global perspectives or world-mindedness in students emerge during program participation (Barnett & Lee, 2003; Hansel, 2008; Kitsantas, 2001, 2004; Taylor, 2000). There are qualitative studies that place specific focus on the process of perspective transformation; however, the number of such studies is still limited. Moreover, the existing qualitative and quantitative studies are generally short-term (i.e. limited to the period of time that participants were involved in a certain program). In sum, there is a need for further long-term and qualitative research to better understand students’ cognitive, affective, and behavioral developments as a result of international cross-cultural experiential learning. In order to maximize the potential of global education, we must examine not only how and what to teach in the classroom using subject content to assist students in developing global perspectives, but also how and what students could learn through alternative methods such as experiential learning.
beyond the classroom to develop their world-mindedness (Taylor, 2000).

**Statement of the Problem**

The focus of this study is the investigation of the ways in which students see the world and their engagement in it differently as a result of perspective transformation that occurs during the international cross-cultural experiential learning. To investigate the changes and transformation processes students underwent, the research question asks in what ways do the study participants retrospectively understand their transformation toward world-mindedness during the global education voyage, and in what ways do the study participants see the world and their engagement with the world as a result of international cross-cultural experiential learning.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate study participants’ transforming process toward world-mindedness and to explore the relationship between their international cross-cultural experiential learning and progress toward world-mindedness. The study uses a retrospective approach to study participants’ journeys in order to examine in what ways their international cross-cultural experiential learning impacted their process of developing world-mindedness. While
the major focus is on the changes that occurred during the students’ participation
during the program, their experiences were examined at different stages including
before, during, and after the program. This serves the purpose of highlighting the ways
in which international cross-cultural experiential learning influences and shapes
world-mindedness and the lives of the students in a more permanent manner such as
their choice of academic or professional field of interest after the voyage.

Guiding Theoretical Framework

Transformative Learning Theory

Transformative learning theory was referred to as a guiding theory in this
study. Transformative learning theory describes the process of individuals becoming
more reflective and critical of their assumptions and beliefs and in turn, becoming less
defensive and more accepting of differences. As a result of such changes, people
transform their original cultural frame of reference, which involves cognitive,
affective, and behavioral dimensions, to consciously expand their ways of making
meaning of the world (Mezirow, 2000). Transformative learning was chosen as a
guiding theory based on the assumption that perspective transformation influences how
students create meaning from their international cross-cultural experiential learning
and how their world-mindedness is shaped.

*Jack Mezirow*

Transformative learning theory originated in the transformational learning theory developed by Jack Mezirow in 1978. It was based on psychoanalytic theory, critical social theory, and adult learning theory. Based on the constructivist assumptions of transformative learning theory, Mezirow maintains that people construct their knowledge out of their experience and learn by making meaning of their experiences. The way people interpret their experience is not only a guide to decision and action but is also central to the way people define their worldview (Mezirow, 1988, 1994, 2000).

When individuals acquire a new experience that they cannot assimilate or incorporate into an existing frame of reference, the experience is rejected or perspective transformation takes place to accommodate the new experience (Taylor, 1993). Perspective transformation is most often explained as being triggered by major personal events such as a disorienting dilemma or acute internal and personal crisis. In new cultural contexts, people consciously or unconsciously search for the missing piece in order to adjust to a new environment. The transformation process is catalyzed
when they find the missing piece. In other words, transformative learning consists of
the continuous creation of new categories, openness to new information, and an
implicit awareness of more than one perspective through informed and reflective
decisions to act on his or her insights (Mezirow, 2000, Taylor, 2000).

Robert Boyd

Robert Boyd and Paulo Freire have also studied Mezirow’s original
transformational theory and provide slightly different models. Robert Boyd (1991)
addresses transformative learning that is grounded in Jungian psychology, which
focuses on the subjective and psychological process involved in the enlargement of the
personality (Boyd & Myers, 1988). Boyd emphasizes the concept of individuation, a
“lifelong process of [individuals] discovering new talents, developing confidence and a
sense of empowerment, a deeper understanding of the inner self, and a greater sense of
self-responsibility” (Taylor, 2000, p. 317). In contrast to Mezirow’s view, Boyd finds
personal autonomy has less to do with perspective transformation and more to do with
social interdependence and people’s emotions (Boyd & Myers, 1988; Taylor, 1998).
For Boyd, “[individuation] is a transformation that involves coming to terms with
hidden or latent aspects of one’s personality…” (Taylor, 1998, p. 15). While Mezirow
claims the importance of individuals questioning their previous assumptions in order to change their existing frame of reference, Boyd claims individuals must “come to terms with the self, the rational side of human nature [that] is vulnerable to the forces of the unconscious, which is unable to act on a new perspective” (Taylor, 1998, p. 15).

*Paulo Freire*

Paulo Freire also studied transformative learning theory, but his description is based on his basic beliefs and practices about fostering an emancipatory transformation. Unlike Mezirow’s perspective transformation, he is “much concerned about a social transformation via the unveiling or demythologizing of reality by the oppressed through the awakening of their critical consciousness” (Taylor, 1998, p. 16). Freire sees the need for critical reflection in this transformational process; “Freire sees its purpose based on rediscovery of power such that the more critically aware the learners become the more they are able to transform society and subsequently their own reality” (Taylor, 1998, p. 17).

According to the descriptions above, transformative learning theory seems representative of different or contradictory views of transformative learning. At the same time, the rational, affective, and social elements all play a role in the complex
nature of transformative learning. Thus, the three different views may be seen as
different levels of emphasis rather than contradictory approaches.

*Transforming the Structures of Meaning*

Transformative learning theory explains the ways in which people construct
meaning from experiences and reflects in expectations, habits, and behaviors, and
decision making as well as how assessing and reinventing the meanings of experience
guides changes of meaning structure (Kelly, 1993; Mezirow, 1991). Meaning
structures are personal and social ideologies that were constructed through prior
learning and act as the lens to through which we view our experiences and filter and
organize our perceptions. Meaning structures are made up of sets of meaning schemes
or habits and expectations we carry such things as beliefs, values, self image, roles, and
cause-effect relationships, and meaning perspectives that assimilate and structure the
process of interpreting new experiences and shape our worldview (Kelly, 1993;
critically aware of their meaning structures and challenges their established and
habitual patterns of expectation through examining the ways in which their
assumptions constrain the way they perceive, understand, and feel about our world. A
perspective transformation is necessary for people to become more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative in their perspective and ultimately to make choices about acting upon these new understandings (Kelly, 1993; Mezirow, 1991, 1995).

Perspective transformation is essential to transformative learning and the process requires people to practice critical reflection. Critical reflection not only assesses the justification of their beliefs, ideas, or feelings but also allows them to investigate how they are influenced by cultural background or prior experiences (Mezirow, 1995). In transformative learning, critical reflection often leads to transformations of meaning schemes by assessing the content (e.g. knowledge, assumptions) or the ways of thinking and behaving and problem solving. There are three stages of critical reflection: content reflection, process reflection, and premise reflection. Content reflection assesses a person’s behaviors. For instance, it assesses if the action taken was good or bad and acceptable or unacceptable. Process reflection evaluates specific strategies, behaviors, intentions, or feelings of a person about a situation. Those two reflections are the ways people change their understanding about their own experiences therefore resulting in meaning scheme. These reflections trigger everyday transformations of meaning schemes that often lead to behavioral changes.
On the other hand, premise reflection questions the validity of making judgments about
the behavior of others (content reflection) and how they perform process reflection in
the first place. Premise reflection generally leads to more profound transformations as
it challenges the way people know or think they know (Mezirow, 1995). The integrated
transformation process of meaning structures and reflection are show in Figure 1
(Mezirow, 1995, p.47).

Figure 1. The Transformation Process

_Identifying the Model of Transformation: Stages of the Transformative Process_

Transformative learning theory asserts that it is the process of perspective
transformation that allows people to critically reflect on their own cultural assumptions
and presuppositions, to make meaning of new experiences, and develop a more
inclusive and discriminating worldview by integrating new experiences or knowledge.

There are eleven stages of perspective transformation: (1) a disorienting dilemma, (2) self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame, (3) a critical assessment of assumptions, (4) recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared and others have negotiated a similar change, (5) exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions, (6) planning a course of action, (7) acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plan, (8) provisionally trying out new roles, (9) renegotiating existing relationships and negotiating new relationships, (10) building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships, and (11) reintegrating conditions dictated by one’s new perspective. This is generally accepted as a hierarchical stage model; however, it is important to be aware that the transformation does not always follow this exact sequence (Mezirow, 1995, p.50).

Transformative learning theory states that the “learner’s experience and the learning process foster the learner’s understanding of the origins, nature, and consequences of his or her beliefs” (Mezirow, 1995, p. 58). By infusing reflective practice in both experience and the learning process, transformative learning involves learner changing their mind (e.g. beliefs, assumptions and perceptions) and potentially
transformative nature (Mezirow, 1995).

Methodology

Qualitative Inquiry

I employed a qualitative inquiry mainly for its naturalistic approach and focused on the emerging process and changes in study participants’ experiences. A constructivist approach was utilized because constructivism is centered on individuals’ meaning-making process of their experiences and thus best matched the purpose of this study, which is to explore the ways study participants find international cross-cultural experiential learning influence their development of world-mindedness (Patton, 2002).

Research Participants

I used purposeful sampling to select an international cross-cultural experiential learning program and study participants from among the program alumni. The snowball strategy and a set of criteria, which will be further discussed in detail in chapter three, were used to select the most suitable program and alumni study participants from whom it was expected I could learn the most about my research questions.

Data Collection

The research design included three rounds of semi-structured, open-ended
interviews with alumni, document analysis of the alumni’s academic and non-academic documents produced during program participation as well as the alumni’s personal evaluation of said documents regarding how the program aided in development of world-mindedness. This series of data collection methods were used to ensure the greatest understanding of the transformation process from the participants’ own perspectives. Data from each source, as well as my research journal, were synthesized and analyzed to develop the findings for the study. Based on Lincoln & Guba’s (1985) suggestion, a triangulation of sources enabled me to establish the reliability of the study.

Data Analysis

I organized the data by transcribing the interviews as soon as possible so that all the information would be fresh in my mind while conducting the initial coding and data analysis. This approach allowed me to elaborate and alter the questions in the later interviews to most effectively access the information to best answer the research question. As Creswell describes, my data analysis in qualitative research consisted of three phases; “preparing and organizing the data (i.e., text transcripts, or image data as in photographs) for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing these codes, and finally representing the data in figures or
discussion form” (Creswell, 2007, p. 148).

The files including transcription of interviews were first converted to appropriate text by hand and computer. Later, ideas or key concepts were noted in the margins in order to determine patterns and categories, which allowed the data to be organized into more abstract units of information. For example, I coded the data using categories and reorganized the data based on the categories. Finally, approximately forty small classification categories were condensed into approximately five large themes to be used to present the findings (Creswell, 2007).

**Significance of the Study**

There are six areas in which this study differs and improves upon past studies:

(a) use of actual data, (b) use of in-depth data, (c) analysis of pre-, during-, and post-program participation, (d) diversities among the study participants, (e) examination of the role of international cross-cultural personal relationships, and (f) practical contribution to the Field.

*Use of Actual Data*

The first significance is its use of actual data being collected from the interviews and document analysis to investigate the transformative learning process
toward the development of world-mindedness. The journey or process of change in perspective transformation is one of the areas most researched about transformative learning and at the same time one of the least understood. While phases of perspective transformation have been identified in past studies, there is also a trend to describe the transformation as more individualistic, fluid, and recursive than was originally perceived. Despite the arguments, a few of the studies provided actual empirical data confirming each phase (Taylor, 2000). In this light, the first significance of the study is its ability to provide actual data concerning the developing perspective transformation in all phases. The findings of this study allow us to further examine the similarities and differences of identified perspective transformation phases among different individual participants. It does not however aim to identify perspective transformation phases that can be generalized. The goal is to better understand the process and potentially uncover overall patterns of change.

*In-depth Data*

The second significant difference of the study is its qualitative nature that allows the collection of in-depth data focusing on the unique experiences of each study participant. In order to develop a good understanding of the perspective transformation
process towards development of world-mindedness, more research is needed with particular emphasis on identifying the inherent components of the transformative process. That may include aspects such as a willingness to act on the new perspectives, subjective reframing (critical reflection of one’s assumptions), and objective reframing (critical reflection of others’ assumptions). It means that both essential learning strategies as well as internal and external conditions that allow the process to unfold need to be analyzed and fully understood. By emphasizing the importance of participants’ self-reflection in data collection, particularly during the interviewing process, this study investigated participants’ internal experiences and how they made sense of external conditions in relation to their transformative learning experiences. A more in-depth synthesis of these characteristics is needed to find areas of commonality (Mezirow, 1995; Taylor, 2000).

Analysis of Pre-, During-, and Post-program Participation

This study places emphasis on examining and connecting all stages of transformation, before, during and after the international cross-cultural experiential learning program, not simply on what participants learned after the program’s completion. Most studies on the process of individual transformation have been
conducted in retrospect, and were bound by a particular event such as completion of a training program or educational course. There are few studies that offer insights into the transformation process by analyzing pre-, during- and post-program participation. Moreover, most studies do not clearly show the participants’ perspective prior to the transformative learning experience that gave them the new perspective. In addition to the examination on pre-transformation, this long-term approach could yield important insights into possible regression that might better explain the transformative process or how the individuals approach and live his or her life differently as a result of the transformative experience (Mezirow, 1995; Taylor, 2000).

Diversities Among the Study Participants

Another unique aspect of this study is the cultural diversity and prior cross-cultural experiences of the study participants. Overall, much more research with a primary focus on the role of culture in transformative learning is needed. Based on the assumption that a participant’s culture has an impact on how he or she will respond to the international and cross-cultural experience and transformative learning process, this study offers an essential cultural balance among program participants and/or study participants with cross-cultural experience. This study will be of great significance to
investigations of the relationship between cultural difference and transformative learning (Mezirow, 1995; Taylor, 2000).

Examination of the Role of International Cross-cultural Personal Relationships

This study is also unique in the attention that it gives to the role that international cross-cultural personal relationships play in transformative learning. Overall in previous studies there has been a lack of attention given to relationships. Little is known about how their dynamics and related elements such as trust, honesty, and friendship affect transformative learning. Building trusting relationships is critical for students to develop the necessary openness and confidence to manage the threatening and emotionally charged experience of transformation. Furthermore, the medium of healthy relationships and genuine discourse between trusting individuals is critical in conducting effective and thoughtful in-depth reflection. Research should pay close attention to specific feelings, such as anger, fear, shame, happiness and the like, and explore how each individually informs the reflective process (Mezirow, 1995; Taylor, 2000). Through purposeful sampling, this study selected participants who had intense international cross-cultural personal relationships during their participation in
Practical Contribution to the Field

The study makes a very practical contribution to the field of global education. The insights into the transformative learning process gained from this study could help educators and trainers to more effectively design training programs and materials that nurture students’ world-mindedness. It also contributes to an understanding of how to identify conditions that may predicate the development of world-mindedness and its related abilities and dispositions. In a broader sense, this study contributes significantly to how education responds to its responsibility for social advancement. It demonstrates how education might act as a social and political agent of change in increasingly culturally diverse societies in an interdependent world (Taylor, 1993).

Biography and Perspectives of the Researcher on the Topic

I was born and raised in a large metropolitan city in Japan. I moved to the United States on my own during high school in order to expand my educational opportunities. Over the last decade, I have lived in different parts of the United States pursuing higher education. In retrospect, the extensive international cross-cultural encounters I have had have helped me to develop intercultural sensitivity and
competency as well as interest in international affairs. Furthermore, my experience with extensive international travel for personal, educational, and professional reasons has provided me with numerous meaningful opportunities to go beyond my comfort zone, to learn to appreciate a wide range of diversity from different languages, religions, lifestyles and philosophies to customs and traditions in different societies and cultures, and to nurture world-mindedness.

I came to this study with my own perspectives on the topics, which are mainly drawn from my own international cross-cultural experiences and reflections on the process of developing world-mindedness. I believe that context is a significant component of the international cross-cultural learning process as well as in the development of world-mindedness. I also consider certain personal traits or background (personality, cultural background, family values, etc.) as important factors that can facilitate or hinder transformative learning.

**Assumptions**

First, this study assumed that perspective transformation occurs with some frequency at least in particular groups of people such as people who challenge themselves by going beyond the comfort zone or who are open-minded and reflective.
The study hypothesized that international cross-cultural experiences may well stimulate this process. Second, the study assumed that the process for perspective transformation during transformative learning could be studied. This was based on the hypothesis that the study participants selected by purposeful sampling would be individuals who were conscious and/or reflective of this process. Thus, the informants would be able to identify and discuss their transformation in some detail. Third, the study assumed the researcher’s ability to sufficiently understand informants’ experiences and transformative learning through in-depth interviews.

**Definition of Terms**

*Agents of change* - Individuals or groups who can generate social change. They engage in the process of attempting change by identifying the issue, seizing opportunities, inventing new approaches, and advancing existing solutions. Their presence and thought processes lead to a change from the traditional ways of handling or thinking about a problem.

*Cross-cultural* - International experiences and activities that transcend borders. It refers to macro-level interactions.

*Cross-cultural learning and skills* - Knowledge about one’s own culture and
other cultures, and skills to effectively interact with people from diverse cultures and countries (Merryfield & Wilson, 2005)

Cross-cultural experiential learning - The term cross-cultural best describes an experience in which a person is immersed in another culture outside his or her own country. Cross-cultural experience demands direct contact with the different culture through firsthand experience as the best way of learning about another culture. Cross-cultural experiences become cross-cultural experiential learning when the learner begins the process of reflection, and previously held ideas begin to change or re-affirmed through a critical approach (Gochenour, 1993; Wilson, 1982).

Critical self-reflection - the process of assessing, analyzing, reconsidering and questioning one’s cultural assumptions and presuppositions implicit in beliefs, values, norms, expectations, and behaviors that provide criteria for judging or evaluating. All reflection implies an element of critique; however, critical self-reflection refers to challenging the validity of presuppositions in prior learning (Mezirow, 1995; Taylor, 1993).

Diversity - In this study, concepts of diversity reach beyond ethnic groups. The concept is extended to include identity groups such as ethnicity, race, class,
gender, age, religion, language, sexual preference, and disabilities (Bennett, 2011).

Experiential learning - Learning from personal experience. Learning by doing.

Experiential knowledge - Understanding gained through direct experiences as opposed to second hand sources. Experiential knowledge allows people to understand what it is like to be, do, see, or feel in the ways which people without the experience could not.

Globalization - Globalization is a worldwide acceleration of international interconnectedness of various areas including politics, economy, culture, and environment. Globalization has been a growing trend through much of world history, however it has been greatly stimulated by advanced technology and science since the early 1970s (Anderson, 1990).

Global competence/Global literacy - (a) a set of broad knowledge of the world and its people including culture, history, politics and economy and how they are interconnected across time and space, (b) a series of skills such as cross-cultural communication, practicing global perspectives, and critical thinking, and (c) an internationally competent or internationally literate person who has ability to
comprehend, analyze, evaluate, and contribute to understanding by using these skills (Kelly, 1993; Selby & Pike; 2000).

*Global education* - Global education is the approach to preparing young people to live effectively and responsively in a global society by developing global perspectives and a sense of the interconnectedness of the world (Alger & Harf, 1986; Kneip, 1986; Case, 1993).

*Global perspectives* - Global perspectives consist of elements such as attitudes, knowledge, and skills to effectively practice perspective consciousness dealing with topics such as global issues, global interconnectedness, global history, cultural learning and skills, and participation in a global society (Case 1993; Hanvey, 1976).

*Perspective consciousness* - “The recognition or awareness on the part of the individual that he or she has a view of the world that is not universally shared, that this view of the world has been and continues to be shaped by influences that often escape conscious detection, and that others have views of the world that are profoundly different from one’s own” (Hanvey, 1979, p. 5).

*Intercultural* - The interaction and communication between people of two or
more cultures. It refers to micro-level interactions.

*Intercultural communication* - Intercultural communication is face-to-face interactions between people who are culturally different. A successful intercultural communication requires intercultural competency, the ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations, to relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts, to engage in informed ethical decision-making on issues that involve diverse perspectives (Bennett, 1998; Bennett, Bennett, & Landis, 2004).

*Intercultural competency* - A transformative process whereby a stranger develops an adaptive capacity, which alters his or her ability to effectively understand and accommodate the demands of a different culture from his or her primary culture. This adaptive capacity is based on an inclusive, discriminating, and integrative worldview. The competent stranger does not passively accept the social realities defined by others, but instead is able to actively negotiate purpose and meaning (Bennett, Bennet, & Landis, 2004; Kelly, 1993).

*Multicultural* - The cross-cultural dimension within the borders of an individual country, such as the United States, or a specific context or environment, such as The Friend Ship onboard community.
Transformative learning - “Transformative learning refers to changing one’s frame of reference to become more inclusive, differentiating, permeable and integrative of experience” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 7). Transformative learning involves alteration of meaning structures that requires a person to critically reflect on the underlying psycho-cultural assumptions that lead to perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1997; Clark, 1991).

Open-mindedness - a readiness or receptiveness to new and different ideas, suggestions, opinions, and behaviors of others. Open-mindedness helps people to be aware that even if you think you are right, you can be wrong and are always willing to listen to and hear an opposing or contradictory view.

Perspective transformation - “The process of becoming critically aware of how and why the structure of our presuppositions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about the world; through a meaning reorganization reconstituting this structure to permit a more inclusive, discriminating and integrative perspective; and making decisions or otherwise acting upon these new understandings” (Mezirow, 1988, p. 237).

World-mindedness - The ability to perceive the world as a whole and to see
one’s own position on a continuum of time and interconnected spaces.

World-mindedness demands a global perspective and a personal commitment for the betterment of the world for all people in effort to solve global issues.

World-mindedness develops a person’s capacity to transcend ethnocentrism, to perceive commonalities in culturally diverse individuals, to experience multiple loyalties and empathize across cultures (Alger & Harf, 1986; Case, 1993).

**Limitations of the Study**

There are five main limitations to this study. First, the study findings cannot be generalized due to the limited number of study participants in this qualitative research. Second, the collectable data was limited to what participants could recall due to use of the retrospective approach. At the time of the interview, it had been a year to a year and half since the participants had completed the global education voyage therefore the numbers of specific examples such as critical incidents the participants could recall in detail were limited. There was also a lack of opportunity for field research and direct observation by the researcher. Another issue was the use of self-reporting based on the assumption that all significant learning was conscious to the participants (Taylor, 2000). Furthermore, the cross-cultural aspect of the study added
layers of language and cultural norms. While I am Japanese, all of the study participants were non-Japanese. Lastly, my pre-constructed knowledge about international cross-cultural experience and the development of world-mindedness may have unconsciously influenced the way I guided the interview processes, analyzed and interpreted the data, and presented the findings.

**Organization of the Study**

This dissertation is organized into six chapters. The first chapter is the introductory chapter that describes the background of the study, presents the research problem and questions, and the purpose of the study. It also includes a brief overview of research methods, guiding theoretical framework, potential significance of the study, biography of the researcher, definition of terms, assumptions and limitations of the study, as well as the organization of the study.

The second chapter provides a literature review on global education and intercultural communication and training. It articulates elements and issues in these fields today, identifies major differences in how each practice is enacted by practitioners, and synthesizes the ways in which theories, pedagogies, and research in the field of intercultural communication and training can strengthen different aspects of
global education.

The third chapter presents the study’s research design and methodological strategies in a detailed manner. It discusses the rationale for using a constructivist approach, choosing particular sampling strategies, data collection methods, and data analysis. The effectiveness and ineffectiveness of the employed methods especially the use of Skype to conduct interviews are discussed. It also includes guidelines on the establishment of the trustworthiness of the data, the organization of findings and the process of writing up all data, and further explanation of the limitations of the study.

The fourth chapter describes the context of the study. It addresses the history of the selected international cross-cultural experiential learning program for the study. It also provides background information about the study participants and different kinds of diversity found on the onboard community. Later a general overview of students’ daily life in the program is provided. There is also a general description of how students spent their time in the destination countries. The purpose of this chapter is to assist readers in developing a mental picture of the study participants and what kind of experiences they had in the program and in the destination countries.

The fifth chapter presents five findings from the study participants’ experiences
being a part of an international cross-cultural experiential learning program. It reports
the findings based on data collected from interviews with program alumni, and
document analysis.

The sixth chapter presents a summary of the study, discussion of findings,
implications of the study, and provides recommendations for further research. In the
discussion section, the findings that support reviewed literature as well as differ from the
reviewed literature are also included.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction .................................................................................................................. 33
Global Education ........................................................................................................ 33
   Elements of Global Education ............................................................................... 36
      Perspective Consciousness ............................................................................. 39
      Knowledge of Global Condition .................................................................. 42
      Cross-cultural Awareness ............................................................................. 44
      Knowledge of Global System and Interconnectedness ................................ 46
      Participation in Global Society ..................................................................... 48
Issues of Global Education ....................................................................................... 49
   Ambiguity of the Definition .............................................................................. 49
   Controversial Nature ......................................................................................... 50
   Readiness of the Teachers ................................................................................. 52
Intercultural Communication .................................................................................... 53
   Elements of Intercultural Communication ...................................................... 56
      Models of Intercultural Communication ..................................................... 57
      Foci of Intercultural Communication Theories ........................................... 59
Issues of Intercultural Communication ................................................................... 69
   Ambiguity of the Definition .............................................................................. 69
   Controversy Surrounding the Motivation ......................................................... 71
   Controversy Surrounding the Theories and Research ...................................... 71
Practices in Global Education and Intercultural Training ..................................... 73
Practices in Global Education .................................................................................. 73
   K-12 Classrooms .............................................................................................. 74
   Teacher Education ............................................................................................ 78
Introduction

Global education and intercultural communication are fields of study that grew out of different backgrounds yet have recently come to overlap in some significant ways. The connections are apparently strong in an approach to global education that employs cross-cultural experiential learning as a primary source of teaching and learning. The three goals of the literature review are as follows: a) to articulate elements and issues in each field today b) to identify major differences in their practices (how they are enacted by practitioners), and c) to synthesize the ways in which theories, pedagogy and research in intercultural education can strengthen different aspects of global education. These are accomplished by referencing the best literature from each field.

Global Education

Interconnectedness has been a growing trend through much of world history. In the last 40 years an increase in technology has sparked a rapid growth of global interconnectedness particularly in the areas of politics, economics and cultural
exchange. This increasing global interconnectedness has led to historical events that make a case for global education in the United States. These events include the following: the changing social structure of the world through the erosion of Western civilization’s dominance, the globalization of American society, and education as a mirror of society and social change (Anderson, 1990).

Today, global interconnectedness is not merely anticipated in the future, but is a fact of life. Globalization and its influence can be observed at the gas pump, in the automobile showroom, in satellite TV broadcast and so on (Alger & Harf, 1986). Alger and Harf (1986) and Case (1993) describe global education as a response to a variety of world events that occurs beyond national borders or events that affect the daily lives of people across countries. Furthermore, global education addresses a strong concern toward the intense flow of culture-generating information in a society. For instance, traditionally students are only introduced to a one-sided version of world events in a classroom. Global scholars claim an inadequacy of current education to teach students about places, people, events, and one’s involvement in the world as well as the skills to discriminate among information sources. Global education promotes an understanding of a holistic and authentic picture of the globalized world for all students (Anderson,
1968; Alger & Harf, 1986; Becker, 1982; Case, 1993). With the increasing complexity of a global society, there is a strong rationale for schools to take an active role in developing students’ competence to be effective players in the increasingly pluralistic, interdependent, and changing world (Kniep, 1986; Merryfield, 2001).

The work of respected scholars agrees that the primary purpose of global education is to prepare young people to live effectively and responsibly in a global society (Anderson, 1990; Becker, 1982; Lamy, 1991, Selby & Pike, 2000). Thus, the four critical goals of global education emphasize the competence needed by citizens in a global age: (a) to enable students to understand and examine the involvement of various factors and actors in global society, (b) to understand the interdependent and interconnected nature of global society, (c) to consider the interests of all as agents of change, and (d) to enable students to see their involvement in the global society (Alger & Harf, 1986). In order to achieve those goals, students need to develop global perspectives and use multiple perspectives to understand global issues and systems and to search for potential solutions to problems and alternatives within the global society.

A person with a global perspective has cultural sensitivities and awareness, competencies, progressive attitudes, intellectual skills, and knowledge. A global
perspective allows students to examine and understand various features of their global society and how it works by enabling them to use multiple and holistic perspectives with a respect for global complexity and diversity. It can be said that the promotion of global perspectives is the central goal of global education. In other words, the overall aim of global education is to help students to practice global perspectives to be effective and responsible decision makers in the globalized world (Anderson, 1990; Becker, 1982; Case, 1993; Hanvey, 1976).

*Elements of Global Education*

While major global education scholars agree on the importance of global literacy and competence, their conceptualization of global education differs as a result of their topics of emphasis. For instance, a range of global topics and different emphases on the substantive dimension and perceptual dimension are found in two widely referenced seminal works: “An attainable global perspective” by David Hanvey (1976) and “Defining a global education by its content” by William Kneip (1986).

In his article “Defining a global education by its content,” Kneip (1986) primarily addresses the substantive dimension, which refers to the objects of a global perspective, by suggesting the unique features of global education are to be found in its
content. Substantive knowledge is gained through content learning, both practical and intellectual, and includes knowledge of the history, geography and lifestyles and customs of a culture lived in or visited. Kneip identifies four elements to be focused on in global education: human values, global systems, global issues and problems, and global history (Case, 1993).

On the other hand, in the article “An attainable global perspective,” Hanvey (1976) identifies five different elements of a global perspective: perspective consciousness, awareness of the state of the planet or knowledge of world conditions, cross-cultural awareness, knowledge of global dynamics, and awareness of human choice or knowledge of alternatives (Case, 1993). While Hanvey addresses elements of substantive dimension, he also integrates elements of perceptual dimension. The perceptual dimension of global education refers to a global perspective as the capacity to see the world as a “whole picture” whether focusing on a local or an international matter. Promoting the perceptual dimension involves nurturing open-mindedness, perspective consciousness, complexity of thinking, resistance to stereotyping and chauvinism, the inclination to empathize, and the ability to be reflective. The development of the perceptual dimension enables students to see the larger context of
people’s lives, to be inclusive of cultures or values that are different from their own, and to reflect and tolerate ambiguity. Importantly, the perceptual dimension is the lens through which we see the substantive dimension. It gives us the ability to see spatial and temporal interconnectedness of the knowledge gained from the substantive dimension (Case, 1993; Merryfield & Wilson, 2005).

While different global educators emphasize different aspects of interconnectedness, all agree that the vital core is a shared intense realism. The common emphasis is on enabling people to see the interconnected nature of the world and their involvement in it as it really is (Alger & Harf, 1986). Despite the differences of definitions or terminologies used by scholars, there are elements of global education that are commonly addressed. For instance, the five elements of global education addressed by Hanvey in his monumental work of “An attainable global perspective” (1976) are most frequently used as basic components throughout the development of global education (Benitez, 2001; Kirkwood, 2001; Merryfield, 1997). The five elements described by Hanvey are perspectives consciousness, awareness of the state of the planet, cross-cultural awareness, knowledge of global dynamics, and awareness of human choice. In the following section, the five elements of global education will be
addressed with reference to Hanvey’s ideas as a foundational framework to integrate and discuss the elements of global education addressed by other respected researchers.

*Perspective Consciousness*

The first element is *perspective consciousness* that addresses the perceptual dimension or point of view (Kneip, 1986). Hanvey (1979) describes perspective consciousness as follows:

The recognition or awareness on the part of the individual that he or she has a view of the world that is not universally shared, that this view of the world has been and continues to be shaped by influences that often escape conscious detection, and that others have views of the world that are profoundly different from one’s own (p. 5).

People naturally have a certain cognitive map that is developed in a particular cultural context; however, an awareness of one’s own culturally unique perspectives does not develop naturally. Perspective consciousness enables learners to recognize various human beliefs and values, including one’s own, and find both differences and
similarities among them. In other words, perspective consciousness exposes learners to diverse perspectives and enables them to transcend one’s frame of reference (Hanvey, 1979). Perspective consciousness is made up of intertwined elements which are necessary for the creation of a global perspective, including open-mindedness, world-mindedness, anticipation of complexity, critical thinking, resistance to stereotyping, and judgment-making competencies, inclination to empathize, and non-chauvinism (Anderson, 1968; Becker, 1982; Case, 1993; Merryfield, 1997; Merryfield & Wilson, 2005).

Among those elements, the two basic aspects of perspective consciousness are open-mindedness and world-mindedness. Open-mindedness refers to a willingness to change one’s current beliefs or accept not being right all the time. It promotes conscious judgment making based on responsible and fair examinations of evidence from all sides instead of only one’s preconceptions and others’ opinions.

Open-mindedness advocates critical thinking and a reassessment of original perceptions by preparing learners to positively explore conflicting evidence and anticipate complexity. Central to open-mindedness are effective research and analytical skills that allow learners to practice perspective consciousness and multiple
perspectives (Anderson, 1968; Becker, 1982; Case, 1993; Merryfield, 1997; Merryfield & Wilson, 2005).

World-mindedness is a generalized ability to perceive the world as a whole and to see one’s own position in time and space from the perspective of the world system as a whole. World-mindedness develops students’ capacity to transcend ethnocentrism, to perceive commonalities in culturally diverse individuals, to experience multiple loyalties and empathize across cultures (Anderson, 1986). World-mindedness, which is enhanced by open-mindedness and empathy, enables students’ to develop non-chauvinism, which is essential in efforts to solve global issues (Alger & Harf, 1968; Case, 1993).

In sum, simply learning more about the world does not advance students’ understanding or develop their global perspectives. In order to do this, we must help students to develop perspectives and cultural lenses, which are the keys to what we notice about the world and how we understand it. Therefore, the development of perspective consciousness that assists learners in developing appropriate conceptual and moral lenses to view global interactions is as crucial as acquiring extensive information, if not more so (Case, 1993; Lamy, 1990).
Knowledge of Global Conditions

Another essential element is knowledge of global conditions that is similar to Hanvey’s awareness of the state of the planet. It is an awareness of prevailing world conditions and emergent conditions and trends such as population growth, immigration, economic conditions, and limited resources and the changing physical environment, political developments, science and technology, law, health, inter-nation and intra-nation conflicts and so forth (Hanvey, 1976). The element of knowledge of global conditions consists of both the perceptual and substantive dimensions (Case, 1993).

As mentioned in the previous section, perceptual dimension is related to perspective consciousness. Within the frame of knowledge of the global condition, perceptual dimension refers to the use of communication technology and emergence of world-mindedness. First, the advancement of communication technology has led to an increasing exposure to people beyond the local community without need for direct contact. As the media increasingly impacts the people’s perception about the world, it is important to equip learners with skills to critically examine given media information and gather alternative information using multiple perspectives to develop a holistic
understanding of world conditions (Hanvey, 1976). Teaching students “how” to learn is particularly important in a world of constant and rapid change where it is impossible to teach everything about the world.

The second element of perceptual dimension is the concept of world-mindedness or the idea of one world. Using the lens of world-mindedness, the interests of a nation need to be viewed in light of all human beings and the overall needs of the planet. As a result, knowledge of global conditions not only helps students to understand global issues and trends but also encourages them to develop a commitment to global peace, social justice, and environmental issues (Anderson, 1968; Becker, 1982; Selby & Pike, 2000).

The substantive dimension of knowledge of global conditions determines awareness about global issues. There are five traits of global issues: (a) global issues transcend national boundaries, (b) the characteristics of global issues result in the degree of concern or urgency expressed by actors who are involved in the issue, (c) global issues can only be resolved through policy actions with active collaboration of key actors, (d) global issues simply will not be resolved next year or the year after, and
(e) global issues are often interconnected or mutually embedded (Alger & Harf, 1986; Selby & Pike, 2000).

Cross-cultural Awareness

The third element is cross-cultural awareness:

Awareness of the diversity of ideas and practices to be found in human societies around the world, of how such ideas and practices compare, and including some limited recognition of how the ideas and ways of one’s own society might be viewed from other vantage points (Hanvey, 1976, p. 10).

This is an element that aims to develop the capacity of learners to accept and constructively cope with cultural diversity and changing global culture (Anderson, 1968).

The extensive flow of information makes it easier for people to have some knowledge about different cultures around the world. Yet, more access to information does not necessarily translate to a deeper understanding or acceptance of cultural differences. Simply providing over-generalized information or exotic images of other
cultures can result in developing and confirming stereotypes, myths, prejudices, and
touristic impressions (Hanvey, 1976). In global education, we must provide students
with the opportunity for substantial learning using authentic information and firsthand
interaction with people from a variety of cultures.

One of the main goals of cross-cultural awareness is reduction of stereotypes.
Resistance to stereotyping refers to a skepticism about the adequacy of accounts of
people, cultures, or nations that either are limited to a narrow range of characteristics
or depict little or no diversity within them (Case, 1993). The practice of resistance to
sterotypes requires both substantive and perceptual dimensions that help students to
appreciate different cultures. Through the acquisition of knowledge about different
cultures, students learn to appreciate the uniqueness of each culture and the culturally
relative nature of values, beliefs, and norms. Resistance to stereotypes requires people
to go beyond dualism (the “us-them” approach) and to see boundary crossing
similarities and shared interests. Building resistance to stereotypes decreases any
inclination to dehumanize or marginalize groups because students come to recognize
these groups as having the full range of human attributes (Case, 1993; Kniep, 1986).
The values that people hold reflect their attitudes and beliefs as shaped by their experiences. Our values determine how we view the world and influence our decisions and behaviors. While some of our values are personal such as tastes and preferences, many of the important values are shared within our ethnic, national, and religious groups. Without cross-cultural awareness, people can only see the differences in light of their own frame of reference (Hanvey, 1976; Kniep, 1986; Merryfield & Wilson, 2005). In addition to understanding others from an insiders’ point of view, the development of cross-cultural awareness also helps people gain self-understanding such as how they are perceived by people of different cultures. Selby and Pike (2000) describe the phenomena as the development of an inner dimension that includes knowledge of self, including one’s identity, perspectives, and values, and skills for personal reflection, analysis and adaptation. Cross-cultural awareness helps students to understand the self and others in relation to each other (Hanvey, 1976; Kniep, 1986; Merryfield, 1997; Merryfield & Wilson, 2005).

**Knowledge of Global Systems and Interconnectedness**

The fourth element of global education is *knowledge of global systems and interconnectedness*, which refers to Hanvey’s knowledge of global dynamics: “Some
modest comprehension of key traits and mechanisms of the world system, with emphasis on theories and concepts that may increase intelligent consciousness of global change” (1976, p. 19). The idea of interconnectedness is the core of global education and is motivated in part by concern for growing cross-national influences and interdependencies in the political, economic, and social arenas. Interconnectedness is largely stimulated by increasing cross-national transactions, including the movement across national boundaries of people, services, finances, information and cultures (Alger & Harf, 1986). The study of global history and global systems are two important approaches for students to understand interconnectedness and the complex nature of the global society.

First, knowledge of global history is key to understanding the historical development of contemporary systems and the antecedent conditions and causes of today’s issues and problems. Global history can introduce the nature of spiral and temporal connections in the global system (Alger & Harf, 1986; Kniep, 1986). Second, knowledge of the global system can help students to develop a sense of anticipation of global complexity based on an understanding of the procedures and mechanisms of global economic, political, ecological and technical systems. Anticipation of
complexity refers to the ability to move beyond the simple notion of cause and effect
and explore the hidden complexity or variables that alter phenomena in our
interconnected world (Alger & Harf, 1986; Case, 1993; Hanvey, 1976; Selby & Pike, 2000). Ultimately, the knowledge of global dynamics enables students to find their
place in the world society and participate in the global system effectively and
responsibly by thinking globally and acting locally (Kneip, 1986).

*Participation in Global Society*

The fifth element is *participation in global society* and refers to Hanvey’s fifth
element of awareness of human choice: “Some awareness of the problems of choice
and confronting individuals, nations, and the human species as consciousness and
knowledge of the global system expands” (1976, p. 34). In sum, global education is not
to simply teach more about the world by providing more information, but to develop
students’ skills in understanding the complexity of the globalized world using a holistic
approach so that they can become effective decision-makers (Case, 1993). Therefore,
the well-balanced infusion of substantive dimensions and perceptual dimensions is
important. In other words, all the elements should not be taught in isolation from one
another due to their interrelated nature.
Issues of Global Education

The main issues related to global education include the ambiguity of its definition, its controversial nature, and the fact that many teachers are ill equipped to teach from a global perspective. In order for global education to succeed and be supported, it is important to discuss these issues and seek ways to solve them or effectively deal with them.

Ambiguity of the Definition

The issue of the ambiguous definition of global education is addressed in the dissection of its elements; there is no single definition or set curriculum for global education. For instance, some scholars or educators may focus on environmental concerns while others emphasize human rights issues or economic development. Importantly, we should not automatically assume that greater clarity about the goals of global education is better because ambiguity can offer flexibility for exploring new avenues for learning and different approaches. Furthermore, the flexibility helps teachers to create contextualized global education that is most appropriate and effective for their particular students (Case, 1993; Merryfield, 1997).

Despite the positive aspects of the ambiguity of the definition, it also leaves
space for conflicting views about global education and its motivations. As a result, there are different images of global education being promoted according to the particular interests of the institutions or communities based on individuals’ unique interpretations. In order to promote the institutionalization of global education, further conceptual and perceptual clarity of its definition is needed (Becker, 1982; Case 1993; Merryfield, 1997).

**Controversial Nature**

Another important issue of global education is the controversy surrounding it, which is shaped by conflicting perceptions of how the world is, how it ought to be, and what and how schools should teach students about the world and their relationship to it. As mentioned above, the clarification of the definition and learning objectives of global education is probably the most effective way to minimize major controversy, although it is impossible to avoid it altogether when teaching international or global issues (Lamy, 1990). Like education in general, global education is not value-free due to its commitment to promote certain values over others. While global education is not value-neutral, it does not mean that global educators can or do automatically prejudge other values that are different from what global education stands for (Case, 1993). In
other words, “global educators should neither promote a specific policy agenda nor unfairly discourage students from conducting critical analyses of policy decision” (Lamy, 1990, p. 55).

In order for educators to approach global education in a positive way, they need to understand its controversial nature and be exposed to the major criticisms such as those addressed below. This can encourage teachers to consciously provide students with thoughtful, reflective, balanced approaches about controversial issues and assist students in developing their skills, efficacy, and confidence that are necessary for them to become effective citizens of a globalized world. The criticisms commonly addressed by extreme conservatives include the following: (a) global education is unpatriotic and undermines the study of the United States and Western civilization, (b) global education aims to develop a world government, (c) global education only teaches a biased anti-U.S. or anti-Western position that is hostile to capitalism and/or categorizes the United States as an oppressor, (d) global education teaches a utopian worldview by promoting pacifism, non-violence, social justice, and economic equity by focusing on the human-centric side of international affairs such as basic human rights, refugee issues, cross-cultural awareness while ignoring complex issues in international affairs,
(e) global education teaches activism and encourages students to take action, and (f) global education teaches nuclear issues (Lamy, 1991; Schukar, 1993; Merryfield & Wilson, 2005).

Global educators believe that in this world of controversy, to deny the role of these issues in education is to deny students a quality education that will prepare them to be well versed in handling contentious situations. Global educators therefore argue that controversial issues of global education should not be set aside out of fear or discomfort (Anderson, 1990; Schukar, 1993). Successful global education needs to present the opposing sides of controversial issues by using both the perceptual and substantive dimensions as discussed earlier. Unfortunately, there are limited opportunities for both pre-service and in-service teachers to experience global education as students and to learn how to practice global education through first-hand experience. Lamy (1990) claims, “The simple truth is that most teachers are not prepared to do that “(p. 62). The lack of teacher readiness to practice global education and effectively deal with its consequences such as local opposition is a critical issue.

_readiness of the Teachers_

The third issue in global education is readiness of the teachers. In order to
assist teachers to effectively practice global education, education professors must provide teachers with opportunities “to understand the nature of controversy and controversial issues, to develop skills for productive inquiry into, reflection upon, and resolutions of controversy, and to learn strategies and methods for teaching these understandings and skills in the classroom” (Schukar, 1993, p. 55). The first-hand experiences of teachers with global education as students help them to infuse those opportunities in their own global education practice (Lamy, 1990). In other words, it is prerequisite that teachers themselves are knowledgeable about the elements and issues of global education, and proficient in skills and content knowledge, so that they will be comfortable dealing with controversy from the school or local communities with confidence.

**Intercultural Communication**

Modern technology has been successfully closing the physical distances between people. On the other hand, it has not been so successful in bringing people’s psyches closer. A greater exchange of people from different cultures does not guarantee an increase in cultural empathy. Furthermore, curiosity about different cultures does not necessarily cultivate the skills to function effectively in a different
culture. Throughout history, encounters with different cultures have created more conflict and divisions among people than harmonious interaction. Despite the nature of the human psyche, the increasing globalization and advancement of technology will continue to increase the pragmatic needs for intercultural communication. Therefore, it is inevitable for people to develop ability for peaceful coexistence with people from different cultures. In other words, education that provides not only factual knowledge but also assists learners in developing insider views of other cultures is needed (Barnlund, 1998; Bennett, 1993; Proverb, 2006).

Intercultural education focuses primarily on immigrants and issues related to ethnic and religious diversity. It is often used interchangeably with intergroup education, which focuses more directly on the topic of prejudice reduction (Banks, 2004). In any case, intercultural education is referred to as a comprehensive study that addresses all aspects of cultural studies, including cross-cultural education and multicultural education (Barnett & Lee, 2003; Bennett, 1998). In this paper, the study of intercultural communication and intercultural communication training are selected for further discussion from the broader study of intercultural education based on my specific academic interest.
The study of current intercultural communication indicates that the
development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes of participants is necessary to create
competent intercultural communicators (Bennett, Bennett, & Landis, 2004; Gudykunst,
2003). King and Magolds (2005) agree when they state, “the change in students’
tercultural skills being called for today require not just knowing more facts or having
more awareness, but genuine maturity, and individual transformation that enable
students to apply their knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts” (p. 586).

There are two major schools of intercultural communication, and they are
referred to as theory-and-research and theory-into-practice. The school of
theory-into-practice has been recently receiving strong attention, which has resulted in
the development of large numbers of training programs based on intercultural
communication theories. The fact that it has received extensive attention in recent
literature warrants further discussion in this paper.

The school of theory-into-practice is interdisciplinary and incorporates
insights from multiple fields including communication, psychology, anthropology, and
sociolinguistics. Intercultural communication is generally defined as the study of
face-to-face interactions between people who are culturally different (Barnett & Lee,
Intercultural communication emphasizes intercultural competence as the primary goal of intercultural training. Intercultural competence is commonly defined as the ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations, to relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts, and to engage in informed ethical decision-making about issues that involve diverse perspectives (Bennett, Bennett, & Landis, 2004; King & Magolda, 2005). Intercultural communication is founded on the difference-based assumption that expects communication challenges in the case of cross-cultural situations due to culture-specific perceptions and behaviors between people from different cultures. Thus, the learning goals of intercultural communication generally include cultural self-awareness, cross-cultural awareness, and various skills in intercultural perceptions and communications (Bennett, 1993).

**Elements of Intercultural Communication**

There are a number of ways to describe the frameworks of intercultural communication and intercultural competence, which are addressed here with reference to the selected models and theories. The selected models of intercultural communications include list model and structure-process model. The foci of
intercultural communication theories include: management of cultural difference, cultural adaptation and development of intercultural sensitivity, and development of cultural competence.

*Models of Intercultural Communication*

*The list model.*

The list model attempts to achieve intercultural communication by developing a set of separate skills or knowledge that emphasizes culturally-specific competence. There are two characteristics of the list model, and the first is its efficacy-based view of intercultural communication. The goal of this view is to successfully achieve certain goals with an intercultural environment. Thus, the list model promotes intercultural training for specific purposes by emphasizing specific knowledge and skills useful in communicating with people of a specific culture for a specific purpose. The second characteristic of the list model is its coherence-based approach to intercultural communication, which perceives successful intercultural communication as creating the missing normality between two different cultures. Therefore, knowledge about the specific encountering culture becomes important in enabling individuals to incorporate the normality of another culture into intercultural communication.
This model promotes an understanding of what culture is and the development of culture-specific knowledge and skills such as history of the culture, its various religions, and cultural values and beliefs. It also extends to learning about one’s own culture and that of another by using a culturally-universal framework such as individualism and collectivism in conjunction with the newly acquired culture-specific knowledge. Intercultural communication training based on the list model tends to assume the presence of previous knowledge and skills in order for successful intercultural communication to occur, which can result in the view that developing competence equals effective intercultural communication performance (Rathje, 2007).

*The structure-process model.*

The second model is the structure-process model, which addresses both the process of cultural development of an individual, and the elements involved in each stage (Gudykunst, 2003). The structure-process model aims to achieve intercultural communication mainly through the development of culturally-universal competence and personal growth. In this model, intercultural competence is viewed as a universal that is not bound to a specific culture or combination of cultures. The structure-process model reflects the goal-oriented view about intercultural communication. The
goal-oriented view finds the procedural development of individuals’ appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to develop intercultural competence. The structure-process model acknowledges the influences of multiple conditions, such as the cultural distance between two cultures and unique personalities of the participants in the development of intercultural competence and communication. Importantly, this model does not claim success or failure in terms of pre-set goals of effective intercultural communication. Rather, it perceives success through the cohesion-based view of intercultural communication. In this system, success is achieved by participants creating a new system of cultural orientation among people of different cultures (Rathje, 2007). Therefore, the holistic development of individuals is emphasized.

**Foci of Intercultural Communication Theories**

As demonstrated above, there are multiple ways to approach intercultural communication and its elements. As a result, there are a number of theories in intercultural communication with different assumptions and emphases. Gudykunst (2003) indicates that there are broadly five main categories among the existing intercultural theories with the following different foci: (a) effective outcomes, (b)
accommodation or adaptation, (c) identity management or negotiation, (e)
communication networks, and (f) acculturation or adjustment. Many of the theories
under each category address a specific aspect of intercultural communication by
focusing on specific variables or outcomes in intercultural communication.

In the reviewed literature, Milton Bennett is one of the few scholars who
describe intercultural communication in a comprehensive manner. Bennett (1998,
2006) demonstrates the three interrelated themes of intercultural communication: (a)
handling cultural difference, (b) cultural adaptation and development of intercultural
sensitivity, and (c) development of intercultural competence. This approach
importantly incorporates the list model into the process-structured model. In other
words, it comprehensively addresses the list of knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed
for successful intercultural communication as well as the development processes of
those elements in both culturally specific and culturally general dimensions (Berry,
2004). This inclusive approach provides a holistic picture of intercultural
communication and its elements. For this reason, this particular approach is used to
discuss the elements of intercultural communication and competence in this section.

Management of cultural difference.
The first theme is how to handle cultural difference. The element in this theme is the shift from mono-cultural communication to intercultural communication.

Mono-cultural communication is a similarity-based approach. In other words, people conduct communication based on the assumptions that one’s language, behavior patterns, and cultural values are reflected in communication. Thus, the use of different cultural frames in communication tends to cause misunderstandings and tension between participants from different cultures. On the other hand, intercultural communication is a difference-based approach to communication, which means people assume different frames of reference are involved in communication and thus there are limitations to making predictions based on one’s cultural frame of reference. This mindset enables people to consider differences in cross-cultural situations (Bennett, 1998, 2006).

The shift from mono-cultural communication to intercultural communication involves going through the five stages to developing intercultural sensitivity: avoidance, confrontation, tolerance, acceptance, and respect and appreciation. The first two stages belong to mono-cultural communication. In the avoidance stage people develop recognition of others, but consciously avoid encounters, preferring to keep
their distance and live according to their own culture. In the second stage of confrontation, people obtain and practice an initial level of perspective consciousness and cross-cultural awareness. The presence of difference in others generally leads people to confront them with the goal of converting or eliminating their differences to recover a mono-cultural environment.

The latter three stages belong to intercultural communication. Each stage is supported by an increasing maturity in perspective consciousness and cross-cultural awareness that reflects people’s knowledge, attitudes, and skills regarding cross-cultural situations. The third stage of tolerance is achieved when negative perceptions of difference are eliminated. In the fourth stage of acceptance, people come to develop more understanding about others and find ways to peacefully and mutually cope with these differences. Finally, the fifth stage of respect and appreciation describes people’s positive attitude toward differences found in others. In this stage, people see difference as diversity that can benefit and enrich human society as a whole (Bennett, 1998, 2006).

*Cultural adaptation and development of intercultural sensitivity:*

Cultural adaptation and development of intercultural sensitivity is the second
theme of intercultural communication. Intercultural sensitivity is a mindset and competence in approaching the issue of difference or “the construction of reality as increasingly capable of accommodating cultural difference that constitutes development” (Bennett, 1993, p. 24). The degree of people’s cultural adaptation is influenced by the degree of their development of cultural sensitivity. This approach claims that what is important in intercultural communication is not an individual’s knowledge about other cultures, but their extent of intercultural sensitivity. The main element in intercultural sensitivity is the shift from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. In other words, moving from the idea of a single-reality and single cultural truth to the idea of a multiple-reality, which assumes differences and multiple truths. Ethnorelativism accepts and appreciates others as essentially unique individuals without judgment (Bennett, 1993, 1998).

The shift from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism takes a total of six stages. This developmental or personal growth model is widely known as Bennett’s Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. The first three stages of denial, defense, and minimalization reflect ethnocentrism while the latter three stages of acceptance, adaptation, and integration reflect ethnorelativism.
In the ethnocentric stages, people are threatened by the concept of fundamental difference in world because it challenges their idea of a single-reality. In order to avoid this challenge, people develop the strategies that are described as the three stages of ethnocentrism. In the first stage of denial, people attempt to ignore the existence of cultural difference altogether by isolating or separating themselves from it. The cognitive and affective openness that allows people to explore cultural differences and encourage observation of these differences need to be developed to move on from this stage. In second stage of defense, people recognize cultural differences, but generally denigrate others and claim superiority to exclude those who are different. The development of perspective consciousness to examine commonalities across cultures, such as universal values must be sought. In the third stage of minimalization people acknowledge cultural differences in a neutral manner, although they assume these differences are relatively unimportant compared to similarities across cultures, such as physical universalism or elements of cultural universality. The worldview of people must be expanded from absolute-based only to inclusion of non-absolute-based (Bennett, 1993, 2006).

In the three ethnorelativism stages, people understand culture as relative and
that its elements exist within a particular cultural context. The fourth stage of cultural sensitivity development is acceptance in which people acknowledge and respect cultural differences while maintaining their own personal opinions about the differences. In other words, people begin to accept differences in behavior and values without judgments regardless of their own personal preferences. People must learn to transform their knowledge of other cultures and accepting attitude into harmonious behavior. In order to move to the next stage, people must demonstrate “the practical application of ethno-relative acceptance to intercultural communication” (Bennett, 1993, p. 51).

