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In Search of Kinship:

Traveling into new worlds through conversation and the impact on building community

By Daniel E. McClary

Doctoral Candidate at Kutztown University

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of Kutztown University

In Partial Fulfillment of Degree Requirements for the Degree of Educational Doctorate

Under the supervision of

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Cathleen McGeehan, Ph.D.

Brenda Muzeta, Ph.D.

Kutztown, Pennsylvania

May 2020

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Abstract

This dissertation reports on qualitative research done with a phenomenological methodology on the topic of building community. This was explored through the voices of over 200 participants representing more than 30 countries. Surveys and in-depth interviews examined international experiences and cultural background of participants alongside many stakeholder voices from within higher education, including international and domestic students, faculty, and staff.

Though the study and application is focused on a higher education context, the research has broader implications to society in looking at how intentional conversations across cultural symmetry impacts relationships and community building. The data touched on feelings of isolation and division in society. The literary scholarship and data collection instruments examined themes such as sense of belonging, acceptance, and identity formation, and the global competency skills that are useful in other cultures as well as in the U.S. Key findings included the impact of lifeworlds as related to identity, the pressure to conform in order to find acceptance, and how humility and better listening are essential to building community on the micro and macro level. Learning to cross borders between differences, disciplines, departments, generations, politics, and cultures in order to interact with people can increase awareness and understanding, while hopefully building empathy and compassion for others. We can create a new and different future through conversations with those who think differently than us.

Key Words

conversations, intercultural, belonging, community, internationalization, lifeworld

Signature of Investigator: Daniel E. McClary

Date: May 13, 2021

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Dedication page

I would like to dedicate this writing to one of the first “travelers” I ever knew, Jennifer, my life partner. You stood out as someone culturally different who I wanted to know because of the life you led and the manner in which you lived it. Your family culture of valuing education, giving experiences more than things, stepping out of comfort zones, doing hard things, and opening your home to people from all over the world became an important part of our lives together. We have lived the research for over 30 years, even more intently the past three years, which you made possible through your selfless sacrifice. These pages represent the culmination of a research study. They also represent lived experiences together, where we found our “really alive” moments, raised five *travelers* of our own, and lived with them on three continents. Let the conversations continue!

Acknowledgments page

I would like to say a special thank you to my growing family. You *all* represent the first and most important community I ever hoped to build and be part of. Attaining a doctorate has been the realization of a goal but pales in comparison to titles I treasure more, such as “Dad” and “Goh-pa.” The focused learning and synthesis of this past three years have hopefully made me a better human being toward filling those roles. That it made me less available to you has not been a good exchange. I look forward to stepping out into the new spaces together.

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Lastly, I would like to especially acknowledge all the participants in the study who completed surveys and were interviewed. Your words and thoughts were invaluable to the research and remind me of why I love intercultural exchange so much. The emerging learning reported in this document would not be possible without your insight. Thank you for being open and transparent and reflective. I sensed in your laughter and tears the same hopefulness that we can build community together and reap its many rewards.

Hope is like a path in the countryside. Originally, there is nothing — but as people walk this way again and again, a path appears.

Lu Xin, Chinese Essayist, 1921

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Chapter 1 – Stepping out of your door

Ideally, travel broadens our perspectives personally, culturally, and politically. Suddenly the palette with which we paint the story of our lives has more colors.

Rick Steves, Travel as a Political Act

The traveler

When crossing a border into a new country, there is no sensation quite like deboarding the plane, stepping out of the tunnel, and going through passport control, where the nagging doubt of whether or not you will be accepted lingers. Within the international terminal, a multitude of diverse lives and purposes and beliefs intersect and cross over each other. The signs are in different languages. People are having conversations but the words are not registering. One's mind tries to decipher announcements over the public address system and other signals in this new space, but it is easy to feel like you are missing something. Smells are new. Sights are unique, with different colors and design patterns. Basic living functions that were simpler yesterday in your previous context are harder to accomplish, as we seek to meet even basic needs such as finding a meal. Exchanging money is suddenly an issue that triggers anxiety. The amygdala, the threat center of the brain, is more active and engaged (Khazan, 2020, p. 81), searching actively for cues, seeking safety as soon as possible, and remaining poised for fight or flight.

Points of transition like these are doors between spaces. There is a sense of being on the cusp of something, where we anticipate new experiences, new relationships, new understandings, along with a sense of adventure. Alternatively, we may have dread or fear as the unknown rears up like a mythic creature blocking our way. Feiler (2020) says “The linear life is dead” and “the chief side effect of the nonlinear life is that these transitions are becoming more plentiful. Half of our lives are spent in a state of in-between” (pp. 14, 162). This runs counter to the strong desire

human beings have for control and the known and to remain in our comfort zones. Bateson (1989) said, “None of us follows a single vision; instead, our very visions are products of growth and adaptation, not fixed but emergent” (p. 237). If we can have the exposure to difference and engage with others, it is possible to expand our understanding by living that curriculum rather than a singular lifeworld formed in an insulated, cultural experience. However, we can easily miss the feeling of competency and expertise we felt in spaces we knew better. Because everything is different and new, as changes swirl around our heads, we find that unfamiliar emotions rise to the surface. Our catalog of experience no longer supports the challenges of the moment, whether large or small. We are shaken and stirred by being out of our comfort zones. This can be a good thing!

The description above captures the experience of millions of students studying abroad each semester. They leave the country they knew to spend a semester or a few years in another culture which they may never have visited before. They are stepping into a middle space between what was and what is yet to be determined, a liminal space between an ending and a new beginning, that occurred when they crossed that boundary. Equally challenging is that thresholds sometimes cross us, even when we have not moved, as will be discussed below. These are definitely uncomfortable moments. In reality, they have not stepped into only one new space, but several overlapping circles of spaces, a new country and culture, which contains the city or town where their campus is, and the campus itself will have a subculture of its own, as will the residence hall where the students meet their new roommates who will be from a different family and regional culture, even if their passport countries are the same.

In reality, this type of disruptive event is not unlike what any human being experiences when stepping into a new job or retirement, or a new relationship that connects you to another

family, or face the loss of a loved one, or any number of the many changes and challenges that time and living bring into the human journey universally. In these transitional moments, human beings are just as likely to be stepping into spaces within spaces, some that overlap and some that do not, as the international student journey held. The questions and feelings human beings have in such times is an area of common ground we could explore together in conversation, the joys and the losses, and perhaps find a level of kinship.

For anyone leaving behind the more familiar context in which they were more comfortable, questions of identity and belonging can surface amidst the new rhythms and patterns and cultural norms. A common existential question of identity is “Who am I?” Applied to a new country or new city or new job, it could be asked as, “Who am I...in this context?” When we meet up with different ways of thinking and functioning, such as different cultural scripts about how banking is done or what classroom behavior is expected or how this employer does annual reviews, the question could be rendered, “Who is this space asking me to be? Will I be accepted for who I am? Do I have to change?”

These questions of our identity easily surface when we move out of our comfort zones and known spaces into new territory, as we would travel physically or, by interacting with people different from us, travel cross-culturally or even ideologically, or as our situations change, such as getting a new work role or assignment. Khazan (2020) describes how the brain “becomes activated when we see a face belonging to someone from another tribe” exhibiting “less empathy-like activity when it comes to people who are from groups outside our own, be they supporters of rival sports teams or people from other races” (p. 81). From within these encounters with people and experiences new to us, these different “countries” and “cultures,” we

face important decisions of how to respond. It can be a crisis that throws us or threatens to destroy or it can be an opportunity for gain. Much of the decision can be our own.

If we are lifelong learners and navigating with a growth mindset, we can state, “The person I’m becoming is...”, allowing that we are in process in our transformation journey; what you see today is hopefully not what you see if you meet up with me later down the road. Not changing or being stretched and challenged is equally appealing many times. Our response and strategies related to these exposure cycles will be varied as the number of people on planet earth. Whether we feel like learning or panicking will vary depending on the circumstances and the day, and especially by the person. The overall exploration done in this study is meant to raise awareness about the dynamics of change and the internal transitions they bring. It is also to explore a type of traveling we may not recognize is available to us in our own neighborhoods, workplaces, and on campuses as we welcome international students. That is, to be intentional about spending time in conversation with people who are culturally disparate from us, such as from different cultural norms, different beliefs, values, or politics. We can potentially gain new insight and understanding and be expanded, even if only having heard another person’s story. There is the simple benefit of learning from their experiences on a topic and the potentially profound impact of knowing another person better.

In a time where being socially isolated and feeling very divided dominate the narratives, this study is considering how our interactions with each other can have benefits enough to offset the challenges. Building and functioning as community is not always easy, but we have much to learn by suspending the habits that thwart communication and much to gain by truly listening to each other’s stories. The globalization that is becoming part of all lives makes the timeliness of understanding our own travels and those of others all the more important, as “the network of

dependencies is fast acquiring a worldwide scope” where the combination of “ethnic diasporas (leaving a) wide trail of immigrants struggling to settle” (Bauman, 2001, pp. 97, 101-102). By the symbiotic relationships of our common humanity we might also meet the basic human need to feel accepted and to belong. That is the hope of the international students arriving on campuses each year, and it is likely very recognizable to the rest of us. Block (2010) said:

Belonging can also be thought of as a longing to be. Being is our capacity to find our deeper purpose in all that we do. It is the capacity to be present and to discover our authenticity and whole selves. This is often thought of as an individual capacity, but it is also a community capacity. Community is the container within which our longing to be is fulfilled. Without the connectedness of a community, we will continue to choose not to be. (p. xviii)

Figuring out our personal identity is significant and helps us to function. If we want to become the fullest versions of ourselves and move beyond basic needs to self-actualization, then an effective means for moving in that direction is the type of engagement discussed here. Hall (1983) said, “one of the many paths to enlightenment is the discovery of ourselves, and this can be achieved whenever one truly knows others who are different” (p. 8). We can explore our identities and ideas in isolation or where we only find a homogeneous affinity through our similarities and like-mindedness. This does insulate us from the challenges of being around culturally disparate people and the problems that differences and diversity provide in human interactions. However, it will also rob us of a very effective way of learning and growing. To “insulate” literally means in the Latin root the process of making an “island” (Lexico, 2021).

The contrast provided by the lens of another person’s lifeworld or culture helps us focus on things we might never see otherwise. When we feel like moving away from someone, that

may be a signal we should actually move toward them. Whether it is movement into a conversation with someone very different from us, or an experience or season that is completely new, leaving our known spaces and comfort zones will stretch and grow us. Sometimes that first heroic step further than we have gone before may be the longest distance of travel.

It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out your door. You step onto the road, and if you don't keep your feet, there's no knowing where you might be swept off to.

J.R.R. Tolkien, The Lord of the Rings

[The invitation to travel](#)

In a rapidly shrinking world where globalization is happening with or without us (Storti, 2007, p. 69), we have a choice of if and how much we will engage with others around us who may be different. Intercultural communication skills will be useful to everyone, both in helping to welcome that international student to your hometown but also in talking to that neighbor whose yard signs and bumper stickers do not match your own. Harvey (2021) describes this type of competence as “intercultural learning,” which she says “involves cultivating a mindset, heart set, and skill set to engage more effectively and appropriately with people who are different from us—whether in race, class, gender, nationality, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, religion, or other ways—while also remaining authentic to ourselves.” As will be seen in Chapter 4, people consistently said approaching someone from another country was easier for them than someone whose political or religious views were different. Storti (2007) said, “Cross-cultural encounters don’t always go wrong, of course, any more than same-culture interactions always go splendidly...” (p. 25). There is a premise explored throughout this study that the care and skills needed to engage across cultural differences can serve us all well locally with our coworkers and neighbors as well as internationally with those encountered out on the trail.

Rettig (2017) offers several good habits for intercultural communicators which could act as a travel guide for those wanting to take this journey of intentional interactions with others. Included in his list are, “always try to understand the other side’s motivations; question your beliefs and assumptions on a regular basis; seek out uncomfortable situations; suspend judgment; (and) always double-check any assumption you are making about another culture.” The learning and growth potential lies more in stepping out of our pod. This may help us find kinship that is missing. At the very least, it will certainly expand our understanding and hopefully contribute to the empathy we could exhibit toward each other.

The international students arriving at the airport can choose not to engage with the new culture, a new season in their lives or they can immerse fully, or somewhere in between. Not to interact with the differences and contrast negates the new perspective and other benefits of having moved into a new space. The same dynamics exist for those who have not physically traveled to other countries as the rapidity of change and adjustment sweeps over each of us, even if we think we are not moving, as demonstrated by how we might binge watch a show to destress from life using streaming services that were foreign to us a decade ago. “Instead, we have learned from interruptions and improvised from the materials that came to hand, reshaping and reinterpreting. As a result, all of us have lived with high levels of ambiguity” (Bateson, 1989, p. 237). For the international student journey, not engaging with the culture slows language learning, cultural adjustment, and academic success (Ecochard, et al., 2017). If isolating from the new space around them by doing online gaming all night with friends back home, or streaming favorite shows from home in their first language, they will end up not integrating into the rhythm of the new time zone, sleeping at hours when others are interacting, and adding yet another layer to the challenges of having their authentic selves be seen by others. The layer of tiredness and

not being engaged enough to begin building a new support network will compound barriers of language proficiency and decision fatigue from many different cultural cues and scripts.

Similarly, when U.S. students doing education abroad do not engage with their hosts, walk the streets interacting and improving their language skills in the local markets, or go on hikes or other outings to socialize with others in their cohort, they are missing out on unique learning and growth opportunities. Yes, it is easier for them to stay inside and watch their favorite team on an NFL app, but that is not why they stepped into this experience. Linking this to the reality inherent in the journey of all people, we may also recognize the temptation to stay inside the bubble of what we know.

These choices about whether or not to engage or choosing how much we are interested in growth could be compared to deciding what type of character we want to be in the narrative of our “unfolding lives” (Bateson, 1989, p. 239). As exemplified in literature, there are static characters, which are the ones that journey through the events, the highs and lows, the conflicts and the resolutions, only to come out on the other side unaffected and unchanged. Examples of these characters are Sherlock Holmes or Captain Hook. On the other hand, dynamic characters are the ones who are transformed by the happenings of the tale, such Ebenezer Scrooge or Anakin Skywalker (Darth Vader) (MasterClass/Dynamic, 2020). A great example of a dynamic character is Samwise Gamgee from *The Lord of the Rings* novel (Tolkien, 1991). As depicted in the movie version (Jackson, 2001), Sam came to an abrupt stop at the boundary line of the Shire, saying if he takes one more step, it will be the furthest he has ever been from home. The person traveling alongside him, Frodo Baggins, gave him a moment, then put a hand on his shoulder and said, “Come on, Sam,” helping him step into a new space. Armstrong (2004) said “every time humans take a step forward, they revise and update their understanding of the world” (as cited in

Feiler, 2020, p. 26). After many iterative cycles of exposure and such steps that echoed this first one, Sam later ended up being a helper to Frodo in his moment of crisis.

The greatest reward of a teacher or parent or leader seems reflected in Sam's journey, that is to help someone reach a new place and then to have the student surpass the teacher. The traveler disposition seems a must for teachers, as they would continuously explore and model for their students the courage to step into new spaces, cross over boundaries encapsulating their known world and comfort zones, explore, learn, and then leave a well-marked trail for others to follow. They are pioneers more than settlers, letting the change, contrast, differences, and even dissent from others expand their lifeworld.

A last helpful illustration is developed from Anne Tyler's novel *The Accidental Tourist* (1985), which has provided a very helpful metaphor throughout this study. The title character Macon Leafy writes travel guides for a living, which, ironically, help people who hate traveling find restaurants and hotels that are just like they never left home, almost as if still sitting in their favorite, comfortable armchair – not engaging with the sights and people of a different culture, going home unaffected. Playing off Tyler's creation, I am offering the alternative of being an *Intentional Traveler* for those who would consider that advantageous. *Travelers*, as I will call them, are people who engage with the curriculum of life. They are affected. They "are able to transform and remake (them)selves in the true sense...it is the curriculum of being and becoming" (van Manen, 2016, p. 7). Travelers recognize change and difference is happening even when they think they are holding still. They are willing, even eager to cross boundaries between what they once understood and new learning out there over the next hill. Travelers engage with difference and newness and unknowns. They are curious. They are genuinely interested in others. They recognize that in engaging with people who are different, that "their

stories are as powerful as mine,” as one participant explained it after having worked in Africa and away from the Netherlands, her passport country. Travelers are lifelong learners with an ongoing interest in transformation – their own, and for those who would be impacted by their journey.

The countries and cultures travelers may visit are easily found without need of a passport or airplane. They may be found by engaging in conversations with other people who are culturally disparate. You can visit the lifeworlds of others, truly listening to them, hearing their stories, letting your understanding and awareness be expanded, adding colors to your palette as you create the painting of your own life and world. Change, movement into new spaces – whether ideological or geopolitical – and engaging with others adds layers to the canvas that will build up over a lifetime to complete the painting. Artist Paul Cézanne was known as the “Father of Modern Art” because of his bold brush strokes and adding new layers to common subjects until they were seen in a way they had not been before (Richman-Abdou, 2020). Being able to navigate change in a similar way is a universal plight among human beings. Bateson (1989) said:

Adults face times that are increasingly challenging. A central theme in our current social context is *change*, reflecting the dynamic impact of forces across demographic, social, cultural, technological, political, and historical domains. Discontinuities are created by a number of factors that include shifting and globalization of business environments, the increasing multiculturalism of many nations, and other geographical and political events.

(as cited in Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006. P. 3)

People from within every cultural context are continuously dealing with transition. The human experience is rife with opportunities to learn and grow from such moments daily. Holding to status quo and resisting changes around us and the transitions internal that shake and stir us if

definitely more comfortable. We feel in control. We can make our plans. However, it denies the rapidity of movement and new circumstances that we will continue to face. When asking participants in this study how important it was for people to develop intercultural skills, they said very important, and that we are doing students a “disservice” not to prepare them in this way. Learning to travel and lean into change does not mean we cannot stay in the places we love, eat our favorite foods, and do the activities we favor. It is more an opportunity to develop the travelling skills that help people stay relevant rather and able to engage with how the world is moving.

The born traveller – the man who is without prejudices, who sets out wanting to learn rather than to criticize, who is stimulated by oddity, who recognized that every man is his brother, however strange and ludicrous he may be in dress and appearance – has always been comparatively rare.

Hugh and Pauline Massingham, The Englishman Abroad

The purpose of the study – one little corner of the earth

The purpose of this study is to first examine what the concept of community means through the viewpoints of many diverse cultural lenses in the eyes of participants. Through intentional conversations and surveys, we will look at what builds community as conceptualized by the participants in the study and what works against it. In this manner, the study also looked at sense of belonging and skill sets, such as communication and especially listening. Working through the theoretical base of the study, the effects of dealing with change, leaving comfort zones, and how transitions impact identity were examined.

The direct application of this study will be to inform programming and services for international students coming to a campus in the U.S., such as those introduced in the opening vignette. Through the insight and emerging learning of the study, the intention is to align campus activities with the actual felt needs of the students, such as having orientation and support

structures in place that allow students to feel welcomed, accepted, and that they have helpers they can trust when needed. A complementary application will be to increase opportunities for engagement across cultural boundaries for all stakeholders on campus toward building global competencies, increasing understanding, and the empathy with which people interact and faculty and staff serve the international student populations that they have invited to their campuses. The increased engagement across sectors of campus, especially involving the offices that act as helpers to international students, should not only enhance relationship building but the relevancy and care of services being provided. All of these effects could act to build momentum in achieving internationalization goals.

Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of (people) and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime.

Mark Twain, The Innocents Abroad / Roughing It

Statement of the problem – it looked different in the brochure

Many colleges and universities are strategically increasing the number of international students on campus toward the goal of achieving internationalization and to help with fiscal sustainability. Moments like this one described below are common in many of these settings:

...college presidents gaze upon the faces of the assembled student body on convocation day, they may very well take heart and a measure of self-congratulatory ‘goal-achieved’ pride at the visual diversity represented before them. But long before the grounds-keeping staff begin folding the chairs and gathering the litter after the event, those young undergraduates will begin clustering along familiar patterns of affinity-based socialization. As will become all too clear in the coming weeks of the new semester, the

mere presence of diversity is no guarantee of meaningful interaction across cultural and racial lines. (Hoekje & Stevens, 2018, pp. 104-105)

Unfortunately, despite the presence of many nations and cultures on campus, it can too easily lapse into international students being seen and not heard. Diverse students are *seen* prominently in such gatherings and in promotional materials are not necessarily *heard* by their domestic student peers, staff or faculty on campuses.

The problem being examined as part of this study is when the students do not feel a sense of belonging on campus. They can end up in the margins of the campus experience, gathering with others like them culturally on the periphery. In relation to community building, Block (2010) said, “The cost of our detachment and disconnection is not only our isolation, our loneliness, but also that there are too many people in our communities whose gifts remain on the margin” (p. 3). Allowing international students to remain on the fringes wastes this opportunity. More than public celebrations of diversity and prominent photos on recruitment materials is everyone recognizing their part in the larger story. There is a social continuum of group possibilities identified by Ward, et al. (2001): *genocide – assimilation – segregation – integration* (pp. 29-30). Through the lens of cultural adjustment and the international student journey, *assimilation* and *segregation* are not the desired outcomes. When foreigners or newcomers to our country:

feel that their original cultural lore is respected in their new home, and the less they feel that because of their different identity they are resented, pushed out, threatened or discriminated against – the more willingly they open up to the cultural offerings of the new country and the less convulsively they hold on to their own separate ways. For the prospects of cross-cultural dialogue, this is a crucial insight (Bauman, 2001, p. 141).

Integration allows a coexistence and weaving of parts together, as a series of island make up an archipelago or a combination of materials and colors make up a tapestry. The individual parts have value on their own and also because they are part of the group. These factors are not untrue outside of a campus context when we think of our own towns and neighborhoods. One participant reflected on this continuum when it came up in our conversation. She was reflecting on a book she had read recently related to race:

I think his point is about increasing people's comfort zone with people who are different. And of course you know he's talking about race as being the difference. But so many people feel that there is a lack of prejudice and bias.

She had shared earlier about how diverse her immediate family is with people of color and those who have traveled often to other countries. They talk openly about these things and touched on some topics in this study that were spurred by her doing the survey.

..and again, ...I hope I don't offend... My family: we come to these terms ...a little bit differently. So we're comfortable saying, you know, if a ...white person views a black person as being just like them, it means they're assimilated. And you know (the author's) point is that's a black person ...who can pass as white ...and that's not what he wants. We need to maintain our differences and be comfortable with that. And that continuum that you talk about, about genocide to assimilation, (it) made me think of that book and some of the things that he said....I think naively and off the cuffassimilation is great. And this book has made me go, "Oh, wait. Deletion means we all think we're exactly alike ...that's not going to be good...

The important observation about “deletion” and being comfortable with our differences is a helpful take on the overall study. When we see only islands correct and best because they are our own and miss that we are part of a series of islands that together make up an archipelago, we seem less likely to build collaboration and community. That approach will leave voices and gifts in the margins rather than letting them be welcome and accepted in the center. Can we allow for and “maintain our differences and be comfortable with that”?

Dench describes the plight of some outsiders as being “suspended in limbo between the promise of full integration and the fear of continuous exclusion” (as cited in Bauman, 2001, p. 94). That we all might find acceptance there is appealing in the way that students are drawn to the U.S.

High quality and diverse experiences in the universities in the United States are attractive to international students. It is critical for higher education institutions integrating international students into campus successfully. The low intercultural interaction rate between international and American students on campus is a consistent issue bothering intercultural educators and institutional administrators in the institutions (Trice, 2004; Williams & Johnson, 2011; Glass, Gomez, & Urzua, 2014)(as cited in Zhang, T., 2018, p. 77).

Increasing the interaction and interchange between domestic and international students, as well as the other stakeholders noted, is not only to help the new international students. It is paramount to the professional development and necessary skills being required of all, as illustrated above. Even those who have a heart and desire for interacting more with those who are different on

campus may drift away from that focus for lack of the necessary understanding, empathy, and intercultural skills that would help bridge the gap.

In campus functions, the mistake is easily made of thinking our only job is to help the international students adjust to being in this new context. In reality, our movement into new understanding and the finding of middle ground should be happening too. We are meaning to create something new that does not yet exist, which is on the other side of these types of activities (Block, 2010, pp. 30, 37, 41; Bateson, 1989, p. 236). Noting the importance of interacting with each other, Block (2010) said, “Restoration is created by the kinds of conversations we initiate with each other. These conversations are the leverage point for an alternative future. The core question that underlies each conversation is, ‘What can we create together?’” (p. 49). In looking at the impact these often untapped “conversations” may have on building relationships across differences at a micro level and the subsequent effect this could have on an entire campus or in society at large on the macro level, the foundation for this study was formed.

Similar to the down sides of isolation noted above, internationalization cannot be realized by segregated pockets or homogenous clusters as well as by regular interaction and engagement. If a truly inclusive community atmosphere can be nurtured, then anyone from any lifeworld and belief system would seemingly be welcomed and accepted, if inclusion is to be honored. All gifts could be brought to the center and each person can be seen and feel heard and that their presence and voice matters. Relating across our cultural differences offers a crossroads to the intersectionality that is the world today. Hoekje and Stevens (2019) say what is needed for a campus setting “are approaches that rely on relationships: culturally aware advisors and peer and academic mentors who can support the student’s identity and sense of belonging as a core

member of the university community” (p. 83). When this is missing, international students are not understood or known as the unique individuals they are. The same could be said for any one of us who has ever felt left out. When this happens, strategies for teaching and connecting that have not taken these dynamics into consideration fall short:

The sharp rise of international students creates unprecedented opportunities for increased intercultural understanding, but it also exacerbates existing cultural divides. Such divides not only highlight important difference in the experiences of international students from various countries; they also highlight how persistent cultural attitudes exacerbate long-standing prejudices and stereotypes (Glass, et al., 2015, p. 94).

If people learn to “travel” in the sense described above, they can be among those crossing the “existing cultural divides” into a new space and type of community we could “create together” on the other side. The turbulence we may feel in that in-between space now would be a short-term discomfort that could make way for a long-term benefit that serves everyone well.

The world hates change, yet it is the only thing that has brought progress.

Charles Kettering

Significance of the Study – Full disclosure, “World peace!”

The local and contextual significance of this study is how it can impact the individual on campus and make life more meaningful and enjoyable, eliminating some of the difficulties normal to college life. The individual changes can affect a larger group, filter into campus life, and potentially impact a larger area. Block (2010) said “building community and belonging is going to be our most powerful strategy for ending the displacement and isolation that plagues so many aspects of our world” (p. xvi). The more far-reaching implications are how emerging

learning from the data could be applied on other higher education campuses, in work contexts, in team building, and other aspects of society.

Campuses have tremendous potential “to serve as spaces of meaningful cross-cultural interactions between domestic and international students” (Rose-Redwood, 2018, p. 1335). For higher education institutions (HEIs), better experiences for international students will lead to less attrition, which is especially important as enrollments decline. HEIs who do community right can be the vanguard of what communities as a whole can do to counter isolationism, nationalism, ethnocentrism, and paternalistic tendencies. Some of the immediate effects that seem possible are a better student experience, increased equity on campus, inclusion over segregation, and a deeper understanding of the symbiotic relationship of the entire community we have access to. Glass, et al. (2015) said, “International students should be, and must be, equal citizens with an equal voice ...Belonging necessitates actual participation in the decision-making processes, both large and small, at institutions” (p. 89). With a voice on campus and a true sense of belonging, international students can move out of the margins and even enter into leadership roles, where they potentially have more impact. Being involved is to be included as a citizen in the fullest sense of this description.

In thinking of social justice, ills of the day, or the desire for healing in the place of division, it seems that large scale change is most likely to happen by smaller actions on the part of individuals willing to take a step or two. “Conventional thinking about communal transformation believes that focusing on large systems, better leaders, clearer goals, and more controls is essential, and that emphasizing speed and scale is critical. The conventional belief is that individual transformation leads to communal transformation” (Block, 2010, p. 77). Though the original focus of this study was primarily on building community on campuses by relating to

those different from us, the study participants often reflected on division felt in the U.S. in 2020, so the analysis hereafter explores that trail with them.

We can easily think a new or policy or program or leader will make the difference, and they can, but if the people in those contexts – the citizens, teammates, members, neighbors, or other stakeholders – are not actively engaged with each other in the shape of community and by means of interaction, it is more difficult to imagine lasting effects. As a society, we can look to a newly elected leader to heal, but it is difficult to envision enduring change if individuals do not cross the street to talk to that neighbor or leave their classroom or cubicle to dwell for a time in the presence of another person's lifeworld. Block (2010) describes what we trade for not having a more "associational life":

...the marketing of fear and fault, gravitation toward more laws and oversight, an obsession with romanticized leadership, marginalizing hope and possibility, and devaluing associational life to the point of invisibility...the alternative future we speak of takes form when we realize that the only powerful place from which to take our identity may be the story we hold about ourselves and our collective way of being together. (pp. 34, 55)

Beyond the advantages disruptions bring in offering new perspective and creativity from inside those in-between spaces, we might consider the new awareness and new priorities that have arisen as we have this globally shared experience around Covid-19. Feiler (2020) said, "A transition is an adhesive and a healer. It takes something broken and begins to repair it. It takes something shaken and helps to steady it. It takes something shapeless and starts to give it shape" (p. 158). Bateson (1989) said, "Our lives are full of surprises" giving us:

a chance to see interruptions reshaped into transitions as thread after thread from the past was picked up and wove in. As a result, I look at discontinuity differently. The lesson each of us has drawn from multiple fresh starts is that there is always something in the past to work with (pp. 237, 236).

This study focuses on transition as a space between a past that has ended and a new beginning that is possible and the people we meet in that journey, those who help us and those we can help. There is an abundance of growth and learning that can happen in between that previous phase and the next one. With collaboration and connection to others and with that new understanding, the movement forward is well served.

Moving outward from looking at this type of challenge on a college campus, it is notable that the Association of American Colleges and Universities identifies high impact practices for all higher education institutions, several of which align with the types of activities being discussed in this study and integrated into the actions planned from it. Included in these are, first year seminars, living-learning communities, diversity and global learning, and community-based learning (AACU, 2020). Stepping back to see a bigger picture still, consider the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) that relate to this study. The UNSDGs describe “the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all (addressing) global challenges we face, e.g. poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. The 17 Goals are ...interconnected ...in order to leave no one behind” (United Nations, 2020). The target date for achieving these goals is 2030. These goals especially speak to the direction of this study. Goal four is “Quality Education” seeking to “ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including...promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of

culture's contribution to sustainable development" (UN.org/4, 2020). Goal 10 is to "Reduce inequality within and among countries states," especially around "education services...To reduce inequality...paying attention to the needs of...marginalized populations," noting "policies should be universal in principle" (UN.org/10, 2020).

With increasingly global problems to solve, our way of being in community together seems key, whether it be on campuses, in society, in our nations, or how we interact walking down our street. Bauman said, "...at no other time has the keen search for common humanity, and a practices that follows such an assumption, been as imperative and urgent as it is now" (p. 140). Having exposure to and engagement with cultural diversity is "an absolute given, as highly desirable, and probably an essential condition for the future survival of humankind. All applied interventions aimed at increasing harmony among culturally diverse individuals and groups will be based on that core idea" (Ward, et al., 2001, p. 17). We have a moment before us. What will our response be? Depending on disposition, people can end up functioning in one of two ways linguists do in examining the grammar of a language, providing another dichotomy of choices for us like the static or dynamic characters or the accidental or intentional traveler. Some linguists are *prescriptive*, stating this is how things are and that you must adhere to this structure and these rules or be wrong. Then there are those who are *descriptive*, seeking to explain how the living and active language at the heart of a culture is out there changing in form and function – living and active – even as we are inside our space studying it.

Bateson (1989) said "new beginnings" are a regular part of life, and they offer potential for creativity. She describes the improvisational aspect of living in "the ways we combine familiar and unfamiliar components in response to new situations" as "the choices and rhythms of lives change" because "constancy is an illusion" (pp. 3-4, 14, 236). The inevitability of change

is clearly seen for all humanity in areas like globalization, technological advances, or disruptive events like Covid-19, which has placed everyone on planet earth in a liminal phrase between what we once knew and what we will one day call “normal” again. Hopefully, the lessons learned and the perspective gained are not lost as we normalize.

**Culture does not change because we desire to change it. Culture changes when the organization is transformed
– the culture reflects the realities of people working together every day.**

Frances Hesselbein

Research Questions – Intentional engagement and the effect on community and our futures

A lot of people resist transition and therefore never allow themselves to enjoy who they are. Embrace the change, no matter what it is; once you do, you can learn about the new world you're in and take advantage of it.

Nikki Giovanni

The primary question guiding this study is: How do intentional conversations between culturally disparate individuals¹ impact building community? The study began with the main idea of examining the interaction on a university campus with an expectation of potential transference to society as a whole. As will become clearer in Chapters 3-5, the timing of the data collection during fall of 2020, several months into the global pandemic, racial conversations, and a contentious election season in the U.S., seemingly caused a shift in how people reflected on the questions about relating across difference. The emphasis on society beyond campus seemed stronger in participant voices than perhaps it would have been in another season. However, that the cross-cultural “travel” skills were transferable to larger society was always a consideration in designing the study. The second research question the study sought to address is: How does increased contact impact understanding, empathy, sense of belonging, and inclusion in a context of community? A hypothesis undergirding this study is that stepping out of the known, out of comfort zones, and being open to new possibilities tills the soils in which new perspective can grow. Lastly, in looking at movement out of comfort zones and their effect, the last question is: How do increased cycles of exposure outside one’s comfort zones affect perceptions and inclinations of future actions? These questions will sometimes be referred to by their numbers:

- **Research Question #1 - How do intentional conversations between culturally disparate individuals impact building community?**

¹ The phrase “culturally disparate individual” is used throughout Ward, et al. (2001).

- **Research Question #2 - How does increased contact impact understanding, empathy, sense of belonging, and inclusion in a context of community?**
- **Research Question #3 - How do increased cycles of exposure outside one's comfort zones affect perceptions and inclinations of future actions?**

If this type of travel and these styles of interaction can begin on college campuses, higher education institutions could take the lead in helping to build community and modeling what is possible. The aim is to continue exploring ways for faculty, staff, domestic, and international students to be together in conversation – toward increasing awareness, understanding, empathy, and so that all can benefit from the interchange. Where well-meaning people can make the mistake of thinking their main job is only to help international students adjust to being in this new space, to truly have internationalization – if that is the goal – means that everyone needs to be moving and growing and stretching. All can have the benefits of crossing borders into new spaces. Everyone may find new awareness that the boundaries are moving around us even if we are still, leaving us in a perpetual state of transition and spaces in between endings and beginnings. The hope would be that we can all be dynamic characters taking heroic steps to write a new story of community on campus.

If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.

African proverb

Theoretical Framework – The Hero’s Journey

Transitions are almost always signs of growth, but they can bring feelings of loss. To get somewhere new, we may have to leave somewhere else behind.

Fred Rogers

This study is a phenomenological, qualitative study with underpinnings that are autoethnographical. The study was animated by the following theoretical frameworks: Transition Theory (van Gennep, Schlossberg, 2008; Bridges, 2001), Joseph Campbell’s Hero’s Journey (1987), Learning Zone Theory (Senninger, 2000), and some aspects of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1979).

Transition Theory

The opening vignette about an international student arriving in the U.S. and all the allusions to change and traveling outlined thus far fit into the framework of Transition Theory models. Transition models describe *change* as the external event, such as a promotion or loss of job. The *transition* effects are more internal, such as feelings and thoughts as a person adjusts to the change. “Transitions are viewed as entailing risks and associated fears, and the strategies for moving through related to the outer world.” Therefore, navigating transitions “entails both inner work and outer work” (Goodman, Et al., 2006, pp. 49-51). Schlossberg (2008) said “it is not the actual event or non-event that overwhelms us...it is understanding how much these changes alter our lives” (p. 39).

Transitions are not just the big milestone moments, such graduations, weddings, births, retirements, or funerals. There are daily endings and beginnings that can escape our awareness if we are not paying attention. They easily go unnoticed and unannounced. A child does not tell the parent, “This is the last time I’m going to need your help on this” and gray hairs show up uninvited. As alluded to earlier, the person does not need to move or act to feel boundaries

shifting around them. “Yet surprisingly, most people understand very little about transitions or how to manage them creatively (even though) ...Transitions are part and parcel of adult life. And so is the discomfort they cause” (Schlossberg, 2008, pp. 3, 5). Feiler (2020) says they will involve “separation, when you leave the comforts of the old place; margin, when you isolate yourself in the neutral zone; and incorporation, when you rejoin civilized life by entering the new space” (Feiler, 2020, p. 146). Figure 1.1. is a representation of how we might view transitions in our lives.

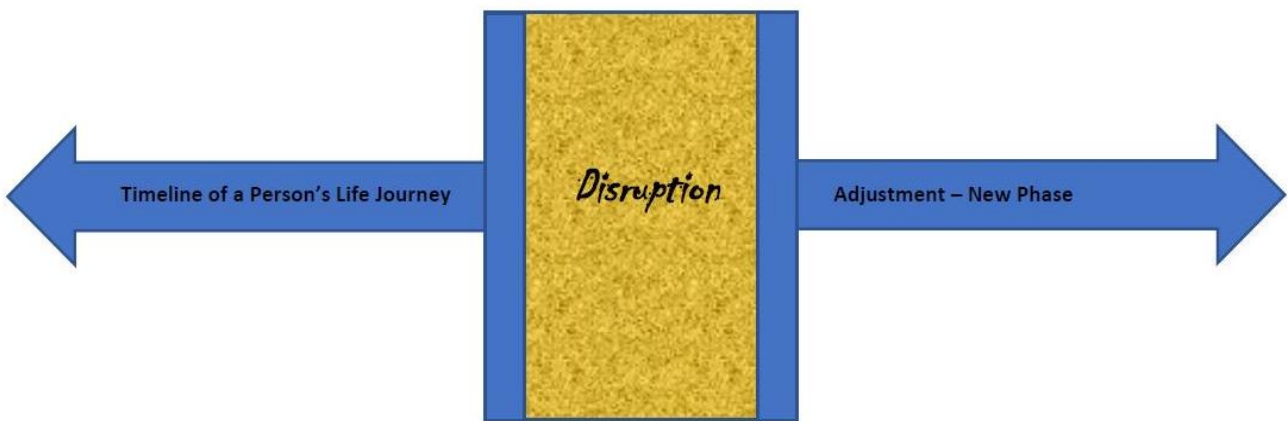


Figure 1.1 – Transition Timeline

There are also transitions within transitions. For example, during the four years a student has left home and is in college, many endings and beginnings happen, such as a change of major, a relationship beginning or ending, or not making the sports team the third year. Transitions “never seem to come in single file... Sometimes one event sets off a chain reaction, and your life feels like one crisis after another. Trouble erupts at every turn, for you and for everyone around you” (Schlossberg, 2008, p. 37). Figure 1.2 illustrates this effect in the life of an international student. However, it would be easy enough for any human being to fill in their own titles of transitions within transitions in their own life once the awareness of this effect is understood.

With this lens, people have opportunities to see how a chapter fits in the larger story of their lives.

Feiler (2020) said, “transitions clearly involve challenging periods of bewilderment and turmoil, but they also involve vibrant periods of exploration and reconnection. Also, the standard descriptions miss the inventive nature of transitions, the way we use them to cast off habits we’ve grown tired of and create new ones we’re proud of” (p. 143). I want to emphasize again the creative aspect of these phrases by which we can layer our painting, as it is easily overlooked in the desire to feel in control and normal again. Evidence of many of these effects of transition described above are visible in the globally shared, lived experience of people all over the world presently navigating the global pandemic.

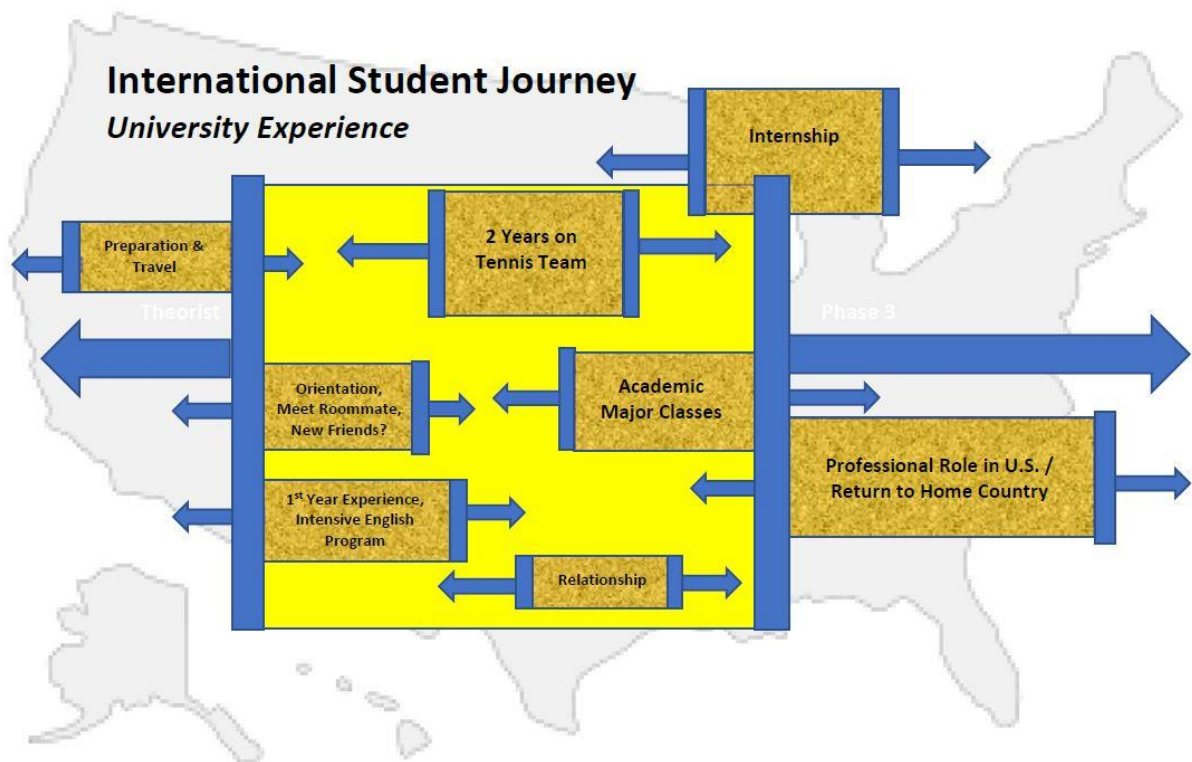


Figure 1.2 – Overlapping Transitions

To make the most of these times, Goodman, Et al. (2006) say “people must first recognize and work through the loss and confusion associated with a transition” which is “an integral aspect of human development...a challenge to personal transformation and growth” (pp. 49-51). Many human beings prefer feeling in control rather than building ambiguity tolerance, adaptability, or resiliency skills. As a lesson that can be learned from Covid-19, any major storm, or other crisis events, we as human beings have less control over things than we like to believe. We arrange our lives into neat categories, and organize ourselves by the apps we love, and display the visual, surface representation of our lives into social media channels and even the words with which we describe our lives. Building the skills for navigating change and difference will allow us to be more engaged with the reality of the world in which we actually live. Bateson (1989) calls this a “central survival skill,” adding the certainty that people need “the capacity to pay attention and respond to changing circumstances, to learn and adapt, to fit into new environments” (p. 231), giving up the “safety” of the spaces they prefer. Building travel skills for the frequency with which we move through transitions and they move through us should prove helpful. Feiler (2020) points out how further study in this area may be beneficial, “Considering how ubiquitous the idea of transitions is in contemporary life, there’s been surprisingly little academic research into how they work” (p. 143). This study seeks to help fill a portion of that gap.

Transition theories originated with Arnold van Gennep borne out of his own cross-cultural, transient life where he lived in multiple countries and learned 8 languages. The concept of *Rites of Passage* in psychology came from van Gennep (Feiler, 2020, p. 143). The “passage” in his concept could be accurately translated as “threshold,” which is from the Latin word *limen*. Liminal means an in-between state, phase, or condition (Merriam-Webster/limen). The transition

point is like a doorway between three distinct phases: *preliminal*, *liminal*, and *postliminal* (Britannica/rite-of-passage, 2021), or as Figure 1.3 illustrates and Feiler (2020) explains:

The person going through the transition leaves one world, passes through a hinterland, and then enters a new world. (Van Gennep) likened it to walking out of one room, proceeding down a hallway, and then entering another room. The actual crossing of thresholds is critical, he said, which is why many rites of passage involve doorways, portals, and gateways, and many thresholds are populated by dragons, ogres, and trolls. We sacralize what's scary (p. 146).

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Preliminal “Separation” | Liminal “Transition” | Postliminal “Reincorporation” |

Figure 1.3 – van Gennep’s Rites of Passage Model

Other transition models have a similar pattern to van Gennep’s. The journey of an international student from home country to a new country for study can easily be placed in this framework, as can any of the transition moments each of us experience. Schlossberg (1995) labeled the three phases as: *moving in or moving out*; *moving through*; and *moving out* (Goodman, Schlossberg, and Anderson, 2006, pp. 49-51); as illustrated in Figure 1.4:

| Stage 1 | Stage 2 | Stage 3 |
|---|--|---|
| Moving In or Moving Out | Moving Through | Moving Out |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>get familiar with new aspects, new rules, conditions</i> • <i>time for orientation, a process designed to help people know what is expected, e.g. onboarding.</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>an in-between time.</i> • <i>Needed balance of activities with other parts of lives</i> • <i>learning how to feel supported and challenged.</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>ending one series of transitions</i> • <i>beginning to ask what comes next.</i> |

Figure 1.4 – Schlossberg’s Transition Model

Unique to Schlossberg (2008) are the distinctions between minor and major transitions. Major transitions will especially affect these four areas of life: roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions (pp. 10-12).

Transitions are the changes – good or bad, expected or unexpected – that unsettle us.

They may be prompted by a host of incidents – a move to a new city, a lost promotion, a new baby, the death of someone close, a financial windfall, an incapacitating accident or illness. These are the things that can and do happen to everyone – male or female, rich or poor, young or old, black or white. (Schlossberg, 2008, p. 3)

Schlossberg also adds the layer of choice, in that sometimes we choose the change and sometimes the change chooses us. She described how they happen “expectedly or unexpectedly” (Schlossberg, 2008, p. 9). Goodman, Schlossberg, and Anderson (2006) describes three main types of transitions: “anticipated transitions,” something we were looking forward to; “unanticipated transitions,” which can catch us off guard; and “non-event transitions,” such as the promotion not happening or the wedding being called off (pp. 34-39). “Non-events” can be as disruptive as events (Schlossberg, 2008, p. 9). In a similar vein, there are also “Sleeper Transitions”:

Many transitions have an identifiable beginning point, such as a wedding, a move, or a death of a loved one. When they start, we’re well aware that change is under way. But some transitions, called sleepers, start much more subtly and just creep up on us over time...Sleeper transitions are tricky because we are usually in the middle of them before we recognize them. Even if you're growing, if you don't recognize the changes taking place and they're leaving you out of sync with your existing world, you can be in a very precarious position. By the time you realize how much you've changed, your behavior

may already have kicked off a chain of events that precipitates an unexpected major transition (Schlossberg, 2008, pp. 33-34).

These factors are significant in looking at the college and university student's journey and identify formation. For international students, these elements are especially relevant when crossing cultural boundaries.

Bridge's Transition Model (2004) offers a few more helpful layers and calls the three phases: *endings*, *neutral zone*, and *new beginnings*, as shown in Figure 1.5.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---------|--|----------------|
| Endings | Neutral Zone <i>"Messy Middle" (as cited in Feiler, 2020)</i> | New Beginnings |

Figure 1.5 – Bridge's Transition Model

Unique to Bridge's model is his emphasis on not rushing through the Neutral Zone, letting it have its effect and do its work. Human beings may wish to just get settled or get to the next thing, such as in a new job or in contexts like basic training or orientation. Bridges points out that rushing ahead to try to force the new "normal" undermines the growth possible and may even cause regression (p. 86). The potential of the neutral zone cannot be underestimated. "Think of transition as a process of leaving the status quo, living for a while in a fertile 'time-out,' and then coming back with an answer" (p. 75). Bridges adds "To become something else, you have to stop being what you are now; to start doing things a new way, you have to end the way you are doing them now; and to develop a new attitude or outlook, you have to let go of the old one you have now" (p. 80). He celebrates the "signals and cues" you are getting in the disruption as you are "being transformed into the person you need to be to move forward in your life" (p. 80). Cross-cultural travelers definitely have to be observers of the cues being given by the new culture,

listening carefully, seeking to feel the rhythm of the culture, and to pick up on the cultural norms and the scripts they are providing to the actors in that setting. Hall (1983) said, “*The Dance of Life* (the title of his book)...deals with the most personal of all experiences: how people are tied together and yet isolated from each other by invisible threads of rhythm and hidden walls of time” (p. 3). When we surrender to this process, there is a beneficial “death and rebirth”, that is a “process of disintegration and reintegration” (Bridges, 2004, pp. 140-141; Adler, 1975, pp. 13-23). Adler (1975) said, “...a successful cross-cultural experience should result in the movement of personality and identity to new consciousness of values, attitudes, and understandings” (p. 15). Additional layers of this study looks at how intentional conversations across borders of difference occur and can be intentional and helpful in our travels. The layer of how our identities are formed and how we can better understand them by this contrast and movement is also being considered.

Campbell's Hero's Journey

The Hero's Journey was described by Joseph Campbell (MasterClass/Hero, 2020). Campbell identified stages heroes journey through, such as a calling to a noble task, having a mentor or helper to guide, crossing from a known space into an unknown space, facing challenges along the way, reaching a low point of struggle – a “death and rebirth” – and overcoming that, being transformed as one returns to the known. In that latter part of the iteration, the hero is a better version of self and more able and effective. (See Figure 1.6².) This framework is visible in many of the stories we have known and loved our entire lives. You can see it clearly in *The Hobbit*, as Bilbo is challenged by Gandalf, leaves his comfortable Hobbit

² Image retrieved 3/21/2021 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hero%27s_journey.

hole, and becomes a different being by the end. Luke Skywalker's journey from farmhand and droid repairman on a desolate planet to battling the Empire in *Star Wars* has these elements, as do Stories like *Beowulf* and Homer's *Odyssey* (YourDictionary, 2021).

There are clear parallels to the transition models outlined above. For example, “van Genneep...saw transitions as fundamentally an act of movement, a passing from one place to the next. The hero's journey is full of similar tropes” (Feiler, 2020, p. 272). Calling back to the choice of being static or dynamic characters in our stories (accidental or intentional), we also have the choice to be the hero of our story.

“Movement gets us unstuck. It restores agency by giving us the feeling we're

acting on our situation; it nurtures belonging by bringing us into contact with new people; it gives us a cause by giving us something to focus on” (Feiler, 2020, p. 272). There are intriguing parallels to living out our own journeys and crossing over boundaries from known to unknown, as studied in this research.

Boyle (2017) said, “Find your story. Know your story. Remember your story. Tell your story. And always know, that at the end of your story, you are its hero (but finding the hero inside takes courageous and constant work)” (pp. 134-135). Boyle oversees Homeboy Industries, a series of businesses that offers former gang members in Los Angeles a choice of an alternative space in which they develop new life skills and experience, such as running business like a

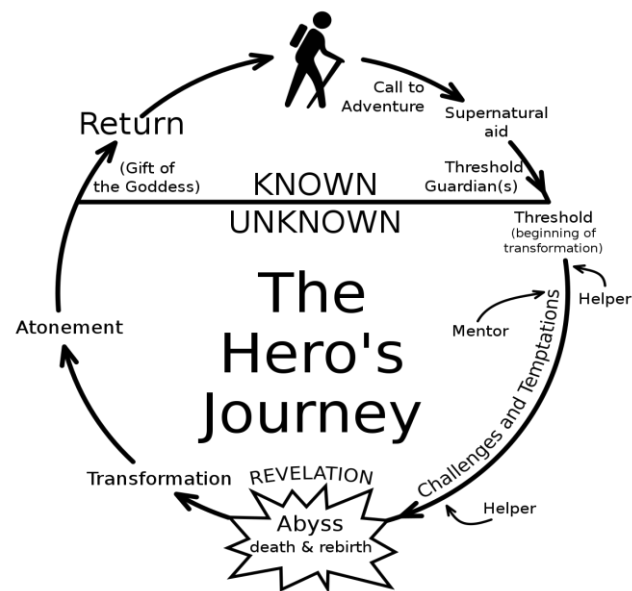


Figure 1.6

bakery, the café, silk screening, or in their tattoo removal service. Volunteers often ask Boyle, “How do you reach them?” He typically replies:

For starters, stop trying to reach them. Can you be reached by them? ...Suddenly, it turns this whole thing on its head. I don’t think we go to the margins to make a difference. But if you go to the margins, you’re supposed to allow the folks at the margins to make you different. (Alda, 2018; Boyle, 2017, p. 175)

The problem with the other framing is that it is about self. Instead of seeking to be a *Change Agent*, we would do better to become *Changed Agents*, moving into new spaces, engaging with others, and allowing ourselves to be affected. With this traveler’s disposition, we seem more likely to become effective helpers and more impactful by the shift in focus. Focusing on changing people is fine, as long as the “people” we mean are ourselves. Having that humility and learner’s disposition seems critical to building community and finding healing, as those things are sought. The participants in this study explored these ideas with me, as detailed below.

Learning Zone Theory

There are many models that describe comfort zones in relation to “learning zones” and “panic zones.” Senninger’s Learning Zone Theory (2000) is a helpful one, as shown in Figure 1.7 and Figure 1.8:

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Comfort Zone | The comfort zone consists of those things that are familiar to an individual; it provides safety but does not provide new learning opportunities. In order to learn, an individual needs to move from the comfort zone to the learning zone where growth and learning takes place. |
| Learning Zone | In the learning zone, people can discover new things, explore their limits, and expand their comfort zone by becoming familiar with more material to be learned. |
| Panic Zone | Beyond the learning zone lies the panic zone; in this zone, the individual has a sense of fear, everything seems rather too difficult to approach and consequently there is no opportunity for learning. |

Figure 1.7 (Kouvela, et al., 2018)

Learning involves an individual moving from the comfort zone to the learning zone, with both teacher and student alike aware of the existence of the panic zone. The panic zone produces stress which is difficult to control, making it more difficult to move back into the learning zone (Kouvela, et al., 2018)..

It should be noted that every person's learning zone boundaries are unique and situational. The thickness or thinness of any given zone varies per person and per context. For one person, bungee jumping may bring a high level of panic but less for another. Walking through the largest open air market in Africa may be in the Learning Zone for one person and the Panic Zone of another. As explored in Research Question #3, this model helps examine how iterative cycles of exposure may change the thickness of one of these layers.

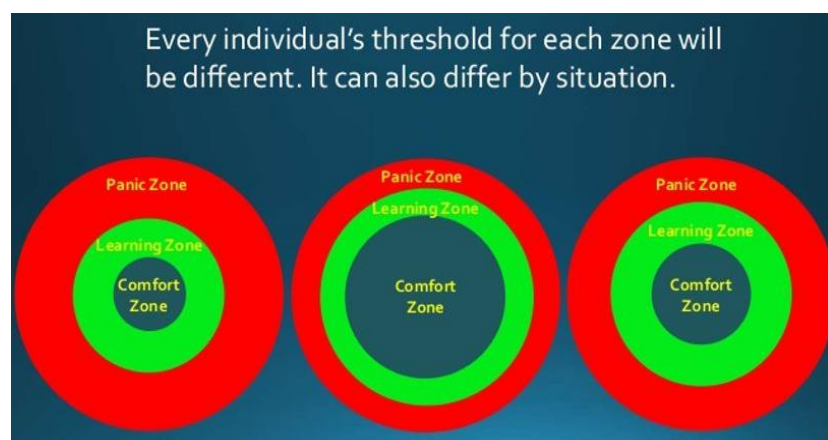


Figure 1.8 – Senninger's (2000) Learning Zone Theory

(As featured in Kouvela, et al., 2018)

Social Identity Theory

Lastly, in looking at the borders being crossed between knowns and unknowns and making cross-cultural connections that may be impactful to building community, Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1979) is helpful. When it comes to relating to others, considering that there are other lifeworlds and belief systems and methods of living, this framework is helpful in illustrating the human response to difference. The theory describes In-Groups and Out-Groups (McLeod, 2019). The theory exposes the *othering* people inadvertently do. How we think of “others,” or more *that* we think of “others” is informative to the research. Feiler (2020) describes the “three strands of our narrative identity”: our *me story* – where we are the hero, agent, creator, etc.; our *we story* – the one in which we’re part of a community; and our *thee story* – the one where we serve an ideal or something bigger. Feiler said, “Having a cause – a thee story – is the third great pillar in living a meaningful life. A cause is something you believe in that’s bigger than yourself” (pp. 104, 117). Block (2010) states “we have the means, the tools, the thinking to create a world we want to inhabit, and to do it for all. If we saw others as another aspect of ourselves, we would welcome them into our midst. We would let them know that they belong, that they are neighbors, with all their

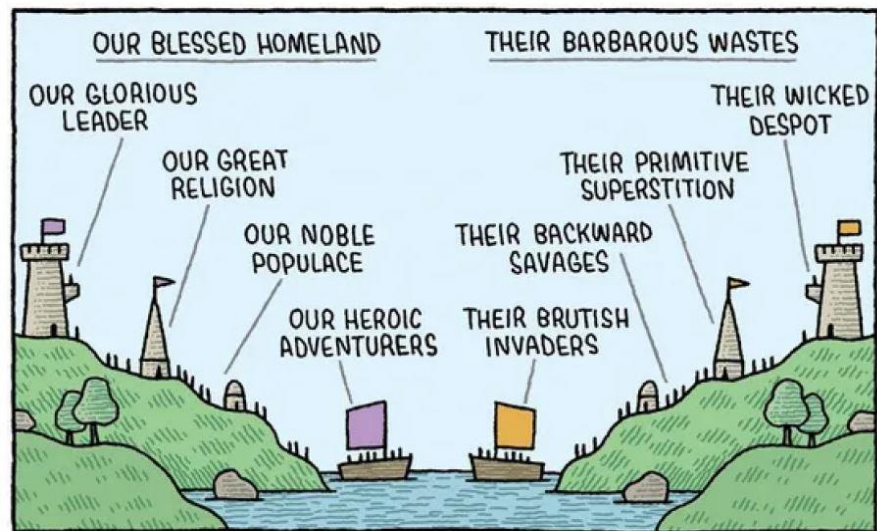


Figure 1.9

(Artist Tom Gauld as featured in McLeod, 2019)

complexity” (pp. 62-63). Figure 1.9 illustrates Social Identity Theory graphically. The theory considers how people see themselves in relation to the larger context in which they reside.

Khazan (2020) said:

The question of how ordinary people could so easily turn on one another seemed to be on Tajfel’s mind as he did this work. Studies like these helped affirm Tajfel’s belief that prejudice was not an inborn personality trait, specific to one nationality or another. Instead, it’s a reflection of the dynamics between groups. Prejudice to him, was more about group-think than gut-feel (p. 71).

There were several questions in the survey and interview instruments that addressed interacting with people who are culturally disparate from us and the potential impact of this contact. In these activities, we not only have the potential to understand the other person better. In the contrast and difference we also have the chance to understand ourselves better. It is worth reiterating the point here that “enlightenment” is more likely to come when “one truly knows others who are different” (Hall, 1983, p. 8). These experiences or lack of them largely inform how we view and act toward the “other” people around us.

Interrelation of the Theories

Figure 1.9 illustrates how the different messages of the theories work together collaboratively.