The fifth stage of adaptation is when people are capable of understanding cultural differences from insiders’ viewpoints and are able to practice empathy. Moreover, people have developed multiple cultural frames of reference that help them to develop a philosophical commitment toward pluralism. Based on the cognitive and affective developments achieved in prior stages, this stage emphasizes behavioral development. In the adoption stage, people develop practical communication skills for cross-cultural situations based on the coherence-based view including alternative communication skills or the ability to develop a new common meaning for actors of
different cultures (Bennett, 1993, 2006; Rathje, 2007).

The sixth and last stage is integration, which can be described as becoming multicultural. At this stage, people have developed extensive adaptation skills and are capable of analyzing and evaluating a situation from multiple frames of reference. They are also constantly forming and transforming their own unique culture that is most suitable to the context using multiple frames of reference (Bennett, 1993, 2006).

Development of cultural competence.

Cultural competence is another essential theme of intercultural communication. In this section, four elements of understanding that enhance the ability of people to effectively conduct intercultural communication are introduced. The first element is the understanding of the difference between Culture and culture and knowledge of those in a specific culture. Culture refers to the elements of objective culture such as cultural holidays, music and food while culture refers to the elements of subjective culture such as the learned and shared patterns of belief, values, and behaviors. The knowledge of culture is emphasized as the key to gaining an insider’s point of view of a specific culture, which enables individuals to understand the “rulebook” of a specific culture, and thus engage in successful intercultural
communication (Bennett, 1998, 2006; Bennett & Bennett, 2004).

The second element necessary for achieving cultural competence is the ability to understand different forms of diversity. In the discussion about culture, there are different levels of abstraction at which cultural diversity is defined. At a high level of abstraction, cultural difference can be only addressed in terms of culturally-universal categories such as individualism and collectivism. A high level of abstraction works as a unifying factor of a culture that consists of diverse individuals and different ethnic groups within a culture. For instance, a high level of abstraction describes the traits of Americans as a whole; however, there is a great amount of diversity within this group, which this level does not acknowledge. On the other hand, a low level of abstraction describes more detailed differences among more specific groups that exist within a cultural group. For instance, a low level of abstraction can describe differences among ethnic groups within the United States (Bennett, 2006).

The third element of cultural competence is about understanding the difference between cultural generalization and cultural stereotypes. Cultural generalizations are predominant tendencies among people of a particular group and are developed from systematic cross-cultural research based on people’s experiences. On
the other hand, cultural stereotypes assume that “all members of a culture or group share the same characteristics” (Bennett, 1998, p. 6), or describes individuals based on the prior images of his or her cultural group without consideration of anything beyond the immediate perceptions. Each culture has different preferences for some values over others and these are often reflected in how people perceive others. Therefore, it is critical to distinguish between cultural generalization and stereotyping (Bennett, 2004).

The fourth element of cultural competence is the understanding of communication process and styles. The first of its three main aspects is the relationship between language and culture. Effective communication requires participants to understand not only the literal meaning of words but also more subtle elements such as tone of voice to grasp the true message. A closely related topic is that of nonverbal communication and its relationship to culture. Each culture has specific meanings attached to nonverbal communication such as gestures, and different cultures may give different meanings to the same nonverbal expression. A third essential aspect is communication styles. The pattern of thinking determined by a culture generally reflects the ways people communicate verbally or in writing. The two major communication styles are linear and circular. In low context cultures, the linear style,
which is explicit in expression and gets straight to the point, is typically used. On the other hand, in high context cultures, the circular style, which is less explicit in expression and circular in approaching a point, is generally used (Bennett, 1998, 2006).

In summary, successful intercultural communication requires people to develop the elements described in the three interrelated themes discussed above: handling difference, cultural adaptation and development of intercultural sensitivity, and cultural competence. Intercultural communication is a complex practice that must be supported by a combination of various knowledge, attitudes, and skills of all involved.

**Issues of Intercultural Communication**

There are three main issues of intercultural communication that are discussed in the reviewed literature. These are the ambiguous meaning of intercultural communication, the controversy surrounding the motivation of intercultural communication, and the theorizing involved in intercultural communication research.

*Ambiguity of the Definition*

Intercultural communication is generally defined as communication that involves face-to-face communication between people from different cultures (Bennett,
In other words, “intercultural communication occurs whenever a message produced in one culture must be processed in another culture” (McDaniel, Samovar, & Porter, 2006, p. 6). Despite the widely used general definition, the vagueness of its meaning remains due to some unified meaning of terms used in the definition or inclusive aspects of the definition. First, different scholars use the term “culture” to mean different things. While most scholars use it to refer to different national cultures, others are more inclusive and refer to people from different ethnic, racial, gender, generation, and physical ability groups (Gudykunst, 2003). Second, the field intercultural communication generally focuses on communication between people from different national cultures however it is also used to address broader studies. As mentioned earlier in the paper, intercultural communication is also used to address all aspects of the study of culture and communication. For instance, the broader meaning of intercultural communication includes cross-cultural communication as one of the categories within intercultural communication. Barnett and Lee (2003) claim, “the greatest issue facing intercultural communication research is differentiating intercultural communication from the related research areas of international
communication, international or comparative media studies, and cross-cultural research” (p. 259).

**Controversy Surrounding its Motivation**

The controversy or misunderstanding surrounding the development of intercultural sensitivity must be addressed, particularly regarding the topic of ethics. The use of complex terminology in the field raises some issues. To clarify, intercultural sensitivity is “the affective aspect of intercultural competence, and refers to the development of a readiness to understand and appreciate cultural differences of intercultural communication” (Chen & Starosta, 2006, p. 357). Furthermore, ethics refer to people’s ideals about right and wrong or good and evil. Morality refers to actual thoughts and action patterns of people in everyday life (Brinkamann, 2006).

Bennett (1998) argues that many people, especially those who think ethics and morality are absolute often misinterpret the meaning of intercultural sensitivity. He states, “Some people seem to think that being interculturally sensitive means giving up any set of ethical principles or moral guidelines” (p. 30). Instead, intercultural sensitivity promotes cultural relativism to accept different values and morals as equally legitimate, and is supported by intercultural awareness, which recognizes the cultural
influence on people’s thinking and behavior, and intercultural adroitness, which is the ability to act effectively in intercultural interaction. Intercultural sensitivity promotes contextual relativism that requires an understanding and analysis of observed actions using an insider perspective of the culture (Bennett, 1998, 2006; Chen & Starosta, 2006). This kind of misunderstanding about the meaning of intercultural communication among the general public is problematic when promoting intercultural communication.

*Controversy surrounding the Theories and Research*

A third controversial issue regarding this subject surrounds the theories and research of intercultural communication. There are five issues to be considered in the future. The first of which is a lack of variety in scholars’ cultural backgrounds. The majority of the theorists and researchers in the field are Westerners, and in particular, Americans. Since the study of intercultural communication requires the study of people from two or more different national cultures, the majority of scholars sharing same predominant cultural background creates “the risk of wrongly interpreting the process of communication and the variables that determine the outcomes of these activities” especially those involving non-Western cultures” (Chen & Starosta, 2006, p. 267).
Furthermore, Gudykunst (2003) and Renwick (2004) urge that this situation has resulted in a failure to incorporate issues of power in intercultural communication theories.

Another problem found in intercultural communication research is a lack of overarching models. Gudykunst (2003) and Landis and Bhawuk (2004) also explain that theories and research models in intercultural communication “take just few antecedent variables and relate those to intercultural behaviors, which are often unidimensional…. A limitation of the over arching model is that people find it daunting and immediately assume that it can never be fully tested” (p. 458).

Furthermore, the use of self-reporting instruments developed according to theories emphasizing particular variables or outcomes is common. Barnett and Lee (2003) claim the needs for qualitative studies, the use of multiple strategies for collecting data, and collaborative research with members of the culture that is the focus of the study.

**Practices in Global Education and Intercultural Training**

*Practices in Global Education*

Among the different ways global education is enacted by teachers, the two major global education practices in K-12 classrooms and teacher education are chosen
for discussion here due to limited space.

*K-12 Classrooms*

The first example of global education practice is the infusion of global perspectives into K-12 classrooms. Most important to note here is that a unique approach is employed that examines opportunities for teaching and learning about the world beyond the borders and limits of one’s own society in relationship to larger global communities (Anderson, 1990). Based on the reviewed literature, this section addresses five approaches that global education has put into practice mainly in the K-12 classrooms. While each approach has its own differences, some of them are closely interrelated to others. As seen below, the reviewed literature more extensively discusses the first two approaches of extending the existing curriculum and cross-cultural study in comparison to the four latter approaches.

The first major approach is to extend and expand the existing curriculum particularly for subjects such as world history, world economics, and world politics. Strong emphases are put on linking the local community or American society to the larger world systems and understanding the interdependent nature of a global society. These approaches also help students to learn their position in the larger world and to
think about how people in different parts of the world perceive them. Global educators expand the students’ understanding about local-global connections to further learning opportunities to introduce global issues, explore various actors in the global system, and foster the students’ interest in local action encouraging them to practice effective decision-making skills. Furthermore, by invoking the concept of *think globally, act locally*, teachers can promote students’ participation in their local and international communities and introduce them to the concept of global citizenship (Anderson, 1990; Kirkwood-Tucker, 2003; Merryfield & Wilson, 2005; Selby & Pike, 2000; Pike, 2007).

Another practice of global education is the cross-cultural study, which, Anderson (1990) explains is to “seek to expand students’ understanding of cultural diversity through the cross-cultural study of literature, art, music, dance, religion, and social customs” (p. 13). In this type of study, it is critical not reinforce stereotypes about other cultures, but to provide students with opportunities to understand the deeper aspects of other cultures such as norms, beliefs, and behavior patterns. Merryfield (2002, 2004) refers to this kind of cross-cultural study as substantive cultural learning and indicates five content areas to conduct substantive culture learning: (a) teaching students perspective consciousness in a cross-cultural study, (b)
identifying students’ stereotypes, exotica and culturally universal aspects, (c) providing knowledge to directly address misinformation or limited knowledge, (d) teaching students to recognize and analyze their own perspectives, (e) using primary sources from cultures/regions under study including direct interaction with people from other cultures, (f) teaching about origins of prejudice and its relationship to power through teaching about prejudice or people who are currently fighting against oppression, and (g) teaching dynamic culture change and the increasing interconnectedness of global society. Substantive cultural learning aims to enable students to practice insider view in their understanding of other cultures. Finally, there are many methods to conducting cross-cultural studies however the common element is an emphasis on incorporating cross-cultural experience into lessons by creating opportunities for students to interact with people from different national cultures (Anderson, 1990; Merryfield, 2002, 2004, 2005).

The third approach to practicing global education is expanding and improving programs and instruction in foreign language and area studies focusing on the countries or cultures that have not been widely taught in American classrooms (Anderson, 1990).
Another important way to improve education about world problems is to help students to develop habits of examining diverse points of view about events and issues. Activities such as research projects or action projects on global issues especially those that have significance in the local community provide ways for teachers to guide students in practicing critical thinking or perspective consciousness, global thinking or holistic thinking, and research skills such as the use of the Internet or gathering various sources that represent various perspectives (Anderson, 1990; Merryfield & Wilson, 2005; Selby, 2007).

For the last approach to creating a commitment to a global ethic in teaching as well as a classroom environment, Pike (2007) argues that schools can model the democratic and culturally sensitive community that global education stands for. He writes “[teachers] can articulate a preferred vision of global society and demonstrate appropriate attitudes and behaviors; they can encourage responsible student participation and illustrate the power of collaborative action” (Pike, 2007, p. 228). For example, teachers can promote a global ethic through advocating for healthy a lifestyle, teaching about the environment daily in the classroom, practicing equal and loving treatment of all students, and promoting non-violent solutions to problems.
Infusing global perspectives in teacher education is essential in promoting global education. In the mid-1990s, national professional organizations offered their support of the integration of global education programs (Kirkwood-Tucker, 2001, 2003). As a result, there are larger numbers of publications for teachers that address the goals of global education, the way to integrate global education into the existing curriculum including teaching materials that can be used to teach specific topics under study (Kniep, 1986). Teachers are the ultimate gatekeepers for classroom teaching and learning, and therefore it is important to assist pre-service or in-service teachers to become intellectually and emotionally ready to teach global education during teacher education programs. Teacher education programs committed to preparing teachers to practice global education take on both the role of providing teachers with first-hand experience of learning through global education and teaching them how to infuse global perspectives into their classroom teaching through methods courses or observing the practice of other teacher educators (Urso, 1990).

In the case of professional development programs for in-service teachers, Urso (1990) uses global education as a tool to promote cross-cultural understanding,
incorporate holistic learning, and promote community involvement in participating in
teachers’ own learning as well as in their teaching. As an example of student teacher
education programs, Kirkwood-Tucker (2001) introduced the use of the Hanvey
Teacher Training model that develops learning and teaching skills of global education
according to the five elements of global education: perspective consciousness,
awareness of the state of the planet, cross-cultural awareness, knowledge of global
dynamics, and awareness of human choice.

While there are differences in expression, it can be said that both programs
incorporate similar elements of global education to organize their programs.
Importantly, teacher educators in both programs describe the importance of helping
teachers help themselves to develop global perspectives and guiding them to be
effective global educators. The three key points raised by teacher educators in the
reviewed examples include: (a) teaching teachers the philosophy, rationale, and goals
of global education, (b) providing examples of teaching practices to infuse global
education and introducing useful teaching methods and materials, (c) providing
opportunities and guidance in the development of global activities or lesson plans that
foster students’ global perspectives, and (d) assisting teachers to construct the critical
questioning skills that would enable them to make nation-centered lessons into global-centered lessons (Kirkwood-Tucker, 2001; Urso, 1990).

Another approach to practicing global education with regard to teacher education is the use of student teaching abroad. Some teacher education programs recommend or require student teaching abroad in an immersion setting. Globally oriented teacher educators who promote student teaching abroad maintain that student teacher’s cultural immersion experience solidifies their understanding of many elements of global education, especially perspective consciousness and cross-cultural awareness. Cushner and Brennan (2007) say, “effective cultural learning comes about with a significant experiential component where the learner is situated in another culture ideally for an extended period of time” (p. 3). The advocates also claim that student teaching abroad in immersion settings provides a rich opportunity for student teachers to engage in different cultures in a holistic way that most effectively influences their cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains (Cushner & Brennan, 2007).

Furthermore, teacher educators address the importance of providing student teachers with enough substantive learning, and structured guidance to encourage their
reflections at all stages of student teaching abroad in order to maximize the ability of
the experience to develop their knowledge, skills, and attitudes addressed in the
elements of global education and also to explore ways to reflect on those in their global
education teaching in the classroom. The reflective journal is widely used as an
assignment not only for student-teachers to reflect on their own experiences and
changes of perspective, but also for teacher educators to monitor student teachers and
to provide thought provoking questions or supportive comments that assist in the
development of student teachers’ global perspectives as individuals and professionals
(Brennan & Cleary, 2007; Wilson, 2007).

The reviewed literature on teacher education that promotes global education
directly and indirectly addresses the critical role of global educators in successful
global education for teachers. Just as teachers are the gatekeepers in K-12 classrooms,
teacher educators are the gatekeepers of the teaching and learning that occurs in
teacher education programs. Based on the study of successful global educators,
Merryfield (1995, 2000) maintains the importance of globally oriented-teacher
educators with cross-cultural experience and international expertise to effectively help
teachers to develop conceptual understanding and classroom practice.
Practices in Intercultural Training

As globalization intensifies, so does the frequency, length, and intimacy of intercultural contacts. The expanding demands for intercultural training has provided researchers and trainers opportunities to increase their understanding and knowledge of different factors surrounding intercultural communication including cultures, individuals, situations, role of relationships, and behavior patterns. Moreover, they have come to closely study the factors that determine successful intercultural communication such as language skills, personality traits, cultural distance, and length of cross-cultural experience as well as how all these factors interact. Intercultural training has also broadened its focus and addresses changes of participants in all cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains of trainees (Landis, Bennett, & Bennett, 2004). The sophistication of intercultural training has also led to a variety of improvements in training, including the development of methods and materials and more attention to overall quality.

Today, intercultural training is conducted for different groups of travelers including tourists, business people, missionaries, students, and international volunteers.

Each group, or even individuals within a group, comes to intercultural training with
unique backgrounds and needs. There is no single program that works for all.

Therefore, there is a strong emphasis on the need for trainers to get to know participants and their expectations about the training in order to create a customized experience. Trainers strive to help participants close the gap between their actual performance and ideal performance to become more effective in intercultural communication. Trainers may also need to identify and solve existing problems and assist participants to develop the appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitudes that would prevent future problems. In order to effectively help participants, it is suggested that trainers take the following steps as a part of their designing and conducting intercultural training session for a particular group of participants.

The first step is gathering information about participants and conducting an assessment of their individual needs. Indeed, intercultural trainers are held responsible for learning as much about participants as possible including their professional, academic, and personal information that would be useful in designing effective training programs prior to the session by sending surveys in the mail or via e-mail (Reinwick, 2004).

The second step is selecting methods, topics, materials, and communication
styles. After gathering enough information about participants and the cultural contexts surrounding the sessions, trainers can move forward to choose or create the most effective tools to use. At this point, trainers are also able to explore and select, at least initially, the use and balance of models of training and theories in the program. Each element of intercultural communication addressed above has multiple selections. Some examples of choices under some elements and brief explanations behind the decision-making are addressed below.

For example, the selection of methods can be addressed based on an approach to four training categories. Each category reflects the choices of a process and content that respond to the different needs and goals of training participants. In other words, the methods should be selected based on the desired outcome of a section in training or training as a whole. The following are the four categories: (a) didactic culturally universal approach is appropriate for lectures, discussions, videotapes, and culturally universal assimilators, (b) experiential cultural universality is appropriate for culture-general assimilators and self-assessments, (c) the didactic culture-specific approach is suitable for specific area orientation briefings, language training, culture-specific assimilators, and culture-specific readings, and (d) experiential
culture-specific approach is suitable for bicultural communication workshops,
culture-specific assimilations, and culture-specific role play. Each method has its
strengths and weaknesses, which makes the use of multiple methods necessary to
maximize the development of knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes. While not
every method can address all three, the combination that best balances the
development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes should be sought. It is important that
trainers not only be familiar with different methods but also have analytical knowledge
of each method (Flower & Blohm, 2004).

During the design process, trainers also need to consider ways to develop a
safe environment for learning, communities of participants, connecting participants’
learning from the training to their prior experiences and lives outside of the training.
The use of dialogue or collaboration with participants is generally encouraged in
intercultural training as a way of approaching each participant as a valuable resource
and active facilitator of his/her own learning.

The third step is making adjustments to the original training design must be
made. Once the training session begins trainers need to seek feedback and evaluations
from participants in order to constantly improve. While design of the training program
may be done in a most careful manner, the voices of participants are essential to making effective adjustments. Furthermore, trainers should make use of the fresh perspectives from participants and constructive evaluations to improve the effectiveness of the training (Renwick, 2004).

_Differences in Practice between Global Education and Intercultural Training_

Based on analysis of the reviewed literature, there are six points that describe the differences in practice between global education and intercultural training.

_Context_

The first difference is that of context. Global education is generally practiced in connection with subject content as part of a school curriculum. On the other hand, intercultural training practice is not closely tied to a particular subject or formal school curriculum. It is rather practiced as an independent program taught in conjunction with workshops in various settings beyond the context of formal education.

_Target Population_

Another aspect to be considered is the target population. Global education is mainly geared towards all students in K-12 and higher education because it is practiced by integrating global perspectives into existing academic subjects. On the other hand,
intercultural training is mainly focused on a more specific population yet wider range of people who will be preparing to travel abroad for an extended period.

Dynamics of the Relationship

The relationship dynamics between these two types of educational experiences varies in subtle ways. Both global education and intercultural training promote a learner-centered approach in practice; however, global education is mainly practiced in a more formal education setting and is closely tied to academic content. This context places teachers as the information sources and students as information receivers. Thus, there is an inherent hierarchy in teacher-student relations. In comparison, intercultural training involves less subject content and the experiences of participants are used more intensively as the source of their learning. Therefore, there are more traits of horizontal or egalitarian facilitator-participant relationships or community of learners found in intercultural training practice.

Aspects of Emphasis

Another difference to consider between global education and intercultural training practices is the different emphasis of each. Both global education and intercultural training aim at educating the whole person where all aspects of the
personality such as cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions are considered. However, each places heavier emphasis on one aspect over the others. For example, global education places more emphasis on the cognitive dimension while intercultural training focuses more emphasis on the affective and behavioral dimensions.

*Specificity of Programs*

The fifth difference is specificity of programs in practice. Both global education and intercultural training sessions need to take into consideration the unique needs and backgrounds of the students or participants. However, intercultural training sessions must be even more sensitive to the wide variety of students it attracts. As a result, the practice of intercultural training is rather broadly described as referring to the steps that trainers take in program design and actual training. On the other hand, the large number of variables and wide range of training programs make each intercultural training practice more specific for their purpose.

*The use of Assessment Instruments*

The last difference between global education and intercultural training is the use of assessment instruments. As mentioned above, intercultural training tends to have a more specific purpose and clearly defined outcomes for each training program.
or session. There are many theories available to guide the specific types of intercultural training such as theories focusing on identity issues to those focusing on adaptation. Many theories also provide instruments that measure certain sets of participants’ knowledge, skills, or attitudes about a certain theme. The uses of those instruments are widely described at different times and for different purposes throughout trainings.

**Synthesizing Global Education and Intercultural Training**

As discussed in an earlier section of the paper, global education consists of five major elements: (a) perspective consciousness, (b) knowledge of global conditions, (c) cross-cultural awareness, (d) knowledge of global systems and their interconnectedness, and (e) participation in global society. The study of intercultural communication can most directly strengthen global education with the element of cross-cultural awareness particularly in using the approach of cross-cultural experience. Cross-cultural awareness represents “respect for and knowledge of the diverse ideas, values, and practices found in human societies throughout the world” (Case, 1993). Intercultural communication can strengthen this element because while cross-cultural awareness is one element among many in global education, intercultural communication more narrowly and deeply focuses on the topics of culture,
communication, and intercultural encounters. Therefore, intercultural communication offers richer intellectual and practical knowledge for teaching and learning cross-cultural awareness.

Much of the global education literature addresses the rationales and intended outcomes of achieving cross-cultural awareness; however, there is less emphasis on the process of its development and the study of different variables surrounding this development. In other words, there are many resources on the “what and why” of cross-cultural awareness development but not so many on the “how” aspect. The aspect that is particularly absent in these discussions is how to cultivate students’ “inner dimension,” which includes their inner-learning journey, self-awareness, and personal growth, and also how the students’ inner transformations occur and progress (Selby & Pike, 2000). As a result, there is a common concern in global education about teachers’ good intentions to develop students’ cross-cultural awareness that often ends up confirming stereotypes of different cultures or failing to go beyond superficial cultural learning to promote students’ perceptual or personal growth. A school cultural fair that minimally introduces students to the exotic images, food, costumes, and music of different cultures is one of the unfortunate examples (Merryfield & Wilson, 2005).
On the other hand, the field of intercultural communication places a strong emphasis on the “how” aspect of cross-cultural understanding and awareness development in both aspects of teaching and learning. Thus, this field has a variety of useful tools established through research studies: theories, measurement instruments, teaching materials or activity ideas, and pedagogical guidelines. Most significantly, intercultural communication deals with peoples’ inner developmental process of incorporating the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. This quality is useful for teachers and students to develop the vision or direction of where they are presently, where they are heading, and how to keep track of their advancement in their cross-cultural awareness development. Furthermore, the stage framework provides a basis for teachers to more effectively select appropriate methods or provide guidance for a particular group of individual students to maximize their advancement in developing cross-cultural awareness (Bennett, 2006; Merryfield & Wilson, 2005).

There are various ways in which intercultural communication may strengthen global education through elements of cross-cultural awareness. Due to space limitations, the following discussion refers to two seminal works from each field as references: *Social studies and the world: Teaching global perspectives* by Merry

Merryfield and Wilson argue that the development of students’ cross-cultural awareness is approached mainly through the teaching and learning of human values and cross-cultural understanding in global education practice. Firstly, the elements of human values include: (a) cultural universals, (b) diverse human values and beliefs within and across nations and world regions, (c) the relationships among peoples’ values, patterns of thinking, and behavior, (d) recognition of the effects of one’s own values, culture, and worldview in learning about and interacting with people different from oneself, and (d) cultural blending and borrowing and culture exchange (p. 23).

Secondly, cross-cultural understanding consists of (a) skills and experiences in seeing one’s own culture and country from others’ perspectives, (b) experience in learning about other cultures and the world from another culture’s values and worldviews, and (c) extended experiences with/in other cultures (p. 23). Merryfield and Wilson maintain that the use of intercultural and cross-cultural experiences is one of the most effective approaches to integrating both human values and cross-cultural understanding. The effectiveness of the approach is discussed in detail during the
global education lessons that promote understanding of world cultures to cultivate world-mindedness. For instance, the authors define cross-cultural competence as “[S]kills in communicating and interacting with people different from one’s self Through cross-cultural experiential learning, students learn skills and cultural knowledge that help them understand and collaborate with people from different cultures” (Merryfield & Wilson, 2005, p. 19).

Merryfield and Wilson (2005) describe international and cross-cultural experiences as having an impact on the five dimensions that are all attributes of global competence: (a) substantive knowledge, (b) perceptual understanding, (c) personal growth, (d) interpersonal connection, and (e) cultural mediation. In order to best make impacts on those dimensions, experiential learning is recommended to approach substantive culture learning and perceptual understanding. Experiential learning can range widely from a cultural assimilation activity in a class session to a guided and reflective cultural immersion experience. Despite this range, activity-based learning or experiential learning is generally claimed to be more effective than lecture-based learning due to its whole person development approach and its self-motivated and self-directed nature that cultivates meaningfulness in learning (Selby & Pike, 2000).
In the context of developing cultural understanding for world-mindedness, both substantive and perceptual learning are necessary. The use of experiential learning supported by information provided by intercultural communication in both learning is effective. It is not only for the hands-on learning aspect but also to allow teachers and students to expand teaching and learning potential by incorporating the knowledge developed in intercultural communication. Firstly, substantive culture learning includes “knowledge of internal [culture] and surface [Culture] plus skills in intercultural competence, the knowledge, and ability needed to interact effectively across cultures” (Merryfield & Wilson, 2005, p. 41). Cross-cultural experiential learning can be effectively conducted in substantive cultural learning by infusing the following concepts and activities: (a) *Culture* and *culture* using the *Iceberg activity*, (b) culture-specific and culture-general (high-context and low-context cultures) using cultural assimilators such as *Bafa Bafa*, and (c) non-verbal behaviors or communication styles using role play, developing discussions about critical incidents and scenarios, or inviting guest speakers from the culture under study (Bennett, 2006; Merryfield, 2005). The training materials from intercultural communication sessions are useful because they not only provide ideas for activities, but they also address the
intellectual concepts behind the activities, ways to introduce the concepts to learners, and a guide for debriefings including the critical discussion points.

Secondly, perceptual understanding includes open-mindedness, perspective consciousness, complexity of thinking, resistance to stereotyping and chauvinism, the inclination to empathize and the ability to be reflective (Merryfield & Wilson, 2005, p. 31). Global education addresses the rationale and functions of those perceptual understandings, but fails to discuss the development process in depth. In global education lessons or programs focusing on development of cultural understanding using cross-cultural experiential learning, Milton Bennett’s Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) is useful. As addressed in an earlier section of the paper, this intercultural communication theory describes the process of shifting from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism by using the six stages of denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration. Both teachers and students can use this model to determine students’ current stage. The model provides insights about the psychology of each stage and suggests activities or critical thinking points necessary to move on to the next stage.

In addition to DMIS, there are a number of intercultural communication
theories that deal with different categories such as effective outcomes, identity negotiation, and acculturation and adjustment. Thus, the most suitable theories must be selected based on the goals of a lesson or program. These theories can help teachers and students to make sense of their thoughts and feelings and gain tips to progress to the next stage of development. Furthermore, some theories include instruments that can assess the developmental level of students that can be used as pre- and post-text or as a self-awareness activity. These development model theories are particularly useful where students experience intense or extended periods of cross-cultural interaction in either international or domestic contexts such as a service learning project, study abroad, or a long-term internationalization effort a school or local community.

In sum, it is important to note that international and cross-cultural experience learning does not automatically guarantee that students will develop substantive knowledge, perceptual understanding, or progress in the inner dimension. It takes well-situated, designed, and guided international and cross-cultural experiences to develop meaningful cross-cultural awareness. Input from teachers is essential in debriefing stages to assist students in engaging in meaningful reflection for their stage of development (Selby & Pike, 2000). Finally, in the larger picture, the effective use of
knowledge offered in intercultural communication can extend its positive impact beyond one element of global education, cross-cultural awareness, and promote the development of other interrelated elements of perspective consciousness and knowledge of global conditions as well.

**Conclusion**

In sum, it can be said that both global education and intercultural communication aim to prepare individuals to live effectively and responsibly in a global society (Anderson, 1991; Becker, 1979; Bennett, 2006; Lamy, 1983; Merryfield & Wilson, 2005; Pike & Selby, 1998). The complexity of the globalized world and its intercultural encounters of increasing number and intensity may amplify the challenges for people to fully understand the conditions they face or to smoothly cope with people who are very different from themselves. At the same time, it can be said that the more differences that exist, the greater the chance for different perceptions and alternatives (Barlund, 1998). I agree with the following quote of Barlund:

“"It is true that the more people differ the harder it is for them to understand each other, it is equally true that the more they differ the more they have to
teach and learn from each other. To do so, of course, there must be mutual respect and sufficient curiosity to overcome the frustrations that occur as they flounder from one misunderstanding to another” (pp. 50-51).

Based on the discussion in this paper, I insist that global education that incorporates intercultural communication can guide students to become intellectually and emotionally capable and committed citizens of the world who are accepting and appreciative of the great diversity this world has to offer. I believe by teaching children today, we are shaping the world of the future.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction ............................................................................................................. 100
Qualitative Inquiry ................................................................................................. 101
Design of the Study ................................................................................................. 102
  Constructivism Paradigm .................................................................................. 102
  Phenomenological Approach .......................................................................... 103
Sample Selection ................................................................................................. 107
Purposeful Sampling ............................................................................................. 107
Getting Access ..................................................................................................... 108
Data Collection .................................................................................................... 106
  Interviews ......................................................................................................... 116
  Document Analysis ......................................................................................... 122
  Internet-Mediated Interviewing for Data Collection .................................... 126
  Collected Data ................................................................................................. 134
Learning about Employed Methods ..................................................................... 136
  Using E-mail/Facebook .................................................................................. 137
  Importance of Pre-interview Knowledge ...................................................... 140
  Benefit and Challenges of Using Videoconferencing .................................. 143
  Difficulties of Collecting Documents from Participants at a Distance ............ 150
Data Analysis ....................................................................................................... 152
Establishing Trustworthiness ............................................................................... 154
Role of Researcher ............................................................................................... 160
Introduction

In the era of globalization, the frequency of international encounters has dramatically increased and cultural diversification is taking place on a grand scale in many societies. In order for people to be effective responsible participants in a globalized world, it is essential for them to develop and practice intercultural competence, global perspectives and world-mindedness. The purpose of this study is to explore the learning process of people as they nurture world-mindedness by using the theory of transformative learning and perspective transformation as a guide.

When people immerse themselves in cross-cultural situations by traveling, living, studying or working extensively in another culture or with people of diverse cultures, they often go through a series of complex changes that results in an increased level of intercultural competence, global perspectives, and possibly world-mindedness. People generally give up some aspects of their previous culture and take on some qualities of the new culture(s) they are engaged with in order to live successfully in their new environment. The process of developing a new way of life requires people to
openly re-learn and practice some new cultural behaviors and use different cultural 
lenses (Mezirow, 1990). Mezirow (1990) describes this as transformative learning or, a 
“process of making a new or revised interpretation of meaning of an experience, which 
guides subsequent understanding, appreciation, and action” (p. 1).

**Qualitative Inquiry**

A research design that can most accurately assist the researcher in 
discovering, illustrating, and understanding the participants’ unique learning processes 
in becoming worldly-minded individuals must be selected. Qualitative research is the 
most appropriate paradigm for that task for three main reasons. First, qualitative design 
is naturalistic and gives a great deal of attention to the process as it emerges and 
changes in each participant’s experiences. Qualitative design is “naturalistic to the 
extent that the research takes place in real-world settings and the researcher does not 
attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest (e.g., a group, event, program, 
community, relationship, or interaction)” (Patton, 2002, p. 39). Second, the naturalistic 
character of qualitative design enables the study to employ a discovery-oriented 
approach that is highly attuned to documenting the “actual operation and impact of a 
process, program, or intervention over a period of time” (Patton, 2002, p. 42). Third,
qualitative data is also descriptive in nature and has the characteristics of storytelling. This trait allows the data to thoroughly communicate participants’ experiences from an internal frame of reference and in detail because it is delivered in their own words (Patton, 2002). In sum, a qualitative design is appropriate to this study because it allows me to access the thoughts, feelings, values and actions of participants and how they themselves interpret them. All of these complex issues are critical to answering the research questions.

**Design of the Study**

*Constructivism Paradigm*

The purpose of this study was to explore the ways in which international cross-cultural experiential learning influences participants’ development of world-mindedness. The most effective way to do this was to employ a constructivism paradigm, which is an epistemology that describes how individuals know what they know. Constructivism claims that people construct their reality, knowledge, and truth through a meaning-making process based on their life experiences (Crotty, 2005; Patton, 2002; Somekh & Lewin, 2005). The constructivism paradigm was the most suitable for this study for two epistemological reasons.
First, constructivism places epistemological considerations exclusively in “the meaning-making activity of the individual’s mind” (Patton, 2002, p. 97). It stresses the individual’s particular mental process of building his/her own knowledge instead of assuming that knowledge is a set of unchanging propositions (Somekh & Lewin, 2005). Second, constructivism acknowledges the unique experiences of individuals and equally validates and values various realities in the process of making sense of the world (Patton, 2002). In sum, constructivism and my study share the same goals to discover and understand the complex and unique meaning-making process of individual participants that occurs during an international cross-cultural experience.

Phenomenological Approach

This study also adapted aspects of the phenomenological approach. Somkeh and Lewin (2005) describe phenomenology as, “… the study of lived, human phenomena within the everyday social contexts in which the phenomena occur from the perspectives of those who experience them.” (p. 121). The term phenomena refer to anything that human beings live/experience. The phenomenological approach is well-aligned with the goals and questions of the study and strengthens the research process in the following ways:
First, phenomenology focuses on exploring how people make meaning of their experiences and transform them into consciousness, both individually and in a shared context. This is done based on the constructivist assumption, which is people come to understand the world by making meaning of their experiences.

Phenomenology also focuses on how people describe and experience things and ultimately make sense of the world and develop a worldview (Patton, 2002). These characteristics of phenomenology support this study in conducting a deep investigation of participants’ unique insights into their meaning-making processes within the context of their cross-cultural experiences and in relation to their emerging world-mindedness.

Second, phenomenological research attempts to break free and see the world anew from a fresh perspective. Phenomenology suggests people revisit their immediate experience with a critical point of view to be aware of potential new meanings that may alter or enhance their former understanding. In other words, phenomenology makes people conscious of their own cultural frame of reference and addresses the importance of breaking habits of thought to remove mental barriers. It allows people to see a particular experience with a fresh, unprejudiced and different perspective (Cortty, 2005). The use of in-depth interviews with open-ended questions and an extensive use
of participants’ reflections in this study are directly informed by this quality of phenomenology.

There are two approaches to conducting a phenomenological study. Phenomena can be directly researched by accessing shared background meanings and practices (indirect approach), or by exploring human knowing through accessing consciousness or investigating human beings (direct approach). The indirect approach focuses on the background and the direct on the foreground. The indirect approach demands a researcher shed light on the life and social context of the participants. Thus, a researcher must immerse him or herself in the everyday world in which they live in order to acquire an insider’s perspective. On the other hand, the indirect approach focuses on how people interpret, make sense of, or seek meaning from their world and how they rationalize their actions or reflect on their experiences by exploring their underlying logic, intentions, and choices. In the direct approach, a non-insider researcher engages in a systematic study of peoples’ mental representations of a phenomenon or inner world as they themselves experience it (Somekh & Lewin, 2005).

This study employed the direct approach since I used purposeful sampling and
focused on uncovering the participants’ transformative learning process in retrospect through in-depth interviews. The phenomena to be studied had already occurred while the informants participated in an international cross-cultural experiential learning program. While the experiences gained from participating in the program may continue to impact the shaping of participants’ world-mindedness long after the conclusion of the program, the study does not include ongoing programs or interviewing study participants who are in the midst of their programs. The strong focus on former international cross-cultural program participants is due to my interest in studying the transformative process towards world-mindedness as it occurred during the program participation.

The fact that all participants were involved in an international cross-cultural experiential learning program does not mean that all the participants did in fact develop world-mindedness. Therefore, it was important for this research to employ purposeful sampling to select only study participants who in fact indicated the development of world-mindedness as a result of their participation in the program. Critical reflection was encouraged during the interview process so that the study participants could revisit their initial experiences during the program and see their
international cross-cultural experiences afresh and also connect them to the larger picture of world-mindedness development.

**Sample Selection**

*Purposeful Sampling*

The aim of this study was to retrospectively investigate the participants’ transformative learning process as it led to the development of world-mindedness during their attendance in an international cross-cultural experiential learning program. In depth interviews were conducted to gather participants’ reflections and narratives on their experiences. In order to effectively answer the research questions, information-rich samples had been purposefully selected.

Sample refers to the individuals who were selected and included in the data collection. Qualitative inquiry typically focuses on relatively small samples, sometimes even as small as a single participant. Non-probability sampling is widely adopted in small-scale qualitative research for the information-rich cases that will illuminate the question under study. A researcher targets specific research participants who can purposefully inform the central phenomenon of the study in depth instead of seeking to generalize findings about the overall population (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002;
Schwandt, 2007; Somekh & Lewin, 2005). In other words, an ideal sample size in purposeful sampling is simply not quantifiable because it depends entirely on the nature of the study and the research questions and concepts under investigation. Schwandt (2007) maintains that “Relevance may be a matter of choosing a unit(s) because there may be good reason to believe that ‘what goes on there’ is critical to understanding some process or concept, or to testing or elaborating some established theory” (pp. 269-270). In phenomenological studies, the participants may be located at a single site, although they need not be. Most importantly, they must be individuals who have experienced the phenomenon being explored and can articulate their lived experiences (Creswell, 2007).

Getting Access

First, effective international cross-cultural experiential learning programs that aim to develop students’ intercultural competency or a related competency such as global perspectives and world-mindedness were identified through snowball sampling. In this strategy, I identified programs of potential interest from people who are familiar with and knowledgeable of the programs such as study abroad, student international teaching, and service learning abroad (Creswell, 2007). I placed more focus on
identifying programs aimed at those with a higher level of education considering the fact that the research demands extensive and critical reflection as well as the ability to articulate the transformation process in detail. I started the process by contacting professionals in the fields with whom I already has personal connections for screening purposes. I contacted professionals including my academic advisor, employees in the study abroad office at my university, and personnel at appropriate nonprofit organizations. I had conversations with them to develop a list of effective international cross-cultural experiential learning programs that may be suitable for the study’s goals.

The following criteria were indicated as the standards for selection of nominating programs: a) the length of the program, specifically cross-cultural immersion experience, is for a minimum of three months hypothesizing that many program participants need this length of time to experience the initial cross-cultural adjustment cycle or u-curve that includes the initial highs and lows of cross-cultural adjustment (AFS, 2009), b) the program incorporates multiple international destinations, which is important for the development of global perspectives, c) there is cultural diversity within program participants to ensure study participants’ cross-cultural experience opportunities during program participation even though the
study participants may not necessarily reflect the same level of diversity, d) the program can offer records of the pre- and post-program participation assessments of cross-cultural competency, intercultural sensitivity, or world-mindedness using a type of measurement tool, and e) the program has more than twenty program alumni. There also must be a minimum of ten program alumni who are interested in participating in the study.

Based on the list of programs being developed, I sought further knowledge about each by examining the websites or program brochures to become familiar with the mission statements, actual activities involved with the program, and the living situation of the participants during the program, among others. When necessary, I contacted a program office to interview its staff members to better understand a particular program and effectively conduct the screening process.

After examining the selected programs, I decided to work with one specific program that clearly aspires to develop participants’ intercultural competency, global perspectives, world-mindedness, and other related abilities or qualities as an outcome of program participation. Instead of working with several different sessions, I decided that it would be more productive to recruit information-rich informants from one or a
few outstanding program(s). I also took into consideration the difficulty of identifying
numbers of outstanding curricula that successfully assist students in developing
world-mindedness. Moreover, the challenge of developing positive and trusting
relationships with the program staff to receive the necessary support during the study
was also a factor in my decision. I identified a contact person who would help me
throughout the participant recruitment process. The goal was to develop trusting
relationships in a short period of time by working with the same person, and also to
promote a high level of efficiency by minimizing the number of people with which to
communicate. I obtained verbal consent from the contact person to conduct interviews
about each curriculum, its administration and participants.

Once a participating program was identified, an initial twenty program alumni
who indicated experiencing a great shift as determined from their pre- and
post-Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) assessment toward a higher degree of
intercultural sensitivity were contacted via e-mail regarding the study participation
opportunity. It was based on the hypothesis that the individuals who indicated a larger
shift would be more likely to be aware of their transformation and able to reflect on it
and therefore would offer better descriptions of their experience. Furthermore, I
hypothesized that the alumni who experienced a greater shift toward intercultural sensitivity measured by IDI assessments might find greater meaning and impact of international cross-cultural experiences and transformative learning in their lives. In other words, these alumni were more likely to have experienced a transformation to world-mindedness and also be more aware of its affects in their lives in personal, academic, or professional levels over a longer period of time. Some of these alumni were also assumed to have become involved or have continued to be engaged in fields related to cultural diversity or international arenas in different sectors and levels as a result of their transformative learning. Such factors could motivate the program alumni to take part in this study that could contribute to more effectively creating meaningful experiences for others in the future.

Furthermore, the initial number of twenty who were contacted about the opportunity to participate in the study was decided based on an assumption that at least half of them would be interested in participating. Similar to the rationale of recruiting a single or a few cross-cultural experiential learning program(s), I sought a limited number of informative and insightful participants. Qualitative research intends to collect extensive detailed information about each individual being studied. A large
number of participants are unnecessary for this study because it does not intend to
generealize findings. Instead, a small number of informative samples are needed in
order to elucidate the general and the specific details of participants’ experiences. In
existing phenomenological studies, the number of participants range widely compared
to other qualitative research approaches. Creswell (2007) claims that
phenomenological studies can include anywhere from one to over three hundred
samples. After reviewing existing phenomenological studies and other scholars’
opinions, Creswell recommends studying approximately ten individuals (Creswell,
2007).

Based on Creswell’s recommendation, I originally planned to contact
additional program alumni in case less than ten out of the initial twenty alumni were
willing to participate in the study. Those additional alumni would have been those who
also demonstrated a significant shift in pre- and post-IDI assessments. At the end,
seven alumni out of the initial twenty I had contacted volunteered to participate in the
study. While still seeking a few additional participants, I began interviews with those
who had already agreed to participate in the study. In the first several interviews, it
came to my attention that participants generally address few other program participants
as significant figures in their intercultural competence and world-mindedness
development during the program participation. Considering the qualitative information
from the initial interviewees as valid criteria as the shift in pre- and post-IDI
assessment I had used to select the initial twenty potential study participants, I decided
to recruit the rest of the study participants through snowball sampling based on the
recommendations of the initial seven participants.

During the recruitment process, an informational letter was used to effectively
introduce the study to the potential participants (Appendix A). The handout included a
brief overview of the study, expectations of the study participants, a tentative timeline
of the participants’ engagement with the study, their freedom to leave the study at any
time, and the compensation that would be offered by the researcher. First, considering
potential participants’ strong connection to the cross cultural learning program and
interest in the related fields, the study participants will receive an electronic version of
my final dissertation upon its completion. Hypothesizing the difficulty of arranging
face-to-face interviews given the potentially diverse locations of study participants, I
offered an option of using microphone or web cameras for personal computers for
those participants who were willing to do interviews using Skype or similar Internet
videoconference functions on an as needed basis.

I made final selections from the study participants among the program alumni who were willing to participate in the study according to the following criteria: a) sufficient English ability to communicate and express oneself accurately, b) access to the internet and phone to communicate with the researcher, c) willingness to contribute approximately 13 hours to the study over a period of three to four months, d) willingness to share stories of academic and personal experiences related to the study question, e) willingness to share some academic and personal documents such as course syllabi, essays, journals, and photographs, and f) enrollment in the selected program between one to three years prior to participating in this study. I believe this is the perfect amount of time to ensure that participants could recall detailed information about the transformative learning experience while allowing enough time to go by for them to digest the experience and recognize in what ways it influenced or continues to influence them after program completion. For the potential participants who met the criteria, I collected verbal consent.
Data Collection

Interviews

Interviews were used as a means of gaining direct access to an interviewee’s experiences and insights. Qualitative interviews began with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit. Through an interview, a researcher can gather crucial information that is often not observable such as feelings, thoughts, and intentions. Through interviewing each participant, I was given direct access to the individual’s personal perspective and the ability to find out what is in someone else’s mind, and to gather his or her stories (Patton, 2002).

Schwandt (2007) describes the interview as “a behavioral event – that is, verbal behavior, a verbal exchange, or pattern of verbal interaction. The interviewee is regarded as a passive vessel of answers for the kind of factual and experiential questions put to [him or her] by the interviewer. Using the logic of stimulus-response (question and answer), the researcher aims to ask the right questions so as to elicit responses in the form of authentic feelings and meanings of the interviewee” (p. 162).

For this study, semi-structured interviews, which are based on a set of guiding questions, were employed as the main method of data collection to effectively elicit
detailed accounts of study participants’ experiences related to their perspective transformation and world-mindedness development. At the same time, flexibility was built in by including some open-ended questions to allow the interviewees to describe their experiences in their own words. The open-ended responses permitted me to understand the world as seen by the respondents. The less structured interviews enabled me to generate in-depth data or knowledge that reflects authentic accounts of lived (subjective), inner experiences, including emotions and feelings. The safe environment and trusting relationship I cultivated with the interviewees were essential elements for conducting successful interviews where interviewees felt comfortable enough to openly share their insights (Somekh & Lewin, 2005; Patton, 2002; Schwandt, 2007). Thus, I took some time to share my background, research interests, and other information as appropriate upon individual interviewees’ requests at the beginning of each interview.

There are three basic approaches to collecting qualitative data through open-ended interviews that range from semi-structured to almost completely open-ended: the standardized open-ended interview, the guided interview approach, and informal conversational interview. The standardized guide approach consists of “a
set of questions carefully worded and arranged with the intention of taking each respondent through the same sequence and asking each respondent the same questions with essentially the same words” (Patton, 2002, p. 342). The question is carefully and fully worded before the interview to assure uniformity that will guard against variations among interviews with different interviewees. The data collected is still open-ended in the sense that the respondent supplies his or her own words and thoughts in answering the questions, but the precise wording of the questions is determined ahead of time (Patton, 2002).

In contrast, the general interview guide approach involves “outlining a set of issues that are to be explored with each respondent before the interview begins. The guide serves as a basic checklist during the interview to make sure that all relevant topics are covered” (Patton, 2002, p. 342). An interview guide provides topics or subject areas within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject. The interviewer remains free to build a conversation within a particular subject area, to word questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style but with the focus on a particular subject that has been predetermined. The advantage of an interview guide is that it
makes sure that the interviewer has carefully decided how best to use the limited time available in an interview situation. It also provides a more systematic and comprehensive approach when interviewing large numbers of people by determining in advance the issues to be explored.

Finally, the informal conversational interview “relies entirely on the spontaneous generations in the natural flow of an interaction... The persons being talked with may not even realize they are being interviewed” (Patton, 2002, p. 342). The informal conversational interview is the most open-ended approach and offers maximum flexibility to pursue information in whatever direction the interviewer deems appropriate based on the conversational flow. Obviously, data gathered from informal conversational interviews will be different for each person being interviewed, and each new interview builds on those of the past, which leads to an evolutionary process in question development. “Being unstructured doesn’t mean that conversational interviews are unfocused... But within that overall guiding purpose, the interviewer is free to go where the data and respondents lead” (Patton, 2002, p. 343).

While the approaches described above were not the only ones used throughout the study, a combination of the standardized open-ended interviews and general guided
The interview approaches were used as the primary form of data collection. Patton maintains that, “The combined strategy offers the interviewer flexibility in probing and in determining when it is appropriate to explore certain subjects in greater depth, or even to pose questions about new areas of inquiry that were not originally anticipated” (Patton, 2002, p. 347). I used a more standardized open-ended type of interview in the early stages because there was more factual information to be collected and the trusting relationship between the interviewee and the researcher had not yet been established. As time went on, I used a more general interview guide or occasional informal conversational approach in the latter phases of the interviews. The interviewees became familiar with what I was looking for as well as more comfortable sharing sensitive or personal topics with me in the later round of interviews. Furthermore, the general interview guide approach offers more freedom for the interviewer to pursue any subjects of interest that emerge from prior interviews or from other data collection methods. It was also appropriate to elicit interviewees’ experiences on their transformative process and learning experiences while leaving flexibility for the interviewee to explain about them freely in their own words as they reflected and came to further insights (Patton, 2002).
The interview schedule included three rounds of one-hour interviews for each participant, which took into consideration the time necessary for interviewees to warm up to the researcher and begin to share their personal stories. The first round of interviews focused on background information, initial interest in participating in a cross-cultural experiential learning program, and the expectations surrounding it. The latter two rounds followed the interview questions that were developed using an emerging design. I developed guiding questions for each round to most effectively investigate the transformative learning and world-mindedness development by referring to the information collected in the prior interview(s) (Appendix B). The second round mainly focused on critical self-reflection, the development of open-mindedness, and expansion of identities. The focus of the third round was on changes in participants’ worldview, world-mindedness, and how world-mindedness affects their present lives and how it might influence choices made in the future.

The one-hour length of each session was expected to provide enough time for the interviewee to speak freely to some degree regarding their experiences and also provided enough time to address each question thoroughly. All interviews were taped and digitally recorded then transcribed. I also kept interview notes immediately after
most interviews to record my initial impressions of the interview.

It is important to note that the interviews were conducted in person, by phone or videoconference over the Internet according to the situation and availability of each informant (Cresswell, 2007). In the interest of flexibility, there was no predetermined location or time for interviews to take place in light of the reality of working around busy schedules of the participants. I strove to be accommodating in order to make the interview process as smooth and convenient as possible for each of the interviewees.

*Document Analysis*

Document analysis refers broadly “to various procedures involved in analyzing and interpreting data generated from the examination of documents and records relevant to a particular study. These sources of data can include public records (e.g., political and judicial reports, government documents, media accounts, television scripts, yearbooks, and minutes of meetings), private documents (e.g., medical histories, letters, diaries, school records, personal journals, memoirs), interview transcripts and transcripts prepared from video records, and photographs” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 75). These documents could provide information that might otherwise be unknown to the researcher (Patton, 2002).
In order to better understand the unique perspective of each participant regarding their international cross-cultural experiential learning and transformation, access to documents such as academic or personal journals, photographs and their descriptions, course syllabi, and participants’ academic works developed during program participation were all collected. The documents for analysis were limited to those that were available and were permitted by the study participants. My interview notes were used for analysis for additional information.

Journal Entries

The most useful documents for this study were participants’ journals that gave access to both personal and academic writings completed during enrollment in a cross-cultural experiential learning program. Journals gave insights into the knowledge, attitudes, and behavior of participants related to cross-cultural matters. Furthermore, the fact that the journals were written during participation in a cross-cultural experiential learning program (i.e. potentially at the precise moments of transformation), they may include initial reactions to or meaning-making of cross-cultural encounters. This fact could further strengthen the longitudinal aspect of this study.
Photographs

Photographs are another vital source of information the researcher must consider. In this study three to five photographs, which were selected by study participants from those that were taken during participation in cross-cultural experiential learning. The selections were made according to how the particular moment, events, experience, and people captured in the picture impacted them in the international cross-cultural experience and development of world-mindedness. The study participants were requested to provide written descriptions that address in what way these pictures are significant to their transformative learning. The importance of photography in document analysis is to gather further information on critical incidents as well as variables that effectively influenced participants in their process of transformation toward becoming world-minded individuals. Guiding questions for the participants to develop descriptions will be provided (Appendix C).

Academic Works

Another category important in the analysis of cross-cultural development is academic work of participants. Based on availability, the study participants could share one to three such papers that they found particularly encouraging and helpful in their
pursuit of cross-cultural understanding and development of global perspectives and world-mindedness. In addition, the participants were asked to provide written descriptions about why they chose the documents and in what way they were meaningful in their transformative learning process. Guiding questions for the participants to develop descriptions were provided (Appendix C).

As mentioned above, I asked study participants to present written descriptions of the documents while answering guiding questions provided in along with the documents of their choice. This was to help cut down on the length of interview time by asking for descriptions of the documents in writing. Furthermore, it was meant to be an efficient approach for both participants and the researcher because the participants were able to prepare these documents and descriptions between interview sessions. Study participants were asked to submit them along with descriptions in the later part of the study. Due to the personal nature of the documents, it was important to introduce them when the participants began to trust the researcher. It was my responsibility as a researcher to build a trusting relationship during the first and second interviews by addressing my genuine interest in learning about the participants’ experiences. There was also enough time for clarification of the descriptions or other questions in the
upcoming interview sessions.

In addition to the three types of data addressed above, my interview notes were also considered as data for analysis. While they focus on my initial reactions and interpretations of observed phenomena instead of capturing the insights of participants, they were useful in assisting to develop critical perspectives in evaluating my process and approach in data collection and data analysis.

Finally, in order to conduct the data collections described in this section in a timely manner, I developed a research timeline. Moreover, in order to effectively manage and organize the process of data collection, I kept a research log. The main function of which was to maintain the chronological records of data as they were collected, which were facilitated by the use of a research log chart.

*Internet-Mediated Interviewing for Data Collection*

In the field of qualitative studies, a number of researchers have identified challenges associated with observation and in-depth interview methods, including cost, time, and limited access to reach participants. The reach and accessibility of the Internet has greatly expanded the potential pool of participants and allowed researchers to study people who are often difficult or impossible to reach or interview face-to-face.
However, computer-mediated interviewing, particularly using the Internet, limits research to those subjects who have access to the Internet (James & Busher, 2006; Kazmer & Xie, 2008; Mann & Stewart, 2000; Meho, 2006).

This section reviews the practical overall benefits and drawbacks of collecting qualitative semi-structured interview data by using Internet-based communication systems. Following the general discussion, the benefits and drawbacks of two specific interaction systems, online asynchronous interview (e-mail) and online synchronous interview (videoconferencing) methods, are further discussed (James & Busher, 2006; Kazmer & Xie, 2008; Meho, 2006).

Mann and Stewart (2000) note that there have been studies about the use of the Internet in quantitative research, but that the use of the Internet in qualitative research has been relatively unexplored. My own experience of going through the process of reviewing the literature on the use of computer or Internet technology for collecting in-depth interview data confirms Mann and Stewart’s observations (2000). My review of the literature reveals that there is a significantly large number of studies available on the use of text-based communications (e.g. e-mail, Internet chatroom) to collect in-depth interview data, while the number of studies about the use of
videoconferencing is still small. Today, the majority of existing studies on the use of videoconferencing is contextualized in job interviews, not qualitative studies.

The Benefits and Drawbacks of Using Internet-Mediated Data Collection

Mann and Stewart (2000) and Mehon (2006) have identified the benefits of incorporating Internet-mediated data collection. Among these benefits, those that are relevant to my study include the following: a) saving cost and time, b) gaining access to a wide geographical area, c) gaining access to a hard-to-reach population, d) gaining access to a closed site, and e) providing a safe environment for sensitive accounts. In addition, Mann and Stewart (2000) have identified a number of drawbacks of using Internet-mediated data collection in qualitative research. Among them, the following are relevant to my study: a) requiring computer literacy for the researcher, b) finding Internet contact information (e.g., e-mail address or Skype ID) for recruitment, c) ensuring the participants’ computer literacy and comfort level, d) ensuring the sustentation of participants’ Internet access throughout the research period, and e) developing rapport between the researcher and participant(s) through online interaction.

The Benefits and Drawbacks of Using E-mail
E-mail is a computer-mediated communication (CMC) that refers to the direct use of computers in a text-based communication (Mann & Stewart, 2000). Unlike e-mail survey, online, asynchronous, in-depth interviewing is usually conducted via e-mail that is semi-structured in nature. Such interviewing also involves multiple e-mail exchanges between the interviewer and interviewee over an extended period of time (Meho, 2006). The benefits and challenges of using e-mail to collect data are discussed below, as they relate to the following three areas: a) reduced cost and lack of in-person interaction between the researcher and participants, b) interview schedule and participant retention, and c) increased time efficiency and exclusion of affective data.

First, the use of an e-mail interview enables the researcher to overcome the practical constrain of costs associated with travel that is often required for a conventional face-to-face interview. The drawback is lack of in-person interaction between the researcher and participants. The literature addresses the importance of the researcher-participant relationship building in qualitative research to obtain quality in-depth data. Thus, the sense of interpersonal knowledge that is generally developed during personal interactions has been attributed to the depth of the participants’
responses to the questions (James & Busher, 2006).

Second, use of e-mail eliminates the need for a synchronous interview. E-mail is an asynchronous interview and is therefore generally not affected by the scheduling problem. Researchers can send their interview questions and participants can return their answers at their convenience (Kazmer & Xie, 2006). The scheduling advantage, however, can be a disadvantage for keeping a data collection timeline. In some cases, it can cause significant delay in the data collection process because it may take days or even weeks before a participant replies to an e-mail message and the researcher generally does not know when he or she will receive a response and from whom. The number of follow-up exchanges between the researcher and participants also contributes to the time period (James & Busher, 2006; Kazmer & Xie, 2006; Meho. 2006). The longer it takes to complete an interview with a participant, the higher the possibility of dropouts or frustration to the researcher, and the interviewees’ as well as participants’ rate drops considerably (Kazmer & Xie, 2006; Meho, 2006).

Third, the asynchronous aspect of an e-mail interview gives the participants control over when to respond. Under the less stressful situation, the participants have more time to think through their response results in more thoughtful and reflective
answers (James & Busher, 2006; Kazmer & Xie, 2006). On the other hand, lack of a synchronous interaction between the researcher and participants creates difficulties in resolving the intended meaning of answers to particular questions (James & Busher, 2006).

Fourth, data from e-mail interviews are generally in an electronic format. This removes the burden of the time-consuming transcription process and only requires little editing or formatting before the data are processed for analysis (Kazmer & Xie, 2006; Meho, 2006). It also eliminates transcription bias (Mann & Stewart, 2000). Furthermore, records of the e-mail interviews enable participants to revisit earlier interviews and make modifications, as it is desirable. James and Bushner (2006) address that this technique may provoke richness of reflection among the participants and development of a more meaningful narrative for the participants than would a face-to-face interview. On the other hand, a text-based interview generally excludes emotional cues (e.g. laughing, sighing) and non-verbal cues such as body language and facial expressions, which may be important information to accurately interpret the participants’ responses.

*The Benefits and Drawbacks of Using Videoconferencing*
Videoconferencing is a non-text based synchronous Internet communication. It allows two or more locations to interact simultaneously via two-way video- and audio transmissions. In addition to the major benefits of using Internet-mediated data collection discussed earlier, a videoconference better replicates the benefits of face-to-face interviewing than e-mail by taking advantage of the visual and audio elements of videoconferencing. Overall, videoconferencing combines those major benefits of both computer-mediated interviewing and face-to-face interviewing.

The benefits and challenges of using videoconferencing to collect data are discussed related to the following three areas: a) synchronous interview and visual and audio quality, b) inclusion of emotional and non-verbal cues, and c) building the researcher-participant relationship and decreased time efficiency.

First, synchronous communication made it easier for the participants to clarify the meaning of the interview questions with the researcher. It also made it easier for the researcher to clarify the points made by the participants (James & Busher, 2006; Meho, 2006; Saumure, 2010). The participants’ responses were given in real-time, enabling the researcher to better manage and maintain the data collection timeline.

Moreover, as Kazmer and Xie (2006) state, when the interviewer and participants were
connected synchronously (e.g. face-to-face, videoconferencing, or via telephone) and questions were asked, participants usually gave answers and were less likely to quit mid-interview. While a synchronous medium can cause more trouble than an asynchronous medium during the scheduling stage, the latter can be more challenging than the former when it comes to retaining participants (Kazmer & Xie, 2006).

Although the synchronous nature of videoconferencing has these benefits, the interaction may be easily distracted by a slight time lag, or by the low quality or freezing of the visual and audio equipment (Mann & Stewart, 2000; Saumure, 2010).

Second, videoconferencing with a well-functioning and well-adjusted camera and microphone provides visual and audio information that are inclusive of non-verbal cues and emotional cues. Those cues are important components in understanding what the participants are saying (Saumure, 2010). For instance, Saumure (2010) described her experience using Skype to conduct a semi-structured interview as follows: “A well-adjusted video feed enabled the participant to see that I was attentive through my nods and eye contact and it also enabled me to gauge the participant’s engagement, through such visual cues as animated hand gestures or yawning” (p. 147-148). On the other hand, low quality or freezing of visual and audio equipment could easily
diminish those benefits and create a challenge by interrupting the communication between the researcher and the participants.

Third, one of the major benefits of videoconferencing is the availability of visual and audio equipment and synchronous exchanges. Those qualities better assist developing the researcher-participant relationship than e-mail, which is a text-based, asynchronous, computer-mediated interview. It could increase the meaningfulness of the interview process and/or the richness of collected data. On the other hand, videoconferencing removes one of the practical advantages of a computer-mediated interview and requires researchers to take on the time-consuming work of transcribing the interviews (Mann & Stewart, 2000; Saumure, 2010).

Collected Data

All the data were collected between August 2009 and December 2009. At the end of the data collection period, I had forty one interviews, fifty documents and their descriptions selected by the participants, and The Friendship program description materials mainly obtained from the organization’s website.

Interview Transcriptions

I had conducted thirty-six interviews using Skype, two interviews via online
Instant Message Function, and three e-mail exchanges. Online Instant Message Function was used because I experienced technical difficulty using Skype, which had low sound quality and frequent freeze ups. As two of the participants with whom I conducted interviews using Instant Message Function were familiar with the chat function offered by Skype, the shift in interview methods was smooth. Skype Instant Message Function and E-mails was used as an alternative way to communicate with students in Ghana as we faced many challenges. First, the web camera did not reach participants because they were held up in customs and study participants were asked to pay a very high tax to retrieve it. Second, they had limited access to the Internet. Also we could not conduct interviews over the phone due to poor sound quality. As a result, all the questions for all three rounds of interviews were sent to the participants in Ghana at once and were e-mailed back to me once they had answered all questions in written format.

Documents

I have collected two types of documents for analysis, those selected by the participants and their descriptions, and The Friend Ship program description materials. The fifty documents consisted of sixteen pictures, eleven journal entries that were kept
as a part of the intercultural communications course, a core class for undergraduate students, eight academic essays or PowerPoint presentations, seven personal journal entries, four short film or video clips, a newspaper article, a brochure of the site visited in a destination country, description of a cultural fair held on board, and an personal e-mail. Detailed information about The Friend Ship program was included, different academic circles or focus, course descriptions, academic requirements, scholarship opportunities, introduction of faculty and staff and affiliated universities, reports of students’ experiences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Collected Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>• 3 rounds of 96 min interview</td>
<td>• 36 Skype Interviews (Total: 46 hr 15 min)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Skype (IMS, Phone, e-mail)</td>
<td>• 2 IMS Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Semi-structured interviewed</td>
<td>• 3 e-mail exchanges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Open-ended questionnaire</td>
<td>• 34 researcher's post interview notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A sets of guiding questions</td>
<td>Total: 1040 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Guiding questions for participants (e-mailed prior to the each interview )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document Analysis</td>
<td>• 3+ documents of participants’ choice</td>
<td>• 50 documents (Journals, Pictures, Essay, Power Point Presentations etc) &amp; descriptions of the documents (253)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Descriptions explaining the significance of the documents</td>
<td>• TFS program descriptions (website) (123)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Guiding questions provided)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total: 376 Pages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Collected Data

**Learning about Employed Methods**

In this section, I discuss my findings on how the employed methods worked or did not work well. The findings range from logistical challenges to effectively gather
rich data to participants’ readiness and comfort levels answering the questions during
the interview sessions. The four emerged major findings from the study are as follows:
a) benefits and challenges of using e-mail or Facebook messaging to reach participants
at a distance, b) importance of pre-interview knowledge for conducting effective
interviews, c) positive impact of video function to effectively conduct in-depth
interviews, and d) difficulties of collecting documents from participants at a distant
after the interview rounds.

Benefits and Challenges of Using E-mail/Facebook

Modern communication technologies, such as e-mail and Facebook
messaging, made it relatively easy to reach participants living at a distance.

Slowdowns in communication were perhaps inevitable because I was unable to interact
with participants face-to-face.

I also did not have any personal contact with the program or program alumni
prior to the study. Thus, I needed to reach out to the potential participants through the
contact person who had access to the alumni’s contact information. Considering the
limited time the contact person could spare for my study and the sensitive nature of the
contact and personal information, I had to obtain the majority of contact information
such as phone numbers, Skype user IDs, mailing addresses for the webcam from the alumni themselves who had agreed to participate in the study. I had had no prior contact with the participants, so they had to show their trust by giving personal documents to a virtual stranger. I knew that it was critical that I effectively build a trusting relationship with the participants so I made a conscious effort to clarify the purpose of the study and make myself available to answer any questions related to the study. Even after obtaining additional contact information, there were other reasons that study participants and I generally communicated via e-mail.

First, there was concern regarding the busy schedules of the study participants. While we were able to schedule interviews in advance and did not have significant problems finding mutually convenient times, it was quite difficult to reach anyone via phone due to time differences. This limited possible timeframes for us to feel comfortable making phone calls without planning ahead. Third, for participants living outside of the United States, there were overseas charges to consider. For this reason, I decided to use the Internet phone call system via Skype. This required me to be at the computer anyway. Since I was not always leaving voice messages via Skype, I ended up sending e-mails after all.
Thus, most of the communication with participants and throughout the data collection process was done through e-mail except interviews. Since there was an established alumni Facebook community, it was relatively easy for the contact person to send out mass study participation invitation e-mails to the alumni selected based on my study criteria. After that initial step, I waited for the potential participants who had been approached by the contact person to get in touch with me indicating their interest in being a part of the study. Since I was to obtain the phone number directly from the potential participants rather than from the contact person, the process was relatively slow. Even after the interview process started, there were occasional slowdowns due to the nature of the e-mail process.

The most challenging aspect of staying in touch with study participants using communication technology for me was counting on others to respond in a timely manner. It was difficult to form a trusting participant-researcher relationship through these remote communication technologies such as e-mail and over the phone especially during the process of recruitment and early interviews. It would have been easier if participants had been close enough for me to physically visit them in terms of relationship building. Finally, some participants had limited access to the Internet for
different reasons that made it difficult to frequently communicate through emails. With those students who had difficulty checking email frequently, there were further physical distance and time differences and challenges ensuring phone quality. The combination of all these factors created further challenges in communication.

In order for an interview to go smoothly, it is essential that the interviewer as well as the interviewee have some background knowledge of each other. This often proved difficult. In order to conduct comfortable and information-rich interviews in a limited timeframe, it was important for both the interviewee and I, the interviewer, to have a clear idea of what to expect from the interview(s). Conducting effective interviews, especially those that deal with personal experiences, requires a safe environment in which the interviewees feel comfortable enough to talk about the topic. To interview and be interviewed by someone you do not know well or have never even talked to in the past can easily create nervous anticipation on both sides. Preparation is the key to avoiding this awkward situation, so I made up a pre-interview questionnaire for the interviewees, sending them a copy of my resume, and provided the guiding questions for each interview session to interviewees.

*Importance of Pre-interview Knowledge*
The purpose of the pre-interview background questionnaire prior to the first interview is to gather basic background information such as nationality, ethnicity, native language, religion, prior international experience, and educational experience, focus of study at university and during the program participation. My goal was to have a very basic grasp of who the interviewee is. Despite the limited information, I found that the questionnaire provided very useful information that allowed me to develop a feeling for the interviewee and allowed for a more engaging and personalized first interview. It was a great way to start the interview off on a positive note.

While it is obviously important for the interviewer to get to know the interviewee, it is equally important for the interviewee to become familiar with the interviewer. For this reason, there were two documents submitted to the interviewee to better prepare him or her for the interviews. The first document was my detailed resume. It was sent out with a consent form after the interviewee indicated interest in being a part of study. Some participants said that receiving a my detailed resume helped them to get to know the interviewer and understand my motivation for pursuing the research. As a result, they felt they gained a better understanding of the purpose and goal of the study. They interpreted it as a sign of the my commitment to the project
as the researcher. In retrospect, receiving the resume reinforced the expectation that the interviews would be conducted in a serious manner, and the participants needed to make a commitment if they wanted to be a part of the study. Interestingly, this could also intimidate the participants and make them less apt to share their The FriendShip experience. Indeed, there were approximately ten to fifteen alumni who indicated their initial interest in being a part of the study who never returned their consent forms that were emailed along with the researcher’s resume. Based on those interviewees’ feedback, a resume or lengthy email may have portrayed the study as overly serious, which may have had negative connotations. As a result, some alumni may have lost their interest or become hesitant to be a part of the study.

The second document of guiding questions was used to better prepare the interviewee for each session. A few days before each scheduled interview, I sent the interviewee a reminder email with guiding questions. The majority of the interviewees commented on the effectiveness of receiving guiding questions when they were asked about the research methodology at the end of the third round of interviews. They confirmed that receiving the guiding questions a few days before the interview gave them time to digest the questions and explore their responses. Some participants said
that reading the guiding questions encouraged them to revisit pictures, journals, or academic works from The Friend Ship or even talk about what they experienced with friends they had made during that time. Participants felt that they would had been able to answer the questions even if they had not received guiding questions prior to the each interview; however, their answers would be not have been as insightful or well thought out. This seemed to be particularly true for non-native English speakers. Some of them explained that they were more relaxed because they had a good understanding of what topics would be discussed during the interview session, and they could organize their thoughts in advance or even bring some notes about key thoughts or experiences they wanted to share with me. They also liked how the conversation during the interview generally followed the order of the questions on the guide while leaving flexibly or giving certain freedom for the interviewee to branch out and discuss what he or she deemed is important and appropriate.

Benefits and Challenges of Using Videoconferencing

A word must be said about the benefits and challenges of using video functions to effectively conduct in-depth interviews from a distance. The visual aspect of using Skype where both interviewee and interviewer could see each other was
effective in re-creating face-to-face interviews I believe it was very beneficial to have visual contact particularly for non-native English speakers.

One of the unique aspects of this study was having an internationally diverse group of program alumni as study participants. Thus, the physical locations of the participants were spread widely from Ghana to Australia, Brazil to Demark. Even those who currently live in the United States were spread across the country from the East Coast, Mid-West, to the West Coast. This fact almost made it impossible for me to conduct in person interviews. At the same time, narrowing the study participants to the alumni who lived in a specific region of the United States where I could conduct in person interviews would extremely limit the number as well as type of participants in terms of criteria available. The use of videoconferencing particularly Skype was the best solution to this unique challenge. While there are some challenges to using this technology discussed in the following paragraphs, the benefits of using videoconferencing far outweighed them.

There were some drawbacks to using this type of technology such as sending a web camera to study participants, setting up the videoconference system, and the unstable quality of the videoconference. For those who had no access to video
cameras, I purchased web cameras and mailed them to participants. While they arrived mostly without any problems, there were a few occasions where it led to some issues.

In one case the web camera was held up at the commerce office for over a week. The office contacted the study participant to request me to send an additional paper. And there were two cases in which the study participants were asked to pay an import tax in order to receive the web camera. It not only slowed down the process extensively, but due to the delay of the web-cam arrival, the interviews needed to be rescheduled. Most of all, this demand for payment ruined the goal of not being a financial burden on the participants. In one case, a participant volunteered to pay the tax knowing she would benefit by being able to keep the web camera after the study. In another case, a participant and I decided to seek an alternative form of interview without using the web camera considering the large amount of taxes imposed. The potential delay at the commerce office and requirement for tax payment were something I was not aware of.

I expected all would go smoothly by using the mail service with a tracking system.

Another aspect that slowed down the research, at least initially was the extra time needed to sign up for a videoconferencing account. In particular, creating a contact list seemed to cause confusion. Apparently we were able to add each other to
the contact list only when both parties were online. With some participants, having both parties online without scheduling was difficult to arrange due to the different time zones. There were also a few occasions when both sides were seeing the offline mark on the other’s status while his/her own status indicated online status. It led to a few cases when both interviewee and interviewer were mistakenly waiting for the other to come online. Regarding the selection of videoconference system, the majority of interviews were conducted using Skype. A few were accomplished via G-chat; however, it often had problems uploading images. Thus, we generally ended up switching to the Skype videoconference system. The difficulties in successfully connecting the video function took as long as thirty minutes on a few occasions, which was half of the allotted interview time. Perhaps it might have been a good idea to set an extra session to ensure that the selected videoconference system was well connected prior to the first interview.

Finally, it is important to consider the availability of or participants’ ability to access the Internet, particularly in certain parts of the world. For instance, some participants may have needed to use an Internet café due to limited access at home, school, or work. It not only raised concerns about how the interviewer may be able to
pay for the cost of using an Internet café, but also about the quality of the interview.

For example, how can the participant maintain focus in a public space? How comfortable can it be to ask and answer relatively personal questions? And what about presence of background noise? I have learned that not only videoconferencing, but phone interviews are also difficult in some cases because of the low sound quality or time zone difference we experienced. As a result, two of the study participants provided me their information in written form. This experience showed it is important to have alternative methods of collecting data.

Additionally, we had to deal with the unstable quality of the videoconferencing system. Skype generally provided good enough quality not to distract from the content of the interviews. There were however occasional issues with the video and audio feeds. For instance, there were times when there was too much noise in the background, which made it difficult to understand what the other one was saying. There were also occasions that the images totally froze on the screen while sounds were coming in well. Not being able to receive the visual cues negated the advantage of videoconferencing. When the sound or visual quality was low, we generally ended the videoconference and started again. Sometimes it improved the
quality but not always. Since we had no control over this, at times the quality of interviews was not as good as I had hoped. There were also several occasions when the connection would be lost for no apparent reason. It occurred more frequently on weekend nights when more people might be on-line with Skype. The low quality of videoconference was a challenge to conducting smooth interviews because it required us to restart, ask for confirmation, and repeat what we were saying, among others.

On the other hand, there were two major benefits mentioned by the study participants. One benefit was the visual aspect that promoted a positive interviewee-interviewer relationship. Another benefit was the ability to interpret body language particularly in a cross-cultural interview. The visual aspect was more than simple images but also a very important information source adding to the validity and depth of long-distance cross-cultural interviews.

Videoconferencing helped to build a positive interviewee-interviewer relationship. Being able to see each other’s faces provided a sense of comfort and familiarity. It allowed us to develop a sense of personal connection that led to a stronger relationship. In other words, digital face-to-face communication helped us to feel that we were talking with someone well known instead of talking to a disembodied
voice. As a result, the videoconference system was able to better create a safe
environment for the interviewees so that they would be more comfortable sharing their
personal experiences.

The second benefit of videoconferencing was the visual aspect providing
additional communication cues. Having an internationally diverse group of study
participants meant that all the interviews had a cross-cultural dimension. Both
interviewees and interviewer had prior cross-cultural experiences and were well aware
of the challenges this would pose. Also, both interviewees and the interviewer
generally agreed that having more information sources available was better in order to
minimize cross-cultural misunderstanding. This is particularly true when you know
how to interpret cultural and communication cues in cross-cultural communication.

Many interviewees addressed the importance of being able to see my facial
expressions, which helped them to feel more comfortable and excited sharing their
experiences, and to ensure the information they presented was completely understood.
Some interviewees also described that they felt more comfortable knowing that I was
able to see their facial expressions and body language. They felt that they were eased
by not needing to depend on exclusively verbal communication to effectively get their
message across. This was more common for non-native English speakers.

Difficulties of Collecting Documents from Participants at a Distance

Another area of difficulty was in collecting documents and online IDI assessments from participants in distant areas after the completion of the three interview rounds. In addition to the three rounds of one-hour interviews, I also requested study participants to submit documents such as pictures, class essays, and journals with descriptions that were significant in their development of world-mindedness. It was difficult to gather information that did not require direct interactions between study participants and myself. It demanded a great deal of commitment and self-discipline by the participants to prepare and submit all documents to me in a timely manner.

Even though many participants were very cooperative in scheduling and having interviews, it was a lot harder for me to gather the rest of the information. I sent out bi-weekly reminders requesting the remaining documents; however, such emails became less effective as time went by. As the researcher, it was difficult to know when to push participants or to be patient with them. Knowing the busy schedule of many participants, I felt uncomfortable constantly demanding information. I was afraid that it
could lead to some participants dropping out of the study or create bitter feelings between some participants and myself. Throughout the interview process, I came to learn some aspects of participants’ personal, academic, or professional lives. The majority of them were very busy to the degree that I was very humbled by their willingness to work hard to be a part of the study. Thus, it has been challenging to indicate my appreciation to study participants for their great contributions to my study despite the further demands of additional time and information.

As an alternative, I conducted additional interviews asking participants about the documents they provided. It apparently made it easier on some participants who were not comfortable enough with writing to get through the process. While interviews could be as time consuming as preparing documents and their descriptions or taking IDI assessments, many participants felt it would have been easier to provide their information via a videoconference during the face-to-face interactions. Some non-native English speakers noted that it was much more time consuming and also difficult for them to type the document descriptions in comparison to providing verbal descriptions.
Data Analysis

Data are the evidence a researcher generates in a study. In a large sense, data refers to all the recorded observations in different forms. Observations include direct observations, interviews, surveys, paper-and-pencil tests, field notes etc. Data may be either structured or unstructured. For example, open-ended interviews, field notes, focus groups, as well as historical archives, which include records, diaries, manuscripts, and newspaper clippings, all yield unstructured data, whereas questionnaires and multiple-choice tests produce structured data (Schwandt, 2007).

Data analysis in qualitative research consists of “preparing and organizing the data (i.e., transcript texts or image data as in photographs) for analysis, then categorizing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, or a discussion” (Creswell, 2007, p. 148). Data are not out there to be collected, but rather they are uniquely created and developed as the research progresses. Thus, “The processes of data collection, data analysis, and report writing are not distinct steps in the process-they are interrelated and often go on simultaneously in a research project” (Creswell, 2007, p. 150). The interrelated and simultaneous nature of the data analysis is best represented in the
image of a spiraling circle rather than a fixed linear approach. Creswell (2007) states that analytic spiral process consists of four loops of data managing, reading and writing memos, describing, classifying, and interpreting, and representing and visualizing (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994).

![Diagram of the analytic spiral process](Creswell, 2007)

**Figure 2. Inductive Data Analysis**

In the first loop of data management, data are organized into file folders, index cards, or computer files. I converted interview transcript files to appropriate text by hand and by computer. In the second loop of reading and writing memos, I further developed a sense of the whole database and explored and identified major organizing ideas or themes. I read through the collected data and documents entirely several times.
and wrote memos such as short phrases, ideas or key concepts in the margins. In the third loop of describing, classifying, and interpreting, I formed categories by developing themes or dimensions through some classification systems. I also reorganized the data that were originally categorized by individual interviewees and each interview session according to emerging categories. I used inductive data analysis to build patterns and categories, and to organize the data into more abstract units of information. Through the inductive process, I went back and forth between the emerging categories and the data files until a comprehensive set of themes from the data was established. After the coding of collected data, forty-two categories had emerged and five overall themes were developed from those categories. In the fourth loop of representing and visualizing, I went through the writing-up process to present the findings from the facts in text, tables, or figures (Creswell, 2007).

**Establishing Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness aims to address the significance of inquiry by describing criteria and questions involved to prove the worth of the findings. The idea of trustworthiness needs to be translated into practice as strategies or techniques (Creswell, 2007). In order to ensure the significance of the findings, I employed mainly
three strategies including validation, reliability, and objectivity.

First, validity claims that the research results have precisely addressed the original research questions (Somekh & Lewin, 2005). I employed the following approaches to ensure the validity of the study: a) methods triangulation, b) member checking, and c) peer debriefing as a way of objectively clarifying my bias as a researcher (Creswell, 2007).

The first approach to ensuring validity I took was method triangulation. One way of establishing the triangulation is to have multiple groups of participants as informants. Another way to do so is to employ multiple methods of data collection. Since this study had one major group of cross-cultural experiential learning program alumni as participants, it therefore used the latter strategy. Triangulation requires the researcher to use multiple methods to alternatively collect three or more different kinds of data on the same issue or event. These data can be collected by various methods such as video, interviews, and questionnaires. This is to overcome the limited nature caused by a singular method and to highlight major themes or perspectives as well as to provide corroborating evidence or cross-validation (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002; Somekh & Lewin, 2005). As addressed earlier in the chapter under data collection, I
employed five methods of data collection to strengthen the trustworthiness of the study. The methods included interviews, document analysis (course syllabi, academic work, photographs etc.), Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) assessments, open-ended written questionnaires, and my interview notes and research journal.

The second approach is member checking in which the researcher seeks to ensure the accuracy of collected data or transcripts and the credibility of the findings, interpretations and conclusions by taking them back to the participants so that they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the study (Creswell, 2007). I conducted a member check after the third round of interviews was completed. I shared the transcripts of the three rounds of interviews, interpretations and findings of document analysis, and categorizations and themes of the data developed during the data analysis process. The participants were allowed to alter or delete sections of the transcripts or to indicate their disagreement about the researcher’s interpretation of data. This process made the data and findings more accurate and insightful.

I conducted one member check at the end of each round of interviews instead of conducting member-checks after each individual interview session. While the amount of processed data is smaller in that approach, I was concerned that frequent
member checking could cause more difficulty in managing the data. This is primarily because not all the participants were able to complete the work in a timely manner. In that case, I kept track of the progress by sending out frequent reminders to the participants. Such circumstances could cause unnecessary stress for the participants and for me. In order to avoid potential confusion and challenges to the way data was managed, I conducted a single large member check.

Another approach to establishing trustworthiness is peer debriefing, which refers to the use of external checks of the research process to increase reliability. The role of the peer debriefers was to act as a devil’s advocate by challenging me about methods as well as clarifying my position and any biases or assumptions that may impact the inquiry and have likely shaped the interpretations and approach to the study (Creswell, 2007). I organized peer-debriefing sessions with my colleagues in the doctoral program to talk about my research experience, including my understanding and interpretation of the data during the collection and analysis process. I held a minimum of four sessions after the completion of each major data collection phase: after each round of interviews, and after the grounded survey. The frequency of peer review sessions helped me to ensure the validity of the findings of each stage, which
resulted in improved overall trustworthiness significance of the study.

Another strategy is reliability, which claims that the truth of the findings is established and supported by sufficient and compelling evidence. Reliability is synonymous with terms such as dependability, consistency, and accuracy. It can be threatened by “any careless act in the measurement or assessment process, by instrumental decay, by assessments that are insufficiently long (or intense), by ambiguities of various sorts, and a host of other factors” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 292). In other words, reliability addresses how the findings vary from occasion to occasion. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe reliability as a precondition for validity. The researcher can enhance reliability by obtaining detailed notes or accurate data by recording interviews on tape or video and later transcribing them (Somekh & Lewin, 2005). To make the data and findings even more reliable, I kept my interview notes. Since this research did not involve field observations, the interview notes could be seen to replace the function of the field notes because they were written during or immediately after each session. In the interview notes, I wrote down my immediate reactions and/or thoughts that emerged during an interview. While the notes included my personal comments, more focus was placed on recording those related to the
interviewee.

The third strategy is objectivity that is played off against subjectivity. Subjectivity refers to human aspects such as emotions, knowledge, experience, and values. In qualitative research the researcher acts as a research instrument and thus her subjectivity is central to the quality of research. It is because “the quality of research is based on epistemological assumptions that truth is not something that can be ‘found’ separately from the particular contexts or participants in the area of study” (Somekh & Lewin, 2005, p. 348). While qualitative research is always influenced by the subjectivity of the researcher to some degree, it is important for the researcher to value the neutral approaches and data that are not influenced by the biases of the researcher.

In order to minimize the undesirable or unnecessary degree of my biases, I continuously kept a research journal during the data collection. The research journal provided me with the opportunity to develop recognition of my biases using the critical reflection on initial reactions or analysis in the research process. It also gave me the opportunity to investigate how my subjectivity might have impacted the study. For instance, it included the opportunity to evaluate how the data collection was facilitated, understood and interpreted, and how the findings would be presented. I also shared my
journals regarding the bias at the peer debriefing sessions, and solicited feedback and opinions from participants and others to keep my subjectivity from negatively impacting on the study.

**Role of the researcher**

In a qualitative inquiry, such as this study, I as a researcher am the primary instrument. Qualitative data may consist of quotations, observations, or excerpts from documents. It describes situations and tells stories by helping a researcher to understand what it was like to have been there, which in turn, allows the researcher to capture and communicate someone else’s experience in his or her own words. Unlike the traditional scientific approach that is primarily concerned with objectivity and detachment, the qualitative approach is subjective in nature. It offers a way to personalize inquiry and incorporate the experience and voice of the researcher throughout the study (Patton, 2002). Although this is the main strength of the qualitative approach, it was also important for me to set aside my own personal experiences in order to better focus on those of study participants and to best represent their voices and experiences (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994).

**Writing Up Process**
The writing up process of the findings was not merely transcribing the factual information about events or the people’s experiences. Instead, it became a process of discovering the messages stored in the data, exploring their meaning, connecting the informants’ words to the society at large or a shared context, and representing the version of the informants’ lives I constructed based on my analysis of data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The writing up process of the findings included exploring the ways to best address the themes that emerged from the data as described below.

Using indicative analysis, I proceeded to use the four loops of inductive data analysis addressed in the data analysis section earlier in the chapter. I ceaselessly compared the data and emerging categories and themes in order to establish a comprehensive set of findings. These findings described the five phases the participants experienced in the process of developing world mindedness. I presented these five findings in the typical order that most of the participants experienced them; however, this was not true for all of them. The goal was to help the reader to better follow and understand the transformation process the participants went through.

As I addressed in the research design section, this study adapted the
constructivism paradigm and phenomenological approach. Thus, the summary of findings focuses on describing the informants’ lived experiences and the ways they made meaning of their experiences through an insider perspective (Somkehn & Lewin, 2005). In order to best balance the discretions and interoperations of the data in my writing, I incorporated the following steps in the process of me writing up the finding:

- Providing “textual discretion” of the participants’ experience by describing “what” happened and including some examples.
- Providing “structural description” of the participants’ experience by describing “how” the experience happened (the context) and how the experience was influenced by the particular setting in which the experience took place.
- Combining both textual and structural description by focusing on “what” the participants experienced and “how” they experienced it including the meanings they assign to the particular experience (Creswell, 2007, p. 159).

Furthermore, I frequently used direct quotes from the interviews. These quotes were used to provide enough details and evidence to illustrate the descriptions. I
selected the quotes that could best contribute to the development of the description, which provided significant evidence for my interpretations. This was an essential step because it enabled me to connect the specific events or experiences of the participants to larger social concerns in order to elaborate on findings in Chapter 5 and to develop discussion or make suggestions for implications and further research in Chapter 6 (Patton, 2002). Use of quotes authentically represented the study participants’ perception of the ways in which the international cross-cultural experience impacted their world-mindedness development. It also helped to increase transparency of the study as all findings were rooted in the data.

**Limitations of the Study**

There are five main limitations to the study. The limitations include the small number of participants, the reliance on a retrospective approach, self-reporting, the cross-cultural nature of the study, and the researcher’s pre-constructed knowledge. The first limitation is the limited number of informants. The study participants were fifteen individuals who participated in international cross-cultural experiential learning programs that are organized by the same educational institution. Thus, the findings from the data analysis were not able to be generalized.
Another limitation is the study’s retrospective approach. I interviewed purposefully selected alumni of an international cross-cultural experiential learning program(s) to ensure selected samples experienced perspective transformation. In other words, I could not conduct field observations while the participants were in the program. Therefore, the data collected from the study participants was heavily influenced by how participants remembered particular events, and reflected on the experiences. This process put the burden of recall exclusively on the participants.

In this type of study there was necessarily a strong reliance on participants’ self-reports. Employment of interviews as the central data collection method as well as a lack of field observation relied on the assumption that all significant learning was conscious to the participants and does not account for the learning that happens outside the learners’ awareness (Taylor, 2000). It also limited the information and thus my understanding of the experiences to only what the participants were conscious of and comfortable sharing with others.

The cross-cultural aspect of the study presented many challenges. Cross-cultural interviewing added layers of complexity to the already complex interactions involved in the interview format. The emphasis of the purposeful sampling
was more on the international cross-cultural experiences and the transformation of participants rather than on their physical location at the time of the interview, nationality or ethnicity, or first language as long as they could sufficiently communicate in English for the study. Furthermore, this study generally employed videoconference interviews using Skype or G-chat video function. Therefore there were no opportunities for the researcher and participants to interact in person. The very limited time that was available for me to develop a trusting relationship with each interviewee and very limited observation or interaction opportunities with study participants might have added challenges that are related to the cross-cultural nature of the study (Patton, 2002).

The two major challenges of cross-cultural interviewing in this study were language differences and different norms and values. Although English was the designated language for conducting the research, I, the interviewer, as well as ten out of fifteen informants of the study are non-native speakers of English. This could raise some concerns about limitations in expressing and communicating thoughts fully. I might not have been able to effectively guide the interview process or fully comprehend the responses or in-depth meaning or messages infused in the answers.
Potential miscommunications and misunderstandings due to my own or other non-native English speaker participants’ limited English ability might include limited vocabulary, variation in pronunciation and intonation, and different usage of colloquial language. I also admit that my interpretation and understanding of findings was limited by language ability.

A second challenge was differences in cultural background, norms and values between the researcher and informants. While I am Japanese with some knowledge of American culture, the study included culturally diverse participants who did not have extensive familiarity with Japanese or American cultural norms. These differences could have prevented or limited me from fully understanding the informants and appropriately interpreting and representing the findings. The goal of the interviews was certainly not to judge participants’ experiences or change their values and norms, but to understand their perspectives in whatever ways they may differ from mine. I had to practice a special sensitivity to and respect for differences in order to get valid, reliable, meaningful and usable information in cross-cultural situations (Patton, 2002). Similarly, I had to be conscious of how different norms govern cross-cultural interactions, which can affect the appropriateness of questions, preferences for privacy,
and conversational styles. In sum, the differences in native languages and cultures created concern about how accurately I could understand and represent the data and findings (Patton, 2002).

The last limitation to be discussed is my pre-constructed knowledge. I came to the study with a certain set of perceptions about international cross-cultural experiences and development of world-mindedness that are based on my first-hand international experiences. It is necessary to note that this pre-constructed knowledge may have unconsciously influenced the way I guided the interview process, analyzed and interpreted the data, and presented the findings. After all, qualitative research is conducted, developed, and understood through the lens of the researcher, and therefore it must be taken into consideration when assessing the degree of subjectivity that could threaten the accurate representation of participants’ voices in the study.
CHAPTER 4

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Introduction .................................................................................................................. 169
Background: The International Cross-Cultural Experiential Program .................... 170
Profiles of Study Participants .................................................................................... 175
  Demographics of Study Participants ...................................................................... 175
  Participants Selected by Intercultural Development Inventory Assessments ............ 177
    Brian (USA) ........................................................................................................... 177
    Coraline (USA) .................................................................................................. 179
    Beth (USA) ......................................................................................................... 180
    Shirley (USA) ..................................................................................................... 182
    VB (Bermuda/USA) ........................................................................................... 183
    Andrea (Russia/USA) ......................................................................................... 184
    Paola (Rumania/Canada) ..................................................................................... 185
    Luis (Spain) ........................................................................................................ 186
  Participants Selected by Snowball Sampling ......................................................... 188
    Gianluca (USA) .................................................................................................. 189
    Misty (Mexico) .................................................................................................... 190
    Luiza (Brazil) ....................................................................................................... 192
    Stoffer (Denmark) ............................................................................................... 194
    Eng (Malaysia) .................................................................................................... 195
    Manuel (Ghana) .................................................................................................. 197
    Kwame (Ghana) .................................................................................................. 198
Different Categories of Diversity Found in The Friend Ship Community ................. 199
  Unequal Representations of Groups within Diversity Categories ......................... 199
Introduction

The globalized world is interconnected through politics, the economy, culture, and the environment. People also experience this increasing trend of cross-cultural encounters and cultural diversity in those areas mentioned above. In this era, world-mindedness is critical to working successfully with others in collaboration for the betterment of the world. It is because world-mindedness, which is developed by the fostering of global perspectives and a personal commitment for a better world, is an essential quality for solving global issues by viewing the world as a whole and
considering the interests of all (Alger & Harf, 1986; Case, 1993, Merryfield & Wilson, 2005).

As the trend of globalization and demand for world-mindedness intensifies, one must ask how students develop their world-mindedness. Considering the different approaches to developing world-mindedness, this study was specifically focused on exploring the ways in which students see the world differently as a result of an international cross-cultural experiential learning. We asked participants to look back on their experiences of The Friend Ship Program and interviewed them specifically about how their transformation toward world-mindedness began.

**Background: The International Cross-Cultural Experiential Learning Program**

I conducted this research with one global voyage program, which was run by an organization based in a metropolitan city on the East Coast of the United States. This program was an academic program aboard. A dedicated passenger ship was transformed to host undergraduate and postgraduate students on semester-long voyages around the world. Participants from diverse cultural backgrounds came together to create life-changing experiences that developed their intercultural competence and global perspectives and fostered friendships reaching across the far corners of the
world. This experiential-based program was described as providing participants with an extraordinary opportunity to integrate education and travel unlike any other programs. As they traveled from country to country over a semester, students lived and learned in a dynamic multicultural environment aboard the ship. When in port (average visit of seven days), students participated in academic field study, community service, shore excursions and independent travel.

The organization successfully hosted two semester-long global voyages. The first cruise started in September 2007 and visited ten countries/territories: Greece, Portugal, Panama, Ecuador, Tahiti, New Zealand, Australia, China, Macau, and Hong Kong. The second cruise embarked in January 2008 and visited eleven countries/territories: Hong Kong, China, Thailand, India, Seychelles, South Africa, Cape Verde Islands, Spain, Turkey, Portugal, and the Netherlands.

While based in the United States, the program offered learning opportunities to an internationally diverse group of students. Approximately two hundred undergraduate and postgraduate students from an average of thirty-five countries participated in each cruise. The faculty and staff members on the cruise hailed from 16 different countries. The crew of the ship was internationally diverse and its members
were hired from different parts of the world as well.

The program importantly provided higher education credits through the member universities of consortium of academic stewards. The consortium of academic stewards consists of seven world-class universities in the United States, Australia, China, Ghana, Mexico, Morocco, and United Kingdom. Charter member universities manage the program and monitor its quality. In order to ensure that the participants would receive maximum benefit from the program, there were admission requirements and an English proficiency requirement. Admission qualification for undergraduate applicants was a minimum of one year of university study prior to the voyage. Admission qualification for postgraduate applications was a minimum of a bachelor’s degree prior to the voyage. Preference was given to students with above average academic records. Furthermore, there was an English proficiency requirement for students whose first language is not English. They were required to provide documentary evidence of completion of secondary or tertiary study in a country where English is the official language or study in an institution where English is the language of instruction in the last two years. Applicants not able to meet these requirements were given the choice to submit a TOEFL test score of a minimum of 550 for
undergraduates and 580 for postgraduates that was taken no more than twenty-four months prior to application. They were also given the choice of submitting an equivalent score from IELTS or CAE.

The program offered several academic divisions called learning circles from which participants could choose. The undergraduate program provided five learning circles: conflict studies, international business and communication, sustainable development, global cultures and social change, and worlds of art and culture. In addition to one or more elective subjects, all undergraduate program participants from all learning circles were required to take two subjects: global issues and intercultural communication. The postgraduate program included three learning circles: international communication, international business, and international relations. Students participated in three required academic field studies according to their learning circles.

Finally, the participation fees of both global voyages were $21,395 for undergraduates and $22,900 for postgraduates. That did not include airfares from the location of their residence and other private spending on the ship and in ports of call. While not all the students were eligible or able to receive full scholarships, the
organization took an active role in assisting students in finding ways to finance the program costs. It reflected the organization’s commitment to recruit a high-quality student population that is diverse, both culturally and socio-economically. For instance, the organization provided support in, assisting students to obtain aid through government programs, from other funding organizations in the participants’ country of origin, or from their home universities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2 voyages: 2007, 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(per voyage average)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ Nationality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5 continents)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Levels/ Courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conflict Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Intern’l Business &amp; Comms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Global Cultures &amp; Social Changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Worlds of Art &amp; Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Intern’l Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Intern’l Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculties/Staffs’ Nationality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(per voyage average)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table. 2 The Friend Ship Program
Profiles of Study Participants

Demographics of Study Participants

For this study, I selected an international cross-cultural experiential program with an internationally diverse group of fifteen alumni. This diversity was essential to studying how people of different backgrounds adjust to living in such a culturally diverse community and how they establish friendships with people from a wide variety of countries on their way to developing world-mindedness. As addressed in the methodology section, I set my initial selection criteria as the shift in pre- and post-Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) Assessment results. This was first and foremost to ensure the participation of those who would be most likely to provide me with memories of rich experiences and who would best address the research questions.

The group of study participants consisted of fifteen alumni, seven of which were on the first voyage which began on September 2007. The other eight were part of the second voyage beginning on January 2008. In selecting study participants, the development and demonstration of world-mindedness were the paramount criteria. Following that, diversity within the participant group was sought to reflect the diversity on the ship as much as possible. The group of participants indicated some degree of diversity regarding country of origin, gender, first language, and level of
program. On the other hand, diversity in religion was not seen among the study participants. There were also some unexpected diversities found including sexual preference, age, and physical ability.

Table 3. Demographics of Study Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Participants</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of Study Participants</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationalities</td>
<td>10 countries: US, Mexico, Bermuda, Brazil, Demark, Spain, Rumania, Russia, Malaysia, Ghana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>7 Males, 8 Females</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Ages (Time of the Program participation) | 19 - 24 (11)  
25 - 29 (3)  
35+ (1) |
| Academic Levels/Circles | 5 Undergraduate  
• Conflict Studies (1)  
• Intern’l Business & Comm. (5)  
• Global Cultures & Social Changes (1)  
• Worlds of Art & Culture (2)  
9 Graduate (Master)  
• Intern’l Communication (1)  
• Intern’l Business (2)  
• (No info available for 2 participants) |
| Additional diversities among the Study Participants | Sexuality, Religion  
Socio economic status  
Physical abilities  
Language abilities  
Prior international experience |
The different kinds of diversities among study participants included nationality, first language, gender, sexual preference, age, education level (undergraduate and postgraduate), choice of learning circles during program participation, and physical disability. One category that lacked diversity is religion. The majority of study participants are Christians. Despite the lack of diversity in some categories, the study participants reflected more diversity than what I had originally anticipated. The diversity seen among the final group of participants was significant in learning whether and how alumni from different cultural backgrounds may perceive their experience with the program and world-mindedness development process similarly or differently.

*Participants Selected by Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) Assessments*

In this section, I sketch a portrait of the eight alumni participants who were selected based on their large shift from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism in pre and post program participation IDI assessments. I describe the participants’ background focusing on culture, family, education, and cross-cultural and international experiences.

*Profile of Brian*

Brian is a white American college student in his early twenties. During his
childhood, he traveled in Europe extensively with a parent who spent significant time there for professional reasons. He attended an international boarding school in the Northeastern United States and spent his middle school and high school years studying and living with fellow students from around the world. As a university student, he lived and studied in Florida and participated in a study abroad program in Italy for a summer prior to the Friend Ship program. Throughout his teenage years, he questioned how people are labeled by society especially based on their family’s socio economic status. He thinks that those labels or preconceptions of identity could prevent or severely limit open communication. Thus, he has always sought and treasured all relationships and encounters in which he was able to appreciate and be appreciated by others for who they are as an individuals. He participated in The Friend Ship in the fall of 2007. During the program, he enrolled in the learning circle focused on international business and communication (undergraduate program). He currently studies in a large metropolitan city in the Northeastern United States. He stated that his experience with the program made him more interested in intercultural communication. As a result he changed his major from international business to communication focusing on advertising.
Profile of Coraline

Coraline was born and raised outside of a large metropolitan city on the Northeastern Coast of the United States. Being an only child, she feels that her parents’ perceptions about life and their worldview greatly influenced her childhood experience. She recalled how her father who was an environmental engineer educated her on environmental global issues and related concerns such as environmental policy, industrial development, and the management of infrastructure including irrigation systems. Toward the end of elementary school, Coraline and her father both took Chinese lessons when he had an opportunity to work in China. She continued the language lessons for several years enabling her to become an advanced speaker of Chinese. Although she grew up very close in distance from one of the most culturally diverse cities in the world, she thinks her cultural and international experience was limited. Her family lived in a predominately white upper class community. She had opportunities to visit her relatives in Europe, but in her daily life international and cross-cultural exposure was limited to dining in different ethnic food restaurants. After high school, she wanted to have learning and living experiences in a culturally diverse community, which led her to a university that claimed to promote diversity. To attend
the university, she moved to a large college city in the Northeastern United States. Unfortunately, she did not see the diversity she was hoping for at the school, which led her to join the Friend Ship program in the spring of 2008 where she took part in the learning circle, worlds of art and culture (undergraduate program). She recently completed her bachelor’s degree in English writing and is exploring the next step for her life. Being a life-long writer, she hopes to publish some of her writing related to the experience she had with the program. As a long-term goal, she wants to become an ambassador to China and improve U.S.-China relations. She thinks that her background, her knowledge of Chinese language and culture, and overall intercultural communication skills and global literacy/competence she developed through the program can be put to good use in this profession.

Profile of Beth

Beth’s international cross-cultural experience began in her adolescent years. She claims international understanding and cross-cultural communication had been a natural part of her everyday life. Having a father who often worked for an extensive period of time overseas in different countries, she became familiar with the idea of the world beyond the United States. Her family also had several long-term international
nannies, generally young females, who lived with them and went to local schools. They also hosted adult male scholars from a sister city in Eastern Europe for months at a time. She recalls developing a family-like bond with those foreign students. After graduating from high school, she started university in a metropolitan Northeastern city to play a sport. After suffering an injury, she returned to the Midwest, but felt a strong desire to explore the world. She transferred to an American/international university in Italy where she studied business administration for the next few years. She participated in the first Friend Ship voyage in the fall of 2007, and took part in the international business and communication learning circle (undergraduate program). After participating in the program, she completed her undergraduate degree in Italy and has returned to her hometown in the Midwest. She currently works for a marketing firm in a mid-size Midwestern city. She feels good about rediscovering her personal and professional roots in her home city after being away for several years. While she has a strong desire to travel more and be in different places encountering different people, she hopes to get back to that lifestyle through her professional life in the future. Moreover, she hopes to join the field of education most likely teaching about diversity management in international business.
Profile of Shirley

Shirley is a white American professional who is in her late forties. She has lived all her life close to a metropolitan city on the West Coast of the United States. Growing up, she did not have cross-cultural or international experiences, but was inspired by others’ travel stories. Her first and majority of cross-cultural and international experience was through her job. Over the years, she worked with many international people visiting the United States. She always had an interest in traveling internationally; however, her interaction and communication was limited to work-related occasions. Furthermore, her condition of being in a wheelchair and related concerns had largely prevented her from traveling. Not long before learning about the program, she had returned to school for her master’s degree in public policy. When she learned about the program, which would allow her to earn graduate credit and provide an accessible way of traveling around the world, she was determined to join The Friend Ship. She took part in the international relations learning circle (graduate program). During the program, she was committed to helping others to better understand the experiences of individuals in wheelchairs. She also paid great attention to how people with physical disabilities are perceived and treated in different countries.
and sought opportunities to empower those who face discrimination. Today, she
describes herself as an educator. She currently teaches mathematics to non-mainstream
students. She says her experience with the program enhanced her knowledge, skills,
and inclusive attitude, which allows her to be more empathic, and supportive of her
students.

Profile of VB

VB is a black Bermudan professional in her late twenties. She was born to
Bermudan parents while they were pursuing graduate work in the United States. She
spent most of her early childhood in Bermuda, and returned to the United States for a
higher quality of education in her mid-teens. Since then she graduated from an
American high school and then received a bachelor’s degree in communications. She
lived in cities in the Midwest and South where she had opportunities to interact with
people from different parts of the world. After graduating from university, she returned
to Bermuda and has been working in the service sector. Through her work, she
interacts with people from different parts of the world on a daily basis. This fact
stimulated her interest in learning about the world. While she was looking into a
master’s program, she learned about The Friend Ship program. She began the program
in spring of 2008, and enrolled in a postgraduate program of international communication learning circle (graduate program). After participating in the program, she returned to Bermuda and continued her work in the service sector. She finds her experience with and learning developed through the program to be very useful in her professional life. She also described her experience with the program as confirmation of her interest in pursuing further education in international communication or a related field sometime in the future.

Profile of Andrea

Andrea works as a financial analyst in a large international city on the East Coast of the United States. She immigrated to the United States after completing her undergraduate education in Russia. She was born and raised in a small isolated military town in Russia. Growing up, she did not have opportunities to travel internationally, but she looked forward the most to summers spent with her grandmothers in a different town. This was because many people who had left town for a bigger city returned to visit family. She enjoyed learning about other children’s experiences in different cities of Russia. This inspired her to travel when she got older. She majored in foreign language and education in college hoping to get a translator job or other international
job that would allow her to travel after the completion of her degree. Andrea first came
to the United States as a summer camp leader through an arranged program, which
eventually led her to pursue higher education at the master’s level and a professional
life in the United States. While it was a challenge to adapt to American culture the first few years, she came to miss more diversity and international exposure. Hoping to get back in touch with these aspects, she participated in The Friend Ship in spring of 2008.
During the program, she was enrolled in the international business and communication circle (graduate program). While benefits from her intercultural communication skills developed through the program, she feels that her current job limits her from contributing her interests, world-mindedness and active engagement for the betterment of the world. She is planning to return to school to study international development or other related fields so that she can pursue a professional path that contributes to developing nations.

Profile of Paola

Paola is a white graduate student in her mid-twenties who was born in Romania. During her childhood, she frequently traveled in Europe. She extended her international experience even more by attending international primary and high school
in Geneva, joining a short term cultural immersion study abroad program in Italy, and working for science summer camps for Scouts in England and France. Over the last several years, she has been very active in a well-known organization that offers many programs for cross-cultural and international understanding. She explained she and her family received great support through the program in the past when they lived in foreign countries. Since then she has had many cross-cultural and international experiences. Being active with the organization is one of her ways to give back as well as grow as an individual. At the time of The Friend Ship program in the spring of 2008, she was working on her bachelor’s degree in commerce focusing on marketing in a university in Canada. During her participation in the program, she enrolled in the international business and communication learning circle (undergraduate program). She says, the program gave her the opportunity to learn as much about herself as others. She recently started a master’s program in global management at a Canadian university. She will be spending a semester abroad studying in Scandinavia.

*Profile of Luis*

Luis was born and raised in a major city in Spain. There were different groups of immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa. He remembers that there were
clear boundaries between Spanish and immigrant populations and they did not interact. While he did not have any negative feelings toward the immigrant population, he had little opportunity to interact with them. This cultural divide was just a fact of life, and he never questioned it. Growing up, he recalls his mother often discussing occurrences outside of Spain, which eventually led to his consciousness of and interest in international topics. When he was 16 years old, he was selected to receive a full scholarship to attend a two-year International Baccalaureate program (junior and senior year of high school in the U.S. educational system) in New Mexico. There, he studied and lived with 200 students from 92 different countries. It was the first time he had left Spain and it definitely proved to be a life-changing experience. Upon completion of the program, he went to India to teach math in a supplementary educational program organized by a NPO. During his time in India, he was persistent in seeking financial assistance to start his undergraduate career at an American university to which he had been accepted and to join the global voyage program. With his never-give-up spirit, he successfully earned the necessary financial support to actualize both those visions. During The Friendship program, he enrolled in international business and communication learning circle (undergraduate program) and also worked as a student
staff member. In this position, he initiated and organized various extra-curricular activities including cultural nights, which received outstanding feedback, as well as cultural presentations. He reflects on his experience with the program and describes that it evolved his intercultural communication and cross-cultural understanding that had been nurtured through the International Baccalaureate program into world-mindedness. He is currently studying engineering at a university in the Northeastern United States. Beside engineering courses, he has been passionate and serious about advancing his Chinese skills. He recently spent a summer participating in an intensive language course in Beijing, China. He feels he is in a ‘preparation’ stage so that he can contribute his professional work for the betterment of the world. The firsthand experience of seeing parts of the world where people suffer in poverty developed his hopes and commitment to improve basic conditions for these people by providing necessary sanitary systems such as clean water and a waste water pipe or sewage treatment system. He thinks that one critical way of moving toward peace for all starts with providing basic needs to ensure healthy lives.

Participants Selected by Snowball Sampling

In this section, I sketch a portrait of the seven alumni participants who were
selected through a snowball sampling based on the recommendation of the original group of study participants addressed in the prior section. Participants recruited by snowball sampling were described as either a person who demonstrated world-mindedness or a key figure who could help inspire others to achieve world-mindedness during the program.