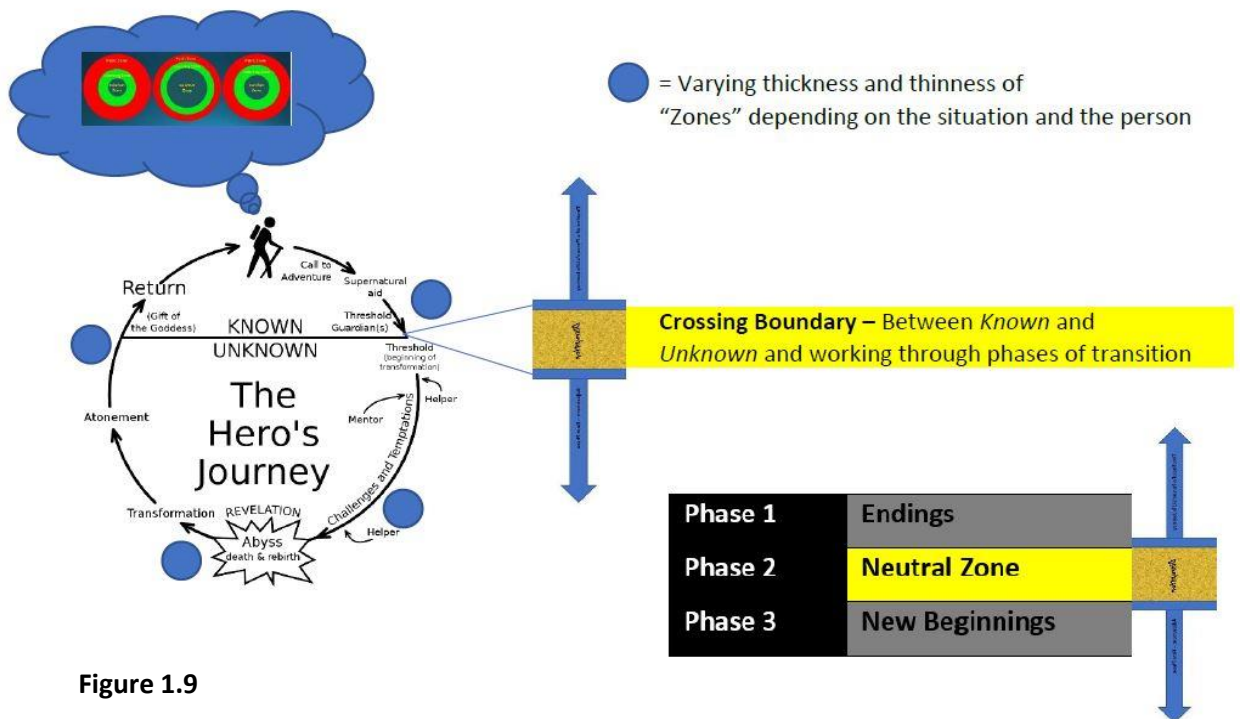
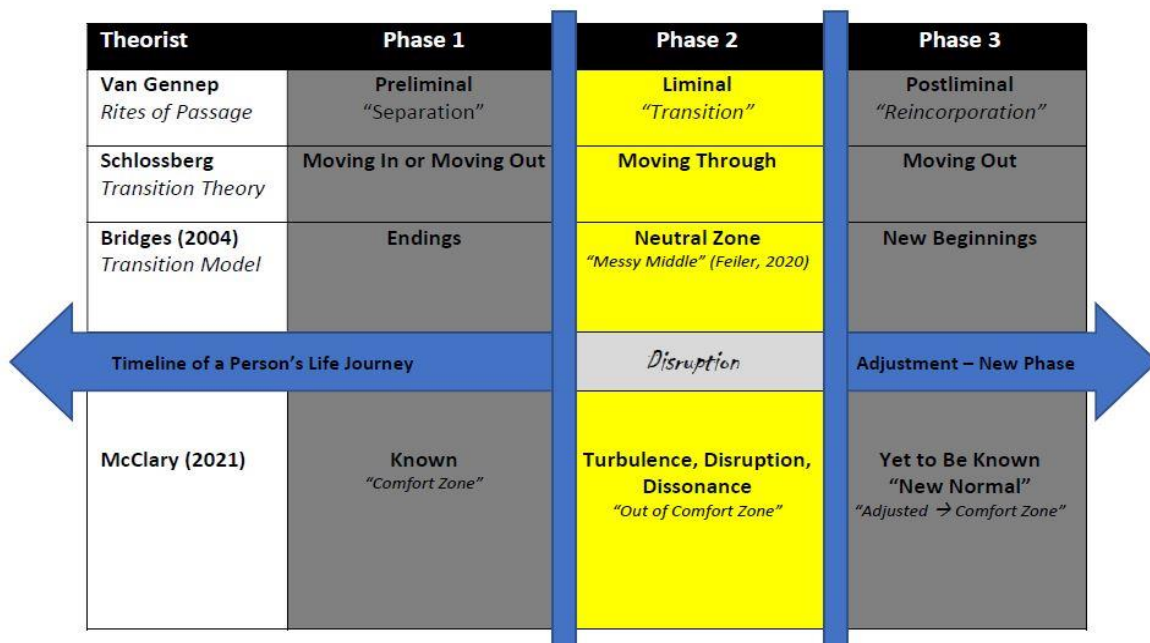


Figure 1.9

Definition of Key Terms

One doesn't discover new lands without consenting to lose sight of the shore for a very long time.

Andre Gide

The following terms will be used throughout this study, with meanings and applications considered as described below by these sources:

- Assimilation** Ward, et al. (2001) characterize assimilation as “the temptation to solve the problem by reducing or eradicating the differences that separate the participants (Bochner, 1986), usually by encouraging new settlers to assimilate to their host culture...abandoning those country-of-origin values and customs that differ significantly from mainstream traditions and behaviours.” Though “short term assimilation may lead to a more harmonious society...groups strongly resist pressures to dilute their cultural identities...” (P. 17).
- Belonging** “Belonging can also be thought of as a longing to be. Being is our capacity to find our deeper purpose in all that we do. It is the capacity to be present and to discover our authenticity and whole selves. This is often thought of as an individual capacity, but it is also a community capacity. Community is the container within which our longing to be is fulfilled. Without the connectedness of a community, we will continue to choose not to be...Belonging means acceptance as a member or part...A sense of belonging is a human need, just like the need for food and shelter. Feeling that you belong is most important in seeing value

in life and in coping with intensely painful emotions” (Block, 2010, p xviii).

Community A universal definition of the concept of community is a goal of this study, as created as an amalgamation of participant voices. Here is a baseline definition for contrast as created by this researcher: “Community is a variety of diverse individuals living or working or studying together in a common context for an extended period of time functioning in a manner where everyone feels welcomed, respected and has a sense of belonging. Where there are differences, others are not reacting with judgment or calling it ‘weird.’ They are open to other ideas, engaged in intercultural exchange activities, and are seeking deeper understanding toward empathy.” Simon Sinek (2021) has a shorter definition that is helpful, “Community is a group of people who agree to grow together.”

Domestic Students Students studying in the country of their birth and formative years, such as American citizens who grew up in the United States studying on a U.S. campus. This term is used in contrast to *international students* who are studying in a country other than their passport country.

Egocentrism Egocentrism is the prevailing sentiment that an individual’s ideology and method of doing things is the best one. This is on a personal, or macro level.

- Ethnocentrism** Similar to egocentrism, ethnocentrism is the prevailing sentiment that “our ways” collectively, on a macro level, are the best and that the ways of others are “weird” or wrong.
- Integration** Integrate is defined as “to form, coordinate, or blend into a functioning or unified whole : UNITE” (Merriam-Webster, 2019). Of all the sociological possibilities, Ward, et al. (2001) say that integration produces best results compared to assimilation or segregation (pp. 33-36).
- Internationalization** “Internationalization at the national, sector, and institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education” (Knight, 2015).
- Lifeworld** Lifeworld is a common term in phenomenological research. It might be thought of in the sense of worldview, as “individuals’ realities are invariable influenced by the world in which they live” (Neubauer, et al., 2019, p. 94). Lifeworld will be considered as one descriptor in this text for the sake of convenience of discussion but is intended to be inclusive of core beliefs, values, cultural norms, and the combination of education and experiences to date, all of which form the lens by which a person views the world.
- Segregation** Segregation is "the policy of keeping one group of people apart from another and treating them differently, especially because of race, sex,

or religion” (Cambridge, 2020). It is highlighted here as part of the social group outcomes outlined by Ward, et al. (2001, pp. 33-36).

Third Culture, Third Culture Kid The phrases *Third Culture*, *Third Culture Kid* (TCK), and *Adult Third Culture Kid* (ATCK) describe a larger category into which international students can be compared. My research to date shows the latter description dating back to the 1950s. Ruth Hill Useem coined Third Culture Kid to describe “children who spend their formative years in places that are not their parents’ homeland” (Mayberry, 2016). There is an in-betweenness feeling that prevails in explorations of these phrases. Merriam-Webster notes that, “Since Useem's study, the term has expanded to include the children of refugee families and those displaced for political reasons, as well as anyone whose work or lifestyle causes a need to settle in another part of the world. Voci (1994) characterized TCKs as being “labelled as ‘different’ from the mainstream culture they are encouraged to belong to, they are basically cut adrift and left to float in a sort of ‘twilight zone’ state. They form a cultural hybrid, a blend of cultures that can be interesting, but also confusing and frustrating to them” (Merriam-Webster/third-culture-kid/, 2020).

Chapter 2: Literature Review – The Ache for Home

The connection of individual student journeys and the bigger narrative in which we all find ourselves – our *we story* (Feiler, 2020, p. 107) – was a common thread in the literature and scholarship reviewed. Gardner and Laskin (1996) said, “All organizations and the people within them create stories about themselves that help make sense of their world. The process of changing an organization is the process of changing its story (as cited in DuFour, et al., 2008, p. 182). Hearing each other’s experiences is part of the solution. A hypothesis explored in this study is that a sense of belonging leads to feeling part of a community. Therefore, in a higher education context, or in any workplace or neighborhood where globalization and increased diversity is increasing, true internationalization cannot be achieved in the absence of community.

The ache for home lives in all of us, the safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned.

Maya Angelou

Theme 1: Sense of Belonging – Where is my tribe?

The relation of changing cultures and a sense of belonging is made within the framework of Transition Theory. “A variety of transitions can bring to the surface recurring themes having to do with intimacy, belonging, and mattering...Questions of where we ‘belong’ often surface after a transition” (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006, p. 230). In the lived experience of this researcher, it has been observed that a person begins to feel more at home in a new setting when one has traveled away and back again several times.

Art doesn’t grow in a vacuum...When you leave your normal domicile and travel, a lot of times your feeling for your original home grows stronger; the distance can make you reach new levels of empathy or feeling for it, so having a distance from any usual terrain provided an influx of ideas (Anatsui, 2021, as cited in Tate, 2019).

The time away gives perspective and helps prioritize. The return helps a person appreciate where they live and, hopefully, how others live. As with the international student arrival scenario, the external differences in a different space are attended to by all the senses, felt by the emotions, and very present when a person moves from one country to another. Similar shifts can be seen in other transitions, such as when relationships end or begin, in response to a death, during a job change, and so on, affirming the commonality of change.

(People)...seem to be questioning where they belong. Their transitions have placed them in an unclear situation between belonging and marginality or, stated differently, between being central or peripheral to a particular group. Every time individuals move from one role to another or experience a transition, they risk becoming marginal. The larger the difference between the old and the new roles and the less knowledge people have about the new role, the more marginal they may feel (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006, p. 136).

Loss is a natural feature when endings are present. Ecochard, et al. (2017) described the individuals “loss of all cues on how to behave and orient oneself... daily....” (p. 101). In cultural transitions, loss of self and identity prevail to the point that an adult can feel like a child again, due to limitations of language, from not having a frame of reference to draw on, or due to not yet knowing the scripts and codes of the new context.

The level that people are able to be their true selves in another culture can vary greatly. This may be due to language abilities, to not having adjusted to the systems and structure, to the person’s choice of response in immersing and engaging or not, and the receptivity and openness of the host people in a new context, whether it be a nation or a corporation or a university campus. If the person with whom we are interacting is also trying to tell our story for us or to get

enough of a read to put us in the right file in their existing lifeworld, then some connection is also lost. We need to be able to tell our own stories as we are experiencing them.

Some cultural models describe the visible 10% you see of the culture above the surface level. Going beneath the surface we can see the reality and depth of cultural differences, where up to “90 percent” is hidden (Hall, et al., 1987, pp. xvii, 3). This seems true on a macro level and equally true on a micro level in the lives of people we meet. The surface features of any person may not tell the whole story. In my own journey, the desire in such situations where I felt like a child was to want to assert my competency, such as, “I know how to buy a hammer in my country!” In the known space, using my previous expertise and catalog of experience to date, it took 30 minutes total compared to the two-day odyssey in this large, open air market in Addis Ababa where I keep mispronouncing the Amharic word for “hammer.”

The adventurous and challenging circumstances are naturally built into international student journeys. During 2020, with Covid-19 lockdowns, additional complexities about home and identity and where one belongs increased exponentially. “The pandemic hasn’t just disrupted international students’ college experience. It has marooned them all over the world,” affecting more than a million international students enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities (Fischer, 2021). Fischer (2021) demonstrates how people are caught in one world or another, or trapped somewhere in between through the experiences of these two students:

Even as she mourned what she was missing, Lily was thinking about her future. She was hopeful that she could start a graduate program, in public health, back in United States in the fall. That hope depended on a lot of ifs — if classes were in person, if American consulates in China began issuing visas again, and, of course, if she got accepted in the

first place. Still, Lily allowed herself to think about when — when she would be back in America.

As for T, as the spring semester got underway, she felt some of her winter-break funk begin to lift. She, too, started to think ahead again, making plans for the summer and beyond.

But one thing didn't appear on her horizon: going home. The fog of that uncertainty kept her from even imagining her return.

In the best of circumstances, a person new to a country easily feels relegated to the periphery. They observe quietly from the margins, seeking clues for how to navigate the new systems, desirous of being included, but not yet knowing how. Khazan (2020) said “for most people, realizing you are on the periphery of your group can, in itself, lead to significant unhappiness” and it does not take a long time to feel left out (p. 102).

The additional logistical and immigration layers add to the “acuteness” level of challenges international students face as they end up caught between worlds, as Fischer (2021) points out:

The challenges international students face are academic and financial, logistical and mental. Shifting visa policy has left students, both here and abroad, unsettled about their futures. Studying in a language other than their own, often — for those overseas — in the dead of night, compounds the challenges of remote learning. And unable to legally work in the United States, some international students have turned to food pantries to get by.

The acuteness of the issues facing international students led the American College Health Association to single them out as a population made especially vulnerable by the pandemic.

When students come to America to study, they understand they will straddle two countries, two places, two worlds. The pandemic, though, has marooned them in just one. They are stranded.

Times of not feeling included can be part of any person's journey. The international students have an intensified sense of hybridity, living in a Third Culture between one they knew and one they had hoped to experience differently than the pandemic has made possible. Similarly, beyond the international student journey, people all over the globe are waiting inside their homes, adjusting to losses of access, mobility, socialization, jobs, loved ones, and the ability to move outward to see family and people they miss.

As you move through such phases, "the goggles through which you viewed life in April may no longer be helpful to you in May... You revised your predictions about the world, you test new ideas, and in the process, consolidate a new set of personal constructs that work for you" (Brian Little (no year given), as cited in Feiler, 2020, p. 133). Feiler (2020) says "This fluidity is especially true during a searing life rupture. Your day-to-day existence simply cannot be navigated in the same way. Familiar landmarks have been overturned; faithful road maps have become obsolete. You need groundings, new passageways, new constructs" (p. 134).

Belonging is closely related to the concept of *mattering*, as coined by Rosenberg (1981). *Mattering* means "the need to be appreciated, noticed, and acknowledged, (and) is a concern of people at all stages of life and can strongly influence behavior" (Rosenberg, 1981; Goodman,

Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006, p. 138). Rosenberg saw this as an often overlooked, universal need.

it is to believe that we count in other's lives and feel we make a difference to them.

Mattering to oneself, others, and the world is the coordinating, although not single, issue that guides our understanding of our selves: 'Do I know who I am? Do I appreciate myself? Do I feel competent? Are my inside and outside worlds congruent? Do others appreciate me? Do work and community worlds make me feel needed?' (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006, pp. 138-139).

When inside and outside worlds are not "congruent," the resulting dissonance or "lifequakes" shake the ground we more comfortably walk on in the absence of such "disruptors" (Feiler, 2020, pp. 52, 72, 75, 161). Yet, in the lived experience of this researcher, these changes, and the subsequent internal transitions, though uncomfortable, till the soil in areas of our lives that might otherwise be left unattended. New seeds might be planted or the land recontoured to make a higher yield or more favorable view. When isolation leads to extreme distress, Rosenberg adds that mattering is a "key to survival," especially in deterring suicide (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006, pp. 138-139). Hoekje and Stevens (2018) show how belonging affects emotional and physical well-being:

If those of us working at U.S. institutions of higher learning continue to turn a blind eye to the fundamental role that belonging plays in human life, we cannot hope to understand the international students who come to us or the worlds that they do or may inhabit [...]

Engagement is central to students' sense of belonging on campus, a feature that is critical to their success. It can also challenge notions of identity as students negotiate co-national, American, and other international social relationships (p. 105).

When international students travel to other countries, full of dreams and expectations, where do they land emotionally in their lived experiences on campus once orientation days are over? Who are the helpers who will meet them at the transition gaps...or the abyss? The warm words of welcome and acceptance heard in the first days can easily be drowned out by other voices or lack of them later. Will the helpers have the sensitivities and empathy to guide them? These are the questions being asked in by those working in international students services even in times we think of as normal. In the present liminal phase between what we once knew and what higher education will look like on the other side of the pandemic, mental health issues and xenophobic rhetoric toward Chinese students, who make up 35% of the international students on U.S. campuses, are rising (Zhang, H., 2021; Gallagher, 2021).

The difficulties are real for the international students crossing cultures. They are just as real for any other person living in the world today, as we cross boundaries and they cross us. Community can become a context in which any of us may do better in feeling secure and able to be our true selves. There is the potential to build support networks in our “web of relationships” as one participant described community. Block (2010) claims “we are living in an age of isolation.” Higher education and many other work contexts are recognizable in his assessment, “Our communities are separated into silos; they are a collection of institutions and programs operating near one another but not overlapping or touching” (pp. xviii-2).

This research study is focused on how we might find more connection and benefit from the interchange between these islands. Phenomenological action research allows for “reaching for something beyond, restoring a forgotten or broken wholeness by recollecting something lost, past, or eroded, and by reconciling it in our experience of a present with a vision of what should be” (van Manen, 2016, p. 153). The hope is that we all can travel into a new space where more

belonging is felt and we can coexist in community, solving problems together and benefitting from the variety and uniqueness that permeate the very diversity which seems to cause us conflict.

Today, if we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.

Mother Teresa

Theme 2: Identify Formation – Who is this space asking me to be?

For the helpers providing services and advising students, it is imperative to recognize that for the international student, there is confusion about who one is and where one fits. This is not untrue for domestic students, or for that matter, any person at times. Zhang, T. (2018) said students are continually navigating cultural identities.

The connection between dialogue, identity, and self means that students, regardless of personal preference or choice, are continually faced with the need to renegotiate their social identity and perform that identity in front of others, sometimes reluctantly or unwillingly. The process of negotiating their identity, while difficult at times – even leading to tears – forges a sense of self that is more resilient and adaptable. (Glass, et al., 2015, p. 23)

All human beings face pressures to “renegotiate” and “perform that identity,” at times, choosing whether to conform in order to meet voiced or unvoiced expectations. It may be an introvert needing to act as an extrovert, a Type D being told by a Type A to be more assertive instead of contributing in ways favoring strengths and complementary differences. Some people think grabbing the bull by the horns is the only option, while others see that walking around the bull a few times may lead to better outcomes, or that maybe a goat would be wiser. In relationships, it can be different expectations on how to do a holiday and fit family expectations or family culture

questions like which way the toilet paper roll hangs, facing inward or outward. The common existential question of “Who am I?” is confounded by these additional layers of movement and cultural differences, such as in these questions, “Who am I in this culture? Who am I on this campus? Who am I in this language? How much of me is getting through? Who are they asking me to be?”

As with the analogy of tilling soil, the disruptive nature of change can bring problems or emotions to the surface that might otherwise go unseen. Sociologist Robert Zussman (2000) coined the phrase “autobiographical occasions,” which constitute:

any moment when we are encouraged or obliged to reimagine who we are. It’s a narrative event, when our existing life story is altered or redirected in some way, forcing us to revisit our preexisting identity and modify it for our life going forward. (Feiler, 2020, p. 129)

In that moment, we have the potential to be more engaged with our own journey and perhaps see things we have been missing to that point. In these instances we might recalibrate our static or dynamic tendencies in forming our characters. There is the potential to be creative or chart a different course.

In her book, *Composing a Life*, Bateson (1989) examines “life as an improvisatory art,” encouraging people:

to look at problems in terms of the creative opportunities they present. I believe that our aesthetic sense, whether in works of art or in lives, has overfocused on the stubborn struggle toward a single goal rather than on the fluid, the protean, the improvisatory.

When the choices and rhythms of lives change, as they have in our time, the study of lives becomes an increasing preoccupation. (pp. 3, 4-5)

The potential for something new to come into existence that was not there before is the essence of creativity. Art and aesthetic experiences stir our emotions in unique ways and allow us new perspective. Disruptions and hard events, though unpleasant, are inevitable and can be a new medium with which to create. We can all be artists in this sense.

Bateson's core message alluded to in her title and explained below may be the most helpful content teachers and those in helper roles can give to the students they work with:

The model of an ordinary successful life that is held up to young people is one of early decision and commitment, often to an educational preparation that launches a single rising trajectory... These assumptions have not been valid for many of history's most creative people, and they are increasingly inappropriate today. The landscape through which we move is in constant flux... Children cannot even know the names of the jobs and careers that will be open to them; they must build their fantasies around temporary surrogates. Goals too clearly defined can become blinkers³ (p. 6).

Not only does this inspire movement and transformation, it normalizes the constancy of change that is inevitable in living. Perhaps this will help build adaptability and resiliency skills that are needed to travel well rather than thinking that an unplanned event or adversity is somehow a breach of contract with the life we had mapped out. Feiler (2020) said, "A transition is a vital period of adjustment, creativity, and rebirth that helps one find meaning after a major life disruption," adding the encouragement that "Each of us has a transition superpower..." That is,

³ This use of "blinkers" are the leather flaps placed beside a horse's eyes so that it may only look straight ahead and not to the left or right.

each of us are best at handling one of the phases: Long Goodbye, Messy Middle, or New Beginning (pp. 143, 148).

Someone new to a country or culture, or workplace or new school, for that matter, can easily feel that wondering about belonging and identity. “Indeed, the powerful interplay of multiple factors – the challenge of diasporic selfhood – when globally mobile students attempt to define their identities clearly complicates any sense of belonging, resulting for many in a sense of belonging ‘nowhere and everywhere’ at the same time” (Glass, et al., 2015, pp. 83-84). People who do not respond in the manner or speed anticipated by those around them may be dealing with a battle beneath the surface that is not easily visible. To understand the hesitation or the dazed look anyone might have if working out options in another culture or having decision fatigue “is to understand the complexities of international student identities, including ethnic, linguistic, and cultural positionalities” (Adewale, 2018, p. 867). What *was* before crossing the border of change into an in-between space and *what will be* after is not yet known. These iterative exposure cycles are “disintegrative” experiences (Adler, 1975, p. 15) which may contribute to an identity that is hopefully integrated within the community.

This confusion about identity is compounded for international students and other sojourners – such as Third Culture Kids or children of family in the military or diplomatic corps – who are living a type of hybridity between worlds (Adewale, et al., 2018, p. 861). They do not have a singular cultural identity. One student’s words resonate around this need, “I don’t actually know where home is right now” (Adewale, et al., 2018, p. 862). “Today, due to rapid cross-border mobility, many international students enter college with multiple cultural or national identities (Gomes, Berry, Alzougool, & Chang, 2014)” (as cited in Adewale, et al., 2018, p. 863).

As Fischer (2021) described the “stranded between worlds” effect above, this displacement and questioning can happen even apart from how Covid-19 has complicated the dynamics.

For university personnel, it is important to not ignore “such identity complexities” because “relatively little is known about the lived experiences of international students who do not easily fit into pre-set institutional categories” (Adewale, et al., 2018, p. 863). Again, the implications and lessons extend beyond the international student journey, as pointed out by Gee (2000):

All people have multiple identities connected to their performances in society...The “kind of person” one is recognized as “being” in a certain context. This kind of “being” is unstable (Gee, 2000), specific in intercultural practice...identity becomes parallel to intercultural interactions, and it acts as a powerful lens to analyze the students’ intercultural experience (Zhu, 2017, as cited in Zhang, T., 2018, p. 84).

This emphasizes the point that the international student journey, in many ways, is the journey of all people. It also reminds us that people feel they must give “performances in society” to fit into the context. In looking outward from self to others, this conformity pressure can be perpetuated when human beings immediately place others into preconceived stereotypes, judge them, exclude them in some way, or like Madame DeFarge in *Tale of Two Cities*, “knit” their name into the list of people to be condemned once the Revolution starts (Dickens, 1999). These very human impulses to label people helps to keep files in order in our lifeworlds and allow us to remain safely ensconced in life as we know it and where everything make sense. It protects borders around the culture of our lives in a way we can retain control and feel confident.

Unfortunately, these practices place us on opposite sides of the continuum from the curiosity, openness, and a traveler's disposition described in this writing. We witness bias and microaggressions and prejudice across cultural differences. Labeling and stereotypes can too often prevail in the arena of identity formation. People say things like, "Oh, you're Korean, you must play the violin," or, "You're from Africa. You must be good with animals," without a lot of thought or the necessary sensitivity. Khazan (2020), who grew up in Midland, TX as the daughter of Russian immigrants was continuously asked, "Do you people drink a lot of Vodka?" She writes, "In communications research, these are called 'accommodative dilemmas,' or the struggle to correct people's misconceptions about your identity group without hurting their feelings" (p. 198).

The patterns of perception which an individual experiences and reflects at any given time are, in large part, determined by...outlook, orientation, and world view. Culture, in addition to being a perceptual frame of reference, is an environment of experience. Every person experiences the world through his or her own (culture). (Adler, 1975, p. 14)

International students experience xenophobic utterances that subtly reflect a categorization rather than integration. This has increased significantly with the rhetoric around Covid-19. And in the complexity of identity formation, when others are not mistreating us, we sometimes take up the mantle ourselves through our own bullying self-talk.

Another difficulty of the international student journey, or for anyone stepping into another space that is unknown, is that sense of feeling like a child again, as alluded to above. How much of one's personhood can even get through the barriers demarcating the surface? One is not able to communicate a need or what is on one's heart or to accomplish things that were second nature back in a known context. Few of us enjoy feeling like an imposter or outsider in

this way. We would much rather feel confident and in charge, an expert in our space. The part of the person's being beneath the surface is not necessarily visible to others due to the inhibiting factors created by language proficiency, cultural norms, and the temperament and disposition of the other person being interacted with.

Bauman (2001) notes that in heterogeneous communities we tend to become "surfaces" to one another with the surface being the "sole available measure by which to evaluate a stranger" (p. 147). In a rapidly moving world where people do not necessarily listen or attend to others as much as perhaps they should, it is easy to see how we would view others as "surfaces." Other human beings are easily lost in deluge of information and stimuli on the screens of our lives. Rather than interact with another human being, we swipe left and move to the next screen. There is a story there potentially missed and understanding not gained. Yet, beneath that surface is the true being who seeks safety and belonging in an insecure world (Bauman, 2001). Whether people find that belonging may rest in the openness or closedness of the other person engaging with them or what they themselves feel comfortable and willing to share.

Identity formation is affected by the dissonance and discomfort of college in general, but especially with the major adjustments from stepping into a new culture, or any of these major transition alluded to.

What all (culturally and linguistically diverse) students share, however, is the transition to a different place – physically and psychologically – where 'home' is expected to be set aside in pursuit of a new and different identity. Negotiating a path to a college identity that allows room for the new but does not completely reject the old is the delicate task facing these students (Hoekje & Stevens, 2018, p. 124).

Some parts of our being we consciously choose to keep beneath the surface and some are blind spots of which we are unaware, such as demonstrated by The Johari Window (Luft and Ingham, 1955), which illustrates the panes of self that are seen by ourselves and others, those seen only by us and not others, those seen by others and not us, and those not seen by either (CommunicationTheory.org, 2021). This is a reminder of how being with others and that contrast can illuminate and help people in their growth journeys. The person might ask, “How much of me is getting through to this other person?”

Both domestic and international college students have common ground in trying to figure out who they are or who their future self will be. The campus experience for all represents transition models by being a liminal space between what came before and what will come after. New knowledge, new experiences, and other formational aspect of later identity are being shaped. Garrod and Davis (1999) said that for most international students on their campus, “the essential process of identity development is the negotiation of their middle ground, their space in between, their building blocks combined from an incredibly diverse range of materials (p. xxiv)” (as cited in Hoekje & Stevens, 2018, pp. 128-129). Feiler (2020) adds, “The messy middle is all about what happens when we’re in the state of in between. It involves a complicated alchemy of giving up old ways and experimenting with new ones, moving beyond what’s past and beginning to define what’s coming” (p. 208). The colors on one’s palette and the layers of paint being applied to the seeming blank canvas of an emerging adult life again help conceptualize the identity formation journey.

Adler (1975) explored the deconstructive and reconstructive natures of identity formation around change and transition. “The reorientation of personality at higher levels of consciousness and psychic integration is based upon the disintegrative aspects of personality inherent in the

conflict and confusion of movement and change experiences” (p. 15). Hudson (1991) described adult life as being “on a raft floating down a commanding river” and that transitions are the “white waters” that test us. He described the balance between “a sense of chaotic power beyond our control” and “a sense of adventure requiring our continual readiness and vigilance” (p. 51)(as cited in Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006, pp. 23-24). Adler (1975) added:

The transitional experience is, finally, a journey into the self. Paradoxically, the more one is capable of experiencing new and different dimension of human diversity, the more one learns of oneself. Such learning takes place when a person transcends the boundaries of ego, culture, and thinking [...] The transitional process which occurs in the cross-cultural experience is a depth experience. It makes the growth and development of personality along a number of dimensions (pp. 20, 22).

The primary point is that sameness, comfort zones, known spaces, and relating only in homogenous circles will not contribute to our growth as effectively as movement into new and unknown contexts, such as different ways of thinking or seeing. These can come through conversations and relationship building, especially building our capacity for “experiencing new and different dimension of human diversity,” as Adler pointed out. The expanded self and increased awareness that results from this exposure, along with the checks and balances of interchange, will also allow us to share our own lifeworld with more credibility.

By becoming more aware of the frequency of changes and transitions in our own lives and the lives of those with whom we live and work, we gain the advantage of being more used to the effects of this type of travel. Things that were once difficult or unknown to us become part of our identities moving forward, such as how our first experiences driving are a distant memory, how wearing masks seems normal in 2021, or the manner in which we take, store, and share

photographs today compared to 15 years ago. When it comes to transformation, if we do seek to be a dynamic character in our own story, it is paramount!

Beyond the identity formation and growth of an individual at the micro level (“Who am I?”), there is identity formation on the macro level (“Who are we?”), which could be asked by a campus or work context or a family. It is a reminder of that larger narrative in which our stories exist. Goodman, et al. (2006) said:

Intrapersonal transitions are often triggered by existential questions such as, ‘Who am I?’ or ‘Where am I going? Often these questions stem from non-events, realizations such as ‘I am not the person I expected to be,’ or ‘I took a long look at my life, and saw all the things that did not happen’. (p. 225)

For the person a decade or two after college, or in the middle of an unexpected hardship, the question might shift to, “How did this become my life?” How these questions relate to the formation of lifeworlds will be explored in Chapter 5.

If not choosing the static character route, there is a sense of continuous change and growing up implicit in traveling. At any given point, we might finish this sentence differently, “The person I am becoming is...” In that state, we open to shifts in our disposition, our attitudes, and especially our choice of response to the matters of life. Psychologists Markus and Nurius (1986) “introduced the idea that all of us keep a running catalog of possible selves” (as cited in Feiler, 2020, p. 171). Allowing for this ongoing growth will be helpful in not categorizing people based on a certain moment, which like a snapshot represents only a millisecond in the timeline of their lives. That instance is the only “surface” visible to you without engaging and going deeper.

Ideally, a community of any sort, including a work team, sports team, a club, or a neighborhood can be a safe space for members to be their authentic selves on that explorative trek. Our hope is that it can fulfil the “promise” as Block (2010) describes:

Community offers the promise of belonging and calls for us to acknowledge our interdependence. To belong is to act as an investor, owner, and creator of this place. To be welcome, even if we are strangers. As if we came to the right place and are affirmed for that choice. (p. 4)

We are meant to be active “citizens” in the sense of “Learning from the stranger and one another. The key to gathering citizens, leaders, and stakeholders is to create in the room a living example of how we want the future to be” (Block, 2010, p. 24).

The wise campus is the one that allows the international and TCK students to also speak into the life of the institution and have their voices heard, especially in building a more inclusive environment. “Not only are students with hybrid identities suited for cultural awareness on campus, they are highly adaptable and able to mix effortlessly with people from different cultures (Volet & Ang, 1998)” (as cited in Adewale, et al., 2018, p. 878). The potential is high for these sojourners to be part of the solution.

Further demonstrating the link between identity and community and all that sojourners and travelers can bring to campuses, Castiello-Gutiérrez (2019) said:

Today’s HEIs focus too much on what we as international students lack instead of focusing on the richness of our “uniquenesses”. We bring with us a set of historically accumulated, culturally developed, and socially distributed resources or what Esteban-Guitart and Moll call *Funds of Identity*. These experiences constitute the very essence of

one's identity and represent a form of capital that can transform an institution. The collective richness of our identities should be purposefully included to facilitate learning and community building.

HEIs are uniquely positioned to take advantage of these opportunities and embrace the richness of having international visitors among the diverse populations on their campuses. Their goals of internationalization are well served by this realization.

Equally important is the acknowledgement that everyone needs to be moving and growing and adjusting toward an integrated, coexistence that has as many of the advantages and as few of the problems as possible. As demonstrated by Senninger's Learning Zone Theory (2000), the layers of panic or discomfort can grow thinner and the layers of comfort thicker, through the iterative exposure and interaction cycles of people moving across the room to engage with those who are different, as examined in Research Question #3. The "one thing that the idea of identity does not signal is a 'stable core of the self, unfolding from the beginning to end through all the vicissitudes of history without change'" (Stuart Hall, 1996, as cited in Bauman, 2001, p. 17). Rather than clinging to a fixed status quo of context or self or other mythical creatures, we can remember the hero's journey and step out to face the inevitability of change and movement that is happening whether we speak of it or not.

But this trip, which has scarcely begun, has already changed me; not only do I see things in clearer, truer colors, but certain aspects of my character have become magnified to an alarming degree...I detect vast capacities for impatience, resentful anger and cynicism.

Moritz Thomsen, The Saddest Pleasure⁴

⁴ As cited in Storti (2007).

Theme 3: Community – What do we want to create together?⁵

The concept of community is conducive to everyone feeling safe, included, and able to explore identity as they travel through the developmental stages of life. Admittedly, though, it is not without challenges. Community is very nebulous and hard to describe. It means different things to different people. Bauman (2001) compared the struggle to describe community to a mythical hero's journey, stating, "Contemporary seekers of community are doomed to share Tantalus' lot; their purpose is bound to elude them, and it is their own earnest and zealous effort to grasp it that prompts it to recede" (p. 17). This paradox echoes the point of how interaction with others who provide contrast helps us in understanding ourselves better. "(The) more one is capable of experiencing new and different dimensions of human diversity, the more one learns of oneself" (Adler, 1975, p. 20). The interplay between personal and corporate identity is found in this paradox. At the heart of the study will be voices from all over the world seeking to describe what community means to them, and what adds or detracts from it, as presented in Chapter 4.

Learning how to better navigate our differences seems paramount in achieving internationalization and healing, where these are the stated goals. Block (2010) describes how intentional community initiatives allow us to "focus on our connectedness rather than on our differences" (p. 65). Lee (2006) helped conceptualize community this way:

The truth is that we live in a global village where our neighbors, friends, and co-workers will not necessarily share the same values or speak the same native language as we do.

As Hall (1990) stated, "[W]e must be willing to admit that the people of this planet don't just live in one world [culture] but in many worlds and some of these worlds, if not

⁵ Block, 2010, p. 25.

properly understood, can and do annihilate the others'' (p. 201). To succeed in both our personal and professional lives, we must learn how to relate, in face-to-face contexts, with people from other cultures (p. 4).

The “worlds” alluded to can be thought of as our worldviews, our point of views, or “lifeworlds” in the phenomenological sense. When the lifeworlds of international students are not integrated, the:

absence of personal and meaningful social contact with other members of the college community, result(s) in feelings of separation or marginalization” and “new students hav(e) trouble coping with the initial changes, demands or stressors that accompany transition into the college and/or departmental ‘culture’. (Retnam, 2016)

In many settings, a philosophical shift is needed toward a more open and integrated stance that recognizes the value of uniqueness, hearing the stories of others, and benefiting from their lived experiences or understanding to date on a topic.

Beyond international student service offices, other staff and especially professors play important parts in the narrative of a campus story. Professors may not realize how crucial their roles are to successful community building (Glass, 2015, p. 21). Ecochard, et al. (2017) describe the factors of adjustment in three domains: English language ability, socio-cultural integration, and academic integration (pp. 100-108). Of the main domains in which they need to adjust, international students can find the academic domain the easiest to move into and understand, as compared to social spaces, or the cultural and linguistic barriers already described. That human desire to feel in control and more of an expert can lead to students focusing more on the academic domain and succeeding in their major area of study. “At their best, classrooms today

are a safe haven from, or a much needed complement to, the informal, chaotic, and complex social cultures outside of class” (Glass, 2015, p. 22).

If professors are less open or misunderstand the student’s abilities based on the “surface” view they have, the negative impact is far reaching. In the classroom, students from some countries feel they were not being treated as equals to their peer classmates (Glass, 2015, p. 25). An ideal “integration,” as described by Zhang, T. (2018) would have everyone engaged and interacting with international students, increasing intercultural awareness for all and hopefully alleviating some of these negative factors. It seems critical for increasing understanding and empathy toward others, that we recognize that even those from our own culture are experiencing the world differently, through the lens of another lifeworld, and navigating a different set of variables and challenges, not to mention their varied dispositions and temperaments.

Beyond the academic and professional advantages that motivate study in the U.S., international students also typically want to make friends and build relationships with people from other cultures. However, too often, within a short time on campus, they fall into clusters of those similar to them linguistically or culturally. Khazan (2020) wrote:

Maybe you are trying to understand why our neighborhood, school, office, or social circle is so homogenous, or why so many people are uncomfortable living alongside people who are different. What is it about unusual people and ideas that makes us so uneasy? And why do so many free-thinking adults all end up living in very similar ways? (p. 7).

Adding to the challenge of cross-cultural friendships is that even the domestic students who have the best intentions of making friends with international students, end up not succeeding in bridging that gap for lack of intercultural skills. They too fall back into homogenous groupings.

Those who would bravely take a step outward from a known space or do something different will seemingly be met almost immediately by resistance of other types.

Building on her charge to see the art and improvisational of our lives, Bateson (1989) described the obstacles we meet this way, “symmetrical models promote competition and conflict... These models also involve pressing participants toward similarity, teaching them to play by the same rules and to abandon their different styles and different contributions. The loss is serious. Furthermore, symmetrical models work badly across cultures, when differences are real and profound” (p. 115). The ideal would be more of a coexistence where all are valued, and individuals have the right to “retain their culturally identity” rather than giving in to:

the temptation to solve the problem by reducing or eradicating the differences that separate the participants (Bochner, 1986), usually by encouraging new settlers to assimilate to their host culture... abandoning those country-of-origin values and customs that differ significantly from mainstream traditions and behaviours.” Though “short term assimilation may lead to a more harmonious society... groups strongly resist pressures to dilute their cultural identities... (Ward, et al., 2001, p. 17)

Many short-term solutions attempted do not bring the long-term goals desired, such as trading “harmonious society” for the losses involved when we “dilute their cultural identities,” which does not seem conducive at all to a community in which belonging and acceptance is felt.

Any culture is primarily a system for creating, sending, storing, and processing information. Communication underlies everything. Although we tend to regard language as the main channel of communication, research reveals that anywhere from 80 to 90 percent of information is communicated by other means. (Hall, et al., 1987, p. 3)

As developed throughout this writing, we can benefit from applying these models beyond intercultural communication to the “cultures” of lifeworlds we have all around us, even in our own homes. Lee (2006) said, “Interacting with people from multiple cultural backgrounds truly widens my worldview and challenges some previously held prejudices concerning people from other cultures” (p. 4). This speaks to how lifeworlds can be expanded by exposure cycles across borders of difference. One international student from Germany participating in the study said,

I think internationalization is very important because we're exposed to other viewpoints (by being) exposed to other people. And it helps us in accepting others. So I think someone that grew up in a very small town (and) wasn't really exposed to other internationals or, say for example, Chinese nationals, but then goes on and is dealing with some Chinese national. It...must be utterly confused by how they work, or how their cultural background shaped them. But if they had been more exposed to that earlier on, they would have probably accepted it easier and build a worldview that is more accepting generally.

This expanded vantage point and learning may be outside of the academic curriculum of a school or institution but integral to the learning that needs to take place inside of people who can build community together.

As an example of how greater awareness and understanding of lifeworlds can be a benefit to higher education, the social sphere of campus culture commonly rotates around alcohol consumption and parties. Adjacent to that contextual reality is that “Saudi Arabian, Indian and Chinese students do not feel comfortable ...going to places that serve alcohol or where alcohol is being consumed” (Kusek, 2015, p. 128). Yet, these three nations send the majority of

international students abroad. Others on campus may miss that “international students tend to avoid these establishments because many of these students do not perceive them as safe or welcoming spaces” (Kusek, 2015, p. 128). Kusek (2015) suggests that communities have opportunities to “create spaces which international students...would consider safe alternatives” and could also draw in local people for a cultural experience (p. 128). In the absence of understanding, separation leaves international students feeling unsupported or even fearful, alerting us that:

The isolation of international students should be concerning...(and) their lack of wider community involvement makes them absent from the cumulative definition of the community outside the campus. What results, is not only a separation among the ‘locals’ and the ‘internationals,’ but also a lack of cultural exchange, which would be beneficial for both international students and the host community (Ahamad & Szpara, 2003; Callaway, 2010; Ee, 2013; Hodge, 2002; Sabry & Bruna, 2007)(as cited in Kusek, 2015, p. 122).

Taken to extremes, the lack of connection can lead to the xenophobic microaggressions, or outright attacks, such as shouting at Chinese students about coronavirus in 2020 or worse actions, which we might picture as leftward movement on the group cultural adjustment continuum away from integration and toward less desirable outcomes (Ward, et al., 2001, pp. 29-30). In the absence of more cultural awareness, these unfortunate incidents also target those perceived as Chinese, even though their national origin is different, which illustrates the lack of understanding and empathy that would prove helpful.

Intentional interactions have the potential to help domestic students make strides in their own internationalization, allowing them to act as welcoming hosts, even ambassadors, while achieving the goal of becoming globally competent graduates.

American students wishing to learn more about other cultures are attracted to international (interaction) so they can learn from the international students. Moreover, the phenomenon of living in close contact with students from different cultures introduces students in sometimes intimately meaningful ways to how similarities and differences shape one's social perspectives. (Kurotsuchi Inkelas, et al., 2018, pp. 58-59)

Baumeister and Leary (1995) said:

...conversation is not only necessary for social relationships, it is the crucial mechanism of the interactive classroom and study groups as well. Over the long term, it seems, having things 'in common' between American and international students is also necessary for developing connections between groups. This is not just a matter of language; it is also a matter of providing significant opportunities for building relationships, identity, and *belonging* in an internationally inclusive campus. (as cited in Hoekje & Stevens, 2018, p. 56)

Most higher education institutions have a vision or goal for some level of internationalization that allows for these benefits to be realized. To that end, Glass, et al. (2015) said:

we firmly believe that any college or university wishing to strengthen its campus commitment to international students must reach out and engage in active collaboration with all departments and offices across the campus, with the larger community, and most important, with the international student community itself. (p. 103)

This provides a helpful picture to conceptualize community in higher education on the macro level. On the micro level, “Peer relationships are critical for students as they develop a sense of belonging as members of the college campus, making sense of their academic experiences and their role and identity on campus (Baxter Magolda, 2009; Braxton, 2009)” (as cited in Hoekje & Stevens, 2018, p. 55). The next theme will explore the value of such interactions.

Trust is earned in the smallest of moments. It is earned not through heroic deeds, or even highly visible actions, but through paying attention, listening, and gestures of genuine care and connection.

Brené Brown

Theme 4: The value of interaction – as people walk this way again and again, a path appears

Walking the path away from isolated clusters toward interactions across differences will help the layers of discomfort or panic to thin out, as awareness, understanding, and intercultural skills grow. DuFour, et al., (2008) provide an impressive list of benefits that come from increased interaction of a group toward solving a problem: reduction of isolation; increased commitment; shared responsibility; powerful learning; increased meaning and understanding; higher likelihood that teachers will be well-informed, professionally renewed, and inspired to inspire students; more satisfaction and higher morale, and lower rates of absenteeism; commitment to making significant and lasting changes; and systematic change (pp. 70-71). This study aspired to inform actions that can replicate these effects by hearing diverse voices working collaboratively through one-on-one conversations to figure out how to build community and alleviate factors that work against it.

Of the three domains in which international students are seeking adjustment – linguistic, socio-cultural, and academic (Ecochard, et al., 2017), the social aspect can be the most difficult for them, even though it is a central part of the college experience and helpful in building personal and professional networks. Hoekje and Stevens (2018) said:

social networks have the enormous potential to include not only their home nationals, but also Americans and others from around the world who they met on the college campus, and from whom they can draw strength as they deal with issues of identity, linguistic insecurity, or a range of personal crises from bullying to depression to matters of the heart. (pp. 105-106)

There can be a disconnected gap between recruitment and enrollment of students if care is not taken. Helping everyone at the institutions be ready and enabled to support the international students benefits the entire campus. Hoekje and Stevens (2018) said:

Institutions of higher learning that seek not only to diversify enrollments, but also to facilitate engagement and foster cross-cultural connections, will need to find new ways to promote a more complex process of identity development among internationally mobile students while securing and preserving a safe and inclusive campus for all members of its community. (pp. 128-129)

Supporting those who were invited is the right thing to do. Leaving them alone to find their own way out of the margins seems very inequitable and will undermine the potential gains for the whole campus community.

To demonstrate the potential of interactions, a participant in a college program that had intentional interaction between domestic and international students said, “Although we came from different cultural backgrounds, the more we got to know each other, the more it became evident that we shared common interests” (Rose-Redwood, 2018, p. 1333). A participant in this research study, a White American graduate student, described the close friendship he had with another student who was from India.

When ...I sort of think about, you know, what would it mean to be friends with someone who's different than me...one of my best buddies here, he's from India. And it's like, oh, that's pretty different. But then it's like, we end up hanging out because you know, we just have like really similar senses of humor and like similar interests and it's like, oh, I guess, you know, in whatever kind of ways make the friendship work. Like we're ...pretty similar, you know, in those respects. Yeah.

Other people saw their external differences, but he intimated he had to really reflect on the question even to realize they were different externally in the eyes of some observers because they felt so similar internally.

Beyond mere friendships like the example above, the usual networks that lead to career opportunities and even marriage often run along the rails of college relationships.

It is easy to imagine the value to (a) student befriending a classmate from another part of the world, whose connections might open up a world of professional and commercial opportunities – as well as the cultural skills necessary to navigate effectively within that greater world. (Hoekje & Stevens, 2018, p. 108)

To not be able to build these networks becomes another way international students remain on the periphery, not having the full campus experience. There is a longer lasting exclusion that plays out in this way well beyond their time on campus.

Homophily also encompasses socioeconomic status, with friends of friends often introducing us to our future spouses, securing membership in future exclusive clubs, or landing us that interview for our future employer, explaining in part why the 'rich get

richer' (Gil, 2012; Christakis & Fowler, 2014a)(as cited in Hoekje & Stevens, 2018, p. 107).

In considering the types of bridges that could connect isolated clusters formed along factors of similarity or connect silos that exist between disciplines or departments, there is a type of social economy that can be considered. Putnam, et al. (2003) define two types of currencies that social scientists describe as *social capital*, one that bonds people closer still and one that bridges difference. They are defined as “inward-looking – *bonding* social capital” and “outward-looking – *bridging* social capital.” They note: “Both bonding and bridging social networks have their uses” (p. 2, emphasis added). Social capital is described as “developing networks of relationships that weave individuals into groups and communities” including “social networks, norms of reciprocity, mutual assistance, and trustworthiness,” which is exemplified by, “making connections among people, establishing bonds of trust and understanding (and) building community” (pp. 1-2). By contrast, Bauman (2001) shows another paradox being together brings:

community means *sameness*, while ‘sameness’ means the absence of the Other, especially a stubbornly *different* other capable of a nasty surprise and mischief precisely by reason of their difference. In the figure of the stranger (not just the ‘unfamiliar’, but the *alien*, the ‘out of place’), the fears of uncertainty, founded in the totality of life experiences, find their eagerly sought, and so welcomed, embodiment. (p. 115)

The participant data in this study supported the point that we can solve problems better by being in community together where different voices are heard, but at the same time, it can bring more problems, as will be explained further in Chapter 4.

Other benefits of increased engagement, especially related to education, is the connection to improved critical thinking, better retention rates, higher grade point averages, and higher graduation rates (Hoekje & Stevens, 2018, p. 110). Therefore, the impact of feeling accepted contributed to “enhancing students’ social integration, associating this integration with outcomes including the successful transition to college, sense of belonging, appreciation of diversity/multiculturalism, and commitment to civic engagement (Inkelas & Weisman, 2003; Johnson et al., 2007; Pike, 1999)(as cited in Kurotsuchi Inkelas, et al., 2018, p. 57). With this in mind, the types of metrics that show good student progress across campus would be heightened by community building with intentional interactions across differences. This would also certainly help move us closer to the ideals of internationalization and community.

To be wise, go out and meet people.

African Proverb

Theme 5: Building global competency skills – prototype citizens of the future⁶

Internationalization has meant varying things over the decades. Since the 1990s, the focus has been to distinguish “international education” from “such overlapping terms as ‘comparative education,’ ‘global education,’ and ‘multicultural education,’” says Knight (2009, p. 113). She goes on to define internationalization as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of higher education” (p. 115). De Wit (2008) says that HEIs should not respond passively, but be an “active player in the global arena” (p. 3). For internationalization to be realized, deliberate initiatives toward increasing intercultural learning are necessary. Unfortunately, due to the “birds of a feather” effect so common to human nature, “bridging social capital is harder to create than bonding social capital,” revealing another

⁶ This title is adapted from the phrase “Prototype citizens of the twentieth-first century” by sociologist Ted Ward (as cited in Pollock & Van Reken, 2001, p. 7).

paradox that “the kind of social capital that is most essential for healthy public life in an increasingly diverse society like ours is precisely the kind that is hardest to build” (Putnam, et al., 2003, p. 3).

A key tenet of internationalization on many campuses is the aspiration to graduate globally competent students (IPS, 2020). The present lack of interactions between the disparate groupings of students on campus as demonstrated above moves us in another direction. This study explores how increasing intercultural understanding can lead to greater empathy and better overall campus support of students. Hardage (2021) says, “Culture is everyone’s job.” (Rector, 2018). Similarly, the responsibility for supporting international students and helping them integrate should fall to the entire university, including domestic students, staff, and faculty, and ideally, the surrounding neighborhoods and community. It is not solely the responsibility of an international programs office.

For domestic students, Kurotsuchi Inkelas, et al. (2018) describe the “phenomenon of living in close contact with students from different cultures” in meaningful ways and how “smaller daily interactions can have profound effects.” The example was given of an American student who called his parents on a regular basis to report on school and ask advice wondering why his Serbian roommate never did the same. It was then he realized the prohibitive costs of international calls. Another example is given of an American student better understanding the privilege and choices she had because she could read fluently in English compared to a new Taiwanese friend who desired to be an English literature major by passion but chose chemistry because of the language barrier (pp. 58-59). As an example of intentional engagement and high impact practices, the living-learning model is being put forward on many campuses to help domestic and international students have more interchange.

Educators would do well to move away from methodology in the classroom that favors only one worldview or one type of learner. Landorf, et al. (2018) said:

Global learning was also developed to produce new knowledge about the well-being of the global community, not to recapitulate old schema, beliefs, and biases. The process of global learning, according to Soedjatmoko and Newland (1987) was conceived as an ‘open system’ that ‘includes self-generated knowledge acquired through experience or observation, interaction, sharing of information, experimentation, and feedback in additions to instruction.

As with the adaptations educators had to make in 2020 with the rapid pivot to online learning due to the pandemic, acquiring many new skills along the way, there must be a shift away from doing things in the same ways to meet the needs of all learners, if ever that was effective. For example, educators may not consider that some students may have grown up not using a Roman alphabet and learned to read from right to left. Considering differing lifeworlds and cultural dynamics, such as power distance or individualism-collectivism, will make the learning environment richer for all and prepare everyone for the future.

International students, as well as Third Culture Kids who have this lived experience of “in-betweenness” and hybridity, can be a tremendous resource on which the campus may draw, as they identify them and bring them into these conversations. Lee (2006) wrote “communication scholars should continue studying the construct of relational identity/third-culture, especially with a critical lens, so as to widen our knowledge of the nature of third-culture and the communication processes that contribute to the formation of a third-culture” (p. 20).

The central assumption of the third-culture approach, according to Casmir (1999), is that members in intercultural relationships have a need to engage in a process of understanding and negotiating differences. This process involves adapting and converging different cultural values and identities. The activity of third-culture building allows all participants to gain an appreciation for and an understanding of others through negotiating standards, goals, and satisfaction in a conversational process. The third-culture represents a mutuality, which is understood and supported by people who are involved in its development. (as cited in Lee, 2006, p. 7)

Pollock and Van Reken (2001) have written extensively on the Third Culture Kid (TCK) experience, which gives a forecast of how this type of hybridity featured in iterative exposure cycles of movement into new spaces can be beneficial to anyone.

The TCK experience is a microcosm of what is fast becoming normal around the world. Few communities will remain culturally homogenous in this age of easy international travel and instant global communication. Growing up among cultural differences is already, or soon will be, the rule rather than the exception – even for those who never physically leave their home country. Sociologist Ted Ward claims that the TCKs of the late twentieth century are “the prototype citizens of the twenty-first century”. (p. 7)

Pollock and Van Reken outline an extensive list of skill sets unique to those who would embrace intercultural living, including ease of transition between modes of operation, sensitivities to hidden aspects of culture, humility, respect toward different ways of greeting, being good mediators between groups, observational skills, recognizing unwritten rules, noticing behaviors others miss, increased self-confidence, increased sense of self-reliance, coping, resiliency,

adaptability, creativity, linguistic skills, and building “deep and valued” relationships (pp. 107-135).

O’Shaughnessy (2014) described the creative problem-solving skills of TCKs, such as “being willing to do things a bit outside of the box...a characteristic that is sought by companies in the 21st century” (p. 115). An important bridging social capital quality is being able to walk in the shoes of another.

Empathy allows us to connect with other people in deep and meaningful ways. It means we are not emotionally alone. It’s a very powerful ability and sadly, one that seems to be on the decline. A recent study found that college students today are 40% less empathetic than they were in 1979, with the steepest decline coming in the last 10 years (O’Shaughnessy, 2014, p. 66).

Learning to navigate the hallways between the rooms of cultures, as TCKs grew up doing, becomes the much needed skill of the future, and communities cannot hold together in the absence of it (O’Shaughnessy, 2020).

Skills such as these are the foundation of internationalization. As a sustainability practice, the strategy must go beyond recruitment and into full support for the duration of the student’s journey and relationship with the institution. Increasing global competencies for all stakeholders on campus is necessary, as Castiello-Gutiérrez (2019) writes:

An internationalization strategy will not be complete if it does not invest the same effort expended on attracting international students towards developing the competencies needed to cultivate intercultural and multicultural communities. Internationalization at home and internationalization of the curriculum can help create awareness not only

among students, but also among faculty and staff so they will value international students for more than economic or academic contributions. Our diverse identities can help steer the campus climate from a place that is open to learning from international students instead of one that is just ‘teaching’ us.

The reciprocal exchange where value is recognized in both directions for the better learning for all involved cannot be overlooked.

Beyond the loss of the community’s potential, there is a social inequity if this intercultural exchange and transformation aspect is not bidirectional. International students typically pay full tuition even as they end up in the margins or otherwise not having a full campus experience. In that, they can end up being more of a visible demonstration of the commitment to diversity and “cash cows” (Brown, 2014) than active and integrated citizens on the campus, where all the value and understanding their voices can carry toward us is heard. “One of internationalization’s core principles, along with post-9/11 openness, is that if graduates are going to live and work in a globalized economy, it is higher education’s responsibility to prepare them” (Fischer, 2019). This is true for all students – domestic and international. As demonstrated above, the challenge falls to every one of us to continue growing and moving into new spaces in order to stay relevant, current, and to be build the skills that will better equip us to be helpers and be helped.

The United Nations’ wrote “In order to further the process of learning to live together, there is a need to promote intercultural competencies, including those embedded in the everyday practices of communities, with a view to improving pedagogical approaches to intercultural relations” (UNESCO, 2019). Kurossuchi Inkelas, et al., (2018) describe the common competencies faculty, staff and students can gain from intercultural communities:

civic-mindedness described as increased understanding of and respect for the laws as well as attending to international affairs and environmental sustainability; open-mindedness, described as respect for their own and others' cultures; independence, described as thinking "rationally and independently, while at the same time think(ing) responsively and objectively"; multidisciplinary skills, including self-awareness, goal-setting, active learning, and flexibility; teamwork, described as being an outstanding leader and group member; professional skills, including employment competencies such as competitiveness, problem-solving skills; and English communication skills (p. 140).

Beyond the benefits of building a more inclusive community, intercultural competency skills make students more desired by potential employers. "The world is evermore connected, and being able to function across cultures is becoming less and less a nice advantage and more and more an absolute necessity" (O'Shaughnessy, 2014, p. 77).-We can naturally assume that the international students themselves are aware of and can articulate the cultural dimensions they are navigating. This is not necessarily true, similar to how any one of us is not necessarily aware of the movement, change, and internal transitions we are living through or could describe our own culture. Raising awareness for all of the transitions and cultural adjustments helps people find common ground and be more prepared for the world in which they live.

To be uncertain is uncomfortable, but to be certain is to be ridiculous.

Chinese proverb

Chapter 3: Research Methodology – Traces on my being

What can we be certain of from history? That human beings have been wrong innumerable times, by vast amounts, and with catastrophic results. Yet today there are still people who think that anyone who disagrees with them must be either bad or not know what he is talking about.

Thomas Sowell

This study was designed through a phenomenological lens that examined the lived experience of participants. There was an autoethnographical thread connecting the focus of the study to the researcher, which is elaborated on under positionality below. Through the survey and interview instruments, participants reflected on their interactions across culturally disparate borders, examined their disposition in relation to change and leaving comfort zones, considered the helpers that empowered them in crossing gaps between the known and unknown, what they believe community means and how it is built, and how transitions in their lives contributed to their growth and identity formation. The phenomenological method used was guided by the work of van Manen which has special emphasis on pedagogical practices. Van Manen (2016) describes a framework of action research within the social sciences at the intersection point of philosophy and psychology. He points out the overlap from many social science voices, where “a sensitive observer of the subtleties of everyday life, and an avid reader of relevant texts in the human science tradition of the humanities, history, philosophy, anthropology, and the social sciences” conducts the research, reading the “texts” of lived experience (p. 29). There is additional overlap between sociolinguistics, anthropology, and sociology through the interests, experiences, and positionality of the researcher. That many diverse voices can bring a stronger result has been the premise of the study, which is echoed by this manner of drawing from multiple disciplines.

The tapestry language of this study is influenced by the work of Ghanaian artist El Anatsui, who creates large-scale works of art from seemingly unrelated items. A unique aspect of his art is that as his work is put on display in galleries around the world, he does not mandate the installation's shape or orientation. The gallery can exhibit the tapestry in the manner they choose for their context. El Anatsui says textiles are always "in motion. Anytime you touch something, there is bound to be a change. The idea of a sheet that you can shape and reshape. It can be on the floor, it can be up on the ceiling, it can be up on the wall, all that fluidity is behind the concept" (as cited in Tate, 2019). In his research related to society, Putnam (2003) echoes the threads of community, saying:

(u)rban planning, architecture, and technology can each foster redundancy and multistrandedness by creating opportunities for encounters that knit together existing ties ... Sociologists refer to (an) aspect of social networks as 'multistrandedness' (asking) how many different layers of connection do they unite? (p. 291)

To this question we could add: How many voices? How much diversity? How many conversations across cultural disparity? How many viewpoints?

When it comes to solving problems and gaining new perspective, it seems clear that moving beyond the boundaries of a single viewpoint, discipline, culture, or department will give strategic advantages. There is an aspect of seeing how the puzzle pieces fit together into this framework. Worthington (2020) says phenomenological research looks at how people interpret experiences, construct their worldviews, and meaning they attribute to experiences (p. 23). Van Manen (2016) describes "the importance of interpretive models that place human situatedness central and are based on the belief that we can best understand human beings from the experiential reality of their lifeworlds" (p. xi). Having conversations and other types of

interchange allows this possibility. The participants and researcher found meanings and new insight in the interchange of ideas.

Within this approach, there is emphasis on meaning-making out of the transitional, transnational, and crises events of our lives, capturing the essence of these seasons within our lived experience. “Living the curriculum,” or in this case, “living the research” has been the mantra throughout the study, as a fun way of acknowledging how these very effects have been significant in the transformation of the researcher. These approaches promise the means of becoming a dynamic character in one’s own narrative, being affected and transformed.

“Whatever I encountered in my past now sticks to me as memories or as (near) forgotten experiences that somehow leave their traces on my being” (van Manen, 2016, pp. 101-105.) Van Manen (2016) describes “hermeneutic phenomenological reflection...as a kind of action oriented research (where) an intimacy between research and life immediately suggests itself...It is done by rather than for the people” to help us ascertain “how we understand things, how we stand in life, how we understand ourselves as educators, etc.” (p. 154). This proved itself throughout the study, as participants seemed as eager to find answers to these questions. They were reflective, vulnerable, and thorough in helping conceptualize what community means, how we get there, and in grappling with the other hard issues that affect living together as human beings.

The Study Design – As if to prove the point

By necessity, this study pivoted slightly from its original inception due to limited access to international and domestic students, faculty and staff, and other community member participants due to Covid-19 and immigration law changes of 2020 the affected student mobility. From that disruptive “lifequake” in the study, new insight and perspective was gained. The discussion on the findings will show what was learned that likely would not have occurred by the

original design. The survey and interview instruments were made more robust in a way to spur reflection and in-depth conversations. That they could potentially serve as interventions and have impact on participants and those with whom they relate in the context of community was examined.

As noted in the problem statement, international students on campuses tend to remain on the periphery and find their social connections in isolated clusters with other students from similar cultural backgrounds (Rose-Redwood, et al., 2018, p. 1328; Hoekje & Stevens, 2018, pp. 41, 107; Glass, et al., 2015, p. 24). If there were more integration it would be more conducive to internationalization and reaping the benefits of cross-pollination of diverse voices and ideas. As a shared purpose and experience, the study has been examining how all people on campus might contribute to the conversation about building community. Hoekje and Stevens (2018) frame the challenge and a solution this way:

How can individuals from different backgrounds hope to break into self-selecting social groups? It is a question that university administrators should be asking as well, in terms of how colleges might promote greater opportunities for all students to create meaningful relationship with their fellow classmates across the spectrum of backgrounds. In particular, how can universities create conditions for students to form strong and diverse social relationships that support their sense of identity and belonging on campus? We propose the value of *engagement* activities for this purpose (p. 109).

This mingling of diverse people is not happening naturally, so this study seeks to inform future activities and gathering modes conducive to engagement. The study could be a first step toward building allies and a de facto community around the topic and be the beginning of forming a task force seeking to build connection on campus once access is possible. Spending time interacting

within a context that allows room for different cultural norms, varying lifeworlds, and without anyone feeling as if they do not belong is a hopeful possibility. New skills, such as learning to find common ground rather than leading with our differences, could well be a key to achieving a peaceful coexistence. As Block (2010) points out, we can learn to build community, and by that, “change the world one room at a time” (p. 98). An anticipated outcome is that the findings as explained may serve beyond a single campus.

Description of Setting

Where the context for this study was originally going to be general information for any higher education campus with specific application to the programming and services at Millersville University, the study has taken on broader implications through the participant voices by the story the data was telling. There are elements that apply to building community in general, as part of teams, and in interpersonal relationships between people. The data presented in Chapter 4 and analysis in Chapter 5 on what “good listening” entails and how this and “humility” impact community is applicable to every context where people are together. The intercultural and community building aspects also apply on our campus but could easily cascade outward into other applications.

In terms of action research and the problem of practice, these broader implications will be applied to building community at Millersville University. The primary goal is to build awareness and understanding that will hopefully contribute to empathy for the international student journey. As intercultural skills and competencies grow on the campus for all stakeholders, the readiness of the University to serve the international students will only be enhanced. Designing sustained programming for welcoming, orientating, and supporting international students can draw from this research. Toward internationalization, the principles emerging from the data can inform

workshops and seminars and other activities that would bring culturally disparate individuals into conversations with each other, such as book clubs, professional learning communities focused on a shared goal, and living-learning communities for domestic and international students in the residence halls, which will be elaborated on in chapter 5.

Such programming would be enacted through the functions of the Office of International Programs and Services and the intensive English program where the primary researcher has an administrative role at the time of this writing. Millersville University presently averages around 7,500 students. Just over 1% of students on campus are international students, but the number has been growing steadily as targeted recruitment is in the sixth year. Additional services and support roles specifically focused on international student enrollment at the school have been increased as a commitment to internationalization. The physical campus is considered very safe statistically (Gargesin, 2020), sitting on 250 acres located near the Conestoga River in Millersville. The main campus is near the historic city of Lancaster, PA, where the University also has a satellite campus. Millersville is within a short distance of major metropolitan areas such as Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington D.C. and New York City.

The Office of International Programs and Services is charged with leading internationalization initiatives on campus, increasing awareness, understanding, and intercultural competencies of campus students, personnel, and stakeholders, as well as handling education abroad and services for international students. Like many HEIs, Millersville University seeks to prepare students professionally by providing “international experiences to develop globally competent graduates” (IPS, 2020). These purposes underlie the foundation of this study design, where these values might be realized: respect for “the uniqueness of each individual by celebrating diversity, through open communication and compassion.” The outcomes possible

from the study may help foster “student, faculty and staff development as citizens by establishing relationships in an international context. Through diversity of thought, they (can then) serve as global ambassadors, as part of the larger community.” Other applicable tenets of the IPS mission are seeking to promote “respect for all cultures, encouraging a sense of unity and support” on an “inclusive internationalized campus that fosters global leadership and engagement.” Other values and goals are to provide “learning opportunities to engage ...serve internationally (and) diverse experiences (that) help to expand worldviews (and) value the global environment we live in” (IPS, 2020). This vision is echoed in the mission of the English Language Institute, which seeks to equip “English Language Learners for a successful transition into U.S. university programs, where they *participate fully as confident members of the campus and local community*” (ELI, 2020, emphasis added). Many of the individual and systemic challenges, opportunities, cultural and community dynamics described in this writing, are also visible on our campus. This study is designed to help inform those in helper roles for the best possible outcomes for students, as our campus community seeks to serve them in a collaborative manner.

Specific Participant Recruitment Planning

Participants for this study were recruited from the Millersville University campus domestic and international students, faculty, and staff. Participants were also recruited from the local community, within the U.S. as a whole, the international community abroad, and from other HEIs. For all recruitment funnels, I provided information on the study, confirmation of Institutional Review Board approval of Millersville University and Kutztown University, contact information for my Committee Chair and myself, the consent form, and links necessary to join the study. Specific recruitment methods were used depending on the proximity and context. For example, domestic students were invited through events and diversity offices on campus, who

sent direct messages to students on my behalf and placed the invitation on the *Get Involved* website in a very cooperative spirit around what we might all learn together. With permission, past and present international students of Millersville University were invited directly by email. Additional international students were invited through colleagues in my professional network in order to draw sampling from other universities. Faculty and staff from our university were invited individually by email by the primary researcher. I sought to have representation from the main services areas that contribute to the international student experience. Beyond HEI representation, I recruited participants who had spent considerable time living or studying in other countries for extended periods of time. This was to have a sampling that could help assess the effects of adjusting to another culture and how responses to transitions and other cycles of exposure to changes might vary. This latter group included those who had grown up on military bases, gone to international schools, were Third Culture Kids, or international workers and their families, such as withing diplomatic, governmental, or mission roles. These participants and those from the local community were recruited through my professional and social media networks and by personal contact. The study invitation included permission for participants to share the invitation with others if they had found the experience enjoyable. This led to a “snowball effect” where more than 200 participants from over 30 countries were involved.

Within the sample of participants were voices with unique experiences that added rich layers to the data. For example, there were people who spoke multiple language and those who spoke one. There were people who had lived abroad more than 20 years and participants who have lived in the same place their whole life. One participant had lived in Minneapolis in 2020 near the time of George Floyd’s death. There were police officers who served on campus forces and one who is on the U.S. Capital Police Force in Washington D.C. There were several Third

Culture Kids, along with those who worked internationally in schools and hospitals and other contexts. One participant reflected on the topic and prompts in relation to having lived most of her life in a wheelchair, even as she spoke of her security job and how she enjoyed her experience skydiving as an example of getting out comfort zones. Among the participants were people involved in business ventures in countries around the world, nurses working on a hospital ship that docks in various ports in Africa, and people who grew up under the former Soviet Union structure. Various values, political views, beliefs, and postures on religion were voiced in the entirety of the sample. Wider recruitment outside of the campus brought participation from people who had lived significant years in one or more other countries, those who grew up moving often, and some who lived in one context for a long time. Lastly, many of the participants did not speak English as their first language. Tables 3.1 and 3.2 and Figures 3.1 through 3.5 summarize the participant pool.

Description of Participants

The following figures and tables and accompanying text will give a summary of the demographic and other relevant factors related to their participation in the study.

Countries and States Represented

38 countries were represented in the study, as detailed in Table 3.1. For some participants, dual citizenship or varying circumstances led to an “other” statistic. As shown in Table 3.2, it is clear that the United States was most widely represented in the study with 62% of the participants. That the study is set on a U.S. campus and specifically Millersville University, as explained above, this statistic, as well as the larger representation of Pennsylvania is to be expected. Beyond this, there is a wide variety of countries represented including ones where a predominant number of international students attend from, such as China and Germany. Looking at the demographic breakdown by states shows

| Country | Percentage | # People |
|-------------------------------|------------|----------|
| United States | 62% | 127 |
| China | 3% | 7 |
| Germany | 3% | 7 |
| Netherlands | 3% | 7 |
| United Kingdom | 3% | 7 |
| Canada | 3% | 6 |
| Brazil | 2% | 5 |
| Ethiopia | 1% | 3 |
| Ireland | 1% | 2 |
| Japan | 1% | 2 |
| Malaysia | 1% | 2 |
| South Africa | 1% | 2 |
| Tajikistan | 1% | 2 |
| Trinidad and Tobago | 1% | 2 |
| Australia | 0% | 1 |
| Bangladesh | 0% | 1 |
| Bolivia | 0% | 1 |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | 0% | 1 |
| Chile | 0% | 1 |
| Colombia | 0% | 1 |
| Costa Rica | 0% | 1 |
| France | 0% | 1 |
| Haiti | 0% | 1 |
| Kazakhstan | 0% | 1 |
| Korea, South | 0% | 1 |
| Kuwait | 0% | 1 |
| Lebanon | 0% | 1 |
| Mexico | 0% | 1 |
| Nepal | 0% | 1 |
| New Zealand | 0% | 1 |
| Nigeria | 0% | 1 |
| Other (e.g. Dual) | 0% | 1 |
| Philippines | 0% | 1 |
| Russia | 0% | 1 |
| Saudi Arabia | 0% | 1 |
| Spain | 0% | 1 |
| Sri Lanka | 0% | 1 |
| Venezuela | 0% | 1 |
| Zimbabwe | 0% | 1 |

Table 3.1 – List of Participants by Countries Represented

that 33% of the participants were international, 44% were from Pennsylvania, and then a range of other states followed.

Living Situation Growing Up and Presently

Within the study, the variables of whether someone had lived primarily in rural or urban areas in the U.S. or otherwise came up occasionally in responses. Like with statistics about living or visiting other countries, there were various combinations and experiences that intersected these statistics. 43% of the participants indicated mostly urban experience growing up. 41% indicated mostly rural experience. 3% indicated suburb areas outside of a city. It was also important to have a reference point in relation to how transient or transitional

participant lives had been in relation to longer times spent in an area, as represented in Figure 3.1.

Cross-Cultural Living, Travel, and Language Experience

Much of the study looked at factors related to stepping out of the known and into new spaces, such as other countries or contexts. However, even without moving, there is cultural engagement. Gelfand (2019) said, “Culture is a really important puzzle—it’s omnipresent—and

| State or Situation | Percentage | # People |
|----------------------------|------------|----------|
| N/A - International | 33% | 68 |
| Pennsylvania (PA) | 44% | 91 |
| Ohio (OH) | 4% | 8 |
| Michigan (MI) | 2% | 5 |
| North Carolina (NC) | 2% | 4 |
| Texas (TX) | 2% | 4 |
| Illinois (IL) | 1% | 3 |
| Florida (FL) | 1% | 2 |
| Indiana (IN) | 1% | 2 |
| New York (NY) | 1% | 2 |
| Utah (UT) | 1% | 2 |
| Virginia (VA) | 1% | 2 |
| Alabama (AL) | 0% | 1 |
| Georgia (GA) | 0% | 1 |
| Iowa (IA) | 0% | 1 |
| Maryland (MD) | 0% | 1 |
| Massachusetts (MA) | 0% | 1 |
| Minnesota (MN) | 0% | 1 |
| Mississippi (MS) | 0% | 1 |
| New Jersey (NJ) | 0% | 1 |
| Oregon (OR) | 0% | 1 |
| Other | 0% | 1 |
| South Carolina (SC) | 0% | 1 |
| Tennessee (TN) | 0% | 1 |
| Wyoming (WY) | 0% | 1 |

Table 3.2 – List of Participants by State

affects us from the moment we wake up to the moment we go to sleep. But it's largely invisible. We rarely recognize how powerful it is!" (Nussbaum, 2019). With the presence in and crossing

of cultures and the focus on understanding and building community that allows everyone to feel a sense of belonging, including those from other countries, it seemed important to

understand the range of experiences participants had.

In terms of language, the prompts asked for levels of experience at a "basic conversation" level. However, a number of participants indicated full fluency in multiple languages, so the responses can be considered as ___# of languages in which a person can carry on a basic conversation to full fluency. As with other demographics, an "other" category was helpful for unique circumstances participants noted. For example, one person did not mark even one language and jokingly

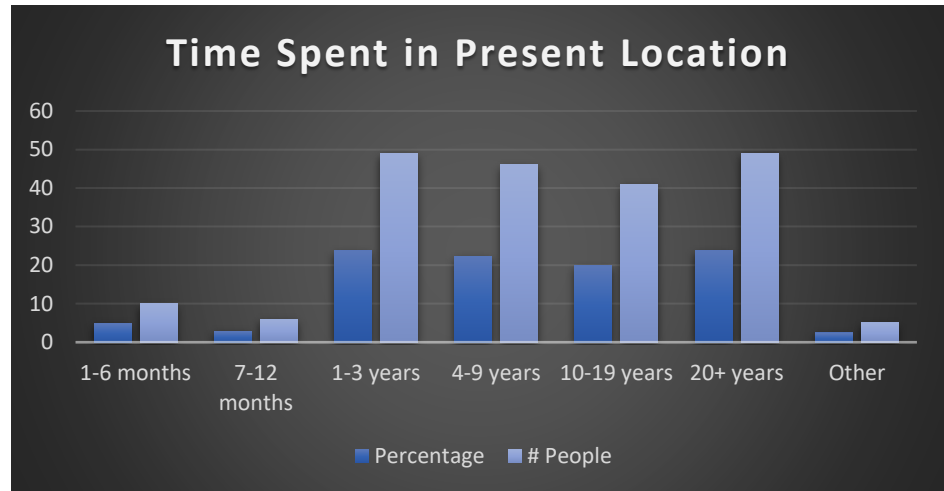


Figure 3.1

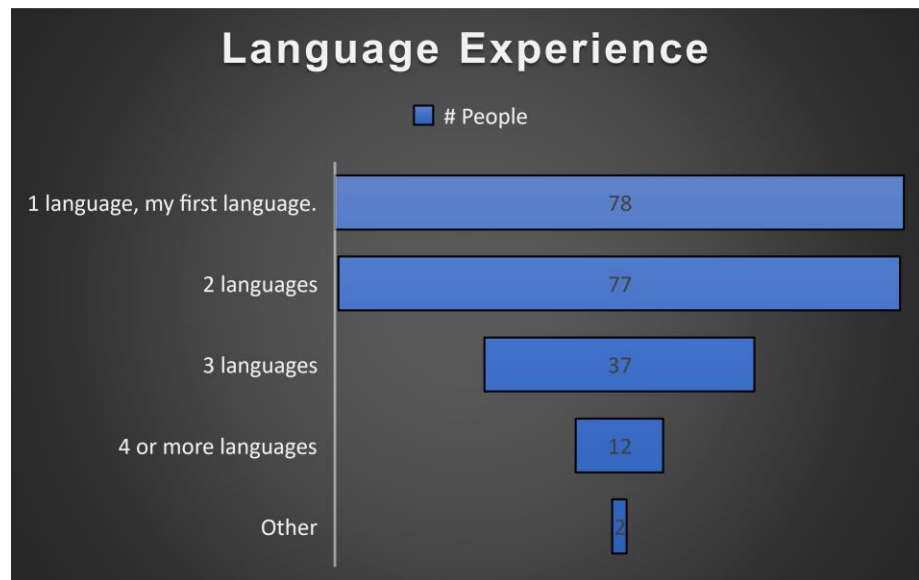


Figure 3.2

admitted, “I sometimes struggle carrying a conversation in my first language,” which demonstrates a humility that seems helpful toward building community. These statistics are illustrated in Figure 3.2.

Living or visiting other countries was another demographic measure sought out to inform the study. The survey prompts asked whether someone had lived in another country for 2 months or longer, such as an education abroad experience to a longer time for whatever reason. Living in another country was distinguished from visiting other countries, which would be shorter time periods. That 3% of the participants fell into an “other” category in this data point had to do with the extensive experiences some had with living in multiple countries and visiting up to 8 or more countries, as details were inserted in their responses, which was marked “Lived/Visited Many – Extensive Experience.” 1% lived in 4 or more countries. 33% lived in 2-3 countries for a longer period. 20% lived in other countries for 2 months or longer. Only 3% of the participants said they had never visited another country. Of those who had visited 1 or 2 other countries, both

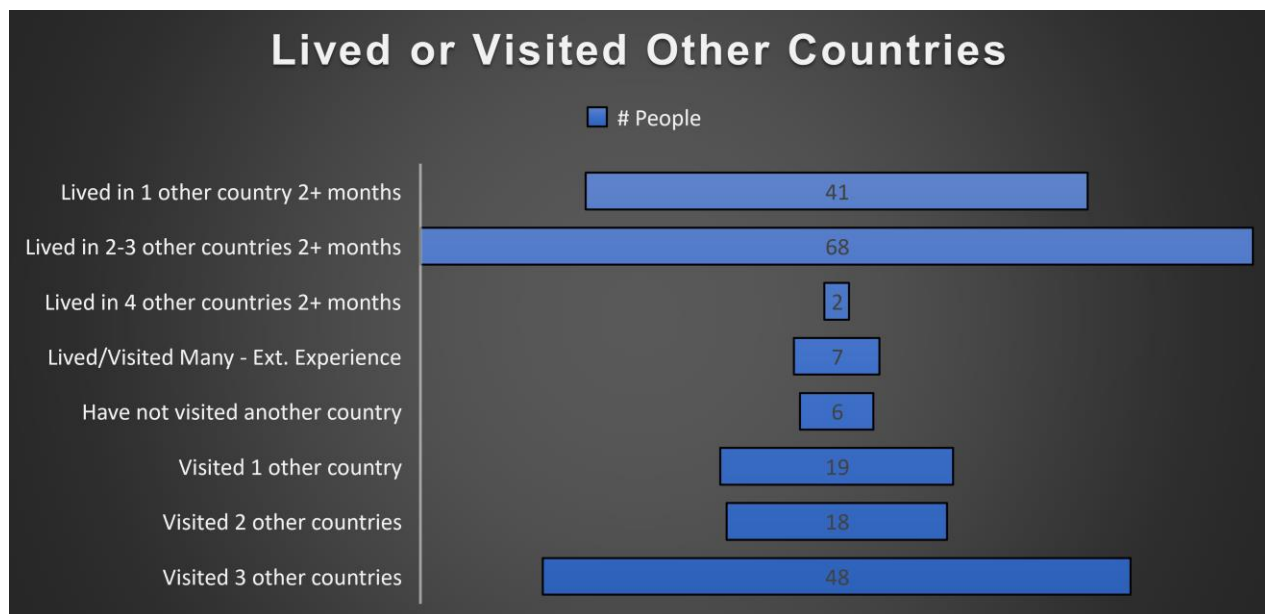


Figure 3.3

were at 9%. 23% indicated they had visited 3 or more countries. These statistics are illustrated in Figure 3.3..

Campus and Community Categories and Descriptions

Since the study is primarily focused on building community as applied to a higher education campus, a larger percentage of participants are from categories of stakeholders related to university and college settings, such as professors, staff, and domestic and international students. Because the anticipated outcomes of the data were to be applied directly on the campus of Millersville

University as explained above, a reasonably significant proportion of those participants have direct connection to our campus. Beyond this, it was equally important

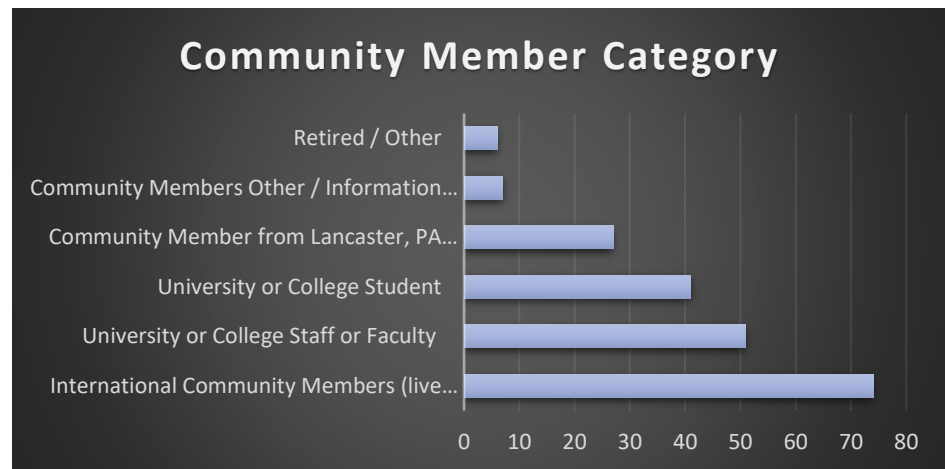


Figure 3.4

to look at the applications to society and community building within society as a whole, including in the United States and abroad, so voices were sought out in a more sweeping look. Distinguishing labels were used for those more local – Community Members from Lancaster, PA (Area)(13%) – those participating from farther away – International Community Members (36%) – and Community Members – Others (Varied Circumstances)(3%). 25% of participants were university staff or faculty members. 20% were university or college students. There were additional participants (3%) who had other circumstances, such as being retired. These statistics

are illustrated in Figure 3.4. The level of formal education experienced by the participants is illustrated in Figure 3.5.

Interest and Engagement Level of Participants

The participants were a great asset to the success of the study. Their level of interest was very high. Throughout the survey's run, the number of people indicating interest in being interviewed after completing the survey was consistently 55% or higher. Participants' depth of reflection and commitment to the questions was also very high. There seemed to be a hopefulness in participants, wishing the study well in the hope for good insight. They grappled with the content and seemed to want the questions answered as much as I did. A few participants were even moved to

tears in processing the implications of relating to others and community. Their engagement level may be due in part to the data collection

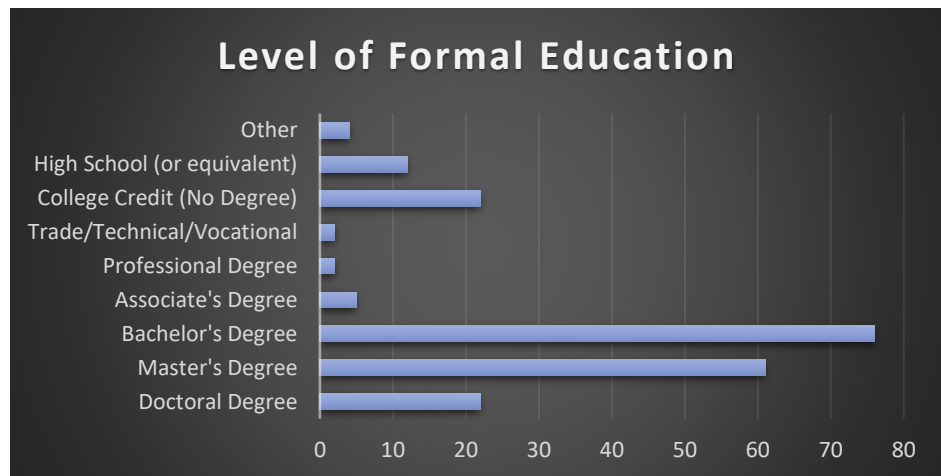


Figure 3.5

occurring during the latter part of 2020, after several months of pandemic effects, a summer of racial tensions, the prevailing sense of “division” in the U.S., and an aggressive and contentious election cycle. Many thanked me for being involved in the study and asked to be kept informed of my conclusions and final output from the study.

Data Collection Methods

There were two primary means of data collection, which were the survey instrument and an interview protocol, both of which are described in detail below. The formal study and data collection occurred on the following timeline:

| October 2020 | November 2020 | December 2020 | January – March 2021 |
|---|--|--|--|
| Data Collection | | | Data Analysis |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IRB Approval • Participant Recruitment • Survey Launched in waves beginning 10/13/2020. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews Began November 6. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews Ended 12/15/2020. • Last Surveys | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey Closed • Data Analysis |

The Survey Instrument

The survey instrument was built in Google Forms. A pilot study was done in the summer of 2020 with over 20 participants, in anticipation of the formal study, including survey and interviews. This test helped inform the final study. The survey instrument was designed to draw data in each of the five themes explored in detail in the literature review in Chapter 2, which are: sense of belonging, identity formation, community, the value of interaction, and building global competency skills. There was a focus on gathering input related to experience and feelings about change, getting out of comfort zones, relating to people who are different, and what helps build and what works against community, places they had felt belonging and why, and exploring empathy. Toward future actions on campus, interest in being part of focus groups and intercultural training activities was asked. There were a mixture of multiple choice questions and open-ended, more reflective questions. Once designed, the questions were randomized to a degree and then broken into segments to make the user experience more navigable. See Appendix A for the full text of the survey.

The consent was built into the Google Form as the landing page. Participants were able to read and give consent in order to enter the survey. At the end of the survey, participants were asked that, if they found the exercise interesting and would like to participate further, they could indicate willingness to be interviewed. Those who assented had one more page with information before the closing thank you message everyone saw, which included the permission to share the survey with others.

Participant Recruitment to Survey and Interviews

After finalizing design, a list of potential participants was created, which was sorted into the categories noted and prioritized into four pools, which I would invite in waves to balance the samplings and having a manageable set of data. The primary invitation methods were direct emails, email and website or other network invitations sent on my behalf by office on the Millersville University campus and the professional networks of other participants, and by invitation on social media and LinkedIn. More detail on recruitment per demographic category is explained above under *Types of Participants and Specific Recruitment Plans*. The invitation information with a PDF of the consent form attached as a reference was sent, as well as the link to the live survey. I monitored the survey after the first wave was launched. It was encouraging to see a mixture of demographics and that 60-70% of the initial wave of respondents said “Yes” to being interviewed. As an example of how the waves were helpful, the third wave was used to seek out more potential participants in demographics that seemed to be missing, such as domestic students on campuses. Four waves were launched by the end of the study. There were over 150 responses to the survey by the end of October and over 200 when I closed the survey portion of the study, which demonstrated the collaboration of others in inviting participation and the snowball effect.

The Interview Instrument

Interview questions were prepared similarly to the survey instrument in that they went deeper on the main themes and topics noted above. The interview questions were more reflective, adding layers of exploration around topics such as inclusion, humility, what good listening involves, and interest and willingness to step out of comfort zones, which drew data related to Learning Zone Theory (Senninger, 2000). There were questions about friendships. There were explorations into the attributes of a friend who could talk one out of comfort zones, which explored the “helper/mentor” aspect of Campbell’s Hero’s Journey model. An example of a deeper layer was a series of questions rehearsing a major transition season and its effect on identity. The impact of Covid-19 on community and as another example of a transition experience globally experienced was explored. This series brought data to analyze with the lens of Transition Theory. This interview design and a protocol to follow with each interview was finalized and can be viewed in Appendix B.

While survey responses were coming in, I began color-coding a master datasheet in Microsoft Excel, assuring a reasonable pool of representation in each demographic category, as well as sorting out those willing to be interviewed. There were more than 100 willing interview participants out of the final 206 responses. Within the pool of willing interviewees, I coded them by priority toward having each category and a range of countries and situations represented. Due to the constraints of time and capacity to finish on schedule, I reluctantly had to defer more than 70 people to a possible later time of additional study. However, their interest in being part was an affirmation.

The rationale for choosing those to invite to interviews again referred back to the guiding rails of the research questions, the themes and hypotheses being explored, and being sure there

was multiple representations in each category. One decision that needed to be made was how much to include people known to the researcher and those not. The value of the former was perhaps a quicker depth of exploration from shared experiences and previously experiencing community together. In the end, it was approximately half known and half unknown people. It was also important to have a mixture of people who had experiences studying languages and living in other countries and some who did not. This was especially important to the study of transitions and exposure cycles. Similarly, I sought to have representation of those who had grown up in a rural setting and those in an urban one. In my related memos, I documented the final goals for the interview pool as including a diverse range of factors:

- age
- categories, e.g. faculty, community member, etc.
- comfort zone approach
- education level
- international living experience
- multiple language learning experiences
- international samples
- multiple countries
- U.S. only samples
- U.S. – varied states and regions
- introvert/extrovert
- length of time in present location
- known/unknown by researcher
- urban/rural/suburban contrast
- worldview (“lifeworld”) differences as expressed in survey, e.g. political or religious beliefs
- Millersville University students, staff, and faculty
- non-Millersville University related participants

The following methods were used for scheduling the interviews. Drawing from the criteria above, I sought out 30 interviews sorting through the waves of survey responses, the

“Yes” to be interviewed answers, and then looking at the next wave of possibilities. For example, of the first 15 invited, 10 scheduled interviews. This meant the other five may eventually, but I would usually move to the next wave toward getting the goal amount on the calendar. These methods were carefully monitored and documented in memos. Of all those who were invited, only a few did not schedule an interview. There were 30 scheduled when I closed off that process. One had to cancel due to contracting Covid-19, leaving a final count of 29 interviews that were conducted. For the convenience of the participants and myself in arranging the interview appointments, I used a scheduling app⁷ which allowed me to block out one-hour windows of time over the six weeks of the data collection phase. This was extremely effective. As participants chose a time, the app would alert me by email. I would then confirm the appointment back to the participant with the Zoom link. Every participant showed up at the day and time designated. Only one participant was a few minutes late but came on immediately upon being contacted. The pace of interviews varied from one every few days to up to three in a day, depending on the week.

The actual interviews were a highlight of the entire process. The interviews were very much in a hermeneutical style, that is conversational, geared to “sense-making and interpreting experiential meanings (www.phenomenologyonline.com, 2021);” as noted, the participants were very engaged and “collaborative” in helping grapple with hard questions about getting along and building community and stepping out of our comfort zones to engage with others not like us. The interviews were conducted via Zoom meetings. They began with introductions and a level of chatting to warm-up. I would then switch to the opening instructions, reminding participants they had done the consent, could choose not to answer any question, and could stop at any time. I

⁷ [Meetingbird](#) was the app used, which has now been replaced by [Front](#) Scheduling.

finished by explaining the helpfulness of recording the interviews for private use by me in doing transcription and analysis, asking their consent, which everyone gave. Seeking to be a good host and put people at ease, I would share that most people are enjoying the process, based on their feedback during the preceding interviews.

The 29 conversations with interview participants contributed a lot to answering the primary research question about the impact of conversation, both by their insightful contributions, and by acting out the premise of the query. That they had lived stories different than my own, in the U.S. and in other countries, and that they were speaking from diverse situations. I was the student of their reflections. As van Manen (2016) said, “When someone has related a valuable experience to me then I have indeed gained something, even though the ‘thing’ gained is not a quantifiable entity” (p. 53). From the very first interview onward, it was very clear that voices of the participants were going to take the study much further and help me in analyzing the topic and going deeper in my own thoughts and observations. It was also clear that the survey and the interviews had the effect of interventions that could be researched, as participants gave examples of how they were thinking differently, monitoring their own listening habits, and being mindful of the comfort zones they may or may not step out of. Van Manen (2016) notes the parallel experienced by the researcher in the study, “Although there is no compelling reason for structuring a phenomenological study in any particular way, it may be helpful to organize one's writing in a manner related to the fundamental structure of the phenomenon itself” (p. 168).

In answer to the research questions, by spending 45 minutes to an hour with most and up to 2-3 hours with a few participants more interested in talking about the topics, I had the lived experience of hearing viewpoints and experiences very different from my own as the primary

researcher. Yet, by listening to their stories and thoughts, taking the time, and not interrupting or injecting my own take on whatever topic, we experienced something together that is very different from an encounter where two people lead with their differences and by that, may not get past the door. My prevailing takeaway was that even though I heard areas where we had different perspectives, as would be expected, I had a feeling of kinship with everyone and would be happy to carry on other conversations. The feedback at the end of interviews indicated participants felt similarly. For those who were not known to me, especially in my work context where the action research would be applied more directly, I sensed the beginning of an ongoing connection of friendship and collaboration to keep working out answers to these important questions about building community.

Data Coding, Analysis, and Reliability

Having over 200 participants was very informative to the study, yielding extensive data from both survey and interview instruments. The survey gave helpful quantitative data to triangulate with the qualitative material generated in open-ended questions on the survey and the reflective ones from the interview. Live field notes were taken with initial in vivo coding during each interview. A discipline maintained through the study design, data collection, and analysis phases was to keep research memos, which for the most part were done within 24 hours of completing an interview and at regular intervals as decision were being made and to document emerging learning. The memo format was structured in a way to allow freeform writing, but also to keep the research questions prominent, emerging learning elicited captured, and to make any procedural notes of what worked well and what next steps will be. At the time of dissertation, the memo document had 225 pages of materials. An accompanying activity done to faithfully explore and document the learning was a separate freewriting journal used to write in a less

structured manner, processing emerging learning, and making connections, which ended up being 350 pages of material.

Van Manen (2016) said, “Human science research writing is an original activity. There is no systematic argument, no sequence of propositions that we must follow in order to arrive at a conclusion, a generalization, or a true statement, because that would be just see writing itself as technical method” (p. 173). One of the most “original” and productive means of analyzing data was the handwritten visual research journals kept throughout the study. The doodles, drawings, charts, and figures developed in this manner were a very effective means of identifying emerging themes and new knowledge. Connections were made and the material placed into more easily grasped concepts. I was able to “develop a conversational relation with a certain notion that has captured ...interest” (van Manen, 2006, p. 75) and be relational with the data that led to deeper, meaningful outputs. Bauman (2001) challenged academia on this topic in a way that was affirmative to this approach taken, noting that those in academia, including himself, can easily make “judgments of the worth of cultures that they have not intensively studied...It is, however, we the occupants of academic offices who are entitled to call a finding a finding” (p. 137). One process that became particularly helpful in my visual research journal was writing a code or key theme in the center of the page and then doing webs and notes outward from there to connect and explore the material. A sample of this process is available in Appendix C.

Each individual interview was transcribed in full, with a second layer of in vivo coding in line with utterances. These were then combined into one central document with all responses placed together beneath each interview prompt. The initial transcription was over 600 pages. After the removal of unnecessary line spaces and closing up some of the margins, the final document was 366 pages. With each review of interview materials, I watched for key quotes that

supported points and themes emerging, as well as any other data to analyze further. In each layer toward final transcription, I did additional coding, labeling, and theme assignment, and wrote findings and connections in a column to the right of the data. Whenever something was not clear or there was perhaps a transcription error, I would replay the video and correct it. Memos, freewriting, and visual research journal analysis was done from this material. The larger interview transcript document was helpful for doing counts of frequently used words or phrases, such as “other person’s shoes,” which was often used in speaking of empathy. Other key quotes supporting of findings and additional in vivo coding were marked in these subsequent reviews. Additional memo notes, journal entries, and drawings in the visual research journal were made in process during transcription, analysis, and coding. The practice of the researcher was to always have the memo, journal, and visual journal documents materials open nearby to capture new insights or connections, pausing during analysis to capture new ideas or mark them down for later reflection.

Toward finalization of codes and formalizing findings, the entirety of the interviews and open-ended survey question responses were separated into individual utterances in an Excel spreadsheet, creating over 2000 lines of data which was reviewed again, analyzed, and coded according to the revised codebook. Codes were continuously being refined and absorbed into like themes, such as “listening” into “communication.” Some codes were eliminated due to redundancy or toward clarity. If a code was only used once or twice, it was reexamined toward usefulness or fit with another assigned code, such as not needing both “narrow” and “closed,” in how participants sometimes described dispositions, both of which were meant to represent the same concept. Another example of this was eliminating “hostility” and “bullying,” letting those be covered under “conflict.” These changes were documented in memos as the study progressed.

The final codebook had 96 codes, with 13 categories as listed below in Table 3.6, placed within the five themes explained fully in Chapter 2, which are: sense of belonging, identify formation, community, the value of interaction, and building global competency skills. The codebook showing the interrelation of categories and themes is available in Appendix C

Words Are Not Enough

An extensive amount of writing was done in analysis of this data. As van Manen (2016) emphasized, “The notion underlying this approach is that interpretive phenomenological research and theorizing cannot be separated from the textual practice of writing” (p. ix). Memo writing was official documentation of decisions, data, trends, and so on. Freewriting in journal was to let the thoughts run and process and to work out ideas. Most often, a new view

| Category | Count |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| Community | 18 |
| Choices and Actions | 13 |
| Disposition | 12 |
| Outcomes | 10 |
| Lifeworld | 8 |
| Feeling | 7 |
| Transition | 7 |
| Demographic | 5 |
| Interchange | 4 |
| Relating | 3 |
| Challenges | 2 |
| Growth | 2 |
| Research Study (Itself) | 6 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>96</i> |

Table 3.6

or connection arose from this practice, as something surfaced that was not imagined or intended going in. The visual research journals were less prescribed and less linear, but typically helped connect dots or make connections between the themes or codes. Recurring ideas and themes were cross-referenced toward the end product, such as “hierarchical thinking” to describe any of the ranking or competitive ways a person may put their cultural practice above another’s. Van Manen said, “Hermeneutic phenomenological method does not offer a procedural system, rather its method requires an ability to be reflective, insightful, sensitive to language, and constantly open to experience” in order to find “the textuality of meaning” and, “The power of story to shape personal and collective history.” He often pointed out that words and language are

inadequate for capturing the lived experience (pp. xi-xii). These principles provided a foundation for how the study was done. The meaning and learning that emerged from these practices as described here are well beyond the scope of what can be contained in a dissertation.

The Role and Positionality of the Researcher

We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.

T.S. Eliot

In the opening vignette of this document, the scene of an international student arriving at a foreign airport in a new country is told. In that are elements of my own story, arriving in other countries in which I was to live for several months at a time to several years. There are also elements of all people's journeys. Each human being has occasions of moving into new seasons or situations or having those situations or seasons move in on them. In my own educational journey that has surfaced in reflection through this research, there were countless experiences that come to mind. I think back to my first day in kindergarten, having left the woods and vacant lots of my childhood, wondering what to expect within the cinderblock walls of this new space. When they passed out the crayons and had none for me, that did not feel right. Was that a signal that I was in the wrong place? They moved me over to the correct classroom but not without leaving a trace on my being. That 5th grade redistribution of students based on non-academic measures had me feeling misassigned. The standardized testing of high school communicated "you're not college material." I appreciated the teacher who after talking to me about not paying attention, realized I was actually listen very carefully even though I was drawing pictures in the margins of my assignments. After that, she would make appreciative comments on the doodles.

That can be the challenge of any context meant to serve the masses, or any community for that matter. There is a pressure to conform, the cost of which can be some loss of individuality and uniqueness. Bauman (2001) said:

...it looks as if we will never stop dreaming of a community, but neither will we ever find in any self-proclaimed community the pleasures we savoured in our dreams. The argument between security and freedom, and so the argument between community and individuality, is unlikely ever to be resolved and so likely to go for a long time to come....Being human can neither fulfil the hope nor cease hoping. (p. 5)

There is a basic human need for belonging that is present for human beings (McLeod, 2020), which can easily make the artist yield or the musician go silent. This need is perhaps felt more keenly when in a context that is new or different. In the manner the student wonders if they will make it through passport control, or how they will do on this new campus where the social and cultural and academic structures are different (Ecochard, 2017), any of us wonder if we will find acceptance in a situation new or otherwise (Goodman, et al., 2006, p. 136.)

In that explanation and the nature and design of this study is an autoethnographical element from the researcher's own lived experiences. When moving back to the U.S. several years ago, I began focusing more attention on the constant reality of transitions and how those phases have had a profound effect on our growth and even life trajectory. As is common during that in-between state, I wanted to rush the "messy middle" (Feiler, 2020, p. 128) and just get on to the next thing. It can be hard letting go of the trapeze bar we are holding when the other bar is not yet in sight. However, the prevailing message of that chapter in life was, "You are going to learn much more in this unknown time than if you knew the answers to what is next." This proved to be true, and life made much more sense from having not rushed the neutral zone. It

would seem uncommon for anyone to sign up for classes in building resiliency skills, adaptability, or increasing your ambiguity tolerance, but as far as life skills go, those develop from such times and are extremely applicable the times in which we live.

Reflecting on the person I was as a child in that kindergarten class, compared to who I am now, as these experiences and movements have taken effect and left “their traces on my being” (van Manen, 2016, pp. 101-105.), I am no longer the boy who grew up in the Midwest, or the person who lived in several regions of the U.S. Neither am I the person who lived in Africa and Europe a decade ago. For that matter, I hope I am not the same person I was three years ago! A prevailing statement throughout my research journals has been, “The person I’m becoming is...” intimating that we are continuously on a journey of growth and transformation, or at least we can be. We have a choice of whether or not to move. We have a choice of whether or not to grow. We can also seek to remain the same, such as described by the two types of characters in literature, static or dynamic characters. My disposition is toward the latter, to be an *intentional traveler* rather than an *accidental tourist*. In Chapter 5’s discussion, this growth journey is elaborated on by remembering that the people we meet in any given moment are also on some type of journey of their own. We are only seeing a snapshot, a millisecond of their overall journey.

Contextually, from having live in other countries, being the parent to Third Culture Kids, having kids living on other continents now and in the past, and from working in teaching and advising roles for international students living together in community in Africa, Germany, and the U.S., the significance of considering identity formation amidst change and transition was recognized. Thy cycles of asking, “Who am I in this context?” resonates in each new situation. Similarly, being a member of an internationally diverse team working together toward a common

purpose, there was much learning that took place in recognizing other lifeworlds and ways of doing things. These types of exposure cycles we can learn from seem very applicable for all of us as the world shrinks and our contexts diversify. There is value inherent in learning to relate to those culturally disparate from us. There is much to learn about our own systems, cultures, and selves when we can take advantage of the viewpoint of others (Hall, 1983, p. 8). As to the existential questions, Sartre said, “I *see* myself because *somebody* sees me” (van Manen, 2016, p. 25). A similar message comes from the African concept of ubuntu, which is common in “almost every African language, as in the proverb, “A person is a person through other persons” (Ngomane, M., 2019, Kindle location 44). The mirror image that contrast and interaction provides brings clarity.

The power of these transitional segments of all lives and the effect of movement into unknown spaces have greatly affected how I think about learning. It is part of my answer to the question, “What does education mean?” These connections were made through this doctoral program of study where these types of questions were pondered. From moving across borders into new spaces I have seen the most profound impact in my learning, an increased awareness of the lives and situations of others, and an appreciation for the wisdom and diversity dispersed throughout all humanity in every corner of the globe. Similar to my own journey, all educators, the people they teach, and everyone who knows them will need to work with the inevitability of anticipated and unanticipated transitions, event and non-event transitions (Goodman, et al., 2006, pp. 34-39), and sleeper transitions (Schlossberg, 2008, p. 33). For my part, I have stepped out of my comfort zones and into new spaces so often, whether geographically, professionally, or ideologically, that the absence of change or movement feels like “stagnation,” as a few participants in this study described their own embracing of change. One person who has

similarly lived a very transient life captured the dissonance he felt, saying, “it's like running in a different gear,” having to be still in this season of lockdown due to Covid-19.

Emerging learning for the researcher in this study has been how feeling like an outsider is another area of common ground that all human beings may find depending on the circumstances. I remember such experiences growing up in the U.S. As an expatriate, I lived as a minority figure in other cultures. Most times when I was out in public I was noticed. Many times I was shouted at. Some of those encounters were negative and some were positive. One farmer in rural Kenya saw me passing yelled, “Wazungu! Wazungu!” He put down his farming implement and motioned me over. I went. He invited me into his home, gathered his family, and they served me bread and Chai. This stop and experience had not been my intention or his that day. But beyond the plans I had in my previously less expanded lifeworld, here was the opportunity for human connection and to expand my being. Being hosted in the lifeworld of another, it would have been very inappropriate, lacking in humility, and displaying my ignorance and lack of perspective, to make any judgments about how they lived, their dirt floor, the food being served, or anything else about their lives. Boyle (2017) said, “Judgment creates the distance that moves us away from each other. Judgment keeps us in the competitive game and is always self-aggrandizing. Standing at the margins with the broken reminds us not of our own superiority but of our own brokenness” (p. 54). I could have held tight to the lifeworld I knew, labeling my version of things as “normal” or “right” or “good,” and asserting my right to feel justified in my own views and feel like an expert in the moment. However, my role was more appropriately as a guest and humble learner. There is a richness and perspective that come from all such opportunities. They would likely not have come about otherwise. They certainly were not within my imagined trajectory of experiences or the lifeworld of my younger years.

The irony of cultural adjustment is that you end up doing it in reverse. When coming back into the U.S., I had been greatly affected by living a decade abroad, as I had been by the iterative loops of many of those other life events. I do not want to become unaffected. I do not want to lose the sensitivities that have altered my perspective and lifeworld. There is now an element of figuring out this new culture that once was the only frame of reference I had.

As a focal point for this study design, one of the losses in coming back was missing the relational and communal living experiences we had in those other contexts. The acceptance of difference and doing complementary and collaborative work as part of a diverse team is now not as common as it was. The cultural value of my present context is to put tasks and time ahead of people on a value scale I do not want to adhere to. My journey in this reflects a sampling of what international students face when coming to campuses in the U.S. Hofstede (1997) said, “The emphasis on individualism in the United States is a value that differs from the relationally oriented cultures of most international students” (as cited in Hoekje and Stevens, 2018, p. 90). Juxtaposed with this are the questions being asked in U.S. society around the social issues related to race and the prevailing perception of being divided as a people. The wondering that arises from travels to date at this juncture and is woven into the study design is whether we can we all find the way toward community here? Can we do better at relating even though we are different? Can we be more relational? Can we see that we are stronger in our *We*-story and *Thee*-story than in our *Me*-story (Feiler, 2020)?

Another wondering is whether the movement into new spaces and transformation such as led to transformation in the researcher’s life matches experiences in the lives of others. As a primary researcher, educator, and human being, I have been greatly impacted by movement and change. Getting to the other side of hard things and transitions has been especially impactful, so

the study aimed to examine these effects and outcomes in the lived experiences of participants to see if there is any commonality that is helpful. The additional hope is to see what we might learn from these phases and movements in terms of education and preparation for change, such as on increasingly diversified, internationalized campus in higher education, or more generally the neighborhoods in which we live.

The theme of humility is explored in Chapters 4 and 5, which may be worth contextualizing within this discussion thread. Like with this research, being part of a doctoral program, and with all the movement and resulting transformation alluded to, rather than feeling more educated and like an expert, I now feel so much more aware of the things I do not know. This then may be a helpful paradox of learning, that rather than having our present understanding of a topic allow us to puff up and feel the expert, we would instead become more aware of our own lack of understanding. There is much still to be gleaned from the curriculum of life. Like with a gap in knowledge that calls for more research, we can seek to follow new trails toward more understanding in areas new to our awareness. That is what travelers do.

As co-researchers, the participants in this study, seemed to be asking the same types of questions and feeling that outsider status. An ELL teacher in another country described, “That deep longing and, yeah, and this sense of not belonging ...in being a misfit everywhere, even in your own culture.” This was a helpful signal that others feel like outsiders sometimes and that it may be more common than realized. Another domestic student on campus said, “I’ve never really felt as though I was really part of any community. I guess I’ve always felt a level of separation from whatever organization that I was a part of.” A professor with extensive travel experience said he was “still searching for his tribe,” which we had an interesting conversation about. It is helpful to frame my own positionality in the context of the participant voices. That they have

similar feelings and hopes perhaps contributed to the level of connection and depth of the conversations. A few times, participants were moved to tears as they reflected, which seemed to signal that others may long for what seems to be missing right now in the same way I do.

Another professor mentioned that the study focus was at a fundamental need area that we seemed not to be meeting as a people right now, adding, “I love your topic!” This quixotic quest seems to have others interested in fighting windmills too. The beginning of a community built around these common goals seemed to find root during the study in way which I hope can continue on the campus. The ideal of what community can be was examined by others outside of this study. For example, Bauman (2001) called it a type of “paradise lost” (p. 3). Of course, there is an idealism pervading the journey of this study and writing, but as the participants seemed to feel, I stated, and John Lennon sang in his anthem *Imagine*, “I’m not the only one” (Solt, et al., 1988).

Khazan (2020) described “hardiness” as the “commitment to seeing life as meaningful and interesting; a belief that you can influence events; and a tendency to view even negative events as an opportunity to grow” (p. 210). This resonates with what the transitions and changes navigated have shown me. As a teacher planning a lesson or with a project like this one, my priority is to have people engage, find it meaningful, and to change the world – no pressure! When I asked one professor the question about the before and after effects of Covid-19 and 2020, mentioning after my hope that we will not lose the lessons, the gained perspective, and the realigned priorities that seem possible right now, he said of my outlook, “I think that's a very optimistic perspective....Personally ...as a nation, I don't think Americans have much long term memory.” Another participant pointed out I must have a positive view of community based on how the questions were asked. Both of these observations were helpful checks for me to monitor my neutrality and objectivity as much as possible. Participants also observed a level of care in

their experience being part of the study. It was typical for me to mention “world peace” as the ultimate goal of the study, which people had fun with. One participant’s comment helped me see how I may have inadvertently tipped my hand to my positionality. He said, “...world peace...(Laughs) Well, I think that your personal investment in (this) sort of ...project...It definitely comes through and I think it makes it meaningful as a participant...”

Each human being will have a disposition and approach that affects how they ride the waves of these normal life changes and internal transitions. This will affect how much we yield or cling, how much we explore over the next hill or how much we stay put, fine with or even protecting the status quo. The thickness and thinness of our zones will vary by the timing and context (Senninger, 2000). That seems to be the journey of learning. The travelers who want to be a heroes in their own stories will likely recognize these shifts and pivots we are making constantly and to take full advantage of them. The agency we may find in our own lives can help us be the affected, dynamic characters we strive to be.

These experiences, outlooks, and philosophies described above are clearly woven into the study design as part of this researcher’s positionality. The theoretical models align with these threads and have animated the study with energy that has been rewarding. The outcome hoped for from this study was to provide a rationale for why this matters, to develop a fledgling travel guide of a sort for those who are interested, and to have expanded my own understanding on the topic. Other applications for the study would be to funnel into community building and intercultural skill building activities on campus, once activities can be in person again or by whatever modalities are possible. This emerging learning can be applied to programs and services for international students, intercultural engagement toward internationalization, and structuring effective orientation and first-year activities to help students in these types of

transitions. Like with the life journey alluded to thus far, the learning that came from this study on a personal level was beyond what I could have been imagined.

My official role in the study was as primary researcher and interviewer but I mostly felt like an engaged listener and a student living the research. My role was also to act as a catalyst to garner interest and encourage participation. Next it was to be a good host to participants in communications, the survey, and in the interviews. The carefully planned scripts and protocols kept those processes uniform and as objective as possible, but also allowed room for the type of creativity, humor, and profound words that came from participant voices.

Ethical Assurances

In order to protect the anonymity of the participants and the integrity of the study, the following measures were taken. All documents related to the study were stored in a password protected folder on any computer or cloud drive in use. All paper documents and artifacts were kept in a locked file at my home rather than my university setting. Anonymity was protected by using the unique time stamp of each survey to denote participants in my processing notes. No names of participants were used in this writing. Every effort was made to generalize their descriptors such that they would not be recognized. In securing permissions during invitation and throughout the study, it was made clear that participants may remove themselves from the study at any point. The interview protocol reminded them they could opt out of any questions or the entire interview at any point.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation that may well be the shadow side of a strength of the study is that by the primary researcher having lived as an expatriate for a decade and being part of international teams and communities as explained under positionality above, my personal and professional

network is largely populated by like-minded travelers. As invitations brought participants who enjoyed traveling geopolitically and being exposed to other cultures, I continuously asked others to share the invitation and otherwise sought out other samples to have a diverse range. Similarly, many of the faculty and staff who took an interest in the survey and being interviewed had traveled to other countries, led study abroad trips, or had a propensity toward intercultural learning. The international students involved were living the research. In this sense, it felt like I was “preaching to the choir,” in that they were speaking of the gains and perspective. Every effort was made to have a reasonable sampling of each category. However, it would be interesting to research in future iterations of the study how responses might vary between those who lived in one areas for longer or shorter periods and those who grew up in rural, suburban, or urban settings in a larger and more anonymous sample.

Related to the setting for the study, Millersville University is smaller than many universities with a student population just over 7,500. In one sense, the dynamics of building community may be different in this smaller setting than on a larger campus. The international students population is small in number, only 1%. Though the intermingled, global input into these conversations seems ripe with meaning and richness, the student, professor, and staff input was mostly limited to the student feedback from a single campus, plus some voices from another campus in Ohio, and then from the local and international community.

The data collection was limited to one semester. Similarly, the pandemic dramatically altered the possibilities and parameters of the study in terms of access to people, or bringing focus groups together, as originally planned. At the same time, and in support of the new solutions and creative outlets that are found in moments of change and transition, new insight came from the study that was unexpected and very helpful, especially in relation to group size

and conformity. The implementation of the study, in effect, acted out the answer to the primary research question by having 1:1 conversations across disparities of experience, culture, and lifeworlds. The interviews and survey acted as a type of intervention, as delivered, which is explained in Chapter 4.

Though not the primary focus of this study, elements of how online and in-person communities differ came out in the conversations. As an example, in-person interviews would have been the preference, but the Zoom format allowed for a level of connection and comfort in the participants that was very effective and possibly would not have occurred otherwise. That people were more closed in with lockdown for several months as we had conversations about building community alongside the more difficult events of the past year, may have led to people feeling more ready to make connections or more eager to grapple with finding solutions that may salve some of the division currently felt. Having conversations together seems a pathway that will get us closer to *ubuntu*, that African concept of a world without division, where our strength is more in our collective story (Boyle, 2017, 2019; Ngomane, 2019; Block, 2010, p. 55).

A Trapeze Poem: Without letting go, there is no show.

Dinabandhu Sarley

Chapter 4 – Explanation of findings - I am involved in humankind

No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main...

...any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind.

And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

John Donne (1624)

Intercultural exchange is as old as known human history. Ancient trade routes driving economics also facilitated a cross-pollination of cultures. For example, the city of Axum, which still exists in present-day Ethiopia, was well known to the Greek and Roman worlds. Its port city of Adulis was an inroad to the entire African continent along the Red Sea during trading rivalries between the Empires of Rome and Persia (Anoba, 2019). At its best, higher education institutions (HEIs) have the potential to function similarly, as a marketplace of ideas and a crossroads to sojourners.

Having an open posture allows us to consider that the walls encapsulating our positions may have formed without the benefits of building materials others might have brought. The extant wisdom of humanity is dispersed among all peoples of the earth, every nation and culture, if we are honest in considering it. Being intentional in engaging with those people is to our gain. “Globalization and increasing international interdependence highlight the interconnectedness of nations and the importance of cultural diplomacy and cross-cultural understanding” (Marshall, et al., 2020, p. 138). There is a symbiotic relationship among peoples and cultures. In separation, we breed ignorance. We minimize potential by going it alone. For all to transform and become the best versions of ourselves, we would do well to recognize how Hall (1983) describes “human beings...locked together in a dance which almost totally function(s) outside their awareness” (p. 154). The intention of this study has been in an effort to pull the curtain back on this larger picture. Willey (2021) is an advocate for bees as the key pollinators on which human life

depends. Human beings would lose 80% of the crops from which they eat regularly without this activity (uaex.edu, 2021). Willey paints murals that help to connect disparate pockets of society and inspire schoolchildren to work “across differences” (www.thegoodofthehive.com/, 2021).

Providing a lens on healing and the part individuals can play, he said:

There's an ancient story that when the world was beginning, it blew up into a gajillion pieces, and basically every human's job is to find their sense of purpose connected with one of those pieces ...and then bring it back to the hive. It's not about fixing the whole thing. No one person has to fix the whole thing. No one person can fix the whole thing. It's our job to connect with that one little piece and bring it back to the collective. And if we all do that, well, it will all be healed. You know I really think it just might be possible that (these problems are) all happening so that humans can experience the beauty and amazement and awe in repairing it.

The problem through the voices of participants

Beyond the general implications of a traveler disposition and building of community, the specific statement of the problem being addressed by this study is creating the type of community on a campus where international students and scholars feel included and a part of things. The campus itself must be ready to receive the students and provide them with a good experience. In the continuum introduced earlier by Ward, et al. (2001), the goal would be moving away from *segregation* toward *integration* (pp. 29-30). In relation to the research questions, the global competency skill building aspect and intentional conversations across cultural differences are important. This Millersville University professor framed the equity factor:

I just think that it's also important that we're intentional when we do bring groups. ...I'm going to focus on higher ed ...when we bring groups from other countries to institutions. We just have to make sure that it's done in ways where they feel part of...that they are fully engaged and included in the community. And it's not just this add-on, because then it can become exploitive because it has to be mutual benefit ...it's not just to benefit Millersville students ...There has to be this reciprocity.

These observations encapsulate the charge to campuses, helping them be accountable as they strive to meet internationalization goals through increasing the enrollment of international students. The broader perspective of how campuses can be a microcosm of the larger societal issues was explained by another participant:

People are moving in from different cultures and if we don't understand them. And if we just have a one track mind with blinders on as to what people are supposed to be, or the way they're supposed to think or have our own preferences about them. We're going to miss so much of the richness of their own cultures and their perspectives on the world.

Logothetis (2019) described “an opportunity for us to connect in ways great and small, to experience the richness of cultures not our own, and thereby, enriching our own journeys, as we travel this road, this ultimate adventure we call life.” An English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher in the U.S. said:

There are definitely values that are important in being able to see other viewpoints and other perspectives and being able to learn about that. The downside to it is, I think, that sometimes the support isn't available one for maybe the students either side of that, I think, you know, whether we're bringing students here or we're sending students to study

abroad. It's an expectation, maybe you know it's a bigger push for students to study abroad but maybe not all the supports are available because it's just like, "Okay, we need to do this," but it hasn't been totally thought out. Or totally recognized.

When asked about globalization and the skills related, multiple participants spoke with recognition of shifts that are happening and the need to be prepared. Putting several of the participants voices together in conversation around globalization, they said, "I think it's inevitable....Even if you're in the same area of the whole life. You're going to be around a lot of people that ...are coming from somewhere else ...Inevitably, they will be either sent to a different company or they will be working with a professional team that ...is represented by people from different cultures."

Within the context of higher education, the participant voices said, "It's a disservice if the university does not prepare its graduates for that kind of work." A domestic student added, "...I say that (for) an academic institution or a government institution or anything along those lines, it's extremely important that internationalization takes place since globalization has, you know, continued to spread." One participant said, "I feel like it's really important to kind of think of yourself as more of a global citizen. The "inevitability" of this type of shift and the "disservice" done to students if we do not prepare them were emphasized several times; it will be discussed further under the questions and data around the importance of building global competency skills. Other voices said, "So I think accepting that things have to change in it. It can be bring better outcomes....internationalization is ...is going to happen."

Beyond the person to person aspects of relating interculturally, as will be touched on below, there will be a brief look through the lens of how online versions can help us understand more about what community is and how it is best built. A participant concluded, "Well, I think

it's inevitable. The more technology comes into the world and breaks down borders and barriers and opens up lines of communication all around the world.” Bauman (2001) said:

...by the advent of informatics: the emancipation of the flow of information from the transport of bodies. Once information could travel independently of its carriers, and with a speed far beyond the capacity of even the most advance means of transportation...the boundary between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ could no longer be drawn, let alone sustained.
(pp. 13-14)

As when the automobile became more a part of life, shifts in how we relate and think of community seem upon us in the seismic shifts in technology (Bauman, 2001, pp. 26-29; Wilson, 2020). Though a great way to understand things more fully and uniquely is through conversation and listening to other people, removing people from the equation in how we think of getting information, as Bauman describes, makes it easier to treat human beings as mere surfaces to swipe. Recalling Social Identity Theory, the lines between who is “us” and who is “them”, as humans tend to view those who are different, will seemingly be more blurred.