Profile of Gianluca

Gianluca is a white American in his early twenties. He was born and raised in a very large and international metropolitan city. Growing up, his life was strongly centered on his extended family. Strong family ties and his ethnic and religious community were a foundation for his life. In retrospect, he feels that he did not think about his own likes or dislikes but how everyone else did things and lived. Thus, he was not exposed to the cultural diversity that existed in his home city. His strong identification with his ancestors led him to enroll in an American/international university in Italy. He majored in international affairs and minored in history. Living in Italy led to many opportunities for self-reflection on topics such as cultural identity, religious practice, and overall philosophy of life. At the Italian university he developed close friendships with other international students and had the opportunity to travel
with them to their home countries. Those internationally diverse friendships and further international experiences visiting different parts of the world greatly fascinated him. This strong interest eventually led him to participate in The Friend Ship voyage in the fall of 2007. During the program, he enrolled in the international business and communication learning circle (undergraduate). He felt that his experience in Italy being immersed in another culture as well as long-term experiences with a culturally diverse group of students prepared him to act as a cultural mediator. He felt great joy and meaning in his life to be able to mediate among multiple cultures. He recently returned to his home city in the United States after being away for over four years. He is currently exploring and getting ready for his next step in life. As a long-term goal, he envisions engaging in international relations or a related field. Due to his academic background, he is interested in working in the political sectors dealing with foreign affairs. At this point, he is also looking into expanding his international experience possibly by teaching English in other countries.

Profile of Misty

Misty is a Hispanic/Latina from Mexico in her early twenties. She was born and raised in a large city located in Northeast Mexico. Living relatively close to the
U.S. border, knowledge of the English language was very important. Misty attended an English-speaking school (1-12 grades). While she did all her academic work in English, she always spoke Spanish for non-academic activities developing abilities and an identity with the Spanish language. Growing up she felt that her society as well as many people had superficial traits. She was often frustrated with or tired of that fact and wanted to see and understand others for who they are behind their facades. As a result, something different always caught her attention and greatly fascinated her.

While her international experience during childhood was limited to the occasional visit to the U.S., she recalls having a strong interest and joyful fascination for learning about different cultures and people of the world. Throughout her life, her high academic achievements were critical to pursuing further educational opportunities and ensuring scholarships. When she participated in The Friend Ship in the winter of 2008, she was attending a university in her home city in Mexico studying communication sciences. Indeed, she won the contest that her home university had organized and was awarded basic program costs to participate in the program. She was a part of worlds of art and culture learning cycle (undergraduate program) during the Friend Ship. After the program, she moved to a city on the West Coast of the United States. She is currently
pursuing further education in media and working in a postproduction facility. In the future, she hopes to pursue a career in media, in a field such as National Geographic, and engage in activities that help people to learn about and appreciate other cultures and what the world has to offer. She feels that learning and understanding more about others is important for encouraging and enabling them to start thinking about the beauty and challenges that the globalized world faces today.

*Profile of Luiza*

Luiza is a white graduate student from Brazil in her mid-twenties. While she can only recall a few things from her childhood, she lived in London when she was a baby while her mother was pursing her graduate degree. In Brazil, her family lived in one of the major Southern cities. There was very limited diversity in both ethnicity and socioeconomic status in the particular community in which she grew up. The only interactions she had with people of different cultural backgrounds were occasional and random interchanges with international tourists visiting her city. She is not sure where it came from, but she had a strong urge to get away from her community and country to see beyond it from an early age. When she was 15 years old, she participated in a year-long exchange program in New Zealand living with a host family. Since returning
to Brazil, she always wished to have others with whom she could connect in terms of having more international cross-cultural interactions. It was not always easy for her to find such individuals. After completing her bachelor’s degree, she worked in a law firm and searched for a master’s degree program at which time she learned about the international cross-cultural program. She jumped at the opportunity in anticipation of being in an internationally diverse community. She participated in The Friend Ship in the fall of 2007, and enrolled in the postgraduate program international relations learning circle (graduate program). She reflects on her experiences with the program and remarks that the personal connections she made with people on the boat and in different countries strongly developed her personal interests and concerns about what is happening in different parts of the world. She feels that the personal connection she developed and maintains informs her compassion and commitment to seek the betterment of the world for all. She is currently pursuing a law degree, and hopes to develop her career in politics. After participating in the program and becoming aware of global issues, she feels the critical need for national leaders who not only think about their own countries, but also are concerned about all and are able to envision the world and its politics on a broader scale.
Profile of Stoffer

Stoffer is a white Danish graduate student and professional in his late twenties. He was born and raised in a major city in Denmark. Growing up in an economically fortunate household, he describes his childhood as peaceful and without critical challenges. Over the years, he traveled around Europe with his family and friends. When he was older, he did a backpacking trip in the United States and visited some Asian countries. International traveling was something many of his friends frequently did, which made it a natural choice for him. In addition to the excitement of exploring new places, he recalls a sense of freedom when traveling in different countries. The fact of being out of his own context often led to a refreshing feeling and experience of liberty for him. He earned a bachelor’s degree in marketing and is currently earning master’s degree in business. Over the last eight years, along with his studies, he has been working as a consultant dealing with business and marketing related topics. Stoffer participated in The Friend Ship in the fall of 2007 and took part in the international business graduate program. He feels that his experience with the program did not necessarily change him, but did provide an opportunity for him to affirm who he is. The experience made him more active and aware of enjoying
different people and other cultures. He came to realize the importance of interacting with others and engaging with different cultures firsthand in order to own the learning and maximize the appreciation; seeing others do and doing oneself results in totally different outcomes in terms of personal growth. By participating in the program, he built the layers of knowledge, skills and attitude that enabled him to feel he would be okay anywhere in the world. In other words, he now knows how to learn about something new and unknown and how to make effective transitions to cope well in any new situation. While he does not see great cultural diversity in his current environment, he came to think of business, marketing, ideas in inventing new products on a global scale instead of simply focusing on Demark. He envisions contributing to and practicing his world-mindedness through the inventing, manufacturing, and marketing of products that can improve the conditions of the world by easing ongoing global issues such as climate change, and the spread of epidemic diseases, among others.

Profile of Eng

Eng is an Asian student in her early twenties who was born and raised in Malaysia. One of her prominent international cross-cultural experiences was attending
an international boarding high school in Singapore where the majority of students were from Southeast Asian countries. Even though it was a courageous decision she had made, she had known many others who went to boarding schools in Singapore. Thus, it was not a totally foreign concept for her. She recalls adapting to the new environment smoothly by developing close sisterly bonds with other students. After finishing high school in Singapore, she enrolled in an undergraduate program in international studies and anthropology in a Southeastern city of Australia. Prior to the global voyage program, she participated in a study abroad program in Brazil. She participated in The Friend Ship in the fall of 2007, and enrolled in the global cultures and social changes learning circle (undergraduate program). Being one of the few Asian participants in the program, she hoped to remove stereotypes or biases often imposed on Asians. At the same time, she made a conscious effort to get to know other students as individuals while using cultural knowledge as a reference tool. She feels her trusting and genuine personal relationships with other participants provided her with great learning opportunities to cultivate her skills, cultural learning, and use of multiple and global perspectives in understanding the world. She still has another year until she finishes her undergraduate program. While she hopes to find a path where she can contribute to
the betterment of the world, such as the preservation of native cultures and protection of native peoples’ rights in different parts of the world, she has not made up her mind yet. Instead of focusing on one path, she is learning and observing as much as she can so that she can make informed decisions regarding what ways she can best contribute to the world.

Profile of Manuel

Manuel is a black student from Ghana in his early twenties. He confesses that he had little international cross-cultural experience throughout his life in Ghana except his experiences with different ethnic groups from this country. He speaks four ethnic languages of Akan, Ewe, Lelemi, and Tuwili in addition to the English that was used as an instructional language for school education. Education was always the topmost priority for Manuel and he has invested significant time and energy on it throughout his life. He had always been committed to preparing himself to contribute meaningfully to society. When he participated in the global voyage in spring of 2008, he was an undergraduate student at the University of Ghana studying political science and history. He was one of the students selected to participate in the program by the University of Ghana, which is one of the academic stewardship member universities.
The basic participation fee was awarded from his home institution. During the global voyage, he enrolled in the conflict studies learning circle (undergraduate program).

Profile of Kwame

Kwame is a black professional from Ghana in his early twenties studying geography and psychology. Growing up in a country with more than a hundred ethnic groups, he is familiar with the idea of ethnic diversity within a society and speaks many languages including Fanti, Ewe and English. Kwame, however had barely any first hand international cross-cultural experience prior to The Friend Ship program and his knowledge about different counties and the world came strictly from textbooks and the media. As a child, he enjoyed his brief experience with a Japanese teacher who worked in Ghana. Since then, he had always yearned to see the world for himself. He had a humble upbringing living in a compound and took education seriously as the way to create a better life. When he participated in The Friend Ship, he was an undergraduate student at the University of Ghana-Legion studying psychology and geography. Along with Manuel, Kwame was also one of the students selected to participate in the program by the University of Ghana. The basic participation fee was awarded from his home institution. Even though he struggled greatly to finance the
program, his was determined to make it happen due to his strong desire to see the world and take advantage of this great academic opportunity. He participated in The Friend Ship in spring 2008 and took part in the sustainable development learning circle (undergraduate program).

**Different Categories of Diversity Found in The Friend Ship Community**

The participants found lack of diversity or large unequal representation of some groups in some of those categories. They also found unexpected diversity in some categories. There were also differences that were expected, which the participants thought were worth noting.

*Unequal Representations of Groups within Diversity*

The participants found a lack of diversity or large unequal representation of some groups in some categories of diversity, such as nationality, ethnicity, first language, and religion.

*Nationality and Ethnicity*

Regarding nationality and ethnicity represented in The Friend Ship community, the participants believed it was worth noting that, on average, the students on the voyage represented 35 different countries. They also noted that there was
significantly unequal representation of countries or regions of the world.

Approximately half of the students were from the United States, followed by students from the Western European countries. The majority of the faculty and staff were also from Western countries.

There was a limited number of students from Asian countries. Eng, a Malaysian study participant, thought that it would have been better to have more students from Asian countries. However, she felt that the few Asian students who attended the program were no less valued; nor was the other students’ interest in Asia weakened due to the limited number of Asian students onboard. Rather, she felt that she received more attention being one of the few Asians, and people appreciated her sharing her experiences and knowledge. While there was limited involvement, the study participants also addressed the fact that the crewmembers of the vessel were from diverse backgrounds. In fact, a majority of them came from countries that were not represented among the students or faculty and staff members.

*Language*

English was the most commonly shared language in The Friend Ship community. More than half of the students’ first language was English. While the
accurate numbers was not available there were a group of the non-native English
speaker students who had received some education in English. For instance, the study
participant from Denmark, Stoffer, did the entire college course work in English as
Danish higher educational institutions use English as the language of instruction. The
Malaysian study participant, Eng, had enrolled in an international boarding school in
Singapore and attended a university in Australia where English was the instructional
language. The study participants from Brazil, Luiza, spent a year in New Zealand as a
high school exchange student. The instructional language for the academic programs
on The Friend Ship and the official communication language were English. Therefore,
the non-native English speakers were required to prove their sufficient English
communication skills by passing a standardized English language test such as TOEFL.
As a result, English gained tremendous power in terms of being the official language
onboard.

The study participants did not think that individuals’ English language ability
created particular issues in informal communication among friends. However, some
described that some non-native English speaker students struggled with their academic
work in English. Many of the study participants claimed that the non-native English
speaker students’ challenges with academic work particularly in-class learning were unnecessarily caused by the language ability itself, largely caused by a lack of familiarity with sociocultural aspects of the English language, such as communication style.

Religion

The Friend Ship community had a significantly unequal representation of religions; the majority was Christian, followed by a small group of Muslims, and a barely significant number of students from other religious faiths. While Christianity dominated the religious representation onboard, the denomination and degree of practice varied. The study participants thought that it was very important that there was a group of Muslim students in addition to the Christian students. It helped non-Muslim students to learn more about Islam and break stereotypes about Muslims. Even if there was a small group of Muslim students onboard, the study participants from a Christian background felt the strong impact that those Muslim students had on The Friend Ship Community and on themselves as individuals. The participants discussed other religions such as Hinduism or Buddhism as a part of cultural learning in relation to the destination countries; however, those were not addressed as part of their daily life.
experiences onboard.

*Unexpected Diversity*

The study participants found unexpected diversity in categories such as sexuality, socioeconomic status, bicultural background, multiple language abilities, and physical challenges in The Friend Ship community.

*Sexuality*

All of the participants commonly addressed the unexpected large group of gay and lesbian students onboard. While there is no means to know exactly how many students were homosexual, one participant guessed that more than one-third, if not half, of the students on the voyage were homosexual. The study participants also addressed that there were bi-sexual students and a trans-gender student in one of the voyages. The differences in sexual preference led to occasional tensions at the beginning of the journey; however, for the most part it resulted in meaningful learning experiences for many, especially those who had religious beliefs that did not support homosexuality or bisexuality. Brian, a gay study participant, shared that the supportive environment toward gays was an affirmative and empowering experience for him.

*Socioeconomic Background*
While most of the students came from financially stable or fortunate backgrounds, there were some students from very humble economic backgrounds. Many participants were stunned by the economic dichotomy among them. For instance, there were some students whose family had extreme financial wealth; and there were also some students from less-industrialized countries, whose families were experiencing financial struggles. Many participants particularly brought up the fact that some students from less industrialized countries, who had won a full scholarship to join The Friend Ship through their home universities, came onboard with extremely limited cash to spend on the voyage. While their program participation fees were paid for by the scholarship, they faced great challenges arranging travel money to purchase the airplane ticket to fly out to The Friend Ship departing country and to fly back to their home country once they completed the program. It was reported that many Ghanaian students did not have an airplane ticket or money to purchase a ticket to return home.

*Bicultural/Multicultural Background*

The study participants described how they were surprised by the large numbers of students who were born into a bi-cultural household, where the parents
were from different cultures or raised in different countries, and spent extensive periods of time in each country. Some study participants expressed that while the strong bi-cultural identity was rather unique based on the norm of the community they came from, it was increasingly common among The Friend Ship students that it was almost perceived as an ordinary thing. It led to firsthand realizations especially among those students who are not bicultural or who come from homogenized societies, that what is considered to be the norm could easily shift, based on the kinds of experiences shared by the community members.

*Bilingual/Multilingual Ability*

Multiple language abilities among non-native English speaker students, which was approximately half of the student population, apparently caught many students’ attention. The study participants insisted that the language barrier did not cause any serious problems; however, students with strong English language ability, including native and non-native speakers of English, apparently had a higher comfort level dealing with the daily onboard life both academically and personally. At the same time, many study participants came to realize that some native English speaker students were increasingly nervous and tense, once they were put in a situation where a
language other than English was used to communicate.

In a non-English speaking environment, non-native English speaker students were better prepared and were capable of managing the situation. First, many non-native English speaker students were able to speak at least another language that is their first language, and oftentimes multiple additional languages. As a result, those students often had a language ability that was helpful in communicating with the locals in the destination countries. Second, non-native English speaker students were emotionally better prepared to handle the potentially very stressful and confusing situations that arose due to the language barrier. It was interesting to learn how the firsthand experience of the native English speaker students losing their linguistic power in a foreign land made many of them feel humbled. They shared that it made them realize how they take their language capital or others’ ability to speak English for granted. They consequently developed respect toward their non-native English speaker peers onboard.

Physical disability

Diversity regarding different physical challenges was limited, yet it was eye-opening, for many students. There was a student, Shirley who participated in this
study, who was in a wheelchair. The Friend Ship program was supportive of her participating in the program and individual students did not have a prejudice against her. At the same time, many students had no idea how challenging things could be to travel internationally, particularly in destination countries in a wheelchair. While Shirley was the only student who had limited physical mobility among a group of students, other students, including the study participant Gianluca, addressed how much they learned about the issues and frustrating experiences that confront people in a wheelchair in destination countries. The challenges addressed included the issues of infrastructure and perceptions of and treatment by some people toward individuals in a wheelchair. By witnessing how the physical challenge did not limit Shirley but definitely created difficulties for her to overcome on a daily, Gianluca came to realize how physical ability could be a significant part of someone’s identity and perception of the world.

Other Diversities

In addition to the over- and under-representation of certain groups in some categories and unexpected diversity in others, there were several issues that the diversity study participants raised during the interviews that are worth addressing in
order to better understand The Friend Ship onboard culture. Those included academic levels (undergraduate and graduate), age, prior international experience, and mindset and purpose of students participating in The Friend Ship.

Age

The majority of the students were in their late teens to mid-twenties at the time of The Friend Ship participation. The study participants explained that people tended to socialize more with other students who were close in age or education level due to the fact that they were more likely to take classes together or to room together. At the same time, they clarified that all students interacted and got along well despite the differences in age. For instance, all welcomed others and were welcomed by others to talk and spend time together despite their ages and education levels. One exception was Shirley who was in her forties at the time of the participation. She had a more difficult time connecting with younger peers due to the age difference. It was easier for her to connect with faculty and staff. She perceived this was natural, yet the experience led her to think about the importance of having others to share experiences, especially the intense international and cross-cultural experiences that were thought-provoking and emotionally stimulating. Furthermore, Shirley felt that age was an equally
influential, if not stronger, factor than nationality, ethnicity, language, or religion that can bond a group of people.

Prior International Experience

There were different degrees of prior international experiences that individual students brought with them to The Friend Ship. According to the study participants, many students had some kind of international exposure including international travel and study abroad prior to The Friend Ship participation. They addressed that there were noticeable numbers of students who had extensive international experience such as having parents from different countries, attending international boarding schools, and attending universities abroad. At the same time, there were some students who had never left their country or even a region of a country and had their first international experiences abroad through The Friend Ship. The different prior international experience of the students was reflected among the study participants as well. As it is described in the participants’ profile in Chapter Four, most of the study participants had some degree of extensive prior international experiences. However, for a few students The Friend Ship was the first major international experience abroad.

The data implies that the degree of prior international experience did not
determine the meaningfulness of The Friend Ship experience for the study participants or their development toward world-mindedness. For instance, some students who had less prior international experience went through a significant learning curve while The Friend Ship for some was overly intense and overwhelming so that they shut down and stuck with what they already knew. Some students who had more international experiences also made small progress toward world-mindedness throughout the program. First, they went through a gentle learning curve during The Friend Ship because many of them already knew how to deal with cross-cultural situations. Second, some students had difficulty acknowledging cross-cultural experience as a unique learning experience as they grew up in an extensively multicultural environment or with an international life style.

*Purpose of Participating in The Friend Ship*

The third category of diversity was not about students’ background, but their mindset and their purpose participating in The Friend Ship. It was addressed as an important category because students’ mindset and purpose of being a part of the program could greatly impact the onboard culture just as students’ cultural backgrounds did. The fact that they applied to participate in the program indicated that
they were interested in having an international experience. Some students saw the program as an extension of an international vacation and as a result, casual fun socialization and entertainment were important. Some students came onboard with a significant interest in learning about different cultures and how people communicate cross-culturally. Those students placed emphasis on spending time with others and consciously observed how their own learning developed through the experience and how they applied their knowledge gained in the classroom to the reality beyond the classroom.

Importance of Acknowledging Different Types of Diversity

After analyzing and synthesizing the data, it came to my attention that the study participants found some categories of diversity easier to recognize and accept or talk about. For instance, participants felt more comfortable talking about aspects of their own culture that were visible, such as traditional art forms or holidays, as well as aspects of their daily lives – such as school, friends, after-school and weekend activities, entertainment, and family – that had significant similarities across the countries. On the other hand, many study participants were hesitant to discuss more sensitive topics such as religion, sexuality, human rights, or politics, especially before
they had developed a trusting community on The Friend Ship.

The data indicated that while learning about different national cultures was an important aspect to better understand the world, many participants came to see national culture as only one element of diversity. Living in the closed space of the ship with a diverse group of people beyond nationality, the study participants came to realize not everyone identifies themselves with their national culture so strongly. Some identify themselves with their religion, or socio-economic status, sexuality, or physical challenges. This realization led many study participants to think that other elements of diversity must be considered and understood. In order to holistically appreciate the complex world and individuals, they needed to value and use diverse lenses.

Interestingly, most of the participants said that at the beginning, they were only conscious about diversity in terms of national culture. They claimed that the close living environment that was open and accepting quickly made them aware of the inevitable diversity beyond nationality.

**Recognizing Commonalities beyond Differences**

The study participants explained that a diverse group of students not only going to classes but also actually living together on the ship allowed them to spend an
extensive period of time together on a daily basis, to discover differences as well as similarities among them. The commonalities addressed were shared interests, experiences, and personal traits.

First, the study participants found shared interests with one another. The data indicated that many students on The Friend Ship had a strong interest in exploring and learning about new and different things. They understood the need to go beyond their comfort zone and be open to change – from how they do things to how they think. They also commonly committed to make The Friend Ship an inclusive community where everyone’s voices would be heard.

Second, the shared experience of being a part of The Friend Ship was a major commonality among the students. The study participants felt bonded by their shared challenges of being in a culturally diverse environment and accepting or adapting to different ways of thinking and doing things. While those challenges or ways of dealing with the challenges differed among individuals, they were comforted knowing they were not alone going through them and could support one another.

Third, the common personal traits such as friendly, caring, adventurous, curious and accepting of differences among the students were important for helping them see
each other as individuals and connect across the cultures. The study participants thought that students were generally effective and culturally sensitive communicators. They were able to practice active listening, put themselves in others’ shoes, and understand different points of view instead of judging others. They learned to share their opinions, empathize with others, express themselves differently depending on their audience, tolerate the intensity of dealing with differences and spending extensive time with others, and learned to let small things go and focus on what is important.

While awareness of one’s and others’ cultural backgrounds was helpful, it also possibly prevented students from making personal connections based on sharing personal traits. The participants claimed that acknowledging those common personal traits assisted the students to see more connections with their peers and bond with them regardless of their cultural background. The study participants described that in brief encounters or at earlier stages of their cross-cultural experience, they often focused on the uniqueness of others based on their home countries or religion, and difference between others and themselves.

Regardless of the categories of difference they were exploring, any difference, in and of itself, tended to lead to the binary of “us-versus-them,” as a way to
understand diversity onboard. The data indicated however, that for the most part, there was no us-versus-them divide in The Friend Ship community. The participants explained that it was due to students recognizing commonalities among the diverse group of students beyond their differences. They had done so by shifting their focus from difference among cultures to similarities among individuals across cultural groups. The participants thought it was important that The Friend Ship community valued who you were as a person, not based on nationality, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background.

The study participants insisted that discovering the commonalities among them was important for developing a sense of bonding in the onboard community, in which there were more noticeable cultural differences, compared to the students’ communities back in their home countries which were usually more homogeneous. By constantly experiencing their commonalities in their onboard life, the study participants were able to see how difference and commonalities co-exist. As a result, they became more comfortable embracing the uniqueness that each student brought, and developed an inclusive onboard community, where diversity was celebrated instead of allowing differences to divide them.
Examples of Routines and Activities of Life Onboard

Many study participants recalled that there was no typical day when they think of their life onboard the Friend Ship. Instead, they used words such as “different,” “new,” or “constantly changing” to describe their day-to-day experiences onboard. In this section, after expanding on participants’ descriptions of life onboard, I will provide a brief example of students’ typical routines onboard, and then discuss both their academic and non-academic activities. The purpose of this section is to provide information that will give readers at least a vague picture of what the participants’ life onboard was like and their general feelings and attitudes toward the different activities.

It is important to explore what participants meant by saying there was no typical day during their onboard life. While there were some daily routines such as classes, meal times, mingling with friends, and working as student staff members, the participants generally felt that the term typical was not the best term to explain their days onboard. Even though on the surface it seemed that the students participated in similar activities, their personal involvement and interpretations of these events varied widely. In other words, they implied that there was some degree of schedule regarding classes and mealtimes onboard, their day-to-day experience onboard was never settled
or expected for it to become typical as The Friend Ship community as well as individuals were constantly transforming. When the context of experience and the mind-set or attitudes of the individuals constantly evolves, it makes their day-to-day life different, new, and constantly changing.

Day-to-Day Routine Activities of Life Onboard

As the previous paragraph indicated, there were some set routines onboard while at the same time there was nothing typical about each day. The following is meant to serve as a sketch of day-to-day life on board the Friend Ship. This compilation is based on information from all the participants in my study.

All participants had the freedom to start their day as they wished. There were a few students who were early birds and took advantage of quiet time alone before breakfast. This time might have been used to make plans for the day, reflect on the previous day’s experiences, to meet with others in a peaceful, calm setting where they could get to know one another. On the other hand, most of the students started their day in a rush hurrying to the dining room before they missed breakfast.

Undergraduate students were required to take four courses and graduate students were required to take minimum three courses during The Friend Ship
program. The majority of the students had more classes in the morning, leaving their afternoons free. Thus, they spent most of their mornings in the classroom till lunch.

Most of the students were able to eat lunch together.

For many participants, their afternoon activities consisted of socializing and mingling. Many also enjoyed some kind of entertainment such as sports while some engaged in extracurricular activities or returned to classrooms to study individually or as a group,

After dinner, many participants generally continued to socialize by watching movies together in a cabin, or having conversations over coffee or a drink. Seven participants talked about entertainment such as dancing, playing games, sharing movies among others in the student lounge.

At the end of the day, five students consciously made the time for self-reflection in order to digest the cross-cultural experience and what they had learned. One of the common practices included watching the ocean alone quietly while revisiting the day as well as keeping daily journals as a way of reflecting on the day. They might also take note of the good experiences so as to remember them clearly, but also to reflect on the not so good experiences and what they might have done
differently. They also described that alone time before going to bed was important to review different perspectives they gained or clarify what things they would like to communicate with others, especially with those they thought they had offended or unwittingly insulted.

_Academic Activities_

As an academic program that provided university credits, it stands to reason that academic endeavors were a large part of the participants’ lives on the ship. This section addresses students’ overall perception of the academic courses being offered, particular course(s) they found interesting and learned the most from, and their impressions of being in a culturally diverse classroom.

_Overall Perception of the Academic Courses_

Perceptions of the courses, particularly the degree of intensity, workload and hours spent studying for courses, varied widely among individuals. Many participants felt there was less emphasis being placed on the academic work and courses were significantly easier compared to their home universities. More graduate students however seemed to find the course work intense and demanding compared to undergraduate students in general. Two students remarked that it was the combination
of courses not being well developed or organized and students having less academic
discipline or focus due to their distracting new environment. Many students wanted to
be able to focus more on interacting with their peers from different parts of the world
beyond their academic setting.

Regarding the teaching and learning resources, six students criticized that
many courses were taught from the Western, particularly the U.S., perspective and
many assigned reading materials also reflected this narrow perspective. Furthermore,
even if the topic being discussed was international, professors exclusively focused on
the regions of their expertise. For instance, in the international business course, the
professor only discussed international business within the U.S. context. Thus, many
courses lacked the global viewpoint for which participants had hoped.

Participants reported that the occasional but a few intense and long-term
conflicts occurred between professors and students. The situation was described as a
few professors being negative role models for students by taking a narrow-minded
approach in their teaching and not being open to different perspectives on class topics,
and also by being culturally insensitive in communicating with a diverse group of
students in the class.
While there seemed to be intellectual disagreements or cultural conflicts on the surface, some felt that they became personal as they negatively progressed. Some of the proposed causes for this contentious atmosphere were too much time being around each other and a lack of intervention from The Friend Ship academic affairs or administration. The professors’ lack of willingness to go beyond their comfort zone and be open-minded toward differences intensified this combative relationship between some professors and students. On the other hand, participants also found that not all but many professors were receptive toward students’ arguments on this matter and tried to incorporate different perspectives on discussed topics.

While participants experienced challenges accessing the resources and information they wished to have due to the limited onboard library and limited Internet access, they also felt that this situation promoted an attitude of learning from peers especially those from different countries. Three participants mentioned how appreciative they were of this environment where they could learn not only from the professors and books but mainly from their peers. They were also pleasantly surprised by the different perspectives from other students on various topics and how overall students’ academic achievements were high.
The Academic Courses the Participants Learned the Most From

Five participants claimed that they found the classes, which helped them to see the world from a different perspective, were by far the most interesting. These types of classes included environmental studies, international business, media culture, world literature, and European history class. For instance, Eng and Kwame found the environmental studies most interesting as they were able to explore the world through environmental issues especially those related to the destination countries. They could relate to these issues because they are found in their country as well.

Eight students said they gained the most significant academic knowledge from their intercultural communication course. They found this course the most meaningful and useful. In addition to that fact that knowledge about intercultural communication was in great demand for students to navigate through the intense multicultural living situation during The Friend Ship program, participants also felt that their living arrangements provided real world situations in which to use their knowledge.

The Culturally Diverse Classroom

It must be said that the culturally diverse learning environment made a deep and positive impression on all the participants. It seemed ironic how the organization
The Scholar Ship emphasized the importance of academics when this was the lowest rated aspect of the entire program. While participants had relatively less positive things to say about the academic courses, they were very impressed by the diversity in terms of students’ cultural and academic backgrounds, which played out in the classroom context or in a group work. In fact, seven students wrote about the joy of having students who represented different countries all together in a classroom and how they were able to share and appreciate different perspectives. They found the classroom atmosphere that equally appreciates different perspectives and knowledge that each student brings to the classroom from their home culture very empowering to all the students particularly the non-Western students. This aspect of the program more than any other had a positive impact on developing a caring and cross-culturally sensitive community of learners. Accordingly, in such a safe and open learning environment, intellectual and cultural disagreements were no longer perceived as problems but opportunities to enrich learning as individuals and a community.

On the other hand, five participants addressed the challenges they faced while working together with peers from different cultures. These challenges included different communication styles, different teaching and learning styles, different norms
of participation, different ideas regarding quality of academic work, different norms of power distance, and language barriers. The participants commonly asserted that they felt more challenged by cultural differences while working in a small group for a class project. While participants still considered multiple perspectives or ideas for approach as resources for better learning, there was also increasing pressure to get things done. This task-oriented approach enabled students to overlook small things and pick fewer fights. Most importantly they learned the value of developing intercultural communication skills, perspective consciousness, and critical thinking thorough the interaction in the culturally diverse classroom and working with peers with different cultural backgrounds.

Non-Academic Activities

All study participants acknowledged the value of non-academic activities because through them they were able to learn about the cultures of their peers in a way that could never happen in the classroom setting.

Socializing

Participants explained that socializing was the most enjoyable and meaningful time for them. The major socializing opportunity was during the meal times. Lunch
along with dinner time were very important in the sense that those were the times when they met new people, got to know others through in-depth conversations, and embarked on meaningful friendships. Many explained that the conversations started over a meal often carried over to hours of conversation on the deck or over cups of coffee.

It was the policy of the Friend Ship community to strongly encourage participants to sit with different people during meals. All the participants commended The Friend Ship staff for their consistency in providing positive reminders about the importance of meeting new people and learning about and from them and also to share experiences with others instead of forming clicks and limiting one’s interaction and experience with others. Many confessed that it took a conscious effort not to sit with people from their country or other friends they had made, especially at the beginning. They however embraced “the meet new people approach,” and as a result, they got to know everyone on the ship creating a big inclusive click of The Friend Ship community.

*Entertainments*

Participants claimed that simple fun time together was also important. While
in-depth conversation during socialization was meaningful especially for learning about uniqueness and differences among cultures and individuals, it was very intense. Thus, having time for simple fun was also important in their opinion especially in an intense cross-cultural environment where tension, could easily arise. Fun time not only relaxed them as individuals and as a group, it also highlighted the similarities among them; everyone likes to have fun. For instance, some spent time playing team sports like soccer, hanging out by the pool, playing card or board games, enjoying different music, and dancing. Four participants mentioned how they enjoyed not only mingling with other students but also the staff and professors. Many participants felt getting to know them on a personal level had significant meaning because by doing so they became their mentors who not only share their academic knowledge but their life-experiences and wisdom. A few also particularly liked the events involving the whole ship such as sports festivals, which were great opportunities to see the community coming together as one and were very memorable.

Extra-curricular Activities

There were also different extra-curricular activities available on-board every evening, and students mentioned that they had engaged in some kind of activity
frequently either as participants or organizers. Those activities included Global Speaker Series, open lectures by guest speakers and, language teachers, book clubs, fund raising, and students working in the office or assisting in the preparation of social and cultural events as student staffs. The most frequently discussed extra-curricular activity was the Cultural Shows, which were organizing according to the different continents. Students volunteered to introduce their national culture in any way they wished and students from different cultures were welcome to join the group assisting students or joining in the performances such as dancing and music.

Overall, participants had much more to say about their onboard life outside of the classroom. Participants were particularly eager to talk about their interaction with others because they found the socializing for fun the most important part of their daily activities on board as those times often unexpectedly resulted in great learning experiences about different cultures and different individuals as well as one’s own culture.

Examples of Activities in Destination Countries

Being in new or different countries was something participants looked forward to and enjoyed immensely. In the destination countries, they either joined the
Academic Field Program or explored the countries independently. This section describes different activities they did in destination countries and their perception toward the experiences they had.

The Academic Field Program

The one way that participants spent their time in destination countries was participating in the Academic Field Program organized by The Friendship. As a part of their academic requirement, students participated in four academic field trips in China, Portugal, Panama, and Ecuador. Participants claimed that some academic field trips did not meet their expectations. For instance, some of them were not well organized or the contents of program were repetitive such as multiple lectures in a local university and did not effectively take advantage of the location or opportunities to interact with the local people. Furthermore, a few students mentioned that the participation fee was high, therefore, they had limited opportunities to register even if there were many programs they were interested in joining.

On the other hand, some students provided positive feedback for one of the Academic Field Programs in which they participated. In retrospect, they thought the Academic Field Program was effective in helping students to learn about a country
through specific academic interest such as international business, politics, and environmental issues. Luis also thought that the Academic Field Program provided him with an opportunity to learn about cultures of different countries in an organized setting as they visited educational and political institutions, and business. Brian appreciated how the Academic Field Program provided hands on learning by connecting textbook knowledge and classroom learning to the real world and helped him get a better grasp on each intellectual concept. Furthermore, Luis, Brian, and Stoffer insisted that the Academic Field Program made learning a more personal and eye-opening experience as it allowed them to experience firsthand what had been vague concepts in textbooks or in the classroom. For instance, Stoffer took a part of the Academic Field Program that visited a part of the jungle suffering from deforestation in Panama. While he had known about the issue all along, he was able to make a personal connection to it by actually visiting the site and listening to the personal stories of people who live there and work to save the forest. Lastly, the excursion type of academic field trip was also valued for promoting the sharing of striking experiences within the community of learners.

*Independent Travel*
Another way that participants spent their time in destination countries was traveling independently generally with other Friend Ship students. Instead of exploring the designation countries with other students they knew well, many participants selected their traveling companions based on common interests in a destination country and took it as the opportunity to get to know other members of the groups had known less. Three students said that this approach created a good balance of exploring the unknown in a new country and having the comfort of familiar company from The Friend Ship.

For the most part they preferred independent traveling to participating in academic field programs because they were able to be more spontaneous. Often times the plans were altered based on the suggestions of the locals. While participants were interested in visiting so called “tourist spots,” many placed higher emphasis on meeting local people and experiencing the local culture and community. The culturally diverse onboard life stimulated participants’ interest in learning from the locals and learning about their everyday lives. Eight participants explained that one of their favorite things to do was to discover things about the local people and culture just by walking around the city, taking local transportation, visiting local markets, and eating
at local restaurants. This gave participants more time to interact with locals and learn about their daily lives and their values and norms infused in their way of being and doing. They saw the purpose of being in different countries was not about going to tourist spots but learning about local people and their lives.
CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS FROM THE FRIEND SHIP PARTICIPANTS’ EXPERIENCE

Finding 1: Building Strategies to Deal with Difference by Encouraging
Open-mindedness and Critical Self-Reflection ........................................... 234
Finding 2: Heightening the Importance of Intercultural Friendships and
Relationships in Bringing the World to Alive .......................................... 292
Finding 3: Combining Theoretical Knowledge and Experiential Knowledge
to Better Understand the Culturally Diverse World .............................. 354
Finding 4: Complicating the Way People Interpret the World and Envision its
Future through International Cross-cultural Experiential
Knowledge ..................................................................................................... 400
Finding 5: Life after the Voyage: Practicing World-mindedness in Everyday
Life by Giving Back and Initiating Change ............................................. 455

Introduction

In this chapter, I present the emerging themes shared by all of the participants
in relation to the research question: In what ways do the study participants
retrospectively understand their transformation during The Friend Ship voyage toward
world-mindedness? The themes that emerged were based on the data extrapolated from
the interviews with fifteen alumni of The Friend Ship program. Additional data were
collected from 50 The Friend Ship experience-related documents selected by the study participants and the participants’ explanations of the importance of the documents in relation to their developing of world-mindedness. The themes that emerged included the following:

1. Building strategies to deal with difference by encouraging open-mindedness and critical self-reflection,

2. Heightening the importance of intercultural friendships and relationships in bringing the world to alive,

3. Combining theoretical knowledge and experiential knowledge to better understand the culturally diverse world,

4. Complicating the way people interpret the world and envision its future through international cross-cultural experiential knowledge, and

5. Life after the Voyage: Practicing world-mindedness in everyday life by giving back and initiating change.

---

1 In this study, I address the study participants as participants, and the all the students who participated in The Friend Ship as students.
Finding 1

Building Strategies to Deal with Difference

by Encouraging Open-mindedness and Critical Self-reflection

Introduction ................................................................................................................................. 235
Embracing the Emotional Highs and Lows of Living in the Culturally Diverse Community ................................................................................................................................. 237
   Embracing the Four Phases of Living in a Culturally Diverse Community ................................................. 237
      Nervous phase .......................................................................................................................... 238
   Excitement phase ...................................................................................................................... 239
      Reflection and adjustment phase .............................................................................................. 240
   Comfort phase ............................................................................................................................ 241
Developing Wisdom from All the Eye-Opening Experiences ................................................................. 242
   Emotionally positive events ......................................................................................................... 243
   Emotionally neutral events .......................................................................................................... 244
   Emotionally negative events ........................................................................................................ 246
Developing a Strategy to Effectively Deal with Difference ................................................................. 249
   Defining Open-mindedness .......................................................................................................... 250
   Pre-phase: Detaching the Self from One’s Home Culture .................................................................. 257
   Practicing-phase: Practicing Open-mindedness ............................................................................. 258
   Exploring the Motivation to Practice Open-mindedness .................................................................. 259
   Preparing Oneself to Practice Open-mindedness ........................................................................... 262
   Follow up-phase: Practicing Critical Self-reflection ......................................................................... 269
      Three Contexts of Practicing Critical Self-reflection .................................................................. 270
      Five Ways Critical Self-reflection Helped the Participants to Behave and Learn ....................... 271
   Personal Transformation .............................................................................................................. 278
Conclusion ........................................................................................................................................ 296
Introduction

Many participants explained that their journeys toward developing world-mindedness started with being exposed to different types of diversity and developing an understanding about diverse groups of people through insider’s perspectives and personal stories. They also found the importance of practicing open-mindedness in how they behave and interact with others. Becoming and continuing to be open-minded required conscious effort, and there were times that they felt uncomfortable going beyond their comfort zones. On the other hand, meaningful international cross-cultural learning through The Friendship program motivated them to keep trying. Brian explains his experience:

Although I was not totally closed-minded, I realized that I was more closed-minded than I thought. It made me realize that I was limiting myself to opportunities, to people, to experience, in every direction I went. It felt like all the windows were half open when they could be open all the way. So, that motivated me. I learned that you could learn a lot from people who have nothing in common with you. I understood
about it when I realized that people are not what I initially though they are. … After The Friend Ship, I am more interested in getting to know about who seems different from me. I see difference as uniqueness of the person and not something I use to judge others. I try to embrace the opportunity of meeting them (Brian, Interview #2, 09/03/09).

Brian implies that practicing critical self-reflection was a key to maximizing the benefits of open-mindedness and moving toward becoming a more conscious and caring, worldly person. The participants argued that becoming open-minded was initially difficult for them, because they were scared of taking a step to go beyond their comfort zones. After pushing themselves to go beyond their comfort zones multiple times and having developed strategies and abilities to cope with the process, they felt that it became less scary, and sometimes was even exciting or even a natural part of who they are. In order to ultimately obtain world-mindedness, people need to be able to take different interests and perspectives into consideration, and proceed in the best way possible. Thus, open-mindedness and the critical reflection required to maintain it were important, as the participants moved toward developing world-mindedness.
Embracing the Emotional Highs and Lows of Living

in a Culturally Diverse Community

The participants found the overall on-board life very positive; however, all acknowledged that there were emotional highs and lows along the way as they were sharing a very limited space for an extensive period of time with the same people. While such conditions could lead to occasional tension for any group of people, the participants thought that the cultural diversity among the students uniquely contributed to the many highs and lows that individuals experienced in The Friend Ship community because those highs and lows were meaningful for them to understand that even though you may be frustrated, at times you have to embrace the experience and learn from it in order to grow as a person and intercultural communicator. The next section identifies four phases of living in a culturally diverse community as the study participants came to embrace the emotional highs and lows of culturally diverse community living.

Embracing the Four Phases of Living in a Culturally Diverse Community

The participants talked about the emotional highs and lows they went through both as individuals and as an onboard community. Based on the data, the overall flow of the highs and lows can be broken down into four phases and described as the stages
of nervousness, excitement, reflection and adjustment, and comfort.

*Nervous Phase*

During the nervous phase, the participants experienced a sense of loneliness as a result of being away from the environment they were familiar with and from their family and friends. It was particularly intense at the beginning of the voyage, when they did not know anyone onboard. Their initial difficulties with effectively communicating cross-culturally onboard also temporarily added to their nervousness.

While the participants thought they increasingly learned to communicate well cross-culturally, some non-native English-speaking participants felt that adaptation to the American or the Western communication style was a continuous challenge. They felt that there were limits to translating their language to English because their culture is so different from the Western perspective. Furthermore, they felt nervous and insecure in the destination countries due to a lack of cultural capital. For instance, Misty explained how nervous and stressed she was in China where she could not understand a word people spoke; nor could she read any signs or find anyone who spoke English or Spanish, which is her first language. VB also shared how she became nervous and very self-conscious after she unintentionally yet greatly offended locals at
a temple in India and received intense criticism. VB explained that there was a Hindu festival during their visit in India. She was interested in learning more about it and decided to attend the special ritual held at a main temple in the community. Upon entering the temple, VB quickly realized that there were rules that locals were rigidly following. She had no knowledge about these rules so did her best to copy what locals did. Unfortunately, she failed to imitate them exactly. She did not enter or exit the room correctly and did not maintain the appropriate posture during the ritual. She was embarrassed for distracting locals during the ritual and was shocked when some people ran after her and yelled at her for her inappropriate behavior. To summarize, the participants experienced the nervous phase when they had intense anxiety from living in a new culture.

*Excitement Phase*

During the excitement phase, the participants discovered the joy of exploring new things with their Friend Ship peers, as well as learning from others and sharing their experiences. In addition to appreciating learning new things and having different experiences, the study participants found great joy in meeting others from different backgrounds and developing friendships with them. Through my study, I found a
positive cycle in which students desired to learn about different cultures and in turn taught others about their culture. The participants found that during this phase they developed mutual respect for each other and formed a community that celebrated diversity.

*Reflection and Adjustment Phase*

In the reflection and adjustment phase, the participants re-examined their assumptions and made a conscious effort constantly self-evaluate and develop open-mindedness. They clarified that the purpose of reflection and adjustment was not so that they would become someone they were not, but so that they would become better negotiators who could accomplish the personal goals they sat for themselves or the academic goals the faculty and staff had set for them. Those could be from getting from point A to point B in China to completing a group project for a class onboard. I found that the participants became increasingly goal-oriented during this phase. Instead of following how things were done at home or what they felt comfortable doing, they let go of many things – concepts of time, standards of good academic work, expectations of good teamwork, and communication styles, among others – and accepted alternative ways of doing things so that they could arrive at an agreement and
achieve their shared goal. They described that in this phase they carefully chose whether to pick a fight or not, so that things got done, and whether or not to insist on having their way in selected occasions when it was very important.

**Comfort Phase**

During this phase, the students continued to be occasionally confused and struggled with cultural differences; but by this point, they were comfortable with the idea of dealing with these differences, as they had experienced multiple occasions of cross-cultural miscommunication or conflict situations and had developed experiential knowledge and coping strategies. One of the important coping strategies was setting aside their cultural norms and accepting diversity as a norm. They came to expect the unexpected. By shifting their norms and standards, they were better prepared and were less stressed dealing with differences and more tolerant toward foreignness. Most importantly, the participants explained that they became more comfortable in the culturally diverse environment of The Friend Ship because they realized that some of their negative experiences indeed encouraged them to transform themselves and grow, and often resulted in overall meaningful learning experiences in the end. Even if the process of cross-cultural experience was not always pleasant, it was increasingly
comfortable to go through, and they became assured that it could lead to something
great.

The participants agreed the process of The Friend Ship community going
through these stages together became a meaningful bonding experience, as they acted
as each other’s support system and witnessed one another’s and the community’s
transformations. They observed that it was critical for not only individuals, but also the
community to embrace all aspects of living in the culturally diverse community
onboard, gaining insights from both the difficulties and the rewarding experiences.
This included students openly acknowledging the challenges and eye-opening
experiences they had living onboard the ship, talking about it, and receiving support. In
other words, in order to become a more cross-culturally well-rounded person and
develop world-mindedness, the participants insisted that it is important to go beyond
their comfort zones and embrace their experiences as a way of expanding their frames
of reference.

*Developing Wisdom from All the Eye-Opening Experiences*

In a cross-cultural environment, eye-opening experiences could be triggered
by emotionally positive, neutral, or negative events. The participants acknowledged all
these types of events led them to see something in a new light; however, they all concluded that the process of opening their eyes to new truths, in retrospect, was all positive at the end. The process may not have been emotionally pleasant, but it was meaningful, and in one way or another resulted in the students’ transformation as individuals.

I found that that once the participants developed the ability to transform the unpleasant experience or negative event into a meaningful learning experience, it was no longer perceived as a negative experience. Moreover, the data indicated that the participants found what made them open their eyes was for the most part not a single isolated striking event, but a series of little cross-cultural encounters in their daily lives onboard. The rest of the section describes emotionally positive, neutral, and negative events that led them to “aha moments” and how they developed meaningful learning experiences especially from initially negative experiences.

*Emotionally Positive Events*

The participants found some of the emotionally positive experiences to be particularly eye opening. They functioned as a model that helped them realize that it was possible to achieve some ideals or visions that they had. A series of emotionally
positive events can be broadly grouped into two types: the unique atmosphere of The Friend Ship community onboard and positive traits of others they wished to emulate.

Regarding the unique atmosphere of The Friend Ship community onboard, the participants were fascinated by how the group had developed a strong sense of community and trust, despite the diversity within and their rather short history together. The participants were also struck by the fact that they were learning and living in a community where differences were seen as positive and enjoyable, daily conversations developed naturally into discussions of topics of international importance, and students were actually taking the initiative to give back to the community and to the larger world. Regarding the positive traits of others they wished to emulate, the participants were impressed by how some students practiced acts of kindness on a daily basis. Such acts included being a good listener, treating others with respect, and always maintaining an outgoing and friendly attitude.

Emotionally Neutral Events

Being exposed to new cultures with which the students were not familiar was memorable and gave them an opportunity to gain new knowledge and understanding.

Some of the culture shock addressed by the participants included: a) the study
participants with a Christian upbringing being exposed to Islam and eventually gaining an insider’s perspective from their Muslim peers onboard, b) some of the participants having first-time extensive experiences with gays and lesbians, c) the participants having a first significant encounter with people of Hindu and Buddhist faith during their visit to India and gaining knowledge about those religions, d) the participants encountering new ethical standards in India regarding treatment of people based on their socioeconomic status; d) the participants being exposed for the first time to extreme poverty in India, f) the participants being exposed to strikingly unique local culture and tradition in India, and g) the participants realizing just how much people think and behave differently than they do in daily life.

Those events were shocking because they were significantly different from what the students were used to in their home society. The participants went from being unnecessarily judgmental toward those who were different than themselves to making efforts to understand the reasons for why things were the way they were. In many cases, the participants thought they were able to gain an insider’s perspective and make sense of different cultures. When they did so, they were able to recognize their judgmental attitude toward others based on their own cultural norms and made an
effort to consciously detach themselves from it. At the same time, it did not mean that they agreed or supported some of the things they had newly learned or witnessed. They continued to struggle in figuring out how to respect cultural differences and when to advocate for change, as it was appropriate. The most important knowledge that the study participants gained through experiencing culture shock was keeping an open mind so they could learn new things, even when they were not sure what to think or could not make sense of what they were witnessing.

*Emotionally Negative Events*

The emotionally negative events that led to the participants’ eye-opening experiences included: a) different interpretations of the same event, b) direct confrontation, c) cross-cultural insensitivity, and d) making false assumptions about others. First, different interpretations of the same event caused confusion and unpleasant feelings. The participants described that there were times that others were not happy with something they did or said, but they had no idea why. They explained that we tend to think others interpret events the way we do. In cross-cultural situations however, it is better to assume that many people interpret situations differently and it is important to make an effort to communicate your feelings and why you are feeling that
way, especially when you have negative feelings. For instance VB explained her frustrating experience doing a pair work with a Ghanaian student in the student lounge. She was very frustrated because the Ghanaian student stopped working every time someone he knew walked into the lounge and had long chats. VB was irritated because she thought he was being lazy and she was doing the extra work. It was eye-opening for her to later learn how Ghanaian culture expect people to drop whatever they were doing and have a conversation whenever they encounter with friends or acquaintance, and consider it as a good manner.

The participants claimed that oftentimes people had no idea how they might have made others feel uncomfortable or upset and vice versa, and there were no negative intentions. It was simply cross-cultural miscommunication. The participants explained that making an effort to communicate well was critical to avoiding a culture clash. Some of the efforts they made included consciously providing others with frequent explanations about how they felt and why, asking others for their feedback about how to communicate, and how to do things, and asking others for explanations for what they do, and why and how they do things.

Second, direct confrontations caused negative feelings and stress for some
participants. In this case, direct confrontation meant a situation where people had a hostile attitude. They described that they were not opposed to direct confrontations in order to better understand each other and find mutual respect or a middle ground that all could live with. However, confrontations where people were closed-minded and imposed their perspectives rapidly increased the tension. The participants claimed that it was important to know how to compromise, while maintaining their perceptions or ways of doing things. Furthermore, some of the cultural minority students felt anxious and uncomfortable challenging the norms or opinions shared by the majority. Even though The Friend Ship community was inclusive and multicultural, some study participants were not certain if those values were strong enough to survive confrontations.

Third, lack of cross-cultural sensitivity, particularly comments some people find insensitive or offensive, created a negative experience for everyone. This was particularly unfortunate when the offence was unintentional. The study participants described that there was a limit to knowing what might offend others especially in cross-cultural communication settings. However, there was no limit to making an effort to fix the miscommunication by apologizing and explaining how the offense was
not intentional and discussing how they could handle the situation differently in the future. Such exchanges taught the participants the importance of carefully observing others’ reactions and constantly practicing self-reflection to be a better and more cross-culturally sensitive communicator.

Fourth, facing one’s false assumptions about others led to emotionally negative experiences. The participants described that when they were not aware of their assumptions about others and commented about or reacted to others without reflection, it resulted in personal embarrassment and they were very sorry about their shortcomings. From those experiences, the study participants learned to make a conscious effort to keep their reactions or comments to themselves and think twice before expressing them.

**Developing a Strategy to Effectively Deal with Difference**

Next the participants discussed the intensity of cross-cultural exposure they experienced onboard day in and day out. The space on the ship was so limited that there was no way to escape each other. The participants thought that one of the main reasons that they learned to deal with each other’s differences so well was out of necessity; they were forced to figure out ways to live peacefully despite differences
and disagreements. The major strategy that the participants developed to effectively deal with differences was first and foremost, practicing open-mindedness. The next section describes the meaning of open-mindedness. It will be followed by the descriptions of three sequenced strategies that enabled the participants to effectively practice open-mindedness in dealing with differences caused by diverse cultural backgrounds: a) pre-phase: detaching self from one’s home culture, b) practicing open-mindedness, and c) follow-up phase: practicing critical self-reflection.

**Defining Open-mindedness**

The participants commonly agreed that being open-minded was critical for them to maximize their cross-cultural learning and to effectively deal with and appreciate cultural differences. Considering how all of the participants acknowledged the importance of open-mindedness, I examined exactly what the study participants meant by this term. Open-mindedness was overall described as the gateway to exploring and experiencing diversity. This section addresses two aspects of open-mindedness: mindset and taking action. The mindset aspect entails being open about new ideas and ways of thinking, while the taking action aspect deals with being open about different ways of doing things. Four qualities in practicing
open-mindedness emerged from the data: tolerance, patience, objective analytical practice, and acceptance.

The first quality found while practicing open-mindedness was tolerance. The participants claimed that an open-minded person generally has a blank slate. S/he is able to put his/her assumptions aside and is ready to explore the unknown without passing judgment. An open-minded person is comfortable with ambiguity and is therefore able to explore new things from multiple angles and is able to hold off forming an opinion until s/he forms a holistic picture of the situation.

The second quality found while practicing open-mindedness was patience. The two aspects of patience mentioned by the participants were patience toward the process of learning new things and patience toward oneself as a learner. Connected to tolerance for ambiguity described in the first quality, an open-minded person demonstrates patience in the process of searching for answers. S/he is open to the fact that there might not be an absolute answer, instead multiple correct answers and some answers might come immediately and others might only become clear when circumstances naturally unfold as time progresses. Open-minded people are also patient with themselves and are able to push themselves beyond their comfort zones.
The third quality of open-mindedness was the use of objective analytical practice. An open-minded person has the ability to analyze different perspectives objectively. While s/he keeps her subjectivity, which allows her to explore the new perspective free from bias.

The fourth quality of open-mindedness was acceptance. An open-minded person accepts different perspectives and adds them to his/her existing perspective. As a result s/he effectively expands his/her frame of reference. An open-minded person practices acceptance, which does not mean s/he is unconditionally accepting anything and everything. For instance, Paola explains this important difference:

To be open-minded, I think there are two parts to it. There is what it is to be open-minded and there is the risk of what happens when you are open-minded. I think it is the balance of those two that we should seek. I think being open-minded is about being able to see things in many different ways and acknowledging that everything is sort of like an artificial social construction. So, there is no system that is superior to another. But then there comes the question. I am not judging, but I am
certainly aware that I would not be comfortable accepting and
compromising some ideas or actions when it comes to some things such
as human rights. I think there is a broad line as to how much tolerance
you should have when it comes to people getting harmed. In my eyes,
not choosing to do anything in the name of being open to different
perspectives is choosing to do the wrong things sometimes. So, I think
being open-minded is trying to understand things, but I think it should
be backed up by certain evaluation. For instance, regarding the issue of
human rights, we need to discuss if it is acceptable that people are
getting harmed in the name of different social values and norms (Paola
Interview #2, 10/15/09).

In other words, acknowledging and recognizing differences and evaluating all
perspectives to add to one’s frame of reference are important aspects of acceptance.