Building the awareness and skills to navigate these shifts as the world is in this transition will be key on campuses and in society. As the professor noted above, we must not only invite international students to our campuses, but we must also all be ready to think differently and be able to host, serve, and teach in ways that fit with how the world is changing. The job of campus personnel is not only help students adjust to being at the institution. It is a matter of everyone adjusting, a theme emphasized throughout this writing. The benefits and the learning can travel in both directions between international students and scholars on campus and the students, faculty, and staff of the school.

Isolating ourselves – islands and archipelagos

When this type of reciprocity is missing, the human tendency is for people to gather along homogenous clusters. Being with those like us comes naturally. As change sweeps across our lives and impacts us, especially when not deliberately chosen, it can destabilize and disrupt the feeling of safety people may have had in the previous conditions or context. Khazan (2020) pointed out that when self-esteem is threatened, people seek sameness (p. 51). These factors complicate the dynamics involved with relating across boundaries of difference and building community. “Because of this tendency for people to cluster with others like them, it is more difficult to find acceptance and friendship in an environment where you’re the different one. No one, unfortunately, sees themselves in you” (Khazan, 2020, p. 42). The international student’s journey onto a U.S. campus has to learn how to navigate the outsider status in this way.

This type of clustering happens in high schools, which may evoke memories in anyone who thinks back on that season of life and how athletes, academically focused students, musicians, artists, and other groups had different experiences in the same setting. This domestic university student had done an exchange program in high school and later study abroad while in college. She said:

... I went to a big high school, there were 500 kids in my class and everyone was cliquey because they ...they were, I don't know, just with sports and everything like that. But then it was interesting, when I went to Belgium and I was in a class with, you know, less than 50 kids and they were also close with each other. Even though. Yeah, they had their best friends and things like that. I mean, ...they grew up together from elementary school to high school, but they weren't cliquey. They were all ...they all knew each other, they all interacted together

Depending on their identifiers, they had different amounts of social capital to spend in the economy of secondary school life.

Though it is more pleasant to think we leave those social groups behind when leaving high school and adult life does not work that way, the reality seems to be different. People find their affinity groups around their belief systems or gather naturally around hobbies and interests. For example, this campus employee described how an immediate family member derided him for remaining friends with someone based on his political views. He explained:

(the person) said, "I don't understand how you'd be friends with this person, because they're going to vote for Trump. Trump's racist and therefore, you know, they're supporting companies racism ...therefore you're associated with somebody," and I say, "(person's name)," I said, "just so you understand. I don't do, you know, like a litmus test on people."

Though many questions and the focus was around higher education, participants consistently went to the bigger picture of society. On several occasions, study participants alluded to reflection and monitoring of their thoughts and actions in relation to the survey. This professor from one of the social science areas said:

I still think we're such a segregated society...I think we tend to be more integrated maybe within our workplace ...but we don't necessarily carry those relationships outside of the workplace. So it really had me think about that, that still within our immediate, whether it's our family, our peers, our close friends...and even our neighborhoods. It's so segregated. So that's kind of like what was going through my head ...as I was completing the form or the survey.

Another person reflected honestly the pull they feel between being accepting and talking to those who are different and choosing to separate from them because their ideology and belief systems are out of alignment:

There are people that I have wanted to entirely disassociate from because of their racial comments or their political comment that, in a different environment, they wouldn't have made and I wouldn't have known and... Is that the right way to be or the wrong way to be?

Knowing what seemed the high road to take in how we relate to each other but not necessarily succeeding at taking that route was a common scenario in the voices of the participants. They grappled with these questions, such as our listening habits or believing it important to branch out into more diversity with social relationships without it really happening. This person on campus gave a very honest reflection:

I don't know if I've done as good a job of getting past maybe some of those lower level barriers of like meeting people because my friends are very homogenous and I probably had opportunities to meet, you know, more diverse people and I haven't necessarily established any long term friendships with those people, even if I have met people. And...you know, if it didn't happen right away. I don't know if I needed to, like, you know, push a little harder because you need to get past maybe the ...if there's a language barrier to get to know someone...So yeah, I don't know if I have tried hard enough if I'm honest with you.

The sentiment and struggle shared by this person was echoed in several other voices in the study around questions of how much they have moved out of their comfort zones and sought out relationships with those culturally disparate from themselves, as queried in the survey.

The macro level issues in society or on a campus can be as difficult as the individual relations on a personal micro level. The dynamics in play seem to be very much related, such as this isolating effect. Similarly, because of the adapted format of the study and the 1:1 conversations, there was new learning about the micro level factors of how individuals related or did not relate to each other, which seems to have a grassroots impact on what could happen at the macro level. Putnam, et al. (2003) said, “Building social capital is neither all-or-nothing nor once-and-for-all. It is incremental and cumulative...The path to success through connective strategies can be long”, so it is important to celebrate the “small victories” (p. 287). Each step that a campus takes that keeps them moving toward the goal is helpful. There are many worthwhile pursuits that, in reality, are destinations that may never be reached, such as social justice, complete inclusion and equity, world peace, and internationalization. Still, they are journeys worth taking. Perhaps on campus and in society, we can find a middle space such as created in the coffee houses in London at the close of the 19th century or revived in the 1990s, where all variety of people from whichever societal strand or status can gather. In that commons, they talked to not only understand each other better but to spur a collaborative expanse of innovation that was not possible otherwise. Wilson (2020) described London of that time, saying, “all the neighbourhood swarm [to coffee houses] like bees, and buzz like them too” (Kindle book, Location 3,584). There is an “Alchemy of Belonging” and possibility that arises when in such conditions (Block, 2010, p. 87; Wilson, 2020, Kindle book, Location: 3,513).

The same challenges seem to be part of life in higher education, and seemingly throughout society. A university staff person observed how even when the student body is less homogeneous, the effect can be the same. She said, “I mean, even if in more diverse environments... I read, ...like *Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria* (Tatum, 2017) ...so even if people sort of self-segregate a little bit.” Another participant who has been able to work in higher education institutions in several regions of the U.S. saw the dynamics playing out on college campuses in this way:

But you know, (as) I think about the student body as a whole, I mean, ...I don't see a whole lot of groups just actively welcoming the international students, you know... You might see more ...some of the things the little things that are happening here and there, but yeah, I still see ...on campus ...more the international students sticking with their group. Yeah, and the others sticking with their group... So what are ways that we can not force, but kind of see more and more of the flow or interaction between the two, yeah, (as) more of a common thing.

The comment above shows how both domestic and international students tend to fall into their clusters of similarity, which demonstrates the point of everyone needing to make adjustments and increase their awareness and skills to help the campus community move toward an inclusive and welcoming context for all students across cultural disparities. Faculty and staff have an important role to play as they ride the wave of the transitions happening around them. Another participant voice on a campus observed:

...we're working with students who need (our services), so I see professors in a different light than other faculty members. You know the staff sees them from a different perspective. And it is a definite contradiction because you would think academia would

be about community growth and learning, but there is the aspect of academia that is about territorialism and that competition ...and it shouldn't be. And as you asked that question. I thought, I wonder if that's what it's like in, you know, European universities or British universities. Is that an American thing? I don't know.

As they are making their own adjustments, the faculty and staff also have the power of presence and example in modeling the ideal of what higher education can be, that is a place where very different viewpoints and types of people can learn together.

The writing of Mary Bateson (1989) has been a helpful voice since early in this study. It may be helpful to note that she was the daughter of famed anthropologist Margaret Mead. She said, "I grew up a beneficiary of openness to alternatives of belief and custom" (p. 58). A professor who grew up in what he described as a very rural, small town, reflecting on the new spaces he has moved through since living there, said:

Well, I think some of it is many, many people have a myopic perspective. Because we, you know, stereotyping. We are not a transient people. A lot of people are born in a small town and they stay in a small town and they never leave their county, and that's the only world that they know. So when you get outside of that you start to see that the world is bigger than you thought it was and that there's more types of people out there and your perspective might not be the only perspective.

He specifically pointed out the lack of movement and exposure that is forming their frame of reference in which their lifeworld is constructed. Another participant who now works teaching ESL to international students from all over the world at her institution in the U.S. spoke of similar dynamics in her own childhood:

...I grew up (in a) very small town. Yes, we had (a) university so that saw a little more of the internationalization but, you know, if you look more specifically at my town. (There was) very limited diversity, very little understanding of the importance of it and other cultures. And so what I would ...what the media shows ...isn't always a great picture, right, so reality is that media doesn't always portray (an objective) viewpoint on things (such as) the politics behind ...immigration... (In Lancaster, PA) the support for refugee resettlement and immigration ...is better, right ...just look at the population of the different programs that we have in Lancaster, it's a much larger support. That wouldn't happen where I grew up. You know, it's just not understood. So I think there were still plenty of areas that need more recognition ...of what the value is what the benefits are.

As she mentioned, her small town is a university town but still had challenges in expanding the line of sight beyond the nearby horizon.

One White domestic student realized a person's "point of view" can matter much as she thought of diversity in her high school. "We had some Mexican students. We had African American students. We had Spanish students. We had all different Asian students...speaking to my other friends of different races and ethnicities. It was interesting to see their points of view on things." She realized that people similar to her thought of the school as diverse, that it was "culturally integrated," but the few students who were culturally disparate there saw the same context as mostly White.

The campus employee who spoke of not having litmus tests for people met with resistance in that situation. His explanation is a very helpful introduction to the later discussion on lifeworlds and their potential negative impact on building community.

I don't know that I'm overly judgmental ...if somebody is saying, hey, I'm closed on whatever the political or religious (point) ...I told you about (a family member talking about Trump). You know, that's her choice if she decides. Hey, I'm only going align and sort of travel in a pod with people (who) think like me on this X, Y, or Z. What I've shared with her, though, is sooner or later you're probably going to find that there can be one thing that could trigger you or them. That's not uncommon. And I said, I think you're missing opportunities when you when you push that things you have to be either to the left or to the right, if that makes sense.

The word “pod” came up in the literature and the voices on occasion and powerfully illustrates the manner in which human beings will set things up around them to remain in their comfort zones. We might observe this in ourselves in how people begin building their “nests” when settling into an airplane, or setting up a hotel room on arrival, or a new office, or a classroom. Of the lessons we can learn from the pandemic, one is that, “As life returns, look beyond your familiar pod. ‘Distrust breeds distrust, but hope isn't lost for finding common ground,’” (Freedman, 2021, as cited in AARP/Lessons, 2021). There seems to be an element of image management and of seeking our own belonging and acceptance wrapped up in our tendency to cluster with the similar and affirm our identity. As professional broadcasters appear on television from their homes during the global pandemic season, image management is evident. There are virtual backgrounds provided by services like Zoom. There are also the carefully configured tableaux behind people broadcasting from their pods. Books, photos, trophies, and awards just happen to be visible in the background.

We can think we want full alignment and for everyone to agree, but we are short-changing ourselves in seeking that, if ever that result were possible. Fuller alignment can be

found in isolated clusters but will never be found completely even in the ones we love the most, such as partners for life. Later discussion on *The gift of dissent* will elaborate on what we lose without the different lenses. Donne (1624) wrote lyrically that no person “is an island,” that every person’s “death diminishes me.” The analogy of us seeing ourselves as isolated islands that do not interact or benefit from an exchange of goods and services as along the ancient trade routes is not as appealing as seeing ourselves as an archipelago, where the separate parts make up a complete whole and all benefit from that configuration.

If education can help students to travel into new territory in the manner described within this research, the exposure cycles and activities of engagement with differences can help them to be ready and more enabled to be part of the solution to the problems stated on campus. A Dutch participant compared where she grew up to her perspective now from having lived in other regions of the Netherlands and in other countries:

I grew up in a really like it's a small town, like that's only when I was a kid, there were only white people. So I think when I was like nine or 10 we had two kids coming from, like, one of the Dutch islands somewhere in the Caribbean. And like those kids are in school. They were Black. That was like...almost like you were in a museum, looking at those people because they were different. Everyone in the whole town was talking about it...it is ridiculous, but it's normal, because it was abnormal in our normal life.

International students can hopefully feel more like active and welcomed citizens of the campus engaged with activities. Ideally, they will choose to integrate while not feeling like they are on display in promotional materials on the campus. As internationalization would become normalized and everyone is moving and learning, international students would not be called on to perform an identity or speak a few words in their language or face “accommodative

dilemmas,” having to politely explain what is not true in cultural stereotypes (Glass, et al., 2015, p. 23; Khazan, 2020, p. 198). These type of conditions can exist in any culture around difference. In the first months we lived in Africa, we were hosted for a few weeks by a Kenyan family in a very rural area. They called us into the house one day because some people had come “...to see the White people.” We sat politely with the group for a time, attempting some conversation, but mostly in quiet. They looked at us, and, indeed, seem to only want to see us. After a short interval, they got up to leave. I gained perspective on my own lifeworld and frame of reference when, as I was shaking each hand as they left, a little boy immediately looked at his hand, rubbing it to see if the white came off.

Clustering with those similar or isolating are common reactions human beings might find in each other’s journeys, if they were to compare notes on aspects of living beyond difference, as this document will repeatedly promote. Learning Zone Theory (Senninger, 2000) reminds us that depending on the person, the timing, and the situational context, each human being will have varying levels of comfort and panic. Finding the middle space between those where learning can take place is the balance educational settings can seek to strike.

2020 provided a different kind of hero’s journey where isolating ourselves and binge-watching Netflix during the global pandemic. This type of retreat from the harshness of life on some days may be appealing to any of us depending on the day. A wondering is if we will move outward and toward others once the pandemic is contained or if another trend accelerated by the pandemic will be less engagement with each other. Khazan (2020) described a human reaction that seems applicable to the international student’s journey:

When you find yourself in constant disagreement with the world, you withdraw into yourself, you re-watch old movies, wear your broken-in pajamas. You move back,

mentally, to a country you fled. When you are the only one of your kind, you just want to find your kind again. (p. 6)

When the language is different or the cultural script and all the cues are unrecognizable and you have decision fatigue from thinking so hard, a little isolation is very appealing. That reflects my experiences in other countries some days. In some moments during my international living experiences, to my own inner voice saying, “live the curriculum....you can learn a lot from this difficulty,” I simply wanted to say, “Oh, be quiet!”

If I never loved I never would have cried
I am a rock
I am an island
I have my books
And my poetry to protect me
I am shielded in my armor
Hiding in my room, safe within my womb
I touch no one and no one touches me
I am a rock
I am an island
And a rock feels no pain
And an island never cries

*Simon and Garfunkel*⁸

Belonging – Who am I in this space and will I be accepted as myself?

A sense of belonging seems an essential part of community, so was examined more in depth in the study, asking participants the types of contexts in which they felt they belonged, and then going a little deeper in that layer, asking them to try to capture in words what about the context helped them to feel they belonged. The data on this is shown below in Tables 4.1 and

⁸ This is an excerpt from the lyrics of the song “I am a Rock,” written by Paul Simon and featured on the album *Sounds of Silence*, produced in 1966 by Bob Johnston and Tom Wilson.

4.2. The importance of this ingredient is perhaps best explained by an international student from Mexico:

Okay, community, at least for me is when you have people, either friends or family, that you feel you belong to. That you feel comfortable with and you feel like you fit in. And it doesn't have to be like "Oh, we're the same culture or whatever." It just feels like safe. Like it just feels like you belong there and you care about them and they care about you. And if you have a problem, you can trust in them. And if they have a problem, you can help them to. So for me, that's kind of a sense of community, like, I belong to these people. Like I feel like it's home.

"Will I be accepted here...as my authentic self?" These types of questions about belonging permeate the coding and notes made throughout this research and will be explored in under the themes of *Belonging* and *Identity* below. The question would seem to resonate with the international student arriving at the airport or on campus, as it might with any of us on a given day. In reflecting on these questions, one campus coworker acknowledged the feeling, "I'm not alone. We all want to be included." Another said, "But it's just how you feel, like I feel like I belong here because they understand me, and they can relate to me."

The Pressure to Conform – You must be like this to fit in here

The pressure to conform to be accepted was emerging as a thread that could be studied in future research. One domestic student talked about how she engages regularly with a friend who has very different views from her and admits that he is surprised they remain friends. She built on the conformity point this way:

I think...as human beings we naturally gravitate towards people who are similar to us because I think there's a natural instinct to want to fit in and be understood...And so you would think that if you conform and you stick around people ...very similar to you that there isn't really a lot of room for diversity or diversity isn't present.

People end up making “self-negating choices” (Cain/TED, 2012), not allowing their authentic selves to risk showing up for fear of not being accepted. Throughout this study and in research journals, I continuously wrote the question, “Who is this space asking me to be?” As we move into a different context or away from the cluster that is more similar to us, what experience will we find there. The professor who worked in the Philippines for two decades said:

If we're really rigid in our own thinking and demand that other people think like us. I think that breaks down community when we see this on social media. Now how everything is dividing. It's because the people who think like what one side says don't like what the other side says it's only now they're just hearing all their own voices. They're not hearing the voices of each other. Various disparate communities and so that's creating a breakdown in community.

The “demand that other people think like us” is a type of pressure to conform that illustrates how much we have to lose in variety of voices, viewpoints, and colors on the palette with which life can be painted and from which innovation can arise. He also alludes to online aspects infiltrating and perhaps confusing what our concept of community is without us realizing. In the past and with different barriers and boundaries in place, such as distance or less transportation options, conflicting points of view would not have found each other as easily. Bauman (2001) had described how information now moves without the need of a human being with “the Web’s astonishing powers of information retrieval” (p. 226). A police officer participating in the study

described the damaging effects of social media, which simulates relating without really involving human beings in an identifiable, accountable way, noting “social media algorithms that ...get stuff that either ...either provokes, and that you know they'll get you to interact with or something that they know you agree with because you've hit like on similar posts like that 100 times before.” We have killed the messengers because they are no longer needed. The messages are everywhere, however. The balancing act that may be required is illustrated in this participant voice, “...people might not be willing to ...share their whole story. ...And that's okay. And so I think we just have to know that. And we don't always have to share everything about ourselves, either.”

This is where I belong feelings

In asking all participants to identify a place they felt belonging, it acknowledges the reality that there have likely been situations in which they did not feel accepted. The intention of that query was to seek data on the former, identifying the type of settings where people felt

| Code | % |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| Family Life | 88% |
| Friends | 61% |
| Church | 57% |
| Workplace Home Country | 47% |
| College / Graduate School | 22% |
| Club/Hobby/Interest | 20% |
| Workplace Abroad | 16% |
| International Community | 12% |
| Sports Activity | |
| Group Activities & Discussion | 8% |
| Married Life | |
| Band/Musical Group | 6% |
| Conference/Festival | |
| English Program | |
| In My Community | |
| Study Abroad Experience | |
| Camp | 4% |
| Home Town/Old Friends | |
| International School | |
| Leadership Role | |
| Orientation Program | |
| Volunteer Work | |
| Alone with God | 2% |
| At A Special Event | |
| Caring People | |
| Clearly Defined Role | |
| Gaming | |
| Home | |
| K-12 School | |
| Men's Group | |
| Military Cohort | |
| Moving Back to Home Country | |
| Only From Self | |
| Political Group | |
| Religious Pilgrimage | |
| Retirement Community | |
| Romantic Relationship | |
| Structured Organizations | |
| Unknown | |
| Virtual Community (Sports) | |
| With Pets | |

Table 4.1 – Where and why belonging felt

most accepted and why. However, the latter reality of feeling excluded or feeling like an outsider has taken on more ominous presence in the study and could be the focus for additional research. The survey and interview data was combined and analyzed around these prompts on where belonging was felt and why. Table 4.1 shows the most consistent types of settings and reasons given.

Family Life

“Family Life” was the highest at 88% and tended to include comments about “home” or “family members” or “siblings.” I kept “Married Life” as a separate category for analysis, but this could easily be added, taking it up to 96%. Different types of people have different types of experiences in their family cultures of origin, so could easily view the concept of “family” differently, in the same way some of us do “community.” Depending on how they were raised, this context can vary dramatically, containing joys and sorrows, blessings and pain, but that it ranked so highly in participant minds seems significant. Additional data on family will be discussed under lifeworld.

Friends

“Friends” was second highest at 61%. Friends become like families for some people. The adage is “friends are the family you choose.” In an expatriate work context, it is very common for adult friends to become like “aunts” and “uncles” to one’s children, and for their children to be like “cousins” to our own. A nurse working abroad talked about the absence of being in her geographical home with her biological family while describing a new friend. “We bonded through the holidays because, I think with her, I just found family.” An ESL teacher in the U.S. gave a similar type of situation:

So that's one group ...of close friends, I would say (that) developed out of travel experiences together abroad, so that pocket of friends from college that we did study abroad trips together and have these amazing experiences, but also went through challenges together during those trips...

Going through challenges together had a bonding element in several participant responses. This participant said, "...it just developed into the closer relationship... But we wouldn't have probably had that if it hadn't been for the initial... So I would say probably because of the crisis is what really started everything."

Among the harder things people face, going through changes together can allow a context in which friendships form. A Dutch man who has lived in various parts of the world and presently works in Africa said:

For my study periods when I, you know, I'm very good friends ...close friends for 30 years almost. ...we started, both at university. So also those friendship developed at a life changing event when I went from high school to college. There's one example. The example I've noticed ...(a) very good Australian friend, which I picked up when I came to (Africa) ...and he was my colleague and still we are very good friends, but also the friendship started and then their life changing experience. Hmm. So I will say that that my closest friends come from those situations. Something new which brought me with new relations. Yeah. But that's a long, long term...friendships.

The intervention effect from the survey and interviews was brought home to me when he emailed me after the interview, offering affirming words and saying, "One final remark. Through your very well set up interview process I've learned more about myself: for example that I

developed my best friendships during transition times.” Being in a new space, far from the more familiar culture, lands, and people we know and going through transition with others provides a powerful ingredient from which community could be built, which is particularly applicable to the international student journey experience. In the setting of Lancaster County, where Millersville University operates, there are multigenerational families with long-standing roots in the area. Their family relations are so extensive that it can be difficult to keep up with biological relationships, let alone look outward toward building new relationships. This is shared alongside the discussion on feeling a sense of belonging, which can serve as a reminder to our context on how important this is to building community on campus. Those who have traveled far and spent important holidays away from home are missing family. Knowing this, campus stakeholders can have more empathy for how they interact with and serve the students.

There was a lot of data on friendships and how they tended to form, the conditions in which friendship grew, and what seemed to be the impetus for the connection. Examples of this are statements like, “we grew up together,” “shared interest...able to bond together over,” and a type of acceptance of self found in this statement, “And we just talked about everything under the sun. And it was kind of nice to just have conversations with somebody else (who) wasn't trying to make me into him. I wasn't trying to do the same.” One person described the “next level of intimacy” that came from the “shared experience” of “going someplace new,” taking “ourselves out of the places where we usually occupied or where we met.” Related to closeness, one participant qualified how friendships do not happen, saying, “I can't share the deeper side of me with them. It's, it's not the same. So, we (just) ended up studying, majoring in the same discipline...we work in the same circles,” but intimating there was not a friendship.

Shared values or being likeminded were themes represented often, such as having similar views on political or social or religious matters. This participant described friendships related to her faith, “Faith is something that's very important to me and kind of structures my values and my morals and just the way ...(I) kind of walk through life. And so those (are) people that are closest to me.” Another person from a higher education context in the U.S. said of her friendships:

...the people that I stay close with are political. I don't want to say political but ...but you know we ...we care about the causes that are important ...for us are important. So, you know, our value system is based in openness and acceptance of all cultures and all beliefs and ...and helping support those types of individuals actually through this last election...

...all of my friends that I'm connected with are non-judgmental ...I mean, they're eclectic, they have different viewpoints, ...they're more humanitarians I guess would be a common theme, but ...but they're also very different. So all of my, my friends aren't similar. And so when we connect. I think we I connect with those people that are non-judgmental, who are more open to you know different viewpoints ...and different belief systems.

In threads of reflection about openness to different viewpoints, there was also the recognition that some ideologies and beliefs identified would not be acceptable in their home or relationships. People also mentioned “loyalty” and sharing the same sense of humor or love for sarcasm as factors that drew them together.

Shared spaces, ideas, and interests

Beyond shared experiences and interests, which were mentioned repeatedly, it was acknowledged that shared spaces of time and location had more impact than perhaps it should. This participant who has lived abroad for a long said, “So community. A lot of times, defines who we are, as well. Sometimes we can find our identity and community in via a group of people that that we identify with that can be our community too.” Another person who works in higher education and has moved into the area where she is presently employed said:

Sadly, proximity, which I've learned is actually a huge factor in relationships. I mean not sadly because they're like, but I mean obviously for them to continue. There had to be other things, but ...I don't remember one of my best friends that I've ...(one of my) oldest friends from junior high, she remembers the circumstances better but apparently, I went up and talk to her because she was the new kid but apparently I did go up and like actually talked to her. And we became friends and then that was, you know, obviously we grew up together...

This observation is especially intriguing in that the differentness of the person was the attraction and that the participant moved toward the new person at the school. Seeking out difference can prove very valuable and lead to our most long-standing and valuable relationships. My own family story would be told much differently if this were not true. Another way to view proximity beyond a fixed space where people are together, such as in a workplace context or a high school class, is to recognize the sojourner scenario. A teacher from Michigan reflected on how some friendships grew just because people “crossed paths,” which is the epitome of how lives intersect for a short time on a campus. The many trails that cross each other on a campus emphasizes the potential the cross-pollination of viewpoints that can help understanding increase.

We just clicked

One final note explored on friendship, is wondering what it means when people just “click” as a couple of participants described. Are there common threads in this that could help guide the larger questions of building community? In answer to follow-up questions on clicking, the participants said things like this:

I think it's just someone that it's easy to get along with. That it's easy to talk to that it's easy to spend time with you don't have to force it. You don't have to put a lot of effort in feeling comfortable, making them feel comfortable, finding something to talk about. It just happens. It's smooth.

Another voice said, “I don't know, I guess, to me it's like you can feel the energy and just know that they're genuine ...genuinely a good person and that you know ...you just feel it.” In grappling with the concept, another person explained what it is not:

...you really want ...like this person. I know a lot about this person, but when I actually meet them, and I know we have a lot in common, but it just doesn't happen. It's just, we're just nice, but nothing really flows.

Having things “flow” and be “smooth” seem to be what we seek the most. Considering the data on how friendships came about, the findings bode well for the potential to engage and build connections with international students. Their pathways are intersecting in shared experiences and challenging times, and in being far from the space they know and their families. New to the space, international students can be looking for new friends. In the host campus setting, if the domestic students, faculty, and staff are not as aware of these conditions conducive to friendship

building or are perhaps well established in their home area with lot of family and friends around, they could easily overlook the felt need of the international students.

This descriptive vignette of how an international student envisioned his U.S. campus experience to what was actually experienced illustrate the impact of building integrated community.

It wasn't supposed to be like this. Prior to leaving his home city of Chengdu, China, Jianyu had imagined a very different US college experience. He saw himself surrounded by American friends, playing his favorite sport, table tennis, or good-naturedly daring them to name an NBA star player better than Yao Ming or Jeremy Lin as they got together for a snack after studying...He envisioned having American classmates as study partners for the big exams...(however) six months into his US university studies Jianyu didn't know a single American he could call a "friend." At residence hall parties everyone spoke so fast, using idioms and telling jokes he couldn't understand – and what discussions he could follow seemed to revolve around football or Game of Thrones, both of which left him mystified and shut out of the conversation (Hoekje & Stevens, 2018, p. 104).

When the awareness is lacking and the opportunities missed, situations like this unfortunately become too common. The need for building of global competency and understanding and increasing intercultural engagement tools is all the more evident. 22% of the participants noted that during college or graduate school was when they made their more lifelong friends, as was also suggested in several of the data portions above. "International community" (12%), "English program" (6%), and "Study Abroad Experience" (6%) are also campus related components where belonging can be felt, as voiced by over 200 survey participants.

At church and in church-related activities

57% of the participants said they felt the most belonging in church or at church-related activities. Examples of survey responses coded as *Church* are found in these participant responses, “I feel (the) truest belong(ing) at my church. It’s like a family to me.” Another participant said:

I serve as an ESL tutor with the (church name) Community Center (sic)... We represent many Latin countries as well as the Anglo community. I also help with the biweekly Food Bank at the Center. As a participant, I feel I am part of the group and an equal although Spanish is my second language.

A comparable explanation to ones above on friendships and family is found in how this participant explains why belonging was felt in a church setting:

The group is so eclectic and made up of such different personalities, ages, backgrounds - we have nothing in common but Jesus, but this common love made all the difference. We had such a great time together, worshiping through music, sharing what God had and was currently doing on our lives, and laughing together. It felt like everyone was respectful (sic) and accepting of each other's quirks and differences with our common goal at the center. I felt loved, appreciated, and a part of a bigger thing going on.

It may be significant to note with this data that Millersville University is located in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, which is known for being home to the largest Amish population in the U.S. and for having a very large number of churches and almost 50% of the population considered religious (AmishAmerica.com, 2019; LancasterPA.com, 2021; BestPlace.net, 2021).

Though a large percentage of people said they felt belonging and acceptance in their church activities, there were a large number of participant voices who said just the opposite. A participant who is involved in civic activities and Boy Scouts in his home area talked about public prayer in meetings and how “under God” was added to The Pledge of Allegiance during the Cold War (PewResearch.org, 2013). In these meeting, he commented:

because they don't respect me, and they're imposing their religious perspective upon the public. But to stand up and say something you're at risk of being marginalized. Or even worse than marginalized, outright ridiculed.

And those are the type of experiences that bother me and feel like I'm not included, that I don't belong. And I think throughout my whole life that has made me feel a little sad. And I guess as a bigger person now, I think... It's kind of odd. Why would a nation want to make people like me feel that way? And ...I've encountered other people who had similar feelings. Which wouldn't surprise me that they're out there. I wish I could find them because maybe that's my tribe and if we could find each other. We won't feel so unusual or isolated.

Those who feel like outsiders seeking others who feel that way is echoed in his experiences, as well as this domestic students perception of his outsider status in society and why.

When I was younger I was raised Catholic...and at the time they were not open to the idea of having LGBTQ people within the Catholic community. I always had a problem with that. And so I created this level of separation from the church that I was going to every Sunday and that continued on. You know the feeling of separation and being different from that community, up until the point where it was my decision whether or

not I wanted to continue with the church. And so because it didn't align with the viewpoints that I had, I didn't feel any obligation to continue with it, nor do I identify as it now...despite the fact that they've changed back there's still a multitude of things that I don't agree with. And so it's not really something I want to be a part of...

Religious factors were as divisive as political points made, the two topics commonly recognized as the least safe things to talk about. Both seem strongly tied into lifeworld, including beliefs and values, which are where people typically have the most time and energy invested, and even from where they draw their identity. This will be explored further under lifeworld below. For now, it seems significant to note that for many people, religion made some feel belonging and others feel like outsiders.

In the workplace

47% of the participants said their workplaces were where they felt belonging and acceptance. This was demonstrated in these remarks, “I felt accepted, appreciated, I could be myself, relaxed, we understood each other and knew how we work,” or, “I had responsibilities that suited my temperament and abilities. I also had significant influence in the decision making processes of the organization where I worked.” The feeling of being able to be one’s self came across in this and other samples across the demographics of the study and was the second highest response on why belonging was felt as seen in Table 4.2. As a reminder, this can be linked back to earlier discussion on the pressure to conform in order to feel accepted. Another participant said they like when it “Feel(s) like

| Code | % |
|--|-----|
| Shared Experience or Purpose | 22% |
| Where/When Accepted as Myself | 16% |
| Feel No Sense of Belonging | 10% |
| With Likeminded People | 8% |
| Within My Cultural / Ethnical Identity | 4% |
| Belongings and Money | 2% |
| Caring for Loved One | 2% |

Table 4.2 – Why people felt belonging

all coworkers work as a team, where we all push towards the same purpose” echoing the “Shared Purpose” theme in Table 4.2 and that shows up below in the data about community. Table 4.1 shows the other responses listed that were named but had a lower percentage rate. Where many people noted that they found belonging in the workplace, some shared that they had the opposite feeling. One participant said, “I never felt like I belong to the university. I taught for two years and a half. I knew from the beginning. This is temporary. I don't fit here and I always knew I didn't fit there and, which is helpful, because it helped me to leave.”

Outsiders all?

Several participants said words to the effect of feeling like an outsider always or at times. This was significant to note and raised awareness for future research that this is very possibly another area of common ground among all human beings, given the context and timing. Those who expressed these feelings were mostly participants who are from the U.S. and grew up here. A domestic student whose words were shared earlier of “never really felt as though I was really part of any community,” added, “(I have never been part) of anything more larger than myself, (I) always felt like sort of an observer.” A TCK who grew up in Kenya and Ethiopia and has lived in several regions of the U.S. said, “I love hearing about people's cultures. I think part of what makes me really interested in it is I don't feel very connected with any culture of my own.”

In one conversation, this person spoke about the longing to have connections with others and more natural options in our lives where we could sit and talk together, even for a short time. He said, “I'm always having conversations in my head ...because I don't have anyone to talk to and that kind of goes back in circles back to the feeling of I'm looking for my tribe.” He explained, “I'm not from this area. So I moved in as a stranger, an outsider.” Another adult in his 60s reflected on this memory from his high school days, “I felt like a misfit. I couldn't stand my

high school. It was huge, you know ...we had this 700 members senior class type high school and I just didn't fit in," allowing a discomfort that was decades old. This less pleasant part of the human journey may be informative to how we build community, seeking to help people avoid such feelings. It provides motivation for helping international students to not feel that way on campus.

In my own experiences moving into the area surrounding our campus, I have experienced that people are very well established with their families and friends and traditions, and it is not a natural inclination to draw others in or be sure they feel included. People are not unfriendly, *per se*. It is more a cultural difference, perhaps, or a missing awareness of the whole context. The people in the margins or left out or not seen in some social contexts. At the same time, Lancaster County is known for hospitality and draws tourists from all over the world. It has also been very open to refugee populations. Per capita, it is settling far more refugees than any other U.S. city. Lancaster City is sometimes called "The Refugee Capital" because it takes in 20 times more than the rest of the U.S. (Strasser, 2017). These dynamics will be something to continue observing in relation to this study topic.

The situations I have observed played out like this story told by Khazan (2020) of Deanna who was originally from Belarus and moved into a small town in Texas. "she found herself stuck in limbo: too old to be a typical American teen, yet with too little English to start college." When sitting with others around her age seeking to make friends, they would sit together on the couch and chat among themselves, "making no attempt to include her in the conversations." Later, they even got up and went to kitchen for food without her, not saying a word. Khazan summarized, "But there are times when the world forces you to confront the fact

that you fit in so poorly you literally don't know what to do with yourself' like Deanna's situation (p 198).

When it comes to the clustering that people do along affinity, cultural, or homogeneous lines, the motivation to find those like us could also focus around outsider status rather than cultural identity. Outsiders in a new or different place can be on the lookout for each other and find belonging together rather than feel the "fierce little sting of otherness" (Khazan, 2020, p. 208). Khazan (2020) tells the story of another person Ayinde who found that others "weren't even trying to empathize with him" until he "eventually found a group of fellow outcasts who welcomed him" (p. 209).

Identify formation – The person I'm becoming is...

The theme of identity formation as explored in this study and in depth in chapter 2 is very much tied into the dichotomy presented in chapter 1, the difference between a static or dynamic character, that is being an *Accidental Tourist* or *Intentional Traveler*. This can easily seem like a choice of whether or not to "travel," that is to move into new spaces and experience new things, "maintaining a conversational relation with the world" (van Manen, 2016, p. 16), such as engaging with those who are culturally disparate. However, as has been described earlier, there is less of a choice whether to move or navigate changes so much as how people experience those realities through their dispositions and formation to date and their choice of response to what is happening. Bauman (2001) said, "The construction of identity is a neverending and forever incomplete process, and must remain such to deliver on its promise...identity must stay *flexible* and always amenable to further experimentation and change; it must be a truly 'until further notice' kind of identity" (p. 64). The "goggles through which you viewed life in April may no longer be helpful to you in May" because "Familiar landmarks have been overturned; faithful

road maps have become obsolete. You need groundings, new passageways, new constructs” (Feiler, 2020, pp. 133-134).

In terms of identity formation, looking at the family of origin and lifeworlds of the participants will be helpful. *Transformation*, which is a goal of learning and education and would be more present with growth and less present when things are fixed, literally means to form from “movement or carrying from one place to another” from the Latin “trans-” (WordReference.com, 2021). One “thing that the idea of identity does not signal is a ‘stable core of the self, unfolding from the beginning to end through all the vicissitudes of history without change’” (Bauman, 2001, p. 17). Where we are in a state of flux or being flummoxed is heard in the participant voices below, as this person said, “...and so kind of determining who am I now.” An international student from Saudi Arabia studying in the U.S. explained it this way:

How do you, how do you preserve who you are, while also going to school without, you know, ...how do you as a Muslim have best friends who are Christian, because you went to that school together? Those seem inherently (incompatible). And it's, it's that finding ways to synthesize between them. It's that, you know, again. Yeah, that the whole listening ...being willing to change. (It) doesn't mean you change, you know. You can have Christian friends and be a Muslim. You don't have to change a religion, but you can understand what Christians come from.

As with earlier illusions of having colors on one's palette with which to fill the canvas of life, identity formation is a creative process, the making of something new that does not exist now.

In examining belonging and acceptance above, the factors of conformity and people feeling like outsiders was seen in the data drawn from the many voices in the study. Identity is

the umbrella over the existential questions referred to throughout this writing, such as “Who am I?” or as we move and seek belonging and community, “Who am I in this space? Who is this space asking me to be?” Especially with pressure to conform, the question of being one’s authentic self versus performing some other role could be framed around use of the words “normal” or “weird.”

Of course “normal” is evaluated by the lifeworlds and standards of others and means one is inside the circle, so to speak. “Weird” is evaluated by the same measures and implies one is outside the circle. Social Identity Theory as described in chapter 1 illustrates this very effectively in that “us-them” dichotomy. This is an iteration of the *Me-We-Thee* stories we tell ourselves (Feiler, 2020, pp. 104, 117). In her book entitled *Weird*, Khazan (2020) explains that the word comes from “Wyrd” in Old English and alludes to three fates:

In that case, wyrd – weird – could be considered a kind of prediction, a destiny. Much like what psychology suggests, your unusualness is a fabric woven from the thread of your life. Your identity, your environment, and your experiences all combine to make you who you are. But your weirdness is also a hint at what you might live to see and do, at what hidden powers you possess. ‘Weird,’ then, is your potential. (p. 22)

Bateson (1989) spoke of the “thread after thread” of our past informing our future (pp. 237, 236). Van Manen (2016) talks about memories leaving “traces on our being” (pp. 101-105.) Khazan’s words build on this imagery and tie it to the artwork of El Anatsui. The creative process of weaving of a tapestry creates tensile strength by drawing in varied fabrics, materials, and toward strength visually, colors and textures. Including these into the weave reflects how the diverse range of people’s experiences and learning and exposure cycles can create community. In life, some choices of materials are out of the person’s control, such as bad treatment or abuse or crises

that happen, but they end up as part of the final work of art. Knowing that as we become agents in the telling of our stories, we also have the chance to choose some materials with which to create is encouraging. We have some control over our choice of response and the type of outcome we seek. It seems like the same analogy applies well to society in any country and especially our global society. We are stronger and better prepared to face the future because of our diversity and our exposure to and acceptance of a diverse range of materials. We have a choice in how we can behave and how we choose to tell the story.

Whether or not a person chooses movement and change and the internal transitions that life brings, the case is asserted throughout this writing that it is happening regardless. The state of flux and formation we find ourselves in may be more beneath the surface of our consciousness. Being exposed to contrast or difference helps increase our awareness of our own internal journeys to self. The dynamic character choice it to embrace the constructive and transformative process. It is not likely any human being wants or would seek out constant waves of change, big or small. However, in another sense, we are all like surfers floating on the surface of the ocean of inevitable change. As we see some waves rolling in, we may choose to stand up on the board and take the ride. Whichever choice is made, the water's surface will sometimes be calmer and sometimes rolling or extreme, but we will never not be in the water that makes up our lifeworld internally as it exists within these external factors.

When human beings would prefer locking down on a fixed position in physical, geographical, or ideological terms, they are also setting up a resistance to the wave of inevitability of change. Several participants used the word "inevitable" in describing the increasing globalization of our lives. Observing shifts in the U.S., this domestic student on campus said:

I can see how internationalization or globalization could be seen as a negative thing to people who are very devout in the traditions that they hold and unwilling to see their legacy change, you know, while they're still here, you know, So in that sense, I guess people are losing a sense of identity when it comes to globalization or ...nationalization.

Finding the balancing point between the realities of movement and incessant change and the comfort of tradition and familiarity is perhaps one of the more difficult challenges of living. Not all former ways are best. Not all change is good. The advancing of time and technology does not give us a pass that we are certainly improving as human beings.

A man once walked up beside me in Addis Ababa to practice his English. In that conversation, he said, "...you are so advanced in the U.S. You have so much technology and washing machines and things like that." Because he was elevating one culture over another, I chose to offer another lens on the topic, acknowledging some of what we have lost. I said, "It's true we do have a lot of machines and things, but from living here in your country, I have recognized some of what we have lost by moving so fast and using those tools. People in my country do not tend to walk up beside others to visit. Neighbors do not know each other as much. The importance of relationships and our connection to each other seems to be lost. That's something I really appreciate about living here, is how much people care about each other and ask about families and events."

The Third Culture Kid experience tends to have more exposure cycles of movement and shifts of cultural dynamics that is now becoming part of daily life for everyone. That interest is personal to this researcher in having raised five TCKs and worked with many others as a teacher and dorm parent. However, there are very valuable lessons in the lives they have lived which can be helpful to anyone living on planet earth in 2021. Pollock and Van Reken (2001) talked about

the TCK experience as a “microcosm of what is fast becoming normal around the world,” and how they are “the prototype citizens of the twenty-first century,” as Ted Ward said (p. 7). They go on to note that “no one is ever a former Third Culture Kid. TCKs simply move on to being adult third culture kids because their lives grow out of the roots planted in and watered by the third culture experience (p. 27). From my exposure to so many people living out the TCK life, it was imperative that I included a sampling of them in this study for all the insight they could provide from their experiences.

One adult Third Culture Kid (ATCK) reflected:

I think I am pretty comfortable with change. And probably a large part of that is I think my comfort with putting myself in new situations (which) comes from the sense of just safety that I get from knowing I have, like, security blankets ...been like my family, you know. (Referring to recent move) We both were kind of excited at the idea of being in a new place. A new geographic place in one sense. It's not like it's that different ...from Minneapolis. So yeah... At least the way ...I think about change is that I like it, but ...that's because any risks that come along with newness are risks that, you know, my situation in life I'm able to bear them quite readily with the help I have from all kinds of friends and family that I can rely on.

The participant who is an ATCK who grew up on military bases in many other countries and speaks on this topic echoed Ward's point:

Ted Ward said third culture kids are inherently previews of coming attractions. They have to struggle with incredibly contradictory issues for identity, you know, how can you

be both a Norwegian passport holder, but also (be) passionately Korean at heart ...how do you do that and they figure out a way.

Related to building community and understanding the bigger picture of how we are all connected, this ATCK, who was formerly in the military and is now a police officer said, “If you can find that sense of power ...(we’re) all part of the human race. We’re all part of...you know, you have this ...this overwhelming, ...identity that brings people together, (and) that can be a good thing.”

My Lifeworld – My Identity

We say we care about people but we still take our bread from the middle of the loaf.

Attributed to George Carlin⁹

The joke about bread is helpful in understanding lifeworlds. From within my catalog of experience into my 20s, I thought the heel was the least desired part of the loaf of bread. When visiting in the household of another, we were making sandwiches. I chose to take the heel as a small sacrifice for the sake of greater humanity. Through the lens of my lifeworld, the heel would not be wanted by anyone else. I was so surprised to get scolded for my action because, as this person explained it, the heel of the bread needs to stay in place to protect and keep the rest of the bread from spoiling as quickly. This innocuous example is a safer way to illustrate the ways people make assumptions and miss each other over topics and cultural norms that quickly spur anger and dismissal of others. They judge and condemn people about a standard of normal they

⁹ As quoted on *Comedians in cars getting coffee*, Season 10, episode 5. See <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt8526462/>

do not recognize is not universal. Adapting intercultural skills for our home contexts, we can consider this from Storti (2007):

Once we encounter another frame of reference, however, we begin to see what we never could before. When we notice the unusual behavior of *another person*, we are that moment noticing our own behavior as well. We only notice a difference (something unusual) in reference to a norm or standard (the usual) and that norm we refer to is invariably our own behavior. Thus it is that through daily contact with the customs and habits of people *who are culturally disparate from us*, our attention is repeatedly focused on our own customs and habits, that in encountering another culture, we simultaneously and for the first time encounter our own. (p. 112, italicized words replaced the phrases “a foreigner” and “from a foreign culture” in the original text for emphasis.)

Lifeworld as defined in this text is inclusive of core beliefs, values, cultural norms, and the combination of education and experiences to date that form the lens by which a person views the world. It is very important to this discussion to recognize that no two lifeworlds are the same. This is where traveling to other worlds can get so very interesting!

In the story of the man and me talking in Addis Ababa, or the bread incident, there is an inherent and foundational aspect of human interaction that we somehow seem to ignore. People are seeing things from different viewpoints based on the “goggles” they have on presently and the catalog of experience built to date. Assuming sameness in the expectations and standards of others is a root problem that could be solved by moving back a few steps and seeing the larger story. Storti (2007) said:

Why would we expect other people to behave like us? The answer, quite simply, is because they always have. That is, most of us grow up in circumstances where we are surrounded by people from our own culture, and while we might have occasional contact with someone from a different culture, most of our interactions are with people like ourselves. And the reason these people are like us, of course, is that from birth we have been carefully and deliberately raised to be like them. (pp. 66-67)

This is a reminder that the skills interculturalists use to succeed in other countries are applicable to life in the U.S. or any setting as globalization increases. For example:

...succeeding abroad means being able to work effectively across cultures. And there's the rub: because of cultural differences – different, deeply held beliefs and instincts about what is natural, normal, right, and good – cross-cultural interactions are subject to all manner of confusions, misunderstanding, and misinterpretation. (Storti, 2007, p. 25, emphasis added).

Substitute the word “abroad” with your specific workplace, or family, or country, and the point is made that human beings increasingly need to use these skills in life at home, as well as when they travel.

In my own lifeworld built to date, my observations is that many misunderstandings and arguments are gaining energy and fervor even when though the people may not be talking about the same things or agreed on the definition of terms, such as is done in

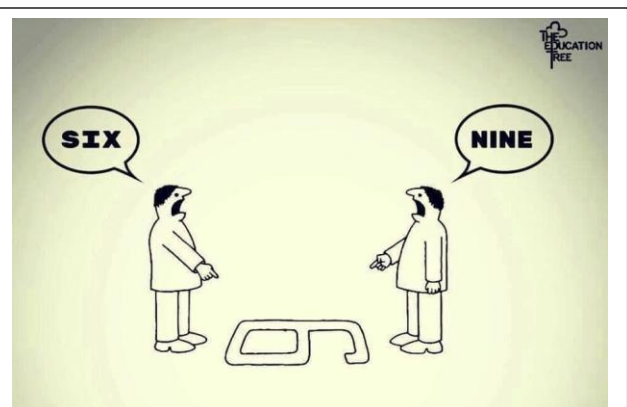


Figure 4.1

(TheEducationTree.com, 2021)

academic writing. Figure 4.1 illustrates “The Ethnocentric Impulse” (Storti, 2007, p. 66) very clearly. The encounters can quickly escalate into hierarchical thinking, one person ranking their take on things above another, or a competition that must be won or a person that must be changed. Rather than connection and understanding across differences, we see dueling sabers of sound bites from the echo chambers of the social narrative, as hot button issues of the times are not so much processed, examined together, as they are repeated. As an illustration of our interactions in the world, if neither person in Figure 4.1 moves from the known space where they feel certain of their rightness and their desire to win the debate, they will never see that from the vantage point of the other person in their world, things look as clear.

The Dutch nurse, who through the unexpected change of Covid-19 was able to spend time with her African crewmates that she would not have otherwise, noticed this difference in viewpoints around the Dutch value of efficiency and the task being more important than the people compared to how her African teammates did not want to dive into the work until they knew each other a little better. She reflected on her professional growth:

...(instead of just working) Like in an efficient way. Let's just take time and, sometimes it's just time to, okay, you just tell your story. Before we move on, especially working with like African surgeons. It's not that the way we do things is the only way that things can be done because there might be a reason why we do it a different way. And let's take time to learn from each other.

Spending time being present with each other will expand both of them to see that a bigger story is happening. The key is relating and spending time with and listening to them and being heard by them.

Participant voices were very helpful in seeking to conceptualize lifeworlds and the importance of our family of origins, the regions in which we grew up, and how we perceive our identity in those spaces. One participant said, "...belonging is very basic because you can believe you know you belong to a family of origin. It could be a good thing or a bad thing. It depends on what family you belong to." This view of a European working cross-culturally in Africa and familiar with the U.S. through friends and family described this backstory of how lifeworlds tend to form:

...those are very important things but ...the more you are in intercultural thing, the more you ...know yourself and get those skills, I would say. So when you are part of the, you know, in the Midwest, often in certain village...where your whole lives (are) predicted...You are not so much challenged to (think about) those things. Where you have certain patterns where it goes from generation to generation how people are brought up and never go ...and a certain value system which is never challenged. So you did the, you know, you're living there and you vote Republican. And yeah, go to the Baptist church and you ...Saturday...you go to the pub and you watch American football. So you follow into this pattern...which you take for granted, often. So I don't say this, this is the norm, but I see it happening all around the globe with us...in the rural areas, I would say. This type of "cultural conditioning" happens around the world, as adults in the culture teach the next generation. "Children are rewarded when they do the right thing and punished when they do not, and what makes those things right or wrong are the values and beliefs of that particular culture" (Storti, 2007, p. 67). A participant recognized this point, "And maybe it depends on what you were exposed to ...to growing up with your family." Being rooted in traditions and living in the same place for one's entire life gives a heritage and legacy to life that less rooted

and transient lives do not get and can easily envy. Being more transient or moving through a series of rapid changes sometimes allows you to see your own patterns of adjustment and living more easily.

As in the example above, a few participants alluded to the difference between rural and urban settings as a generalization of the situation. The people who have grown up in rural settings and those who have grown up in cities would likely see the elements they appreciate about their context and build a case for which is better, perhaps, if debate were desired. The point is more that they are different, and members of either setting could learn from engaging more with each other. Wilson (2020) gives his position away in his book's title, *Metropolis: a history of the city, humankind's greatest invention*, where he builds a case how the mingling of culturally disparate individuals in cities throughout history has led to innovations and creativity that has been unmatched.

The word "civilisation" derives from the Latin *civis*, town, while "urbane" comes from *urbanitas*, one of the meanings of which is the art of turning your tongue to wittily allusive and polished speech, an accomplishment that can come only from living hugger-mugger with a diversity. (Kindle location: 2,075)

Whether or not we agree with his stance, the alchemy of new ways of thinking that are possible when culturally disparate people engage is the point worth emphasizing. It bodes well for some of the gains of life in community. As to building community on campus, academic more than non-academic settings would seemingly make similar claims as Wilson about having tested ideas against each other and therefore having more credibility, all while maintaining a level of collegiality. The view from inside of academia would celebrate the value of learning that is only found through formal education. There are voices outside of academia that would offer different

views, perhaps deriding “book learning” only. The ideal of community, exchanging goods of experience and wisdom gathered to date, and living together collaboratively and peacefully, may be good to remember again. The destination may never be reached but taking the journey seems worthwhile.

Another person who had lived in different regions of the Netherlands and then in other countries pondered this topic through the lens of her experiences, giving this clear example of how respectful exchange may lead to a creative new result:

Well, if I'm convinced...blue is the best color because that's what my parents told me and my grandparents and like part of my culture (says) blue is the best color there is. I haven't even looked at anything else. So you're just like narrow focused on that's blue. So that's what it is. (If) someone...talks to you about yellow and explains why yellow can be beautiful and what you can do with yellow, like, whatever you're talking about ...helps. It might help you to understand, like, why other people have their opinion and it's not going to say, well, their opinion is right in mine is wrong, but like together blue and yellow might actually make green, you might both like green.

The design of this study has been to examine how movements away from our known spaces into lesser known ones can be beneficial for perspective and building needed skills for living in an increasingly diverse and globalized world. They help us in our own transformation toward becoming a more fully actualized human being, as demonstrated by this university professor who has traveled to many other countries:

Well, I think it's better understanding, you know, you use that analogy of going to another country. Lot(s) of people, including myself, really don't understand the culture that they're in because they're in a boat. When you leave it for a while and you come

back, then it smacks you in the face, and you're like, "Oh, now I understand a little bit better what people are saying about me and my culture." So, you know...when you start to learn about other people who are different than you. It helps you look at yourself differently and perhaps change some behaviors to make you into a better person.

The patterns and habits that make up much of our life are easily formed outside of our awareness, which is why we have trouble seeing and describing the "water" of our culture the way a fish would the context it knew its whole life. Others are "weird" and we are "normal" without us being able to explain why.

The impact of family on the individual can vary greatly by the cultural norms and the decisions of the people. The U.S. culture is among the most individualistic in the world (Hofstede/Compare, 2021), which came out in the observation of this international student who commented on how American students more commonly move out of their parents' homes when they are younger. She was thinking out her lifeworld verbally:

I used to think of myself just like what people would identify with back home just like, I'm a Saudi person. I'm a Muslim person. And basically, that's it. But now I kind of go more in depth about my identity and I have more, like, I've developed more of my own thoughts and ...like my own thinking and opinions. Rather than when I was back home. I would just take the opinion of others

She very skillfully answered the research questions guiding this study by adding:

I think it's really important to be more open to the world and learn how to be okay learning about different cultures and respect them as how they are ...And be okay like having relationships with different people are not necessarily close relationships, but at

least like be open to the world. Know the differences and accept them as long as they are not like hurting you or hurting anyone physically. Just be more open to the world. I think it's really important. Yeah, and I think I could see that like back home, and ...even though it's more diverse in the US. But I can see it back home that people are just like... They're all the same. And when there is someone different. They're just thinking differently of them and they don't try to like make any relationship with them. I mean, we're all human beings and I mean, we're all basically the same with a little bit of differences. So, it's still worth it to be more open to the world.

This ESL teacher from Kazakhstan reflected on how family culture can work:

So some belonging is chosen. And some it's just there. You know, so (a) Kazak family is like any Asian family. You belong to the family. My goodness, and all the stuff that comes with the territory. Which means, you know, certain things you have to do ...You have to give (gifts) certain ways ...you express respect (with) certain words, you have to use to call certain people. And so all of that, you know, and that also part of belonging. I belong to a Kazak family and I can't throw that away. ...there are certain responsibilities that come with that...But maybe that's true for other communities too, you know, communities are not just for you ...to enjoy ...to be welcome and feel safe. There's also a responsibility on you to ensure that ...that sense of belonging and safety is given to others.

It was helpful to hear her apply the lens of how she grew up to inform how we might collectively “do life together” in the way some described community.

An international student from Mexico spoke of her parents and family very often in ways that created the “warmth,” which Bauman (2001) described as part of our ideal for community. She has actively been influenced by the words of her parents growing up and is still, even as a graduate student. As an example, she shared this insight she was learning while living in the U.S. during the past several years of her life:

When you have an experience like that I've had where not everyone is going to understand a lot of like...Like I haven't experienced a lot of like racism or anything like that. Like, I believe, and my parents always told me like there's good people everywhere. But in this situation, I was....I didn't understand ...and it was in a small campus...it was in (a small town in Pennsylvania). So they didn't understand a lot of that. So there was only one boy that... He couldn't ...understand like, why I was studying abroad and why I was not in my country... He had some kind of stereotype of like the typical living ...in Mexico, and I was kind of explaining him like, no, it's not how you think...I think that taught me a lot because I'm definitely... I was upset and I was mad, and I was showing him pictures from Mexico and I was showing him like regular houses, my house included, and like how we live, just to kind of like help him understand but then afterwards I talked with my dad and my dad...taught me a lot. And he was like, you cannot change everyone's minds and you cannot let something (of) that kind of like upsets you, like, .you are in the control of how you respond and how ...who (you let) upset your day or ruin your day or just you shake it off...

There were other examples given of the things that children learn from their parents. A college employee told of an experience where she volunteered as a teacher at the YMCA. “...I had two children in my one class who were young ...and they were Jewish and they absolutely hated

Islamic people. They were six and eight. And the only way that happens is you get that from your parents.”

The ATCK who served his country in the military and serves his metropolitan region as a police officer explained the influence of his family growing up:

But yeah, you can never really get away from who you are. From the very beginning, or... where you are now. You can learn different things and certainly can adjust and relate, but...I think it might have been gone back to my parents, you know. I grew up in a missionary household and so (it) was service to God before service to myself, kind of thing. And so any type of job that I've been interested in has always been like a service related job, serve others, serve the community. I've got to be working for something above my own individual needs. Otherwise it. I just don't find my fulfillment in that ...because of the nature of family.

Some of his strategies for relating to people different from him through his experiences in different regions of the worlds were very helpful. His vocational choices are tied strongly into the *Thee* story (Feiler, 2020, pp. 104, 117).

[Transitions making us, and hopefully not breaking us – “I’m no less me.”](#)

Just as examining how families of origin and the area we grew up in as children has impact lifeworlds, it was helpful to consider with participants the effects transitions. The movements through the phases of transition leave people standing on the other side of the change, a new space not lived in before, where the questions of “Who am I in this space?” can easily be asked again. There were a series of questions in the interview process where people were asked about an unnamed event or shift in their lives, where there was a clear before and

after time, and what the impact of this event or shift was in the trajectory of their life and how they saw their identity. More research is needed on this topic, but it was expanding to my own understanding to see people either separate their lifeworlds from their identity or see them as interwoven.

One of the professors in the study shared that she had left the business world to begin teaching, so we were speaking on the other side of that transition in her life. She explained it this way:

Yes, because I would say that my identity and maybe even my worth, which is, you know, now that I think back on it ...was connected to that that job ...that role that I had. And so I think making that shift ...was so challenging ...because that's how I identified myself. ...I (am) not quite sure I'd be as satisfied, which is interesting because back then I would have said, I'm very satisfied and content.

A female international student from Saudi Arabia observed the following effects from thinking back on her life before her studying abroad time and how she perceives herself now.

...I'm much more independent right now than I used to be back home because back home, I would. I was living with my parents, my family and almost everything.... they would do for me. There's just very little things that I would do for myself. And over here, I'm all by myself. So I have to do everything on my own. And also, I'm more open to life and to other different...people...who are also willing to be open to different people. So I wouldn't walk to a different person and be like, "Hey," and show that I'm interested in knowing them when they are not.

The reciprocity and mutual exchange is powerfully evident in her explanation and elaborated on below:

I'm open to know people, but only if they are open too. And because I've had, I've seen different people who would not be open to like, to know, different cultures and learn about different people who would ...might even make fun of something that I do...for example, so they are not open. So why would I be trying to get to know them. And I'm also...I was more shy. And I'm confident about myself...I'm not going to say that I'm not shy at all, right now, but it's much, much, much less than I used to be when I was back home.

This student shared many thoughts about her view on things now and the advocacy she feels compelled to be part of in relation to the rights of others.

The Kazak ESL teacher explained the effect of changing away from being a university professor and then navigating more changes she had not chosen as the world changed around her:

I lost my language school because of the pandemic, so... There was a lot of attachment. It was, in the way, my child. And you know so loss of employment in a way. I mean, it was, it was my project ...is something I developed something that it was only a year and a half old. So losing it that early... It's painful and so kind of determining who am I now. ...because prior to that, I was always working as a university professor. So then I left that I started my own private school (and) now I don't have that either. And I'm not at the university. So what am I? Just the private English Tutor Online and that (was) also part of my stripping away, you know, all of my regalia and all of the status and the respect that I

had from the colleagues (and) the students. I don't have that. I just have five or six students that I teach online. And, so, what does that do to me? But am I still the same person, or am I different?

The level of vulnerability and reflection in this explanation was present in many of the conversations, as participants grappled with the hard questions and the meaning-making of life chapters they may not have connected together previously. It was a privilege and honor to be present with each person in conversation as they submitted these thoughts into consideration of the topic. She continued:

And so I'm learning...I'm learning that my identity is not my job. Or in a place of employment... You know, it's nice when I'm associated with a particular university or particular profession but I'm no less me just because ...I'm self employed now and I don't have a huge classroom where I teach...but it's still me. I can learn to still give fun and created classes in a different medium... I'm learning to still work with excellence, with the limited resources I have and limited group of students. ...You know, so it's just a different circumstance, but the values and principles are still there.

This explanation in one of the earliest interviews allowed me as researcher to watch for how people live within their lifeworld and whether or not they perceive their identity in relation to those values. Her affirmations of the adjustment process she is in were seemingly spoken from the middle phase of transition models as explained. The depth of her perspective and clarity on her own identity and values came from within that space, rather than a previous one that was more comfortable.

Crossing into another culture of a person's lifeworld is a challenge. However, statistically, according to the participants surveyed, it is much easier to talk to someone from another country than a person from your own where your beliefs are not aligned. An international student from Germany thought through these challenges and why it may be more difficult to relate to those who are closer than foreign to us:

...if you know someone really well (like a) close friend or a family member... I know ...almost everything about you. I think maybe the root of it is even like I'm trying to understand. So why do you hold this political opinion. Oh, why do you believe this, or whatever... And I think ...why it's so difficult for me to approach someone that has a very different political opinion is because it becomes problematic when it intrudes... like it when it goes traces back to someone's morals and beliefs and those viewpoints. ...My friend ____ (is) very conservative and, I'm like, I don't have a problem with that. You just have a different viewpoint. But if (the person's) more conservative viewpoint was based on discrimination of specific groups like LGBTQIA groups or ...racial groups, then that would be like, that goes back to your personal morals and beliefs and I cannot agree with that status. Who you are as a person at this point it's not only a political opinion but your political opinion is a result of your morals and beliefs and, if I can't agree with your morals and beliefs, how can I be a friend?

In relation to the comfort-learning-panic zones and willingness to move into other spaces relationally, Hall (1984) said, "Staying comfortable is largely a matter of culture. Informal or core culture is the foundation on which interpersonal relations rest. All of the little things that people take for granted...depend on sharing information patterns" (p. 195).

The subtitle of this dissertation is *Traveling into new worlds through conversations and the impact on community* for reasons hopefully obvious reading this far. It is not easy thing to move about in another culture with other cultural norms and cues and different languages being spoken. And to emphasize the point, people are perceiving talking to someone with different ideology and beliefs as more difficult still. Perhaps another reminder of how intercultural skills may help people in making these moves, we can offer ourselves grace in the way Storti (2007) describes here:

Don't be too hard on yourself. We're not talking here about getting the hang of one or two new paradigms; it's a whole new world. And whole new worlds can take some getting used to. So you can be forgiven for feeling a tad overwhelmed, for wondering what you've gotten yourself into or whether you've done the right things, and for being irritable and not much fun to be around. (p. 21)

In his reminder, he is talking about the dazed effect of standing in a different country.

Annoyance and even anger at the behaviors of others gets the better of the person making that adjustment. The connection is that we are all in the process of forming. The paint is still curing. The new worlds are in the faces of each person with which we interreact. Where human beings can easily take it personally or see it as intentional, the person is not trying to be difficult, they are just being different. Perhaps we can be more patient with others and with ourselves.

When we recognize our interconnectedness and the fundamental dignity and equality of every human being, we help to build a world that is more accepting, secure and free.

Barack Obama

Community – Our interconnectedness and what is at stake

As a researcher, the hopefulness I have for achieving more of a sense of community and teamwork in U.S. contexts similar to how I had experienced it in other cultures seemed evident

in questions asked, as explained under positionality in chapter 3. My quixotic run at the windmill of society's ills seemed to draw in other participants who wanted to find answers to how community might work better. It was helpful to see others speaking and writing about the promise of community, as this seeking of kinship and community seems more of an ideal. This phenomenological approach created a synthesis where that "intimacy between research and life immediately suggests itself," as van Manen (2016) described it (p. 156). The survey and interview questions kept probing deeper into the topic. Reading Bauman's (2001) overview and theories in his work with the telling title of *Community: Seeking safety in an insecure world* was helpful because he acknowledged the ideal of community and how we can perceive it as good, a "warm....cosy and comfortable place...like a fireplace" (p. 2). Bauman said "community" is a feel good word that:

stands for the kind of world which is not, regrettably, available to us – but which we would dearly wish to inhabit and which we hope to repossess...another name for paradise lost – but one to which we dearly hope to return, and so we feverishly seek the roads that may bring us there (pp. 1, 3).

Bauman (2001) framed the struggle to find a definitive concept of community as a mythical hero's journey, stating, "Contemporary seekers of community are doomed to share Tantalus' lot; their purpose is bound to elude them, and it is their own earnest and zealous effort to grasp it that prompts it to recede" (p. 17). Despite the seeming elusiveness of community and the challenges to conceptualizing it, participants seemed to find this an enjoyable exercise. They were intrigued to see what would come from this question because they knew they were among voices from many cultures. The pursuit of community on a macro level is a journey worth taking, even if the destination may never be reached. Internationalization on a higher education campus is a similar

paradigm. Though its promise of enriching our education, working experiences, and lives, as we graduate globally competent students with the needed skills of traversing difference, there will likely be some who remain in the known boundaries and comfort they have within their pods. Recognizing the value of interchange with those culturally disparate from us is a hard sell.

How diverse voices perceive community

If someone were to arrive on the planet today and ask you what the word “community” means, what would you say? In framing the interview question this way and playing that part, I explained to each participant that I was very interested in the topic – pretending I had absolutely no concept of it – and would very much like to understand. Would they help me by describing it to me in words or phrases? It was important to the study to have a sense of what community is as seen by people from all over the world. They could each offer the vantage point from within the cultures of their families, their lifeworlds, and the countries represented on their passports. It was also key to see how much they valued being part of a community and having a sense of belonging. One survey participant noted how hard the idea is to pin down, writing, “Community is a broad term!” Despite the challenges to conceptualizing it, participants seemed to find this an enjoyable exercise. They were intrigued to see what would come from this question because they knew they were among voices from many cultures. The data on these areas and a few other key themes are shown below.

One commonly expressed idea of community was simply doing “life together.” Another broad explanation was literally of being “in communion” with each other, drawing from the faith background of the participant. He said, “it’s something we all do together. So everybody in that room feels the same way about that. We’re in communion with that, you know.” An English as a Second Language teacher in another country said:

it comes from the word commune
 ...common ...share with ...share ideas
 ...shared things...shared responsibilities.
 It's an interesting place, so, like, ...if I
 teach a group of students (in) the first
 couple of classes we strive to build a
 community, you know, we try to not laugh
 at mistakes because (if we) laugh at all
 ...mistakes, we're not going to have a
 class. ...We're creating a safe place for
 people to be and communicate with each other. (We're trying) to do something together.

| What Makes Community? | % |
|---|-----|
| Unit (e.g. group of “people” or “member”) | 62% |
| Support | 52% |
| Purpose (Overlap) | 48% |
| Commonality | 41% |
| Proximity (Overlap, not necessarily physical space) | 31% |
| Care | 28% |
| Diverse (Differences) | 28% |
| Belonging and Acceptance | 24% |
| Benefits | 17% |
| Contribute | 17% |
| Time (Overlap) | 17% |
| Beliefs, Ideas, Values | 14% |
| Network (Interconnected, Web) | 10% |
| Structure | 10% |
| Collaborative | 7% |
| Experience/Event, Shared (Overlap) | 7% |
| Safety | 7% |
| Control (Affect) | 3% |
| Ideal, Longing for | 3% |
| Identity | 3% |
| Informal | 3% |
| Responsibility | 3% |
| Similarity (e.g. “class”) | 3% |

Table 4.4 – What makes community?

Block (2010) describes a type of creativity and potentially new outcomes that are only possible when we have differences in the room, asking, “What do we want to create together?” (p. 25). Several participants built the concept phrase by phrase, then looped back through it in full to hear how it sounded and if it rang true to them. Often when they finished that section, I would affirm

their effort and say, “That sounds like a very nice place. I’d like to live there.” They often echoed that sentiment.

Participants typically warmed-up by saying words or disconnected phrases. It seemed helpful for them to begin by stating words to the effect of, “Well, people...obviously.” Others used words like “member” or words I coded as “units,” such as a team or military group. Then participants began going deeper and voicing other elements. They often wrapped up by summarizing what had come out as they reflected, which provided some very helpful statements, as seen below. The most prominent themes that came up in the coding of responses had to do with having a support structure. *Support* was described more in terms of infrastructure and services. A participant from Kazakhstan said, “They live life together...A small village is a community...if something major happens, the whole village shows up and helps...” Keeping these codes separate served the overall study better, but this is significant to note that if *Caring* for the individual was combined with *Support*, that would make the concept of looking out for each other the highest value at 80%. One participant described this as “taking care of those in the community who may be struggling.” Another campus staff person said:

It's people coming together to lift each other up and help each other. But unfortunately, sometimes not even communities do that, so...But at its best, you know, different groups of people joining together, recognizing each other's strengths and weaknesses and, you know, lifting each other up to accomplish...a task.

The idea of achieving something together and the value of a person being able to *Contribute*, as I coded it, was spoken of often. That is, people should not only be receiving, but giving something back. Another person described it this way, “It's somewhere where they feel like they belong,

somewhere where... I think of a maybe have a role to play, like..." A campus staff person formed this word picture:

I think a community gives people a sense of belonging. It's somewhere where they feel like they belong. Somewhere where...I think of a ...maybe have a role to play. Like, feel...they are an active member ...like they contribute something. So I think you ...have to (have) both. Maybe *get* something from a community and ...to *give* something to a community. I don't know if you feel like it's a community if you're not really contributing.

Another participant said, "There has to be a shared commitment. Whether that's a commitment to each other as people or to a shared vision or to a task. There has to be something to which all members will commit. Without commitment, there isn't community." In both data utterances, not contributing and no commitment broke the contract of membership.

The ideas expressed were that we should *Collaborate*, which is commonly done around the shared *Purpose* or in response to a *Shared Experience or Event*. A Brazilian man who does business all over the world and had lived in the U.S. as an exchange student noted the importance of having "something to take care of, you know. ...For instance, (a) recycling program... And so I think our communities (are) really like when people think about each other ...the other one. You know, I think this is a notnot thinking about myself. But ...the others around me." Related to this was the sense of responsibility it was felt people should have for the community, to have ownership of a positive type. This idea was coded as *Citizenship* in a way that was helpful to monitor throughout the data analysis. Another voice built on that idea, "Yeah, I mean the citizenship. Yeah, it's interesting because it's in a way ...it's ...it's definitely belonging, right, you belong to a particular nation...(a) particular country or state..."

Sometimes the shared purpose is rallying together at a time of crisis. We can see acts of heroism and selflessness, but they are sometimes competing with images of people hoarding bottled water or toilet paper or coming to blows over a city parking space they shoveled out in the city and now feel ownership of during a blizzard. A former military participant, now a Capitol Police officer lamented about “toxic” people, saying:

This year (of 2020 with Covid-19), could have been one of those years that really brought us together as a country, kind of like after 9/11, you know, we face (a) big thing (and) everybody has to come together to face it, and it felt like it was going to be that way for like a few weeks and all, maybe even a month ...and then ...everybody remembered this was an election year...So we're going to take the opposite point of view ...force their own ulterior motives on (others and) these struggles.

Many people reflected on the division felt in the U.S. in this way and the increasing conversation and awareness around racial harmony. Another participant captured the *Mutuality* this way:

They support each other. They invest what they can ...what they have towards (the) goal (or) purpose. ...And they learn together. They learn from each other and ...they learn just ...how to accomplish that purpose, but also they learn to work together, to live together, to love each other, to forgive each other, to support each other. ...I think that's it.

This conclusion links to one of the most poignant definitions of community discovered since beginning this study. It is from Sinek (2015) and echoes this participant voice. “A community is a group of people who agree to grow together.”

Building on mutuality, a campus police officer described the need for “mutual respect for each other,” adding, “respecting that we don't have to be all completely aligned.” An ESL teacher who grew up in the former Soviet Union, described diversity in community this way:

(It is) what we called internationalism and international relations because the Soviet Union consisted of 15 Republics...a bunch of the so called autonomous republics, each of which had its own language and culture...and ethnicity. ...we were always taught ...that all people are similar, or people a(re) good and it's good to have different national(ities)...We had the cultural festivals on a regular basis. Like people from different republics would come...and visit one another and they were there with the music festivals (and) kosher festivals. And if you happen to visit another republic, everyone was friendly. That is, until the country collapsed... until the Soviet Union collapsed. It was nice and friendly. ... So people are psychologically similar. They need to have something in common...like maybe a common language, like English...But let each country of nation develop their own ethnicity, their own culture because that's how we enrich one another.

Her observations on how her life has been different from that childhood to living in the U.S. as an adult were very informative.

It was acknowledged that sometimes community forms simply because people are in an area or space together, such as a classroom, a neighborhood, a small town, or a baseball team, which was coded as *Proximity*. At the “most basic level, it means the people who live around you. Or who are around you that you see on a daily basis, like, it might be your neighbors next door, across the street or whatever, that, ...in one sense is community,” said one participant who lived as an expatriate for more than 20 years. An international student from Saudi Arabia noted

sharing “social class” and “a lot of similarities.” Related to the premise of moving into new spaces, it was acknowledged by participant voices that physical space or proximity is not necessarily a requirement. Community could be contained in an online space, or around a cause or common interest or an ideological space, such as a parent’s support group around a child’s health condition, those who dream of bow hunting, or those who love to make cheese.

A nurse from Colombia who now works internationally said, “community is a group of people very different. They ...don't have to look the same, or have the same height. Same color. They're just people. Human beings. And there is something that unites them. There's one thing or several that they share.” Picking up on this themes of shared tasks or goals, which was coded as *Motivation* and spoken of often, this Midwestern school teacher’s words about values are illustrative. “We're still a community, and we're going to accept those differences because we all have the same goal in mind.” Participants talked about the similarities in common and also the value of diversity.

A web of relationships

There is definitely an interconnectedness of people making up community. The expatriate who had lived over 20 years in the Philippines described the differences in community and socializing that he experienced there compared to in the U.S. “It's a web of relationships with people who have affinities for one another or similarities to one another, who have similar interests or similar ideas or similar feelings.” An ESL teacher in Kazakhstan said the spread of the pandemic is an example that really demonstrated our global network and need for global competency skills:

I think it's inevitable. ... (if) you want your graduates to function in today's world, they have to be global citizens, they have to understand how everything is interconnected in

the world. ...the pandemic shows ...so powerfully how (we have) global problems to solve. ...You know, we're all very human (whether we) live in different places. We speak different languages, eat different foods, but we all have the same immunity or lack of it (even) before this virus, you know, and so that ... We're humans. We're people. We're all the same. ...I mean, the reason we have this epidemic is because people are moving all the time. ...this never happened before, to that extent. So quickly. But it's because people just can't stay put, to be in that one room that they're so used to... So because of air travel... In a bad way. But it's still a very bright example of how interconnected, you know, how we really are in a small global village.

It is much more common for people to be moving into new spaces all over the world, doing international business, traveling for pleasure, or visiting distant family members on other continents. That this is so aptly proven out by the pandemic was a helpful insight of our common *Humanity*, as it was coded in analyzing the data. Our “mutual connection” can be seen (Warner, M., 2003). Peters (2020) builds on the analogy of how the pandemic helps us understand our humanity:

While some of us may fare better because of our age or health, the microbes themselves are impartial’ which means ‘we’re all in the same boat’ but accepting this is ‘uniquely difficult in America’ because ‘This country is built on a cult of individualism’. What can the novel coronavirus Covid-19 tell us about contagion and the human condition? That ultimately the only answer metaphysically is solidarity based on a kind of love for our fellow human beings – not ‘me first’, not ‘America First’ but, indeed, the exact opposite, a responsible form of globalisation that recognises that we are only as strong as our weakest link.

This recognition brings it back to where the reflections started, the support and care we can provide each other.

Walls with windows and doors

With talk of community and the similarities or differences of human beings, a modern view would seemingly be a borderless space, open, with no barriers or borders. It was very informative to the study to hear several participants process the need for some sort of containment or membrane. For example, boundaries of some type seem to be needed to contain the shared interest or activity or demographic in order for it to actually be identified as a community. A domestic student on campus said "... the word structure and stability (are) our two strongest points of Community. Communities are not always diverse and they are not always willing to view diverse viewpoints." Where imagining no walls can seem favorable, that open space also removes feelings of safety, a need as basic as belonging. Studies of playground designs have shown that fences not only provide a sense of security, but they also enable more creativity, and factor into social interaction (Pitsikali, A. & Parnell, R., 2020; Hampton, M., 2017). Bauman (2001) pointed out, "Security is the enemy of walled-up and fenced-off community. Feeling secure makes the fearsome ocean separating 'us' from 'them'" seem more like an inviting swimming pool" (p. 142). Block (2010) had said, "Community is the container within which our longing to be is fulfilled" (p. xviii). The absence of some sort of containment also makes any sort of identification with a group or team much more difficult.

Putnam (2003) described how in military and social contexts the need to "create a cellular structure with smaller groups linked to form a larger, more encompassing one. Organizational choices that facilitate 'mixing' and 'bridging' among small groups can harness the benefits of

both intimacy and breadth” (p. 279). A participant working in higher education processed this point:

...I would like to include those things. But I'm trying to think of...so, as a community defined. How is the community defined? Like, are their boundaries? ...Yeah, so I kind of feel like communities have to have boundaries or it doesn't feel like a community ...So I think ...if it's bound by something, then you inherently are excluding something and potentially people.

Grappling with the relationship between inclusion and exclusion, another campus staff person drove the data deeper, grappling with the concept:

Community is a group of people. We have something in common as an accountability structure also in this community. So, so it's not, you know, like if you're a member of the soccer team, you subscribe. So it's more on a membership base. I think community is not so formal. Like a club...with the archetype of the Freemasons or whatever group. Yeah. It's kind of closed group...with the community that the boundaries are more open than closed group.

The important point raised was whether the people had access or not and what defined membership within the space. The identifiers needed were explained by this person:

In Namibia, you have this saying One Namibia One Nation. ...everything's okay as long as you have a flag... you are a real Namibian. The sense of the community so vague, the symbol, that most of the Namibians looked at identity in the tribal community. So, you know, if you're part of us.....

The participants talked of whether the membranes that encapsulated a community were impermeable, semi-permeable, and permeable membranes as with biological cells. Block (2010) said:

The communal possibility is that space or porous container where a collective exists for the realization of all the possibilities of its members. This is the real meaning of a restorative community. It is that place where all possibilities can come alive, and they come alive at the moment they are announced. (p. 132)

How important is it to you personally to feel like a you belong as a member of the community or situation in which you are living?

| | |
|----------------------|-------|
| Very Important | 56.3% |
| Somewhat Important | 34% |
| Neutral | 4.4% |
| Not Very Important | 2.9% |
| Not Important at All | 2.4% |

Table 4.3 – Importance of Community

The same question might be asked of an individual lifeworld, that is, can new things get in from outside, can things inside get out, and is there a reciprocal exchange.

How much community appeals to participants varied, perhaps in relation to how difficult the concept is to pin down and based on their experience to date. When asked how important community is to them, 56.3% said it was “Very important,” but others found it of less value. The summary of answers are seen in Table 4.3.

Ubuntu – “I am because you are.”

Summarizing the other major trends, if *Lifeworlds* (ideological space) was combined with *Proximity* (physical space), 44% of the participants were describing this type of connection between people, making it the highest value after *Support* and *Purpose*. If *Purpose* and *Proximity* were combined, this would give a value of 79%, showing some of the strongest factors of what makes up community in people’s minds. Therefore, in looking at a universal description of the

concept of what community is, the ideas of supporting and protecting each other and having some common interest around a hobby or activity or being in common in demographic or cultural terms are by far the most prominent features as reflected on by participants. Ngomane (2019) describes the concept of ubuntu, which is present in most cultures and language of Africa:

My humanity is caught up, (and) is inextricably bound up, in yours... even strangers, as fully human you will never be able to treat them as disposable or without worth... ubuntu teaches us to also look outside ourselves to find answers. It's about seeing the bigger picture; the other side of the story. (Kindle locations 77, 81)

Recognizing that in spite of differences of many types, we are more similar if we will go deeper and look at the bigger story of how we are all “bound up” in our common humanity. *If* we believe this and *how* we act on that belief seems critical to the discussion of community.

Building community online

Digging deeper to complete the exercise, some participants made note of how many words we commonly use that have lost their meaning. This may be due to saturation or alternative uses, such as how the word “friend” has lost its long-standing sentiment now that it is a marker of a social media connection. Other words are altered or spelled differently in order to grab a unique domain name on the Internet. One participant who grew up as a Third Culture Kid on military bases around the world and who speaks on the pros, cons, and effects of the transient lifestyle said:

I think we've abused the word (“community”) and ...I'd want to point that out to an alien, because they're going to run into that word a lot, (and) we've abused the word. ...social media and various other things now mean that we've turned *community*. It's kind of like

junk food. I think you can have, like, online, you can have an awful lot of joint interest, you know. It's the flavor and it tastes great. But there's no real joint investment. There's no joint risk. So there's no nutrients, which just further escalates the problem of disposable relationships.

During the study, many conversations have been about how the social isolation around Covid-19 has impacted community, which could easily be a separate study of its own. The person above was addressing the rise of online and virtual communities, such as around a hobby or interest group. Increased access and experiments that will likely become part of our “new normal” are demonstrated in this story from a participant:

I'm in a Facebook group called learning Swedish ... We're here to support each other learning language and there's no other reason...if I have questions, I'll post it to that community or I'll just scroll through it, see what people are wondering about what resources...Maybe it helps you find people with similar interests. ...I am taking a Swedish course at the ...American Swedish Historical Museum. And normally I wouldn't be able to take that because it's in Philadelphia, but the pandemic drove it online. So there's people I meet every week, who are also interested in learning Swedish and so that's what's binding us together and we're going through this experience together

In times of transition, especially in that middle space of disruption, inequity of access related to education was seen more clearly in ways missed before. In contrast, museums like the ones above, he noted are seeing a model for the future that allows more people to participate in their programs.

This participant who teaches courses in higher education and regularly relates to a coworker in Pakistan as part of his other working role gave an analysis of community building by Zoom including what it offers and what it does not:

They're having to learn to build electronic communities...So we meet (and) even after all these months on Zoom, even though they're fully active members of (the small group), they refuse to get on Zoom because they just don't like the technology or they don't like the distance. And then other people...don't ever say anything. They don't ever contribute, even though they're there, they're listening, they're observing...even though you ask them sometimes ...directly...if they say anything at all, it's very little or, "No," or, "Yeah, whatever...I'm fine." They don't really go deep.

As he continued, this analysis was a helpful distinction of the balance between more access and less engagement, which could perhaps be thought of breadth and depth. The one does not necessarily preclude the other, but the literal two-dimensional surface type of interaction is not seeming to work the same for people, as he went on to explain:

So I think ...that's created an impact on community in some ways ...that has hurt community, but on the other hand, ...it's broadened community. So now, because it's electronic, people from anywhere around the world can join a community anywhere. So the definition of community is much broader... more based on technology and electronics. But I think it's much more shallow. I don't think we're able to get as close ...as deep in community. It's more accessible. But that doesn't mean that it's better. Accessibility is good because then you can involve more people, but the quality of that community has not always impacted for the good because of the nature of the

technology....there's been a lot of conferences I've attended online, and that's the great for the content sake, but for connecting to people, it's very, very difficult.

The educational and training accessibility options are increased in many ways but the effect is different. Conversations around this topic were helpful in taking the researcher deeper into what community is and what it is not. Asking why he thought this was so in follow up to the analysis above, he pointed out how spontaneity is missing from so many of our Zoom experiences, saying, “you can't spontaneously generate a relationship. Unless you intentionally set that up and that's harder to do. Usually the best relationships, the best community happens spontaneously.”

Hospitality in our homes and conversations

The tradition of hospitality permeates many cultures, as Block (2010) describes in introducing the idea of “a restorative community”:

Hospitality, the welcoming of strangers, is the essence of a restorative community.

Historically, if strangers knocked at your door, you automatically invited them in. They would be fed and offered a place to sleep, even if they were your enemies. As long as they were in your house, they were safe from harm. They were treated as if they

belonged, regardless of the past. This is the context of restoration we are seeking. (p. 118)

During the conversations with participants, I would sometimes use the word “relational” to describe what I remember from living in Africa, as explained in chapter 3 under positionality. It did not come up often, but resonated with those who had lived in or had extensive visits to other countries. One participant gave this example:

We cannot get away from that experience (of being) in the Philippines for 20 years now. (It) influences how we relate to people here even though (the United States) is where we grew up....You know, because we learned hospitality. We learned how to relate. We learned some Filipino things that we have applied here and we have been totally changed by that. So...you're right ...your world is expanded and it grows and it's for the better, usually.

He went on to explain how, though they love the openness and friendliness of being so relational with others and including everyone as if family, it tends to throw people off back in the U.S., their “home” culture, now that they are back. This participant from Utah shared how she views the potential for the areas in which we live:

Despite having the differences of whatever ...like my neighborhood is, you know, we have like a deaf neighbor, a couple houses down and then an interracial family and a Native American family and you know some ...religious families in here and those that aren't religious and those covered in tattoos and those who drink and smoke and, you know, just ...try to bring everybody together so that they're included despite their race or religion. Whatever.

The picture she painted represents how diversity is becoming more present in the lives of everyone. The suggestions of building skills for relating interculturally would facilitate movement and relationship building in such contexts on a micro level, which would seemingly create community on a macro level.

The ESL teacher in Kazakhstan pointed out that, “communities are not just for you ...to enjoy ...to be welcome and feel safe. There's also a responsibility on you. To ensure that that

sense of belonging and safety is given to others. ... It's not that different. You know, the sense of belonging.” This Kuwaiti student described how the impact of his time abroad makes him think differently about how he would be if back in Kuwait:

...you will understand, like, let's say when you see like a person from a different country, like over there in Kuwait, like how to make them feel welcome, you know...every time I go back and I see like a person that is not from over there and like I tried to make sure that they in there ...like they feel welcomed...

Adding to this description is this layer of the richness that comes from having an open posture and welcoming spirit, this participant said, “many times, though, we find that when we welcome people in who are different ...it brings blessing. I mean there's things we learn. We grow from that and we become better people because of it ...(by) being diverse (and) being inclusive.”

This campus employee shared an account of a family member's time spent working for a nonprofit in the Dominican Republic for a few months:

And those people just embraced you and were very welcoming and open...And he said, “Some of the happiest people in the world.” And he said, “Some of the poorest people in the world.” He said, “They have no reason to be as happy as they are...they're amazing people.” So I don't know what makes one place different because that certainly is, you know, Haiti and the Dominican, the poor areas of the Dominican are certainly isolated and remote.

This was a great example of the type of hospitality and reception people can feel when traveling into another culture. There is a sense of acting as the host and providing hospitality that any setting or context or culture may or may not offer, depending on the circumstances and timing. The types of exposure to other cultures and living situations in this way is also demonstrative of

varied lifeworlds and how we can apply our value scale to another context, such as in what constitutes “wealth” or “poverty.”

One professor summarized his travel experience on the topic in this way, “They refuse to leave you alone and they engage in you and start to talk.” He went on to tell about a life-changing trip he took to South America. He shared that his Spanish was limited so his read on things on the surface during a bus ride in Peru. As people were pointing and gesturing his way, his interpretation was that they were making fun of him. What happened next surprised him:

So I’d ride in a bus with the locals, or, you know, be holding a sack of fish in a “clacktiveo” (transportation vehicle) and you’re just forced to talk to people – and I don’t find Americans easy to talk to. Sometimes when you’re on a bus the message ...is leave me alone. I just want to be on my phone or read my book and I don’t want to talk to you – And I remember the guy sitting next to me. He kept looking at me and I think he realized I was cold and he shared his blanket with me. And that struck me as an extremely kind act to share his blanket with me. He didn’t speak to me. (We) didn’t understand (each other’s language.) But I thought, you know, like, that’s an extreme act of kindness of one human to another because he didn’t owe me anything. He didn’t have to do that. But there was something about him as a person or the culture that he came from or the community that he was in that he just felt here’s somebody in need. And I never forgot that. And I hope I’m able to share my blanket to someone in the future.

He experienced relational aspects of community drawing him in in a way he has never forgotten. Having been exposed to that, it is now impacting how he thinks about future actions he would take in such moments. This provides a vivid answer to research question #3.

There are examples of how lifeworld lenses can inhibit our understanding of a different culture or a different person. People get wrapped up in their descriptors and labels without going beneath the surface, relating to the human being, or hearing their story. With the latter, there is the opportunity to learn. The important trigger when saying, “I don’t understand why....someone would vote for Trump¹⁰...would live in a place like this...could be so seemingly happy even though poor, etc.? that we back up a few steps and acknowledge they are working from within another lifeworld or perhaps a different value scale of what defines “rich” and “poor.” Another campus employee described a similar perception, “When we went to Haiti ...with our youth group. ...I felt that immediately when I entered that country. They have nothing but yet they have everything. And, like, what is it that is so missing from our culture?” The contrast of another setting, as demonstrated in both of these descriptions, demonstrates how one might go deeper into their understanding of their own culture. What works against community is when saying “I don’t understand why...” also means, “...and I am not going to try to understand that.”

Block (2010) said, “The invitation is to those who have an interest in the future you are imagining – all who have that interest, whether like-minded people, strangers, stakeholders, adversaries, or someone who is not known, yet. Whom you invite into the room is a big choice” (p. 118). Were we to have a mind toward building community and stronger relationships with fellow human beings, there seems to be applications we can make from these examples of hospitality. We can be a good host in our homes, in our workplaces, and in our classrooms. We can even show more hospitality in the conversations we have with others. Perhaps asking ourselves how our body language might represent our home, in an analogous sense; are the windows and doors all shut and the outside gate closed, or is there a more welcoming

¹⁰ “Trump” was mentioned twenty times as an example across many participant voices.

impression? Similarly, when visiting someone else's culture or lifeworld, we can seek to be a good guest. In the manner we might picture a beloved grandmother or someone who cared for us when we were sick, a similar posture of how we host and care for others seems like it will contribute to the healing we are seeking.

To be human is to be relational.

John Eldredge, Epic

What contributes to building community?

Table 4.4 summarizes what participants felt most contributed to building community. Many of the codes assigned to the summary data in the table have been described above, such as having a common purpose, being accepting, making a contribution, and having mutuality. Table 4.5 shows a summary of factors participants felt most worked against the building of community. Most of the topics have been explained in detail above, such as how lifeworlds, including beliefs and values can affect interactions among people. The tensions over politics and religion were also addressed.

The two tables work in support of each other in many categories, such as demonstrating that hubris, or a lack of humility works against building community and more humility,

| Code | % |
|--|-----|
| Accepting (e.g. differences, welcoming, inclusive, safety) | 31% |
| Communication / Listening | 21% |
| Interaction (Engagement, especially across difference) | 17% |
| Contribution | 10% |
| Curiosity / Learning | 10% |
| Diversity / Differences (For AND Against) | 10% |
| Empathy | 10% |
| Purpose in Common | 10% |
| Respect | 10% |
| Collaboration | 7% |
| Commonality / Mutuality | 7% |
| Others Centered | 7% |
| Support | 7% |
| Understanding | 7% |
| Belonging | 3% |
| Boundary or Border | 3% |
| Care | 3% |
| Compassion | 3% |
| Emotional Intelligence | 3% |
| Expectations | 3% |
| Experience/Event Shared | 3% |
| Humility | 3% |
| Identity Markers | 3% |
| Influence | 3% |
| Intentionality | 3% |
| Loose / Tight Cultures | 3% |
| Patience | 3% |
| Size | 3% |
| Skills | 3% |
| Time | 3% |
| Trust Building | 3% |

Table 4.4 – What builds community?

curiosity, and an interest in learning works toward building community. Similarly, not listening or lack of intentional noncommunications works against and listening more works for. A few codes rose in significance during the in-depth interviews and will be described below: communication/listening, having curiosity and desire to learn (humility), size of the group, and time. Skills and interaction are two of the primary themes discussed throughout. *Communication is a learning process*

| Code | % |
|---|------------|
| Beliefs, Ideas, Values (Religion, Politics) | 14% |
| Not Feeling Accepted | 14% |
| Communication / Lack of Engagement / Not Listening | 11% |
| Diversity / Differences (For AND Against) | 11% |
| Isolation, Isolated Silos/Clusters/Lanes | 8% |
| Crime / Drugs | 6% |
| Hubris / Arrogance | 6% |
| Inflexibility | 6% |
| Self-Focus | 6% |
| Expectations | 3% |
| Fear | 3% |
| Narrow-Mindedness (Closed) | 3% |
| Negativity / Toxicity | 3% |
| Skills Lacking | 3% |
| Trust Lacking | 3% |
| Fixed Mindset | 3% |

Table 4.5 – What works against community?

From the research and pilot study prior, the topic of communication and especially listening to each other seemed a very important skill to explore further. Participants were asked about this scenarios in the survey: 39) *Which best describes how long would you listen to someone you did not agree with or who had very different beliefs/values/opinions than you?* The responses are detailed in Table 4.6. People indicated in the survey a fairly reasonable approach to listening. There was some indication that people may interrupt or even walk away. During the interviews, there were additional questions about listening or it came up in relation to another prompt, where people indicated they did not do as well at this as they would hope to.

When asked what constituted good listening, the answers were very consistent, as demonstrated in Table 4.7. “Seeking to understand” was the type of response that came out the highest by far in the coding

| % | Response |
|--------------|---|
| 44.2% | “I would listen until they finished speaking, then I would share my viewpoint.” |
| 40.3% | “I would listen until they finished speaking, then be sure I understood their viewpoint.” |
| 11.7% | “I sometimes interrupt to share my viewpoint.” |
| 3.4% | “I would listen until I heard something I disagree with, then interrupt with my viewpoint.” |
| .05% | “I would not listen and/or I might walk away.” |

Table 4.6 – How you would listen to someone you disagree with

at 90%. This works in tangent with not just hearing audible signals and paying attention to non-verbal signals. In other words, attending to the other person was critical. When we consider this along with speed settings and time spent and the busyness felt in our cultural rhythm, there is something to consider about how fast we move and ask others to move.

Focusing on the other person and not self was emphasized. This is echoed in having a one-way flow during the listening process, asking questions to confirm you are understanding, and not enduring the minimal amount of listening until a topic or phrase triggers a person’s own story or point of view on the matter. 38% of the responses spoke of focusing on others, being present and attentive, not interrupting, and having it be a one-way street while listening. Linguistically speaking, one of the important skills needed early in any language study is a grasp of turn-taking. After a time of reception of what the other person is offering, there is then a shift to where the listener becomes the speaker, and the other receives. Not having an agenda or ulterior motivation for the conversation other than knowing and understanding the other person better, that is connecting with another human being, came out in the comments; this and a discussion about conflict will be elaborated on in chapter 5. Not judging or ranking or other types of hierarchical thinking and one-up positioning is helpful. There was a level of care and

compassion and patience for others voiced often. The other person needs to feel safe and comfortable, which is created in part by the listener who may consider the hospitality aspect of being in conversation, as if hosting a guest in one's home. It was clear that people in general seemed to know what good listening is. Exploring it in depth with interviewees, there was a common realization and chuckle to ourselves that even though we know what to do, we do not tend to do it. Bad habits creep into life quickly, including those that inhibit communication, which certainly seems a critical lifeline to building community.

The intervention aspect of the survey instrument was seen in this response early in an interview with a university employee.

So I have caught myself like...more actively paying attention to that piece. Like, am I actively listening to people? Because my initial responses. "Oh yeah, I will be listen to people." And then after completing the survey, I sometimes find myself...(chuckles) I apparently don't listen quite as actively as I thought! ...I do tend to... I began to realize (I) jumped in occasionally with people I know.

Many participants spoke of "active listening" as a concept many people are familiar with, and they tended to equate many features of "good listening" with "active listening." Making connections, especially deeper connections, with other human beings beyond the differences we sometimes lead or open with and how that might build community came out in many responses, such as this one from an international student from Mexico:

Maybe if I don't agree with that person. Or I don't value that person. Maybe I won't listen to that person. But if someone that, for example, I respect, like my mom will tell me that then I will kind of like open my barrier and be more willing to listen, to take her point of view...for other people, we kind of let them out. This kind of like... they're just words but listening from ...active listening can transform us.

She went on to demonstrate the impact on community of shutting the “barrier” and the labeling and categorizing that works against connecting with other people. In these comments, she was trying to understand the election season in the U.S., the many yard signs on public display unlike in Mexico, and how people seem to be antagonistic toward each other.

I think that if we did that, it will divide us, because we are no longer listening to that person, but we are like...We're putting them in boxes and therefore we're not active listening. But if we get rid of that. Then we will find out that we could be friends with someone that doesn't agree with their same ideas. And because of that, then we're willing to include them and to be like active listeners and be like, “Oh yeah, right. Yeah. You're right about these ...or I don't completely agree on this case, but I could see your point. And it could be more human than just putting that barrier and be like, “No, no, no, no, this side...this side... (and) That's it. So I definitely, ...I.... I see that.

This student is moving toward a career involving social work and counseling, so she is very interested in understanding the types of issues coming out in this study. They relate to the campus community and her experience there as an international student. It also impacts the larger context surrounding her campus experience in the U.S.

How long will you listen?

There was a challenging aspect built into the survey question #39 about how long someone would listen to another person who had very different viewpoints. In looking at lifeworlds, we might consider the larger themes where we have common ground, even if only our humanity. Looking deeper beyond the surface features, and especially hearing their stories, people may find connection that the “yard signs” and “bumper stickers” of our lives would thwart, especially when we lead with differences. Participants spoke of the ideological spaces people occupy both in religion and politics as the most intensive areas for difficulty.

This college employee grappled with these dynamics, having grown up in an area in the U.S. where the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) was present and active.

I'm not willing to necessarily be open with that extreme radical beliefs. And that's not to say I can't have a

| Theme / Factor | % |
|--|------------|
| Seeking to Understand (e.g. processing, asking questions, clarifying, confirming you are hearing correctly) | 90% |
| Focus On Others (e.g. caring, not problem-solving, not your story, not your values, not your version of this, etc.) | 41% |
| Being Present and Attentive | 34% |
| Not Interrupting | 31% |
| One-Way (Flow) | 24% |
| Empathetic | 21% |
| Not Listening Until Trigger Statements/Word/Topic – or Planning Response | 21% |
| More Than Hearing (Auditory Signals In) | 17% |
| Interest and Curiosity | 10% |
| Quiet | 10% |
| Speaker Can Tell You Are Listening | 10% |
| Speaker Feels Safe & Comfortable | 10% |
| Time Taken | 10% |
| Open-Minded | 7% |
| Skills | 7% |
| Discerning | 3% |
| Giving Back (Contributing to person or community) | 3% |
| Humility | 3% |
| No Agenda (Motivation) | 3% |
| Not Changing Subject | 3% |
| Not Judging | 3% |
| Patience | 3% |

Table 4.7 – What makes for good listening?

conversation with individuals who are right wing beliefs, but ...it's that radical supremacist belief that I ...can't tolerate that behavior. So...I don't. There's a difference between that *other*, you know, because I said, “Well, I'm open to all different cultures and beliefs and I am but ...there's a certain level radical supremacist belief systems ...that I can't be open to that communication for whatever reason. So I would say...I'm going to sort of use that as a as an example.... For me, communication is a learning process. I learn from everybody and there are people that I won't be open to in that communication dialogue...that's not really active listening because I can't do that for whatever reason.

The honesty and vulnerability of this response was helpful and appreciated. That “communication is a learning process” summed up much of what this part of the study would hope to say. Several people tried to reconcile their perceived openness and progressiveness with the realization that there are some people they would not sit across the table from.

Are you willing to be changed by the other person?

There was a more provocative question I used to elicit more data on the skill of listening and the art of conversation. The question came from a quote from Alan Alda, who is known for his acting roles on M*A*S*H and on other shows and movies. His recent decades of work have focused on improving communication skills, which is seen in books he has written, workshops and training,¹¹ which are especially targeted at helping scientists be able to share information clearly. His podcast *Clear and Vivid*¹² is focused on connecting and communicating. In one podcast, he shared a charge to himself that was adapted into an interview question. Alda said, “I have learned that I am not really listening unless I'm willing to be changed by the other person”

¹¹ Read more about the Alda Center for Communicating Science at <https://www.aldacenter.org/>.

¹² Learn more at <https://www.alanalda.com/>.

(Alda, 2018). That set up and quote was given, and then I asked people, “How does that strike you?” This generated a lot of good reflection and insight from the participants.

As an example of how the quote tended to cause some wrestling with the concept, this university employee talked it out this way:

I would argue that... I don't want ...my mind to change. And I don't know if it should have to change, but maybe I can still listen, in a way of appreciating another person's experience without being willing... but I don't know, I, yeah, so I kind of get the sentiment that maybe. Yeah. You can't really be appreciating or understanding or open to another person's idea if you're not willing to potentially change your mind. So I think it's certainly it's certainly worth aspiring to and thinking about.

The ideals of connection and community and communication are evident in this reaction. During the interviews, I would let the question hang there without comment, and it brought responses such as above. A Dutch participant working in Africa similarly acknowledge the challenge:

It's a threat ...But (on) the other hand it's a new opportunity to learn. So the comments we have some of another person. There is also an opportunity for growth. Yeah. So first I feel threat...and then I have to process it in my mind. And then ...it becomes a learning opportunity.

There is that inclination to “aspire” to listen more, to engage with others who are different than us, and certainly to build toward connection.

This student from Germany had spoken earlier about the desire and struggle to remain friends with someone when their views on U.S. politics were so diametrically different from each other. She grappled with that relationship around the Alda quote:

There are so many people that are able to just be quiet and take things in and that doesn't mean that they have to be willing to change. I think they just have to be willing to connect with other people. ...like I can listen to you and I'm trying to understand that doesn't mean that you're going to change my opinion or you're going to change how I feel about something politically, but it just means I'm trying to connect with you because I'm trying to understand. I feel like that's very different from I'm going to change by listening to you.

The college employee who mentioned just above not relating to radical groups processed the charge about willingness to be changed in this way:

There's a lot of truth to that. There's so many truths, because for me, too, and I'm even thinking about those individuals who belief systems are totally different ...than my belief systems. But in those interactions where you open up to whatever belief system is happening. There's...I'm learning from that. I'm changing from that. I'm seeing things and hearing things in a different perspective. Yeah, and I think about those individuals... There's certainly ...individual belief systems that I just can't be open to so I can't communicate with them, so... for me, it would be the Right wing, Klu Klux Klan, you know, the individuals that are so biased to people outside of their white supremacist culture.

It was from these types of responses, and the wondering for any person, who is it that we could never imagine sitting across the table from ever, that new clarity came to the researcher. People felt the “threat” of the prompt, especially in the idea that they had to change themselves. Having to change rings of judgment or rejection of something that is not as it should be. However, the quote does not say one *has* to change. It is positing a measure of what being truly engaged and

listening is, that we could be changed if our posture is open. The concluding thoughts from this series of discussions were that we *are* changed even if only in how we are expanded by knowing more about the other person. The idea of us changing from listening to others, even if they are very opposite of us on some ideological continuums or cultural norms, comes in that we are literally expanded if only by our understanding of them. Knowing where they are coming from, knowing their backstory or origin story, and truly seeking to understand their ideas or point are aspects of life that do not seem as visible now. These fall on the other end of the spectrum from the quick labeling, categorizing, filing, and potentially dismissing that human beings can do in interacting with another. A similar expansion may come around the topic or opinion but that seems secondary. If we are not different from having had the interaction, something does not seem to be working right, especially in terms of building community.

The biggest challenge of all in listening well, as alluded to in the data depicted in Table 4.7, is not judging the other person. Taking away the hierarchical thinking, the one-upping, winning, and ranking that comes with thinking our way is better seems destructive to community. Drawing again from the world of intercultural skills: there is an egocentrism and ethnocentrism that is often only relegated to our countries of origin and cultural ways seems just as present in our individual core beliefs, values, politics, religion, and other aspects that make up our own lifeworld. “My way is superior” lends itself more to *bonding* social capital than *bridging* social capital, a reminder of the point that the most needed way of connecting is most difficult to attain (Putnam, et al., 2003, p. 3).

This nurse from Colombia who worked in other cultures in Africa realized the quote had actually played out in her own journey:

I think that's what happened to me. Like for example, I did not know a lot... I didn't know anything about Islam and through conversations with my day group, my translators, I've learned a lot about what they believe. And it has changed what ...I, ...the way I perceive it, the way I think about it.

There was an expansion of self in how she perceived the belief system of another, which was added into her catalog of experience as a reference moving forward. Her perceptions toward future actions would seemingly be different from having gained this experience.

Must I win or evaluate or can I just understand more?

The competitive aspects of interaction that take away connection and understanding as the primary reason for engaging was reflected in how this professor considered the quote:

Like when I hear that statement, I think, we are very quick to want to respond, again, it goes back to that, we got a win, right. It's about winning a debate...winning a discussion or winning in a position. And so then we don't we don't listen. And instead ...we're quick to, you know, in our minds, we're coming up with our defense. Our argument, our counter position. And so then I'm not listening to what you're having to say because there's nothing, you know, you can say that's going to change my mind. I'm not willing to change. ...And I think that sort of reflects that...we need to enter conversation (where) my goal is not to change your opinion. My goal is to... our goal should be to understand one another and then ... through that conversation that we have, we begin to learn... what's influencing our, our perspective of the situation. And then as a person based on what I'm hearing that might trigger me to want to go and learn more about it. And then I begin to potentially shape and alter my understanding of it. ...so then I'm more likely to embrace change and consider a different perspective.

As with the realization from the nurse about Islam, when there is an open and receptive posture that does not feel threatened, the opportunity to learn and grow and have the borders of our own understanding expanded become more visible. The feelings of safety and trust in a conversation can be collaboratively created by the participants in the spirit of hospitality discussed earlier.

These points will be elaborated on in chapter 5 under *The gift of dissent*.

Letting the mirror reflect back at you

There were two additional applications made to teaching and being impacted by others as made by two ESL teachers, one in Kazakhstan and one in another part of Pennsylvania. The former related it to how she teaches her speech classes:

And it's, it's one of the principles, you know what, when you listen to somebody...don't listen to the questions in your head, like you're already prepared with the scripts and you're trying to disagree. Like I teach public speaking and debates and so the kids, they have a script in their heads and that's all they're listening to. They're not listening to the other team presenting so I teach that to them. ...it's interesting. ...I need to stop and think about that myself, you know, like (if I'm) so convinced... If I'm so attached to something ...to my position about something that I'm not willing to listen and be ...open-minded enough to see maybe they have a point. I don't have to agree completely. But maybe there's some way for me to see the truth from their eyes. ...it's profound...It's like a mirror, you know. I teach something. But then somebody brought that mirror back to me with this quote and said, "What are you doing yourself?" Outside the classroom, when you have a conversation with someone, then you disagree with them, are you willing to not listen to the script in your head. But listen to them...be willing to hear them out. See why they're saying what they're saying, what's their truth. What is ...not their truth?

This reflective rehearsal of the application beyond the classroom is a great illustration of the power of contrast to help us understand more – not only about others but about ourselves. People in helper roles, or wearing the mantle of parent or teacher or leader, can speak principles and vision for others to follow but it is important to let the mirror reflect back on themselves too. Through our interaction and engagement we have more credibility with each other and potential for our own growth to keep progressing.

The ESL teacher in Pennsylvania compared the willingness people have to be truly engaged and listening to another with a similar choice students need to make in the classroom.

I think (I) can apply (that) to many different places. I, I probably might use that with my students like ...if you're not actually willing to commit this to knowledge and you're not really listening, you're, you're attending, right, so we say that difference of attending class and just being there physically but not actually engaged. And I think that's the same probably with this idea of listening, that if we aren't actually willing to do something with it, then it's just that, *in and out* type of idea. Or just background noise and not actually committing to it. I think that's important.

Her version of this was, “If you are not willing to learn, then you are not really attending class, even though you may be there physically.” This was a helpful application.

Among the different responses, several people interpreted the statement as the person *had* to change, either change as a person or change their mind, as a result of listening to the other person. This take on it was as more of a contractual exchange in that *if I listen I must change*. That is not my interpretation. In a quick debrief afterward, I would sometimes share that it strikes me more as a matter of our posture and positionality toward the other person. If every door and window of my lifeworld is closed, then I am not being very hospitable. Neither am I being

curious, open to learning, or exercising humility that may be helpful to connecting and especially my own growth. In chapter 5, there will be a more in-depth discussion about how people attend to others, and how seeing others as “background noise,” or “surfaces” to swipe, or one “task” in our multi-tasking mythology are certainly not contributing to the connections between human beings that seem imperative to building community.

Ready or not, globalization requires a particular set of skills and will find you

Considering the importance of building global competency skills cannot be emphasized enough as the interconnectedness and technological advances allow remote access for education and work across the world. People who stay in one area or remain static in a single discipline or career and never imagine themselves traveling by airplane or otherwise will still find the world changing around them, regardless of their plan. As was explained with change and transition, even those who do not cross boundaries of intercultural difference will find the boundaries cross them. This participant adjusting to living back in the U.S. after more than 20 years abroad observes:

I think people are going to be able to connect with people of other cultures and countries a lot more easily. And I think it's going to create some cataclysmic changes in the world. So I don't think it's anything we can prevent ...internationalization...is going to happen. And so those people who are more able to understand people of other countries or other cultures and have different perspectives are going to probably going to be more sought out and more welcomed, more desired are needed in the future because they're able to operate on several different levels with several different cultural understandings.

In the context of this interview conversation, he noted that his four kids who are TCKs who have grown up with that hybridity of living between worlds are in demand in their careers and have

skills that companies are looking for. Our own five children, having grown up similarly, have interaction and people skills that are admired in ways that parents love to hear and which continuously seem to help them advance in their work settings.

This domestic student at a U.S. university recognized the importance of internationalization initiatives on campus for students:

It's important that you learn as much as you possibly can before you get into the workforce...if you only have one set of instructions, then you're going to be clueless when it comes to needing to adapt or need to accept different viewpoints (for) an academic institution or a government institution or anything along those lines, it's extremely important that internationalization takes place since globalization has, you know, continued to spread.

His points are echoed within the framework of transition models through what Bateson (1989) said in her writing from within a higher education context:

As escalating and sweeping changes have become the norm, life can feel increasingly complex and unsettling...Indeed, today continuity is the exception, and adjusting to discontinuity has become the norm of our era. Whether people accept the changes around them or not, they may find that their old strategies no longer work in today's social context. Those who do not master adaptation are likely to find themselves trapped into obsolescence as the world continues to change around them (as cited in Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006. P. 3).

In chapter 5 under *The Child-Expert Cycle*, this point will be built upon in considering remaining malleable and adaptable as a means of professional development that keeps a person current with the times in any field. This professor summarized how a campus learning environment can be

impacted, “Whenever you can diversify your environments. It just enriches it ...because ...it challenges our understanding of the world and understanding of people. Again, challenging those ...stereotypes that we might have. And the way it just broadens (your) global citizenship” When we consider the dichotomy of being static or dynamic characters, or, if you will, a fixed versus growth campus, the movement toward global competence within internationalization planning seems a must.

Triangulating the quantitative data from the survey with the qualitative data from participant voices, there is a strong consistency. 89.3% of participants said it is “Very important for college student to develop skills for relating globally and those different from them. Only 9.7% said it was “Somewhat important.” 1% were “Neutral,” and no one said developing these global competency and intercultural relation skills were “Not very important” or “Not important at all.”

With this traveler approach, there is the potential to not only maintain relevancy, but to build adaptability and resiliency and to prevent atrophy in the quality of the learning experiences themselves. In the same way an international student coming to a U.S. campus has the choice of whether to immerse or not to make the most of the experience, all people have the same choices before them in leaning into the wave of change and riding it. Or we can seek or speak more of seas that are flat and calm...and seemingly nonexistent much of the time. This university employee challenges our educational approaches by comparing the difference between a surface and a depth experience related to engaging with the culture:

...we do a disservice to our educational system by not teaching our children a second or third language in those developmental years because we need that intercultural language

to embrace others and have a different understanding. ...I will have *an* experience because I'm in Germany, but it won't be as robust as if I could speak that language.

A domestic student who had some study abroad experiences builds on this point, talking about how people in the U.S. feel:

"There's no need to go out of the country." I feel like a lot of people have that idea...in (my) high school ...I was (one of) only two kids in the last 30 years who had gone abroad...And I just think it's ridiculous...it always ...amaze(s) me how people learn (and) Americans aren't as open (to that)...There's so much pressure to (just) finish your degree in four years or less...because it's so expensive. I mean, (but you're) not really focused on how you can better yourself as a person and you're more so just worried ...being able to get a job and pay off your student loans.

This participant grew up in Ukraine but is now long-time resident of the U.S. She made many points about all the good things experienced here. As an educator with advanced degree and a heart for students, she made this observation about the range of exposure to things more global we may or may not offer as we design educational programming:

...there's one thing I think that lacks even in the American education. ...(growing up) we had more of that because, for example, we started world history like even back in high school. ...we were much more aware of the United States, of course, not counting the propaganda, the slant of all the things. Yeah. But even so, ...we had more factual knowledge. But in American schools...for example, ask someone (where) Ukraine (is or) the Volga River, stuff like that, and a lot of people don't know about it. And then a lot of people, especially people who live in smaller towns, they have never left their state. They

never left their town. And they know nothing about people... (H)owever, globalization is a quite a real thing and it's happening.

She was surprised in reflecting on this how systems such as socialism are being spoken of so favorably in the narrative of the U.S. now by people who have not lived under that system as she has. A woman from the U.S. voiced this wondering as she thought about internationalization:

I wish education was taken a little more seriously here in America, you know, because I feel like national or worldwide in other countries, you know...they take school more seriously...I don't know, like you've been in geography class and stuff, you know, you would only learn about like the country and the capital of the country and take the test like it wasn't a, "Let's sit down and focus, you know, pick a couple countries to focus on for the semester and learn about their culture and their ...you know, what they eat...

Related to this theme of building global competency skills, participants used the word "inevitable" five times and communicated that idea even more, such as in the participant voices above. To not prepare students for the world as we find it now and the way it is changing is a "disservice" to them was spoken of specifically.

The comments from U.S. citizens from within the country are a good reminder that the international student's journey, as has been described here, is really every person's journey. The diversification and globalization will enter everyone's context. Triangulating the quantitative data with the qualitative showed strong correlation again. The question was asked, "How important it is for anyone" to develop those same skills, taking "college student" out and replacing it with "anyone" in asking the question. The percentages dropped only slightly. 79.6% said "Very important." 18.4% said "Somewhat important. 1.9% said "Neutral." Again, no one

responded that it was “Not very important” or “Not important at all.” It seems very recognized in the sample that the global competency skills are needed.

These principles apply to many contexts, to many other educational settings, such as K-12, and especially to higher education campuses. The point was made very explicitly from two voices at the campus setting where the application of this study would be focused. This comment was a campus employee who has a role that overlaps with all other departments and services on campus:

...how important I think it is for people to be ...exposed to different cultures and different belief systems, so I really like the idea of internationalization. Because I think in our country, in particular, we have this mindset that we do things the best way and it's just not true. And so I think (it) is really important for us to bring other people into our schools not so we can show them the best way to do things. But so they can show us that there are other ways to understand things (and other) ways to do things. And I think that's super important ...for people to grow and to learn.

It is honest to call out the ethnocentrism that is present in any culture. Thinking our way of thinking and doing things is best is a type of egocentrism that is commonly human in a person. As noted here, it can be as present in one's own body of knowledge, department, or whichever isolated silo or “pod” that might apply. It is not to discredit the greatness of a country or idea or method or discipline, so much as it is to say we can learn from each other if we will cross boundaries from time to time. The hierarchical thinking that elevates one over another is not as conducive to building community.

This international student from Germany had done an exchange program attending a U.S. high school and is now an undergraduate student at our university. She hopes to attend medical school in the U.S.

I will always be a proponent of internationalization. I think there's just so much to gain from it. I think on the most basic level of people are exposed, not exposed, but are faced with ...with other opinions and other backgrounds and so they are faced with people that are very different from them. Maybe not always in the way they expect. And I think just being around people that are different is a very good learning environment because if we are able to play with it, to think about and to work with what makes us different. I think there's a lot of ...like there's a high learning curve. ...I cannot come up with negatives (about) internationalization.

This ATCK reflected on the value of building these skills, saying, "I don't know, but the more that people are prepared to ...spend time with people from other places in the globe...That's just ...that's gotta be good. That's world peace!"

How do intentional conversations with culturally disparate individuals impact community?

After spending time talking about internationalization in general and the ideas for building community, as rehearsed above, the survey instrument and interview protocol asked the participants directly about the factors related to research question #1 reiterated in the title above. They were first asked how they felt about the prospect, which was analyzed and coded as either having a positive impact, a medium impact, or a negative impact. Only 2% of responses were coded as negative, 7% medium, and 91% of the respondents said this type of interaction between culturally disparate people has a positive impact. This statistic was very validating to the design of the study.

Participants were next asked what they thought might come from such exposure, which was analyzed and coded as illustrated in Table 4.9. Again, there were overwhelmingly positive benefits predicted. The highest values statistically had to do with increased understanding and awareness and other descriptors for growth. There was also the recognition of expanding perspective in comments coded as “Lifeworld.” The power of contrast to increase understanding of others and self was noted. There was a recognition that empathy would likely increase. The challenge in this clear picture from the data, similar to how it was with factors around listening well to others, is if we as people see the many benefits to having this type of exposure and engagement, why do we not act on that more?

The qualitative data aligns with this quantitative coding, such as in the comments throughout the study and this participant voice:

I think it's a good thing if we can identify more as the human race instead of just individual races like we're all part of something. If you can find that sense of power, you know, (that we're) all part of the human race. We're all part of ...this overwhelming

| Code | % |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| Understanding | 19% |
| Growth | 18% |
| Benefits | 13% |
| Lifeworld (impacted) | 11% |
| Perspective | 8% |
| Contrast (Benefits of exposure) | 6% |
| Awareness | 4% |
| Empathy | 3% |
| Relationships | 3% |
| Common Ground | 3% |
| Skills | 3% |
| Interest | 2% |
| None (No clear code) | 2% |
| Open | 2% |
| Bias | 1% |
| Challenge | 1% |
| Community | 1% |
| Conflict | 1% |
| Disposition | 1% |
| Diversity | 1% |
| Ethnocentrism | 1% |
| Family | 1% |
| Respect | 1% |
| Zones | 1% |

Table 4.8 – What comes from exposure to difference?

...identity that brings people together, that can be a good thing. ...Seems like the world right now is pulling back from that...

A workplace, or a neighborhood, or especially as we picture a college campus with networks of sidewalks and open commons and central spaces between residence halls, it is not hard to recognize the intersection of diverse lives that traverse these crossroads. The international student journey is often one of sojourn, that is, a temporary stay in a location. That too represents all people's journey, as we all navigate the seasons of life and change. The overlapping of life trajectories for a set period of time brings to mind the most impactful manner of a Venn Diagram. Inside that overlap are timelines of lives and experiences, temporarily in the same space, such as a work team, neighborhood, or campus, where this is access to a tremendous range of lifeworlds and, in that, opportunities to travel and learn.

By engaging with others who are from other cultures and otherwise different from us in lifeworld, we have portals into other countries, cultures, and even worlds. Education found in books and curriculum offers some steps forward. However, engagement and coexistence with others who are culturally disparate invites access to the entirety of wisdom dispersed across all of humanity. There is so much to be gained by packing curiosity and humility and setting out to travel. Putnam, et al. (2003) said:

Again and again, we find that one key to creating social capital is to build in redundancy of contact. A single pitch is not enough, whether you are pitching unionization or Christian salvation. Common spaces for commonplace encounters are prerequisites for common conversations and common debates. Furthermore, networks that intersect and circles that overlap reinforce a sense of reciprocal obligation and extend the boundaries of empathy. (p. 291)

Block (2010) calls us to see “through the eyes of the artist” to reflect “the intimate nature of community,” adding:

What makes community building so complex is that it occurs in an infinite number of small steps, sometimes in quiet moments that we notice out of the corner of our eye. It calls for us to treat as important many things that we thought were incidental. (p. 9)

If we allow for such a shift and maximize those momentary decisions to engage with our only agenda being to understand, the kinship, healing, and peace we seek may be found. The interest seems strong from within this participant sample. They were asked their interest in having training toward building global competency skills in survey question #42 as a measure to read the receptiveness on campus and in

44) How strong is your interest in attending a workshop on building multicultural/intercultural communication skills and global competencies, if available?
206 responses

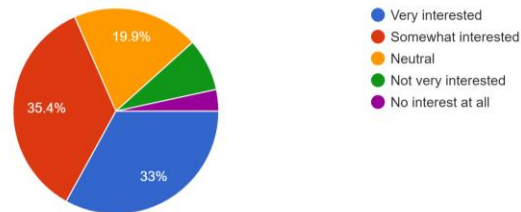


Figure 4.2

45) How important is it to you personally to feel like a you belong as a member of the community or situation in which you are living?
206 responses

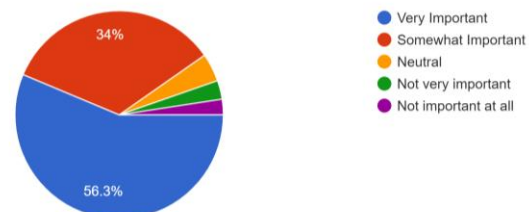


Figure 4.3

the community. Figure 4.2 demonstrated a reasonably high interest on which to build. The overall data from participants inside and outside of higher education indicate the desire for being part of a community where everyone feels belonging was high, as illustrated in Figure 4.3 in response to survey question 45.