As to whether people become open-minded, all of the participants agreed it is
ultimately a personal choice. It is hard work to consciously remove one’s cultural
frame of reference with which one grew up and look at the world with a fresh mind.

Reflecting on their experiences on The Friend Ship, some participants at times found
being open-minded in a new culturally diverse environment overwhelming. At the same time, they thought anyone could become open-minded if they chose to commit to expanding their knowledge and experience and grew as individuals upon which Brian comments further:

By the end of the program, people were open-minded but only those who wanted to become open-minded. Not everyone. [The Friend Ship] obviously could not make everyone open-minded but those who tried, like me, experienced a whole new world they never imagined. I, along with many, let myself grow. It is all within you to let yourself grow. On the ship, we were always encouraged to go beyond our comfort zones. It was about testing your limits and goals (Brian, Interview #3, 09/19/09).

While the participants insisted that becoming open-minded is ultimately each individual’s choice, they also thought the three factors – environment, personality, and education – could play a significant role in becoming open-minded. First, the participants were in agreement that the environment in which a person grows up
significantly influences one’s open-mindedness or perception toward being open-minded. Misty supported this point:

I think becoming open-minded is largely an individual’s choice; but people need the exposure to something different in order to realize that there is something more out there than what they have known and go through the process. Some people might be closed-minded not because of their personal choice, but because they don’t know anything different (Misty, Interview #2, 09/05/09).

If you grow up in a mono-cultural or rather closed-minded society, it requires an even stronger will to become open-minded. On the other hand, people often use their cultural background as an excuse for not exposing themselves to difference, as Luis argues below:

Sometimes, it is very hard for people to take down their own cultural veil even though they want to. At the same time, there are people who purposefully put up their cultural veil and close themselves off because
they do not want to see anything different. ... I think to be open-minded is a person’s choice and you can still be open-minded because in the end, it is you who has to challenge yourself and push yourself to step outside your comfortable cultural circle (Luis, Interview #2, 09/15/09).

Summarizing Misty and Luis’ comments, it could be argued that one’s cultural environment may be an external as well as an internal factor that prevents one from being open-minded. Moreover, the participants believed that firsthand intense experiences in a cross-cultural environment where people have to become open-minded to live comfortably, just as within The Friend Ship onboard community, were effective in practicing open-mindedness. Such environments not only made individuals realize the importance of this trait, but also provided an opportunity to gain experiential knowledge of how to become an open-minded person and practice this skill in daily life.

Second, the participants then explained how some aspects of personality could help or hinder people’s quest to become open-minded. Everyone has their norms and going beyond one’s comfort zone can be emotionally challenging for someone who is
not used to or is uncomfortable with taking risks. On the other hand, some people are naturally more adventurous and find excitement and joy in going beyond their comfort zones. Despite their different comfort levels, students stated that what makes them capable of becoming open-minded and practice it well is their ability to understand themselves and to make appropriate adjustments in effective ways.

A third aspect that may play an important role in shaping people’s open-mindedness, according to the participants, is education. They argued that education has the potential to increase students’ awareness toward differences. If students received education that actively introduces multiple perspectives and promotes critical thinking, they will have an easier time translating the concepts they learned in the classroom into the real-world.

*Pre-phase: Detaching the Self from One’s Home Culture*

The pre-phase toward open-mindedness consisted of participants developing the will to go beyond their comfort zones so that they could consciously detach themselves from their home cultures because it restricted their perceptions, and to some degree limited their ability to take risks and be open. They claimed that detaching themselves from their home cultures was important because it led to
increasing opportunities for them to actively seek new experiences and understanding and potentially adopt new perspectives. Being on The Friend Ship made it easy for them to free themselves from their frames of reference, cultural norms, ways of thinking, and assumptions toward others that were strongly influenced by the cultures in which they grew up.

*Practicing-phase: Practicing Open-mindedness*

The participants believed their ability to practice open-mindedness was to some degree a natural outcome of living in the diverse Friend Ship community. The cross-cultural experience onboard was an intense daily experience. Even if you wanted to, there was no way of avoiding it; therefore, becoming open-minded was inevitable to cope with the situation. Luis shared a story that provides an example this point:

When you encounter people from other cultures, for example a different sexual preference from mine, you do not know how to act. Oftentimes, it is not because you discriminate against someone, but you never had the experience of closely interacting with them. For me, homosexuality was kind of like that. At the beginning on the voyage, I did not know
how to act around students who were gay but I ended up becoming
good friends with one of the gay students for the first time in my life. It
is because I pushed myself to go beyond my comfort zone and remain
open-minded, giving it a try. And I got to have very meaningful and
positive experiences with someone of a different sexual preference
(Luis, Interview #1, 09/15/11).

The participants explained that they identified or developed the motivation to be
open-minded and expanded their capabilities to practice open-mindedness because
they wanted to develop friendships and better understand their peers.

*Exploring the Motivation to Practice Open-mindedness*

The participants explained that a firm understanding of why they wanted to
practice open-mindedness was very important, as it required making a conscious effort,
and was not always easy. There were many factors that motivated the study
participants to strive to be open-minded. These included: a) a fascination for
differences; b) a desire to learn; and c) a desire to do the right thing.

First, the participants were generally fascinated with differences. To maximize
their experience with differences that they encountered during The Friend Ship, they
wanted to be open-minded so that they would not restrict themselves from exploring,
experiencing, and appreciating what they enjoyed; difference. Many had rebellious
spirits and were eager to have new experiences and were ready to see different
perspectives and ways of doing things. So they found their experiences with
differences humbling and meaningful. They perceived exposure to differences as
opportunities to expand themselves personally and academically. The participants
often were confronted by others’ prejudices as well as their own and worked hard to
break through them. After The Friend Ship voyage, they felt that they increasingly
knew what it means to celebrate diversity.

Second, the participants had a strong desire to learn from others, especially
from others’ experiences and understand them better. Coraline explained the
motivation to practice open-mindedness in this way:

If you care about others so much, you naturally care about their
opinions intentionally or unintentionally. You care about them so much
because they are your friends. If they are important friends, you want to
understand what they are trying to say to you especially when you disagree. Your friends may not tell you that you cannot have a different opinion or your opinion is wrong, but they may ask you to re-evaluate your opinion saying, “Are you sure? What about this kind of idea?” It is times like that that really help you to develop and use open-mindedness.

(Coraline, Interview #2, 09/15/09).

Just like Coraline, many participants had a strong desire to listen, analyze, and learn from the personal stories of their peers onboard in order to better understand their new friends and also share their stories, once they returned home. The participants found active listening skills and maintaining openness to whatever their peers shared with them without judgment to be very important. Listening with an open mind was the best way to learn about their peers. Moreover, many added that it helped them to learn about themselves more objectively and grow as people.

Third, the participants had a strong desire to do things right. They came to the realization that in a multicultural environment there were multiple ways of doing this. This understanding made them believe that finding a middle ground of negotiating
between different interests or opinions was the best option. Paola explained her aspiration to be open-minded and challenge herself:

I think to be open-minded is something to aspire to. I think it is more of an ideal and a value you choose for yourself. I believe that doing the right thing – if there is such a thing – it is about trying to be considerate of others and not letting your ego to guide you (Paola, Interview #2, 10/15/09).

This motivation was rooted in their desire to be caring toward their friends with different cultural backgrounds and considerate of their needs and interests, as well as their own.

Preparing Oneself to Practice Open-mindedness

Motivation alone was not enough to effectively practice open-mindedness. The participants described in what ways they prepared themselves so that they could practice open-mindedness. The elements of preparation include knowledge, skills, ability, attitudes, disposition, and self-confidence.
The first element of self-development is knowledge, which includes facts and intellectual knowledge, as well as experiential knowledge. The facts and intellectual knowledge that the study participants considered the most important were about different religions, specific cultures, concepts of culture, and theories of intercultural communication. The experiential knowledge that they said they valued included culturally specific knowledge gained through firsthand cross-cultural experience and intercultural communication through actual practice.

The second element of self-development is skills, which were needed on a daily basis during The Friend Ship participation. These include critical thinking, good research/study habits, intercultural communication, negotiation, problem-solving, and leadership skills. VB described how a combination of all of these skills was important in cross-cultural living situations:

It was just adapting constantly, being challenged constantly, resolving problems constantly, explaining things to others, and communicating and working with others constantly. A lot of the time, we did not know what was going to happen next. It put stress on many of us. Even for
those situations where we normally do not get stressed at home, we could easily stress and [it would] lead to a bad situation. So, it was important that we know how to break the pattern of unknown factors leading to stress and stress leading to big arguments. Also, it was great to know how to handle a situation when things [reached] the unfortunate conflict situation. Most of us never had experienced intense cross-cultural conflict to the degree you really have to work to solve it. I am glad I had the opportunity to experience it. I think it was very unique and meaningful. The experience made me realize my ability to deal with such situations but also made me very humble (VB, Interview #2, 9/11/09).

VB’s observations imply that there were not set cultural norms reflecting the diverse background of the students onboard; the culture of The Friend Ship community was flexible and also subject to continuous change. This demanded the participants to constantly learn and re-learn about what was going on onboard and in the destination countries and how they reacted or how they made sense of this changeable situation
through critical reflection.

The third element of self-development was ability: the ability to go beyond one’s comfort zone and the ability to critically reflect on oneself. In order to deal with cultural diversity, the students developed a habit of constantly going beyond their comfort zones so that they could better understand others and how they as a community could work together despite differences. The participants also emphasized the development of ability to critically reflect on one’s thoughts, emotions, and behavior. They realized that by constantly re-examining their cultural norms, values, and beliefs, they were able to increase their awareness and acceptance of differences.

The fourth element is attitude. The participants found the most improvement in their initiative taking, a positive and optimistic approach to challenging situations, a tolerant and open attitude in dealing with differences, a less judgmental attitude in cross-cultural understanding, and flexibility in negotiating. Coraline describes her experience below:

It really [requires us] to *tango*, I would say. I would have not been able to be so nice if the man had not been nice to me. It always takes two
people to raise a conflict and also to solve it. When two people are on
the negative side, it develops tension and distrust; but when two people
are on the positive side, it is the time when friendship [develops]. Even
if the sides were unbalanced, you try and do your best to [have a]
positive outlook. It is difficult sometimes especially in a country I don’t
know much about. I was fortunate to have people around who
demonstrated the positivity to remind me. So even though I was
skeptical of things, as a group, we balanced things out well, like having
a good cop and bad cop (Coraline, Interview #1, 08/18/09).

Coraline’s observations addressed the importance of having a positive attitude to
collaborate in cross-cultural or conflict situations and the positive atmosphere begins
when at least one of the persons involved has a positive attitude and influences the
others to do the same.

The fifth element of self-development is disposition. The participants explained
that people who practice open-mindedness are also thorough individuals. Remaining
open-minded demands the following dispositions: respect for others and self, being
empathetic, compassionate, and genuinely caring for others. The participants claimed that those dispositions were stimulated by living on The Friend Ship onboard community, which is a caring multicultural environment. Coraline described her emotional experience:

Treat others well and act with genuine love. I guess that covers so many feelings. It is kind of love for another that makes you want to be nice to them. [The Friend Ship] experience actually made me realize how many people I love than hate, despite our differences. It was because I did not pass judgment on anyone. I respected, valued, the acted out of kindness... it is hard to be kind in this world, where many people seem not to respect kindness (Coraline, Interview #1, 08/18/09).

While kindness is ideally something we should all give and receive, the study participants, including Coraline, focused on the origins of kindness. They were concerned that if people cannot be kind to others unless others were kind first, the circle of kindness might never start. Thus, they insisted on the importance of letting go
of judgment even for those who were not kind to you and taking the initiative to be kind to others.

The sixth and last element of self-development is self-confidence. The participants explained that the major factor that increased their self-confidence was their development in self-efficacy in a cross-cultural setting, which was widely supported by the development of cross-cultural competence. Luis elaborated on this point:

When I gained a set of tools and initiative, I felt more confident and became very optimistic. I learned what kind of ability and quality I have and how to use them well to make my cross-cultural experiences more meaningful. I may have developed those skills because I needed them. Then I internalized them and actually did something with them (Luis, Interview #2, 09/15/09).

When the participants developed the ability to navigate by themselves through a new place where they did not know much about the culture, they became increasingly
relaxed and found it easier to remain calm and open-minded. They also saw fewer boundaries between themselves and people of other cultural backgrounds and became more comfortable initiating or engaging in communication with diverse groups of people.

*Follow-up Phase: Practicing Critical Self-reflection*

The participants were able to practice critical self-reflection once they mastered open-mindedness. As a result of practicing open-mindedness, they increasingly were willing to expose themselves to differences and step out of their comfort zones and challenge their norms. Earlier in the section titled “Defining Open-mindedness,” I reported that the participants commonly described that practicing open-mindedness is the gateway to exploring and experiencing diversity. In other words, open-mindedness allowed them to go beyond their comfort zones, but this was just a starting point.

They explained that becoming open-minded is one thing, maintaining it meaningfully in the real world is another. There were three contexts in which critical self-reflection was used to help the participants become meaningfully open-minded. They used critical self-reflection: a) to remain open-minded while being selective and
conscious of their own opinions, b) to make-sense of unusual or negative experiences and to remain open-minded, and c) to learn from the positive practices of others and apply them to oneself.

_Three Contexts of Using Critical Self-Reflection_

The participants employed critical self-reflection to remain open-minded while being selective and conscious of their own opinion formation. They insisted that being open-minded is a conscious and thoughtful act and does not imply letting anything and everything go unconditionally or without conscious thought. They explained that meaningful open-minded practice required them to consciously explore, recognize, and evaluate what is new and different, without passing immediate judgment. Instead, it was important to examine how they were making sense of and reacting to new situations. Critical self-reflection helped them to be grounded and be conscious and informed thinkers and to attentively practice open-mindedness.

The participants also employed critical self-reflection to make-sense of unusual or negative experiences and remain open-minded. It would have been easy for them to go back to a narrow mindset when they could not make sense of what was going on and get increasingly frustrated and overwhelmed. Critical self-reflection enabled them
to hold off on judgment and objectively examine the situation through taking the following steps and taking a closer look at: a) what was different and unusual about other ways of perceiving the situation, b) how they reacted to the uncomfortable situation and how they could have responded differently, c) how others reacted to their reaction and why and how their reaction made them feel the way they did, and d) how they could communicate with others in search of a common understanding and ways to best deal with the situation.

Lastly, the participants employed critical self-reflection to learn from the positive examples of others and apply it to themselves. They realized that their practice of conscious open-mindedness led to a newfound awareness of their surroundings. They also stated that there were occasions where others dealt with a situation very differently from how they would have, but it turned out to be remarkably better than their old way. Those unexpected positive models caused them to reflect on how they would approach such a situation, how others do things differently and why, and what they need to change, in order to employ a positive outlook.

_Five Ways Critical Self-Reflection Helped the Participants to Learn and Behave_

Of the three ways that the study participants achieved critical self-reflection,
they found that critical self-reflection helped them in the following ways: a) to make a conscious effort, b) to conduct self-examination, c) go beyond their comfort zones, d) to not allow negative experiences to lead to imposing judgment over others, and e) to reassess one’s motivation for practicing critical self-reflection.

First, critical self-reflection helped the participants to make a conscious effort to think a lot, de-clutter and reorganize their thoughts, and effectively communicate them with others. They described that critical self-reflection transformed their reactive thinking or shallow opinions into a deeper level of consciousness. Andrea demonstrated this point below:

When something went wrong or every time I could not work well with others, I began to think who they are, what they do, how they do things, what kinds of skills they have, what they think about me, and what I should be doing to meet their expectations or find a way to work things out well. I felt that if I understood who they are, I would be able to make appropriate adaptations and work with them better. So I definitely focused more on observing and understanding others first than
convincing them to do things my way (Andrea, Interview #2, 09/05/09).

The participants learned that occasional tension was a natural part of a cross-cultural experience. They also learned that cross-cultural miscommunication and having biases and stereotypes toward others were natural to some degree. Thus, they needed to consciously practice critical self-reflection to reassess this negative thinking.

Second, critical self-reflection also helped the participants to conduct self-examination as a way to self-check and improve their thinking. The participants explained that critical self-reflection increased their self-awareness and understanding about the impact of their home culture on their perceptions and made it possible for them to effectively examine their biases and presumptions. They learned that their ideas and assumptions about other countries and people could be wrong and could result in mistrust. Stoffer shared his experience of examining his assumptions:

It is pretty difficult to do, but I had to check my assumptions first and foremost. It was like throwing everything you had out the window once and for all. I guess I can say that it was being more like a child and
asking really dumb questions. A lot of times, I did not ask those
so-called dumb questions because I felt I knew what people would say
anyway. But my experience with The Friend Ship made me realize that
those things I thought as truths were not always true, after all (Stoffer,
Interview #2, 10/15/09).

Stoffer’s quote indicates that acknowledging one’s limited thinking or knowledge
ideally leads participants to seek basic information and explanation from others, which
was so much better than remaining ignorant. They also learned that in-depth
understanding of others or even of oneself requires asking not only what is different
but the reasons why those differences exist. In addition, examining their minds
extended to examining their behavior. The practice of critical self-reflection challenged
the participants to reflect the change in perception and to their behavior, as well.
Through reflective thinking, they learned how their behavior has consequences and
positively or negatively could affect others.

Third, critical self-reflection helped the participants to go beyond their comfort
zones to expand themselves as individuals. Critical self-reflection helped them think
through what they were struggling with and what changes they would need to be making to reach their goal. Critical self-reflection was the effective and logical way to pushing themselves to break out of their shells. The participants learned that once they were able to do this, they could see commonalities among people who appeared to be very different on the surface.

Fourth, critical self-reflection helped the study participants to contain their negative emotional experiences and not impose their judgment on others. They described that there were different ways that they practiced critical self-reflection. These included having quiet time to write a reflective journal or analyzing their thoughts or behaviors with others who provided constructive criticism. One of the ways they conducted critical self-reflection was by having an instant or reactive reflection, which helped them not panic by taking the situation as a personal attack, but rather, being objective. For instance, Misty described this practice:

I never thought about disagreement or problems with others during The Friend Ship on a personal level. I rather approached those as issue-based difficulties. I did not think about what I felt towards the
person who disagreed with me, but I focused more on how I could solve the problem we were having and the conflicted situation we were in (Misty, Interview #2, 09/05/09).

The participants also learned the importance of differentiating between negative criticism and constructive criticism when giving and receiving feedback. It was not easy to give and receive certain types of feedback, which suggested some changes, but critical reflection trained them to monitor their emotions and maintain control over them to make the experience constructive.

Lastly, critical self-reflection reinforced the study participants’ motivation to practice critical self-reflection. They believed that critical self-reflection helped them to become a complete person by gaining more consciousness, awareness, and understanding about themselves as well as their surroundings. They found critical self-reflection to be an empowering process that nurtured their self-esteem and motivated them to overcome challenges and prepared them to handle a similar situation better in the future.

Even though they were motivated and had a set of tools, it would have been
difficult for the study participants to practice meaningful and effective
open-mindedness that led to personal growth without constant critical self-reflection.

Being open-minded was not about going with the flow, but involved consciously
observing and evaluating a situation, variables, and oneself. Paola described one of her
experiences of practicing critical self-reflection:

Even when things that happened were bad, I actually felt good about
them. Many experiences I had initially shocked me negatively and I was
very emotional, but as I took time and reflected later, usually through
writing in my daily journal, I became less upset about them because the
journal writing process led me to understand better or make sense of
what happened and why it happened. I felt happy about it. When a
similar situation occurred later on, it was less dramatic in a good way,
because I was able to refer to the experience and learn from it that I
already had. (Paola, Interview #2, 10/1/09).

The participants importantly experienced that the ability to reflect critically enabled
them to learn from both positive and negative encounters.

Personal Transformation

This section will discuss how the study participants needed to go beyond their comfort zones to expand themselves cross-culturally and how practicing open-mindedness and critical self-reflection plays major roles in their journey toward becoming more cross-culturally competent. The participants found that as they became more cross-culturally competent they experienced some transformations. This section presents the changes the study participants went through as a result of becoming cross-culturally more competent in the areas of: a) social interactions b) values and priority, c) interests, d) skills and abilities, e) self-understanding, and f) viewpoints.

The first transformation the participants underwent was one regarding their social interactions. They described that they became more well-rounded people who are comfortable interacting with different people, dealing with different ideas, experiencing new things, being flexible and spontaneous. They believed open-mindedness led them to be more worldly and actually celebrate diversity. Open-mindedness allowed them to experience the world directly or indirectly during The Friendship program, as they made more emotional connections with the world.
Moreover, as they gained increased appreciation for the diversity and uniqueness that individuals bring, and saw themselves as a part of the diversity not as the standard, they became more tolerant of others and felt more confident dealing with the cross-cultural situations that they previously had found difficult.

The second event the participants experienced was transformation of their values and priorities. They addressed that being open-minded enabled them to recognize different values and priorities people have and also encouraged them to review their own values and priorities. Many participants addressed that prior to The Friend Ship program, they found that they placed more value on financial and material wealth. Through The Friend Ship experience however, they came to place more value on non-superficial things such as people and friendships, self-development, and different cultures. Andrea explained her personal transformation:

I was actually very impressed by people in all of the developing countries we visited. There were content and completed people. They did not need anything else but each other. They had a strong community and a rich local culture. In a non-materialistic way, I found those people
and their lives very rich. After my experience visiting those developing
countries, I no longer look at counties through their degree of industrial
development. Instead, I look at the people. What is important to me is
who those people are, their kindness, traditions, and cultural wisdom

(Andrea, Interview #2, 09/05/05).

The quote describes how Andrea’s open-minded approach during the time she spent in
less-industrialized countries made her aware of a different kind of wealth. It also
indicates that her critical self-reflection led her to shift her values from material wealth
to inter-personal or communal wealth. The participants also described their values,
especially with regard to religion, became more accepting. For instance, Kwame
explained his value transformation below:

Some of my values underwent a transformation. I retained others
nonetheless. The changes were gradual, and not sudden. Through
constant interaction in the classroom and group activities in informal
settings, I came to understand the world from others’ perspectives. First,
I got hit hard by others’ values or religious beliefs that contradicted mine. I asked questions of people who had different values and religious views in order to understand their perspectives. I also asked people from different countries or continents their opinions and feelings about those values and beliefs. From there, I was able to make more informed decisions that were objective and more respectful of others (Kwame, E-mail #2, 12/10/09).

The transformation of his values enabled Kwame to conduct a healthy balancing act, managing different perspectives and realizing that things are not always one way or another, but that one can respect different “ways.” The participants were able to value and accept different religious beliefs and values while still maintaining their own religious views or values. Furthermore, they became more conscious of the formation of their values and established priorities. Instead of blindly copying the values and priorities of people in their home environment, they came to make more conscious and informed decisions by exploring and learning from different perspectives.

The third transformation that the participants underwent was transformation of
their interests at personal, academic, and professional levels. At a personal level, being open-minded encouraged them to not settle for what they already like or are familiar with, but to go beyond their comfort zones and explore and learn new things. It pushed them to enjoy and embrace cultural diversity during The Friend Ship program from food and music, to other ways of life. The participants most importantly came to increasingly value seeking opportunities to interact with people from diverse backgrounds and expand their circle of international friends. Eng described how developing international friendships transformed her:

Definitely all of the friendships I gained from [The Friend Ship] impacted me. I think I became more culturally sensitive and I have a lot more cross-cultural awareness. I have a better understanding of how people may be different because of their cultural background. I think all of these come to you so much more naturally after the whole [The Friend Ship] experience. Many things that were unique became normal things because you spent the entire four months speaking with people of different cultures and hanging out with them. When you talk to others
and they have different opinions, you know not to be offended and
handle it well, so that it does not get ugly or develop into a fight
because you are there to make friends, not enemies. You learn to be
more diplomatic in the way you communicate and careful what you say
and how you say it, especially when you are communicating with
people from different cultural backgrounds. And yes, it is the different
backgrounds that lead to different opinions. You just have to learn how
not to take anything too personally or not to get emotional and get angry
or be offended easily, because people do, and always will, have
different opinions and disagree with you. So you learn how to be patient
with others and also with yourself, when people have different opinions.
Once you can do it, your circle of friends expands tremendously and
you learn so much from them and appreciate them more than you ever
imagined (Eng, Interview #1, 09/28/09).

Eng indicated that it is possible and meaningful to develop friendships with people of
different backgrounds. The participants went beyond their comfort zones in terms of
making friends and found it very rewarding because it not only allowed them to learn different perspectives and pushed them to develop the ability to handle emotional and conflicting situations well through the experience, but also proved to them that one can develop respectful and close friendships despite differences.

At the academic level, practicing open-mindedness and critical self-reflection assisted the study participants to develop habits of understanding a topic by using different perspectives. They explained that being open to different viewpoints and developing heightened understanding, especially concerning international-related topics, not only gave them opportunities to reexamine their perspectives, but also to see the world in a different light. Their Friendship experiences that led them to develop personal and emotional connections to the world also made them want to learn more about global issues and some countries or regions of the world they had not learned much about in their prior schooling.

At the professional level, many participants came to think about how they could or would like to contribute to the world through their careers. The career paths that the study participants were on or planned to pursue varied from international development and politics, to business and media. As a result of The Friendship
experience, they were interested in getting involved one way or another on an international scale. Thus, they were increasingly interested in continuing to learn about different cultures, people, conditions of different regions or countries, and global issues, among others.

The fifth transformation the study participants experienced was in their abilities and skills related to cross-cultural competence and self-efficacy. They developed cross-cultural awareness, such as critical media literacy. They observed that The Friendship experience helped them to see their own and others’ unique cultural points of view. They also said they focused less on differences and more on commonalities among cultures in search of common ground. This awareness led them to develop cross-cultural sensitivity and intercultural communication skills that ultimately enhanced their cross-cultural competence. Kwame reflected on his development of cross-cultural competence and self-efficacy:

The Friendship experience greatly enhanced my understanding of people from different cultures. I could comfortably interact with almost anybody anywhere in the world. ... I am more tolerant and accepting of
different ways of life that people have. Now I believe it is wrong to ...

judge other cultures and people’s ways of life, including religion and political decisions or activities only using my own cultural lens. Now I believe that we need to celebrate diversity and not be scared of it

(Kwame, E-mail #1, 12/10/09).

Kwame speaks for many of the study participants who claimed the importunute of knowing where they are coming from as the first step toward cross-cultural competence and self-efficacy. Then, people need to accept and appreciate both similarities and differences to make adjustments to live in harmony with one another.

In relation to self-efficacy, the participants addressed a series of survival skills that helped them get through the intense cross-cultural experiences they had on The Friend Ship. These skills included critical thinking, decision-making, learning skills, and intercultural communication skills.

The sixth transformation that the study participants had was transformation in self-understanding. The participants described that they learned as much, if not more, about themselves and their own culture, as they did about others’ cultures. Brian’s
observations support this:

I did not realize, but I was closed-minded before I got on [The Friend Ship]. I realized I was not very open-minded to others’ beliefs, whether they were against me or for me. I was not open-minded about people, their worldview, and their debates. Once I realized how closed-minded I was, I was able to make a more conscious effort to be more open-minded. Being open-minded broadened my view of how people think (Brian, Interview #1, 08/24/09).

The onboard experience taught the students that the first step toward open-mindedness was to learn how closed-minded they were. They also witnessed that open-mindedness and critical self-reflection led to emotional maturity and stability. As a result, their ways of reacting to differences in cultures, beliefs, and worldviews became more stable and effective.

Lastly, the participants experienced a transformation of their perceptions toward their own countries and cultures, toward the concept of change and the
unknown, and difference. First, their perceptions toward their country and culture were transformed by being open to seeing them from others’ perspectives. In addition to gaining different perspectives, comparing their country and cultures with those of others helped them practice critical self-reflection and identify the new positive and negative aspects of their own countries and cultures, as well as newly found differences and commonalities with others around the world.

Second, they also changed their feelings toward the unknown. Prior to The Friendship, the participants were less open to change and the unknown. Coraline described her experience:

Before the trip, the idea of constant change terrified me. I do not know why I was terrified. But on [The Friend Ship], constant change was a normal thing. It was so real that way. It made sense to constantly meet new people, do new things, and go to new places. It was almost expected of you. You needed to adjust and keep up with the changes around you all the time. After doing that for a while, it was not a scary thing, anymore. It was actually welcomed! I was afraid of change, but
after this experience, I did not mind. Now being back home, I am actually restless because I miss the constant changes, diversity in a community, and a variety of experiences in daily life. That is why I like traveling in New York City or any other destination different from where I live in Pennsylvania. The sense of wonder is still there and you cannot really get rid of it (Coraline, Interview #1, 08/18/09).

The quote implied that the study participants developed an increasingly open attitude toward change and the unknown during the voyage and they came to perceive constant change as the norm and developed the ability to enjoy the unknown and expect the unexpected.

Importantly, their perception toward differences was also transformed. Before the voyage, the participants were less open or accepting of differences because they had stronger ideas about what was right and normal. The Friend Ship experience encouraged them to become open to and accepting of differences, and that led them to think that there is no single perfect way of thinking or doing things. Furthermore, they came to see differences as simply a part of life, not necessarily as superior or inferior
Many participants explained that their journeys toward developing world-mindedness started with their exposure to different types of diversity and developing an understanding about diverse groups of people through insider’s perspectives and personal stories. They also found the importance of open-mindedness in how they behaved and interacted with others. Becoming and continuing to be open-minded required conscious effort, and there were times that they felt uncomfortable going beyond their comfort zones. On the other hand, meaningful international cross-cultural learning through The Friendship motivated them to keep trying. The participants argued that becoming open-minded was initially difficult for them, because they were scared of taking a step to go beyond their comfort zones. After pushing themselves and having developed strategies and abilities to cope with the process, they felt it became no longer scary, and sometimes was even exciting or a natural part of who they are. In order to ultimately obtain world-mindedness, people need to be able to take different interests and perspectives into consideration; thus, open-mindedness and critical reflection to maintain it were a vital step toward
developing world-mindedness.
Finding 2

Heightening the Importance of Intercultural Friendships and Relationships

in Bringing the World Alive

Introduction ................................................................................................................ 293
Developing Interpersonal Connections with People of Diverse Backgrounds .... 293
  Developing Close Friendships with the Diverse Students Onboard ............... 294
    The Role of Initial Conversations ................................................................. 296
    The Role of Similarities in Personality and Outlook ..................... 297
    The Role of Focusing on Inner Qualities in Understanding
      Different Cultures and People .............................................................. 298
    The Role of the Unique Environment Onboard ............................... 300
  Learning from Establishing Friendships with a Diverse Group of People
    Onboard .................................................................................................... 304
  Identifying the Uniqueness of the Friendships Made Onboard .......... 310
  Maintaining the Friendships after the Program’s End ................. 311
Familiarizing Oneself with Different Cultures and People ...................... 313
  Familiarizing Oneself with Different Cultures and People through
    Onboard Cultural Learning Activities .................................................. 314
  Familiarizing Oneself with Different Cultures and People through
    Visiting Different Countries .................................................................. 318
  Comparing Experiences in Destination Countries with those Onboard ...... 320
  Recognizing the Similarities and Differences Among People and
    Cultures ................................................................................................... 323
  The Process of Familiarizing Oneself with Different Culture and
    People .................................................................................................... 324
Exploring One’s Engagement with The World ............................................. 330
  Gaining Awareness and Knowledge about Global Issues .................. 331
  Putting Think Globally and Act Locally into Practice .......................... 332
Exploring and Expanding Identity ............................................................. 334
Introduction

The study participants claim that personal and emotional connections with the rest of the world are the most critical element in developing world-mindedness. Those connections were the major factors that inspired the participants to care for the world more and more, and to explore the importance of making the world a better place, with a concern for the best interests of all. The personal and emotional connections established by the study participants during The Friendship program made the world smaller and more real in their eyes. This section discusses in what ways and how the study participants developed the personal and emotional connections with people and cultures across the world, taking into consideration the following aspects: a) developing inter-personal connections with people of diverse backgrounds, b) familiarizing themselves with different cultures and people, c) exploring and expanding one’s engagement with the world, and d) exploring and expanding identity.

Developing Inter-personal Connections with People of Diverse Backgrounds

The participants stated that the personal and emotional connections they
developed through The Friend Ship, not factual knowledge from books was the most important factor which led them to nurture and practice world-mindedness. They insisted that having more knowledge about the world did not automatically give them personal and emotional connections with it. There were two ways that the study participants developed meaningful interpersonal connections with different people and cultures: they developed close friendships with the diverse group of Friend Ship students onboard, and they also had meaningful interactions with locals in the destination countries. This section describes how the study participants developed friendships and what they learned from nurturing and enjoying those friendships.

*Developing Close Friendship with the Diverse Students Onboard*

All of the study participants remarked that life onboard The Friend Ship gave them a unique opportunity to bond with their fellow students. They highly valued the time they spent developing these friendships. It was perhaps the most important of all of the experiences gained through The Friend Ship program. One of the students, Stoffer eloquently describes the friendly atmosphere onboard:

> Meeting new people who come from different places was very
important to me. It was what I enjoyed the most and one of the reasons I joined [The Friend Ship in] the first place. When I had any free time during the day or needed a break from studying, I would find people to sit around and talk about things, anything from very casual and silly to serious and deep. I liked spending time just talking with people because you never knew what was going to come up and what we would end up talking about. But we always had good conversations. I loved that. Those times were very special because I had fun with them and got to learn who my friends really were (Stoffer, Interview #1, 10/12/09).

As Stoffer implied, the friendships formed on the journey were special to the study participants not simply because they were international in nature but were developed upon knowing and appreciating each other’s differences through multiple meaningful conversations shared throughout the voyage.

Friendships developed onboard in the following ways: a) the role of initial conversations in the establishment of friendships, b) the value of similarities of personality and outlook, c) the role of inner qualities in the nurturing of friendships,
d) the role of the unique environment onboard The Friend Ship regarding the
forging of special attachments.

*The Role of Initial Conversations*

First, the study participants pointed out that all of the close friendships started
out with casual conversations about their lives back home, personal interests, or
making plans in the destination countries during mealtime or when gathering at the bar.
The students stated that the conversations developed over common themes, such as
family, friends, relationships, school life, weekend life, food culture, and favorite
music, books, movies, and sports. There were occasions when they were surprised to
discover a common interest, such as their favorite authors or books. Those
conversations played an important role in helping them get a sense of each other’s lives
prior to boarding The Friend Ship. The conversations also reminded the students of the
similarities across cultures.

Second, the study participants also addressed the role of conscious or
unconscious factors that draw people together as friends. Factors that influenced
connection included the similarities in their home cultures, in their personalities, and
shared experiences that they had on The Friend Ship. Similarities in the students’ home
cultures promoted friendship, as there were fewer cultural barriers to overcome and fewer things that the students needed to explain to each other. Furthermore, sharing a similar home culture, having a shared historical heritage and communication style provided a sense of security and comfort.

*The Role of Similarities in Personality and Outlook*

Similarity in personality was a factor that brought some study participants closer to other students. Among them, the participants discussed personal character, sense of humor, similar interests and hobbies, and overall life experiences, particularly international experiences. Paola describes how similarities of native culture are actually less important, and that personal uniqueness plays a stronger role for her in making friends:

I had a very hard time understanding why people would seek someone from the same country to hang out with on [The Friend Ship]. For me, nationality was just another category and not particularly important. I think it may have had to do with the fact that I grew up in three different countries. I was used to the fact that others lived in very different ways
than I did and had different cultural references. Culture is only one
dimension of a person and does not completely define a person. So, I
think the lack of commonalities or I should say more differences
between people perhaps make friendship more interesting and better
(Paola, Interview #1, 09/24/09).

The data indicated that individuals’ prior international cross-cultural experiences and
personal values influenced their comfort levels in seeking friendships.

*The Role of Focusing on Inner Qualities in Understanding Different Cultures and People*

The study participants explained there were different approaches or mindsets they nurtured for developing friendships with one another, and they noticed how these changed throughout the voyage. At the beginning of the voyage, they used nationality or visual cues such as physical features and clothing as a short hand method for getting to know each other. As they continued to attend the programs on The Friend Ship, their reference points shifted, and they began to focus on inner qualities. The shift was promoted by the development of sincere and trusting friendships, as their respect for
their new friends motivated them to understand each other on a deeper level. To achieve this level of intimacy and care for one another, the study participants were eager to go beyond casual fun conversations and take the time to sit and really talk with each other. Brian describes his experience and meaning he found in having in-depth conversations:

On the boat, we did so many things together. I felt like I had known the participants forever because we had so much in common. We all acknowledged that we were coming from different places and there were differences among us but we all put these differences aside, as it was necessary to enjoy the experience together. It was not how things would have been on land where you go to school and interact [with] different friends and come home to your own comfortable place and take a break. So I really dug deep and started to understand who people really are beyond the categories placed on them (Brian, Interview #1, 8/24/09).
Brian’s story is an example of how the study participants were able to learn that the national or ethnic cultural backgrounds were only one dimension of who people are and they also developed a shared identity as “The Friend Ship family” because of the in-depth conversations they had.

The Role of the Unique Environment Onboard

The study participants stated that their friendships grew even deeper as a result of the unique environment onboard. The friendships that the study participants formed onboard came to have a deep purpose and meaning as they were each others’ support systems, family away from home, and a team of people who shared the once-in-a-lifetime experience together. Misty describes her experience as follows:

I got on the ship and got to know everyone. Then, my nervousness totally disappeared. After a day, I felt like I had been there for a week. After a week, I felt I had been there for a month. They were my support system. Especially when we were in different countries, they were in a sense my security blanket. Because I had them, I was able to go beyond my comfort zone, be adventurous and expand my worldview. There
were many things I would have not done without them, but they were there to experience things with me. I was encouraged by my friends and was able to experience the world the best way I could (Misty, Interview #1, 08/28/09).

The special quality of the friendships spoken of by the participants included being there for each other in times of excitement and challenges, and facing and solving problems together. On many occasions, they served as a positive role model and resource for each other, providing different perspectives, genuine support, and a positive outlook. Because of their shared experiences, they developed a deep respect toward each other. This kept them from developing cultural or individual hierarchies in the on-board community.

As the voyage progressed, the study participants formed meaningful and trusting friendships with other students and gradually started to open up to each other. They began to have many more long and deep conversations on various topics that were of a serious, sensitive, and/or personal nature. Brian describes the bond he had with his Friend Ship friends and their in-depth conversations:
Lots of people on The Friend Ship became like my family. Even though we were from different places, we were able to connect on a very deep level. It was amazing how similar we were despite the different backgrounds we all had. We understood each other. We knew each other’s strengths and weaknesses by the end of the first month. We knew what made each other angry or upset. We were able to bond over general things like movies and food and also deeper things like personal struggles or issues ... We were all very very comfortable with each other. There was no one I could not talk to and no topics were off limits.

We bonded well and it was like we could talk to anyone about anything (Brian, Interview #1, 08/24/09).

What Brian had to say implied that a safe and trusting environment was critical for the study participants to be open to having in-depth conversations with one another and sharing meaningful experiences. Those topics included both cultural and non-cultural matters; from social issues related to politics, economy, history, and stories about prior meaningful or life changing experiences, to cross-cultural or personal conflicts...
onboard. Stoffer provides an example of a meaningful conversation he had that had a deep impact on him:

I think the talks that were really interesting were when someone sat down with you and really talked for an hour or two about aspects of their country, such as their political system. In Denmark, we have this system that you basically pay fifty percentage of what you make as tax. It was very pleasant to sit there and answer people’s questions. It was also a good experience for me defending the system. That was something very different. It is not being Marxist, but that’s just the way we do things in Scandinavia. When I sat down and talked to people who were coming from very different places, ... I was very excited to learn about them and their countries. I usually ended up wanting to visit or even live in their countries afterwards (Stoffer, Interview #1, 10/12/09).

Knowledge about those topics could be gained from books. However, the study participants agreed that learning through in-depth conversations with their friends was
much more meaningful for them. It is because their friends’ insider perspectives or knowledge were often different from what was provided in books and also included more personal and in-depth perspectives on topics, which allowed for deeper learning to take place. The participants explained that those conversations were not always simply fun or pleasant due to the complexity of the topics, but they were always meaningful. Those deep conversations gave them opportunities to learn about their new friends’ life stories beyond surface level. They also encouraged the study participants to be open-minded toward different perspectives and enjoy broadening their minds as they encountered unexpected perceptions or ideas provided by their friends.

The Friend Ship also provided great learning opportunities to actually observe and learn from positive act of other students especially regarding culturally sensitive or potentially very subjective topics. These included German students talking about the Holocaust or Muslim students talking about Islamic teachings regarding women’s rights. Thus, they described in-depth conversations with their friends on The Friend Ship as the most important and meaningful experiences they had in their onboard life.

*Learning from Establishing Friendships with a Diverse Group of People Onboard*
The study participants learned a lot from the process of nurturing and having friendships with a diverse group of people onboard The Friend Ship. They were able to learn to value each other’s differences and understand and admire the knowledge and different perspectives of others.

First, the study participants were thrilled by their ability to make many friends from different countries on The Friend Ship. They claimed that the unique shared experience of participating in The Friend Ship as well as the generally shared interests and commitment to meeting different people made it easy to make friends and nurture friendships beyond cultural borders. The participants found the open and welcoming atmosphere of the onboard community made no one feel outcaste and also greatly promoted and increased cross-cultural friendships. The Friend Ship, including all students, faculty, and staff members, together created the multicultural and inclusive atmosphere where difference was considered “the norm.” According to the study participants, there were no stable clicks within the community, but The Friend Ship community was rather a large single clique. They were also able to use already established friendships to connect to others, which is an important aspect of developing a large friendship circle.
Second, through the process of nurturing friendships with a diverse group of students, the study participants learned that close and trusting friendships could be developed across different cultural groups. Just as diversity was a norm, international cross-cultural friendships was also very much the norm in The Friendship community. Brian provides an example of how he made friends with students from different cultural backgrounds:

In the beginning, we talked about how our cultures are different like food, holidays, and music. We also talked about how people’s lives back home were different in different countries. Gradually, international differences became the norm. Toward the end, we did not acknowledge that we were from different countries. We knew we were from different countries but it became normal to us (Brian, Interview #1, 08/24/09).

This phenomenon was based on the fact that many participants were able to rise above surface level differences and actively find deeper-level similarities with one another, such as love for family, life philosophies, and values. In other words, they developed the ability to find shared core values and to connect with others at a deeper level.
While many lessons could be learned from any friendship, friendships with people of diverse backgrounds increasingly taught the participants about the need to acknowledge, respect, and accept differences without judgment and to learn how to deal with conflict, using both humor and serious discussions depending on the circumstances.

Third, most importantly, the participants became aware of the value of being able to learn from each other and realized that others who are different than themselves were great learning resources. They mentioned that they were able to discuss observations about politics, economics, and history that reflected perspectives and insights different than their own. They also acted as each other’s cultural consultants who could share insider’s perspectives on cultural specifics, such as norms, values, and beliefs, among others. When their learning resources were close friends, it was very easy for the participants to develop an emotional attachment to the culture during the learning process, because it stimulated them to think, ask questions, and appreciate and experience the culture to some degree through interacting with the friend. VB explains this point further:
That is not a doubt. It was traveling to all the places and meeting people that enabled me to see and say how beautiful and wonderful those places and people are, regardless of how much poverty there was. There were places and people I have heard horrible things about. But even at those places, I met local people who I came to care... very much about.

Interaction with people gave me the emotional elements to a lot of things. Because of that I feel connected to different people and places in the world (VB, Interview # 2, 09/11/09).

Luiza also provides a story emphasizing the critical role of close personal interactions with others in understanding their culture:

I knew nothing about China. I felt that going to China would not help me much to understand the country or its people. I had [the assumption] that they were rather closed to outsiders and because of this, it [would] be difficult to communicate with the locals because of the language barrier. But, having a Chinese roommate who I did many things with
really made me [get to know] the culture. She was able to teach me

many things about China and answer my questions. Physically being in

China was amazing, but I feel like I learned more about China from my

roommate on the ship. The experience was so unique and interesting. I

loved it (Luiza, Interview #2, 09/30/09).

The participants importantly learned that having close friends from different countries

motivated them to learn more about those places, cultures, and people because they

were eager to understand their friends. They also emphasized how personal

interactions with people on and off the boat made them feel more connected to the

world and made them feel that the world was smaller and more real than physically

being in different countries without any deep or meaningful personal interactions. On

the other hand, the participants also explained the impact of their personal experiences

with others on understanding different cultures and the alleviation of stereotyping,

which Coraline explains:

I think experience on an individual-level really “colors” how you view
another culture. It depends on the persons whom you meet. If you never met [anyone] from a [particular] country, the first person you meet kind of represents the country in your mind to some degree. If the person was unkind to you or very aggressive, you may wonder if many people in that country are like that. It took me some time to get out of this mindset and think probably it was the particular individual and not everyone is like that. Who knows, maybe someone did not like me because they remembered an American who was mean to them. So, I learned that I cannot associate one negative experience with an individual if I want to understand a country as a whole (Coraline, Interview # 1, 08/18/09).

In addition to knowledge, the interaction with close friends from a different culture taught the participants that there were many types of diversity within the cultural group and also national and ethnic cultures were only one dimension of diversity.

*Identifying the Uniqueness of the Friendships Made Onboard*

The participants described the uniqueness of friends and friendships they developed through this program. First of all, the diversity among the students was
significant. In order to avoid stereotypical understanding of each other based on
national or ethnic culture, they placed more emphasis on unique individual
characteristics. Despite their varied backgrounds, the students had a lot in common.
Being onboard, they had constant interactions with each other for extensive periods of
time, which encouraged them to develop The Friend Ship identity and became like a
family.

The participants were aware that actually doing things together rather than just
talking about things was essential to developing collaborative relationships. They
appreciated diversity while putting their differences aside to work together, as
necessary. Furthermore, the fact that they did not know each other prior to the voyage
allowed the study participants to launch their experiences on The Friend Ship with a
brand new self and with no preconceptions about themselves or others. This allowed
them to start the voyage on a positive note. Moreover, the participants found that the
fact that everyone knew everyone else onboard after the voyage created a safe
environment.

*Maintaining the Friendships after the Program’s End*

The participants developed very special bonds with their Friend Ship friends.
The key to the strong and lasting relationships was their living together and sharing intense experiences, which helped them really understand each other and brought them together. They explained that even though they came from totally different places and spent only a short time together, they felt as if they had known each other forever and understood each other more than many friends they had had their whole their lives.

The Friend Ship was like a big instant international family. As a family, its members shared general traits of being open-minded, while individuals had their own unique characteristics. They had both serious and fun talks and enjoyed experiencing the program together.

After the program ended, the participants found it difficult to lose touch with their “international family” after being scattered to every corner of the world. Many had difficulties back home connecting with their old friends because their experiences on the Friend Ship changed them so profoundly. Despite the barriers of time and space between them once they returned home, the participants kept in touch and continued to develop the friendships. Paola comments on the importance of this trend:

Many friends I made on [The Friend Ship] were very close to me and I
really stayed real friends with them even after the program. It is true

living together made us one community and helped us develop a special

feeling for each other. Once we were back home, the intensity faded,

but if someone would ask for me help I would always do it, because I
do still feel very much connected with them and care about them (Paola,
Interview #1, 09/24/09).

Paola’s words indicated that they were still very much connected to each other and

motivated to maintain a sense of community more than a year after they had completed
the program. There were many ways that the participants kept in close contact with
each other. For instance, there is a well-developed Friend Ship Facebook community,
in addition to e-mail and phone; they also extensively use instant messenger or Skype
to talk to each other. In addition, they voluntarily organize occasional regional or

national reunions, visit each other across oceans, and form alumni organizations with
affiliated universities.

**Familiarizing Oneself with Different Cultures and People**

During The Friend Ship voyage, the study participants had the opportunity to
familiarize themselves with the different cultures and people onboard. They all agreed that those opportunities opened their eyes to the thrill of learning about new cultures.

Luiza explains the significant role of The Friend Ship in her becoming familiar with different cultures and people:

[The Friend Ship] experience really changed my views about different countries and their cultures and people. For me, it was very important because there were people and cultures that I would have never met or had a chance to learn about if I did not join the program (Luiza, Interview #1, 09/23/09).

Luiza’s words represent the study participants’ awareness of the unique international cross-cultural learning opportunities available to them because of The Friend Ship and their willingness to actively take advantage of the benefits presented by the program. They gained meaningful experiences through cultural learning activities onboard and through visiting different countries.

Familiarizing Oneself with Different Cultures and People

through Onboard Cultural Learning Activities
The study participants discussed their cross-cultural experiences and culture-specific learning opportunities with their peers onboard, particularly how they went about gaining knowledge of different cultures and people. Their cross-cultural experiences in the destination countries definitely had an impact on them; however, they found the day-to-day learning onboard to be more significant. They all concurred that consistent exposure to the routines of different cultures over time gave them more familiarity with cultures than a one-time big event that took place in a destination country. They particularly discussed the two ways that they gained familiarity with different cultures and people onboard. These were expending their informational knowledge about different cultures and working with a diverse group of people as a team with the purpose of teaching and learning from one another. The goal onboard was to work as a team and in this way teach and learn from one another.

First, one way that the study participants familiarized themselves with different cultures and people was through exchanging informational knowledge about history, politics, cultures, and people’s general worldview through informal conversations with friends and in class discussion. The study participants’ familiarity or comfort level with different cultures and people increased significantly when their
informational knowledge was supplemented by direct cultural learning experiences.

For instance, many study participants joined cultural show activities onboard. These cultural shows introduced different aspects of various cultures by regions of the world. The events were organized by a group of student volunteers who were interested in presenting and a group of students who were interested in learning more about a particular culture.

Those who took part in these cultural shows said that they invested extensive hours and energy preparing for the shows. After a few weeks of intense practice and preparation, they became increasingly familiar and comfortable with the culture and working with the people from that particular culture while they gained increased awareness overall about the culture. The study participants regarded the multiple weeks of preparing to present a cultural show as the process and period in which they could digest the informational knowledge they had gained about the culture and people. Many study participants contributed to multiple cultural shows. They said they became more familiar and comfortable with the world by learning about several cultures in this way.

Another way that the study participants familiarized themselves with different
cultures and people was through working as a diverse team to teach and learn from one another. When they worked on any project with a specific goal to achieve and a timeline to follow, they had intense interactions with their teammates, as they negotiated different cultural knowledge and cultural capital that they each brought to the table. The time pressure they were under doubled the intensity of their experiences.

Coraline’s words demonstrate this point well:

Cultural shows were really great ways to learn how to be a team and work together to put on a show to entertain people and educate people about a culture. Even though you were not from the cultural group, you were welcome to join in and contribute. So, this whole amalgamation of people was doing the same thing working toward the same goal. I thought it was interesting... I really appreciated that because it made me and many others want to get together to do things and take initiative to learn about different cultures. During the performance practices for cultural shows, there were times when we, meaning those who are not from the culture, just could not understand anything and got totally lost.
We could just quit but we did not and others did not let us. We received constructive criticism and gained insights from the students of the cultural group and as a group we just kept learning and practicing. It was like problem solving in cultural learning or cross-cultural teamwork. I was really glad that we were able to pull it off (Coraline, Interview # 3, 09/15/09).

The experience taught the study participants that working in a diverse group means not only learning about aspects of different cultures, but also developing problem-solving skills and flexibility to make appropriate adjustments in a cross-cultural context. The firsthand experience enabled the study participants to directly work with people from different parts of the world and also to imagine how to do so in “the real world” beyond The Friend Ship journey.

*Familiarizing Oneself with Different Cultures and People through Visiting Different Countries*

The study participants remarked that many destination countries were significantly different from their home countries, and that the experiences they had in
those places were memorable. They added that visiting multiple countries with an open mind and an eagerness to learn about another culture and people enabled them to develop much experiential knowledge. As a result, they not only were able to compare the destination countries with their home countries, but also with different destination countries. On the other hand, their short cultural immersion experiences in the destination countries did not often give them enough time or resources such as cultural mediators to digest their experiences and make sense of them in meaningful ways.

The study participants developed familiarity with the culture and people of a destination country by focusing on learning about the daily lives of ordinary people in the local communities that they visited. They were able to spontaneously gain informational knowledge about the culture and people through their observations and cross-cultural experiences. The study participants explained that they came to understand the cultures and people in the destination countries not only intellectually but through all their senses such as visually, and through sounds, smells, and feelings. This sensory approach fact helped them to actually imagine and have a sense of the culture and of people’s lives in it. By spending time in a specific cultural environment, they became more familiar with the local people, local foods, dress codes, typical
lifestyle in a community or society, gender roles, religious practices in daily lives, different work people do, and the impact of the social systems such as legal, economic, or political system on people’s everyday lives. The study participants argued that it was important that they witness social issues, particularly in less-industrialized countries. Their firsthand experiences helped them learn how those issues impact society and people’s lives. Those social issues included extremely unequal distribution of wealth, which led to poverty and lack of support and accommodation toward those who are physically challenged.

As well as the positive aspects of their short cultural immersion experience in the destination countries, the study participants also addressed some negative aspects. They felt that when they had questions such as not understanding what was going on or how things were done, they had a hard time finding local cultural mediators who could answer their questions and explain things to them. Thus, while the cultural immersion experience of visiting different countries was very stimulating, they did not feel that they learned about different cultures or people in as much depth as they did onboard with their peers over the course of the program.

Comparing Experiences in Destination Countries with those Onboard
Life on the ship with a group of diverse students was very intense, particularly at the beginning of the voyage; however, as the voyage progressed, the study participants came to see onboard life as safe and comfortable for cross-cultural learning. It was because they got to know each other personally by living onboard together and also felt that everyone in The Friend Ship community was on the same page in terms of their perception or approach toward cross-cultural understanding. They were not overly anxious about going beyond their comfort zones or asking questions because they knew that people would be supportive and accommodating, and would appreciate their attempts.

While the participants viewed the onboard environment as a safe cross-cultural learning haven, they viewed the destination countries as a real world setting where not everyone is interested in cross-cultural understanding or would appreciate their efforts in learning about their cultures. They found the real world to be less open or flexible and to have strong cultural norms and restrictions over people’s actions and behaviors. As a result, their experiences in the destination countries were overall more intense, as they had more anxiety dealing with high uncertainty, while trying to maintain flexibility and open-mindedness to deal with culture shock and any
unexpected events. They also felt pressured to consciously remain curious and
effective cross-cultural learners who could create meaningful cross-cultural learning,
even in a potentially non-supportive environment. The study participants perceived
their time in the destination countries as opportunities to test the cross-cultural learning
skills they developed to enhance meaningful experiences.

Synthesizing the data, the participants’ Friend Ship program experiences can
be summarized using a metaphor: the cross-cultural learning onboard was a
long-distance marathon, while cross-cultural learning in the destination countries was a
sprint. The study participants shared how aspects of learning that took place in two
different contexts were similar; yet, they felt that each context had a different kind of
intensity. They also stressed the importance of connecting what they had learned and
their experiences onboard to those in the destination countries. They saw their
cross-cultural experience and learning onboard as preparation to take best advantage of
intense experiences in the destination countries instead of becoming overwhelmed by
differences or culture shock and shutting down. Luis addresses this point when he
provides the example of security briefings:
I love travel. It was so amazing that I had opportunities to learn about
the country and its culture onboard first before going into the country.