Empathy can flow through you

Empathy has been a strong theme running through the language of the survey and interviews and illustrated in the tables summarizing the data in this chapter. The phrase “in the other person’s shoes” or words to that effect were used often. More elaborate explanations were drawn out by the participants, such as this one from a someone who teaches at another higher education institution and connects with other parts of the world via online meetings who explained empathy this way:

You, you have to be able to open yourself up to feel what other people feel, to experience what they may have experienced, or at least understand or to listen, you know, that takes a lot of empathy. Like, even in the case of the racial tensions that are going on. The biggest problem. I'm, I'm pretty convinced of is that people don't want to just listen. They don't want to understand. They don't want to work at understanding what has happened ...particularly the African American males in this. ...there's a narrative that's in their mind and they look at every single black man, the same and then they'll realize that well that black man may not fit that narrative. Yeah, so a lack of empathy contributes to the divide in community.

He explained the above in the context of being a White father who lived overseas for some time, is back in the U.S. now, and has children who are now married to persons of color. He was sharing some of the perspective they have gained from listening to his African-American son-in-law who is also a police officer. The value of empathy in answering the primary research questions is explained in a moving way by this ESL teacher who grew up in the Ukraine.

I take it as having some active interest in what the person is saying ...Meaning if you kind of relate to that person. If you're empathetic. It's like you imagine yourself in the person's shoes and the ...like you let it flow through you. You feel his emotions. You don't just listen to words but you actually become empathetic. So then, of course, there is an interchange...not just on the level of words, but also the level of emotions. ...and then the person really opens up because the person sees that you are sympathetic that ...you're not just listening because you have to, but you are genuinely interested.

In the ongoing quest to conceptualize what community is and what it may mean to people, this impactful statement from a TCK participant who speaks often on the subject said, “I think (of) community as ...the corporate manifestation of empathy.”

Humility – an open gateway to learning and caring

In probing deeper in order to answer research question #2 about factors that impact community, participants were asked if there were any connections between community and humility, and if so, what they were. Some participants commented that they were surprised to consider “humility” in the context of community, and then grappled with it in the manner of the *Alda listening...changed* question above. One professor said, “It's kind of interesting, thinking about it. I don't normally think of those words in relation to community.” Another university employee summed it up this way:

it's an interesting word to choose with community. And it makes me think. *Humility*. I think needs to be part of a community because community ...is about everybody working together towards a common goal and sometimes that takes humility... So, a sense of *community* is a sense of group to me and a sense of the *ego* is a sense of one. So I think being able to have humility means you put group ahead of yourself.

The impact of vulnerability and humility was explained by this police officer:

...there's no greater ...sign of strength and showingyour humaneness and...whether that's ...the community helping in solving particular crime or you know crediting an officer who did a particular task. (It's) not getting too full of self, you know, because of the position that we do. ...we're all pretty pretty similar, you know, when it comes down to the very basic part of things. ... there can always be forces that push things the opposite way. And ...I see those as being a threat to, you know, the overall fabric of our community...

A professor in social work placed humility alongside the need for empathy and compassion, saying:

I like to focus on compassion and humility and empathy is important...that to me connected to the humility piece ...that willingness to continue to learn and transform ...the humility piece (is) where I keep expanding my understanding about ...the barriers to change ...and recognizing ...there's not one right way and that we have to collaborate in here, diverse thoughts around solutions to these complex issues.

In the student voices on campus, there were a few that used the word “entitlement” in the sense of feeling entitled to hold your view of the world above others or to preserve your legacy and view of how the campus, community, or country should be. This student said, “I think that (humility)...contributes to growth tremendously ...no matter how much you know or have experienced or ...whichever level, you think you are, you're always open to learning... not even more about yourself, but about other people or other knowledge.” She went on to say:

I think that some people ...think that they're entitled because of how smart they are (or by how) successful they think they are. How much ...money you have

that's why I think humility is so important for the growth of the community because community can't grow if they don't interact and if they don't ...get along. And if they're not empathetic and they don't try to understand each other because they're kind of blocked

Another domestic student explained it this way:

...I think one of the things that impedes community building and progress and cooperation, such as entitlement: believing that you know better than. What you know is the best and that you have the right not to change anything about yourself, because this was the way you (were) raised or what you believe, or what somebody else has taught you to believe so. ...knowing that your beliefs are built off of the life that you lived and possibly influenced by outside forces allows you to be more empathetic towards other people in your community or just around you in general on a daily basis.

His analysis connected the previous points on family of origin, lifeworlds, and the charge to being open to change discussed earlier in this section.

Other participants echoed similar sentiments on how humility is an ingredient that seems integral to building community. A college employee said, "understanding we might not have all the answers, and we may not always be right." An international student said:

Humility is kind of like the gateway to being able to care about other people, and like have the space of open conversation. Because if you are so self-centered and so

convinced of yourself and your opinions. I feel like there is no space and listening to other people.

An ATCK built on the concept of creating a “space of open conversation” saying:

Humility, in the sense of saying, I don't know what it is like to be you. ... communicates to them ...I'm willing to listen and learn from you because I have the humility to say that I don't know everything about you or about myself.

The nurse from Colombia added to the point, “humility, it's just it's just an open door to learn...if I feel like I don't need to learn, if I feel like I do everything in the best way, then I won't be able to learn from other people.” The aspect of our posture toward others is reflected in this professor's words:

you have to be humble enough to say that... You have something I need to hear about or you have something to say that I don't or you have a perspective that I need. And that takes humility because you have to open yourself up to say my way not might ...might not always be the best way or the only way.

The connections made to learning and building community echoed also from a voice in Brazil, “I was humble enough to accept my mistakes and ...the other one's mistakes. ...I'm not superior to anyone. I can have a knowledge of a better knowledge in certain topics better than you, and in the other way around.” Lastly, humility was noted as the building block of community by this ESL teacher in Pennsylvania:

I think I just relate that back to, again, letting people tell their own story and recognizing that what we see or what we think we know might not be the whole picture...People are out for themselves. And so ...they make it about themselves. And I think it needs to be the opposite, that community building is starting with others.

If a setting has some of the elements participants describe that help create community, such as safety, trust, listening, and vulnerability, humility also seems to need space in which to live toward a better community outcome. People feel safe enough to admit they do not know everything or when they make mistakes. If ever there were a common ground that could be found among human beings everywhere, those would be on the list. People can easily have in mind to change others more than being open to being affected and changed ourselves. For activists, leaders, educators, or anyone wanting to make an impact, the power of humility and being more of a *Changed Agent* seems imperative.

Before and after: the impact transitions had on trajectories and outlooks

In the series of interview questions on transitions where there was a clear before and after, the data on how the transition affected identity was reported earlier. Participants were asked how their lives were different on the other side of those transitions. There were a few additional points from that data that apply to the discussion here, especially in finding common ground. Feiler (2020) “We need to rebrand life transitions. Instead of dismissing them as hostile terrain we have to soldier through, we should see them as fertile terrain we can gain sustenance from,” adding that though they are filled with “tumult and unrest,” they are “also filled with helpful purging and dazzling creativity” (pp. 312-313). Domestic and international students on a campus, the faculty and staff that works to serve them, and for that matter everyone in the

surrounding community have common ground in that they are dealing with changes and the internal effect described in Transition Theory.

As they move into or out of any particular situations, adults can benefit from discovering their commonalities, from realizing they are not alone. Such a realization, referred to by Yalom (1985) as a sense of universality, typically comes when people in a group learn that many others have shared similar experiences and feelings. (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006, p. 215)

We are not alone in facing these challenges. The more we can compare notes and listen to each other in support, we may find the helpers that will become part of our support networks. These are the “helpers” or “mentors” that can stand beside the heroes when crossing that gap between the known and unknown or in times of crisis at the abyss, as in Campbell’s Hero’s Journey. Like with globalization and the diversification of society and constancy of change: “Transitions are not going away; the key to benefiting from them is to not turn away. Don’t shield your eyes when the scary parts start; that’s when the heroes are made” (Feiler, 2020, p. 313).

Everything I *never* knew I always wanted

Participants reflected on their movement from where they were more comfortable and things were known, how their perception from their vantage point compared to their perspective afterward. This professor who had once worked in business and made a career change:

...I think I've been definitely (healthier) ...I think the shift has been was eye opening in many positive ways. ...you begin to realize ...that there are some negative effects from something when you step back and you look at it and I wasn't. I was too engrossed and I thought that that's all there was, right, and there wasn't another me. It was like the career

path and options, but then when you make that shift, then you realize how much it was negatively affecting.

An international student from the Middle East simply said from on the other side of his transition, “I’m more open minded.” The Dutch nurse who worked in a hospital in Africa had this to say from the other side of the gap between what she had known and her perspective now:

I think I’m more focused like on the people instead of ...the tasks. Take time to talk to people, like, not like look at your watch, like, well, I actually have to go to a meeting. It’s like, well, the meeting can wait because now I’m talking to someone. So let’s just like take time. Listen. And then we’ll move on. ...Yeah, I think that really changed but it’s hard to like keep that like mindset when you’re back in the Netherlands. Yeah. So, everyone is focused on time. (If I had not gone to Africa) I probably ...would still have had my own house with my job in the hospital in my hometown and life would be the same as like 10 or 15 years ago. The way that actually other people would expect my life to be.

A man who lived with his family in the Philippines for more than 20 years spoke to me from his home in the U.S. In imagining what his life might have been like with that experience deleted said, “(I think) my heart would have been the same, but what I ended up doing was different. ...And I’ve told people ...that, having gone to the Philippines, you know, I’m so thankful and I did things and I saw things that I never dreamed possible there.” Another person reflected, “Yeah, I do wonder a lot ...if I didn’t have the disability. If I would be the same type of person that I am. You know, or would I be somebody else not empathetic and sympathetic to those (with) differences.” The participant who grew up in Ukraine observed:

..when I came to the United States. I had to start from the beginning, I was like a completely different person, the challenges I faced. I had to become maybe a little bit of a more aggressive, more determined ...Yeah, I had to deal with my shyness. I still have it. But you really have to ...fight it and go out and communicate and do things...(she gave some examples) ...all those things. So I'm very different. I think, I think I became better. I guess I like myself more this way.

The movement into the new space allowed a lens that helped form identity. She found belonging in the context she perhaps would never have imagined as a child.

This domestic student who did an exchange in another country in high school and study abroad in college and observed the impact on her life trajectory:

You know, maybe it's not even that I am different. It's just that I discovered a lot of things at an earlier point, whereas if I wouldn't have studied abroad and ...had that experience, I would have went down a totally different path. I was actually going to go to school for like business. And then I wanted to do something in the fashion industry. But I just realized that there are so many more things to life (than) the American culture, yeah, I think we're so go go go all the time. Then, and while it's good to be to be driven and set your goals. It's also good to stop and smell the roses ...I decided to that I wanted to just do something where I'd be able to help people more and (not) work every second of my life. So that's why I chose to continue French studies and I'd like to go abroad, whether to teach English for a few years, or come back and then work with, like, ESL ...or even teach French....

Noting the impact on how we perceive ourselves anew from the other side of transitions and exposure cycles, she added, “I guess I'm still the same person, but just a better version of me. ... It's crazy how one event can change your whole life.” In my own journey and in the research journal for this study, I used an image of the beach toy that sifts sand to find treasures. Life in our known and comfortable places will sift out “our stuff” as changes and event and non-events happen. However, when we step into another lifeworld or culture, the sifting seems to speed up dramatically.

Several of the examples were about vocational changes or how the impact of the transition influenced career, such as above or with this adult TCK reflecting on his transition back to the U.S. after several years living in Ethiopia:

...back to America and I was at a school of 600 kids just in my class. So we had like 2,400-2,600 people in school (so) basically invisible going into that kind of school setting and it was a pretty profound emotional experience, kind of culture shock moving back to that situation ...from a missionary school to public school setting and all the other things that go along with that.

When asked how he imagines his life might have been different if that experience of living 6 years in Ethiopia and attending that international school were deleted from his story, he said:

Yeah, I mean it could have been just a totally different experience. ...I feel like it allows me to talk to people better, um, just (be) more open to ...I think I'm just better individually at talking to people from different backgrounds and I would have been just living in America, South Charlotte, 95% white schools, 90% white school. So not, a lot of diversity.

This person shared many stories demonstrating his skill at relating across cultural differences, which are a key part of his working life now.

In the interview protocol on these series of questions, it was always stated that the person need not say what the event was, just that there was a clear before and after phase in their lives from it, but most shared what they were thinking about. Some situations were hardships and health issues we would never expect and certainly not choose, such as in this story:

...now...it's definitely a part of our life and we wouldn't change who (person's name) is, or, or what it's taught us and it's taught us a lot and brought us people who we would have never met. Otherwise, and that's a really important part. So,I just have to roll with it so that certainly changed me as a person in some way.

So I'd say, you know, in this particular case, we're looking at having (this child). I would say a lot of empathy and understanding but ...I would have never had an understanding differing abilities and what that means for many people. And as I said (name)'s pretty high functioning, but recognizing various hoops that many people have to go through of many different diagnoses and medical issues, not just spinal bifida, but really recognizing some of those challenges that I never would have thought of before. Recognizing hoops that we have to jump through and ...I consider myself pretty educated and sometimes it's challenging to say, okay, who do I need to contact and when do I need to contact them and, you know, just keeping up with everything and really thinking about underprivileged and how difficult it must be for them.

This story illustrates how our circumstances can unfold similar to being in another culture that has become our life, where we can feel like a child who does not yet know the culture or language, and we need to find our way anew and build up new support systems. Having those

intercultural skills that work for geopolitical travel also serve well in these local contexts of our lives. The events and non-events, chosen or not, have that additive and instructive element as we learn to be travelers in the stories of our lives. If we are attentive and engaged, willing to be affected, we can look for and draw out the meaning from the joys and the sorrows to be better equipped and more resilient for the unknowns yet to come.

Approaching life as a curriculum can be so impactful as a form of learning. Placed alongside textbooks and formal curriculum, which does have a place but perhaps not the same appeal to all, we might get closer to an answer of what it means to be educated and equipped for life through our interactions and experiences. The impact of living with others who are different from us and the effects of these transitions on relationships were explained in this way by this participant:

I think I probably wouldn't have had the opportunity to maybe deal with my own stuff. My own issues. I think it pushes you to deal with your own stuff because now you are affecting someone else and influencing someone else and having to live with someone else. ...So, um, yeah, I think I would be a completely different person, for sure, (a) more selfish, more self focused person.

Another person spoke of the effects of a relationship ending as a reference point of a transition, describing the journey between the before and after phases.

I continued traveling up through (the) gap between Colombia, Costa Rica, or Panama. And it was just this kind of, I think, it was a journey of healing. And when I came back home. I, I think it was like a new chapter for me. (He explained many adventures and circumstances.) ...I met a lot of very nice people along the way.... Well that was a very

transformational trip. ... Um, so I don't know how things would have turned out for me if I hadn't had that experience because when I came home what I felt was hope. That there are other people out there in the world. I could meet new people.

His travels were not merely on the geopolitical map, so much as his time spent in discovery about how life was being imagined. He was recognizing who might be helpers that are present at key moments or even travel with him.

This person explained how her lifeworld and family of origin became more clear to her on the other side of the event or situation she used as a reference point.

I was brought up to think ...a specific set of beliefs and after this particular situation in my mind, I learned to question things more for myself, instead of just believe in what I was told. ...trying to find those answers for myself and form kind of what my beliefs were ...like figuring out who I am, because it's who I am not who someone's telling me I am ... It's an internal difference of how I understand myself. Yeah, so, um, I would say it would be sad that didn't happen because I think I would have gone much longer trying to live up to people's expectations and beliefs of what they set for me and it would have taken me much, much longer to kind of find my true self, and my own beliefs.

The questions of identity in a particular space or setting or with a particular group of people resonates in this account, as well as the pressure felt to conform versus being our authentic selves.

These final two examples are from within higher education, as an employee and a student look at the impact in their lives and identity from the other side of the situations of change they referenced. This person described leaving another type of role in higher education:

So that was life changing for me because that was a big risk and I had to be self-reliant, I had to rely on myself for a lot of different things, but also I develop(ed) friendships ...very close, very quickly because of our lifestyle and (the work) we're doing. So, so being able to embrace all different types of people and the importance of individuals in my life, you know, even if it was for a short period of time. You know that human connection was really important to me...to develop new friends in different worlds, you know, different environments. So...if I would have stayed ...in that (other) field. I don't think the risks would have been the same. ...I wouldn't have been as exposed to different individuals and ...different things.

She gives an answer to research question #3 of how increased exposure impacts perception of or our willingness to move into future unknowns. This international student from Saudi Arabia reflected on the impact of her studying in the U.S. as her reference point.

...because now I'm so different from ...from before, like so. So different in my thoughts and my opinions and how I think about things. And that I wouldn't just listen to someone else saying something and ...and take it. I would just go read about it myself and have my own opinion based on what I read. On what information is available on ...on that thing. But...if I didn't come here. I think I would be the same old person with little differences, maybe, but not that big of differences. I think this experience and this transition have changed me a lot and have done so many things to my personality and (my)... thinking.

It is worth repeating here that new vantage points and adjusting to other worlds is not just for the international students on the campus. For the benefits of true internationalization to be felt, faculty, staff, and domestic students would hopefully all be making such journeys and

discoveries rather than thinking their role is only to help international students on campus assimilate.

I haven't seen my comfort zones in years!

This title quote is from someone early in my intercultural training who had worked for many years in Papua New Guinea. We had stepped away from life as we knew it in another state and were attending linguistic and intercultural training preparing to do literacy work in the developing world. Her take on movement away from the familiar and the benefits she shared from having lived that way were added to my lifeworld catalog in a memorable way three decades ago and reflect my positionality in relation to this research. The survey and interview instruments examined the effects of leaving comfort zones as a type of traveler which revealed the following data.

This international student from Mexico reflected on those questions in considering having gone to an international high school in the U.S. and her present graduate school program.

...being way being outside of your comfort zone makes you grow...it makes you learn skills that you use for your next challenge. I wouldn't be that mature. ...Maybe, a little bit more shallow like...I think that (it) challenges, make(s) you grow and they make you a better person. They make you kind of develop the skills. They kind of make you more down to earth and they make you more likely to...have empathy and also to...understand...I think if you if you've never experienced a challenge. If someone talks to that is experiencing a challenge. (It) might be harder to...connect or to have that empathy, but because you've been there you are....It makes you more human.

If this chapter of her life were deleted, she concluded:

...I wouldn't have found out, if that's a good grammar, what it kind of I'm made of, like, I can do this. And it's that growing part, the growing pains that you need them. And maybe, I don't know...I needed that to face life or afterwards, like with a more confident way (because) we went through challenges before. Now I can do these...it also makes you appreciate how much you've grown and then also appreciate like the good moments and the bad moments...

Her words are very applicable to her perception about future actions of stepping out of her known spaces, as asked in research question #3. She indicated feeling emboldened and ready to take on what came next. Similarly, related to exposure cycles and their impact on future outlook, this participant talked about how moving often has affected him.

(in the) Navy...we're moving every two, three years and a lot of unknown getting out of the Navy and starting new jobs. And so, you know, a lot of people I know stayed in the same city that they grew up in, or they went to college and stayed in that city. Never, you know, never moved...same job, same field, same area for a lot of their lives. Not that ...there's nothing wrong with that. But I think I'm definitely more open to change because of the experiences I've had...

Another participant who had moved a lot from having grown up on military bases observed the difference he sees in his own approach to change compared to friends he has.

...the biggest thing I've been learning genuinely has been to become more empathetic for how people experience change... As an example...I can remember a friend of mine...they'd never left the US and they waffled on for like a year about whether they should accept this job in Germany or not. And then just the few months in, I was like, for the love (of)... This is all you talk about! Just go! It's Germany. It'd be fine. Like the

language is not that hard. It's an incredibly...Like, why is this such an ordeal for you, like, I could have gone and been back already. ...And I'm far more sensitive now to the fact that, you know, for this person, their whole life has been, you know, a stable something or other...and to leave all of that to go into a giant unknown. It's actually very stressful. I know that because a huge chunk of my life has always been relatively unknown.

As emphasized here, having the mirror of contrast provided by another person's lifeworld, again, can be very instructive in helping us expand our understanding of others and ourselves.

Other examples of exposure cycles impacting perceptions toward future actions and change are found in these passing comments from various participants in higher education contexts.

I recognize change is important and beneficial. So I do try to push myself outside my comfort zone because I know in the long run, it's good...So, for example, I'm naturally an introverted person. I don't particularly you know put myself out there. But I do find myself wanting to be part of a community and you know making community like connections which isn't always super easy for an introverted person like me. So, you know, I've started forcing myself to ...join like extracurricular clubs and stuff (to) get past the initial discomfort.

Lastly, this educator grappled with how the transition had impacted life:

I wonder if I would be ...more afraid of change than I am now and less confident in my ability to handle change than I am now. ...retiring from teaching after 30 years and totally changing career course when I picture myself you know in my 20s. I'd never done that. So, you know, I think maybe I wouldn't have had as much confidence in my abilities

as I do now. And I don't mean that to sound egotistical, but I think you know what I mean, you've ...you've embraced things are very, very different. And you know, it's going to come out all right. And as a young person maybe you didn't do so much of that don't have that opportunity.

Campbell's Hero's Journey began animating the analysis of the data partway through the collection, so I also began exploring whether helpers were present at the crossing of the gap into the unknown and what attributes of the helpers made a difference. One higher education employee explained how she was able to step out when she had others with her:

Getting out of my comfort zone...I think I've mentioned this in the survey that I think my ...my way for doing that tends to be with friends. So I have, I guess some level of comfort and somebody to kind of help push me or just making plans with something that I wouldn't normally do, whether it's something the other person would normally do or not, but like, just because then we have a commitment and we kind of have the plans to do the thing. Whereas if it's just me as an as an introvert, like if it's just me and I can back out. Like, I can say, I'm going to go do something but it's hard. I don't always follow through.

Another participant from Colombia talked about how she began doing organized runs that would have never happened without a friend nudging her that way, as she recognized her outlook on such things in the future. "I felt like I could do more in the future...It just encouraged me a lot for the future to do other things to run more ...run faster. But it had a lot to do with my friend pushing me...but also believing in me in doing it with me." In chapter 5, *The Child-Expert Cycle* talks about dynamics that affect potential helpers and especially educators. The helper's belief

that things will turn out is typically based on their own catalog of experience to date from having already crossed that gap.

The encouragement of someone else in a life can nudge us and literally make us stronger and more fit for what lies ahead, as this female participant explained, “I didn't want it (but) I had a friend who was a bodybuilder, and she taught me how to lift weights and so she went through all that with me and, you know, I wasn't expecting it. But I loved it!” A higher education employee told about a teacher in high school who “had a way with connecting with us” and talked her into doing speeches:

After a couple of speeches, she actually sat me down one day and she said, I think you should join the speech and the debate team...I ended up doing speech team for three years of high school. And every time I would go to competition, I would be on the bus, and I'd be nervous as heck, and I'd say, why do I do this myself but when I got there ...it was great fun to be part of that, you know, (I) made a lot of new friends in that group. It's just a different group of people for me to hang out with...that was awesome. For me and my growth then. Yeah, but did I want to do it. No, ...not in the beginning.

The repeated cycles of exposure for this participant per speech competition demonstrates the iterative cycles of a hero's journey's within a hero's journeys. Each experience built incrementally on the last and transformed her as a person, as well as her outlook on doing something she would not have tried on her own. Pressfield (2012) writes extensively about the “resistance” we feel before doing something we know we need to do. He points out that it shows us what is very important. He said, “Fear is an indicator. Fear tells us what we have to do” (p. 170).

The helpers above knew how to connect with others. Sometimes the helpers were mentors or models and their impact was named by several people, such as this international student's choice to go into social work because, "When I was in high school...there was ...my counselor and there's also social worker and...they worked with me (when I was) having a hard time." Another international student explained how someone helped her learn to drive, saying, "once I got there, I had a good time. And then I was like, I'm glad I did this...Like she's my friend, and then I trust her." An ESL teacher explained her journey into presenting in professional conferences in this way:

I ...never presented (at) TESOL¹³ but ...colleagues ...kind of brought me along and you know, but slowly, baby steps. It wasn't like, oh, submit this and do it yourself. It was, let's do this collaboratively. ...Because I'm supported. So I'd say I'm one that yes, as long as I kind of have a plan and also have that support network, then I'm okay with it. It wouldn't be like I would probably be convinced to skydive ...if someone's with me. But if they just say, go do it yourself. And then I wouldn't, I wouldn't be as likely to go and do that. ...(It's) my trust for them. I guess if they trust that I could do it, then I I feel like, yes, I can step out of my comfort zone and ...try it.

Related to skydiving, these participants, one a teacher abroad and one a resident of the U.S. who has lived much of her life in a wheelchair described their experiences of being affirmed and supported by helpers. The teacher did it more on a dare.

¹³ "TESOL is an international association of professionals advancing the quality of English language teaching through professional development, research, standards, and advocacy" as stated in their mission. TESOL holds an annual international convention often referred to just as "TESOL." Learn more at: <https://www.tesol.org/>.

He said, I bet you would never jump with a parachute. ...And I had never been training to jump with a parachute. Somebody else folded my parachute, of course...instruction took about few minutes, you know. They just said, Okay, this is how you will, you know, disconnect the...And then I'm gonna jump out of a plane. You know, I just felt like I trusted my friend enough to do that...

The other participant told the story of support she had from friends who wanted her to know she could achieve this.

...he was just a good friend and I think he wanted to see it more for him because I have the disability and I am challenged in a lot of ways, you know, I can't do a whole ton of things. So I think he was like pushing for that too, just like he just he wanted to see me do it. And he was so excited when it finally happen(ed)...I did and it was awesome, and I would do it again in a heartbeat.

In reading the narratives of other people's experiences, we may likely find some of our own examples coming to mind or the descriptions of the helpers resonating with people in our own experiences who were impactful to us. Framed in the context of this study design and focus, especially as it would apply to education contexts and educators, it is important to recognize the part of a helper within the framework of transition models, learning zone and panic zone levels, and the repeated cycles of a hero's journey are demonstrated above. The campus life for all stakeholders is a microcosm of lives crossing paths and transitional moments and seasons of change. By that, it can also be a model for community and a fertile space where community can grow.

One participant's story of the trouble she had crossing a narrow footbridge over what seemed a precarious spot brought back a memory of my own, where a raging river in Montana had a very sturdy looking footbridge suspended about 50 feet above the surface of the rapids and crossing the few hundred feet over the turbulent current to the other side. Stepping onto the platform, I found that my feet would not move out onto the bridge. The person I was in that moment was experiencing the red panic zone. Yet, in other settings in Africa and around the world, I was very comfortable or in a learning zone in situations that would cause others to be in the red panic zone. At the bridge, my friend, who was meaning to be helpful, ran back and forth across the bridge to show how strong it was and not a problem, but it did not help. Sometimes, we just need to be attentive to where the other person is in their journey or in that specific moment and context. Learning to be a good helper as a teacher or leader or in whatever role is a transformative skill to build.

While living in Ethiopia, I found it helpful for keeping perspective to walk through rather than around the nearby refugee camp by where I worked. If others were new to the country, and in my role in orienting them, I would ask them if they wanted to walk with me. Sometimes they did. Sometimes they did not. The point of the learning zone models is that it varies for people per situation. For some, the most difficult gap to cross is that bridging social capital from people like ourselves in thoughts, looks, and culture across to those who are culturally disparate. Putnam, et al. (2003) said, "Because building social capital and trust is cumulative, social life is replete with victories circles. Weak social capital fosters the symptoms of social disintegration, such as crime and poverty, and those symptoms in turn further undermine social connections" (p. 287).

Seeking to understand through conversation

When it comes to the type of movement out of comfort zones that would place us beside someone who is different from us, a helpful model comes from literature. This exchange is from John Steinbeck's classic novel *East of Eden* (1952) set in northern California in the early 20th century. The characters Samuel Hamilton seems to have as his only motivation that of understanding his new friend. I appreciated the respectful interchange:

"What's your name?" Samuel asked pleasantly.

"Lee. Got more name. Lee papa family name. Call Lee."

"I've read quite a lot about China. You born in China?"

"No. Born here."

Samuel was silent for quite a long time while the buggy lurched down the wheel track toward the dusty valley. "Lee," he said at last, "I mean no disrespect, but I've never been able to figure why you people still talk pidgin when an illiterate baboon from the black bogs of Ireland, with a head full of Gaelic and a tongue like a potato, learns to talk a poor grade of English in ten years."

Lee grinned. "Me talkee Chinese talk," he said.

"Well, I guess you have your reasons. And it's not my affair. I hope you'll forgive me if I don't believe it, Lee."

Lee looked at him and the brown eyes under their rounded upper lids seemed to open and deepen until they weren't foreign any more, but a man's eyes, warm with understanding. Lee chuckled. "It's more than a convenience," he said. "It's even more than self-protection. Mostly we have to use it to be understood at all."

Samuel showed no sign of having observed any change. “I can understand the first two,” he said thoughtfully, “but the third escapes me.”

Lee said, “I know it’s hard to believe, but it has happened so often to me and to my friends that we take it for granted. If I should go up to a lady or a gentleman, for instance, and speak as I am doing now, I wouldn’t be understood.”

“Why not?”

“Pidgin they expect, and pidgin they’ll listen to. But English from me they don’t listen to, and so they don’t understand it.”

“Can that be possible? How do I understand you?”

“That’s why I’m talking to you. You are one of the rare people who can separate your observation from your preconception. You see what is, where most people see what they expect.”

“I hadn’t thought of it. And I’ve not been so tested as you, but what you say has a candle of truth. You know, I’m very glad to talk to you. I’ve wanted to ask so many questions.”

“Happy to oblige.”

Like most human beings, Lee has a desire to belong and not be rejected. He wants to be seen and heard and have a sense of “mattering,” recalling Rosenberg’s term (1981). Because of that, he conforms to the story being imposed on him in order to be visible. Sartre framed the existential statement this way, “I *see* myself because *somebody* sees me,” (van Manen, 2016, p. 25).

This conversation in the novel exemplifies many elements one could hope arise from this study and analysis. It shows people choosing to spend some time alongside each other. They moved at the same speed and rhythm for that exchange, governed of course by the circumstances and the horses. Questions were asked respectfully out of curiosity and genuine interest. Hamilton

did not even notice the shifts between languages or cultural norms because he was looking at the human being. Both people had their attention garnered in a new way around the unique opportunity it is to be in that moment with each other. There was no judgment or hierarchical thinking, no compulsion to fix or change the other person, just a genuine desire to know each other better. The potential for an ongoing friendship or relationship ensues from adjusting their pace, and with a level of grace and care, to seek to know each other better. Samuel and Mr. Lee seem like they are modeling a pathway toward healing and a feeling of less division, which we might apply on campus or in society.

A wondering embedded in this study is how intercultural skills and drawing from other disciplines and fields, as well as cultures and viewpoints, may serve us all in navigating what is becoming a globalized society at an increasing rate, as technology and entertainment and easier travel (in non-pandemic times) allows us more situations when we are bouncing off of each other, even for those who would consciously and on the surface choose not to travel or move or seek change. As pointed out, non-events and non-choices are thrust upon us often forcing us into adjustment modes and the other elements of transition described. If we could “extend that same passion and compassion ...and empathy towards ...fellow citizens ...and colleagues and peers” in the contexts we find ourselves in each day, again, we may be find the route toward some healing and feeling less divided.

In that excerpt from *East of Eden*, Samuel was seeing only the symptom of language use and was not yet aware of the larger system presenting challenges to Lee in his lived experiences. 100 years after the setting of the novel, the same dynamics of needing to perform an identity are being discussed in light of the international student journey. Chinese students often provide English names to help domestic students and professors not have to learn to pronounce their

names if they would try, or perhaps to not have to hear their names garbled because of the different linguistic skills with tone and altered consonant sounds. As we expand our understanding and internationalize our curriculum or learn more about things outside of our own country, as the participants described, perhaps these realities will decrease. There is always the chance to travel alongside another for a time.

How can we understand each other if in the words I use I put my own sense and values, while the listener assumes I mean his personal sense and values?

Joe Lurie

Chapter 5 – On the road between Utopia and Dystopia

On any given day, we are each offered many chances to be the person who – whether it be through words, actions, or even silence and inaction – offers space to those we encounter to experience care and relationship.

Mungi Ngomane

Like 2020 with the global pandemic and the “life quakes” that followed (Feiler, 2020), the year 2001 provided lived experiences in our lives and a nation, also demonstrating how change happens by the choices we make and sometimes by the choices of others. Sometimes they come from matters out of anyone’s control (Schlossberg, 2008, p. 37). There are endings and beginnings. The borders around chapters of our stories are redefined in unexpected ways or through detailed planning and deliberate movement. Our own family story had chapters defined within the bigger story that year. Schlossberg said, “Events and non-events never seem to come in single file... Sometimes one event sets off a chain reaction, and your life feels like one crisis after another. Trouble erupts at every turn, for you and for everyone around you” (p. 37). One of the events in 2001 is very important in considering the international student’s journey and how community is experienced by them. Whether they find belonging and acceptance on a campus or in a country or another perception they take away, which in this case provides a tragic example of what can go wrong.

We were returning from Africa to the U.S. to deliver our fifth child, touch bases with family and friends, take care of some other family medical needs, and for me to step into a new educational space for intercultural studies and teaching English as a second language. In part, we chose that particular study program because it would be near where my grandfather lived making it easier to visit while he was back. My wife traveled ahead due to flight timing requirements around pregnancy. I stayed behind to finish the year so the international school where I worked

in Ethiopia would not have to find a replacement teacher in those last busy weeks. The agreement was that the baby would not be born until I got there in late June.

We had learned from living in other countries not to get attached to Plan A, and not overly attached to Plan B, and keep Plan C ready with an open hand. Grandpa died in April and none of us were able to be there for the funeral. My wife started having symptoms of delivery early. At the hospital, the medical staff attending her were caring and attentive, trying to help her decide if things could wait and remain safe. The story of her situation had been cycled through a few teams of people. When it got to the final medical team that would make the call, they asked, “Now, *where* is your husband?” wondering how long it would take me to get there. One nurse who had heard the details a few times helpfully chimed, “He’s in Utopia!”

The birth happened in the hours just before I was to depart Addis Ababa for the 16 hours of flying time. We named our new son over the phone just before I went to the airport. As with all human journeys, the timeline of his life and the traces of where his experiences overlap with mine had begun without me there. I met him 24 hours later at a busy airport in a major U.S. city. The study program began a few months later in August. For all the altering plans and unexpected twists, the biggest one came on September 11 when terrorists took over several airplanes in an attack on U.S. soil. This event created a disruption in the life of a nation. From that attack, there was a clear before and after of transition that is still shaping the identity of this country and its people. Covid-19 is having the same effect on the entire world at the time of this writing, as we all function within the middle phase between what we knew before and what we will one day call “normal.”

After the tragedies and loss of life at 9/11, there was a general disparagement and even physical attacks in retaliation on people who others perceived could be Muslim or from one of

the countries whose citizens performed the terrorist act. The actions were made based on outward, physical appearances. The anger people feel is real and they tend to want a target for it. Similarly in 2020, those from China and those from other Asian countries who people perceive as possibly being from China are being spoken of and treated differently in public rhetoric and private encounters due to Covid-19, as people make snap judgments based on appearances.

When we moved back to the U.S. more recently for this present season, I worked in a role at an international house, where building community and increasing understanding was part of the job. There was a lot to be gained by having more diverse voices and disparate viewpoints applied to any topic or as part of solutions to problems. It was meant to be a place where all felt welcome and that they belonged and where understanding, empathy, and compassion might take root. In that time, I learned then that many of the past and present world leaders were previously students in U.S. universities. I also learned that one of the masterminds of the 9/11 attacks had also been an international student in the U.S. earlier in his life, which is where some of his negative impressions came from (Wright, 2006; Von Drehle, 2006; CIA, 2021). The experiences these visitors in our countries have will leave traces on their future lives and policies and actions.

Within the development of Social Identity Theory, Tajfel noted how quickly affinities for one's own group and enmity for the other group can form, even within a few minutes of teams being assigned (McLeod/Social, 2019). We may recognize these same dynamics from the mixer games at a social or work event, or the pressure a non-drinker feels when "everyone is going out for drinks" after, or even the memories people have from middle school playgrounds or the pecking order quickly established in a summer camp. Some people are setting the tone or sitting at the cool kids' table and others are walking by just hoping not to drop their tray of food. Some people are in the center of the room being the show on the dance floor and some are lining the

walls, relegated to the margins, perhaps by their own choice and disposition or because the signals from others moved them that way. “(For) most people, realizing you are on the periphery of your group can, in itself, lead to significant unhappiness...When people are made to feel that they lack fit within their group, they question who they are,” (Khazan, 2020, pp. 102, 114). The existential identity questions noted throughout this writing rise up in these moments, as we consider, “Who am I in this space...situation...with this group? Who are they asking me to be?” We might add to this, “How much do I need to conform? Can I be my true self here and be accepted?”

In extreme cases like that of the eventual 9/11 planner, he did not describe his experience in America favorably. He made sweeping judgments about U.S. culture from his viewpoint as an outsider in the margins (CIA, 2021). Khazan (2020) pointed out that like with the shooters in Columbine, CO, there can be a strong desire to “punish the groups that excluded them” (p. 116) due to feeling “alienation...separateness...isolation, sadness, loneliness, not belonging, and not fitting in” (FBI, 2020). Khazan (2020) added “many people are drawn to terror groups precisely because they feel misunderstood ...one way to stop them might be to finally try to understand them” (p. 117). There is no intention here of saying people will become criminals or terrorists from being left. The point is how important learning to accept others and engage and be in community together offers an alternative to the strong negative emotions that human beings feel in both directions in these situations. The feelings that might be felt by an international student traveling into another country are not unlike the emotions in any person’s journey in situations like the ones described above.

Beyond the implications for everyone welcoming and being part of community building that helps international students feel welcome on campus, or the wider implications for all of us

living in society in our countries and beyond, there are the ramifications of what happens when we choose not to engage and seek to understand each other's stories. When people with similar ideology function in isolation without the checks and balances of mingling with others, what are often called "extremist" groups and actions can occur, such as the above examples. From hearing one of the Jonestown survivors retell her story on the news (BBC, 2021), I learned that the vision of the settlement in Guyana was to build a community where there was equality and harmony among races. Jim Jones "was inspired by the ideal of a just society that could overcome the evils of racism and poverty. Although Jones was white, he attracted mostly African Americans to the group with his vision of an integrated congregation" (Melton, 2021). In their isolation around that ideal and hearing only the voice of Jones, tragically, the group carried out a mass suicide on November 18, 1978 (History.com, 2021).

When asked his thoughts about internationalization and the topic of interacting with those who are culturally disparate, this participant said:

I think it's massively important...more ...important today as it was years ago. You know, I think, ...xenophobia and some other, you know ...history can repeat itself...I'm not great at history, but you know, ...look at what happened in Nazi Germany and with fascism ...and I think we're naïve to think that can't happen again.

Weingarten (2021) points out, "Dictatorships depend on force. Democracies depend on compromise and trading, and when you hate, you don't do that, and democracy doesn't last long." Referring to the global pandemic and how it is changing our lives on campus, the participant added:

I think ...having a little bit of chaos at times is also not bad, because I think it can lead to...learning opportunities...and realizing we're not all the same and that's actually okay ...but some of that, I think is... definitely requires education. And some of it also requires maturity...

Community as an ideal or a type of “Utopia” may remain a destination never reached, but the hope can be that learning how to travel together and being mindful of what we pack for the journey may well bring us all closer.

When we are no longer able to change a situation - we are challenged to change ourselves.

Viktor E. Frankl

Implications for all people's journeys

Which identity do I need to perform in this space?

The benefits and value of talking to those who are culturally disparate from us have been rehearsed throughout this writing and study. Participants indicated clearly that they felt it was much easier to talk to someone from another country than it was someone from their own culture who had different ideology or beliefs. Earlier, I explained that in a true phenomenological sense, the participants were extremely helpful in seeking answers to these complex questions about things that mattered to them also. Their insight was extremely valuable in expanding the boundaries of this researcher's body of knowledge and catalog of experience to date, especially toward seeing connections between anger on the streets and the lifeworlds in which people dwell.

Where time allowed, I invited some participants to think with me why that is. In this case, I asked why we can sometimes be nicer to strangers we meet on airplanes or in society than at

home, where holiday dinner table tensions sometimes rise. This participant is a professor in social work who has a lot of experience moving in and out of different countries and very different ways of living within the U.S., which she tries to build into how she prepares students in the program. Her analysis on my stranger question offers a wider angle view of this dynamic:

No, I think you're absolutely correct. And I see that a lot. So, you, you know, I go to South Africa, a lot and Idraw upon the parallels between apartheid and slavery. And I would say the same is true for when it comes to African Americans and blacks. In South Africa, where there tends to be this ability to ...connect with black South Africans, um, and empathize with their ...challenges and their struggles and want to help. Right. I use the term "helping" (in) quotes, but they can't extend that same passion and compassion, right, and empathy towards their own fellow citizens ...and colleagues and peers

Another campus employee explained this dynamic in a way that was helpful. Her example also demonstrates very clearly the pressure to conform to the identity society or the work context is asking of us.

I think it's because we so often wear masks and when we finally get home, we can put our mask down and be our true selves. And if we're honest, our true selves are not always very nice. So if we were our true selves even outside of the house, we would not be nice all the time because ...humans ...we're just not always nice all the time. An example of this is ...so people at work know me is like a bubbly, cheerful person. Okay. People at home, do not....I've used up my energy at work to be lovely and cheerful and at home. I'm, you know, much quieter, not so bubbly, just myself. So, since I work from home sometimes, my husband's occasionally home when I'm working. I took a phone call one

day. I got off the phone call. And (he was like), “What was that?!?” That was bubbly charming me. It's like: that was *work me*. You get to see her now.

People end up making those “self-negating” (Cain/TED, 2012) choices that move them away from their authentic selves. They “perform the identity” that is being prescribed in the context (Glass, et al., 2015, p. 23.) This pressure to conform is present in the student journey into another country, as it might be for any traveler navigating the tension to want to be accepted and fit in versus losing self. How does one move out of the margins and have their gifts recognized in the center, as Block (2010) framed it (p. 3)?

A case study in society that may be a helpful example and point of reference is how commonly introverts feel they must speak and act extrovert all day in order to function and even be seen in their workplace. This was seen in part of the “work me” narrative above, as well as how Lee performed a role as a Chinese man in that time and setting in order to be visible. Introverts are still passed over for advancement in the workplace, which is attributed in part to how the U.S. has become more a Personality Culture than a Character Culture (Cain/TED, 2012). Anaïs Nin said, “Our culture made a virtue of living only as extroverts. We discouraged the inner journey, the quest for a center. So we lost our center and have to find it again” (as cited in Cain/Quiet, p. 264). There is a tremendous loss of creativity and innovation that comes when people are not able to be their authentic selves in a work context.

Whoever you are, bear in mind that appearance is not reality. Some people act like extroverts, but the effort costs them in energy, authenticity, and even physical health.

Others seem aloof or self-contained, but their inner landscapes are rich and full of drama.

So the next time you see a person with a composed face and a soft voice, remember that

inside her mind she might be solving an equation, composing a sonnet, designing a hat.

She might, that is, be deploying the power of quiet. (Cain/Quiet, 2012, p. 266)

Steve Wozniak, who with Steve Jobs founded Apple, said, “Most inventors and engineers I’ve met are like me – they’re shy and they live in their heads. They’re almost like artists. In fact, the very best of them are artists. And artists work best alone...” (as cited in Cain/Quiet, 2012, p. 73).

Within the study, only 21.9% of the participants indicated they were very or somewhat extroverted. Interview participants brought up their introverted dispositions in relation to interactions and community 30 times, even though it was not the focus of any specific question. One participant voice, an ESL teacher from another country, spoke to this point, “I’m very introverted. Yeah, I mean I tried to like suppress it like because, you know, in modern society, you have to communicate. But it’s always a big effort.” This international student from Mexico said, “I find it easier to have to do something together like a task or like a group project because I’m ...a little bit introverted (at) the beginning so I cannot find a lot of topics to talk about sometimes.” This international student from Saudi Arabia explained the tension she navigates this way:

I’m a shy person, so I don’t like to have the attention of a lot of people toward me. So, for example, someone told me, hey, let’s go dance like on the streets. Okay, that would be a big deal for me...people would be looking at me. Maybe I look so stupid. And I don’t know. I just don’t want to put myself in this situation.

Seen through the lens of context, the introversion-extraversion continuum relates to building social capital that is more easily spent in finding belonging, as this campus employee explained:

I'm more extroverted, so sometimes ...I can use my personality ...to my benefit ...to kind of invite myself and or make myself included, but one of the things that as I'm talking through this and just answering a question for you. Those that are more shy or introverted maybe...won't take ...the steps or, you know, wouldn't be ...as eager to kind of step into the community without being invited, so to speak.

She felt gave an advantage that others might now have. Where others, in the social capital economy, may get the message, "Your money is no good here." This dynamic plays out among people from the same cultures, where in day-to-day encounters, one person may have no idea how much another person is feeling that kind of pressure to "perform" in the ways more accepted manner in society. That is just in general. Families and work teams and other groups have sub-layers of expectations and requirements for membership, which may be written down or may not, and in the latter case are only found by the negative reinforcement that comes from getting it wrong. Adding then the realities of changing cultures and countries, we see the formidable task of seeking to find one's place and feel belonging that an international student journey entails.

This introversion-extraversion spectrum does not touch on the many other dispositional factors that human beings might sort themselves by, such as the *Feeling* versus *Thinking* range on the Myers-Brigg Type Indicator. One campus employee participant is certified in this, so was explaining some of the dynamics. She noted that the research shows the types are fairly universal across other cultures. International students coming into the U.S. are trying to figure out the overall culture of a country that is different to their own. They are also trying to succeed in the sub-culture of the whole campus. Then there are other important sub-cultures, such as their residence hall, any quad or pod section of their dorm, and relating to a roommate or several suite

mates. These challenges are present for any domestic student even without the added layer of cultural norm differences.

Examples of cultural dynamic difference could be things such as being offered food only one time. The international student that comes from a culture where it is considered very rude to accept food until it is offered the third time goes hungry while the domestic student walks on unaware. The professors who tell students to call them by their first names do not realize that boundaries of formality are being violated for students from some cultures. The layers of complexity and cultural adjustment cascade outward at a mind numbing speed sometimes. From my own experiences, I like to remind students that if they feel excessively tired sometimes, that would be normal and understandable given the number of layers they are navigating. They are simultaneously trying to communicate in a language other than their first while following cultural scripts different than their own, as decision fatigue sets in over so many options at any given moment, especially in some U.S. consumer contexts like a fast food restaurant.

Listening – The new superpower

If we can change ourselves, we can change the world...This is the essence of compassionate listening: seeing the person next to you as part of yourself...when you approach a moment without judgment and can connect with the sacredness of the agency of each soul, we can transform the moment...[and] evolve.

Rep. Dennis Kucinich, The Compassionate Listening Project

Just as conversation can seem a lost art, being truly present with and listening well to another human being seems like a superpower now. That is how rare and heroic it feels! Participants in the study rehearsed many of the factors of good listening, including the importance of observation of the kinesics, or the non-verbal body language. Studies on communication often note that a high percentage of the message and meaning is carried in manners other than words (Schneiderman, 2013). Tone of voice carries a lot of the message and

meaning, as well, so speaking to someone on the phone carries more meaning than in the absence of tone, such as with texting. Schneiderman (2013) said:

...it's worth noting that human beings were designed to connect with each other on many different levels...58 percent of communication is through body language, 35 percent through vocal tone, pitch, and emphasis, and a mere 7 percent through the content of the message.

We all know that good communication is the cornerstone of relationships. So why attempt to resolve a disagreement using only 7 percent of your full expressive potential?

...And that's a generous 7 percent.

This shift in society seems worth mentioning in this context of asking what works toward building community and what works against it. As a student of linguistics, sociolinguistics, and intercultural topics, it has been very surprising to me how humanity has landed on texting, one of the least effective forms of communication, as their daily mainstay. LOL. It lacks body language and tone of voice, and the words get shorter or abbreviated. There are an increasing number of emoji options, but I am not sure that there will ever be one that convey the experience of a boy who lost a favorite toy irretrievably or the quintessence of emotions the international student experiences stepping off of the plane.

The research summarized in Table 4.9 showed that 90% of the responses about good listening were focused on seeking to understand the other person, such as by asking questions that draw out more or seeking to clarify understanding or that the listener has heard the story accurately. Another 41% said to focus on the other, with 24% noting the one-way direction of travel from the speaker sharing to the listener's intake. Not interrupting and being present and attentive was also very highly noted. As indicated, people had a clear picture of what good

listening is. We know what to do. The question could next be, then, why do we not do it?

Throughout chapter 5, the hope is to explore some of the reasons that good listening does not occur.

We're living in a society!

There are many voices and influences that speak into this researcher's experiences and emerging learning. An example of this is in how I see the research being lived around me, such as in how people drive. There seems to be in humanity a lack of acknowledgement that other people are different and navigating their situations from within different lifeworlds. Drivers in Lancaster County, PA will regularly encounter horse-drawn Amish buggies moving about on the roads as the Amish do life. The buggies will typically stay to the side making it easy for motorized vehicles to pass when there is space to safely do so. The choice of response to this unique cross-section of cultures vary greatly. As a casual observer with no data, my assumption is that more drivers are impatient and annoyed rather than curious about the cultural difference. My observations of the difference between the culture of motorized vehicles and horse-drawn ones is made from the seat of a bicycle, adding a third angle to the multiple lifeworlds at play. Beyond how the motorized vehicles put pressure on the buggies or honk in annoyance, I have observed many other bad habits that some drivers have allowed into their driving lives, such as using the shoulder as a turn lane or otherwise deciding the agreed upon rules and structures of society do not apply to self in a given moment.

Living with this research study, I see these habits crossing over into our communications. The problem is that from our outsider viewpoint, we just do not know what is going on in the lifeworld of the other person's buggy or truck or bicycle. The slow-moving car in front of us becomes an object of scorn within our own lifeworld and perception of our needs, where in

reality it might contain a newly married couple making yet another trip home from the hospital where their premature baby is in its third month in the ICU and things are just not too certain yet. The truck that made a mistake nearby might contain a father who is equally fascinated and distracted by his son's regaling of an adventure at school that day. The child-like way any new driving in training felt is all but forgotten, replaced by our feeling of expertise over our own moments of urgency. People feel it their duty to tailgate or honk the horn or otherwise reveal the lack in the other person and tell them the speed and route they need to be traveling in order to meet our needs. The point is we do not what is going on inside the other person's world. Engaging with others, listening fully and well without the bad habits slipping in, and hearing their story is the beginning of finding out.

This impactful reflection by an ESL teacher demonstrates some of the key points related to listening reflected in the data:

Not interrupting ...because some people struggle with expressing verbally, what's going on with them, what to say. So, giving just a little patience ...give them a little bit of space of time to ...say what they want to say because some (people are) verbal processors...they actually formulate their idea better or they completely deviate from what they wanted to say at the beginning because (interruptions). ...I think being a teacher and being a language teacher helps me in that regard. So I have to listen to students with very inadequate English or struggling. They're trying to convey some kind of message. And so I need to make them feel valued. Especially if I work with adults, I can't just interrupt...I can't finish sentences for them. I need to hear them out. I need to let them struggle and stumble through the sentences and yet affirm them, that they have valid contribution to the discussion.

This observation really helps personalize the struggle of how much the identity or personality of the international student is making it through the linguistic barriers. In the pilot study for this research, one participant noticed that as our focus group conversations went deeper, closer to matters of the heart, language was less of an issue and connections were made. To echo the point: it takes time, patience, and a level of engagement to get to the heart level, which is not often present in our fast-moving current. The ESL teacher impacted the understanding all the more in adding this:

...it also helps that (a loved one I relate to) stutters, so I need to not finish these words or begin (the person's) words, you know, just step back and give them time can say it. And so I'm thankful for this experience because it teaches me to be more patient. More willing to listen and not interrupt.

There is a type of care and service to others that consists of nothing more than listening, if only in that they feel heard and therefore visible. A creative innovation or new helpful outcome may come from the verbal processing of ideas the other person is doing. Like with driving, we can from our own perception feel it is our place to hurry someone along or not let them travel the speed and route they had in mind, our own self-focus and personal agenda keeping will seemingly not build connection, relationship, or community. When hubris leads over humility, the human tendency can be to finish the story or try to tell it for the other person. People can think they are even doing a service to others by interrupting to “help” them by laying a solution on them, where in reality, the other person was not even seeking a solution. This begs the question, “How can we help another person when our first action toward them is not listening?” Wilson (2020) offers this alternative outcome, “We feel it when we connect with other people

and share a sense of humanity; when we listen deeply and experience an emotional bond; when we treat ourselves and other people with the dignity they deserve (Kindle location 69). We might too easily miss the privilege of being with another human being and only see the obstacle in our way, allowing the bad habits to prevail.

The hope is that in seeking to build community and benefit from it, we can be informed by this data and these reflections. There is the opportunity to listen ...or drive differently, with the bigger picture of humanity and realize the symbiotic level of compassion we might show to each other. There are other choices besides tailgating someone or otherwise indicating we know better than them the speed they should be going. From within our own positionality, we can think honking at the other person, which is what interrupting can function like, is a way of helping the other person, perhaps pointing out their mistakes, as if *to err* was not *human*. Snap judgments based on surface impressions have some drivers calling others “jerks” or worse, which translates in our intercultural community study as labeling and stereotyping based on little to no information. Even though one driver would choose to disregard the red light or other laws or safety principles in their own value system, it does not seem imposing those values on another builds community. There are many hero’s journeys taking place all around us, transitions abound, and the learning and panic zones vary for each person we encounter.

The potential of a shift in these dynamics around communication are perhaps best captured in this participant voice, “you can't really listen until you can enter into their world. And when you enter into their world. You can't help but be changed.” Where in a fast-moving current that sees time a certain way, people inside the U.S. cultural system perceive there is not enough time to do all this listening and relating stuff. However, listening actually saves time (Rockwell, 2017). There is much misunderstanding, lack of clarity, and offshoots into wrong

directions that would not occur if people took time to really listen and connect initially. Conflict and regrouping take up a lot of time. Loss of relationship or attrition in a workplace consumes much time. Indeed, from the purview of this research and the climate of the world in 2020 and 2021, it does seem like listening is a superpower for the hero on a journey, especially the one who wants to grow and transform into a dynamic character by the end of the story.

The rhythm of a culture – adjusting our time and speed settings

There is an underlying beat and music that is part of a culture. Part of cultural adjustment is recognizing that different types of music are playing in different places with different people. Hall (1983) said, "...human beings, culture, and behavior (are) the most personal of all experiences: how people are tied together and then isolated from each other by invisible threads of rhythm and hidden walls of time" (p. 3). This is a helpful framing of how any human being may think of relating to those just in their own culture. In the manner that the international student journey is navigating multiple layers and domains simultaneously, all human beings are having a similar effect in dealing with change and transition. Bridges (2004) said, "...rather, adulthood unfolds its promise in an altering rhythm of expansion and contraction, change and stability" (p. 97). "Your work life, like your relational life, has its own natural rhythm. The task is to find the connection between the changes in your work or career and the underlying developmental rhythm of your life" (p. 84). As has been demonstrated throughout this writing, everyone is traveling and needing to recalibrate and adjust constantly, whether they purposefully choose to move or even if the changes are beneath the surface of their consciousness. The disruptions and feelings and reactions will still have their day.

When we feel overwhelmed during some of the waves of these realities, it is no wonder staying inside, isolating, and maybe binge-watching that show is appealing. For international

students pushing through a few additional layers when in another country, Molinsky (2007) says they may naturally “retreat to their cultural enclave and limit their campus engagement. Others, quite literally embracing the best of both worlds, see no reason to choose one culture over another, employing cross-cultural code switching depending on the context in which they find themselves” (as cited in Hoekje & Stevens, 2018, p. 127). Beyond the isolation, clustering, and the issues of international students being on the periphery, the conformity issue as to “Who am I in this space?” comes into play even at the most basic level, as the Chinese student says just call me “Tony” to ease the burden of pronunciation for the Americans on campus. “Donning a nickname helps him assume a role and rhythm that makes him dance to the beat of American culture” (Hoekje and Stevens, 2018, p. 127).

The understanding of rhythm and time spent and making speed adjustments is critical in seeking to answer the primary research question #1: *How do intentional conversations between culturally disparate individuals impact building community?* In the same way a person traveling across geopolitical borders into other cultures in Europe, or Asia, or Africa can find that space where people sit in the afternoon or evening and share coffee, tea, hookah, or other activities that anchor them for a time of connection and exchange of presence and life stories, human beings have the same opportunities around them in their neighborhoods, workplaces, and especially on campuses, where there are lounge areas and food and drink amenities abounding. However, more than the opportunity and the presence of physical spaces to gather comes the internal change. People will need to recalibrate speed settings and rhythms. It was fun comparing notes on “African time” with a few participants who had lived there. It contrasts with the fast moving current of culture and busyness in the U.S. Like the moving sidewalk at the airport, it is hard for the traveler not to step onto the device and begin moving past others on the ground at a speed

that makes conversation impossible. This pace and surface skipping style of functioning can be a challenge for connection and building relationships and community.

Many of the participants acknowledge the basic need for time together with phrases like “hang out” with, which was mentioned 13 times. Putnam, et al. (2003) said, “One lesson is that creating robust social capital takes time and effort...extensive and time-consuming face-to-face conversation between two individuals or among small groups of people,” and in specific application to research question #1, “It takes person-to-person contact over time to build the trust and mutual understanding that characterize the relationships that are the basis of social capital” (p. 9). One participant emphasized the importance of this point by saying, “it is hard work to live and to have a community. So take something from everyone. So you all need to be ...willing to live together or spend time together. Understand each other” as she described her international community on a hospital ship docked in Africa. She elaborated on this in discussing the changes Covid brought:

I was stuck on this ship ...for three months ...the hospital was closed. So I ...got to meet and to know some of our African crew because a lot of them were working in the galley...they have different schedules (and) different places (and) usually...you become friends with the people you work with...it's really, like, interesting to, ...get to know them and spend time with them and really appreciate the things that they do and just learn from each other. “...so what is your normal life look like?” And just like all kinds of conversations while you're cutting tomatoes. It was great!

And it's also like the choice, “Okay am I ...just going to do my job cut my tomatoes and listen to my own music on my phone ...or trying to really get to know people...Yeah, so it really like opens your mind that there's ...more than ...our job or ...their kitchen job.

It's like we're all working together (for a) common cause. And like I came to the ship (because) that's what I feel like I needed to go to. And because I'm trained as an O.R. nurse (but) their stories are as powerful as mine.

The value of making the choice and spending the time were the meaningful takeaway from this narrative. Her last phrase, "their stories are as powerful as mine" resonated so powerfully through the entire study and reflective writing in relation to the research.

An example of finding the rhythm of another person's lifeworld or situation is found in the narrative example above of the ESL teacher talking about not hurrying her English students and being a patient and compassionate listener when engaged with a loved one who stutters. These speed adjustments could be thought of as slowing your steps or picking up your pace to be side by side with another human being for a time on the trail. Depending on how the engagement goes, either one of you might break off to follow another trail or find that you want to walk further down the road together. Human beings who are quick to dismiss others or never adjust their pace to be in the same space together, are seemingly missing the bigger picture that "there is only one trail," as this ESL teacher observed. If, like her phrases in describing the adjustment she makes, we can similarly "give (others) a little bit of space of time," we would have the chance to hear more of their story and know what their journey is like. We can adjust then lenses and paradigms through which we view things and gain new ways of seeing things through their experiences. This would allow us to proceed with new sensitivities that may help us build a community in which we could more peacefully coexist. We all could feel we belong and make valid contribution, while we also learn to enjoy the spices and flavors of the variety offered in the ways of others.

One other point related to time adjustments came in the considering the transient nature of some contexts where people might seek to build community. I asked the TCK speaker who had grown up on multiple military bases abroad and in the U.S. any observations he might have on the depth and quality of relationships he has experienced, adding to my own understanding from long- and short-term experiences of that type. He shared that he often speaks to TCK groups on lack of conflict resolution skills:

And we have to unpack that ...component ...lack of conflict resolution skills that these kids have). They've never had to practice that. Their life is transient and they can make relationships disposable...and, you know, to watch the effects of that.

For the TCKs in conflict, they recognize that there is no need to resolve an issue because either the other person or they will be moving along soon. He made the helpful observation that this is seemingly what we may be seeing in the world now, as social media and the anonymity it offers allows people to function in this more transient manner. He wondered “what that will do to our ability to communicate and have meaningful exchange and things...I'm always looking for more research on that.” The more human beings would isolate from each other, clustering with like-minded people, if they gather at all, the transient life style that involves less commitment to each other, less time, less proximity, may become the norm for more than just those who have lived lives of hybridity between worlds like TCKs. Their “prototypical lives” (Pollock, et al., 2001, p. 7) of movement into new spaces and sorting out identity and belonging in repeated, iterative cycles of exposure and learning may inform us all in some of these positive aspects. The negative possibility of seeing others as disposable may also become part of the journey.

In E.M. Forster's (1909) dystopic short story *The Machine Stops*, there are two groups of people: those content to remain underground in their pods plugged into multiple screens and

virtual stimuli they access while floating about at will in their recliner chairs; and those who feel there is something else out there in the fresh air, as people would go beyond the surface and see trees and move and connect. The title is sort of a spoiler alert, but as we move out of our Covid lockdown and “get back to normal,” I wonder about how humanity will function as the machine starts up again. Will some of the creativity, innovation, and new ways of connecting that have been found in our forced adjustment to a different rhythm during the pandemic give way to the fast current where we collectively do not take time to be present with or listen to each other. My hope is that at least some of the lessons learned, new priorities seen, perspective gained, innovative new ways of accomplishing things, and the list of things we realized we took for granted, will at least hang in the air for a short time when our next transition hits.

It is not hard to see the Smombie¹⁴ Apocalypse taking over as you walk the sidewalks of a campus or the sidewalks of a city. Those spaces where people might gather over coffee in an open space are now more often filled with individuals looking at their phones and not engaged with others, perhaps not even present with the other person at their table. This is powerfully illustrated in the *Removed* photography series by Eric Pickersgill (2021) as seen in Figure 5.1, which shows common, everyday gatherings of people with their phones removed. The body language is telling. “Although social media promises to connect us, we still sit in Starbucks, walk



Figure 5.1 – Images from *Removed* by Eric Pickersgill

¹⁴ “Smombie” is modern slang for people walking around with their attention fully absorbed by their smart phone unaware of their surroundings and even running into others or light poles. Developed from “Smart Phone” + “Zombie” = “Smombie.”

down the street, and dine together staring at a flat screen. To restore our connectedness, we need to see clearly the isolation we are part of and to not be taken in by the myth of communal progress” (Block, 2010, p. xv). Perhaps like what used to take place in the coffee houses of London a century ago and more recently in the U.S., the exchange of ideas and leveling of the playing field can be found again in the common spaces we can once again find to occupy (Wilson, 2020, Kindle book, Location 3,584). Where once people might isolate in the “pods” of their homes, or like in Forster’s story, their underground bunkers, now it is possible for people to literally carry their pods with them. People can “reinvent themselves again and again in response to a changing environment,” Bateson (1989) reminded us (pp. 16-17). O’Shaughnessy (2014) put it another way, describing the need to become “people of the hallway,” able to move between rooms and traverse differences on a daily basis, rather than live in only one room and never venturing out (pp. 15-18).

The news can seem much worse from a distance, as I learned living in other countries. Bauman (2001) said keeping distance was “once the most formidable among the communal defences” (p. 13). The further one is from the events, the worse our perceptions of them can be, such as family members asking us if we are okay in Addis Ababa because of those events happening in South Africa. Or friends from Europe asking us in Pennsylvania if we are okay and safe because of that earthquake in San Francisco. The U.S. politician who flippantly commented on how Ethiopia should spend money on famine relief and not war in 1998, our first year living in a country under conflict, allowed us to experience some anti-American sentiment that was very visible in the culture and in the form of graffiti on the streets I walked. The comment was seemingly made from a cultural stereotype people have about Ethiopia and not from lived experience on site. I was not sure how to feel as that backlash flew about. The trace of that on my

being (van Manen, 2016, pp. 101-105), though, gives me some understanding of what it might be like for our many Chinese and other Asian students as xenophobic microaggressions and verbal attacks around Covid-19 affect international students on campuses. The lesson I brought from that first year under war in another country was the danger of ignorance, i.e. an absence of knowledge or experience on a matter and how things seem worse from a distance. That lesson has hung in the air for me throughout this study, as I seek to apply it to the importance of relating to people different from us. The more distance there is, the less understanding, and the worse the news seems. The application is that in not knowing another person or culture better, human beings easily imagine it worse than they would find it if traveling into that lifeworld.

In one of the most international community experiences I was privileged to be part of as a dorm dad, we ran a home for almost 40 people from many nations and family cultures, living communally 24/7. There was an adage given to us by leadership that is a tip I have never forgotten and continue to use: If you feel like moving away from someone, it is a sure sign you should move toward them. When it comes to this research focus, the pods can be the lifeworlds in which people dwell, call their things “normal” and other people’s things “weird.” There is the real possibility that in the absence of interaction with those who are different from us, never the twain shall meet, and distance and misunderstanding and feelings of divisions will rise. My encouragement is to move toward each other.

All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us...Not all those who wander are lost.

J.R.R. Tolkien, The Fellowship of The Ring

Surfaces are people....they're people!

Henning Bech said that in the “everchanging crowd of varied strangers moving among one another” we become “surfaces” to each other (Bauman, 2001, pp. 147, 227). Combined with the increasing online flow of information that no longer requires human messengers, Bauman

(2001) described how there will be more of “a veneer of community” rather than “clear evidence of members’ building the relationships of trust and reciprocity that we understand to be central to social capital” (p. 227). Like the word I coded thereafter as “pod” to represent the smaller worlds we prefer, are comfortable in, and protect, this word “surface” has taken on significance through the research. The implications of people not really interacting or seeing beyond the surfaces of each other seems clear. Like with the discussion on breadth versus depth in these days of online classes and virtual community, the relationships remain two-dimensional and we risk losing the full three-dimensional reality. As the fast current of the “machine” moves people along and people choose not to adjust speeds or consider and find other rhythms, the sad picture that forms is of these “surfaces,” that is people, being just another screen we swipe aside, dismissing it for whatever next thing may be waiting. Like Detective Thorn in *Soylent Green*, I want to cry out, “*Surfaces* are people...they’re people!” (Turner Entertainment Co., 2003).

The temptation is always there for one human being to view and file another human being by the surface features, categorizing the externals. However, like with the linguistics of human language, there is much more beneath the surface features, such as why the plural -s in English marked by the same consonant actually varies between /s/ and /z/ sounds phonetically based on the preceding sound. In our own journeys, we can realize why a certain set of conditions cause a love one distress based on things underneath the surface where they are processing past experiences. Similarly, in the world of an international student on a campus, they might be viewed as younger or less intelligent than they are when a campus employee makes that judgment based solely language proficiency in English, which is perhaps their 2nd or 3rd language. Williams (2005) said, “where people’s respect for others is based on their verbal abilities, not their originally or insight. You have to be someone who speaks well and calls

attention to yourself. It's an elitism based on something other than merit" (as cited in Cain/Quiet, 2012, p. 77). People are much more than statistics or demographic data. This point calls back the question, "Who do I have to be in this space to be accepted?" Block (2010) said, "All transformation is linguistic, which means that we can think of community as essentially a conversation. This means that if we want to change the community, all we have to do is change the conversation" (p. 31).

The U.S. is receiving refugees who flee from war and persecution and need to navigate similar cultural adjustment waters, such as the man who was a surgeon in his home country and took up one of the few jobs he could in the U.S. as a janitor sweeping up the surgical suite, just to be around what he loves. How is he viewed by coworkers? There will always be more to the story. And for the international student on a campus, the dilemma can be how much of their identity and personality is able to cross over the language and cultural differences. Sense of identity being lost can also come from these types of dynamics, where someone new to a language or culture actually feel like a child again. My own feelings in such moments was to want to assert my competency in that new setting. In the midst of the frustration on the second day navigating the massive open-air market, I want to shout, "I know how to buy a hammer (in my own culture)!" Yet, in the labeling, stereotyping, and categorizing that comes so naturally in human interaction, we can lose sight of the human being and the story that is the most important part of the exchange. You "can't learn the language of a people without also learning the 'grammar' and 'vocabulary' of their worldview" (Storti, 2007, p. 101). The snap judgment made of another is, like an actual photograph, representing a millisecond of the other person's entire life journey to date. The reason Uncle Steve cries during that certain commercial is because it reminds him of his dad. The reason the Chinese student on campus does not choose to attend the

social event is because of the pressure she feels from her home University and family to finish the two years of her exchange program on time.

Not recognizing there is more to every story, our approach can be to pretend “change doesn't exist, which is even more pointless and can make me cruel. I may assume the homeless man I see in the street was somehow born homeless, that everyone's state is fixed beyond remedy” (BBC, 2013). There is always more than the surface allows sight of, so spending the time, listening well, and hearing another person's story seems conducive to building relationship and community. This study by BBC (2013) helps emphasize the point of being mindful of change:

As individuals and nations, this can keep us from safety and mercy. If that homeless man on the street could never have been like us then he's beyond helping and we can't gain the humility to know we could also be painfully changed, we needn't try to make the world safer as a project to benefit us all. And when we intervene in other countries, we usually cling to familiar, failed templates. We are as inflexible as possible in worryingly fluid situations and quickly scared people face other scared people in self-perpetuating battles between rigid values. Change resistance produces a nightmare, which change denial means we'll pretend has been eternal.

Listening to the story of another offers a way to be expanded ourselves. Van Manen (2016) points out that phenomenological research is a chance to “borrow” other people's experiences “and their reflections on their experiences” toward finding and “understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience, in the context of the whole of human experience” (p. 62). It does not begin to capture the depth and richness of experiences, stories, and cultural heritage that could help expand our own, when we do not engage with the

international visitors around us or conveniently lump them into one category as “you international students,” as if they are one group that knew each other before or share a language. The snap, surfacy categorizations and filing humans naturally do with each other will seemingly not help us learn to work collaboratively to solve global problems. Intentional conversations across borders of differences may.

Their stories are as powerful as mine

This title is a quote from the story of the nurse from the Netherlands who found herself with time and space to engage across cultural differences in the galley of a hospital ship docked in Africa. As explained earlier how her own cultural bent to be efficient with time and work and not necessarily value relationships and getting to know the other person became clear to her as she heard the stories of others. Like the account of Samuel and Lee from *East of Eden*, the narrative provides an example of the potential. Feiler (2020) said, “Stories connect us. They give us a sense of belonging. They can take two people with no previous relation and give them a relationship for life” (p. 315). This is a point of connection between the existential questions of identity explained throughout this dissertation and the characters we choose to be. “As Daniel Taylor has written, ‘Our stories tell us who we are, why we're here, and what we are to do. They give us our best answers to all of life's big questions, and to most of the small ones as well...Seeing our lives as stories is more powerful than a metaphor...It is how experience presents itself to us” (as cited in Eldredge, 2004, pp. 5-7). Eldredge (2004) said,

This is why, if you want to get to know someone, you need to know their story. Their life is a story. It, too, has a past and a future. It, too, unfolds in a series of scenes over the course of time. Why is Grandfather so silent? Why does he drink too much? Well, let me

tell you. There was a terrible battle in World War II, in the South Pacific, on the island called Okinawa. (pp. 5-7)

The educational implications of hearing another person's story are impactful, especially if transformation is a goal. People learn and expand their own catalog of experience by engaging with others. "We gather other peoples experiences because they allow us to become more experienced ourselves" (van Manen, 2010, p. 62). The power of contrast often holds up a mirror to our own lives and previous level of understanding. Hopefully humility is present in the curiosity to explore rather than a narcissistic hubris that would have us fear to recognize ourselves in reflection.

Within the charge to do research properly is the tenet of letting the data tell the story. Providing the same courtesy to fellow human beings seems warranted in the search for kinship. One participant said it as, "letting people tell their own stories." Putnam, et al. (2003) said, "In one-on-one conversations...elicit stories...Abstract ideas do not connect people, and social action, when it is not rooted in the heart of people's life experience" (pp. 21-22). Van Manen's (2016) explanation of this type of phenomenological research offers that we:

are given the chance of living through an experience that provides us with the opportunity of gaining insight into certain aspects of the human condition....Story provides us with possible human experiences...enables us to experience life situations, feelings, and emotions, and events that we would not normally experience...allows us to broaden the horizons of our normal existential landscape by creating possible worlds. (p. 70)

The appeal of story is as an "artistic device that lets us turn back to life as lived, whether fictional or real...(evoking) the quality of vividness in detailing unique particular aspects of a life that could be my life or your life" (p. 70). Building this study and especially the reflective writing

done in analyzing the data, I have given myself over to the story being told and connecting the aesthetic references from literature to the important stories being told by the lives of the participants.

The micro to macro effect of individual transformation affecting the building of community is demonstrated by Block (2010), who said, “A shift in the thinking and actions of citizens is more vital than a shift in the thinking and actions of institutions and formal leaders” (p. 31). When the individual is affected the community is also changed. Block adds:

This calls for a shift in narrative which says that individuals, risk, and competition are just *one story* of who we are; they are not *the story* of who we are. Our work is to shift the narrative by designing ways of coming together that become an example of the future we desire...we can begin to think of our communities as nothing more or less than a conversation. If we can accept the idea that all real change is a shift in narrative – a new story as opposed to the received dominant story – then the function of citizenships, or leadership, is to invite a new narrative into existence. Narrative begins with a ride on the wave of conversation. For greatest effect, we need a new conversation with people we are not used to talking to. (pp. 3, 55).

Without this realization of story and the interconnectedness of all actors on this human stage, progress and effective change that is hoped for is less possible because we are bound by the thoughts of the past. Through only viewing the stories we know, imagination and new outcomes are governed and even stifled.

The breakthrough is that we become the possibility, and this is what is transforming. The catch is that possibility can work on us only when we have come to terms with our story. Whatever we hold as our story, which is our version of the past and from which we take

our identity, becomes the limitation to living into a new possibility...What is the story (we) keep telling about the problems of this community? (Block, 2010, pp. 16, 110-111)

In the study design, there were 29 intentional conversations among culturally disparate people, where experiences and viewpoints varied significantly. Yet “kinship” was found during that time even though there were points of disagreement on some topics and hot-button issues. When it comes to building community, conversation is key. It was refreshing to spend the time together.

In more typical unplanned interactions, in the absence of time, commitment, and intentionality, it is easy to imagine human beings handing their business cards of different opinions to each other before deciding if the meeting will even continue. “Telling and listening to stories creates empathy and helps people find the things they have in common, which then eases the formation of enduring groups and networks” (Putnam, et al., 2003, p. 283). The outcomes of hearing their stories are described well by Feiler (2020) in relation to his own narrative research: “There is power in hearing them. But there is greater power in the interaction between the two. Just as nearly everyone said they learned something valuable from our conversation, I felt the same way. We created something together that neither one of us could have created on our own” (p. 315). Like me in my own research, Feiler came away from the many conversations related to his work feeling honored, humbled, and expanded to have taken part in the engagement.

One of the ESL teachers helped explain why this is so important:

...I think even when we think there are similarities there, there are always slight differences that we can learn about and learn from and ...and learn how to be a better person from that. So I think, again, we each have unique stories. And so even if we say, Yeah, I knew who, you know, this is what this outer image looks like about someone,

there's always maybe something else to their story. And so I think it's really important just to really listen and get to know people and not categorize and stereotype into this is what they appear to be or they ...they seem the same to me. Because they might have a very different experience or a different outlook and so I think it's important to not create a story for them. But let them tell their story.

To echo what Block (2010) said, “our identity may be the story we hold about ourselves and our collective way of being together” (p. 55). When individuals act alone or certain groups or political parties pass policies without building consent, there is a turn-taking manner of winning that each subsequent election cycle may alter. Putnam, et al. (2003) said, “...the collective agenda grows out of overlapping personal stories, that agenda has far more staying power than it would were it imposed from without or formulated in advance” (p. 283). Hearing each other’s stories has the potential of moving us toward the “cosy and comfortable place,” a “return to the campfire” bound up in the ideal of community (Bauman, 2001, p. 1; Feiler, 2020, p. 316). Feiler (2020) adds that because we don’t tell our stories, at least certainly “not in a way that’s comprehensive, reflective, vulnerable, and meaning-making. We have become a generation of unstorytellers, which is one reason we’re a generation of malcontents” (p. 316).

The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Let me tell you your story

One manner of not listening well and not letting others tell their own story is by labeling other people, filing them into categories, or otherwise stereotyping them. Doing this is a manner of imposing the story onto the other person. Not listening to the other person is taking belonging away from them in that space and moment. It ties back to the pressure to conform, saying in

effect, “You can *be* in this moment...this conversation...this space, but this is *how you need to be* to belong here. This is the uniform you must wear...*my* telling of *your* story.” In the world of a child, some of these voices may come from the bullies or those who would tease. In adult life, it is more pleasing to think this way of treating others was left behind on the middle school playground or the high school cafeteria, but the lowest common denominator of humanity seems to enter into adult life too. These bad habits of communication lead to judging or evaluating the other person, thinking in a win/lose or zero-sum framework, or using hierarchical thinking that ranks one way over another. When someone says a generalized statement about a group of people or about all people such as, “Everyone cheats on their taxes,” the story being imposed is not true of “everyone,” but you can be pretty sure it is true of the speaker. This recalls how we function within our lifeworlds and assume sameness. Khazan (2020) describes stereotypes as a way to “compress foreigners’ personalities to a caricature – the offense for which I had always resented certain Americans” (p. 238), who constantly asked her if her Russian family drank a lot of Vodka.

The power of stories emerged from the participants’ observations, such as this ESL teacher:

...sitting down and listening to people's stories...the rhetoric is immigrants are coming and stealing jobs...when in reality, if you look at what the actual economics behind it and ... listening to the stories ...or having the experience of going and seeing these countries...and what they're actually living with and what they're coming to ...and still struggling with ...(it) creates a whole different picture and a whole different story. ...I think it's going to take a lot of time ...for most people, to see those benefits and ...unfortunately, I think the pandemic is going to be a huge step backwards. ...we're

going to have to keep working towards and...pushing: What are the benefits (to HEIs) and how international students benefit schools here (and) how it's beneficial for them and for our students to study abroad as well.

The points made about immersion and actual engagement interculturally and the impact and goal of internationalization are all echoed in these observations.

With every step of our lives we enter into the middle of some story which we are certain to misunderstand.

G.K. Chesterton

I didn't know what it was going to be like, but I didn't think it was going to be like this.

Another way in which people can fail to practice good listening and impose stories onto others is through expectations and by an assumption of sameness. "The problem is not what the (other) people do, but the fact that we are expecting them to do something else. In other words, our expectation, not their behavior, is the real sticking point" (Storti, 2007, p. 75). These expectations that human beings project onto others may not even be done consciously. However, the disappointment or annoyance people feel in many circumstances can act as a signal that an expectation had been present. It may help us find, define, or redefine a value or core belief we have because of how we felt witnessing an interaction or behavior. These signal flares are especially available with differences we encounter interculturally, so can be very helpful in our own learning and transformation. An ATCK participant who usually lives a fairly transient life globally explained some learning that emerged for him from his time living in lockdown in the U.S. during the election season of 2020.

(in) Singapore and Dubai and Brussels ...big international hubs...I'm very used to having discussions with a group of people who all come from different backgrounds with different ideas...Everybody knows you're in a group of people coming from a different place with different beliefs and different priorities and so ...there's sort of a given that

you're like, "Oh, you think differently to me. That's interesting." And that's about it.

...Nobody takes it to personally because, I mean, you know, if you have 12 nationalities sitting at the table, of course, you're all going to (have) different (ideas) ...so no one ever gets...It's very rare that things get heated or upset

...So here in the US (it) seems to be quite a divisive place in that ...friends that I have here which spanned quite a few different even political ideologies (so) we'll have discussions with that, especially this election year, my gosh, and ...it's very easy for me to ...have discussions because, again, you know, I've usually bounced around a lot of places...so I like to just hear hypotheticals. "You know what...? What about...?" but that's very dangerous to do here. ...My, my... people get really upset and I think sometimes it was because I look and sound like them. But don't think like them, and that would freak them out. ...it got angry so quickly in a few settings.

The assumption of sameness had people around him feeling betrayed by his difference. Rather than benefiting from another viewpoint or the creativity that comes from "weirdness" (Khazan, 2020, pp. 135-136, 141) to our "normal," they were put off. The participant explained that he stopped engaging and more stepped back just to observe and listen. He put his intercultural skills into play. Interaction is shut down because people are holding so strongly to their way of viewing the world and taking offense if someone sees it different, as he went on to explain:

They've grown up with that reinforced around them very strongly. And so this is very personal...I've lived ...usually in an international bubble where, ...people aren't going to take things too personally because you just, you could never function that way, ...there's so much difference around ...you couldn't do it. ...I've had to learn to rein that in because

I, you know, (the) last thing I want to do is have people take personal offense to any, you know, queries or anything...

The intercultural exchange of ideas and goods he was used to in an environment that would support it helped formed the habits of engagement and exploration of his curiosity. Comparing that to a less internationalized setting, such as he has been living in during the lockdown, that type of interchange is not as possible. Unfortunately, withdrawing into a more isolated less interactive mode becomes the way to survive. Walking on egg shells culturally does not seem to provide the fortitude to build bridging social capital (Putnam, et al., 2003, p. 2). Storti (2007) said, "...the way to prevent cultural incidents is to stop assuming that other people are like us. If we didn't expect the local people to behave like we do, we would no longer be critical when they didn't" (p. 76).

Adapting intercultural skills to our local contexts, as the ATCK did during his lockdown experiences, seems a helpful strategy for everyone as the world continues to change. With that lens, it is possible to see that many conflicts that happen are because of those assumptions that others will think and do just like us. Storti (2007) said, "It is precisely this belief, that other people are like us, that is the source of most cross-cultural incidents. If we truly believe other people are like us, then it is only natural to expect them to behave the way we do..." (p. 66). This is the "ethnographic impulse" illustration in Figure 4.2, where the two people are arguing over a "6" or a "9" based on where they are standing. As human beings, we can quickly default to telling ourselves the story about the other person based only on external, surface features. We risk putting their file away, labeled, and carefully categorized into the cabinet of our own lifeworld without the inconvenience of hearing a word of their story from them. As we apply more intercultural communication skills into our local contexts, these assumptions and

expectations can “start to color all your subsequent interactions with the local people. You tend to see only those things which reinforce these attitudes and to overlook behaviors that might give you a more balanced view” (Storti, 2007, p. 48). This leads into isolating or withdrawing from engagement and their presence because “Once you develop negative attitudes toward the local people, you will naturally want to limit your contact with them. After all, the emotions caused by cultural incidents – anger, fear, worry, frustration, to name just a few – are decidedly unpleasant” (p. 49).

We regard discomfort in any form as bad news...But feelings like disappointment, embarrassment, irritation, resentment, anger, and despair, instead of being bad news, show us, with terrifying clarity, exactly where we're stuck.

Pema Chödrön, Buddhist nun¹⁵

The gift of dissent – “It's not you; it's me.”

Human beings seek to ensure safety and thereby meet one of their most basic needs. The type of discomfort that comes from leaving the known spaces or considering that we have growth areas does not feel as safe. When there is an issue or conflict of some sort with another person and annoyance or anger rises inside, the natural defense mechanism is to find a target for the anger. And the target is often the other person, especially the one in view. Even in horrific events that dominate the news sometimes, where the collective story we are telling ourselves is that the news is all bad and we are very divided, people on the screen are seeking a target for their anger. It is normal to want someone to blame when bad things happen.

Wherever two or more human beings are gathered, the potential for conflict seems likely. However, we can shift our paradigm of what these events can do for us. Storti (2007) points out that “cultural incidents” can be very helpful to our growth and focusing or expanding our learning. He speaks of honing one's intercultural skills for living in other countries, but again,

¹⁵ As cited in Feiler, 2020, pp. 312-313

the applications in our own country seem very timely, especially as we are traveling among different lifeworlds.

By far the greatest reward of becoming culturally effective is the fate it saves us from.

The alternative is to live and work among people we don't understand and therefore can never entirely trust. It means living and working among people who repeatedly annoy and upset us, toward whom we become increasingly critical and negative, and compared with whom we feel increasingly superior. It means the artificial reality and forced friendships of life in *the expatriate subculture*. It is a prescription for the narrowing of our humanity, for our ability to be sympathetic and compassionate people. (pp. 113-114, emphasis added)

If you substitute “the expatriate subculture” with any of the contexts that make up your life, such as your workplace, neighborhood, or campus, I believe the words will apply in a way that resonates. The “fate it saves us from” seems very recognizable as we reflect on life in 2021. That the intercultural skills are needed for life within our own countries is shown by Khazan (2020), who pointed out that, “Since 1980, jobs requiring lots of social interaction increased by 12 percentage points as a share of the overall labor force, and high-paying jobs increasingly require social skills (p. 12). In spite of that:

...we're becoming more alienated from one another, splintering into tribes and escaping to our screens and echo chambers (even though) our livelihoods increasingly depend on being smooth and capable collaborators. Everyone is feeling weirder, and we're all supposed to be fine with it. (p. 12)

In Forster's (1909) *The Machine Stops*, the mother in the bunker who does not want to talk to her son promoting an alternative future outside of the pod simply presses her “isolate” button to tune

him out. People can similarly maintain their known and comfortable bubble by “shutting down the borders of their minds” (Khazan, 2020, p. 52).

Related to higher education and preparing students with needed skills, Petter Myklebust and Smidt (2021) said, “The number of jobs that require creativity, innovation and empathy is expected to rise with an increased need for information technology skills...” Rather than becoming more isolated and fixed, the future is calling for people willing to cross borders and enter other domains, to synthesize seemingly disparate factors, and to be able to relate across a wide spectrum with empathy. Employers “routinely list teamwork, collaboration and oral communication skills as among the most valuable yet hard-to-find qualities of workers” (Deming, as cited in Khazan, 2020, p. 12). There seems to be a call for dynamic characters who can travel, remain curious, and have a growth mindset. Beyond the practicality of this sort of professional development, the “reward (and) the fate it saves us from” that Storti refers to seems very contributive to building community.

You Annoy Me So Much! Thank you.

What is so difficult about this manner of learning is that, well, it is so very annoying. It is not comfortable. Living this research while in China for five weeks recently, I knew the mantra of being nudged out my comfort zones and recognizing all that I can learn from difference. When cultural scripts and decision fatigue were setting in, one voice on my shoulder said began describing the higher road I could take, saying, “This is such a good learning opportunity. You will become stronger from this.” My human response was to say, “Oh, shut up!” It is a bold move to see the contrast and difference we encounter daily in the curriculum of life as to our gain. However, Block (2010) pointed out that as we grow more secure in our interaction skills, having left behind the urge to win or prove or disprove or change others, we can actually say to

someone who disagrees with us, “I should warn you, I may have to join you.” By that, we are, in effect, stepping over beside them to view the number “6” as they saw it where we were convinced it was a “9” (as in Figure 4.1). Durrell (1957) said, “Journeys lead us not only outwards in space, but inwards as well. Travel can be one of the most rewarding forms of introspection” (as cited in Storti, 2007, p. 112). It is definitely not comfortable. None of the travel brochures would promote it. Yet, if transformation is the goal, yielding to these effects and becoming more comfortable with different ways of seeing and doing things will help take us there.

As we reflect on the conversation on what community is, recognizing the gift of dissent seems very important. The mirror of contrast helps us to see new things and gain from the perspective of others. Storti (2007) said:

Once we encounter another frame of reference, however, we begin to see what we never could before. When we notice the unusual behavior of (another), we are (in) that moment noticing our own behavior as well. We only notice a difference (something unusual) in reference to a norm or standard (the usual) and that norm we refer to is invariably our own behavior. Thus it is that through daily contact with the customs and habits of people from a foreign culture, our attention is repeatedly focused on our own customs and habits, that in encountering another culture, we simultaneously and for the first time encounter our own. (p. 112)

One participant pointed out how she was much more aware of her “own stuff” from living closely with other human beings. There is an awareness that comes from being in relationships like roommates, partners, marriage, and coworkers. The paradigm shift we can make is to let our annoyance and anger be a light on the dashboard signaling an area to

address. It draws our attention to something, such as a value we had not defined as clearly, an expectation we had that was maybe not yet recognized, or simply an area of growth we can keep developing. The spirit of what Storti (2007) is advising is that if you are angry or annoyed, that is good, and here is why: you just gained insight into your own life and culture; your own growth area may be revealed, or a value you did not know, or an expectation you did not realize you had. Instead of thinking the problem and issue is with the other, you can capitalize on what life is showing you. "It's not you; it's me."

Many participants in the study spoke of avoiding conflict and withdrawing or being a silent observer when there is a dissenting view present, which is very understandable. There is a desire not to offend and to avoid the tension that may arise. This participant shared the types of strategies represented in other voices around this egg shell dynamic, "If this is my first encounter with this person, I wouldn't disagree right away...I'm checking out this person. I'm checking out this relationship. Is this something that could develop into something more." Another said:

Yeah, I wouldn't want to openly disagree or impose my opinions or anything. I would probably be just talking about very general things ...just asking questions and letting them do the talk mostly...I probably wouldn't want tobe very final ..or categorical and defend positions and stuff like that. I just don't think it's worthy of ...like I would try to avoid conflict or confrontation, especially if it's the first chance meeting and I just don't see the point.

Like with other examples of moving into a new space and wondering whether we will find acceptance there, many people described the variables of how well they knew the person or how important the topic was to them. A few participants said they may be willing to risk more engagement with a different viewpoint if they know the person better. One said entering into a

conversation where they are coming at things differently would depend on, “Do I think the person has the potential to change and to grow?” Mostly, the feeling was one of not wanting to feel rejected. What is seen in these comments is that when we think of being hosted in the “country” of another “lifeworld,” people want to be accepted.

When differences lead to increasing tension or conflict of viewpoints, there is the propensity to isolate into quiet, conform to the moment and expectations of others being voiced, or to otherwise put one’s head down and not stand out as different. The alternative to not coexisting with difference is explored in Bill Bishop’s (2009) book *The big sort: why the clustering of like-minded America is tearing us apart*. He explains it is “their desire to stop feeling like outcasts” that lead many people to cluster in homogeneous groupings. “Americans are increasingly moving to places where everyone is just like them” as “sorting along racial, ethnic, and even ideological lines happens” (as cited in Khazan, 2020, pp. 246-247). As indicated here, however, is an alternative choice of seeing the “gift” of the other perspective.

In an earlier narrative from a participant who lives in many international hubs around the world, he noted he was used to hearing other viewpoints from people and that they did not “take it personally” when they did not see things the same way. Building on that point, this Dutch intercultural worker in Africa explained:

Yeah, I see that (effect) in the United States, but I think in the Netherlands (we are) much more....a debate culture...I think when that United States has two political parties. In the Netherlands, you have, I think about 14 parties in Parliament. So, which also we represent the diversity of the people. Hmm. So people are much more used to cope with diversity than they are in the States, I think. That's my observation.

If people were to accept that contrast and difference is helpful in the manner of a mirror to understand ourselves more or another lens by which we can get a clearer picture, we can move away from stasis and knowns and reveal new horizons otherwise not possible. These are challenging steps to take because, especially as “self-esteem is threatened, people seek sameness,” as Khazan (2020) pointed out (p. 51). Yet in that pursuit, people may find more adaptability, flexibility, and the resiliency that are among the necessary dispositions in a rapidly changing world.

One of the more impactful lessons on creating the story of community together, as explained by Block (2010) is how important it is “for people to see the limitation of the story, for each story has a payoff and a cost.” He described, “The distinction ...between dissent and complaint... People’s doubts, cynicism, and resignation are theirs alone. Not to be taken on by us. Dissent is distinct from denial, rebellion, and resignation.” The goal:

is to bring the gifts of those on the margin into the center. The gift of conversation is the essence of valuing diversity and inclusion...Belonging occurs when we tell others what gift we receive from them, especially in this moment. When this occurs, in the presence of others, community is built. (p. 130)

Seeing the differences of viewpoints and lifeworlds as a “gift” is a heroic action. An analogy from acting and especially improvisation has been helpful in moving the understanding along in the research. Actors on stage must attend to each other. It is taboo to step on each other’s lines or to upstage the other person. A basic rule of improvisation is that when the other player offers a “gift” into the skit, you must accept the gift and work collaboratively with the other person to see where it takes the story. New humor and outcomes that were not imagined before arises from that approach.

The rule of improvisation fits well into the Transition Model and the level of change human beings face at increasing levels. In looking at the curriculum of lived experiences, Bateson (1989) reminded us that “life as an improvisatory art” (p. 3). The ideal of community explored throughout is related to the gift of dissent. Bauman (2001) recalls the fireside, saying, “Inside the ‘warm circle’ they won’t have to prove anything, and whatever they do they may expect sympathy and help” (p. 11). “The kind of understanding on which community rests precedes all agreements and disagreements. Such understanding is not a finishing line, but the *starting point* of all togetherness. It is a ‘reciprocal, binding sentiment’...that in community people ‘remain essentially united in spite of all separating factors’” (Bauman, 2001, p. 10). There is a journey mapped out for humanity in this explanation.

People have to believe that the price of the status quo is dramatically higher than cost of the transition.

Daryl Conner

Conflicting Lifeworlds

A significant finding that arose from this research is how much identity is integrated with values and core beliefs. The conflicts spoken of above take on magnitude when placed in the framework of lifeworlds. To reject someone’s viewpoint is in effect a rejection of the person. One participant explained his feelings in relation to conflict and dissent, “...just because I don’t want to come across to them in any way offensive, even though I know that it’s an opportunity for them to participate ... You know, to me, I look at it more from a personal perspective and rejection of me...” It bears repeating that though we may humanly think we want full alignment and similarity and agreement, this will never be possible, even with those we love the most. In any context where human beings gather, there will be conflict and difference. Storti (2007) draws this point out from an intercultural skills position:

succeeding abroad means being able to work effectively across cultures. And there's the rub: because of cultural differences – different, deeply held beliefs and instincts about what is natural, normal, right, and good – cross-cultural interactions are subject to all manner of confusions, misunderstanding, and misinterpretation. (p. 25, emphasis added)

We can easily remove the word “abroad” from this statement and recognize the value and apply the point in the context of increasing diversity around us in our home cultures, or as applied to internationalization on a college campus.

The data continued telling the story, such as in this helpful insight from a professor who had done a good bit of traveling. He said:

...what I learned in listening to other people is that all of us, regardless of where we come from or how we identify ourselves, whether it's religious identity or national identity or whatever, we all ask the same questions when we're young. And those questions are very profound at a very early age. Like I'm not aware of any child who didn't ask, “Am I going to live forever?” That's a very profound question asked at a very young age. Where did this come from? They observed the moon in the sky (and ask), “What is this, mom?” Doesn't matter where we come from, we all ask the same questions. I think that unites us as a people. What divides us is the answers we provide children to those profound questions. The answers vary based on where you grow up community that you're in.

This explanation is very useful in building on the earlier discussion around lifeworld and the impact of family of origin and all the factors that feed into the outlook and perspective people have on the world around them.

We agree on the key questions, especially as we look at those existential questions, such as “Who am I...in this space?” There are other questions that people tend to ask which reflect their worldview, such as: Where did you come from? Why are you here? What's wrong with the world? How do you fix it? The social ills of the day, whether it has to do with climate change, political solutions, or the economy in the U.S. system, can be mostly agreed upon as problematic. The ideas of how to solve the problems is what brings out the contrast, such as how each of the two main political parties in the U.S. frame economic solutions. The polarization felt in the U.S. often has as its focal points around how we solve hot button issues of the day that dominate the social narrative and echo around media channels. On a broader scale, related to Covid-19, people the world over would agree there is a challenge. The solutions and strategies to meet the challenge are demonstrating the variety of humanity in the global conversation.

Creativity requires you to deal with the discomfort of NOT knowing.

(Source unknown)

Shibboleth – the dealbreakers and litmus tests

Considering how much lifeworlds are tied into the identity of people, it was helpful to look at the data around commitment to others and the conditions that lead to a “break” in the relationship. One person reflected on how he recognized his own movement from the space he had grown up in and his own transformation that went beyond the geographical. He tried to find words to explain this without adopting hierarchical thinking:

...I don't have really good friends from long ago....This is gonna sound terrible, but I don't know how to say it nicely. I feel like I outgrew the relationship (he described a few situations) ...it made me uncomfortable, but the deal breaker was...(another situation

described) ...just, like, I grew past this. I'm not from a small town going off in the woods anymore.

His use of “outgrew” and the type of circumstance and response are situations many human beings may recognize in their own journey, especially if they are moving and interested in their own increasing understanding and transformation.

Everyone is living a more transient life even without choosing to move or travel based on the change and diversity around them. This connects to another way people could learn from the hybridity in the lived experiences of TCKs. The TCK speaker noted the challenge for them, and others who live highly mobile lives or temporary situations, is that when there is a conflict or incident, they can rely on the fact that they will be moving on soon. They do not end up building the conflict resolution skills they need. Here is how he described trainings he does in international schools:

And we have to unpack (a) component of (what) probably is lack of conflict resolution skills that these kids... They've never had to practice that...their life is transient and they can make relationships disposable and ...to watch the effects of that. Yeah, it's we have social media. Now, which shows us you know what ...what that will do to our ability to communicate and have meaningful exchange and things.

In our social media world, as he pointed out, people are having a similar experience in not investing in or committing to relationships as they might in person compared to the disposable nature of friendships on social media. An ELL teacher who grew up in Ukraine but has lived in the U.S. for decades compared some of her memories growing up with intercultural exchange to this aspect of her life here:

I've had a lot of experiences when people have a different to me they were not tolerant, they had zero tolerance. So once they found out that we had some difficulties, maybe ideological (or) political affiliations, so they would do become very negative and ...if it's like a Facebook (they) would unfriend me and sometimes they would get very rude. ...Yeah, I used to like it more but now (I've) become a little cautious after having a few ...very negative experiences.

This German international student is seeking to reconcile long-term friendships and compassion with values tied into identity:

...in the current like political climate...it's so easy for me to just write off someone that's a Trump supporter, but it's not that easy. And so ____ and I just had a conversation with a friend the other day where I was like, "Oh, do you think ____, one of our other mutual friends...I feel like she's probably a Trump supporter. Do you think that's true?" Yeah, absolutely. I'm hundred percent certain she's conservative and she probably voted for Trump again. Um, and I think for our friend, it was kind of like a dealbreaker. And I'm like, it doesn't have to be a *dealbreaker*. Like if you look at the statistics still half the population voted for Trump. And so you can just expect that everyone is (going to) share the exact same mindset as you. We still appreciate this friend but she's still just leaning a little bit more conservative and she just had a different political opinion...but that's not a reason to like write her off because of it.

The term *dealbreaker* has become standard parlance for how human beings seem to sort and file the people around them. Several other participants talked about being unfriended or used "dealbreaker" in reacting to the questions.

An international student, who is a graduate student in psychology and is desirous of figuring these things out, gave this outsider viewpoint from having been in the U.S. during high school, college, and now graduate school:

I see the difference from like Mexico...when I was driving (in the U.S.). I will see like in their homes, they will put like their political signs. And I was like, oh, in Mexico. We don't do that because we don't ...tell anyone like what we are rooting for because (she explained the problem, and then said) I think that if we did that, it will divide us, because we are no longer listening to that person, but we are like ...putting them in boxes...But if we get rid of that. Then we will find out that we could be friends with someone that doesn't agree with their same ideas and because of that. Then we're willing to include them and to be like active listeners and be like, "Oh, yeah, right. Yeah. You're right about these..." Or, "I don't completely agree on this case, but I could see your point. And it could be more human than just putting that barrier and be like, "No, no, no, no, this side...this side..."

Khazan (2020) said in, "More recent history, of course, has supported Tajfel's (Social Identity) theory. We tend to sort people into groups based on their differences, even when those differences are laughably minor. Then, we rank the groups in relation to our own," often having a litmus or "Shibboleth" test of how they speak on certain things to know whether any future relations will happen (p. 74). Current examples in U.S. culture could be around the social issues named above or for some people breaking off communications with a "Trump supporter" or someone who "listens to Fox News," as one participant in the pilot study stated. For other people, they would drop relations with anyone who "listens to CNN" or "voted for Biden." Morson and Schapiro (2021) have written how litmus tests around religion are now shifting to

political affiliation. Compared to ten years ago, it is more common for a student in a discussion group to say, “Oh, well, you know, of course we have no problem marrying somebody of a different religion, but I couldn’t marry a Republican” in the same tone of voice as a few decades ago someone would say, “I couldn’t marry a Catholic” (Weingarten, 2021).

During the timing of this focused research around the topic of factors that build or detract from community, it has been nearly impossible to not see connections to the news and events that unfold. The insurrection at the U.S. Capitol building in January of 2021 was seemingly an example of lifeworlds in conflict. The way that the mob saw things seemed clearly evident in the actions they took. Even Wolff Blitzer’s live running commentary about the mob, saying, “They probably are too stupid to know they are heading for jail at some point down the road” (Feldman, 2021), reveals a lifeworld. Through horrific actions and deaths during and after from the effects, these events seem to show some of the worst of human actions when understanding and peaceful coexistence of diversity cannot be found. Isolation breeds the ethnocentrism present in ideologies.

Social Identity Theory as illustrated by Gault in Figure 1.9. seemed clearly evident in how the Capitol event unfolded. Gault’s image is of the two identical castles across the sea from each other. Their armies and boats and all parts of the illustration are exact mirror images of similar things with labels that conflict, such as, “Their wicked despot” versus “Our glorious leader,” or, “Our great religion” versus “Their primitive superstition.” Bauman (2001) pointed out that in a time of:

Not listening to outsider voices, only their own...community will feel like a besieged fortress being continuously bombarded by (often invisible) enemies outside while time and again being torn apart by discord within; ramparts and turrets will be the places

where the seekers of communal warmth, homeliness and tranquility will have to spend most of their time. (pp. 15, 13)

He added additional imagery around the walls and fortresses of lifeworlds and social identity that are part of the human experience.

cultural differences are used as building materials in the frenzied construction of defensive walls and missile launching pads. ‘Culture’ becomes a synonym for a besieged fortress, and in fortresses under siege, the inhabitants are required to manifest their unswerving loyalty daily and to abstain from any hob-nobbing with outsiders. (p. 144)

In such closed off isolation and hostility, people will only feel safe spending time on the “ramparts” of the castle (p. 150), which are those dug-in fortifications for protection. In this analogy, the protecting of one’s “pod,” the ideas and values making up their lifeworld are what must be protected.

Block (2010) compared the “insular mentality” to being “Under the siege of fear, fault, and the rest, (as) people and institutions build a wall around themselves and are primarily concerned with their own interests and survival” (p. 45). Reading these literary sources and listening to the voices of participants mindful of the election that just happened, and doing analysis while the transition of power was taking place in the U.S. made these metaphors by the authors that much more haunting. There is an alternative Bauman (2001) writes about as we would have intentional conversation. “The sameness evaporates once the communication between its insiders and the world outside becomes more intense and carries more weight than the mutual exchanges of the insiders” (p. 13). As intercultural exchange ensues isolated clusters dissipate.

The recognition of our common humanity and a search for kinship filtered into this study especially through the lens of Social Identity Theory, which explains the propensity to see *Others* as bad or the enemy. One professor reflected on history and the distance and castles of kingdoms in the past and then proposed this alternative structure:

one way to stop nations from fighting each other is to create situations where the cost of conflict is (in) no one's interest... I guess, globalization is what I'm getting at. If we're all interrelated and we create institutions ...that force people to interact with each other. And if a fight is brewing the realization is we don't want to fight because it will hurt everyone involved. Instead of we have to find some other solution to get past our differences.

Beyond the political contexts, you see similar dynamics in sports, as fans from opposing teams end up in a brawl after the game. When we lead with our differences, that may be all we see. In the case of the fight in the stands, we can miss the common ground evident in that all of those people are gathered together in one place to watch a sport they love in person. They are committed to it. Many others not like them are absent from the event or unaware, and yet they can come to blows over team loyalty. An international student from Mexico used a similar analogy speaking of her time in the U.S. and the politics she has observed:

...it's like a shame because (like) I always tell my mom, "They don't realize that they're in the same team," like...I often see like ...my brother plays baseball and I, we saw how like the Red Sox and the Yankees were like very against each other and ...and then I sometimes compare that with like how things are right now and I'm like...someone needs to tell them....You're in the same team, like you're in the same country like if you just, like, get ...over some of the things....

As much as I want to be really understand their point of view, I wasn't raised here so I might not understand everything but ...It's kind of like family sometimes, but it's like you have your disagreements, but then you realize like, you have to care for your family or at least that's what my parents told me, like if we don't care for each other, then who's going to care for us.

She expressed concern about how her words in observation come across because she realized it is a very sensitive topic.

A smile or a tear has no nationality; joy and sorrow speak alike to all nations, and they, above all the confusion of tongues, proclaim the brotherhood of man.

Frederick Douglas

Those fundamentalists are part of the problem

Within the narratives and responses in interviews and on the surveys, there was a divide between those who viewed religion as a helpful and supportive aspect of life and those who saw it as judgmental and exclusive. Some found community and belonging inside the faith they had in a belief system such as Christianity or Islam. Some found exclusion in similar contexts. Those with fundamentalist beliefs were derided in some accounts by those who have found that invasive and unwelcome. When people have an agenda, especially one to change the other person, this is very different from the goal of merely making a human connection with no motivation other than deeper understanding.

One person told about a college classmate who was “extremely religious” who “would always spin the Bible into it to the point that (he) frustrated everyone around him.” Criticisms of the church and Christians that were present in the study as something that may be working against community are perhaps best captured in how this description about the classmate continued, “...that's I think the thing that I find bothering. Because that's a judgment that there's

something wrong with all these people and they need to be saved.” Morson and Schapiro (2021) write in their book *Minds Wide Shut* that “the fundamentalist mindset” is “one of the gravest threats not only to democracy but to meaningfully addressing the greatest problems we face as a country: racism, climate change, and poverty, just to name a few,” adding “fundamentalism is characterized by a ‘radical simplification of complex questions and the inability to learn either from experience or from opposing views’.” An important distinction they make, however, is that “fundamentalist thinking stretches far beyond the realm of politics and religion and into spaces like economics (for example, the idea that capitalism can solve all of our economic and social problems) and the sciences more broadly” (Weingarten, 2021). Where criticisms of Christianity might lament their “doctrine” and “dogma,” the case Morson and Schapiro (2021) are making is that it is common for all people to hold their lifeworld as authoritative.

Each person’s lifeworld contains the core values and belief systems they adhere to, perhaps by the time invested in them, by contextual influences, or by people they grew up around. Religious beliefs become an easy target in the social dialogue without the acknowledgement that each person has an operating system by which they are interpreting the data around them. Morson and Schapiro (2021) make the clarification that “Fundamentalism is not just ‘out there,’ lurking in other people, but inside each of us” (Weingarten, 2021). They were first drawn to “fundamentalism” by the fervor with which people spoke of science as “a solid block of doctrines to be accepted, uncritically, and with equal confidence” (Weingarten, 2021).

Instead of professing that we believe in science, Morson explained, “We should respect the scientific method and the spirit behind it, which involves the careful weighing of evidence, testing ideas by those who doubt them, and arriving step by careful step at the

best available answer, subject to revision in the light of future evidence.” ...In today’s world, if you want to claim you have all the answers, you don’t talk about religion.

[Instead], you claim you have a science because nobody can argue with science. That’s the modern secular equivalent to “God spoke to me” back in an earlier period.

(Weingarten, 2021)

This example helps to demonstrate how ethnocentrism and egocentrism exist within belief systems of human beings apart from their ethnic culture of origin or passport country.

The authors discuss the human desire to win the battle of viewpoints and “scoring points” more than actually solving a problem such as poverty. The key is to “recognize that *all of us have some fundamentalist views*—that we know we’re right, and no evidence is going to change our view of that” (Weingarten, 2021, emphasis added). The examples and supporting literature above reflect what was heard often from participants in the pilot and formal study, that if the other person has an agenda – that is, anything other than getting to know them as a person – then the intercultural exchange will tend to break down. Fundamentalists of any sort would seemingly seek to change others or write them off unless they change their viewpoint to align. This closing of doors and windows and putting up higher walls exasperates any movement toward engagement and exchange and leads to withdrawing further into isolation and clustering along homogeneous lines.

If we feel the other person is about to attempt to sell us something, whether a product or a belief, our barriers start to go up. People notice and resent an agenda that is acting to short-circuit the human connection possible, as in the case of the college student weaving the Bible into everything. Another participant explained a similar example this way:

I hate when I'm talking with somebody who has, you know, brought up a topic for whatever reason. And I think that they're talking because they really want to talk about it and have discourse and that sudden shift when I realized they didn't ask my opinion to find out what my opinion was. They asked my opinion, to make sure I (would) agree with them. That that changes your conversation...and how manipulated people feel...

This participant went on to explain how the division and way of interaction is affecting her. It also demonstrates the very natural human impulse to move away.

There are people that I have wanted to entirely disassociate from because of their racial comments or their political comment that in a different environment, they wouldn't have made and I wouldn't have known...Is that the right way to be or the wrong way to be? ...it comes down to...Do I think the person has the potential to change and to grow. And I know that sounds egotistical if I want this person to change to be like my perspective, you know, I want somebody to be non-racist. I want somebody to truly believe that everybody has equal rights. And that is my agenda. And if somebody feels differently. I think they're (wrong).

But it's been hard. It's been disheartening to see things become so polarized and so black and white and so many people becoming entrenched ...*and yet I am one of those people!* Because again, I firmly believe that you should not be racist and I firmly believe you should agree on an equal opportunity in life for everyone.

Her lifeworld was visible to her in that contrasting moment, and yet she was noticing the conflicting parameters they created. In one interview, this description was used about someone known to the participant. He said their mode was, "I'm only going (to) align and sort of travel in

a pod with people (who) think like me on this X, Y, or Z,” and he added in advice, “sooner or later you're probably going to find that there can be one thing that could trigger you or them.” In many of my notes, “protect your pod” became a shorter code for any of the lifeworld preservation we do, as our egocentrism of how our view is the right one in our *Me*-story and ethnocentrism in our *We*-story (Feiler, 2020) rears up clearly beyond just our country or culture.

The Science Advisor to President Biden, Eric Lander (2020) in his podcast called *What will it take?* called it imperative that we learn how to coexist and work together without anyone being “deleted,” as the one participant said. Lander described a choice between a utopian or dystopian existence. He indicated that it is up to all of us who make up the *We*-story (Feiler, 2020). In his discussion about how we might become less divided in the U.S., he spoke of similar themes as those that came from the participant voices, the need for “humility,” and for “building trust.” Part of building trust, he noted, was having “skepticism in the worlds of science and media,” distinguishing between citizens questioning respectfully with information “not blind trust or cynical doubt, but earned trust and informed, skeptical doubt.” He called for those presenting information to be more transparent, especially about what they know and do not. Lander, who calls himself, a “Hopeful Optimist,” described people in “tribes” who have given up on coming together and are feeling divided, pointing out the need for finding “common ground” or at least “meeting ground.” Like Block’s (2010) “alternative future” we can build collaboratively (p. 55), Lander said, “It’s time to choose our future....we – all of us – have responsibility...(it) “will take all of us” (and) “will take humility...(and) commitment.”

Earlier an ESL teacher talked about the changes the pandemic has brought and how the effect was a stripping away of parts of her life, such as her language school. It was in the realization that her values and beliefs were still present that helped her realize and say, “I’m no

less me.” For her or the person wrestling with the “disheartening...black and white...polarization” and excluding people who did not see it the same way, the link between identity and values is very intertwined. From the voices of participants, watching the events of the past year, and in the literature, it is my observation that the fuel that gives energy to the fire we call “division” and “polarization” comes from this intimate connection we have to the *why* of what we believe. To change one’s viewpoint on an issue, in one sense, is like excising a portion of self.

To show the impact of our lifeworlds and how they interact, we can consider this comment from Morson (2021), an “observant Jew”:

No one’s going to convince me anything about God. It’s completely off the table. There are certain things that we believe that make us who we are. You should recognize where you’re a fundamentalist, and what is open to debate. What defines you if everything is open to debate? (Weingarten, 2021)

Tying this directly to dissent in building community, Block (2010) said, “Dissent in this way is life giving, or life affirming. It is the refusal to live the life someone else has in mind for us.” In having intercultural exchange of goods, such as between a series of islands making up an archipelago or as along those ancient trade routes, there is the potential to have addition without subtraction, it would seem. That is, we can be expanded. Our understanding can be increased, even if only in the sense of having a better understanding of the person. Morson and Schapiro (2021) talk of:

valuing the process of the exchange itself, which means you really listen, and actually respond to what’s being said. And at the end of this process you know more than you did before, and you’ve arrived at a point where neither of you started. If you’re saying,

“Anybody who disagrees with me is either evil or stupid,” then dialogue can’t work. It has to be [rooted in] the willingness to understand that you don’t know everything to begin with...(Weingarten, 2021)

If we travel across borders from known to unknown spaces and engage in intentional conversations with culturally disparate individuals, we have much to gain and, perhaps, isolation and division to diffuse. Especially if our packing list for travel does not include judgment, hierarchical ranking, winning, or “knitting” their names down as dealbreakers (Dickens, 1999). Better if we can remember to pack humility, curiosity, openness, and an honest desire to find connection. In the absence of this, there is an elusiveness of “a middle ground between the extremes of questioning nothing and questioning everything. But it’s a middle ground that today we rarely see in the wild” (Weingarten, 2021). Weingarten (2021) confirms the needed skills in this way, “cultivating the skills of ‘self-questioning, recognizing our own limitations, and attentive listening to those who differ,’ we might learn to think and engage differently.” The cross-pollination of cultures in relation to internationalization is, again, a manner in which thinking in intercultural terms may help humanity find its way forward as the diversification of “goods” in the social economy expands.

We don’t see things as they are, we see things as we are.

Anaïs Nin

On creativity and problem-solving

When it comes to solving problems that are increasingly global, having more diverse voices in the conversation can be helpful in offering more lens by which to view the issue. This can be thought of as people working with “complementarity” and seeing “Contrasting approaches to the same problem” (Bateson, 1989, p. 78). New solutions arise and phrases like, “I would have never thought to solve it that way!” ring in the air, which would seem to signal an

environment conducive to innovation and creativity, where the “we’ve never done it that way before” observation rings more hollow. Status quo and systemic stasis can provide foundation and ground traditions, but the checks and balances of diverse viewpoints seems imperative as the pace of change accelerates.

Just as in a social context or on a college campus, if there is an absence of some voices speaking to what affects life for everyone, then there is loss. In his community building activities around conversations, Block (2010) noted that once the group is assembled, we should remove the empty chairs from the circle so we are not “reminded of our loss” (p. 156). Bateson (1989) noted the “...fact that these separations, like the exclusion of the talents of large sections of the population, have caused us to forego important kinds of creativity” (p. 78). Block (2010) reminded us that beyond our “isolation...there are too many people in our communities whose gifts remain on the margin” (p. 3). Beyond the literary support, data from the participants echoed the benefits to problem-solving that come from more of a cultural interchange. This ESL teacher who has lived long stretches of life in two different countries said:

sometimes when you spend time around people who are similar to you...you stay within the same mindset...you solve problems following the same pattern all the time. And then all of a sudden you see a person who has a different approach and you start thinking, okay, maybe my way of solving problems is not unique. Maybe there are other options. And then you see how they work for other people.

Another benefits of the “gift of dissent” is finding solutions and being creative. Khazan (2020) said “the teams that had dissenting opinions in their midst came up with more innovative solutions than the teams in which everyone agreed” because the “friction of dissent is often what ignites the creative spark, and it takes weirdos to make dissent possible” (pp. 140-141). Those

who ask, “Is this still working?” or, “Is that approach still effective?” can be the voice that saves a context from stagnation, decline, or cessation. Within the framework of transition models, both endings of some things and new beginnings of other things can be extremely energizing, practical, and profitable, as the monetary value scale is applied. The level of innovation and pivoting that so many businesses and industries have had to do during the global pandemic has been amazing to observe. The hardships and being forced to shift methods is not pleasant but if there were a way to measure the creative energy that has allowed business and industries to continue functioning, it seems it would a high number.

A university employee explained the importance of breaking larger problems into smaller tasks and having a diverse range of voices:

I think those different viewpoints are really, really important when trying to solve whatever problems come up because we all look at it in a different lens in a different way. And I think that's really, really important. ...And then trying to just take it one step at a time ...Let's see how we can look at this and solve whatever problems that are happening...at the same time, we have to ...look at that problem in bits and pieces, but that diversity and different lens is really important as...we're tackling whatever that world problem is because ...diversity is important, but it's also important to try and for me take it in smaller chunks. Because if we continue to circle around the big picture, we're never going to get anywhere.

The point of community and feeling you are contributing was echoed in how this international businessman from Brazil described different people working together:

...they have to be open to ...to discuss things...It's not saying that. You know what I propose is not better than you propose, you know. So what I'm saying is really, like for

instance, you know, you can come up with a better idea than I ...had, ...and the opposite, you know...I believe this has to be ...not saying, “Well, because I came with this this idea... This idea has to be accepted.” ...Of course, I thought (it) was the best idea and...that's why I propose(d it), you know...I like to solve problems as well...this also ...counts because of experiences in life (but) you have different experience. ...What makes me happy is really, when I come with an idea and that contributed (it) makes me happy that you know that I ...contributed to something, you know.

In recognizing how the global pandemic is an outward sign of humanity's mobility and interconnectedness that exasperates the problem of the virus spreading, this ESL teacher living abroad also noted that scientists and other people working collaboratively all over the world has brought a vaccine and program for distribution at a faster speed than would have seemed possible in other times. She was picking up from talking about how thinking our way is the only or best way, the absence of humility, can inhibit solutions.

I don't know this race for vaccines ...now there's a sense of we're trying to do this not because we're the best or, you know, this lab competes with (that)...I think...there's this desire to produce something that will help humanity, not just a particular country or not just a particular class of people...This is very unifying in a way like teams of scientists international teams across the borders, they're all working on this solution. And that's also to me is a beautiful picture of the people can come together in times of crisis.

It comes easily to think of the pandemic as bad and creating loss of life and loss of many opportunities and family connections, such as only being able to visit through a pane of glass or the high school commencement ceremonies that became drive-through events. The discomfort and loss and pain is obvious, but it exists alongside the innovation and creativity that would not

be happening were Covid-19 not an issue. Choice of response, what Frankl (1984) calls “the last of human freedoms”(p. 9), becomes part of our dispositional makeup as we travel through change and it travels through us. This participant voice from someone who had lived in multiple countries surprised me, but was also very helpful in analyzing the data. When asked about the year 2020 and the impact of Covid-19, he said:

I would say that I will be quite positive about it. In other words, I like changes. So this Corona crisis for me. I think it was a very great period because you are part of a new time. You move into a new era, and I'm very privileged to be part of that. You know, yeah, like ...his zoom, meeting Skype. Teams, Google Meet, all kinds of new techniques where you're part of... You know, I was also in a big conference ...a couple of conferences. Normally you would have to travel. Now it's via the Internet and so ...I like it very much. I would say.

His observation about the access relates to the tradeoff of access to programming versus the depth of connection, as discussed around online community building. He noted that there are people who do not like change and do not have coping strategies. He felt more adept at this from his more mobile, intercultural lifestyle, mentioning some of the conspiracy theories others who are more stationary seem to embrace.

The imagery of cross-pollination and cultural interchange and checks and balances have permeated this analysis of the data findings. This professor's explanation of how the U.S. functions is a helpful parallel to these images in terms of global collaboration:

So like look at our country. It's kind of an experiment with the 50 states doing 50 different things. And sometimes things don't go well. And hopefully we learned from it. But sometimes the state will have an idea that's quite interesting. And then it gets adopted by the whole nation, and you wouldn't have that type of incubation of ideas. If you didn't have difference in the first place. Take that idea and expand it to the world. Think of it as a big incubator of ideas and don't be so bold to think that you're the best in the world that we're all equal.

The phrase “a big incubator of ideas” is captivating when considering what a higher education institution can be, allowing intersectionality across disciplines, departments, and the cultures of the various stakeholders. Another participant described his growing up in a way that can act in summary of points about community needing boundaries of a sort, having their own language, and so on:

I feel incredibly fortunate ...we met on work while working in a military base and in some ways I feel like that was just this amazing petri dish...We had a built in level of exclusivity. I mean, we were working on an overseas base. It's inherently, you know, surrounded by barbed wire and exclusive. There's ...a language to it that...is not uncommon outside of it. There's shared purpose and mission. There's just, they're all these ingredients that actually make it ...that build really easy frameworks for relationships to build off of. And so I feel just incredibly fortunate and ...and we were thrown together. You know, there wasn't ...you skip the whole awkward like kind of choice thing like we just all happened to be there.