There were sessions that talked about how to get ready for the next
country. The speaker from the culture talked about how to detect key
learning points and how to see things about the country from an
insider’s perspective. Then, we actually spent time in the country.

Sometimes we were assigned homework related to the country or the
cross-cultural experience we were expected to have in the country
before going into the country. So, I was paying close attention to certain
things and developed my idea about how to do homework during my
time in the destination countries. My learning onboard and my learning
in the destination counties were connected. Because of the learning I
had onboard, my eyes were wide open when I got off at destination
countries and I was able to appreciate every detail I observed and
experience I had in those countries (Luis, Interview #1, 09/12/09).

_Recognizing the Similarities and Differences among People and Cultures_
Reflecting on their experiences of familiarizing themselves with different cultures and people both onboard and in different countries, the study participants soon realized that there were many more, similarities among them than differences; at the same time, they realized that individual cultures and people were unique, and no two were the same. For instance, they described that despite different cultural backgrounds, we are all human and behave in similar ways; but how we do things and how we feel about things are different (e.g., the idea of happiness).

The common elements among the cultures reported included universal human needs (e.g., love for family and friends, desire to be loved and appreciated), shared social struggles (e.g., poverty, discrimination), and universal human values (e.g., beauty, kindness, work ethic). There were also common frameworks shared by different cultures, such as humor, relationships, and entertainment, but these turned out to be very different in how they were carried out. Based on their experience of becoming familiar with different cultures and people, the participants learned that similar values and priorities were strong uniting factors among people of different cultural groups.

*The Process of Familiarizing Oneself with Different Cultures and People*
The study participants claimed that familiarizing oneself with different cultures onboard or in the destination countries was not only about learning about other cultures and people, but about the process of learning and understanding oneself and one’s own cultural perspectives. It included identifying one’s false cultural assumptions, recognizing diversity within one’s own culture or country, and understanding different perspectives.

First, the study participants learned the importance of identifying their false cultural assumptions in order to appropriately and effectively understand different cultures and people. They admitted that when they encountered new cultures and people, they unconsciously referred to the stereotypical information they had acquired back in their home country through secondhand sources. While they did not question the reliability of the information before The Friendship program, they came to realize that the information they had acquired at home was often influenced by the perceptions of a home society or distributors of the information. After recognizing their limited and often false assumptions, the study participants consciously abandoned their preconceptions of culture and people and acknowledged their limitations to accurately diagnose a situation or problem in a cross-cultural setting. Such experiences led them
to gain a new attitude in learning about different cultures and people; no culture and people are what you think they are. VB supports the development of a new attitude when she explains her experience:

Through the cross-cultural experience, I realized that the worst thing I could do is to think I know everything because I couldn’t possibly know everything about different cultures and would make some kind of cultural mistakes in different countries. It is just inevitable. [The Friend Ship] taught me about embracing making mistakes as a part of cross-cultural understanding and experience. That was very important. It was about traveling and developing myself internationally by making mistakes and humbling myself. I struggled with making cultural mistakes over and over because I always wanted to do the right things in the right ways. But it was impossible, because I did not have a clue of what was considered “right” in different cultures. So, I really had to confront myself opening up to other people and asking for their mercy to accept my mistakes. I definitely think those experiences increased my
tolerance for others. People in different parts of the world make mistakes or have cross-cultural misunderstanding like I do. I think it is best to be open and willing to explore what is going on without judgment whenever you have a cross-cultural experience (VB, Interview #1, 09/10/09).

Second, the study participants also learned that recognizing diversity within a culture or a country is important to avoid making overgeneralizations about that culture and people. The study participants explained that at the beginning, they had some stereotypes in mind regarding various cultures. It was inevitable to start their cross-cultural learning by having stereotypes or overgeneralizations as their only reference point, as they did not know anything else. However, they also learned that it is important to always remember there is diversity and individuality within every culture. For instance, they knew that there are people who are kind and less kind in every culture. Or that there are different cultures among groups of same-language speakers, such as American and Australian or Spanish and Mexican. They learned that they could not understand people based on their country of origin or any other single
element of a complex culture of an individual. In support of this point, Brian expressed his opinion about stereotypes:

I learned that stereotypes should not exist. Not everyone in a culture is the same. No two cultures in a region are the same. No culture is what you think it would be. Every culture has problems. No culture is perfect and no culture is totally bad. I learned that every culture has its highs and lows, just as we do as individuals. If you have stereotypes, you do not understand the culture and people as you should (Brian, Interview #1, 08/24/10).

Finally, the study participants learned the importance of understanding cultures from different perspectives in a well-rounded and informed manner. Firstly, it is important to understand different cultures from an insider’s perspective. The study participants learned how they used their cultural frame of reference to make sense of other cultures, which often resulted in passing judgment about others and led to misunderstandings. In order to have the best possible understanding of other cultures
and people, the study participants needed to be open and learn how cultural insiders make sense of their own culture. They found understanding insiders’ perspectives critical, particularly in understanding culturally sensitive topics. Some of the topics that the participants raised included different treatments of Native Americans in the U.S. and Canada and the history of polygamy in Muslim societies. The study participants claimed that people could disagree, but they could not impose their opinion shaped by their home culture on different cultures and people. They sought insider knowledge and ways of thinking to understand a particular topic in similar ways as insiders do.

Second, the participants learned they needed to accept the variety of ways that people interpret their home culture. Furthermore, they realized that there were times when people from the same cultural group had different perceptions toward their culture and people. This understanding allowed the study participants to become more aware of and think about how they or their cultural groups unconsciously approach different cultures and people.

To sum up the views of the participants, the ways to most effectively and appropriately familiarize themselves with different cultures and people demanded the
participants be independent and conscious thinkers who could take on the task free of preconceptions of others and their own cultures. The data implied that many aspects of the participants’ learning about the process of familiarizing themselves with different cultures and people resembled the discussion developed in the first finding of this study, on the participants’ experience of going beyond their comfort zones to expand themselves cross-culturally through the practice of open-mindedness and critical self-reflection.

Exploring One’s Connection with the World

The study participants described The Friend Ship onboard community as a micro cosmos. In addition to their personal and emotional experience of developing close friendships with a diverse group of friends and visiting different countries, practicing to “think globally and act locally” onboard encouraged and trained them to think about how they can become advocates for world-mindedness and actually engage in the process. The study participants described that there were two ways they learned to connect with the world, gaining awareness and knowledge about global issues and putting “think globally and act locally” into practice onboard and in destination countries.
Gaining Awareness and Knowledge about Global Issues

The study participants found ways to engage with the world through gaining more awareness and knowledge about global issues. Prior to The Friend Ship voyage, they had heard about global issues, natural and human disasters, and economic and political crises impacting different parts of the world. Many students felt however that those were distant matters to which they could not connect personally. They explained that taking The Friend Ship voyage enabled them to make personal and emotional connections to those issues. Their firsthand experience of constantly talking about, learning, and experiencing different cultures made them increasingly aware of how they are so intimately connected to the rest of the world. Luiza describes this transformation of thought:

Just living on The Friend Ship with friends from around the world inspired me to think about the world. It is not over-exaggerating to say we were always talking and thinking about the world when we talked with friends, in the classes, and in different countries. Whatever we were talking about or doing, we often ended up talking about the world
and things that of international concerns (Luiza, Interview #1, 09/23/09).

After The Friend Ship voyage, whenever they came across news or discussion about different countries and people or global issues, the study participants always thought about people they got to know during the program. Consequently, these issues were no longer someone else’s reality, but their own.

*Putting Think Globally and Act Locally into Practice*

The participants engaged with the world through taking local action, while thinking globally. They took action to help challenges that other students faced onboard or to ease issues people were experiencing in the destination countries, expecting that would indirectly contribute to the betterment of the world. They were encouraged to take such actions generally because they desired to give back to the world.

First, the study participants found different roles they could assume to assist with the challenges that students were facing. They took the initiative to develop a positive culturally diverse community by actively getting involved with what was
going on onboard in social activities such as cultural shows and problems that different students confronted. They practiced leadership to engage all of the students to create the experience and have a voice in the community. They also acted as mediators. As language mediators, some students helped others who had different first languages to communicate with each other, clarifying the messages they exchanged. Or some students helped non-native English speakers with their English. As cross-cultural mediators, they intervened in cross-cultural conflict situations by explaining different perspectives and facilitating positive discussions to come to a peaceful solution. Moreover, some participants took the initiative to organize fundraising events for Ghanaian students who had limited finances to purchase airplane tickets to return home.

Second, by learning about different people’s realities onboard and in the destination countries, some of the study participants were struck by how fortunate they were themselves, in terms of their financial standing. They realized they had taken their good fortune for granted. As a way of giving back, they participated in service projects in the destination countries and organized fundraising events onboard to support those projects through donations. For instance, Coraline organized a fundraiser
for the school she visited in India, so that the school could buy necessary educational resources and amenities.

Taking such actions made the students feel they were a part of something larger than themselves, working toward the betterment of the world. They were able to “be the change they wished to see” and be a role model for others. This kind of mindset and action taking on The Friend Ship voyage made the study participants see some of the international news or events in increasingly personal ways, beyond the completion of the program. Unfortunate news from different parts of the world triggered them to want to bring about positive changes in the world by helping others who are in need.

**Exploring and Expanding Identity**

The Friend Ship experience exposed the participants to different cultures and encouraged them to develop new connections with the rest of the world beyond their country of origin or any other cultural communities with which they identify. The participants felt that becoming familiar with different cultures better enabled them to envision their place in the world and expand their identities. The recognition and development of their competence as cultural mediators during the voyage as well as
the challenges of not fitting back in at home after the voyage prompted participants to
identify and further explore their new multicultural identities. Furthermore, the close
connections the participants made with people from other cultures during the voyage
led them to see themselves as global citizens.

Identity as a Multicultural In-between Person

The participants described that The Friend Ship experience triggered
development of or affirmed their multicultural identities. Their new identities began to
form as a result of learning how to be effective intercultural communicators and
“in-between-persons” during the voyage. However, they became particularly aware of
the tremendous changes that took place only when they returned home and could no
longer fit comfortably in their home communities and old identities after the voyage.

The participants explained that the experience of being an intercultural
communicator and cultural mediator was pleasant for them and allowed them to
expand their multicultural identities as in-between-persons. Those participants became
comfortable switching their identities and cultural frame of reference based on the
context. For instance, Gianluca explained that his strong Italian American upbringing
and experience earning a bachelor’s degree in a university in Italy nurtured his identity
as an Italian. He said he felt more Italian being in Italy surrounded by Italians but felt
more American being back in the United States. This newly developed Italian identity
did not replace his American identity but rather it added another layer to his
increasingly sophisticated multicultural identity. He said he began to become aware of
his multicultural identity when many students on The Friend Ship asked him if he is
Italian or American. Andrea also shared her awakening experience regarding her
multicultural identity. After growing up in the former Soviet Union, now Russia, she
immigrated to the United States and earned a college degree. She married an American
and had been working as a professional for a couple of years when she participated in
The Friend Ship. It was not until she was living in the U.S. that she began to realize
how strongly her identity had been influenced by growing up in a communist society.
This unique experience made it difficult for her to balance her Russian identity and
American identity. In this way, she assimilated herself to the United States and became
an American both legally and culturally. Thus, she approached The Friend Ship
program with the mind-set of an American. For this reason, she was put off guard
when she saw her doorplate announcing that she was from Russia. She soon put it out
of her mind due to the spirit of international inclusiveness brought on by, the diverse
onboard community; nationality seemed to be of little importance. She did not feel any need or pressure to defend the fact that she was bi-cultural or try to assimilate to another culture like she had when she moved to the United States. She was able to enjoy being both Russian and American without consciously determining which identity to use for a particular situation but simply going with the flow. This example implies that people with multicultural identities feel more comfortable being in “limbo” among different cultures and are less worried about being assigned to one particular culture or identity.

Nine participants were also willing to share their challenges of being different from many people in their home community who have very limited exposure with or interest in cultural diversity. The reentry to their home cultures was a type of reverse culture shock for the participants and triggered their realization about how different they had become from people in the community as a result of The Friend Ship experience. The feeling of being an outsider in one’s own home community triggered the question, “who am I?” Stoffer shares his feeling of being lost:

It is tough to share the stories from [The Friend Ship] with people at
home. When I do that, it is like we are speaking in a different language or something. We communicate but not really. I am no longer on [The Friend Ship]. So, I feel lost sometimes. It is like I am a ship without an anchor floating in the middle of the ocean and not knowing where I am or where I am heading (Stoffer, Interview #3, 10/20/09).

While Stoffer appeared to be dealing well with his newly enhanced “in-between-person” identity and learning the meaning of being a significantly more cross-culturally oriented person in his community, Misty expressed her desire to change her life style or living environment so that she could further pursue her development as a multicultural individual instead of suppressing it, which she felt she would have to do to remain in her hometown:

Since I came back from [The Friend Ship], I am having a hard time being in one place for a long time. It is not like I do not like people at home or my hometown, but I am just so hungry for the different experiences that open my eyes. Now that I know there is so much
more to see and to learn out there and there are people who feel the
way I feel, I just miss having them around and living the lifestyle. For
me, [The Friend Ship] was like my new family. It is really funny
because I spent only four months with those people but I feel so much
more connected with them and feel more understood than when I am
with the people I have known all my life (Misty, Interview #1,
08/28/09).

They began to feel estranged from their homes and the places and people they had
known their whole lives, and felt more connected with the friends from the Friend Ship
and the international life style they represented, the participants began to search for
their true selves and more meaningful friendships that were not restricted by location
or local culture. The intense international cross-cultural experiences were not limited to
but definitely included The Friend Ship experience particularly a culturally diverse
onboard living arrangement that promoted honoring multiple perspectives and
celebrating diversity. As those attitudes and perceptions had become part of who they
are, the participants were less likely to stick with the cultural frame of reference shared
in their home communities. Misty discusses her feelings of never fitting into just one culture:

Even before [The Friend Ship] I did not like identifying myself just as a Mexican. As I said, I was a little different from many people in the community where I grew up. I always had a different or rebellious mentality and did not particularly fit in. After the ship, I really do not identify myself as associated with one place or one culture. [The Friend Ship] experience stimulated the idea of me being a collection of little things from different places and different cultures. The experience supported my idea of not being tied to just one category (Misty, Interview #2, 09/05).

After the voyage, their feelings of not belonging to just one culture intensified. While they increased their experience, familiarity and comfort level with different cultures; they became more rootless, which weakened their ties to their home culture. Paola shares her story:
I describe my cultural identity as a combination of little bits of different cultures. There are three cultures I had the experience living in, Romania, Belgium, and Canada. After learning the ways of multiple cultures, I find it very difficult to come up with one cultural identity. For example, I constantly see different sides of things and it is because I am seeing things using different cultural lenses. I think it got intensified after learning more about intercultural communication on the ship. It made me see things in a way I never imagined before. Now all of a sudden I see all these different points of view and I am aware of how a single action can be interpreted in so many ways. It is difficult and confusing because I am constantly thinking this way and that way and am never sure which one is the real me. The question becomes “who am I?” (Paola, Interview #1, 09/24/09).

The confusion led them to develop their own vision regarding their personal cultural identities instead of trying to fit into a given culture. As discussed in the previous
paragraph, they found comfort in maintaining multicultural identities and flexibly refer to the most suitable identity and cultural frame of reference depending on the context.

Luis comments on this new found talent:

[The Friend Ship] taught me so much and helped me to see things like cultural lens or cultural identity in more organized way. I have a better understanding of the process of dealing with or making sense of cross-cultural experiences; what I am experiencing or why I feel certain things. It was also nice to know it was not only me who was going through those confusing experiences. It made it easier to accept that as a part of cross-cultural experience instead of feeling as if I were crazy. Understanding how culture works and how it influences the way we think and behave made me much more comfortable being in different cultures. I do not have the anxiety that I had before. I used to want to run away when I started to experience cross-cultural confusion. Now, I can feel comfortable wherever I am because I am more loose with my cultural identity in good way and more
comfortable with referring to different ideas from different cultures

(Luis, Interview # 3, 09/22/09).

While they addressed the confusion inherent in the process of figuring out their
“flowing” or “mosaic” identities, they were content with the flexible and multicultural
identities they found for themselves. Once they reached the point of finding their own
identities that come from within, they felt that they knew who they were regardless of
other influences.

*Identity as a Global Citizen*

The Friend Ship experience led the participants to make personal connections
with the rest of the world. The developing personal connections with the world and
multicultural identities as in-between-persons led them to explore and develop
identities as global citizens. The ultimate purpose of the Friend Ship program was to
turn the participants into global citizens, but what is the meaning of this term? When
participants were asked to explain their vision of global citizenship, they replied that
global citizens have multilayered identities, which connect them with local, national,
regional, and global communities. Luis eloquently describes this point below:
I think global citizens are people who see themselves as belonging to the world instead of specific countries. They can imagine themselves being anywhere around the world and think they can find their way. I think we should all be global citizens because we all live in this globalized world. In a way we are all global citizens regardless if we agree or disagree as individuals. Some people may have a hard time seeing themselves as global citizens because they are trained to see national borders and have nurtured a strong association with a particular country throughout their lives. I still feel I am Spanish but it is important that I feel like a global citizen. I feel I am from Madrid, from Spain, from Europe and also from the world as a whole. It might be easy for me to feel this way because I have experiences that I can look back on and see times I identified myself with Madrid, Spain, Europe, and the world. I think many people never have the feeling of being a global citizen because they never first-handedly experienced the meaningful connection between themselves and the world either.
mentally or physically (Luis, Interview #2, 09/15/09).

Developing an identity as a global citizen does not mean that people have to give up their original identities based on the places or cultures in which they grew up. Instead, they see their identities as consisting of layers of circles which represent different identities; individual, family, local community, country, regions, and the world among others.

The six participants also have made individual conscious choices to equally value those different layers of identity. Coraline and Luiza particularly felt being a global citizen was about individual conscious choice rather than cultural identity at this time in their lives. For instance, Coraline who grew up very close to New York City felt that living in a cosmopolitan city did not make people automatically global citizens unless they made a conscious effort to connect with the international diversity within the city as well as the rest of the world beyond New York City or the United States. Luiza comments on the importance of her ethnicity and how she balances it with being a global citizen:
I am a global citizen but I am still very proud of my country. My pride as a Brazilian does not change if I still live in Brazil or not. My pride as a Brazilian does not make me value or appreciate other cultures and places any less. …For me, being a global citizen is not about giving up where I come from but adding elements of other cultures or layers to who I am. Like I said, I learned about different cultures during [The Friend Ship] and took good things I learned from those cultures, German culture, American culture, and even Chinese culture. All those became a part of who I am. I have little bit of everything. I have pieces of different cultures in me and that makes my identity expand and become a global citizen I envision (Luiza, Interview #2, 09/30/09).

Elaborating on the multilayered nature of identity as a global citizen, Paola stressed that a global citizen does not neglect his or her local, national, or regional interests or unconditionally accept everything in the name of universalism or betterment of the world as a whole. Instead, he or she critically evaluates the options that benefit the maximum number of people and strategies for different interest groups to find middle
The participants went on to describe the traits of a global citizen based on the definition they developed. Nine participants agreed that one of the most prominent traits is a person’s international orientation. Many global citizens have international cross-cultural experiences through living abroad and extensive international traveling, like Misty:

In order to become global citizens who have both local and global identities, to have both identities, people have to experience being in an international context away from their own home context. People have to encounter diversity and learn how to deal with differences and interact with people from different countries. For me, [The Friend Ship] helped me to recognize my local identity and develop my global identity by providing opportunities to interact with people from different places. I came to appreciate my cultural background and uniqueness and also the ability to go out there and explore and appreciate different cultures. The sense of being a global citizen
emerged from seeing all these places and getting insights into people’s lives and their challenges. And realizing how our lives and challenges are similar and also interconnected in some cases (Misty, Interview #2, 09/05/09).

Luiza also emphasized the importance of leaving her community and country to become a global citizen:

Honestly, I do not think people can become global citizens without leaving their own communities for some period of time. I think you have to experience the world beyond your own community to get a sense of what the world is. There might be some people who have extensive contact with foreigners or recent immigrants in their community but it is still not the same because they still have the emotional security of being in their own cultural community. I think experiencing the intensity of being away from home and putting oneself in the foreign environment is important. So, I am not talking
about touristy international experience but something more. Once you leave your culture everything is new and you see the world from a different perspective. I think people need to be pushed to really open their eyes and see things differently. So, I think it is very difficult for people to become global citizens without leaving their homes (Luiza, Interview #2, 09/30/09).

All the participants agreed that it is difficult but not impossible for people to duplicate an experience similar to what they had through The Friendship, which helped them to develop their identities as global citizens without leaving their home communities. While they think the intensity of the international cross-cultural experience would be very difficult to achieve in substituting activities such as volunteering in an international charity organization or being a part of an international cultural group in a home community that connects them to different parts of the world might be helpful for people to develop a sense of being a global citizen.

Moreover, the international cross-cultural experience helps people to gain competence and disposition as a global citizen. These qualities include awareness of
global events, consideration for people and places beyond national borders,
open-mindedness and mutual respect for differences, and possessing a great interest
and motivation to learn from others and a willingness to make cultural adaptations or
any other desirable changes and improvements. The participants such as Andrea and
Eng envisioned that global citizenship would enable them to ultimately feel
comfortable being in most places in the world. Eng expands this point:

I think [The Friend Ship] made me feel “open.” When I go over the
pictures from the ship, I could relate myself to different people and
places around the world. I feel I could live anywhere in the world if I
wanted to. I feel I will be able to find ways to be just fine wherever the
place might be. I guess I feel that way because I got along with people
from diverse cultures during the voyage. It did not matter if they had
different religions, grew up in different cultures or social classes, spoke
different languages or had different accents, or ate different types of
foods. I think [The Friend Ship] experience made me think that if went
somewhere in the world I had never been to, I could still find ways to
learn and appreciate the local culture and get along with the people

(Eng, Interview #2, 10/02/09).

Andrea added this point:

I think [The Friend Ship] experience changed me a lot. I really started
to think of myself as a part of this world. For me, a global citizen is a
person who thinks that one’s home is the world instead of a particular
country or town. I no longer identify myself with a country or local
community I belong to but at the same time I feel that the world
became my home. [The Friend Ship] experience made me feel that I am
really a part to this world, a global citizen.... Going around different
parts of the world, I would no longer be thinking “I am a tourist” but I
would be thinking, “I live here.” I do not see the U.S. or Russia as the
center of the world. The ways I see myself and the world has really
changed. The fact that I was able to actually communicate with people
from different cultures and in different countries and we were able to
understand each other really made me feel that I am a part of the larger world. We are all different but we are all humans and have similar goals, feelings, dreams, and desires. I feel like we are all connected and live together on this planet. Whatever we do, it is always going to affect others one way or another. So, I think it is in our best interest to make sure that whatever we do is for the benefit for all of us (Andrea, Interview #3, 09/19/09).

The participants commented that in this globalized era, everyone should have an identity as a global citizen. Luiza explained that identity, as a global citizen is important for people to unite and work together for the betterment of the world. She commented that identity, as a global citizen is effective because it focuses on the commonality or shared identity among a diverse group of people while national identity is based on highlighting the differences among people. At the same time, six participants among the nine also addressed their concern of how realistic it is for everyone to develop this identity or even a sense of being a global citizen. They think that lack of experiences beyond their national borders and the strongly rooted history
and culture within their national borders make it challenging for people to expand their identities and add another layer of global citizenship. On the other hand, Coraline thought such an expansion could be easier for some people or countries like New Yorkers or Americans who have a high level of cultural diversity and a relatively shorter history compared to other countries.

**Conclusion**

By having large numbers of friends from around the world or having personal memories of different countries, the study participants came to see all international matters as their own issues. Through participating in The Friend Ship voyage, they greatly minimized the “us-versus-them” mindset. Instead, they increasingly developed the concept of common humanity or one planet in understanding and dealing with various local, international, and global matters. In sum, the participants came to believe that having knowledge about different cultures and people and global issues can enable them to practice global perspectives. They also realized that it takes interpersonal and emotional connections for people to commit to acting with a global mindset, and they felt that the Friend Ship program greatly contributed to their taking a step toward becoming more “world-minded.”
Finding 3

Combining Theoretical Knowledge and Experiential Knowledge
to Better Understand the Culturally Diverse World

Introduction

Based on their experiences onboard The Friend Ship, the participants
described the importance of effectively combining theoretical and experiential
knowledge in their effort to understand different cultures and engage in intercultural
communication. They thus learned about how the culturally diverse world operates.
They claimed that these types of knowledge came with unique benefits and pitfalls.
This section discusses in what ways the study participants found theoretical knowledge
helpful. It also discusses the experiential knowledge the participants gained in their
efforts to understand different cultures and intercultural communication.

**Acknowledging the Benefits of Theoretical Knowledge Regarding**

**Cultures and Intercultural Communication**

The participants claimed that they benefited the most from the intercultural
communication course that introduced the concept and process of intercultural
communication, including the different aspects of a culture and culture-specific
knowledge. They found this class to be the most helpful and useful because it enabled
them to explore the reasons why some cultures have an easier time communicating and
agreeing with one another and others clash so violently. Such analytical ability was
critical, as the participants had to constantly practice intercultural communication
throughout the voyage and had a strong desire to do so effectively.
First, the participants learned about different aspects and types of cultures, such as collective and individualistic cultures, high context and low context cultures, direct and indirect communication, linear and non-linear ways of thinking, and differing concepts of time, among others. This knowledge helped them to understand the characteristics of different cultures including their own culture and that of others on The Friendship or in destination countries. By examining compatibility among different cultures, the participants were able to identify desirable behavioral changes, to be sensitive to their counterpart’s culture and to successfully conduct intercultural communication.

Second, the participants were also able to develop an understanding and appreciation for the uniqueness of each specific culture. Culture-specific knowledge made them aware of cultural relativism, which includes different ways of thinking and acting in different cultures based on unique values, expectations, and norms. The participants were able to use the culture-specific knowledge to intellectually and objectively understand different cultures from an insider’s perspective, instead of imposing judgments based on their own cultural perspectives. They used culture-specific knowledge to minimize cross-cultural miscommunication and tension.
in intercultural communication and to effectively handle disagreements.

The participants confessed that they were overwhelmed with the amount and intensity of intercultural communication in which they needed to engage daily. At some point, they all felt frustrated with the daunting task of figuring out others’ cultures and how to communicate with them successfully. They were not overwhelmed with the intensity of the cross-cultural experience per say, but with being unable to make sense of their new experiences and their inability to articulate difficult issues concerning communication. Coraline shared her opinion about how academic learning about intercultural communication helped her:

Learning about intercultural communication was psychologically a great jumping off point for me. I think humans are far more complicated than what intercultural communication theory explains, but it offers good points that we can use while trying to understand each other

(Coraline, Interview #2, 09/01/09).

The participants insisted that viewing intercultural communication through a
theoretical lens helped them to explanation intercultural communication difficulties that they all experienced in one way or another. It kept them objective and patient during the communication process and prevented them from panicking and rejecting intercultural communication once and for all. The study participants found that theoretical knowledge empowered them with a sense of understanding and control in uncertain cross-cultural situations.

Acknowledging the Pitfalls of Theoretical Knowledge Regarding Cultures and Intercultural Communication

The participants acknowledged the benefits of having theoretical knowledge about different cultures and intercultural communication through secondhand sources such as textbooks, the media and others’ experiences. On the other hand, they also came to acknowledge two pitfalls of relying too heavily on these indirect sources of understanding other cultures and the value of approaching intercultural communication through firsthand cross-cultural experience. The two pitfalls addressed were the gap between theoretical knowledge and experiential knowledge regarding culture and intercultural communication and the inability to generalize theoretical knowledge about a particular culture as well as a failure to address individual differences within a
cultural group.

With regard to the gap, the participants claimed that they found differences between what they read or heard about other cultures and intercultural communication and what they saw and experienced firsthand. They insisted that it was important to experience the culture firsthand and form their perceptions from experiential knowledge instead of accepting what secondhand sources had to say about the culture without examining them personally. VB addresses the rationale for cross-cultural experience:

I think it is very important for people to experience the world. Reading about the world is you seeing the world through somebody else’s eyes. I think each individual has a different way of perceiving the world. So, if you actually go out there and see it for yourself, you might see the world differently from how a book portrayed it. Experiencing the world firsthand helped me understand things and see things that I thought I had understood and knew in totally different ways. This is why I love traveling and find it so exciting. The trip might [take] a few days or [a]
few weeks, but the memories can last a lifetime. It can be a
life-changing experience. (VB, Interview #1, 09/10/10).

The participants explained that another reason for why cross-cultural experiential
learning is so important is that the many course materials overgeneralized cultures and
the practice of intercultural communication. They importantly noted that it was only
after they had the firsthand experiences that they appreciated the complexity and
diversity within a culture particularly in the process of intercultural communication. In
line with this argument, Misty shared her experience:

I think some of the materials on culture can be toxic and prevent you
from really learning about other cultures. In classroom learning, the
textbook tells you very simplified or overgeneralized information about
a culture. It tells you what the common values are and all that, but you
may learn something different from firsthand experience with the
culture. The general view you gain can be different, depending on the
information sources. You know, going to different cities in a country
and seeing how there are differences and commonalities among people or cities. I guess what is so special about learning a culture from firsthand experience is you are learning from what is real (Misty, Interview #3, 09/23/09).

Furthermore, the participants described how seeing friends from different countries onboard and seeing them in their home cultural context led them to have different feelings about their new friends and their cultures. While the friends were still the same people they knew from onboard, they described that seeing friends in their cultural context opened up a whole new level of understanding for them.

Another pitfall the participants addressed was that the generalized theoretical knowledge about a culture and intercultural communication failed to address individual differences within a cultural group. At the beginning, the participants interpreted intercultural communication as conversations with “people from different cultures;” therefore, they focused on cultural differences rather than the individual differences of people with whom they were interacting. For instance, the participants acknowledged some of the cultural uniqueness during the cross-cultural experiences referring to their
theoretical knowledge about culture and intercultural communication such as the
different ways of greeting, varying degrees of appropriate physical contact, different
communication styles, senses of humor, and different senses of propriety, especially in
choosing conversation topics.

On the other hand, the participants recognized that the differences they
encountered were caused by a combination of cultural differences and individual
differences. Even within a cultural group, individual differences were often clear such
as genders, sexuality, religion, prior life experiences, different personality traits, and
physical disability. In addition to cultural background, these individual traits uniquely
influenced how the students on The Friend Ship saw themselves and others and how
they communicated with others. The participants explained that there were times when
individual differences played a stronger role than cultural differences in influencing
both intercultural communication and within-group communication. In other words,
some students were more similar to students from a different cultural group than
students of their own culture because they shared some individual traits. By witnessing
this phenomenon, the study participants became aware of differences and similarities
within and across cultures.
The participants felt that while prior cultural knowledge could be helpful in developing successful intercultural communication, relying on it so heavily could result in labeling others according to their culture and creating dangerous stereotypes which would damage the students’ quest for understanding individuals. Thus, as they became more experienced in intercultural communication, the participants began to see the process as communicating with individuals first and foremost, and purposely putting culture aside.

The participants acknowledged the benefits of having prior theoretical knowledge about cultural and intercultural communication. It was not about underestimating the role of cultural differences, but rather about the need to explain the importance of going into intercultural communication without unnecessary preconceptions of those cultures that might hinder potentially effective communication. Many participants asserted that through direct intercultural communication, they came to see how the theoretical knowledge from class was generalized and led them to form stereotypes about others before even getting to know them. Thus, they consciously chose not to overly rely on the theoretical knowledge they had learned in the class and instead used it sparingly as supplemental information.
Growing as an Intercultural Communicator through Real-life Experience

Acknowledging the Importance of Real-life Implications

The participants insisted that having theoretical knowledge about different cultures and intercultural communication did not automatically make them effective intercultural communicators. The ability to apply knowledge to the real-life intercultural communication setting through firsthand experience put them on the path to becoming effective intercultural communicators. Misty comments below on this intriguing development:

I think firsthand international and cross-cultural experiences were important because those opened my eyes. Those experiences made me realize there is something out there, something so different from what I know or used to know. The firsthand experience made it easier for me to interact with others, both [those] who are from the same culture [as me] and from different cultures. The awareness about how people think and express themselves differently put me in the thinking mode to try to figure out the best ways to deal with the cross-cultural situation. There
was a big difference between getting information about intercultural communication and using the information in [an] actual conversation. I think firsthand experience gave me the ability to utilize the information gained from the classes. I think the knowledge or skill also stayed with me better because I practiced (Misty, Interview #2, 09/05/09).

The participants described that the intense and repeated intercultural communication they experienced during The Friend Ship greatly enhanced their ability to effectively conduct intercultural communication.

According to the participants, it was small daily cross-cultural experiences, and not necessarily big eye-opening events that helped them to become culturally sensitive and interculturally effective communicators. The participants described that their putting the knowledge about intercultural communication into practice was a daily occurrence as they lived in the culturally diverse community of The Friend Ship. They found the knowledge becoming meaningful and relevant as they used it onboard. Eng describes this emerging cultural sensitivity:
I think I became much more culturally sensitive and I gained a lot more cross-cultural awareness. I have a better understanding of how cultural background influences people who are different from each other. I think all that awareness and understanding came to me so much more naturally because of the whole The Friendship experience. I spent the entire four months day in and day out speaking to and hanging out with people from different cultures (Eng, Interview #1, 10/02/09).

The participants commonly addressed how their living and studying experience in the culturally diverse onboard community strongly impacted their desire and ability to become effective intercultural communicators. For instance, the Western participants described how they observed their good friends from non-Western cultures struggle to state their opinions if they questioned or disagreed with a professor or other students in the classroom because speaking out in disagreement was less accepted in their culture. The participants explained how those students got frustrated especially when the wrong things were said about their country, culture, or religion.

The Western participants were able to personally ask the non-Western students
outside of class about a culturally sensitive observation they had made, and together
they thought about how the students could share their opinions in class. Oftentimes, the
Western study participants apparently initiated the conversation. For example, they
might say something like, “Professor, I have been thinking about the discussion we had
about Chinese economic policy the other day, and I would like to ask the Chinese
students in our class about it. Could we take some time for it today?”

*Acknowledging Diversity as the Norm*

The participants described that a safe and supportive culturally diverse
environment onboard helped inspire them to become intercultural communicators. The
constant cross-cultural interactions onboard and in destination countries motivated
participants to explore what culture is and how it influences people’s lives.

The participants explained that the interaction with people from different
cultural backgrounds during The Friend Ship program allowed them to observe
firsthand how strongly people’s home culture shapes every aspect of their lives from
the ways they behave and how they perceive the world to what they eat for breakfast.
Needless to say, it was difficult to break existing norms and expectations taught in
one’s home culture, as they were habitual. The participants questioned if they should
hold on to what they were taught in their culture or put it aside in order to explore what other cultures had to offer in the way of different values, norms, expectations, and ways of thinking and behaving.

The participants claimed that it would have been difficult to challenge what one’s culture teaches in one’s home society because there would be social pressure to follow the rules pertaining to a specific cultural context. On the other hand, they felt no pressure to follow the rules of their home culture on The Friend Ship community. The Friend Ship culture had neither a single dominant culture nor a host culture to be followed. Instead, it represented many cultures and created an entirely new Friend Ship culture that embraced multiple norms or differences as the norm. The cultural diversity onboard was reflected in the opinions shared in the classrooms, daily religious practices, and menus, among many other things. Luiza comments on the multicultural environment of the Friend Ship,

I personally found it difficult to identify which was “the different culture” on [The Friend Ship]. There was no specific dominant culture to set a standard on the ship. So there were no different cultures, either.
There were many different cultures coming together, to create a new one. [The Friend Ship] culture was very inclusive and accepting of differences within the community. It was just a normal thing. So, that was very different from the experience I had being abroad where there was a dominant local culture and I needed to make adjustments to fit into it (Luiza, Interview #3, 10/09/09).

Luiza’s observation implies that The Friend Ship culture, which was founded on the multicultural community, allowed the study participants to free themselves from their home culture and explore different ways of living, without being criticized. They were not able to totally remove the influences of their culture; however, they found it to be a perfect environment in which to explore different cultures.

Finding a Middle Ground

The participants concurred that finding ways to peacefully co-exist despite their differences was critical to the harmony of the onboard community. The multicultural environment provided them with constant reminders to go beyond their comfort zones and consciously practice intercultural communication. As the onboard
community consisted of many cultures and diversity was valued, the preferred strategy to co-exist was not assimilation, which would force some groups to change their ways and adapt to the ways of the dominant culture. Instead, they attempted to employ the “meet-in-the-middle” adaptation strategy, which allowed all of the groups to maintain a part of their culture, while making some modifications to accommodate other cultural groups in their quest to co-exist peacefully with one another.

The participants explained how practicing real-life intercultural communication helped them develop perspective consciousness and cross-cultural awareness. Their experiences pushed them to develop and use perspective consciousness to acknowledge their own cultural lenses and perceptions about cultural differences to effectively deal with each cross-cultural situation. They learned how they had previously used their own cultural lenses to distort different cultures and to impose their judgments onto others.

At the same time, the participants also learned how others perceive their culture differently from them and how others are judgmental of their culture. As a result, they came to understand the importance of gaining insider perspectives in understanding different cultures. Traveling with a diverse group of peers also taught them how
individuals from different cultures may experience and interpret the same event
differently due to different cultural frames of reference. It encouraged them to explore
different ways of looking at situations to gain new perspectives. It also encouraged
them to accept differences as they are, instead presuming either one to be right or
wrong despite their familiarity or comfort level.

Regarding communication styles, the participants explained that finding the
middle ground among different cultural groups was ideal; however, it was unrealistic
in many cases, especially when half of the student body was American. Many
American study participants felt that students from other countries consciously or
unconsciously volunteered to alter themselves to fit into American culture, including
using English to communicate. One of the examples was the use of English names.
American students found it interesting that many students from non-English speaking
countries insisted upon using an English name that had no connection to their original
names (e.g., a Chinese student referring to herself as Rebecca) or using the English
version of their given names (e.g., Miguel referring to himself as Mike). Many
American students indicated their desire to address their friends by their real names;
however, they often received a polite decline with the explanation that using English
names would be better because they would be able to remember them more easily and pronounce them correctly. Many American or Western participants claimed that it is the responsibility of the cultural majority to make a conscious effort to welcome other cultures into the community as they have the numerical privilege of setting the tone in the multicultural community.

While the study participants were enthusiastic about finding the middle ground when they confronted cultural differences, they also described the challenges and frustrations they encountered in attempting to make it a reality. The situations that the study participants commonly described as negative cross-cultural experiences were when they dealt with closed-minded people who were exclusionary of others and immediately shut out anything different from what they were used to. Luis described his frustration:

There are some things that just do not belong in my comfort zone and I always did and probably always will feel uncomfortable dealing with those ... dealing with closed-minded people has been [the] hardest. I am not proud to say this, but dealing with people like that was very
frustrating and difficult for me. ... but I was able to approach the situation consciously. I tried to apply what I learned from United World College [the international baccalaureate boarding school], the school I attended before The Friend Ship and classes I was taking on [The Friend Ship]. I think referring to the knowledge I had from the past classes onboard helped me deal with the highly emotional situations more objectively. It was important that I learned not to let the frustration and emotions overwhelm my thinking and my experience. I must say I got better at dealing with closed-minded people. So, even though things might be frustrating at first, I think it is just an early step of people becoming better intercultural communicators (Luis, Interview #1, 09/12/09).

In other words, the participants perceived their cross-cultural experience as being negative only when they failed to develop two-way communication due to lack of open-mindedness on another student’s part. Successful intercultural communication demanded efforts from both groups involved. Paola explains this intercultural
exchange:

Of course, if everyone tried to meet in the middle when there were disagreements, I would have made more effort to do so on my end.

When I saw people’s goodwill and effort to work things out, the disagreement itself or process of struggling to find the middle ground did not irritate me because I was able to see there was effort being made and we were working toward the common goal of solving the issue. We were on the same page. I was not happy when I had to make all the adjustments and the others did not reciprocate. I found it unfair and frustrating. Once the reactive emotion was triggered, it was just overwhelming (Paola, Interview #1, 09/24/09).

The participants agreed that intercultural communication was easier and more successful on The Friend Ship than in destination countries. This was because The Friend Ship students generally shared a philosophy of valuing cross-cultural understanding and open-mindedness as well as a theoretical understanding of
intercultural communication. In contrast, there was a further gap between the study participants and the locals in the destination countries. On the positive side, these negative experiences made the study participants even more committed to constantly self-reflect, remain open-minded, and be open to communication.

Overall, the participants described that the firsthand efforts in finding the middle ground and their experiential knowledge made them feel less threatened by differences and more comfortable about being open to difference and being flexible with regard to people from different cultural groups. The participants felt intercultural communication became easier and less conscious as they practiced it more.

*Developing Personal Strategies for Successful Intercultural Communication*

The participants stated that they employed their own personal strategies to conduct successful intercultural communication sessions. They might have gained theoretical knowledge about intercultural communication and specific cultures in the classroom or from books; however, they needed to figure out how to put that knowledge to use in real life situations. The participants emphasized the importance of understanding the context and creating a friendly environment as a stepping-stone to effectively apply existing knowledge and promote effective intercultural
communication. The personal strategies reflected the various traits of the participants as conscious intercultural communicators. Those traits included being good observers, communicators or willingness to socialize, and participate and to be friendly.

A large number of the participants explained their personal strategies for successful intercultural communication was to be a good observer of others. Through observation, they effectively detected different communication styles and values people displayed and they analyzed how those differences interacted with each other and impacted the greater context of intercultural communication. Luiza shared her personal strategy:

I loved observing how people interacted and how intercultural communication worked. I found it interesting to see the different ways people behave and think. Especially those differences were interesting to see when they came up in a daily situation. For example, people discussing how others think or do things. Even simple stuff like how they eat something or how they laugh and make jokes. I think that was very, very interesting (Luiza, Interview #2, 09/30/11).
To act as good observers, the participants must also be sound and active listeners and careful thinkers. Most importantly, they needed to access the inner-self who was eager to learn about others.

Second, another aspect of their personal strategies was to be friendly and willing to socialize. To develop successful intercultural communication, they needed to create the opportunities for intercultural communication to take place. They explained that they made a conscious effort to be extraverted, to initiate conversations and be open, to actively listen and ask questions in the effort to start and maintain conversations. Oftentimes, such efforts required the study participants to go beyond their usual personalities and to establish new selves. For instance, Misty said she was always a friendly person and enjoyed talking with others, but was also introverted and totally shied away from initiating conversations with new people. With the strong desire to meet people from different parts of the world and learn about them and their culture, she was able to overcome her shyness and transform herself into a more active communicator with positive energy and initiative.

A third aspect of participants’ personal strategies was to be active participants
in the community. They felt that it was important for them to have constant and meaningful engagement with other students and to be consistently aware of what was going on onboard. They began to realize that being around a diverse group of students did not automatically mean that they had intercultural communication opportunities or meaningful experiences. They still needed to initiate those opportunities. Sharing experiences with a diverse group of students taught them to have enthusiasm and the will to adjust, initiate, and take a leadership role.

Fourth, the ultimate personal strategy for successful intercultural communication addressed by the participants was to become friends with others. They explained that sometimes they became friends as a result of successful and enjoyable intercultural communication. At the same time, they also explained that it was easier to become friends if they had something in common or had a desire to learn about each other and they did not have to understand everything about each other from scratch. They believed that having a sense of friendship promoted effective intercultural communication. Being friends provided them with a sense of security and commitment to learn and try new things for the sake of strengthening their friendship. Most importantly, their friendship increased their desire to better communicate and
understand each other, so that they could share more meaningful experiences.

While one strategy more than others may have resonated with the participants, they agreed that it was important for them to combine those different approaches for best results. Kwame, describes this process:

At the initial stage of the voyage, I was an observer. Whenever I am in an unfamiliar environment, I find myself falling into this role of observer. I carefully observe the environment, what people say, what they do, and how they do things. So, on The Friend Ship, I observed. I listened and watched others. Once I developed some understanding, I switched from the observer mode to the participant and friend modes. I did not have a fixed and specific personality. It was more important to be flexible and to adapt myself to any situation (Kwame, E-mail #2, 12/10/09).

The data analysis indicated that the participants highly valued this flexibility to comfortably adjust their personalities or communication approaches in order to best
meet the unique intercultural communication challenges.

Acknowledging the Obstacles in Conducting Successful Intercultural Communication

The participants described that the process of developing both theoretical and experiential knowledge about intercultural communication allowed them to observe and analyze the way their minds work and how they behave in cross-cultural settings. The observation and analysis helped them to acknowledge the generally seen obstacles in the contexts of intercultural communication. The three obstacles addressed include: use of a specific cultural frame of reference, cultures of different languages, and fear of going beyond their comfort zones.

The first obstacle was the participants using their own cultural frames of reference too narrowly during intercultural communication. Many students, especially those who had taken intercultural communication classes or had extensive prior international cross-cultural experiences such as study abroad, expressed their theoretical understanding and familiarity with the cultural frame of reference that was shaped by the individuals’ home culture. Despite their understanding and awareness, they found it to be an obstacle. The participants described that it was difficult to monitor their use of a cultural frame of reference spontaneously, as they were
communicating interculturally. In order to moderate the use of their cultural frames of reference and engage in intercultural communication, they needed to be aware of them and also be able to apply the knowledge through extensive practice.

A second obstacle to communication was the non-American participants’ inability to understand and appropriately refer to cultural frames of reference generally used in English. The participants explained that the significant challenge in communicating across cultures, especially with others whose first language was not English, was not a language barrier, but a cultural barrier. Everyone onboard, including non-native English-speakers, spoke sufficient English to conduct daily conversations in this language. At the same time, there was much confusion and misunderstanding among them because many students still followed the communication styles appropriate in their native languages while attempting to communicate in English. Many bilingual participants explained that switching languages was one thing, switching cultures to match the language they were speaking at the moment was quite another.

The bilingual participants found it easier to switch languages back and forth than to switch cultures. The reason for this was because, for many, English was simply
a tool to communicate with others whose first language was not the same as theirs. On the other hand, culture was something more deeply rooted in their identities. Switching cultures was difficult because it demanded them to become someone different by making some shifts in their personalities, ways of thinking, and behaving.

Furthermore, in the environment where there was a variety of “Englishes” being used as communication tools between native English speakers and non-native English speakers as well as among non-native English speakers, coming up with a standardized culture to be used with diverse “Englishes” was not appropriate and very difficult. For instance, the Brazilian study participant, Luiza, explained that she spoke English with other Latino students because her first language was Portuguese, while theirs was Spanish. While she spoke with the other Latino students in English, she did not make many changes in the way she communicated with them, as she knew their culture and communication styles were quite similar to hers. She however consciously made some adjustments in her communication style when she spoke with the American students.

The last obstacle for discussion was the students’ fear of going beyond their comfort zones. The descriptions of the first two obstacles above indicate that successful intercultural communication demanded equal effort and commitment from
everyone. Thus, the emotional readiness of participants to go beyond their comfort zones and devote themselves to intercultural communication became a key as well as an obstacle. For instance, in some destination countries, some participants had a difficult time creating meaningful opportunities to communicate with the locals, as they seemed to be uncomfortable and avoided interacting with them. Some also found intercultural communication over culturally sensitive topics and controversial issues onboard challenging, as it was hard work being conscientious, careful, and patient communicators. It was easier and more comfortable for them to interact with people from the same culture. They maintained that in order not to be trapped by this obstacle, they needed to discover the meaningfulness of intercultural communication for themselves.

The study participants explained how they knew they were learning a great deal from people of different cultures. Therefore, in order to maximize their learning on The Friend Ship, they chose challenging yet meaningful intercultural communication over easier communication with others from the same culture. They also noted that in order to benefit the most from intercultural communication and minimize miscommunication, it was important to understand the “do-s” and “don’t-s” of
linguistic and cultural complexities and to be emotionally ready for intercultural communication. Knowledge about the common obstacles enabled the study participants not to be trapped in the pitfalls.

**Acknowledging the Benefits of Cross-cultural Experiential Learning in Understanding Different Cultures and Intercultural Communication**

The participants felt that meaningful knowledge about different cultures and intercultural communication could not be acquired from books, but from experience. Misty describes how she developed experiential knowledge:

I think I mostly learned about different cultures from the interactions I had with others. So, experiential learning had a lot more to do than book learning for my understanding of people or life in different countries. I learned things from books. But when I look back on my [Friend Ship] days, what stands [out] is [my] interactions with people and not so much about academic things like what I learned from textbooks. I thought what I learned from classes were important; but at the end of the day, I got most of my cultural learning [from my] interactions with
people (Misty, Interview #2, 09/05/11).

The participants claimed that information about culture and intercultural communication from books would not be well understood without real life experiences in order for them to develop meaning. The limited learning of culture through books could lead to reinforcement of stereotypes and creation of false images and assumptions about the target culture. Misty eloquently elaborates on this point:

I think it is possible to develop a grasp of what is out there in the world from books, different media, and others’ stories. But the information you get through these sources is always biased. There is no place for your own personal experience to help make sense of different cultures and the world and also who you are in the world. I think to truly feel and understand the world and become a worldly person, you have to go out there and experience it firsthand, for yourself (Misty, Interview #2, 09/09/11).
The data analysis confirmed the participants’ standpoint that effective learning toward cross-cultural understanding requires both equal parts firsthand experiential learning and informational or theoretical learning from secondhand sources. As a result of their experiential learning, the participants were able to understand the knowledge on a deeper level.

Furthermore, the firsthand cross-cultural experiential learning transformed the information about the culture and intercultural communication into an exciting learning process and helped the study participants to close the gap between indirect information about a culture and the reality of living in a culture. Even if they were familiar with insider perspectives about the culture, the information became much more alive and real when they actually experienced it or when they were able to use the information to meaningfully understand their experience. Misty argues the importance of cross-cultural experiential learning in being able to understand a culture and the world overall:

Reading information about a culture is one thing, interacting with people who live in the culture is quite another, [which] we cannot
dismiss. I think both approaches to learning about different cultures are important, but I personally think [direct] cross-cultural experience outweighs reading books about a culture. Books can teach you things, but they also tend to overgeneralize things. So, reading and fantasizing about the country based on your imagination and actually developing a feeling about the country through interacting with people in the country are not the same thing. So, for me, understanding a country or the world is about a combination of actually visiting places and mingling with people from all over the world (Misty, Interview #2, 09/05/11).

The importance of the intensity and consistency of the cross-cultural experience are keys to learning about different cultures and intercultural communication. Misty elaborates on using these keys to unlock world mindedness:

I think firsthand international cross-cultural experience was a really big chunk of how [The Friend Ship] impacted my world-mindedness because I actually interacted with people from different parts of the
world on a daily basis or actually lived 24-7 under the same roof since
day one. In addition, ... I got to meet many local people in their cultural
contexts in different countries. I think all of the experiences and
learning enriched me – not only my mind, but also me as a person

(Misty, Interview #3, 09/23/11).

Misty implied that one has to grow as a person to develop world-mindedness. In
retrospect, the participants believed they learned more about different cultures through
a series of little daily cross-cultural experiences over a period of time than through
isolated critical incidents onboard or in the destination countries. To summarize, the
participants believed personal experience had the strongest impact on the ways they
understood and perceived the world, and it made them who they are.

Acknowledging the Cross-cultural Experience as the Ultimate Challenge
in Becoming Cross-culturally Competent

The participants addressed that cross-cultural experience acquired both
onboard and in destination countries left a strong impression on them and helped them
learn about different cultures. For them, direct cross-cultural experience was the
gateway to successfully becoming a cross-culturally competent and world-minded individual. Luis explains this standpoint:

I think firsthand international cross-cultural experience was something that really shocked many of us. In some cases, it triggered our interest to explore different cultures. I think how you view and handle cross-cultural experience defines if you would want to or could continue the journey to become a more world-minded person. I say so because in that journey most likely you would get scared, get tired, and lose the will to challenge yourself further. At some point, you would get fed up and would not want to deal with cultural differences anymore. I think that is a very common thing that many people experience. But the key is if you still continue to engage in cross-cultural experiences (Luis, Interview #3, 09/22/11).

The participants, including Luis, described that directly experiencing cross-cultural learning was significantly more intense than learning about different cultures from
books or lectures. The process was emotionally frustrating for them at times; as Misty explains [but overall, it was] exciting and meaningful:

Even though I occasionally had a hard time agreeing with or understanding others, all of the cross-cultural interactions I had during [The Friendship] were always positive experiences for me. The processes of understanding each other cross-culturally were often tedious, but I did not think it was all negative... because I saw it as a natural part of learning. When I am at school or even in my daily life in general for that matter, there is always some kind of struggle and challenge. You cannot let those difficulties make your experiences negative. It is important that you turn them around and make them into positive experiences. It might not be fun, but make sure you learn something from it (Misty, Interview #2, 09/05/09).

As Misty stated above, the study participants argued that there were differences between pleasant/unpleasant experiences and positive/negative experiences. According
to them, the earlier expression is used to describe momentary frustration caused by the experience and the latter expression is used to describe the meaningfulness of the experience given time for reflection regarding cross-cultural understanding. The unpleasant experience could easily turn into an overall positive experience, as it motivated the participants to critically reflect on their identities and gain new perspectives. Andrea explains this transformation:

I would say that the moment when I had to think about cultures a lot was probably when I was having an unpleasant cross-cultural experience. The unpleasant moments were when I had difficulties understanding other cultures and [it] made me think how different we were. Those were not happy moments, but [they] forced me to reflect and really think deeply to figure out what was going on. I was glad that I had unpleasant experiences because [they] led me to learn a lot about myself, my culture, and other cultures. So, the outcome of unpleasant cross-cultural experiences was always positive. There were a few exceptions that remained negative, but still, [they] were meaningful
experiences (Andrea, Interview #2, 09/05/11).

The participants placed more emphasis on creating meaning from their emotional responses and learning experiences that took place in relation to the cross-cultural incidents [than they did] on the events themselves. With such a mindset, they accepted the emotional highs and lows of cross-cultural experiences with consistent and positive attitudes. Furthermore, the participants said that the intense cross-cultural experience challenged and affirmed their fundamental philosophies or values toward learning from the experience and from others’ differences. Paola further elaborates on this point:

Accepting difference is more than just tolerating differences; it is about how you come to really value the difference and how you interact with people who are different from you. Intercultural communication is not something I only link to cross-cultural matters. Beyond the cultural issues, it is linked to how you fundamentally treat other human beings despite your similarities and differences. I think one of the keys to
successful intercultural communication is your value system.

Conducting successful intercultural communication or celebrating diversity is about knowing how to tackle the situation when it is in front of you; ... it is also what kind of philosophy and value you have in doing so (Paola, Interview #1, 09/24/09).

The participants described that international cross-cultural experience led them to explore and develop practical skills and values, which allowed them to appreciate the diversity among their fellow students and other people in destination countries instead of judging them for their differences. As a result, many of the participants challenged the value of describing their emotional cross-cultural incidents by using terms such as pleasant and unpleasant or positive and negative, which carry a connotation of judgment.

International cross-cultural experience intensified the participants’ excitement, culture shock, critical thinking, and process of self-reflection on The Friend Ship. International cross-cultural experiential learning created great opportunities for the study participants to cultivate and apply their perspective consciousness,
culture-specific knowledge, intercultural communication skills, and ability to accept and practice new and different ideas or ways of doing things. They appreciated all of their experiences equally because they regarded them as equally important, yet uniquely different.

**Acknowledging the Pitfalls of Cross-cultural Experiential Learning in Understanding Different Cultures and Intercultural Communication**

They highlighted the importance of international cross-cultural experience in developing well-balanced and sufficient understanding about different cultures and the world and ultimately developing world-mindedness. At the same time, they claimed that having international cross-cultural experiences did not automatically mean they gained meaningful knowledge. Luiza further illustrates the difference between developing world mindedness and simply travelling:

> I do not think people . . . become world-minded just by going abroad... that kind of growth does not happen like instant magic. Traveling around the world does not automatically make you open-minded, or make you start worrying about different places and people across the
world. I think it depends on what the person did with the experience; what they were thinking at the time. Even on The Friend Ship, I knew people whose world-mindedness did not develop much. We shared experiences and went through similar things, but they did not change that much. I always wonder how that could be! I still do not know why some people still had such narrow concern, only for themselves, after The Friend Ship experience.

After I got off the ship, I kept thinking and now I think that the difference in world-mindedness development I saw among my peers was the result of a different process of making meaning from the experience and a different degree of self-reflection they had during the experience. If you were simply satisfied and felt good just being around a diverse group of friends and going to different countries and did not make a conscious effort to improve yourself and become a more worldly person, you did not develop world-mindedness (Luiza, Interview #3, 10/09/09).
From the data analysis, we can see that international cross-cultural experience needed to be supplemented with other steps to create a process for developing meaningful learning from the experience. In retrospect, they explained that the meaning-making process should take a period of time, while the length might widely differ depending on the individual and the nature of the experience. Accordingly, each person would need to digest and think about the experience, develop meaning from it, develop ownership of the experiential knowledge, and apply it in future situations, as appropriate. For instance, Misty shares her experience:

I think you do need time to process whatever you experienced. For me, I still look back on my experience during [The Friend Ship] and I realize now how many new things I learned. It has been a year, but I am still processing and digesting everything I experienced. So, I think it is not the cross-cultural experience itself or the immediate knowledge I gained from the experience, but rather the knowledge I have been developing from the experience over time that helps me to become
world-minded (Misty, Interview #2, 09/05/11).

While the order of the learning activities was less important, the participants described that effective international cross-cultural learning with a goal toward world-mindedness combines the acts of reading and talking about, and experiencing a culture, global issues, and other related topics. Based on The Friend Ship experience, the study participants describe that the sequenced learning cycle of cross-cultural experience that contains the above-mentioned stages helped them to use the strengths of each element in a well-balanced manner.

**Conclusion**

Based on their experiences, the participants described that they needed to gain both theoretical understanding of the process of intercultural communication and the practical ability to employ the knowledge in real life situations to become an effective intercultural communicator. Luis explains the need for both theoretical knowledge and practical application:

I think both firsthand cross-cultural experience and having intellectual
understanding about intercultural communication are important to the
development of intercultural competence. At the end, it is all up to you
regarding how the firsthand experience or learning from books
influences you. I think it comes down to how open and willing you are
to learn from them and change yourself for the better. (Luis, Interview
#1, 09/12/09).

Most of the participants promoted using a combination of theoretical knowledge and
firsthand experience. The data indicated that if they had to choose between theoretical
knowledge or experiential learning in becoming an intercultural communicator, the
study participants thought experiential learning would be more effective. This was
because they could develop experiential knowledge through intense firsthand
experience, while the theoretical learning could not be fully understood without the
firsthand experience of using it in a cross-cultural setting.

Finally, the participants claimed that the process of developing intercultural
communication contributed to their overall development toward world-mindedness.
The process helped them to go beyond their comfort zones and to be open-minded. As
a result, they learned to be cross-culturally sensitive, expand their cultural frames of reference, and use multiple perspectives. It can be said that the development of good intercultural communication skills led to the development of global competence among the study participants.
Finding 4

Complicating the Way People Interpret the World and Envision its Future

Through International Cross-cultural Experiential Knowledge

Introduction .................................................................................................................................. 401
Recognizing Changes in Worldview ......................................................................................... 401
   Becoming Familiar with Different Cultures and the World through
   the Exposure to Diversity ....................................................................................................... 402
   Acknowledging Lack of Knowledge and Understanding about
   Different Cultures and the World .......................................................................................... 405
Learning about the Similarities and Differences among
   Different Culture .................................................................................................................... 410
Interpreting the World Through Cultural Differences and Similarities .................... 414
   Interpreting the World through the Differences Among People,
   Cultures, and Countries ......................................................................................................... 416
   Interpreting the World Through the Similarities Among People,
   Cultures, and Countries ......................................................................................................... 418
Developing New Perceptions Toward Differences in the World ......................... 420
   Identifying the Negative Aspects of Presence of Differences .............................................. 421
   Identifying the Positive Aspects of Presence of Differences ................................................. 426
Exploring Factors that Divide and Unite People ............................................................... 430
   Identifying the Factors that Divide People ........................................................................... 431
   Identifying the Factors that Unite People ............................................................................. 435
Exploring the Possibility of a United World Despite Differences
   and Dividing Factors .............................................................................................................. 440
Developing a Shared Vision for an Ideal World ................................................................. 446
Conclusion ................................................................................................................................ 453
Introduction

In retrospect, the participants observed that they did not know as much about the world as they thought they did, despite their interest in the world beyond their immediate communities and countries. Their vague idea of the world before they set out on The Friend Ship voyage became clearer as their ways of interpreting the world became more complex. Finding 4 reports the perceptions on the following five points that the participants developed in the process of learning about different people, cultures, and countries during the course of their travels on The Friend Ship: a) recognizing changes in their worldview, b) interpreting the world through differences and similarities. c) developing new perceptions toward difference around the world, d) exploring factors that divide and unite the world, and e) developing a vision for an ideal world.

Recognizing Changes in Worldview

The Friend Ship experience made the participants think of the world as “smaller” in terms of reachability and personal connection, yet “larger” in terms of understanding its complexities. The participants also described the similarities and differences in how they understood and interpreted other cultures and the world in
Becoming Familiar with Different Cultures and the World

After making an internationally diverse group of friends and visiting different countries, ten participants felt that the world with its people, cultures, and places was no longer a forever-unknown mystery; rather, it became a familiar place that they were able to see, touch, feel, and experience. They felt connected to the world more than ever before. Coraline described this connection in the following paragraph:

I feel the world is smaller in terms of reachability. The earth is really a big thing compared to one person, but it is still accessible. It is accessible in terms of places and also in terms of people. In knowing all these people on [The Friend Ship], the world is more accessible, reachable, and tangible. I could be friends with people from different parts of the world; I could actually experience being in different countries. ... It means that the world became more real and not scary, I would say. The world is our home. I feel connected with the world because I can go places mentally in my memories; I can go places physically by getting onto an airplane; I
can visit someone whom I met before or meet someone who is from a place that is far from [my] home (Coraline, interview #1, 08/18/09).

The participants were able to make personal connections with the world through their firsthand experiences. Two participants, Andrea and Luis, who had had extensive experience living abroad prior to The Friend Ship, particularly felt a strong connection with the world at large and described that after The Friend Ship experience, they came to see themselves as citizens of the whole world. As Andrea put it, “I think I look at the world as my home. It really is. My home is no longer a specific country, but the whole world. The world is where I live” (Andrea, Interview #1, 08/16/09). Luis commented on the same subject:

After the first year of being enrolled in an [International Baccalaureate program], I started to feel the world is my home. Because that was how things were in the community where I lived and studied. [While atteding the International Baccalaureate program ] I saw the world around me every day. If I see a world map today, I see all these different countries;
then I see the faces of my friends in so many different countries. I think about who they are and the experiences I had with them. [The Friend Ship] experience made this perception of the world even stronger because I have made so many more friends around the world and I got to actually visit different countries and meet the locals and experience their lives. These are the reasons I got to feel the world much closer and why I feel the world is my home (Luis, Interview #1, 09/12/09).

The participants stated that exposure to the diversity in the world made them feel smaller than before. At the same time, VB commented, they did not feel any less important because their perception about themselves was simply the result of them recognizing the richness and complexities of the world.

Before [The Friend Ship], my world was small. My personal “world” was 90% of the entire world for me. After [The Friend Ship] journey, I came to see that the world is bigger and I am a very small part of it. This is a humbling feeling but not at all negative. For me, it motivates me to travel
more or be in more internationally oriented environments. It motivates me to get involved in different things and ... [experience] different things.

It helps me to remember how big and rich the world is (VB, Interview #2, 09/11/09).

**Acknowledging Lack of Knowledge and Understanding about Different Cultures and the World**

The participants described that their world became larger as a result of being able to understand its complexities. They explained that The Friend Ship experience made them realize they knew much less about the world than they thought they did and how the world is much more complex and richer than they had ever imagined before the voyage. For instance, Brian reported this new connection with the world:

Before [The Friend Ship], I thought I had a basic understanding of the world. Growing up, I traveled internationally and spent years attending an international boarding school. I had friends from different parts of the world. I lived with them and studied with them. And I studied the basic
stuff in the classes. During [The Friend Ship], it really hit me that I really
did not know much about the world. It was shocking at first. There was
just so much to learn and I was a bit overwhelmed! After the voyage, I
am more humbled, even though I now know more about the world. I am
still learning about the world and I will continue to learn. I guess that is
the important part (Brian, Interview #1, 08/24/09).

On learning about the world VB noted the difference between what she learned from
books and the sense of awe she had from personally experiencing the greater world
which she got to see during The Friend Ship voyage.

I always read a lot. I read about different countries, cultures, histories,
current events, and all that. So, I always felt that I had a good
understanding of what the world is about and also was aware of different
things that are happening in the world. Once I was on the ship, I almost
felt ignorant because [I realized] the world is such a big place that I could
not possibly know everything about it. There is so much more to learn
and explore (VB, Interview #1, 09/10/09).

In addition to their lack of factual knowledge, the participants addressed their recognition of their lack of experiential knowledge and understanding about the world. This was highlighted even more when they recognized the gap between their knowledge about the world prior to The Friend Ship and their experiential knowledge gained during the voyage. Kwame described the impotence of firsthand experience in understanding the world:

Before [The Friend Ship], what I thought about people and countries around the world came predominantly from what I read for school, from the media, and [a] little bit from my friends’ stories [about] being abroad. I appreciated the information, but I knew I would not be satisfied till I [saw] it for myself. ... I always yearned to travel to other parts of the world and see for myself how other countries and people really are (Kwame, E-mail, 12/09/09).
For instance, the participants realized that the knowledge about different people, cultures, and countries they had obtained through secondhand sources were much more overgeneralized than they ever expected. For instance, instead of discussing a specific country like Ghana and focusing exclusively on its people, culture, economy, or politics, those secondhand sources often focus more generally on “Africa.” In other words, they were not at all helpful in learning about Ghana in particular or Africa in general due to useless stereotypical information.

In addition to knowledge about the world, the participants became more aware of the ways of learning or forming an understanding about the world:

In a sense, [The Friend Ship] reshaped how I develop my views about the world. Now when I see someone or go to different countries, I think twice. Before, I probably had preconceptions about different people and places and did not even pay close attention to what I was seeing or experiencing. I was quick to judge people, countries, and different cultures. I was arrogant. My experiences on the ship made me learn that ‘different’ does not mean one side being better or worse than another.
People value different things and understand the world in certain ways.

Understanding the world became much more complicated because now I know that I have to see things from different people or cultures’ perspectives to really understand the world (Paola, Interview #1, 09/24/09).

Luis agreed with Paola when he explained how he used to view some people, cultures, and countries stereotypically through the limited number of immigrants who lived in his hometown in Spain. The Friend Ship experience helped him to realize the diversity within his own country and to become more sensitive to the diversity of individuals even within groups of immigrants from the same country. Kwame also explained how his perception of “Whites” – such as them being strongly business-minded people, witty, and focused on their economic interests while often undermining the wellbeing of others – was narrowly shaped by his experiences with a very limited number of white businessmen in Ghana and how many people in his community thought negatively about them. In retrospect, the students agreed that they became aware of their narrow-mindedness about the world and its people as a result of
The Friend Ship voyage.

*Learning about the Similarities and Differences among Different Cultures*

Third, many participants spoke of the importance of learning about the similarities and differences among different cultures in understanding another culture and the world. They explained that understanding another culture or few different cultures does not mean that they understand the world as a whole. For instance, Andrea explained it this way:

Understanding another culture is just going into the details, trying to figure out the culture. The whole world consists of many individual cultures and all those separate cultures still have something in common. I think there is no such thing as an isolated culture that does not have anything to do with the rest of the world  (Andrea, Interview #2, 09/05/09).

Andrea’s explanation implies that in order for people to understand the world, they need to understand as many cultures as possible and understand the similarities and
differences among them and how those cultures interact with each other in the global arena. Misty explained this concept further:

You can get a grasp of the idea that there is something different out there by visiting a few countries. But, to get the bigger picture, you have to visit several countries in different parts of the world and observe different realities. More countries would be better, but I’d say definitely more than five countries-five to ten countries around the world that have different characteristics. You have to visit several places to get a sense of the wholeness of the world. Obviously, you cannot visit every single country in the world, but if you get little fragments from here and there, you can put them together and a get a bigger picture (Misty, Interview #2, 09/05/09).

Focusing on the importance of individual cultures in understanding the world, Luis had this to say:
I think the world is like a mosaic with tons of unique pieces. All the pieces are more or less important than others because all play an important part in making up the world. If you do not have all the pieces, you cannot complete the puzzle. So, you need to have all the pieces. Even though some are smaller than others or some are more colorful than others, all of them are needed to complete this puzzle, the big picture of the world (Luis, Interview #3, 09/22/09).

In addition to understanding a series of different cultures or countries, eight participants described that people need to understand the interconnected nature of today’s global society in order to understand the world. For instance, knowledge of global issues, world systems (e.g., international economics, international political and economic organizations such as the United Nations, International Monetary Fund [IMF], and European Union [EU]), and the role of modern communication technologies such as the Internet, satellite TV, and cell phones in the global media and culture are essential to understanding the world as a whole. While ten participants stressed that there is a difference between understanding a particular culture and understanding the entire
world, three among the ten also emphasized how understanding different cultures within it would greatly aid in understanding the world as a whole.

In an interconnected world, there is no clear boundary between understanding the world as a whole and understanding different countries and cultures within the world. Both go hand in hand (Brian, Interview #2, 09/03/09).

While the above testimonies reflect the perception of the world as a cluster of different cultures, seven participants among the ten also explained that they see the world primarily as a large unified whole first, and see the diversity within it, second. As Kwame says, “I see the world as a big whole that has diversity within because I believe we are all humans first” (Kwame, Email, 12/10/09). Andrea also addressed this perception by emphasizing the nature of global solidarity:

I see the world as a whole that has diversity within, rather than a cluster of individual pieces. I do feel like we are all connected and there is no
way to get away from each other. It is like living on the ship. We only
have one planet and we are all together (Andrea, Interview #3, 09/19/09).

Before The Friend Ship voyage, the participants had a vague idea of the world.
As a result of developing understanding about specific cultures and global
interconnectedness during The Friend Ship, the ways they interpret the world got more
complex and clearer.

Interpreting the World through Cultural Differences and Similarities

Talking about the reasons for their participation in The Friend Ship, most of the
participants addressed the desire to learn about different countries, cultures, and people.

Misty described her fascination with other cultures:

I was so attracted to [The Friend Ship] because it was going to visit all
these places. I also thought it is very special that I would get to share the
experience with students from different countries around the world. I was
always fascinated and wanted to learn about different cultures and people
who are different from me. So, it was like my dream coming true (Misty,
In addition to their interest in meeting people of diverse backgrounds and learning about new cultures and countries, participants addressed their desire to push themselves beyond their comfort zones and experience new things. Many participants went on the voyage with the assumption that there would be differences that would be potentially disconcerting.

During The Friend Ship experience, the participants came to acknowledge that there are differences as well as similarities among diverse groups of people in different cultures and countries. It was not because before the voyage they did not think these similarities existed, but that their approach to interpreting the world was more focused on the differences than the similarities. For instance, the participants were particularly curious and excited to learn about the uniqueness of individuals, cultures, and countries at the beginning of the voyage. They were also anxious to find out in what ways differences might cause conflict on the ship and to what degree it might impact their experiences. As the voyage progressed, the participants became more comfortable with differences. Once they found normalcy in experiencing cultural diversity on a daily
basis, the similarities among people, cultures, and countries began to capture more of their attention. Their interpretation of the world as being full of differences shifted to a world that contains both differences and similarities.

*Interpreting the World through the Differences among People, Cultures, and Countries*

As far as what makes people, cultures, and countries different from each other, the participants brought up many factors such as people’s ways of thinking and ways of doing things in their daily lives, geographical location and climate, shared history, and social systems. There were some overlaps and causal relationships, such as isolated geographical locations that promoted development and maintenance of unique traditional cultures that led to and preserved differences. VB explained the influential role of culture in creating different saying,

Culture makes people and countries different. It is the biggest difference because it heavily influences almost everything about our lives.

Oftentimes we do not even realize it. Culture is the lens that we use to interpret the world, but we tend not to think like that. We often think those are just the ways we see things; how we see our lives, how we
celebrate, how we mourn, and how we determine what is right and
wrong, what is considerate and inconsiderate, what is acceptable and not
acceptable, and even what is important. People are not born with culture,
but culture shapes people. Because of culture and people, countries are
different (VB, Interview #3, 11/19/09).

First, based on their experiential knowledge gained from The Friend Ship, nine
participants said what makes people different from each other was their cultural
backgrounds. Based on their explanations, the aspects of culture that contribute to
people’s uniqueness are different ways of thinking and ways of doing things. Regarding
the ways of thinking, culturally specific perspectives such as values, priorities in life, the
meaning of material wealth, sense of beauty, and openness toward differences made
people different from each other. Regarding the ways of doing things influenced by,
culturally specific norms and expectations such as communication style, sense of time,
standard of right and wrong, and role of traditional customs made them different from
each other.

Second, the participants thought what made countries or cultural communities
within a country different from each other was shared experiences and visions among their members. Six participants thought societal ideologies and visions being practiced were distinguishing factors. Those included political ideologies, economic situations, social conditions, educational practices, religious practices, and approaches to solving social and global issues particularly concerning environmental and energy issues. Four participants thought the geographical location that impacted climate, suitable industries, or available natural resources led to the uniqueness of countries and communities. Four participants also addressed collective memories of the countries or cultural communities such as how history or traditional customs brought each country and community together and made them different from any others.

*Interpreting the World through the Similarities among People, Cultures, and Countries*

The participants interpreted the world through the three large categories of similarities found among people, cultures, and countries. Those included all human beings’ universally shared needs and wants, and common structures and elements of culture and society.

First, regarding the similarities among people of different cultures, the participants stressed peoples’ common humanity despite their individual differences.
The emphasis was placed on how people can communicate with each other in ways we cannot with animals. Stoffer commented on our unique ability:

As far as communication goes, we only have each other in this world to talk to and consult with. We cannot talk to other species like we talk to each other. I think as people communicate more, they become more aware of their similarities. I think it is especially true when people from different parts of the world talk to each other. Talking is a very simple but powerful way to exchange information and develop new ideas together. With all the communication technology, like the Internet and phones, information from a person’s mouth can spread across the world in a matter of minutes (Stoffer, Interview #3, 10/20/09).

To sum up, people can use their advanced communication skills as an effective tool to overcome any conflicts and disagreements.

Second, other universal similarities are human needs and universal values that transcend culture and national borders. The universal needs and values addressed
included physical needs (e.g., the need to eat, the need to sleep) and emotional needs (e.g., the need to be loved, the desire to be accepted, and the desire to be appreciated).

The universal values also addressed were the shared moral values (e.g., the desire to do right, the desire for social justice, and the desire to solve global problems).

Third, the participants addressed the common frameworks or elements found across cultures and countries. For instance, cultures and countries generally embrace elements such as history, language, widely practiced religions, and commonly accepted values and expectations. They also perceived that the contents of those elements are closely shared within a culture or a country. For instance, countries have a history and collective memories and shared experiences that create that history.

**Developing New Perceptions toward Difference in the World**

The participants were exposed to a wide range of differences during the voyage. After learning about how they viewed the similarities and differences among people, cultures, and countries, I asked them whether they thought it would be better if there were no differences in the world. In response, twelve participants shared their thoughts about both negative and positive aspects of having differences. They tended to appreciate the differences while acknowledging the challenges caused by those
Identifying the Negative Aspects of Presence of Differences

Twelve participants identified four negative aspects of the presence of differences. They explained that differences could cause or intensify preconceptions about others; possibly aggravating miscommunication, disagreement, and irrationality in dealing with conflict arising from those differences. The participants addressed problems resulting from having preconceptions and making judgments about others. They observed that when closed-minded people are confronted with differences, they often hold those differences against others, judging others based on their own cultural frame of reference instead of accepting the difference as is or learning about others’ standpoint. Luiza reported on the pitfalls of this narrow way of thinking:

I think the negative part is that we tend to believe different ways of thinking or doing things are wrong and that only our ways are right. Without even thinking about it, we tend to jump into judging everything that is different by own cultural standards. I think it is important that we understand “different” does not mean wrong. I think this is a negative
part of having differences. I think, because of the difference, people judge others and tensions between people or cultures intensify (Luiza, Interview #3, 10/09/11).

Second, another negative aspect is the possibility of cross-cultural miscommunication. The differences in first languages and communication styles led to major difficulties in getting one’s message across without being misinterpreted. As a result, people become impatient and jump to judgment when they detect differences in communication styles that might interfere with getting ideas across. The participants also described that repeated experiences with cross-cultural miscommunication helped them to be better prepared for such situations by enabling them to manage frustrations and be patient. For instance, Coraline shared the following:

A lot of times, misinterpretation and misunderstanding occurred because of cultural differences. People, especially those who were impatient, were quick to judge others. They shifted the responsibility for the failing communication onto others. To make intercultural communication work,
you really need to put all your beliefs and presumptions aside so that you can be clearer minded and objective. For me, learning to develop love and compassion for those I was communicating with was a lot of work, but very beneficial. Such feelings and attitudes really improved my life during [The Friend Ship] (Coraline, interview #3, 09/15/09).

Six participants discussed the third aspect to cause problems as a result of differences. This was that differences led to disagreements. There were disagreements that were simply exchanges of different opinions. On the other hand, disagreements could also escalate into serious conflicts. Sometimes, people had widely varying standpoints, which they felt so strongly about that they were not able to effectively communicate or make attempts to understand the opposing viewpoint. When the differences were about fundamental values, beliefs, and ethical behaviors, people often did not see things eye to eye and the clash between them seemed to be inevitable. Shirley described her experience:

If it was a philosophical debate, it did not get ugly. I think it got ugly
when the disagreement was over different belief systems. For example, we had a United Nations day onboard. Some of the students representing different countries or continents held a debate on stage featuring issues such as capital punishment and use of military force against other countries for self-defense purposes. It got really heated up. I forgot the details, but it was pretty eye-opening to see how these folks I lived with and got along with on just about every subject had very strong opinions on those issues, [which] were different from mine (Shirley, Interview #3, 09/28/09).

Even among the differences, there were various types of differences, and some were easier to accept or find a middle ground, while others were extremely difficult to even be able to discuss in a civilized manner.

The participants explained the forth problem with differences, that they sometimes trigger people’s irrationality dealing with preconceptions, miscommunications, and disagreements. When the discussion got heated over sensitive topics, people got frustrated and emotional. Instead of remaining open-minded, they
became more forceful, trying to impose their beliefs and opinions. Differences triggered ethnocentric attitudes and judgments toward others who thought differently. This emotional irrationality prevented people from focusing on developing meaningful discussions to better understand others and appreciate differing points of view.

In addition to the commonly addressed negative aspects of difference, there were two interpretations regarding the nature of “differences,” as described by Brian and Stoffer. Brian presented his opinion about the nature of difference with a negative connotation. The characteristics of people, cultures, and countries that create differences are deeply rooted, therefore difficult to change. In other words, differences often led to problems or divides that could be overcome. On the other hand, Stoffer perceived difference as something neutral, but claimed that the ways in which people deal with the difference often make it something negative, which he explained further:

I think the presence of difference is not inherently bad, even though it could cause misunderstandings or make it harder to communicate well. I think difference becomes a negative thing because of people’s inability to recognize the differences and deal with them effectively. I think the
problem is people’s lack of awareness toward differences and [their 
inexperience] of consciously dealing with differences; not being able to 
effectively recognize differences and not being able to communicate well 
with others about the differences they are experiencing (Stoffer, 
Interview #3, 10/20/09).

Stoffer raised an interesting point questioning the widely shared notion that difference 
automatically creates problems. This point is further explored below, reporting the 
positive aspects of differences according to the participants.

**Identifying the Positive Aspects of the Presence of Differences**

As noted earlier in this chapter, twelve participants presented their positive 
attitudes toward difference, while acknowledging its negative aspects reported earlier. 
The two positive aspects of having differences were having access to multiple resources 
and being excited to learn new and different things from people who are different from 
one self. First, the participants described that differences are beneficial resources for 
alternative ideas, knowledge, and actions. The exposure to differences meant 
opportunities for constant improvements and self-growth, as Luiza explained:
I think when we do a thing in a different way, we are always learning and improving. If I meet someone who does things in a different way from me, I would think, “I want to know about it. It might be [a] better way.”

It might be [an] opportunity to improve myself. The positive side of having differences is that, by being open to learning from the difference, you are always improving yourself as a person and developing your knowledge and abilities (Luiza, Interview #3, 10/09/09).

The opportunity to learn from those who are different with an open mind also motivated the participants to develop mutual respect for others and accept differences without passing judgments and without using these differences as reasons to exclude others.

Andrea addressed this point below:

Everyone cannot be the same. Being different is just a dimension of human nature or societies. I think we look for uniqueness in individuals, cultures, and society. Sometimes, the uniqueness we enjoy ends up
causing problems. But we cannot let the difference prevent us from talking to each other. We should not let the difference get in the way of appreciating diversity and respecting each other (Andrea, Interview #3, 09/19/09).

Experience of being exposed to and learning new things also helped the participants to learn about themselves, evaluate their own ideas and actions, use multiple perspectives, and be critical thinkers. Luis expanded on other positive aspects of difference:

I have to say the positive thing about having differences is that it creates more chances and reasons for you to learn more, challenge yourself, and grow as a person. Exposure to differences can also help you realize your own unique cultural perspective. If everyone thought the same and did things the same, there would be much [fewer] opportunities like that, I think (Luis #2, 09/22/09).

Becoming aware of differences motivated the participants to think outside the box and
expand their frames of reference. As a result, they were able to understand the world through multiple perspectives and make informed decisions.

Second, the participants explained that having differences is exciting because it is interesting to explore and learn new things. For instance Misty said, “I think difference makes our lives more interesting. With Diversity, there would always be something new to discover. I think life is more exciting when there are so many things to learn [and] explore” (Misty, Interview #3, 09/23/09). The students found excitement and joy in encountering and dealing with unexpected things. Difference could promote culturally varied individuals to develop a positive cycle of learning by teaching and learning from each other. Brian shared his opinion on this point:

Different needs, wants, and ideas keep us different. If we all wanted the same thing, it would be very boring. On the ship, everyone wanted something different. So, when someone introduced something different to me, I really liked that. Some of my thinking and preferences totally changed because of that. I often introduced something new to others, as well. So, there was this cycle of teaching and learning. I think that on
Looking back on The Friend Ship experience, the participants thought the presence of difference enriched their experience. They gained different specific cultural knowledge, grew to appreciate diversity, developed tolerance and patience, and became more creative in their thinking. I was pleasantly surprised to discover how enthusiastic the study participants were about the presence of differences, even after going through the difficulties associated with it.

**Exploring Factors that Divide and Unite People**

Based on their experiences during The Friend Ship, twelve participants indicated very positive attitudes toward differences among people, cultures, and countries. I wanted to know if they were being positive about difference strictly regarding The Friend Ship or were applying the notion to the larger world. Thus, I asked them to share what they thought about the factors that divide and unite the world that is full of differences. The participants also dug deep to examine the possibilities of the
world coming together despite the dividing factors.

*Identifying the Factors that Divide People*

Ten participants identified a total of four major factors that cause division in the world. The “us vs. them” approach was the overall issue behind the dividing factors. The first and second dividing factors, different values and beliefs and a different history, more explicitly deal with the issue of difference. On the other hand, the third and fourth dividing factors discuss people’s attitudes toward dealing with the difference, rather than the difference itself. The fifth dividing factor dealt with the issue of competition and power struggles.

Firstly, the participants thought different beliefs and values comprise a strong factor that divides the world. Eight participants thought different religious beliefs often cause domestic conflicts as well as international conflicts. Religion received strong attention because the participants thought it set the standards for what is right and wrong for many people, and determines their morals and ethical behavior. Consciousness about religion was also a result of their experience onboard The Friend Ship and in some destination countries, often talking about and experiencing differences due to their differing beliefs. Other than religion, two participants raised different viewpoints
particularly regarding the ways people or countries perceive and prioritize working on

global issues. For example, Stoffer shared the following:

Traveling around the world and living with friends from different parts of
the world, I often thought about how things were quite different from one
place to another. One thing that caught my attention was how different
people or countries, I guess, go about [dealing with] global issues. I was
constantly thinking about how much you need and how much is enough
to live a life; how much food, material wealth, energy, and things like
that. It is very tough to talk about global issues like environmental issues,
energy issues, poverty and hunger issues and so [on]. I mean we often
talked about it in [a] casual manner in a small group, but if it was done in
formal and more public ways, the discussion would have been explored
like [it was the] biggest war (Stoffer, Interview #3, 10/20/09).

Stoffer described how people or countries have different values and priorities. Thus, the
same problems or events can be interpreted and approached differently and for this
reason it is difficult to have everyone on the same page.

A second factor, thought by two students to divide the world, is history. Even though history comprises the things of the past, many people hold strong personal feelings about it as it continues to live among people and in a country as a collective memory. There are multiple sides to history and as it was developed based on people’s subjective experiences and understanding of what went on, it is difficult for multiple actors to come together over history and develop mutual understanding and respect toward different interpretations of past events. Due to its complex nature, history is addressed as a factor that divides the world.

Unlike the first two factors that directly address issues of difference, the following two factors focused on issues of how differences were handled. As a third factor that divides the world, the participants raised power struggles and competition caused by nationalism or ethnocentrism as contributing factors. They think that governments of different countries heavily prioritize their own national interests. Instead of taking other countries’ needs and opinions into consideration and working as a team with other countries, some become greedy and only are concerned with their own well being at the expense of others. This greed contributes to issues such as unequal
distribution of wealth, and unequal political and financial power, among others. These have always been problems among different countries. For instance, even if different countries could agree on various global issues, they could not agree on how to go about solving them, as this often requires them to voluntarily give up something in the process.

Fourth, the participants identified people’s ignorance and prejudice as contributing factors to poor handling of difference. They thought people often overestimate how much they know and do not make an effort to learn more. With limited understanding, or even lack of acknowledgement about how little they know, people may subconsciously interpret and judge others based on the stereotypes and preconceptions that they have of others. And once those frames of reference are established, it is difficult to remove them. This can be greatly offensive to others and can result in tension that divides people, cultures, and countries.

For the final dividing factor, the participants addressed the bottom-line importance of the will to work together regardless of nationality and identified the lack of effective communication and effort for international cooperation as a factor that divides the world. After experiencing the international cross-cultural experience, the participants learned firsthand about the obstacles that prevent effective communication,
such as the language barrier and different communication styles and how those often result in misunderstandings or judgments toward each other. They also explained that beyond the cross-cultural obstacles, some people or countries have a fear of change and fear giving others a voice and power. Thus, they display arrogance to undermine others, refusing to understand or respect differences.

Identifying the Factors that Unite People

Thirteen participants identified three major factors that they believe unite the world. Those included concern for the world, the force of globalization, and people’s knowledge and attitude toward appreciating different cultures and ideas. First, nine participants described how people’s concern for the world can unite it. Among these nine, five thought global issues, such as poverty, disease, human rights, and natural disasters, can be a uniting factor. VB explained that acknowledging global issues would be a start, but the actors involved need to develop approaches that all can support in order for the world to unite:

I have to hope that the world can unite for [the better]. We all have to agree to work together for the best interests of everyone and our planet.
But who gets to decide what is best? We really have to think deep (VB, Interview #3, 11/19/09).

VB’s words are a reminder that it is important to have everyone on the same page as much as possible in order to work together effectively and to achieve our goals.

Another set of five participants stated that the sense of shared ownership of the planet and the global society unites people by developing healthy partnerships among different global actors. They insist that humanity must come together with a common goal because we only have each other to count on. They stressed that the world could be united because people have common desires despite coming from different backgrounds. For instance, people generally desire peace, equity, justice, and to have an overall comfortable and healthy life. To address the many issues we face in today’s world, there is no other option but to be united toward a shared goal – the betterment of the world.

The overall goodness of humankind was said to be the key. Three participants agreed on the importance of having everyone developing and clarifying a common aspiration, vision, and course of action to be able to realize the goal. In other words, they claimed that having the shared commitment as agents of change would unite the world.
Second, nine participants believed that people’s shared knowledge and appreciation for different cultures and ideas can unite the world. As VB agreed with this sentiment:

I think conflict happens when we only look at issues from our own viewpoint and ignore others’ perspectives. I also think not being aware of and not understanding different aspects that influence other people’s views or actions could deepen the conflicts. We can be united when different sides understand or at least try to understand how and why others think and act the way they do. I think it would help people to agree to disagree and unite in peace despite their differences (VB, Interview #3, 11/19/09).

VB’s words imply that worldly and well-rounded people lead the push for unity in the world. The key is a combination of people’s knowledge about the uniqueness of other cultures and countries, acknowledgement of universal similarities, a positive attitude toward intercultural communication, desire for cross-cultural understanding, tolerance
for differences, and the ability to agree to disagree.

Third, seven participants thought that globalization made it inevitable for people to unite due to its interconnected and interdependent nature. In a globalized world, individuals as well as countries need to see the big picture to understand the world as a whole through such perspectives as international politics, global economy, global environment, and global culture. Stoffer further clarified this point:

As the world gets more and more globalized, I think we will become more and more interdependent. It means that our decisions influence others’ lives, ideas, actions, and so forth more and more, and we actually have to become aware of that. For example, what does it mean for the sushi culture to spread around the world? How does it impact on the tuna consumption, tuna population, and the fishing industry? Would it cause less popular traditional food cultures around world to disappear? I think globalization forces us to develop a “global brain” and see how things are connected (Stoffer, Interview #3, 10/20/09).
In addition to this holistic thinking and use of global perspectives, the participants brought up the concept of a new global identity promoted by globalization as the reason for the world to be more united. Luiza explained that the globalized world is the best new community built upon multiple cultures and countries. In her opinion, in a globalized world, she imagines the world would be more united because people would be more identify themselves as members of the global community rather than identifying only with a specific country, culture, or ethnic group. Stoffer supported Luiza’s point and described how people in Europe share a strong identity and pride of being “Europeans” beyond their countries of origin. He said that in some cases, people display more commitment to the larger European Union than to their own nation. In addressing this point, he used the example that when a national government wants to take military action against another country, the citizens of the country tend not to support the decision. On the other hand, when the European countries, as the EU, want to take military action, people seem to be more supportive and committed to that decision once it has been made. He argued that the same notion about expanding identity, pride, and commitment can be translated into a global community.

On a more casual note, the participants indicated the importance of having
simple joyful occasions for people to gather, such as festivals, international sporting events, and even meals with a small group of international friends where they could share and enjoy music, films, books, and paintings, etc. Based on their experience on The Friend Ship, they explained that such events would promote positive socializing that can lead to developing friendships beyond national borders.

**Exploring the Possibility of a United World Despite Differences and Dividing Factors**

As I purposefully selected the participants who made a noticeable leap toward world-mindedness during The Friend Ship voyage, I wanted to investigate how they perceived and handled the reality that the global society is dealing with factors that both divide and unite people in the world. In order to do so, I asked them to share their thoughts on whether they believe people can unite in spite of their differences and dividing factors. The responses were very hopeful and focused on the possibility of a united world. At the same time, anticipation for tremendous difficulties for the world to actually unite in the near future was addressed.

Nine participants thought it is possible for the world to unite despite the differences and dividing factors. Two participants focused on the goodness of
humankind, such as strong desire and commitment for the betterment of the world. They explained that when people or countries can find a common positive spirit especially in overcoming conflicts or tackling shared problems, the world can be united. In other words, the world can be united because shared goals and commitments can outweigh the differences and conflicts among people and countries. Inspired by their experience on The Friend Ship, the participants explained that they believe the world can come together as one. Shirley elaborated on this hopeful idea:

I would say the world could be united despite the difference 20% based on what I know in my head or gut feeling I have deep down, 80% based on my actual experience. On [The Friend Ship], we actually made it work. There were many differences and disagreements among the students, but we were a united community. It was confirming (Shirley, Interview #3, 09/28/09).

Eng also emphasized the impact of The Friend Ship experience on her outlook:
[The Friend Ship] experience definitely influenced my opinion; living on
the ship with students from different countries, visiting many countries,
and experiencing different cultures. On the ship, I witnessed students
from different cultures coming together, getting along, and understanding
different perspectives. That was a very positive thing to witness. It made
me optimistic and hopeful about people being able to work together
despite their differences. So, yes, the ship influenced my opinion a lot.
Even though there were so many different cultures on the ship, which
sometimes created challenges, we actually managed it great. I think it
was possible because people who came onto the ship were quite
open-minded. I think open-mindedness was the basic characteristics of
people on the ship and the key for all the people to get along well. It
made people more accepting of others who are different (Eng, Interview
#1, 09/28/09).

On The Friend Ship, the participants witnessed what is possible regarding
people coming together despite their differences and finding a way to peacefully
co-exist. Thus, The Friend Ship was described as a model community where the
uniqueness of individuals was equally respected and diversity was celebrated. As
Kwame put it,

The world can unite by positive human diversity and by understanding
diversity as a natural part of the world. There are many differences that
could separate us but there are more things that bond us ... and allow us to
have [a shared] human experience (Kwame, E-mail, 12/10/09).

During The Friend Ship, the participants went through highs and lows of cross-cultural
experience, including the challenges of living in a culturally diverse community and the
rewards of overcoming or learning to manage their differences. They described that the
experience assisted them to develop practical skills and train their minds to actually have
a sense of what an ideal society looks like and how they can develop such a society
despite the odds. The participants knew it would not be easy, but they also knew it is
possible for the world to unite.

The participants among those who described why the world could unite despite
the differences and dividing factors were also concerned about how it would be very
difficult. They addressed the potential obstacles of achieving their goals. Misty gave an
example when she discussed people’s lack of knowledge about different cultures and the
need for open-mindedness:

Ideally, I would be quick to say it is possible for the world to unite as one
for the betterment of the world despite the different interests and
opinions. Unfortunately, I think there is still a long way to go. Because
people have to understand and appreciate our differences instead of using
them as barriers to create conflicts. I think it is going to take a while for
people to become more open-minded. It requires a lot of effort and
commitment to reach out to close-minded people. But I think it is
possible for the world to come together.

I think my hopeful attitude has a lot to do with [my time on The Friend
Ship] because the voyage taught me to be eager and also enjoy to learn
and experience new things (Misty, Interview #3, 09/23/09).
Before the world can unite, there are many ongoing issues that need to be worked on first; these include breaking our biases and stereotypes, improving cross-cultural communication, finding ways to end wars, overcoming the fear of new and different things, shifting ethnocentric ways of thinking, and changing our attitude that promotes exclusion of others. Andrea gave the example of how self-interest and ethnocentrism or nationalism can be obstacles:

I think it is definitely possible for the world to unite despite the differences. But it is going to be very very difficult because we are not only different from each other, but also very selfish in nature. We tend to think we are better than others and deserve more than others. So, people try and want to get the bigger piece of the pie. Most of the people in the world do not really know about different cultures and people with different cultural backgrounds. Even if they think they do know, they learned about it from books, TV, [and] others’ stories. Those are full of bias and wrong information. It is rare that they learned [these] through
their firsthand experiences. When people do not have a good understanding of each other, it is hard to communicate with each other and even harder to unite (Andrea, Interview #3, 09/19/09).

The participants described that improvements on the issues addressed above could potentially promote people’s aspirations and values to consider not only for oneself or one’s own country, but for the larger global society examining various needs and interests.

**Developing a Shared Vision for the Ideal World**

Discussing the potential of the world being united despite the differences and dividing factors, four participants insisted that a common vision for the ideal world is necessary. It is difficult for people to come together when they cannot imagine the ideal world that they are supposedly working for and cannot agree on how to get there. As Kwame observed,

The ideal world I envision would embrace diversity. People [would] celebrate diversity instead of differences separating us. I think it is
important to have the same vision so that people are on the same track. It
would hold us together (Kwame, E-mail, 12/10/09).

Developing a shared vision and agreeing on how to get there would be a tremendous and
difficult task; however, the process would tackle many critical issues, particularly global
issues such as unequal distribution of wealth and power, human rights, or environmental
problems that cause division in the world. The characteristics for an ideal world
described by the participants can be grouped into three categories: a) people having
world-mindedness as a norm; b) people valuing mutual respect and peaceful
co-existence; and c) people actively seeking ways to engage with the local and global
society.

First, the participants described that in an ideal world, people perceive
world-mindedness as a norm. Two participants thought that intense exposure to
differences as a result of globalization would be the necessary trigger to get people to
think about the ongoing local as well as global challenges, and how world-mindedness,
which considers the interests of all in an effort of making the world a better place, is a
critical mindset and attitude:
I would say in [an] ideal world, people are willing to venture out and expand their worldview. It is important because it gives you more compassion to learn about the world. The compassion makes you take a close look at the world and you probably see things that you do not want to see about the world. Your heart may sink, but that is the starting point.

If you care for the overall wellbeing of the world, you would be committed to make changes in any way you can. You begin your search for the avenue to make the world a better place (Shirley, Interview #3, 09/28/09).

As ways for people to display their world-mindedness, the participants addressed three traits among people in an ideal world. Six participants said that people have optimistic and compassionate outlooks that people can work together to make the world a better place for all. They said they believe in the goodness and potential of people actively practicing in “think globally, act locally.” In other words, they have the big picture to understand the complexity and interconnectedness of a globalized world and to seek
ways in which they can contribute to easing conflicts. People who have a big picture of the world can better imagine and envision the needs of the world beyond their immediate community and its momentary needs and interests. Thus, they would thoroughly examine the effect of the decisions that they make on the larger world in the long run.

Four participants explained that people’s world-mindedness would lead to a more equal distribution of power and wealth among different countries and people and overall improvements in living conditions and the environment, as there would be more concern and effort to ease problems. They said they would expect improvements on issues such as poverty, health, social justice, environment pollution and destruction, and education. Coraline emphasized the importance of basic education as a prerequisite for people developing world-mindedness. In order to be aware of the world and effectively participate in it and to have a voice, some degree of education was necessary to help people gain background knowledge about local and global issues and cultures and acquire the skills in critical thinking and thinking through multiple perspectives.

Second, ten participants thought that in an ideal world people would highly value mutual respect and peaceful co-existence among different people, cultures, and
countries. As a result, people would live in a more united international community, where cultural uniqueness is maintained and diversity is celebrated as opportunities for learning and making improvements. As Brian observed,

In an ideal world, people would be more accepting. There would be a unified accepting culture. People would still have differences, but they would also accept the differences. People would accept each other for who they are, so that people could still be true to themselves. Muslims can be Muslims, Christians can still be Christians, republicans can still be republicans, and homosexuals can still be homosexuals. In an ideal world, everyone accepts that everyone is unique in a positive light (Brian, Interview #2, 09/03/09).

In an ideal world, people would be united; however, this does not mean people would be clones of each other. What would keep the diverse group together would be people’s willingness and openness to learn about differences and to be flexible about making appropriate temporary or permanent adaptations based on learning about others while
maintaining one’s own culture. As Misty shared,

In an ideal world, society or people in general would be more open-minded. I do not think the ideal world has the one universal culture. Instead, there are different cultures under a bigger umbrella, which is a global culture. People see diversity as really a positive thing. People would enjoy experimenting with different things instead of shutting things out. People would see differences not as causes for obstacles, but as opportunities to learn and improve. With that kind of attitude, I know that the world would be more united (Misty, Interview #3, 09/23/09).

Three participants said that in order to ensure that differences would be positively and effectively used as rich resources, people must develop intercultural communication skills, cross-cultural awareness, and perspective-consciousness. These would enable them to better communicate cross-culturally and would result in better understanding of each other and ultimately, of the world. Eng supported this point saying,
People could learn more about other cultures so that they would see things from different points of view. When they encounter conflict, they would know how to rationalize it and manage it in more culturally sensitive ways. I think if they knew more about different cultures and had more experience with a diverse group of people, they would be more emotionally ready to work with people of different cultures and face the challenges that come (Eng, Interview #3, 10/04/09).

Third, six participants described that in an ideal world, people are more informed about ongoing world issues and events and actively seek ways to engage in the local and global society. As Paola indicated,

In an ideal world, I hope more people would be aware of their place and role in the world. People would be more aware that they have a voice and there are ways that they could contribute. Maybe they would interact with each other more effectively and meaningfully because they would have common goals, making the world a better place. People would not have
to be best friends with everyone but they could avoid violence and war

(Paola, Interview #3, 11/19/09).

People may find opportunities to engage in international volunteer organizations or in community- or public service projects. For instance, Paola volunteers to provide multicultural training at her university and also works for Amnesty International, developing cross-cultural understanding materials for the volunteers. Shirley volunteers at local schools to talk about her international cross-cultural experiences. As a teacher, she is more attentive to the needs of immigrant students and their families. She uses the opportunity of being the editor of a county’s newsletter to promote cross-cultural understanding and create a multicultural environment. People could also engage in local think-tanks or local politics or a community leadership program to explore and discuss what they can do locally to contribute to the betterment of the world.

**Conclusion**

The Friend Ship provided the participants the opportunities to explore in-depth knowledge of different cultures, as well as interconnectedness of the globalized society. Firsthand international cross-cultural experience helped the participants to deconstruct
the vague ideas that they had about the world and develop clearer ideas by interpreting the world from different angles such as similarities and differences that they observed during the voyage and their perceptions about them. It can be said that the participants developed more complex ways of interpreting the world as they developed experiential knowledge on The Friend Ship.
Finding 5

Life after the Voyage: Practicing World-mindedness in Everyday Life

by Giving Back and Initiating Change

Introduction

The participants described the voyage as an empowerment process of becoming effective members of a culturally diverse community. On The Friend Ship, each student was considered and treated as a contributing member. They were able to establish a transformative community where a diverse group of students actively participated in setting the direction of the community’s development. Students’ voices were strongly heard in the atmosphere, expectations, norms, and values that widely shaped the
community and their experiences. Describing the community onboard The Friend Ship as a microcosm of the world, the participants expressed their belief and hope that what they had onboard could be realized on land. After the voyage, the participants have been putting much effort into maintaining their cross-culturally sensitivity, international curiousousity, and open-mind in the hope of being a positive model for others on the land. As time went by, they explored other ways that they could contribute to the betterment of the world. Some of their visions were reflected in their post-voyage lives.

**Being a World-minded Role Model for People at Home**

The participants took their duty of being a positive role model as a world-minded individual in their post Friend Ship lives very seriously. Twelve participants explained that their actions would speak louder than words in helping others understand the importance of world-mindedness. They all agreed that practicing what they preach was the best way to communicate world-mindedness, instead of simply talking about it.

*Acknowledging the Challenges of Verbally Communicating the Experiential Knowledge Gained on The Friend Ship with People at Home.*

This standpoint was widely supported by the participants’ common experience
of having difficulty developing meaningful conversations with people at home about their Friendship experiences:

I think I gained lots of knowledge about the world from being around students from different countries and visiting different countries. I learned a lot from people I met and places I visited. That really hit me after I came home. I think it is very awkward for many people to talk about places they have not been to or do not know anyone who is from there. I guess, their interest in my stories lasted only for a short time. I think one of the reasons was they could not relate to my stories for the most part. Many people may have been annoyed that they had to hear about me hopping around the world and having amazing experiences, I suppose. It was and still is difficult to share my experiences and the amazing things I learned without appearing like a showoff (Stoffer, Interview #2, 10/15/09).

Finding ways to effectively get their message across to people who may have less
interest in or familiarity with international travel which includes interacting with local people in a foreign country or experiencing different ways of life, appreciating different cuisine, music, art, or traditional holidays, appeared to be a challenge. Luis and Stoffer recognized the difficult situation in which they had been placed, as addressed above. At the same time, he also believed that once students developed world-mindedness through The Friend Ship, they would be aware of how special their experience was and would be committed to reaching out to people despite the challenges:

It is difficult to communicate what I experienced during [The Friend Ship] to someone who was not on the ship or who did not have similar experiences. It is hard to explain what I learned from the trip and how it impacted me to those people in a way that would make sense to them. It is frustrating when people do not understand what I am trying to say or when they do not understand why I get so passionate telling them all these things. It is upsetting when people don’t care to hear your stories because they are not just stories about where I went and what I did, but stories with deeper messages. ... Even though it is frustrating at times, I
think it is still important for [The Friend Ship] alumni or at least for me to make a conscious effort to share my experiences and what I learned from them. I think all alumni need to see it as our duty and chance to give back to the world. It is important that alumni remember how lucky we were to have [The Friend Ship] experience (Luis, Interview #3, 09/22/09).

Recognizing the depth of the experience and how it meaningfully impacted how they see the world and their place in it, the participants expected many alumni to find enough motivation and passion to spread their experiential knowledge despite the challenges. Furthermore, they believe that the voyage equipped them with patience, practical skills, critical self-reflection, and theoretical knowledge about intercultural communication for them to keep exploring different ways to communicate their message to different groups of people.

*Addressing Ways of Being a World-minded Role Model in One’s Home Community*

As addressed earlier, twelve participants stated that the purpose of becoming a positive role model was to display the changes they wished to see in the world. They were particularly excited to address topics such as intercultural communication,
open-mindedness, critical self-reflection, and life style or decision making that reflected
the idea of “think globally act locally.” They were hopeful their actions and words
would capture some people’s attention and would help them to focus on
world-mindedness and its practice.

First, ten participants described that one of their ongoing efforts was to model
world-mindedness through imparting the idea of intercultural communication in their
daily interactions. When they referred to intercultural communication, they also included
related elements such as cultural awareness and sensitivity, tolerance toward differences
and ambiguity, ability to effectively listen and understand insider perspectives as well as
the ability to comfortably and positively deal with cross-cultural situations. Paola
explained that those elements became more significant during intercultural
communication efforts; however, they were also beneficial in any situation, as there are
individual differences within each cultural group.

Brian touched more on the philosophical aspect of what intercultural
communication represents and addressed the importance of celebrating diversity and
practicing acceptance and respect. He took the same viewpoint as Paola by saying,
“people can and should celebrate diversity and practice acceptance and natural respect in
everyday life.” He claimed that once he became aware of how he interacts with others and reflected on his behavior, he could detect many ways in which he could make improvements and incorporate those elements into his communication. For the participants, intercultural communication symbolized people’s will to go the extra mile to communicate with and understand each other and be able to practice the “golden rule” of doing onto others what they would have done onto them.

Second, eight participants demonstrated and promoted open-mindedness and critical self-reflection in interacting with people at home. They emphasized the importance of practicing perspective consciousness, which included both the willingness to learn from others and the ability to understand themselves better. Kwame explained this complex concept below:

One of the most important things I gained from the experience is open-mindedness. To me, open-mindedness is the ability to view the world from different perspectives. For instance, an open-minded person understands different cultural points of view with an insider’s perspective. Open-mindedness helped me to be more interculturally
sensitive and [become a] better intercultural communicator. I practice those skills in my current life with foreigners in my community (Kwame, E-mail, 12/10/09).

The participants asserted that being open-minded and practicing critical self-reflection can help people expand their knowledge, understanding, and opinions on a topic of discussion. They explained that the more people became aware of different perspectives, the less judgmental they became because instead of jumping to conclusions, they would hold off on decision-making and critically reflect on the sources of information and their frames of reference.

By modeling the practice of open-mindedness and critical self-reflection, the participants wanted to help others see beyond the constraints of their own cultures and see things from a new universal perspective. It is an important step toward becoming a world-minded person to infuse a global perspective into the daily way of thinking and understanding. For instance, Shirley and Misty shared how they demonstrate critical media literacy to people at home in discussing current world events reported on the U.S. media. They found that many people at home accept what they hear in the news without
questioning it. By considering only one side of a story, they tend to form biased opinions. Focusing more on the emotional domain, Brian claimed that open-mindedness and critical self-reflection enable people to take a step back and deal with a situation objectively and explore ways to make the best of a situation. For instance, he noticed that some Americans get very irritated and begin to shut down when foreigners state their disapproval of U.S. military action in the Middle East. With open-mindedness and critical self-reflection, people would be able to take the opportunity to learn different perspectives in order to react more openly instead of being bitter or ignoring the subject. The participants claimed that development of world-mindedness demands people to become informed and effective decision-makers who are holistic and thorough in their thinking.

Third, five participants reported that they have been making an effort to model world-mindedness through their decision making or action taking in their daily lives, which reflects the idea of “think globally, act locally.” The three global issues they addressed were connected to the experiences they had in some of the destination countries such as Ecuador, Panama, and India. These issues included environmental problems such as deforestation and global warming, human rights issues such as child
labor, and issues surrounding the unequal distribution of wealth such as low standards of living of plantation workers in less industrialized nations. For instance, VB has been an advocate of recycling and buying locally produced organic foods. Living in Bermuda and working in the tourist industry, she recognizes that the beauty of the island is a critical part of the local culture and of the island economy.

I want to be an example and show others that we can live happy and fulfilling lives that are harmonious with nature. I believe that many can benefit from a simpler and more wholesome life – eating healthy and caring for ourselves the way that people have been doing for thousands of years before the rapid industrialization or modernization of the last few centuries. I try to do that through eating organic or local foods and recycling. ... In Bermuda, I want to encourage the tourists to enjoy the relaxed life and appreciate the friendliness of the people and beauty of nature on a daily basis. I try to communicate this message through my interactions with my customers at the hotel where I work. With Bermudans, I want to encourage them to be knowledgeable about the
world and current international events. I try to do that through daily conversations and also through the local youth group that I started. All these are small things, but if I keep doing them, they will eventually make a little difference (VB, Interview #3, 11/19/09).

VB’s attitude shows the importance of a conscious search for harmonious living between different people as well as between people and nature. After the voyage, VB was concerned about how the local Bermudans may take for granted their current natural environment. She was also concerned about how tourism would damage the island’s ecology in the long run. She has been trying to model environmental consciousness on an individual level, and hopes to expand to the community level through forming a group with environmentally conscious people in the local community.

Another way of making a small but conscious effort to reconcile global issues is to be a socially conscious consumer. For instance, Gianluca described how he has done just that, especially when purchasing clothing, as a result of discussions that were often raised on the Friend Ship about sweatshops. While he cannot purchase all his clothing from the fair trade shops due to limited finances, he has been more aware of how the
products he is purchasing are produced and has been sharing the information with people around him. Stoffer has also become a more conscientious consumer, especially with food. As a recent MBA graduate, he found his experience at a banana plantation in Ecuador quite striking. He spoke about the valuable insights he had regarding the current international food trade, especially issues on the pricing of products and the labor markets. Upon returning to Denmark, he said he has been careful to check where foods—particularly fruits, vegetables, and frozen seafood—come from and how they were produced. Like Gianluca, Stoffer cannot restrict his food shopping to fair trade stores because of the cost; however, he would like to do so as much as possible and also learn more about the background of the products he purchases.

By demonstrating their conscientious efforts to ease global issues, the participants have been sending the message that even though these problems cannot be solved by individuals or overnight, everyone can do their part to make the world a better place.

*Exploring and Creating Opportunities to Give Back to the World*

In their post-voyage lives, newly developed world-mindedness triggered the participants’ commitment to contribute their experiential knowledge to the betterment of
the world by influencing one person at a time. Despite their desire to take action and to
give back, they felt they were not able to accomplish anything close to what they had
done during the Friend Ship program. After the voyage, they faced less support and
interest from others, as well as various daily life obligations such as academic and
family responsibilities, jobs, and maintaining a social life. The participants were
frustrated with the fact that they found it difficult to remain as active, spontaneous,
flexible, fearless, and action-oriented in “the real world” as they had been on The Friend
Ship. Gianluca describes this conundrum:

I feel frustrated and disappointed in myself for not being able to help
others. Realizing the fact that the norms, expectations, and values I had
onboard do not transfer to my community on land. The Friend Ship
community was accepting of differences, tolerant of unknowns, and
encouraging me to try new things and take action. In retrospect, those
things we took for granted were largely possible because the onboard
community did not have long-rooted cultural rules. Now we feel
restricted and unable to do many things that we used to do onboard
because on land there are set rules. Thus, now we have to break through existing cultural rules particular to a certain country first. Challenging the norms has higher risk on land than onboard, as people are less open-minded (Gianluca, Interview #309/18/09).

Needless to say, the participants definitely explored and created opportunities to give back to the world. The following section discusses the ways the participants have been contributing their international cross-cultural experiential knowledge in the areas of their personal, social, and academic lives.

**Personal Domain**

Ten participants reported that they try to give back to the community by introducing their family and friends to different cultures, people, and ideas whenever they find an opportunity in their daily lives. They have been actively going to different ethnic restaurants with family and friends to create opportunities to appreciate different cultures and talk about their cross-cultural experiences during The Friend Ship program. They said they have enjoyed introducing their international friends to their families and friends and in this way showing them how people can connect with others across
cultures and can share opinions on international events. Providing their family and friends with opportunities for cross-cultural experiences was important because it could be a first step for them to build a connection with the world. Personal connection is important because it promotes people’s interest and concern for the wellbeing of the world as a whole. Misty talks more about this connection:

For me, it is really important that I share my experiences [on The Friend Ship] and what I learned. Hearing other students’ experiences on the ship helped me to connect with the world. So, I am hoping that it may help others, as well. So, if I do not share as much as I can, I would feel like I am not making the impact I am supposed to be making. I do not take for granted [my Friend Ship] experience and the opportunity I had to develop world-mindedness. ... I try to introduce different perspectives especially when people are being judgmental or stereotyping people from different cultures. Just putting different ideas out there [can get] people to rethink how they [view] things or be more accepting and appreciative of diversity (Misty, Interview #3, 09/23/09).
As discussed earlier, the participants found it challenging to directly communicate about their experiential knowledge gained from The Friend Ship, which they wanted their family and friends to become more conscious about. For instance, they were active diligent about introducing different ethnic dishes, foreign music and films to their families and friends to create opportunities for them to appreciate different cultures and talk about their cross-cultural experiences on The Friend Ship. They actively introduced their international friends to their families and friends so that they could prove that people could develop friendships across cultures. They also played devil’s advocate when they talked about international current events, global issues, or even a government’s foreign policy on the news. Andrea described the importance of using multiple perspectives in understanding the world:

I definitely think a patriotic American can also be a world-minded person, but I often find a self-claimed patriotic person putting other countries down. I guess what I am saying is that I think there is a difference between being patriotic and nationalistic. I feel like people
sometimes confuse the two. I think education helps many people to appreciate [their] own country and culture. I think education should put more emphasis on teaching students how to appreciate other countries and cultures. So, maybe it can prepare students to become not patriots of a country, but patriots of the world. In my own small way, I can help people to [connect] with the world through my stories. Maybe it can be a small step for them to develop an interest in different cultures (Andrea, Interview #3, 09/19/09).

In addition to Andrea, four participants also described their sharing of personal stories from The Friend Ship, evidencing multiple perspectives on a single event. For instance, Brian explained that the anti-U.S. atmosphere onboard or even in destination countries forced him to become aware of different perspectives regarding U.S. military action in the Middle East post-9.11. Initially, he felt he was being attacked and became emotionally resistant to understanding different perspectives. After learning about different opinions held toward the U.S. regarding the topic however, he saw different yet logical arguments being made and also felt the need to evaluate Americans’ attitude of
“the U.S. needing to act as the world’s police force.” The participants believed that being aware of different perspectives would not necessarily make people less patriotic, but would only expand their information base and help them deal better with complex international issues, which would contribute to the overall health and strength of the world.

Four out of the ten participants also found that telling their stories of international cross-cultural experience was effective in encouraging others to explore the world when they are shared at the right time. They claimed that sharing stories on their own terms tended not to work well because it often ended up being preachy, which made their counterparts feel pressured to listen to stories that they had nothing to do with or were not interested in. To avoid this situation, the participants took time to get to know their audience to figure out the best ways and times to share their stories. They soon found the most appropriate time to share was when the counterparts were the ones who initiated the talk about international travel, global issues, or foods and music from different countries. It is because they were already interested in the topic, and therefore more enthusiastic to listen and learn from their personal experiences. Shirley further addressed these points:
I think that sharing my stories, especially the ones full of adventures and meaningful experiences, could be a great encouragement for others to take chances to go abroad and have international experiences. I think there are many people who are interested in seeing the world, but have never done it because they are a bit scared. I think my story can be the little push they need. When I share my stories, I can also share what I learned from [The Friend Ship] including intercultural communication, the importance of being open-minded, and things like that (Shirley, Interview #3, 09/28/09).

Shirley implied that the participants know that the act of sharing their stories is tied to the overall process of cross-cultural experiential learning; however, this can only take place when the people are open-minded and ready to listen.

*Academic Domain and Professional Domain*

Twelve participants discussed ways they would like to give back to the world through their current or future professions. The majority of the participants were still
enrolled in school, a few were just graduating around the time of the interview, and only three had been working as professionals. Therefore, most of the discussions about ways they would like to give back to the world through their professions were limited to future plans. Seven participants reported that The Friend Ship experience helped them to explore and determine ways they could best contribute to the betterment of the world, taking into consideration their academic strengths and personal interests and values.

Their vision for future directions led the participants to change their fields of study or reaffirm their fields of study. The majority of the participants had developed a vision to pursue a professional path that was widely international and cross-cultural in nature.

They had been preparing to get into this type of profession by studying at the university level or exploring the possibility of going back to school since the completion of The Friend Ship program.

For instance, two participants described their interest in a profession that would allow them to work in developing countries involving humanitarian efforts. For example, Luis became a civil engineer so that he could make sure that people have clean water, the most basic need for survival:
You may not always make a direct impact that results in immediate changes, but there are so many ways you can contribute toward a positive change. For instance, when I taught in India before [The Friend Ship program], my students did not have clean running water. When I was on [The Friend Ship], I saw similar issues in many of the places I visited and also heard other students witnessing similar issues in different parts of the world. When I think about world peace and how we could achieve that, I think people’s basic needs must be met first. ... The world-mindedness I developed makes me want to become a global citizen who can do something for the betterment of the world, especially for people who struggle with poverty. That is why I am studying engineering now, and want to become an engineer. So that in the future, I can help build a water pipe system or teach local people how to do it in the areas where clean water is not available. ... My goal is to be involved in aid work in developing countries (Luis, Interview #3, 09/12/09).
Extending Brian’s discussion about professional skills, Luis spoke about the ability of intercultural communication skills to effectively contribute to his world in a culturally sensitive manner:

I feel that when professionals go to an aid-receiving country or community, they often have the attitude like “I am going to help you because you do not do things well.” I think that kind of approach would not be effective. I really think that effective intercultural communication could make a big difference in the actual area where the project takes place. If you are interculturally competent and know how to interact with locals, you can help the people in the community better and make sure the project is a success. So, I want to develop a well-balanced ability, ability as an engineer and intercultural communicator. That is one of the reasons I began to study Chinese after [The Friend Ship project] (Luis, Interview #3, 09/12/09).
Andrea was working as a professional engineer at the time of the interview. However, she shared with me her plan to get a master’s degree in international development. Both Luis and Andrea went through extensive cross-cultural adjustment when they moved to the United States, but later found themselves to be effective in a new cultural environment. They think their cross-cultural competence gives them desirable strengths when working in the field of international development.

Three participants described their plans to seek a profession in the field of international politics, such as a Foreign Service worker or diplomat. Even prior to The Friendship program, they thought they might be interested in those types of occupations. However, they also said the experience confirmed their interest. They think that their multi-language abilities, intercultural communication skills, and their ability to learn about new cultures would enable them to do their jobs more successfully. At the time of the interview, Gianluca was submitting applications for a Foreign Service government position and Coraline was seeking internship opportunities at organizations that focus on U.S.-China relations. Luiza was enrolled in law school and shared her thoughts on her future profession:
I would like to become a diplomat one day. I think the occupation involves all those skills I learned during The Friend Ship program and how I came to think about the world as a result. I think diplomat is a profession that demands you to really think for the world in a global way.

... As I am in law school now, I meet a lot of people who also want to become diplomats. Seeing them makes me worry because most of them do not have the world-mindedness that many people developed on the ship. They [only] know law. They care about Brazil and will fight for the country’s interests when they become a diplomat. The problem I have is that I do not think diplomats should be focusing so heavily on the interests of their own country. I think they have to take other countries’ needs into consideration more and must be willing to work with them.

For instance, if there were an opportunity that would be beneficial for Brazil but if it would benefit the world as a whole if Brazil gave that opportunity to other countries, a diplomat should do that instead of narrowly focusing on the national interest. When I actually get to become a diplomat, my political philosophy will be to think more about humanity
and the world as a large community rather than just my country and her interests. It may sound idealistic, but I really want to do that (Luiza, Interview #3, 10/09/09).

There were four other students who were also interested in working in a profession that involves intercultural training that included teaching diversity management for business professionals to working with NGOs that work with newly arrived immigrants in a community. Three of them had extensive experience living abroad and one had years of experience working with international colleagues; however, they all agreed that The Friend Ship experience made them more comfortable pursuing their profession. They all agreed that The Friend Ship was special in helping them to theoretically understand what they were experiencing and gave them the skills and tools to explain topics such as intercultural communication to others. There were also two participants who were interested in promoting culture-specific learning and global perspectives through the media. For instance, Misty explained her dreams to give back by introducing her fascination of experiencing the world through the visual arts:
It was amazing that I got to travel around the world with [The Friend Ship]. I was just so lucky to have financial support from the school and my friend’s family. I know that many people do not have an opportunity to travel. However, for the world to become a place where there is less conflict and more peace, people somehow must learn more about the world. I think learning about different cultures and people around the world through an insider’s perspective is very important. ... So, I want to bring the world to them using the media. I want to help people learn about different people, cultures, and many things happening around the world every day. I want to deliver new information and different perspectives. As I said, I have been interning at a place that does post-film production. It would be my dream to work for a place like The National Geographic (Misty, Interview #3, 09/23/09).

The participants addressed various professions including those not always connected to the international arena, such as engineering or filmmaking as ways to give back and promote development of world-mindedness. The interviews implied that regardless of
the profession of choice, if a person is world-minded and conscious about contributing to the betterment of the world, he or she could be successful. It was interesting to learn how the participants share a similar vision for an ideal world and commitment to give back, yet their paths to do so were uniquely different and diverse.

Besides the commitment to give back in hopes of making the world a better place, the participants also shared their frustration. While they had a vision and actual plans and were aware that they needed a period of preparation before they can contribute to the world as effective professionals, they could not hide their feelings of being disconnected from the world beyond their community and not being able to experience a sense of accomplishment regarding making a positive change in the world as they did during the voyage. For instance, Stoffer explained his dilemma:

As much as I know why I am in Copenhagen and I have been enrolled in the MBA program here, a part of me has been frustrated. I have the urge to take off and do things in different countries. Probably it has to do a lot with the fact that many students who were on [The Friend Ship] now work in developing countries. I read their updates on Facebook all the
time. I see their pictures in the field, getting dirty, working with the local population, and things like that. They are getting directly involved in making immediate changes. ... a part of me says, “What are you doing? Get out and do something.” So, that has been my dilemma.

As I said, I have been studying and working in the field of idea marketing or inventory. I definitely see how I can contribute to making the world a better place by being in this field. For instance, in developing countries, in culturally respectful ways, I could spread the ideas that were well accepted in Denmark like wind scale generation that Denmark is known for. ... I will continue to have this dilemma for the next 10 or 15 years ‘til I actually get to do what I want to do. At the same time, I feel more okay with it because I really think I need to build [some] experience to become a more globalized person and professional and expand the international networks to do the job I want to do well (Stoffer, Interview #3, 10/20/09).

Social Domain
Six participants reported that they sought ways to give back by participating in social activism from political demonstrations to community service, as well as organizing events such as intercultural communication training or a youth group that focuses on cross-cultural and global understanding. It is important to note that thirteen participants also felt being a part of this study was a way to give back to the world because they would be sharing their international cross-cultural experiential knowledge and promoting world-mindedness.

Three participants explained that they became more aware of different opportunities available in their community that they could take part in to promote social justice. For instance, Andrea started to volunteer at a homeless shelter. During the voyage, especially during the visit to India, she developed a strong interest in learning about poverty in the world and became passionate about being part of the solution. Upon returning home, she was not sure how she could contribute to easing world poverty. However, she came to the realization that there was poverty in her own city, as well. Many other participants had the same experience, that actually, the issues that caught their attention during the voyage also existed in their own backyards, and they could take locally oriented action while thinking about the issue on a global scale.
Another three participants described that they had initiated intercultural training programs for youth groups focusing on local as well as global issues in their university or local communities. For instance, Paola has been offering intercultural training sessions through the Office of International Affairs at her university. At the time of the interview that I conducted with her, she was in the process of developing cross-cultural adaptation training materials targeting incoming international students. She was also looking into developing a leadership platform that aims to help students to become effective leaders in a multicultural society. VB, who had been working in a resort in Bermuda, had initiated establishing a youth organization in her community as well:

I am reaching out to a grassroots organization in my community to create a youth group. I think it is important for the youth to discuss the issues in our community and think about what they can do to make positive changes. I hope I can encourage young people to come together and influence what happens in our community. I would like to do for the young people in my community what The Friend Ship program did for me. I would like to encourage them to take initiative and advocate for
change. ... This is for me, as well. I need opportunities where I can
discuss issues that affect the community and also the world at large. It
begins with just my one voice speaking; but the more I speak, the more I
would find others who would add their voices. Eventually, we can make a
choir! One person’s voice can be heard only so far, but the voices of
many are more difficult to ignore. I want to encourage people to be
informed about the issues, form their opinions, and become part of the
solution (VB, Interview #3, 11/19/09).

The participants found creating those opportunities that focus on a specific topic
could be an effective approach. The major difference in seeking suitable opportunities
from daily life was that they had control over creating opportunities and the participants
would be more interested in the topic. Thus, it would allow them to jump onto the topic
of focus and share their knowledge and opinions more effectively. The participants also
explained that the reason they participated in this study was because they thought it
would be a good opportunity to give back, and that they could talk more directly about
the important experiential knowledge they gained and how it helped them to develop
world-mindedness. Eng shared the following:

I took part in this study because I thought it would be a great opportunity for me to tell my story. I am really hoping that our stories would make a positive change in the way people who read your study see the world. I hope by sharing my story of how I grew and became a more worldly person will contribute to making the world a better place in some small way. [The Friend Ship program] made a positive change in my life. So, I thought it was my turn to return the favor. I guess, paying forward. ... I hope [The Friend Ship] will come back. It is a shame that we do not have one of the most amazing programs preparing students for the globalized world. I hope your study will spread the word about how much the program helped many of us. Then maybe there will be more programs like it in the future (Eng, Interview #3, 10/04/09).

VB agreed with Eng and also shared her hope of establishing more intercultural programs in the future:
When I heard about the opportunity to be a part of this study, I thought this would be a way I could contribute to spreading the word about how amazing the experience was. I hope our stories can convince people that we need more programs like this. ... I wish there were more programs and as many students as possible could participate. I truly think this type of international cross-cultural experience would be life-changing for so many students. The culturally diverse living environment was definitely unique and perhaps effective in finding some of the answers to solving some of the cross-cultural issues with which people struggle (VB, Interview #3, 11/19).

The participants discussed their belief that a program like The Friend Ship deserves more attention and recognition from the field of education, study abroad, and other related fields in helping students become effective members of the globalized world. In addition to reaching influential groups such as universities, international education organizations, and potential sponsors, the participants also thought it was
important to send messages to the general public based on their experiential knowledge gained from The Friend Ship. Responding to the question, “After The Friend Ship experience, what is the message you would like to share with people the most?” The participants answered this question by addressing the importance of understanding different cultures, people, and the world through firsthand cross-cultural experiences and how those experiences shape one’s view of the world or one’s role in it. Stoffer summed up their answers very well:

The message I would like to share the most is that international travel, meeting people from different countries, learning about different cultures as well as learning about our own cultures through others’ lenses, are [things] that needed to be tried. When I talk to people who would like to go to different parts of the world and experience different things, I cannot summarize what I want to tell them in a sentence or two and make them understand. So my message is, “you have to get out there and experience for yourself whenever you have the chance.” Even though you never know what it is going to be like and you might have some bad
experiences along the way, it would be something great after all. ... I can’t really recall situations where I went into a place where I had not been before and I was not amazed by something. So, that is what I tell people, “Travel, get out there! Do not settle and stay here. If you do, you will miss a lot.” (Stoffer, Interview #3, 10/20/09).

Misty agreed with Stoffer about the importance of people experiencing the world beyond their immediate community or the country:

If you have the opportunity to travel around and actually experience being in other cultural contexts, go and meet people from different countries. If there are people from other cultures in your community, try to get to know and learn from them. “Do not stay in your comfort zone!” That is my message. Some people might be afraid or do not see the need of going beyond their comfort zones. But I think, sometimes in life, we have to take risks because it is those kinds of experiences that would trigger you to open your eyes and grow as a person. So, sometimes, it is
good to take risks. Of course, sometimes, you might have negative experiences. But in the end, the positive things would balance out or the meaningfulness of the experience would enable you to leave the negative aspects behind (Misty, Interview #3, 09/23/09).

Expanding on the importance of going beyond one’s comfort zone and experiencing the world firsthand, Luis sent the message that emphasized the importance of people being lifelong learners:

“It is possible to make a change.” That is what I want to tell people. It is important to realize you can use your knowledge, abilities, and experiences to challenge the status quo and make positive changes. ... At the same time, people have to have continuous learning as their goal. You learn so much more just from having the mentality and being open-minded. It is possible to make a change [in the world to make it a better place], but you need to be able to use different perspectives and understand the big picture (Luis, Interview #3, 09/23/09).
Misty and Luis’s observations emphasized the importance of individuals having the right combination of attitude, experience, and ability to develop world-mindedness, which will contribute to effectively making positive changes in the globalized world.

Before The Friend Ship program, they were not actively participating in community service and were not engaged politically in their local community. Nor were they enthusiastic about initiating their own programs in the community. One of the major reasons was they doubted the power of one person to be able to achieve anything. The Friend Ship experience helped them to realize the importance of individuals taking initiative to make a positive change.

**Conclusion**

Even after two years since The Friend Ship program’s end, the spirit of giving back among the participants was still going strong. The participants expressed their desire and commitment to being a positive influence on the world. It is important to note that they had maintained their world-mindedness in their post-voyage lives; they did not leave behind their experience, learning, and vision that they developed during the voyage when they got off the ship, but were consciously connecting them to their life on
land and their future plans in every aspect of their lives. With their developed sense of connectedness and world-mindedness, the participants were committed to helping others in any way they could, regardless of their chosen careers.

In retrospect, the participants regarded the community onboard The Friend Ship as a microcosm. This unique environment enabled them to see how they have a role to play in making the world a better place for all and explore in what ways they could best fulfill that role. Even after The Friend Ship program, they did not think they could change the entire world or even their home community overnight. However, they strongly believed that they could have a little impact on individuals, one at a time. They perceived that the effort and process of achieving their goals were just as important as actually reaching those goals, especially when the goal is as vast as making the world a place where everyone and everything can live in peaceful harmony.
CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 493
Summary of the Research .................................................................................................... 494
Discussion: Toward Flexible and Experiential Global Education to Nurture
Students’ World-mindedness .......................................................................................... 496
    Transformative Learning Theory as a Road to the Development of
    World-mindedness ........................................................................................................ 496
    Global Education: Experiential Knowledge of World-mindedness .................. 503
    The Intercultural Communication Model as a Guide for Developing
    World-mindedness ........................................................................................................ 507
Implications: Creating International/Cross-cultural Experience-centered
Global Education for World-mindedness Enrichment .................................................. 511
Further Research ............................................................................................................. 514
    Investigating the Role of the Academic Curriculum in International
    Cross-cultural Experiential Learning-centered Global Education
    Programs ....................................................................................................................... 515
    Investigating the Strengths and Weaknesses of Different Educational
    Approaches to Nauture Students’ World-mindedness ........................................... 518

Introduction

This study has provided me with a great opportunity to listen to and learn from
the participants who were expected to make the greatest leap toward world-mindedness
during the global voyage on The Friend Ship. Through the stories the participants shared, I was able to investigate the ways in which their international cross-cultural experiential knowledge influenced the ways they understand different cultures and the world and their place and role in the world and how it enriched their world-mindedness.

To best represent the participants’ experiential knowledge, I have integrated much of the participants’ own words, thoughts, and ideas throughout this dissertation to further illuminate the topics under study. I hope their stories serve to confirm the power of experiential knowledge in enriching people’s world-mindedness. I also hope this study stimulates further discussion to explore the experience-centered global education with creating world-minded individuals as a major objective and encourages further cross-field collaboration among global education, intercultural communication/training, and study abroad programs. In this final chapter, I provide a space for discussion, implications, and suggestions for further research by revisiting the research questions.

Summary of the Research

The purpose of this study was to understand the ways in which international cross-cultural experiential knowledge developed on The Friend Ship influenced the participants’ world-mindedness. The research questions included the following: 1) In
what ways do the study participants retrospectively understand their transformation
during the educational global voyage? and 2) In what ways do the study participants see
the world and their engagement with the world as a result of international cross-cultural
experiential learning?

After completing the investigation of the research questions, five major findings emerged, which included: 1) Building strategies to deal with difference by encouraging open mindedness and critical self-reflection, 2) Heightening the importance of intercultural friendships and relationships in bringing the diversity in the world alive, 3) Combining theoretical knowledge and experiential knowledge to better understand the culturally diverse world, 4) Understanding the way people interpret the world and envision its future through international cross-cultural experiential knowledge, and 5) Practicing world-mindedness after the voyage in everyday life by giving back and initiating change.

In this final chapter, I discuss how the five major findings have implications for teaching, learning, and research. These discussion points include: 1) Transformative Learning Theory as a road to the development of world-mindedness, 2) experiential knowledge of the world’s diversity as an essential element in global education, and 3)
intercultural communication as a model for the development of world-mindedness. The chapter concludes with suggestions for further research that investigates the role of an academic curriculum that focuses on global perspective development in experiential learning-centered global education with an ultimate goal of world-mindedness enrichment. There is further need for comparative studies to examine the effectiveness of different types of programs with the aim of developing students’ world-mindedness, which will also be discussed.

Discussion:

Toward Flexible and Experiential Global Education to Nurture Students’ World-mindedness

Transformative Learning Theory as a Road to the Development of World-mindedness

This study explored ways that international cross-cultural experiential learning influenced the participants’ development of world-mindedness and the extent to which Transformative Learning Theory, the study’s guiding framework, can explain the reasoning and meaning of people’s transformation. Transformative Learning Theory explains the process and outcome of individuals becoming more critically reflective of their own perspectives and as a result becoming more open to the perspectives of others,
becoming less defensive and more accepting of new ideas. Brian discusses this life altering process below:

Although I was not totally closed-minded, I realized that I was much more closed-minded than I thought I was. [The Friend Ship] experience made me realize that by being not fully open-minded, I am limiting myself to different opportunities, to people, to various opportunities in life. I felt like all the windows [of my mind and heart] were only half-open, when they could be opened all the way. So it motivated me to learn a lot from people [with whom] I thought I had nothing in common. I learned this when I realized that people are often not how I initially thought they were. ... After [The Friend Ship program], I am more interested in getting to know the person who seems different from me. I see difference as uniqueness of the person and not as something that I use to judge others. I try to embrace the opportunity of meeting them and what they have to offer (Brian, Interview #2, 09/09/11).
The participants reflected on their personal transformations toward world-mindedness and addressed the importance of practicing open-mindedness and self-reflection, which are essential to this process.

The data identified a series of perspective transformation components addressed in Chapter 1. However, the data made a stronger connection to some components than to others. Based on the data, those components can be broadly grouped into three, as will be further discussed below. Each group relates unique viewpoints by Jack Mezirow, Robert Boyd, and Paulo Freire regarding the reasoning and meaning of transformation. While these perspectives are not clear-cut but overlap, the discussion below focuses on one of the stronger relationships observed between the components and the reasoning and meaning described by these scholars.

The first group of components relate to critical self-reflection beginning with a disorienting dilemma which leads to self-examination with a desire to change and a critical assessment of assumptions and culminates with the conscious act of sharing one’s confusion which leads to transformation along with others who are going through similar changes (Mezirow, 1995). The data strongly connects the components of self-examination with the desire to change by critically assessing one’s assumptions. For
instance, as it was elaborated in Finding 1, the participants described how they wanted to do the right thing by being sensitive and considerate of the context; and that led to the motivation to practice critical self-reflection to become more open-minded and expand their frames of reference. On the other hand, the participants described having less experience with the other two components.

The data analysis implied that while the participants had many eye-opening moments, most of them were not dramatic enough to be categorized as “disorienting dilemmas.” The two strongest examples of disorienting dilemmas were limited to such controversial topics as whether homosexuality and trans-sexuality is a sin and the treatment of impoverished people in India. The data also described that the participants employed journaling or taking quiet time alone for reflection on a daily basis in order to better process their experiences to achieve transformation. The data implied that the participants also learned to share their disorienting experiences with others in order to better understand and overcome them. As a result, participants as well as other students onboard became each others’ support system. It was a rather unconscious act and the participants were unable to acknowledge it as a part of critical self-reflection at the time the interviews took place.
Overall, those components related to critical self-reflection align with Jack Mezirow’s (2000) claim that when people cannot make sense of their own experience with an existing frame of reference, they either reject the experience or go through perspective transformation by employing reflection as a major strategy with the result of rejecting the previously held frame of reference (Mezirow, 2000; Taylor, 2000). Finding 1 provided evidence that supports Mezirow’s claim by analyzing examples of ways that the participants understood and employed critical self-reflection during international cross-cultural experiential learning. The participants described practicing critical self-reflection as a key to maximizing the benefits of open-mindedness and moving toward becoming a more conscious, caring, and world-minded person.

The components of the second group relate to self-development: exploration of options for new roles, new relationships, and actions; acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plan; provisionally trying new roles; and renegotiating existing relationships and negotiating new relationships (Mezirow, 1995). Finding 2 presented examples of how the participants displayed those components. For example, some participants were able to discover their new role as an in-between-person in the internationally diverse onboard community. They were able to recognize and
consciously use their culture-specific knowledge such as language, cultural norms and expectations, and intercultural communication skills to act as mediators in order to develop deeper friendships with onboard community members and take an active role in developing a safe and positive diverse community for all.

Expanding on those self-development components, Robert Boyd (1988; 1999) also described his interpretation of transformative learning as a subjective and psychological process of enlargement of one’s personality, capability, and confidence. Finding 3 on intercultural communication supports this claim. Some of the participants described that they were friendly, yet also rather introverted. While they were interested in talking with other students from different backgrounds, they did not initiate the interactions because they were shy and nervous about taking the first step. After realizing that many people were just like themselves waiting for someone to take the first step, they were able to interact more freely with a diverse group of people, and realize these opportunities were too meaningful for them to miss out on, because of shyness. Therefore, those participants who were introverted made a conscious effort to become more extroverted. They said that their transformation in personality led to more opportunities and to be outgoing, friendly, and inclusive of different people. Their
self-confidence was stimulated by the fact that they gained the ability and confidence to initiate and develop friendly conversations with strangers of different backgrounds.

The third group has one component, reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspectives (Mezirow, 1995). This component implies the butterfly effect; individuals’ change in perspective led to change in their decision-making and behavior, resulting in vast expansion of their social lives. Finding 5 strongly corroborated this theory in the participants’ post-Friend Ship life. As a result of enriched world-mindedness and empowering experiences of actually observing them making changes in the onboard community or in the lives of people they encountered during the voyage, the participants perceived their power and role as small, yet important in making the world a better place. Thus, the participants reported that they have been actively taking initiative to give back and to practice “think globally, act locally” in their current daily lives. This observation indirectly supports Paul Freire’s basic belief that transformative learning is about the awakening of people’s critical consciousness, emancipatory transformation, and ultimately about social transformation (Mezirow, 1995; Taylor, 1998).

While there was a general flow of participants going through the components
from group one to group three, there was no evidence that there was a set sequence that people follow. Instead, the data confirms Meziro’s (1995) view that there is no exact sequence of how people go through the components. The data implies that transformative learning is more complex and highly contextualized or individualized regarding its components, processes, and reasoning or meaning than the reviewed literature suggests. I agree that some degree of simplification and generalization may be necessary to make the concept describable and understandable; it is also important to point out that the nature of transformative learning is as complex and unique as the thoughts and experiences of each individual.

Global Education: Experiential Knowledge of World-mindedness

The work of respected scholars confirms that the primary purpose of global education is to prepare young people to live effectively and responsively in a global society (Anderson, 1990; Becker, 1982; Lamy 1991; Selby & Pike, 2000). The global education literature reflects how this might occur by discussing the goals, elements, and practices of global education, which were reviewed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. My findings are in agreement with the goals and elements of global education, but I question some of its practices.
Global education is expected to help citizens develop the competence they need in order to function in a global society. As a result of global education, students will be able to do the following: a) understand and examine the involvement of various factors and actors in the global society, b) understand the interdependent and interconnected nature of the global society, c) consider the interests of all as agents of change, and d) see their involvement in the global society (Alger & Harf, 1986). My study, particularly Finding 5, supports the literature that international cross-cultural experiential learning helps students develop or improve their abilities to carry out the items identified by Alger and Harf (1986) listed above.

As evident by the content of the five findings, the participants’ experiential knowledge and transformation as a result of The Friend Ship program place more emphasis on some aspects of global education over others. The study reveals that the outcome of international cross-cultural experiential learning had less to do with the substantive dimension of global education that is the object of a global perspective or content knowledge of global education, and more to do with the perceptual dimension of global education that is global perspective or the capacity to see the “big picture” whether focusing on a local or an international matter (Case, 1993; Hanvey 1979; Kneip,
1986; Merryfield & Wilson, 2005). For instance, there was significantly more detailed data on elements of global education that have a perceptual rather than a substantive focus. Perceptually focused elements of global education include perspective consciousness (Finding 1), cross-cultural awareness (Finding 4), and participation in the global society (Finding 5) while substantive elements include knowledge of global conditions and global system interconnectedness (Alger & Harf, 1986; Case, 1993; Selby & Pike, 2000; Merryfield & Wilson, 2005).

While Findings 1, 4, and 5 were aligned with the elements of global education, Findings 2 and 3 were about developing knowledge, skills, and abilities addressed in each element. These findings emphasized the importance of developing a personal connection to the topics under global education and also stressed the importance of putting knowledge, skills, attitude, and behaviors introduced in global education into practice on a daily basis. The study suggested that experiential learning and experiential knowledge are keys to developing students’ world-mindedness instead of traditional book knowledge. Thus, my study questions the effectiveness of widely practiced, global education that incorporates global perspectives through subject content teaching in the classroom setting, particularly its effectiveness in developing world-mindedness that
demand students’ affective development.

One of the issues in global education discussed in the Literature Review chapter was the lack of a single definition of global education and a concrete set of elements. While the issue of ambiguity was raised concerning the confusion about what global education is, it was also addressed that flexibility helps the organization or instructors to create a contextualized global education that is most appropriate and effective (Becker, 1882; Case, 1993; Merryfield, 1997). In this regard, my study supports the literature by identifying both the strengths and weaknesses of an international/cross-cultural experience-based global education model for the university level through in-depth discussions of students’ experiences that are different from global education through infusing global perspectives in subject teaching in a K-12 classroom setting.

Another issue in global education addressed in the literature review was the controversy surrounding global education, which is shaped by conflicting images of how the world is, how it ought to be, and what and how schools should teach students about the world and their place and role in the world (Case, 1993; Lamy, 1990). My study expands on the discussion of widely accepted definitions, goals, elements, and practices addressed in the literature review, and proposes international/cross-cultural
experience-based global education practice as an effective approach to dealing with this particular issue. The experience-based approach allows students to search for the answers themselves instead of being taught. My study describes that students develop stronger ownership with experiential knowledge than with book knowledge.

The Intercultural Communication Model as a Guide for Developing World-mindedness

Studies of current intercultural communication widely discuss the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes of individuals to prepare them to become interculturally competent communicators (Bennet, Bennet, & Landis, 2004; Gudykunst, 2003). The literature describes how interculturally competent communicators obtain genuine maturity and comprehensive ability to apply their knowledge and skills in a variety of cross-cultural contexts. Thus, it is more complex than simply obtaining more factual knowledge, or becoming aware of, different cultures; it is about being able to effectively employ that knowledge in actual practice (King & Magolds, 2005). In this regard, my study, particularly Finding 3, supports the literature with its emphasis on theory-into-practice, as well as its inclusive approach to addressing intercultural communication competence as a series of qualities of individuals – from intellectual, affective, to behavioral.
My study reveals that the significance of theory into practice was not only limited to the participants becoming “everyday interculturally competent communicators” (or those who practice intercultural communication as a part of normal daily life), but also becoming “everyday world-mindedness practitioners.” This finding brings my attention to the potential need to emphasize “practice” or how to not only think, but also act, as world-minded global citizens in everyday life as a result of global education.

The literature review described two frameworks of intercultural communication and intercultural competence: the List Model and the Structure-process Model. The List Model presents the efficacy-based view of intercultural communication and promotes intercultural training for a specific purpose by emphasizing specific knowledge and skills useful in communicating with people of different backgrounds for a specific purpose (Rathje, 2007). My study supports the literature and suggests that understanding intercultural communication through the List Model helped the participants to create the missing normality between two different cultures by enabling them to incorporate the communication styles and cultural norms and expectations. At the same time, some participants shared their concern about people being overly conscious about cultural
difference based on their firsthand international/cross-cultural experience. For example, Paola raised a point that if two interculturally competent communicators from very different cultures communicated strictly based on what intercultural communication teaches, this would result in ineffective intercultural communication because the two people would simply switch places and communicate with their counterpart from the other side of the cultural realm. The participants explained that more general skills or personal qualities such as observation skills and social skills, as well possessing qualities such as approachability and friendliness, are as important as culturally specific knowledge. This theory is limited in that it doesn’t take these personal aspects into account at all. Such a claim based on actual experience raises a question regarding the practical need for extensive culturally specific knowledge in conducting effective intercultural communication and stresses the importance of developing other more culturally neutral skills or personal qualities, such as those addressed above.

The Structure-process Model presents the goal-oriented view of intercultural communication, which emphasizes the procedural development of appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitudes that promotes individuals’ holistic development. This model describes how successful intercultural communication is achieved by actors in
creating a new system of cultural orientation (Gudykunst, 2003; Rathje, 2007). When we take into consideration Paola’s concern addressed earlier, as well as Findings 1 and 4, this study supports this intercultural model.

As an extension of the Structure-process Model of Intercultural Communication, the Personal Growth Model widely known as The Model of Intercultural Sensitivity was reviewed (Bennet, 1993, 2006). This model addresses the six stages that describe how people transform from an ethnocentric to an ethnorelati

state. The stages include denial, defense, minimalization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration. The study focused particularly on students’ critical self-reflection, open-mindedness, and cross-cultural learning that relate to these stages and therefore support this model. As further support for this model, the participants’ in-depth personal stories about their experiences on The Friend Ship, many participants went through those processes described above.

The literature also asserted that the stages of the Intercultural Sensitivity Model can also be applied to guide individuals in dealing with the different categories discussed in the field, such as achieving effective outcomes in a cross-cultural setting; cultural accommodation, adaptation, or acculturation; identity management or
negotiation; and developing effective communication networks. My study extends this discussion and reveals that those processes can also be used to develop perspective consciousness and cross-cultural awareness, understand global issues and the interconnected world system, and explore ways to effectively participate in the global society. The study presents the elements of global education and how many participants went through the stages of intercultural sensitivity in developing those elements. As I discussed in the literature review, in addition to what to teach under the five elements of global education, greater emphasis is needed concerning how students develop their abilities described under the elements and how teachers can assist them in this process.

Implication:

**Creating International/Cross-cultural Experience-centered Global Education for World-mindedness Enrichment**

There is an implication suggestion to come out of this study. It promotes cross-cultural experience-centered global education programs at the university level. My study described the following three major factors of The Friend Ship program as keys that helped the participants develop world-mindedness: (a) the effectiveness of a floating microcosm environment over that of a classroom environment, (b) the
effectiveness of an experience-based curriculum over a book-based academic curriculum, and (c) the effectiveness of having a series of ordinary daily cross-cultural encounters by living in an internationally diverse community over having few critical cultural incidents during short visits to different countries. These findings challenged the generally accepted notions or assumptions that successful global education demands subject teaching with global perspectives in a classroom environment or firsthand experience abroad. The findings also gave breathing space to explore new global education practices such as the establishment of a global education program in the university community reflecting the key factors to develop world-mindedness addressed above.

The participants explained that what helped them enrich their world-mindedness was not visiting different countries, having an isolated striking critical incident, or learning from academic courses on international topics; rather, it was having small daily cross-cultural encounters over a period of time, developing international friendships, understanding different cultures from an insider perspective, and understanding their own and other’s cultural perspectives and process of transformation. One way of delivering effective global education for world-mindedness
development was to prioritize creating an internationally diverse living environment where the community members were actively learning about and from each other over subject teaching and learning, as well as physically going abroad.

For instance, universities that have some degree of international student enrollment could initiate a global learning community program based in a residential hall as a type of extracurricular activity, certificate program, or first-year student experience program. This would require an application and interview process to ensure students’ interest and commitment to learning about international cross-cultural experiences and commitment to participate in all of the program’s activities as long as they participate in the program for a minimum of one school year. Ideally, the students would join the global residential community when they start college so that they would be able to form an initial bond with other community members and establish their roots in the community. The students from different countries would room together to promote international cross-cultural experiences. The program would appoint residential assistants who could also function as cross-cultural counselors or mediators. They would play a critical role in setting the tone of the internationally diverse community and providing emotional support and guidance to their members to ensure a meaningful
learning experience. These residential assistants would also assist in organizing both academic and cultural sessions that all participants would be required to attend throughout the year. These sessions would include intercultural communication training, team-building workshops, round table or panel discussions on current world events, service learning projects in local or international communities, a world cultural fair, and international movies or music nights, among others.

As discussed in the literature review, the two main challenges of providing a global education program to undergraduate students included the difficulty of including global perspectives in courses that have a more specialized focus and a tightly structured degree program, and the difficulty of financing study abroad opportunities for students. These were considered problems based on the assumptions that effective global education is to be delivered through infusing global perspectives in traditional subject teaching or through taking students abroad. Instead of facing the challenges that are evidently difficult to solve, the global learning community program would provide an effective alternative to develop students’ world-mindedness.

Further Research

Successful global education should have the ability to evoke students’ curiosity
to learn about the world, inspire them to explore different cultures, and help students develop necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to become effective decision makers in the globalized world. Successful global education can help shape students to grow intellectually and emotionally spiritually and help them think about the world across time and space and actively take part in the betterment of the world as a whole by practicing “think globally, act locally” in their daily lives.

With these tremendous objectives, it is the responsibility of global education professionals to continue to explore the most effective ways of conducting global education. Based on this study that requires the small contribution of subject content learning and the significant contribution of international cross-cultural experiential learning to students’ world-mindedness enrichment, further research is recommended in the following two areas: a) the role of the academic curriculum in international cross-cultural experiential learning-centered global education programs, and b) the strengths and weaknesses of different educational approaches in nurturing students’ world-mindedness.

*Investigating the Role of the Academic Curriculum in International Cross-cultural Experiential Learning-centered Global Education Programs*
Given the freedom to talk about what they found most important in their world-mindedness development during The Friend Ship program, the participants chose focus on sharing their experiences and learning that they received outside of the classroom. They did not talk about their learning from academic work significantly less. The data implied the need for further research investigating the role of the academic curriculum in international cross-cultural experiential learning-centered global education programs regarding its significance, effectiveness, and meaning, as well as realistic expectations toward its contributions.

For instance, the academic component was an important sales point for The Friend Ship program and also one of the main key factors that influenced the participants to join the program. This study raised the question of why they were disappointed in this particular part of the program and agreed that it failed to contribute to their development of world-mindedness despite the organization’s commitment to develop and deliver an internationally oriented academic curriculum. The gap between the expectation and outcome and its causes need to be investigated. In order to explore and develop effective learning programs that enrich students’ world-mindedness, the following questions need to be explored. First, did the participants find subject content
learning less significant in their development of world-mindedness because the academic curriculum was not well developed or generally speaking, the academic component could not compete with the striking effect of the experience component in a study abroad type of program? Second, if the participants’ low evaluation of the academic curriculum in helping students’ world-mindedness development was due to its insufficient development or ineffective deliberation, what would a desirable academic curriculum look like? In what ways would the criteria for academic curriculum development and deliberation differ from ones of The Friend Ship program? Third, if the academic program was deemed not to have the x-factor that promotes students’ world-mindedness, should the global education that mainly employs the classroom subject teaching approach shift to global education with a focus on real world international/cross-cultural experiential learning?

Considering how a large part of global education is currently practiced by infusing global perspectives in traditional subject teaching in a classroom setting, it is important to investigate the effectiveness of such an approach in helping students develop world-mindedness. Further research that focuses on the role and effectiveness of the academic components in a widely experience-based global education program is
needed. This ultimately raises the question of whether students can become world-minded citizens of the globalized world only through global education that was limited within a classroom or whether it would require students to have extensive international cross-cultural experiential learning where they can develop their experiential knowledge through meaning-making of their own experience.

*Investigating the Strengths and Weaknesses of Different Educational Approaches to Nurture Students’ World-mindedness*

I recommend further comparative studies that examine the strengths and weaknesses of multiple educational approaches and programs that aim to help students better understand different cultures and the world and ultimately help them become world-minded individuals. Identifying the unique qualities of different approaches and programs can create an important base for exploring the ways in which international/global educators can learn from each other and potentially integrate various practices in to develop and deliver the best programs.

As discussed in the literature review, there are different educational approaches and programs that aim to prepare students to become effective citizens of the globalized world. These approaches share the same overall goal, but they may have different paths...
and means to this goal as well as slightly different objectives and outcomes. For instance, there is K-12 classroom-based global education that is considered effective in helping students obtain global perspectives through subject content learning; however, its effectiveness in developing students’ affective domain that enriches their world-mindedness needs to be further studied. Another approach is a single-destination cultural immersion study abroad program widely used in higher education. It generally contributes to students’ gaining culture-specific knowledge and intercultural communication and self-efficacy; however, its contribution to developing students’ world-mindedness is unclear. This study implies that a multi-destination study abroad program with a culturally diverse group of peers is effective in developing students’ world-mindedness.

Comparative studies are necessary to better understand the key variables of different types of programs on students’ development of world-mindedness. The potential variables include the academic curriculum, firsthand experiential learning, location and length of the program, international or cultural diversity among students in the learning community, and ages, background, and interests of the students, among others. Comparative studies could contribute to developing more effective approaches or
programs by combining the strengths addressed in the studies to better assist and promote students’ world-mindedness development.

For instance, comparison of empirical studies of programs that promote global education are needed to identify clear objectives, actual practices, and assessed outcomes of different educational approaches, and the ways in which different variables influence them. Comparative studies of empirical research can enable us to articulate the different functions of various approaches and programs. The gained understanding and insight would serve as a knowledge base in exploring the development of a new approach or a type of program that integrates the different strengths identified within the empirical studies. The findings of this study also question the validity of developing an approach or a program that consists of various domains, and promoting using a series of approaches and programs as a set instead of one inclusive approach or program.

As global education scholars ask students to become life-long open-minded learners and act as effective global citizens of the world, they must continuously strive to examine different educational practices in the ongoing journey of exploring the best ways of assisting students in the process. Just as the study participants describe the diversity in The Friend Ship community as a beneficial resource, when the global or
international educators with different knowledge, experiences, and ideas work together, we all may gain something more than if we only focus on our own ways of doing things; as the saying goes, “two heads are better than one.”
REFERENCES


Hicks, D. (2003). Thirty years of global education: a reminder of key principles and


Merryfield, M. (2000). Why aren’t teachers being prepared to teach for diversity, equity, and global interconnectedness? A study of lived experience in making multicultural and global educator. Teaching and teacher education, 16,


global competence (pp. 34-56). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.

APPENDIX A:

RECRUITMENT LETTER FOR POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

Principle Investigator: Dr. Merry Merryfield

Dear Sir/Madam.

I am planning to conduct a research study with former participants of program XXX about the ways in which participants’ cross-cultural and international experiential learning influenced their development of world-mindedness. World-mindedness is necessary for effective citizens of the globalized world. It describes abilities that consist of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable people to consider the interests of all and act as an agent of change for the betterment of the world.

I would like to ask if you would participate in my study. If you agree to participate, I will ask you to contribute your time during the course of approximately three months to the following activities: having three rounds of one-hour interviews with a researcher, posting weekly messages in on-line discussion, and sharing your selection of program related documents such as academic work and photographs along with descriptions of their importance between the second and third rounds of interviews. The scheduling of the interviews and their method will be flexible and based upon your convenience.

At the end of the study, I am planning to write a dissertation and publish the study findings. However, the information you share with me will be confidential. I will not use any identifiers or markers that link the information to you. In my report, I will use pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. As federal regulations require, study records
will be retained for at least three years after the close of the study. Agreeing to participate in my study does not obligate you to complete the study. You can withdraw from the study at any time or choose not to answer questions. If you agree to participate, I am required to gain your signed informed consent.

In an era of globalization and cross-cultural encounters, educators, administrators, and researchers are trying to better understand the ways in which students develop world-mindedness. Such understanding could greatly contribute to better preparation and assistance to students to become effective citizens of the globalized world. Your support with this study would be greatly appreciated. If you have any questions related to the content of the study, please feel free to contact me, Misato Yamaguchi, at (614)707-3218. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a participant, please contact The Ohio State University Office of Responsible Research Practices (ORRP) at 1-800-678-6251.

Sincerely,

Principle Investigator: Dr. Merry Merryfield
(614)766-9968 or Merryfield.1@osu.edu
(614)707-3218 or Yamaguchi.14@osu.edu
APPENDIX B:

INTERVIEW GUIDEING-QUESTIONS

Pre-interview Questions (Written survey)

1. What is your name?
2. What is your nationality or country of origin?
3. What is your ethnicity or racial background?
4. What is your gender?
5. How old were you at the time of The Friend Ship participation?
6. What is your religion?
7. What is your first language? Do you speak any other languages?
8. Did you have any international cross-cultural experiences prior to participating in The Friend Ship?
9. What is your academic background?
10. When did you participate in The Friend Ship?
11. Were you pursuing any academic degree in a college/university at the time of The Friend Ship participation? Or where you working (professionally) at the time of the program participation?
12. What was your learning circle?
13. How often did you participate in Academic Field Program?
14. What is your current occupation?
15. Did you have a roommate(s) during The Friend Ship?
16. If there is anything you want me (the researcher) to know about yourself, please note them here.
Interview #1 Guiding Questions

Before Participating in the Program
1. Please tell me little bit about yourself (family, where & how you grow up etc)
2. What was your life like prior to participating in the program?
3. What was important in your life during that time?
4. What did you think of other countries and people who are different from you?
5. What kind of worldview did you have?

Encounter with the Program
6. How did you come to participate in the program?
7. What kind of expectation did you have about your experience with the program?

Life during the Program
8. What was the atmosphere of The Friend Ship like?
9. What was your daily life experience like during the program?
10. What part of your daily life did you find most important or meaningful to you?
11. What was it like for you to be a part of The Friend Ship and living in an (intense) cross-cultural situation and having international experiences in daily bases?
12. What were some of the most difficult, least challenging, and pleasant experiences?
13. What were the things that made think about world and your engagement with/role in the world?
14. What kind the eye opening experience did you have?
15. What are the things you learned about different parts of the world and people in those places?
16. Over all, what kind of experience during The Friend Ship was most significant to you?
17. What were the significant changes you see within you between pre- and post The Friend Ship? How did your worldview change between pre-and post The Friend Ship?

Interview #2: Guiding Questions
1. What kind of person were you during The Friend Ship?
2. What were your feelings about international cross-cultural experience and the people or culture you interacted with?

Critical Incident & Self Reflection
3. What kinds of self-reflection did you have during The Friend Ship?
4. What kinds of incidents, events, experiences (critical incidents) triggered your critical self-reflection?
5. What kind of overall inner-transformation did you experience as the result of critical self-reflection triggered by the critical incidents?

Open-mindedness
6. What does it mean to be open-minded?
7. How were you less open-minded prior to The Friend Ship? Can you give me an example(s)?
8. How are you more open-minded after The Friend Ship? Can you give me an example(s)?
9. Is becoming more open-minded a person’s choice?
10. What were your motivations to become more open-minded?
11. What did you do to become more open-minded?
12. How your ways of making judgment, dealing with emotion and ambiguity, and achieving an objective in international and cross-cultural environments changed in the process of becoming more open-minded and worldly-minded?
13. How is critical self-reflection important to become more open-minded and world-minded person?
14. How did your values being influenced or changed throughout The Friend Ship experienced? What were the processes like?
15. How did your intercultural competence (ability to understand and work well across the culture), global competence (ability to understand the world as a whole and work well in globalized world), and self-confidence increased? What helped you to increase in those? How was the process like?

Personal development
16. What development or transformation in skills, knowledge, and attitudes did you
experience during The Friend Ship?
17. In your opinion, what are the difference between understanding another
culture/country and understanding the world as a whole?
18. How those developments/transformations helped you to be come more
world-minded person who can consider the interest of all in the betterment of the
world?
19. While you were participating in the program, how your perspective toward
yourself, your culture and country changed?
20. How have your identity (as an individual, citizen of a local
community/country/region/world) influenced by The Friend Ship experience?

Environment
21. How The Friend Ship uniquely helped you to make those
development/transformation? (e.g. skills, knowledge, attitudes, perceptions,
identity)
22. In your opinion, can people make such transformation in their everyday life at
home? Why?

Interview #3: Guiding Questions

Globalized World
1. What are the things that make people/culture/countries different and similar?
2. What are the things that divide and unite the world? Why?
3. What are the negative and positive of having differences? Why?
4. How the world can unit for its betterment as a whole while having differences?
5. How do you see the world; the world as a big whole that has diversity within or the
world as a collection of diverse pieces making up the world? Why?

World-mindedness
6. How do you describe a person with world-mindedness in today’s globalized world?
7. What are the skills, knowledge, and attitude necessary for a person to develop and
practice world-mindedness?
8. How do you describe yourself in terms of world-mindedness?
9. How important is it for you to be a world-minded person?
10. How did the first hand cross-cultural international experiences gained from The Friend
Ship impact your world-mindedness?
11. How did your experience visiting different parts of the world and interacting with
diverse cultures and people influence your world-mindedness?
12. How does world-mindedness has been influencing your life after the The Friend Ship?
13. How do you use your world-mindedness in current life?

Contributing Your Experiential Knowledge
14. What are the things you would like to share about your experience and learning with
others in terms of assisting them to expand their world-mindedness? Why?
15. How important is it for you to share your experience and contribute your leanings
through The Friend Ship with others? Why?

Working toward the Betterment of the World
16. What kind of vision do you have for the globalized world? What do you wish the
world to be?
17. In general, what does it take for a person to contribute for the betterment of the
world as a whole? What can she/he do (from personal to global scale)?
18. How are you contributing for the betterment of the world?
19. What are the ways you would like to contribute to the world in the future?
20. Where do you go from here?
21. What are the messages for people in general as an individual who had the very
special experience to explore the world with The Friend Ship?

Participating in the Study
22. How was your over all experience having interviews?
23. How did you feel the way the study is conducted? (Recruitment, Scheduling
   Interviews, Guiding Questions, Skype Interview, Document Analysis etc)
24. What did it mean to you to be a part of the study?
APPENDIX C:

DOCUMENT ANALYIAIA GUIDEING-QUESTIONS

DOCUMENT ANALYIAIA GUIDEING-QUESTIONS

Between interview #2 and #3, please select total of 3-10 documents that would allow you to best answer the questions indicated below.

The documents may include:
- Pictures
- Academic works (e.g. class papers, projects, class notes)
- Course syllabus
- Descriptions of/materials from academic field work program
- Brochure from the places you visited
- Journal (e.g. academic journal, intercultural journal, personal journal)

Please include documents that captured not only positive but also challenging experiences/learning that led your self-reflections or personal growth.

For EACH document, please provide 1 page description (length is flexible). In your description please provide concrete answers to the following questions as much as possible.

1. Please describe the documents.
2. What memories does this document bring back?
3. Why is this document important to you?
4. What were the skills, knowledge, attitudes you developed/expanded to become
more world-minded person through the learning/experience represented in the document?

5. What kind of self-reflection or critical reflection did the learning/experience represented in the document lead?

6. How did the learning/experience help you to learn or think more about world?

7. How did the learning/experience have influenced the way you see and understand the world?

8. How did the learning/experience represented in the document assist you to think your role in the world or ways you engage in the world?

9. What are the things you do differently or started to do as the result of the learning/experience?

10. How does the learning/experience represented in the document continue to influence you after The Friend Ship?