The shared purpose and being “thrown together” aspects described in this narrative capture the researcher’s own experiences as alluded to in notes about positionality. As one traverses the spaces inside an international school compound with 30-foot walls topped with razer wire, walks outside the gate, engages with the community, or cuts through a refugee camp, there are paths that cross with other paths, as one is open to walking in a different way.

Connected to how individuals on a micro level and countries or communities on a macro level respond in light of the conditions and changes around them, there is a distinction between those cultures that are loose and tight. Speaking of cultures, Gelfand (2019) said:

But my research has shown that some groups have much stronger norms than others; they’re tight. Others have much weaker norms; they’re loose. Of course, all cultures have areas in which they are tight and loose—but cultures vary in the degree to which they emphasize norms and compliance with them. (Nussbaum, 2019).

Khazan’s (2020) research revealed that Nobel Prize winners come more from looser, more diverse countries (pp. 95-96). She also explained:

Tight cultures...provide order and predictability in hostile environments. One study found that people from tight cultures were less receptive to foreign ideas and less likely than people from loose countries to succeed at creative competitions, like designing a new type of water bottle, geared toward foreign markets. However, people from tight cultures performed excellently at creative tasks in their own cultures or in cultures similar to their own. (p. 54)

Khazan related her research about those who were different from the norm and considered “weird” to Gelfand’s research data, saying, “Often, what leads to innovation are, precisely, norm-violating, nonconformist ideas...People who notice and react very strongly to social norm

violations tend not to think outside the box” (pp. 95-96). From these voices of participants who had lived in several cultures, observations made matched this data:

our best creativity often comes from diversity. That you know ...mix up different approaches, different ways of thought and you get better creativity, ...because you you get different perspectives. And the more perspectives on something, generally, the better it can be ...and globalization is a phenomenal conduit for that, you know...the iPhone takes something like 27 different countries...or assets or something to make. ...And so ...we love the benefits of it. I think we have to do it responsibly. Because yeah, ...you can absolutely over homogenize, you know.

In isolation, especially in homogenous clusters of like-minded and culturally similar people, we will easily have the same ideas and words and solutions. The potential future is governed by the past. To echo here the point Block (2010) has reiterated, the past can lockdown the future depending on how we function collectively. A known and fixed past can end up putting parameters around the future rather than leaving things open to possibilities not yet imagined. Block calls on us to “shift the narrative by designing ways of coming together that become an example of the future we desire...If we can accept the idea that all real change is a shift in narrative – a new story as opposed to the received dominant story” (pp. 3, 55). Creative, new ways of being and doing are possible when those doors and windows are open.

If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.

Frederick Douglas

Will living under a rock make it better or worse?

The potential of new and innovative and creative outcomes is a stimulating fusion of voices and possibilities, as considered above. I explained to one participant the idea of enjoying new foods that we may risk trying, and then never wanting that food to not be part of our lives after. Ethnic foods can be scary to people depending on their exposure cycles and comfort zones, but once experienced, enrichen life. The professor reflected on that analogy:

I think most people would embrace diverse food. Yeah, it gives you more options, more choices. And it also allows you to be creative because you can take different types of foods and fuse them together to produce something new. And isn't that exciting! And if you don't like a certain type of food that's fine. You don't have to eat it because there's lots of lot of choices out there.

Similarly in music, there are compositions that allow each voice and section and instruments have some time of introduction and presence in the piece. Then, as the music continues, that pivotal moment comes when all the voices converge into the fugue. Like with fusion cooking, all the ingredients gel. In my own experience playing in band and orchestra, the bottom dropped out emotionally in those moments, when all who chose to, could ride the waves of the sounds to a new place. Making beautiful music does not happen easily or without hard work and practice and the presence of many mistakes. Similarly, participants noted that for all the potential of having more diversity together in one space, especially toward solving problems, it also ends up creating new problems. The Dutch international worker in Africa said:

So, together with different people tends to have more problems. (Speaking of centered and bound groups) If you're centered group and the group where you have clear boundaries. Now, not much problem with that because as you want to stay in the same.

(But) was not so much creativity. So to solve problems requires time and listening to the other people and also consulting maybe advisors. If you got it right so don't jump into conclusions too fast.

Among the elements that helps build community, as voiced by the participant narratives, is the emphasis on taking the time needed and listening well to others. This ESL teacher in the U.S. said:

Well, I think, sometimes it doesn't always solve problems because sometimes it makes us think more and dig deeper ...and not live under our rock that we live under. So, I think sometimes it can create more problems by listening to others or learning about them and ...and saying, "Okay, ...what is the issue? What is the problem?" You know, it's easier to say, "Oh, I just live under this rock and ...I think ...this is the issue. And that's what I'm going with." And when we stop and actually listen, we learn that it's a much larger issue or problem. And so maybe it doesn't actually get solved but the more people that I think we get involved in that. Then ...and (we) can educate and then collectively ...make that difference then, but, um, so I don't think it always solves the problem, just by listening.

Sometimes, then we realized the problem is much bigger than, than we thought.

There will be tradeoffs and payoffs either way. Through having a range of diversity seeking to solve problems, there are also likely to be more problems present due to the great amount of difference that may be in the room or at the table.

Block's (2010) overall work equates building community to having a conversation. The story we are telling ourselves about who we are, what the problems are, and how we solve them animate the best and worst things we see in the news. One outcome anticipated from this research and writing is that the gap in how we are able to see ourselves and our way of being together might be more clear. Perhaps we can develop the framework and language that will help

more of humanity feel kinship rather than polarization, which to this researcher in this study, fits well under the umbrella of “community.” For at least one person affected by the study, yours truly, there is the hope of always becoming a better listener and even “learning to be a human being... admitting human connection is something you need, like vegetables and water, because it’s good for you. Eventually, you come to like it. Or maybe even to crave it” (Khazan, 2020, pp. 224-225).

This observation from the TCK speaker with much experience crossing cultures helps support this point:

...I think if we're going to harness the benefits as best we can...just like ...the language and framework for third culture kids...there are great benefits that come with mixing cross cultural upbringing with transients. Great strengths and skills, you know, increased worldview adaptability, all sorts of great stuff. But there are challenges too and I think globalization is the same way.

The challenges of identifying, or especially agreeing upon the sweet spot on the continuum from *genocide – assimilation – segregation – integration* (Ward, et al., 2001, pp. 29-30) seems simpler in a theoretical terms than in reality. When some feel included and some do not, or when some are being “deleted,” as one participant described it, we seem to have missional drift away from all gifts coming out of the margins and into the center and everyone having a voice (Block, 2010, p. 3). There is a delicate balance between recalibrating the system and balance of power versus shifting the imbalance and inequities in ways that merely give the lines to other actors.

The TCK speaker observed the tension between our words and actions in this challenge:

You know, I think the language we use right now for globalization, I think is, is not great. I mean, we phrase that we associate with it are inherently contradictory. I mean,

globalization will ...at one juncture say simultaneously. We want borderless trade, but you should also buy locally and support your local markets. I mean, those are the kind of opposite. If you're buying locally. You're inherently not supporting cross border trade. If you're exporting cross border trade you're inherently not buying local and somehow we associate both of those with the idea of globalization.

This speaker and this researcher do not propose to have the answer to this balance we are seeking to find as society in so many ways, which translates directly to the balance of internationalization initiatives on a campus. Some think full assimilation is best. Some think segregation is warranted. The value of having conversations with each other in the spirit of solving these problems is an ingredient that will help make the dish better, as considered through the lens of this research. The TCK speaker added:

And I think ...on culture, you know, we say simultaneously. You want to preserve...native and local cultures. But we also want to... have a global identity in a global sense of ...citizenship and I mean ...they're mutually exclusive requests. And I think we're gonna have to sort a lot of that out, you know...we're trying to oversimplify globalization. And it's inherently not simple...

It can feel like watching a ping pong match back and forth between opposing viewpoints, between black and white, without consideration of the existence of gray areas. Block (2010) encourages getting the questions right, even if together we are not yet finding all the answers. When we do that, “we choose depth over speed and relatedness over scale. We also believe that problem solving can make things better but cannot change the nature of things” (p. 77).

Talk of inclusion can inadvertently or intentionally create exclusion, as in the earlier analogy of the island within the archipelago. One or a few islands having all the power and

influence seems a factor in how we view the social challenges of the day. There is more than semantics at stake though, when the social movement does not honor its own language of “inclusion” and “equality” by gerrymandering the borders to denote which islands are part of the system and which are not. The earlier points about whether someone feels included or not – their sense of belonging – factors into their motivation to act, whether to be part of the collaborative conversation, or to attack. That all islands have equal access, voice, and influence is part of the ideal. Getting there is a more arduous journey. It is fraught with even more peril when we travel alone and do not engage with those we meet along the way.

One of the most difficult things is not to change society – but to change yourself.

Nelson Mandela

All I wanted was some ketchup.

Living the research, I heard this message in a series of ads called *Behind the Mac* that Apple has been running during this time of analysis and purposefully alongside social events that reflect the tensions in society. The voiceover says:

There's a certain kind of person who doesn't take no for an answer. They don't walk in quietly. They parade in, trailblazing, eyebrow-raising, status quo-breaking, grazing greatness, braving hatred, and taking up space. Never got a seat at the table so we can't sit and behave. We'd rather defy the rules and amaze. There's a certain kind of person who doesn't wait for greatness. They make it. (Diaz, 2020)

Like their famous 1984 ad where a giant hammer is thrown into a dystopic, Orwellian screen to symbolize how we can break through from this present state, the message in these current ads is of a “giant leap” forward in technology (Diaz, 2020). The commercials feature famous people from a cross section of society, such as Spike Lee, Tom Hanks, Takashi Murakami, Lady Gaga, Steven Colbert, “Black Lives Matter activists, ‘Me Too’ founder Tarana Burke, editor Gloria

Steinem, and primatologist Jane Goodall” (Diaz, 2020). Khazan’s (2020) research is on people who feel “weird.” They find their way around that boundary to become innovative contributors in society. Like those groundbreakers in the Apple ad, voices from within this research have taken similar journeys, such as the boy who came into his kindergarten classroom with anticipation, hope, and wonder about this new space and was told he did not belong there and sought places where he might be welcome. Or there is the TCK speaker who was used to having stimulating conversation with an international crowd, hearing from various viewpoints from many diverse cultural lenses, as topics could be safely bandied about over a meal without fear of anyone taking offense, walking away, or rejecting him; from being on lockdown in the U.S. for several months, he learned he would do better to remain quiet, listen, and only observe rather than be part of the exchange because of how people reacted so strongly to him not fitting the story they had imposed on him based on his external factors.

Contrast this to the alternative approach of a healthy interchange without fear that is allowed in a “debate culture,” such as a Dutch participant described. Another culture’s lens provides an example, as described by this university employee in relation to her previous study abroad experiences:

...variety ...adds to life and people who have different experiences have things to teach you. If it's a discourse and a discussion. I'm comfortable with that. I like to engage with that. If I feel that if somebody's escalating the energy just because they want to drive home their point, I'm not comfortable with that. And if it feels like it's (going to) escalate into conflict, I back away from that.when I was taking classes in London. The British approach is really a Socratic discourse. And a lot of the other American students just kind of sat there waiting for the right answer. And they were very uncomfortable, you know.

They were waiting to take notes and there they were uncomfortable with being asked the question to engage in a discourse. I really like that, but I do not like people that I feel are trying to ram their thoughts down my throat.

Her narrative also demonstrates how we might learn from different approaches, both in how the discussions happen and what is said in them. When the conversations are shut down, there is loss.

Interviewees commented on hoping their answers were helpful or asking if they got it right, even as I would assure them that there are no wrong answers as we grapple with these hard questions. One person said regarding the survey, “I thought that maybe my answers may have disappointed you.” The egg shells were evident in other comments from participants, such as “And again, I don't. I hope I don't offend...” Their hesitancy then and intimation that they would not dare speak on these things in many other settings where they felt less safe came out during prompts around “conflict.” People do not want to be yelled at. They do not want to be rejected. Some will not risk saying what they are feeling or the idea they have that may help because, like the nail that sticks out, they know they will get hammered down. Another person was making a very helpful point about bound and open systems and how views on this may differ, finishing the point by saying, “Maybe I hurt you now. Sorry for that...”

The genesis of this observation about egg shells in our U.S. societal dynamics came during our first months back in the U.S. We were at a McDonalds with our kids. After taking our food to the table, I returned to the counter to get some additional ketchup packages. I was surprised to see the tension on the face of the employee at my approach. “Is everything alright?” she asked. I explained very cordially that all was well and I just needed ketchup. Her relief was evident. When I returned to our table, I observed that I think people at counters and customer

service stations are being yelled at a lot here. I have seen her face reflected at many counters since then.

In the interviews, people did get increasingly comfortable as conversations went on. They shared profound insights that gave rich data for analysis, risking to share even political and religious views as examples of their exploration in ways they might otherwise not feel safe doing. It was affirming to the process, when, after a long time in conversation where differing views on things were present, I heard one participant, a school teacher who I mostly knew in high school decades ago, describe what good listening is in this way:

...you're kind of demonstrating it because I'm talking all over the place. And then I just kind of shut up and then you kind of respond, but...I can tell that you've been listening because you always find a way to segue back to something I said...That's an example of good listening. Not thinking about what you're going to say next. Because...first you listen to what someone said, and then hear with a couple seconds to digest that. And then respond to that in a positive way first. (He contrasted this to a coworker) (Not) like this person I work with, "I can't believe you think that. What do you mean I'm not a Christian, cuz I'm Catholic?!?" I wouldn't say that I heard what she said. But I'm not gonna...I'm gonna listen some more here. See (where that's) coming from, you know.

Part of the effect the research has had on the researcher is to all the more recognize that in any contact between two human beings is the opportunity to begin to build connection. It is to be relational with the hope of bringing others into the community in the way some of the travelers in this study described experiences in Costa Rica and Peru and Africa.

Block's (2010) said:

We change the world one room at a time. This room, today, becomes an example of the future we want to inhabit. There is no need to wait for the future. Creating the experience of belonging in the room we are in at the moment becomes the point, namely that the way we structure the assembly of peers and leaders is as critical as the issue or concerns we come together to address. (p. 98)

The privilege of being together with other people can, perhaps, be too easily missed. Even in the present lockdown around Covid-19, people seem more aware of what they may otherwise take for granted in having access to each other. The research questions guiding this study felt answered in many ways through the beginning of a community and movement of participant allies who would similarly like to see the benefits and effects this type of interchange could bring.

The initial concerns or nervousness about answers seemed to dissipate as the interviewees and I were in conversation longer. They got comfortable enough that they risked sharing more of their thoughts on what would be the hot-button issues of the day. The school teacher finished by saying:

...as we've been talking again I, you know, years of separated us in our experiences have separated us and we've had our own wonderful experiences and all that. I don't know how you feel about things politically or, you know, faith, spiritually, but I shared those things. My feelings with you, but I felt comfortable sharing those with you because of the way you were listening. And being real objective and your responses...you're trying to take what I have to say toward your goal, but I didn't feel any sort of judgment.

Considering the research questions and the impact that can come from having intentional conversations across cultural differences and cycles of exposure to each other, I could not

imagine a more affirming description of what could be possible if we “lower the temperature,” as President Biden said in his inaugural address (WhiteHouse.gov, 2021). If we slowed things down, became more present with each other, if we truly listened, and stopped feeling “entitled,” as some domestic students put it, to pack for our travels the right to judge or rank or condemn others. Thinking that is ever the point of our interactions is not following the trail that might lead us to connection and community. If our motivation is to understand, then that would seem to map out a higher road that could be taken.

We can see each other not as adversaries but as neighbors. We can treat each other with dignity and respect. We can join forces, stop the shouting, and lower the temperature.

For without unity, there is no peace, only bitterness and fury. No progress, only exhausting outrage.

No nation, only a state of chaos.

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

Creativity lost – not being the nail that sticks up

When it comes to creativity and production, the more conditions allow people to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance, where more of their authentic selves are welcome, the more creative energy and contribution flows. When the people feel the pressure to conform and are not able to be themselves, belonging is missing. For those who would rather have a voice, contribute to the shared cause, and can offer creativity that infuses the project at hand, it seems especially sad when the environment created is more one of keeping one’s head down, keeping quiet, or just riding it out. In one recent conversation someone said, “I only have ten years until retirement.” In the manner that some situations can make it feel safer to play dumb to fit in or not share your relevant experience for how it will be received, there will always be loss when someone cannot be fully present as their authentic self. “Once you begin to understand the culture, however, and learn what is appropriate and what is not, you can release your grip on your instincts and let your personality loose. In a word, you can relax. The relief you feel is

enormous, and the local people, not incidentally, find it much easier to be with you” (Storti, 2007, p. 109). Some of the favorite rooms in our hearts, where we would love to spend more time, are places we cannot go for how they will be received, such as talking about our grandkids, or that daring and stupid adventure at the Grand Canyon, or the invaluable experience gained at a previous work institution or country because people are tired of hearing you talk about it.

There is a tension in seeking acceptance and being with others, and it seems to come out in messages like, “Conform...be like this...don’t be like that...you need to ____.” There are tradeoffs for being together with others in community versus what a person has when alone. Bauman (2001) said community “demands unconditional loyalty” and “stern obedience in exchange for services it renders or promises to render” (p. 4). He points out other trades: to have security, you trade some freedom; to have confidence, you need to not trust anyone outside your community; to have mutual understanding, don’t speak to foreigners or use their languages; to have warmth, do not come near the window and never open one. “The snag is that if you...keep the windows sealed, the air inside would soon get stuffy and in the end oppressive.” Above all else for remaining safe, and I will add comfortable, “Do not let the strangers in and yourself abstain from acting strangely and thinking odd thoughts” (p. 4). Different is dangerous. Remaining safe is key.

Where does this leave the creative person or the one who is from a different place or thinks differently or has found their own rhythm that does not sync with the masses? This stifling of creativity and pressure to conform emerged from looking at belonging and community. Khazan (2020) explained a dichotomy between fitting in and being excluded, noting that less creativity flows from those trying to fit in. For those already excluded and left out, more creativity flows (pp. 134, 136). Perhaps that is what the Apple ads are trying to say. A study of

architects by MacKinnon (1962) “found that the families of the more creative architects moved around a lot when they were kids, which ‘appears also to have resulted frequently in some estrangement of the family from its immediate neighborhood,’” (Khazan, 2020, p. 134). The type of adaptability and out of the box thinking that TCKs typically exhibit from crossing borders so often seems present in this study’s data for similar reasons.

Earlier, an example was given of how introverts feel a pressure to perform as extroverts. When people cannot be accepted as their authentic selves, which would hopefully include valuing their voice and contribution, they end up making these types of self-negating choices. Storti (2007) looked at this phenomenon through the words of anthropologist Vincent Crapazano (1986), suggesting we substitute “waiting” with “withdrawing,” so it would read this way:

In the very ordinary act of withdrawing, particularly of withdrawing in fear, men and women lose what John Keats called ‘negative capability,’ the capability of so negating their own identity as to be imaginatively open to the complex and never very certain reality around them. Instead, they close off; they created a kind of psychological apartheid...(p. 114)

The other side of being in a space that is new or strange to you, especially another country, is that it opens up aspects of self that were perhaps lying dormant or tucked away under the thumb of conformity. “Similarly, being in a strange land seems to liberate you from normal thought patterns. For one thing, living abroad might simply expand the number of ideas you’re exposed to – as long as you try to absorb the local culture, rather than cloister yourself” (Khazan, 2020, p. 137). If the mission is to become an *Intentional Traveler* being transformed by the process instead of an *Accidental Tourist* who tucks self away in rooms of familiarity, then finding the balance between these tensions seems critical. Our brains definitely are more engaged at the

boundary markers of difference and newness (Khazan, 2020, p. 81). A professor reacted to the hypothesis woven into this study that our learning potential is higher as we cross borders into new spaces, saying:

So when you go to a foreign country, you have no choice but to have your cognition marched into overdrive. So, I would agree with your hypothesis. Because your brain is ...it has to be activated. You're seeing stuff that looks very different and your brain is forced to try to make sense of it and look for patterns. So that you can get into a routine. And when you get into the routine. It's time to go somewhere else.

His observations reflect the participant voices who spoke of loving change to avoid stagnation. It also brings to mind the very situation that opened this writing, of the international student stepping out of the tunnel into an international terminal, with brain in “overdrive” seeking to make sense of things.

One participant who has lived in several countries noted that the border regions between countries are often very mixed in population. As an eclectic, polymathic researcher, I find that significant, that as we are willing to cross boundaries or have them be semi-porous, this opens up more possibilities. I believe the same is true across disciplines on a campus or in industry. As the method another cultures uses to solve a problem may influence an adapted version of that in our own culture, or as the biomimicry of engineering finds insight from biology and nature (Alexander, 2018). Bateson (1989) said:

It also seems probable that the most creative thinking occurs at the meeting places of disciplines. At the center of any tradition, it is easy to become blind to alternatives. At the edges where lines are blurred, it is easier to imagine that the world might be different. Vision sometimes arises from confusion. (p. 73)

This puts another interesting tension in play. Tat those in the margins and cracks of society, through the adversity and difficulty of their experiences or the different ways in which they function, already possess or tend to create the very gifts that we most need in the center of the room. Bateson (1989) adds this imperative traveling skill:

...the real winners in a rapidly changing world will be those who are open to alternatives and able to respect and value those who are different. These winners will not require that others become losers....The change goes on, and surely the central task of education today is not to confirm what is but to equip young men and women to meet that change and to imagine what could be, recognizing the value in what they encounter and steadily working it into their lives and vision. (p 73)

She lays out the “the central task of education today” in a manner that can certainly be applied to higher education.

In academic research and writing, a prominent way of gaining credibility is by letting the work be shown publicly, to invite scrutinization and dialogue, which then renders the findings more sound. To not do a “disservice” to students, as participants put it, our educational institutions need to, “equip young men and women to meet that change and to imagine what could be,” as Bateson put it. As we seek to find our balance in society, on campus, and build community, if the tension to be our authentic selves versus conforming to fit in remains, then the conversation about everyone having a place and a voice seems only on the surface level of perceived change. The tapestry will fall apart because not all of the threads are interwoven and integrated.

The greatest danger in times of turbulence is not the turbulence – it is to act with yesterday’s logic.

Peter Drucker

Implications for higher education institutions

What really matters is helping others win, too, even if it means slowing down and changing our course now and then.

Fred Rogers

The international student journey – finding support in various domains

International students arriving in the U.S. not only have to navigate multiple new spaces, as intimated earlier, they specifically have to find their footing in three specific domains of campus life, as demonstrated by Bell's (2016) dimensions of international transition support shown in Figure 5.2. The domains are: English language; socio-cultural integration; and academic integration (Ecochard, et al., 2017). Given the complexities of layers they are traveling through, once they have gotten off the airplane, where they have lost “all cues on how to behave and orient oneself...daily...” (p. 101), it becomes clear how strategic and impactful the services and support offered by the school become. Major (2005) said, “In a matter of days, international students deal with and

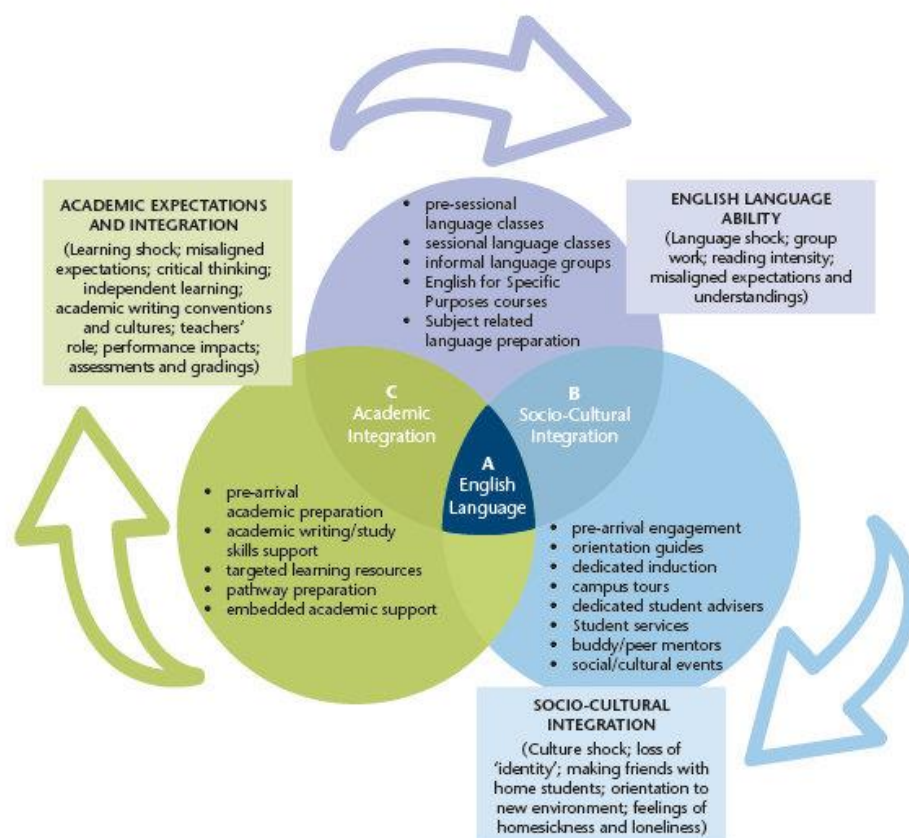


Figure 5.2 – Bell's (2016) dimensions of international transition support (as cited in Ecochard, et al., 2017)

master: all-day orientation sessions, placement tests, course registration, advisers, housing, money, all in an “unfamiliar sociolinguistic and cultural context...” (as cited in Ecochard, et al., 2017, p. 104). Language proficiency is a challenge and learning a language takes time, practice, and lots of engagement. The onus is on the schools inviting and enrolling these students to do all that is possible for them to be integrated into a full campus experience, finding the “glue binding together” the domains (pp. 101-102).

Social norms, the building of bridging social capital and bonding social capital (Putnam, et al., 2003) is hard enough for people in their first language, let alone coming in from an outside context. For example, students may leave behind their collectivist culture where identity is established mostly by membership in the collective or group and be confounded by the staunch individualism in the U.S. Those who would reach out and welcome these international students, such as domestic students, faculty, and staff, may not recognize this one of many layers being navigated, viewing it primarily from a Western cultural perspective. When we lament how the students are clustering together ethnically rather than integrating and engaging more, we can ask questions about how we are doing in welcoming and helping them engage. More importantly, we can ask ourselves if we are considering different cultural scripts and cues, whether we are moving, and whether we are equipping ourselves and others affected by our roles to have the global competency skills to function well in these contexts. For example, Chinese students, which are the largest international student group at universities, feeling accepted and belonging in an individualist culture can be difficult, as they transition from collectivist cultures (Forbes, 2016; Hoekje & Stevens, 2018, p. 107).

In other words, breaking into established campus social networks can be a daunting task for those outside the networks, in particular for Asian students. Zhang, T. (2018) reported

that on US campuses, Asian students are the least likely among all international students to be included in American social circles and befriended by domestic majority classmates. In a further study, 40 percent of surveyed Asian international students reported not having a single American friend on their US campus, compared to fewer than 20 percent of international students from European countries (Gareis, 2012). (as cited in Hoekje & Stevens, 2018, p. 107)

The complexity of how Chinese students are experiencing campus life now and how others are treating them has been impacted significantly by rhetoric in politics and in general society around the global pandemic.

The more other stakeholders are aware of what the international student journey fully entails, the more they will be able to find connection, invite people into the gatherings and conversations, and help them to feel belonging and in community. As Hoekje and Stevens (2018) reminded earlier, social networks should include “home nationals...Americans and others from around the world...from whom they can draw strength as they deal with issues of identity, linguistic insecurity, or a range of personal crises from bullying to depression to matters of the heart” (pp. 105-106). Having as many of these stakeholders aware and growing in understanding and skills is a key focus of collaborative efforts toward building campus community as outlined in the action plan derived from this study (See Appendix F).

The importance of this type of support system for any international student was explained by this German international student participant reflecting on how the past year of Covid lockdown has been:

I think community like plays into that a lot. I think a lot of these hardships were easier to deal with because we had our group or a certain community that we were a part of and

everyone got hit pretty hard when quarantine measures started in like March. And I think for a lot of people, it was only more bearable because they had a support system to rely on that might have been like their social group or their community. And even if there were difficulties with that I think just not feeling alone was the biggest piece that ...got people through this year...

Further complicating the social connection domain for students are the bad habits of communication human beings allow themselves, such as in the “driving” analogy explanation outlined earlier. For example, in recalling how the cultural scripts are providing different cues to the actors in these dramas, the aspect of new international student orientation I dislike the most is needing not explain the common greeting exchange in the U.S. Rather than setting them up to misread the situation and lose social capital, we share that when you meet someone in your resident hall or on the sidewalk and they ask, “How are you?” The convention is to just say, “Fine,” and move on. The words do not carry the literal meaning of people wanting or expecting to hear more. Similarly, to, “How are things going?” or, “What have you been up to?” the answers are “good” and “not much, you?” Having already shared how much I have appreciated the relational manner of some cultures, or how greetings on the street in Ethiopia would be 5-15 minutes depending on how long it had been, as we talked about families and events in our lives, needing to explain this U.S. social convention can be grating.

What I have learned from my own experience is that the most important ingredients in a child’s education are curiosity, interest, imagination, and a sense of the adventure of life. You will find no courses in which these are taught; and yet they are the qualities that make all learning rewarding, that make all life zestful, that make us seek constantly for new experience and deeper understanding. They are also the qualities that enable us to continue to grow as human beings to the last day of our life, and to continue to learn.

Eleanor Roosevelt, You Learn by Living

Building community – factors specific to higher education institutions

All of the topics and factors around community building throughout this dissertation apply to the primary stakeholders making up a higher education institutions, such as domestic students, international students, faculty, staff, and the surrounding community members. The inevitability of change and increasing diversification are as relevant on campus as off. Block (2010) said “isolation is on the rise” (p. xiv). The charge in his work is to develop:

...ways of thinking and practice to return to a sense of belonging that this mobile, modernist, novelty-seeking culture lacks. It is clear that the isolation in our institutions, cities, and larger world seems to be increasing rather than decreasing. The extremism and rigid ideology that flood all forms of public conversation are painful to witness and, to my mind, partial determinants of the violence that surrounds us. (pp. xv)

The stated problem this study addresses has been to learn more about building community, especially as applicable on campus, where everyone feels a sense of belonging and acceptance. At the same time, the campus stakeholders and community members doing the survey and being interviewed continuously lamented about the “division” felt in society and struggled with the problem of why we seem to be moving apart rather than together. That is the story we are telling ourselves right now. What new story can we begin to write, and what type of characters do we see ourselves being in that story?

The special focus is on the journey of the international student who can end up in the periphery of the campus experience. Can we work together to create a new and yet unimagined future not bound by the past by having the conversations across our differences, where all the “gifts,” even the gift of dissent, are brought to the center and out of the margins (Block, 2010, p. 3; Storti, 2007, pp. 109-112). The voices of the international students in the study and hereafter

are very valuable because they, like the TCKs described, live a continuous life of border crossings and moving into new spaces with all that entails. Clinging to the known the comfort zones, the status quo are less possible. With their travel skills and ways of being in that continual movement, they can be helpers to others of us in our own hero's journeys. If they are listened to, they can be trusted guides that help us take one more step than we have before. There is also the possibility of a bidirectional exchange. We can be helpful to them in our home context, and they can be to helpful to us broadening our perspective. Bateson (1989) saw the potential for change this way, "...I have come to think of homes as joint compositions, frameworks of complementarity composed by difference within which growth is possible. This concept can be expanded to include schools and neighborhoods, the workplace and the biosphere" (p. 118). That in mind, there are some dynamics related to this study and the overall topics that seem more specifically applicable to higher education intuitions, especially in relation to building community, which will be described below.

Awareness, drawing others in, and sharing a blanket when necessary

Though described at the outset and woven throughout, it bears repeating how imperative it is for those working on campuses in service and faculty roles to understand more of what it is like to be an international student or scholar coming in from the outside. Awareness and empathy that infiltrates instruction and services and ways of being together are extremely important. As primary researcher in this study, I am in a role devoted to helping international students land well and succeed on campus. However, I would delete the word "primary" very quickly, recognizing that significant emerging learning and insight form this research came through the voices of the participants. By inviting faculty and staff and domestic students into the study, a conversation has begun that can and hopefully will continue on our campus. A great benefit of this study has

been to increase my own understanding around the topic and to be better equipped for doing my own role in relation to the international student journey. However, it would be very short-sighted to think that whatever positive outcomes develop toward community on campus would come from a single role or one office devoted to international services, so much as from everyone playing a part. The campus itself will need to recognize that building culture is everyone's job (Rector, 2018). Everyone plays a role. Hoekje and Stevens (2019) remind us, "Most importantly, in our view, are approaches that rely on relationships: culturally aware advisors and peer and academic mentors who can support the student's identity and sense of belonging as a core member of the university community" (p. 83).

One area of awareness for campus stakeholders has to do with the academic, linguistic, and social domains international students navigate. Students vary and may prefer one domain over another. Chinese students, who are the largest international student population around the world right now, often default to academic only, not seeing the value of integrating social aspects into their campus experience. This works against building community where they are part and feel belonging.

Chinese students, in particular, are often dubious about the importance of campus activities and their relevance to academic success, lacking an understanding of the advantages campus activities might afford them...Many earnest, high-achieving Chinese view campus life activities as superfluous distractions from the task at hand, namely to study for exams, pass their courses, and, often, sign up for additional credits to complete degrees a semester or two earlier and thereby hasten their return home. (Hoekje and Stevens, 2018, p. 123)

To not engage and only focus on the studies makes sense in the short-run for students, especially as they feel pressure from family or their partner university back home. However, if success and academic achievement is the goal, balancing life out in the campus experience is better. Hoekje and Stevens (2018, p. 110) compiled these factors on creating a culturally inclusive campus:

Engaging international students in the life of campus is not merely desirable but critical to their success. High levels of engagement correlate with measurable gains in critical thinking (Kuh, 2001). It also correlates strongly to higher retention rates, especially during the first year when students have not yet established their identity as a full-fledged member of the academic community (Tinto (2001), in Tinto & Pusser, 2006). Having host country friendships, as well as co-national social support, has been demonstrated to have a positive impact upon international students' level of persistence (Andrade & Evans, 2009) [...] (For) many international students who may otherwise be dubious about the benefits of involving themselves in campus and community activities, strong engagement is linked to higher GPAs and graduation levels (Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, 2002; Pike, Schroeder, & Berry, 1997).

For international students to succeed on campus in the academic sense, some time away from the studies is important too. This also taps into the diverse experiences and intercultural exchange aspects a campus or community can offer, a type of learning that books will not provide. Raising awareness of this factor for the students themselves is important, as is helping other stakeholders to know, so that they might seek to draw the international students into the community more.

Sergiovanni (2005) says, "Communities spring from common understandings that provide members with a sense of identity, belonging and involvement that results in a web of meaningful relationships..." (as cited in DuFour, et al., 2008, p. 20). There is compelling narrative from

students and data to support further exploration of this study around intentional, sustained engagement between differing people around the topic of community, as is anticipated from programming explained in the action plan below.

Change is hard because people overestimate the value of what they have and underestimate the value of what they may gain by giving that up.

James Belasco and Ralph Stayer

Expanding the circle – static or dynamic characters in the story of education

When stakeholders have awareness of and are desirous to meet the international students at the level of their felt needs, the disposition of the stakeholders themselves is important. Do they want to bring about change, or be changed and affected themselves? This has been discussed in detail above, but is worth a quick recalling here. The choice of being a static or dynamic character, protagonist or antagonist in the conflicts and resolutions of the story we are writing is imperative for professors, staff, and others on campus. Again, the job is not just to help international students adjust to life in the U.S. and on campus but to be open to being affected ourselves. If we are willing to move and find that middle space that has inclusion and overlap of many lifeworlds, not just our own, then it seems like positive change can occur.

The rationale given for internationalization is sometimes described more unidirectionally than it seems it should be, such as the commonly expressed idea that having international students on campus helps our domestic students to become more globally competent. There is a hint that the same is true for faculty and staff. This model, when in place, can be problematic and inequitable, as explained more fully in chapters 1-2. Earlier, one participant had called it “exploitative” if there is not reciprocal exchange. Seeing that we all need to move and grow and increase our global competencies in a world that is rapidly diversifying is important. For those who would choose not to move or be open to change, holding on to current ways and status quo,

they will recognize that the borders move even when we do not, as demonstrated above. Covid-19 and the impact on education is a current example.

In academia, bodies of knowledge are referred to often. One might imagine a circle where the line creating it represents the boundaries of all knowledge known to date in a given area. A Ph.D., as explained by Might (2020) recognizes a gap in the existing scholarship and pushes the border out slightly in that specific area, as in figure 5.3. This illustration has animated this research study in applying it to people themselves. How willing are we to be expanded? If the circle represents our lifeworld, all the knowledge and frame of reference we have to date, how willing are we to cross borders or see them expand? The conversations across differences and intercultural exchange approaches described here seem like very strategic and efficient ways to keep pushing our own boundaries out wider, getting us further from the shore of things known. In a campus setting, when you add the intersectionality of multiple disciplines and the pathways of lives and viewpoints across campus, the potential to push present understanding borders outward seems very high if we will collaborate and interact. Building community and talking together can be contributive. There are silos in many settings, including higher education. With the varied disciplines, degree programs, factors of tenure, and retrenchment, there are additional features that could inhibit growth and transformation if we remain in isolation.

Change aversion is real everywhere. Rosengberg (2021) said:

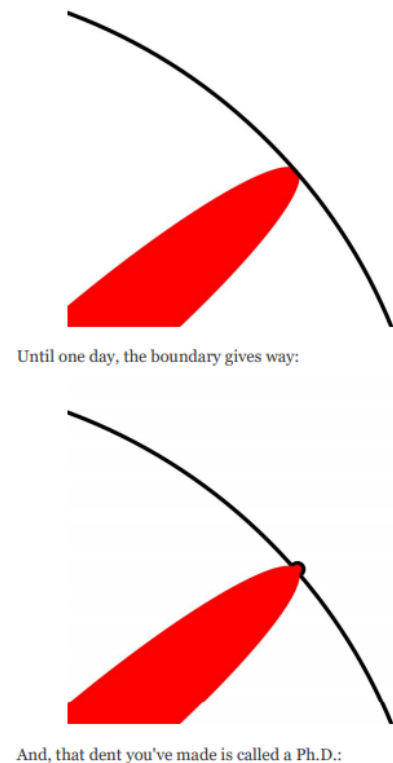


Figure 5.3 – Expanding the body of knowledge (Might, 2020)

Notice that I do not include in this definition of the ideal “preserving higher education in something as close as possible to its current form,” despite the fact that this seems to be an implicit or explicit goal of many within academe. That goal should be prioritized only if it can be shown to be the best way of leading to the desired outcomes.

Higher education can become “territorial,” as one campus employee noted. There are clearly defined lanes, union ties, parameters, and other borders visible and not. These overlays may create domains and trails to traverse that are not even recognized by stakeholders, similar to the domains noted for international students. These are factors of all people’s journeys in any given context. As we would look to the horizon, it is possible to see the ongoing shift in what Clandinin and Connelly (1995) call “professional knowledge landscapes” (as cited in Webster-Wright, 2009, p. 715). In any work context, on one hand, there can be the feeling, “We’ve fought hard and already taken this hill.” On the other hand, at the pace things are moving and changing, that hill may end up on the other side of the front line of relevancy by morning.

Education without getting out of your pajamas...or bed

There have been advertisements on television for study programs online, where they tout, “You do not even have to get out of bed!” as an appealing advantage of their program. How desirable that prospect is depends on the person. Picking up on the impact Covid-19 has had in education and other parts of lives, it seems that trends already happening were amplified or accelerated by the disruption in the timeline of the global pandemic. Online education was already increasing. Will it now accelerate? It seems there will be more options and access points for students hereafter, a payoff from the hard year. Isolation and disengagement were already issues, so will they be amplified post-pandemic? The realities of online education during the past

academic year were considered in the following ways by participants in the study, which illustrates some of the give and pull on building community these changes may bring.

While we can appreciate the technology and the access they provide, older realities still ring out, such as in-person contact allows connection that online meetings do not. Carl Jung said, “The meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances; if there is any reaction, both are transformed” (as cited in Cain, 2012, p. 225). In a similar way, the examination of virtual study abroad as a necessity during the pandemic could be a possible trend continues. Will the virtual experience of visiting Spain compare to the live, in-person walking of the Promenade of El Muro de San Lorenzo? While it is a great option for a biology class on our campus to engage with a group studying marine animals in New Zealand, the experience would seemingly not compare to flying there and adding side trips to see the mountains, views, and sets where *The Lord of the Rings* was filmed, as would greatly engage students. Study abroad experiences will have more depth and richness if the student actually lives in the other country for a term or a year, immersed in another language, culture, rhythms, and lives.

Students and professors discussed the differences with online learning in the interviews. This seems informative to the question of what builds community on campus, as well as the what works and what does not during the increased virtual learning season. Factors such as motivation and level of engagement were discussed, such as by this domestic student:

I know sometimes I can get off track on what I need to do. And I think there have been certain moments where I've lacked motivation entirely...I think students who have ...had the courage to still do online classes, whether it's like one, two or five classes, plus still work during these times, plus try to maintain, you know, like have family time or see a friend here and there and have like a full packed schedule. I think that ...like, they must

be just very motivated individuals. So I'm just saying at certain times, I wish I would have had more motivation or more focus.

This participant was one who noted he liked change and felt it really helped him to grow. He said he found “a lot of purpose or fulfillment in trying new things or experiencing new things. It feels stagnant to do the same thing over and over again and repetition...A lack of advancement.” Not being able to move into new spaces and in and out of buildings and rooms has affected him in this way:

it was a lot easier to keep a schedule and ...I feel like deadlines and such...when the day could be broken up into different environments... You know, being at home. Everything blends together, you know, doing schoolwork, relaxing, waking up in the morning, everything, like, that all sort of blends together into the same day.

Another factor relating to community building on a macro level and relationship building on a micro level is a shift in formality that has been part of our adjustment for those working or studying remotely. Whatever a person's status or rank in the context, the social capital they have, Zoom meetings allowed us to see into each other's lives more. We hear each other's dogs bark or kids interrupt or email inbox chimes. These variations are “all part of the fun,” as one participant put it. We do things online that we would not do in person-to-person relations, such as tell others they are on mute. Classes have also had shifts in formality. This international student described it this way:

...everything is online. We don't have to go anywhere. I would just wake up and not even...like change my pajamas or anything. I would just open the Zoom and attend my classes. And I would do everything from home like write my essays prepare my presentation.

And even when presenting on Zoom, it's different because people are not seeing you...we don't have to open the video...so you just have to put your, ...your PowerPoint slides and ...like start presenting with your voice only. I think I lost a lot of the motivation and I started not getting things done when this started.

Recognizing the shift and how it was affecting her, she added:

But then I started realizing that we, like, we're still in school and we have to still do work and ...you feel like things are less serious...

I noticed that even with my professors when they are presenting the lecture. They're like you. "Do you have any questions?" (and) you can't see the people. So if they're like nodding or doing face expressions...the professor is not seeing us and the students are just not willing to open their mic and (speak).

The trends toward more online education options and more choice were happening before Covid-19, and there will likely be many new parts of what we think of as K-12 and higher education once Covid-19 is not dominating the horizon. However, these stories demonstrate the loss of engagement felt in this modality, which seems to detract from building community in a classroom or beyond.

The last relational aspect observed had to do with vulnerability levels and roles people fall into depending on the context. The social capital dynamics shift around as the actors or context changes. This participant who teaches courses and seminars at a university saw the changes in how sessions played out:

I think that on some of the programming the zoom breakout rooms have been much more effective than in class work...looking just at group interaction and...What I've seen through the ...is that students typically are sharing more in the smaller groups than they

have in their (in-person) classes. I'll be working with a class and everyone's really starting to get engaged with me, there's really some positive things happening. And then one of their class members come in, that sort of ...big person on campus...And the dynamics totally change and the involvement of the students will depend on that individual and they may not be as engaged because they're being judged...by that individual.

So the, the interactions and the work that we're doing. Is so helpful, but it's not as in depth...There's individuals in that that program...getting more engaged in the breakout rooms. So...for that purpose, I would still want to do some of my programming through Zoom because it has been more impactful.

She plans to take advantage of the best parts of these options in the future, to allow for the social capital shifts, but also sees more in-person factors helping in other ways, especially toward more “depth.”

It was notable how dynamics around personality, identity, and willingness to participate shifted in these contexts and descriptions. Specifically related to building community on campuses and the international student journey, the impact on motivation, comfort levels, and willingness to engage were noteworthy. The question of, “Who is this situation asking me to be?” still seemed a factor in the virtual spaces. In thinking of how much of a person can be known by the surface seen, being limited to two dimensions in virtual meetings would seemingly compound that effect. It has been interesting to observe this past year of Covid and remote broadcasts on television from the homes of contributors, how people seem to manage their image somewhat by what they let be seen or not be seen by the lens. It is hard to imagine that the tableau of shelves with certain books, objects, photos, and awards behind the speaker are not

arranged by design. This too seems a virtual representation of how human beings arrange their appearance and what they will let be seen or feel safe to show during their in-person meetings.

Traversing the many lifeworlds in a classroom

Classrooms in K-12 and higher education, as well as other training settings, will need to be increasingly cognizant of the diversification of the student body. Like with the traveling into new spaces and engaging across differences, there will be many lifeworlds present in any given educational setting. Lee (2017) said:

educators especially need to be mindful of their “assumptions, ideas, and habits” (p. 10) that influence their teaching. “We must attend to our own identities and beliefs as a necessary step in the often uncomfortable process of moving ‘from being simply a master of content to also being a non-master of intercultural pedagogy’...(to) honor human diversity. (pp. vii, 41)

In the manner that styles of learning and types of intelligences were increasingly considered in teacher education, taking into account the cultural background both ethnically and from family cultures and expectations will go into the planning of the most effective types of training. As teachers and professors increase their own global competencies and awareness, they can facilitate the type of learning within their pedagogy that helps everyone understand these shifting dynamic, as Lee (2017) suggests. Recalling the social element that can be missing in the lives of the Chinese students and how teachers may help domestic and international students build bridges, Pan, Wong, Chan, and Joubert (2008) found:

students who engage in meaning-making processes were more likely to report positive affect (sic?) despite language difficulties, difficulties in understanding slang and jokes, difficulties with coursework, and psychosocial issues such as homesickness and

loneliness [...] In other words, an individual's ability to make sense of his or her stressful acculturat(ion) experiences proved just as important as the experiences themselves." (as cited in Glass, et al., 2015, p. 86)

The types of bridging and bonding social capital (Putnam, et al., 2003) and the need to scaffold learning in ways aligned with the cultural diversity are areas to consider in making classes more impactful for everyone. Campuses are "ideal settings in which to foster cross-cultural and meaningful international friendships" in which "Cross-cultural interactions and international friendships can arise from both formal and informal encounters" (pp. 1328, 1334).

In the online learning discussion above, it was noted how students performed their identities differently online than live in the classroom. Those performances shifted with the "big person on campus" came into the virtual room, demonstrating the personality culture effect (Cain/TED, 2012). The pressure to conform would seemingly be just as present in the virtual and live contexts, as well as in the international student journey and all people's journey, as people consider their level of comfort with their own uniqueness (Khazan, 2020, p. 183). Professors feel this too, such as in the "publish or perish" charge or feeling they must be part of unions or certain systems.

As long as I can control it, I'm fine with change and unexpected twists.

It hardly bears relegation to higher education, so common are these feelings, but the desire to be able plan and control things is very prominent in the lives of teachers. Participants explained this in reference to questions about change and leaving comfort zones. One professor said:

I'm not good at those things...I guess...maybe there's some people that like adventure.

But you know, I think the majority is not a fan of change, but...Facing the unknown. I

mean especially Covid right now. I think the worst part is not knowing. Like how long it's going to be. When it's going to end. So I think all of those things are very hard. I tend to be an overthinker. So for me, I tend to be a planner. I want to like be able to plan things and being in control of things so ...unknown is very hard and unless I can figure out how to enforce my planning on it somehow...

There is an important point to be recognized in how powerful the unknown can be in creating change and getting humanity to a better place, as seems to be the expressed desire, in spite of habits we adopt that would inhibit progress. Block (2010) said:

We want desperately to take uncertainty out of the future. But when we take uncertainty out, it is no longer the future. It is the present projected forward. Nothing new can come from the desire for a predictable tomorrow. The only way to make tomorrow predictable is to make it just like today. In fact, what distinguishes the future is its unpredictability and mystery. (p. 109)

Progress, change, and a future that looks different from the present we observe has to have a level of uncertainty and loss of control involved. Block said without that, "it is no longer the future;" it is only the "present projected forward," so is governed by the same people having the same conversations in the same way. Conversations with different people and done in different ways could bring different outcomes. An ESL teacher in another country talked about change resistance in herself as an educator this way:

But kind of like (change) on my terms. You know, I have to be the instigator (of) change. You cannot control a lot of the life events. Situations that you couldn't have predicted. That's a different phrasing for the same problem. Indeed ...at the end of the day, you want control. ...I think some people personally really like routine, like that's what they

want and they don't like to have that routine disrupted. I guess I am a creature of habit it....And so in that case (things like Covid-19) you just need to recognize that you have no control.

And an ESL teacher working in higher education in the U.S. said, "So many unknowns and of course I'm not good with that. I'm (a) planner..." Bateson (1989) shows how conversations across difference are as important in higher education as they are anywhere:

...the discovery through a variety of relationships that social expectations can be changed and that difference can be a source of strength rather than of weakness. We grow in dialogue, not only in the rare intensity of passionate collaboration, but through a multiplicity of forms of friendship and collegiality (as we) seek out relationships across difference, and yet we are all sensitive to the treatment of difference as invidious that is so common in American culture. (pp. 94, 97).

Pointing directly to educators like herself and how the curriculum might need to adjust in spite of change aversion, she said, "it fundamentally questions the value of what people are doing. To ask faculty to change a curriculum is like asking someone to move a graveyard" (p. 97). The desire to hold tightly to Plan A, and only reluctantly shift to Plan B, never mind a Plan C works fine when all things remain the same and there is not much change or difference. In reality, being able to adapt and be resilient in the face of continual change is more what travelers need when stepping into a new culture or when seeing the sands shift beneath their feet in their home country.

To be uncertain is uncomfortable, but to be certain is to be ridiculous.

Chinese proverb

The Child-Expert Cycle – heroes of another sort

The model of The Child-Expert Cycle has been forming in my analysis of the data in this study. See Figure 5.4. The model is well placed in the context of higher education to illustrate what is possible for those who would choose to travel in this way. As background and a reminder, the genesis of this study is to encourage lifelong learning, which can be exemplified by movement into new spaces. By being willing to travel in this way, such as engaging with those who are culturally different, people will continue to expand their horizons. Steves (2021) says of travel “when we venture thoughtfully out of our comfort zone, we gain an empathy for the other 96 percent of humanity and come home with the greatest of all souvenirs: a broader perspective.” The part of the international student journey that begins at the airport of the new country symbolizes that act of taking one step further into a space that is unknown. It symbolizes leaving our comfort zones. The rewards and promised benefits and skills gained are plentiful. Most importantly, we have the chance to see things we have never seen before. The difficulty comes in that releasing of the control we desire, moving farther from the shore to a point where our feet may no longer touch bottom. The stretching that comes next may mean learning a new skill or possibly relying on others who have experience we need at that juncture. Their catalog of experience includes more exposure cycles on this aspect of life than does our own. This type of imagery fits well with the layers per person and situation in Learning Zone Theory (Senninger, 2000).

To be the teacher in the classroom or the professor in the auditorium, or for that matter, to be the parent in the household or the adult in the room, there is a pressure felt to look competent even if internal feelings belie that reality. There is the rub. We want to look like we know what we are doing. We want to feel like we are experts and in control. Many people prefer the feeling

of, “I’ve got this,” or, “I own the room”

more than the doubts and fears and imposter syndrome that flails up when we leave our zones of comfort and knowledge base. One way to diffuse imposter syndrome is to increase exposure cycles. “The key to getting over insecurities such as imposter syndrome, meanwhile, might be to try to look at your situation from another person’s perspective” (Khazan, 2020, p.

190). Godin (2020) explains the risks and gain:

As you try something new in the hope of making things better, you will inevitably feel like you do not know what you are doing, get the sense that people are judging you, and think, “I’m a fraud...” But before you give in to the imposter narrative and give up, know that every leader who stands up for a cause, every artist who shows their work to the world, and every entrepreneur who tries to make their first sale, feels like an imposter. (as cited in productivitygame.com, 2021)

Godin says, “The imposter is proof that we’re innovating, leading and creating” (as cited in productivitygame.com, 2021).

The name of this model comes from the lived experiences of the researcher, in that I too, like international students or any traveler to other cultures, can end up feeling like a child or imposter when in a new situation. When first living in Africa and Europe, the desperation would

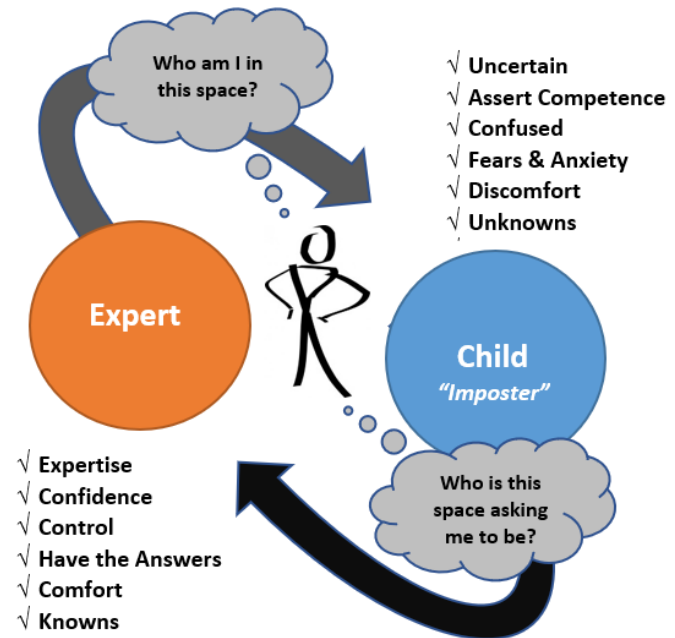


Figure 5.4 – The Child-Expert Cycle (McClary, 2021)

well up and want to scream out beyond what barriers of language proficiency and cultural understanding allowed, “I’m not a child. I’m competent in my own country!” There is admittedly a self-focus and image management aspect to that declaration, but it is also very human. After more exposure cycles in the context that was once unknown, the child-like feeling dissipates. Skills and new knowledge increase. The circular boundary of what was known before pushes outward a little bit.

In reflecting on my own educational journey, the lenses through which I viewed the world growing up in a small town in Michigan are not the lenses by which I see things now, having moved into yet to be imagined spaces, new regions of the U.S., living on three different continents, and returning to my home country. I was thankfully affected by all of that travel. Feiler (2020) reminds us that “life is in the transitions” and the “linear life is dead” and where we find ourselves now and constantly is “in a state of in-between” (pp. 14, 162). When it comes to finding middle ground with those we see as “others” who are different from us, we could certainly compare notes on this transitional state in which we all live. We can ask each other about our life journeys, hear each other’s stories, and talk about new beginnings and endings, as these aspects are part of lives in all cultures. The transitions have been experienced by everyone.

The model, like Campbell’s Hero’s Journey, is cyclical but feels less heroic at times. Every time we go into a new job, a new role, a new season, we are living out this cycle. From those first days in kindergarten, to those times on the playground in middle school, to leaving senior year and having people constantly ask plans, or even in taking on challenges like a doctoral program and writing a dissertation, the cycle goes around again. I feel like a child. I would rather feel like an expert. The existential questions play through again, “Who am I in this space? Who is this space asking me to be? Will I make it here? Do I belong?” However, I would

encourage anyone to give themselves over to the current of curiosity possessed by the lifelong learner. Where human educators might prefer to be the “sage on the stage” in a classroom and have students look up to them for wisdom and as a resource. More wisdom may be observed in the leader who is transparent about what is and is not known, as Lander (2020) pointed out. Without movement into new spaces of study, research, learning, and intercultural interchange as proposed here, that sage can easily become a static fixture in a known space that is decreasing in relevancy. Admittedly, this abandonment to constant cycles of learning and movement into the unknown is very unsettling. It makes maintaining the feeling of expertise challenging. In the end, though, what if the expertise is that of *being* a traveler who adapts more quickly at each turn, develops the resiliency to thrive in increasingly more difficult circumstance and the face of constant change? That is The Child-Expert Cycle. It is a strategy for learning, growth, and transformation, as well as remaining relevant and current in a rapidly changing world.

The range of dispositions from humility to hubris factor into The Child-Expert Cycle. Taking up a posture of humility allows a release from the Expert side of the cycle. Picking up on a reflection about control and planning, this participant shared:

...This isn't good for somebody that's an educator, but I'm not good at...I don't like doing things I'm not good at. (As an educator and parent) you're supposed to encourage a growth mindset. I like my life to go like in a routine where I'm like...There's a schedule that I follow...needing to have that sense of control of my environment.

So for me, I tend to be a planner. I want to like be able to plan things and being in control of things...So I am a creature of habit. I know this about myself. I don't particularly like a whole lot...The fear of making a mistake. The fear of saying the wrong thing doing the

wrong thing, making a big mistake and ...and then what other repercussions going to be ...unless I can figure out how to enforce my planning on it somehow.

These very relatable feelings of the professor help to demonstrate how difficult it can be to let go of the known. We want to *feel* like we know what we are doing. We want to *look* like we know what we are doing. Bateson (1989) reminded us how higher education can have students who are “educated by faculties deeply committed to continuity...(who) spent their entire lives in a single institution....and (who) may no longer be intellectually flexible” (p. 17). Making mistakes and getting out and walking the streets of a country are the fastest ways to learn the language and increase proficiency. Martin (2012) said, “...there’s a lot to be said for putting ourselves, from time to time, in situations that make us uncomfortable, where our usual assumptions and talents don’t serve us especially well. This is especially challenging because, as a society, we’re terrified of failure” (p. 109). It is counter-intuitive but works. We can travel in this manner to other “lifeworlds” or in dealing with “change” and “transition.”

Participants in the study noted that humility is an important part of building community. We can learn from anyone. In contrast, when someone goes into a new context or country asserting their *Expert* status, the job may get done in one regard, but the relationships are easily spoiled and the project outcomes never used because there was no buy-in locally from lack of relating. One participant who worked as a professor in another country explained it this way:

When I worked with foreigners...I can tell when people come in with the humble attitude...I don't care if he has a doctorate degree and he's this big scientist or whatever.

They can still come with a humble attitude and learn the local ways. Learn what the local universities are doing (or) trying to do, before they...dispense their wisdom, an expert opinion. That doesn't always happen.

...they're just lacking those cross cultural skills...We're still very interested in their expertise (and) collaboration and learning from them. But if they could just change the way they enter and introduce themselves and show...what they can contribute to the project so...It just changes the whole atmosphere and the feelings that people have that are involved in the project. ...it doesn't take much to teach those skills...a few classes of cross cultural communication, empathy and humility. Instilling the sense of, you know...I could learn something from these people. I can learn something from this culture. Just the sense of ...these people are different from me. There's an opportunity for me to ...learn ...to grow ...like a growth mindset.

On the world stage, people from the U.S. are often caricaturized in this way. The phrase *Ugly American* came from a political novel by Burdick and Lederer (1958), which described diplomatic failures. However, the phrase has taken on a life of its own as a concept that is visible when one travels the world and sees loud conversations or incidents from which, as representatives from the same culture, one would rather disassociate from. When we think of educators as travelers, the hope would be to not demonstrate those “uglier” traits. Within the sectors of society, giving ourselves over to *Child* side of the cycle, having a posture of learning and humility, will seemingly help in building community and achieving the purposes for which that particular group of people are gathered at that particular time and place.

Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up.

Pablo Picasso

Fundamentalism in higher education

Higher education is not immune from the belief systems, dogma, and doctrine that frame our interpretations, as explained above. Where these are often relegated only to the realms of religion and politics, they are present in all people's journeys (Weingarten, 2021), as they hold to

their lifeworlds by which the same data and evidence we all have in front of us is interpreted.

The “ivory tower” referred to in relation to higher education can become a version of an insulated pod where cross-pollination lessens or ceases altogether. Rosenberg (2021) looked at the disruption of Covid and how much it may help HEIs to examine their beliefs. The challenge is considering:

how far colleges and universities, beyond those whose wealth and reputations insulate them from both disruption and self-reflection, are willing to go to mitigate the crisis. How fundamental are the assumptions we are willing to challenge? How many established orthodoxies and traditions are we willing seriously to interrogate? Will this be a slight mid-air course correction or a redesign of the plane? In an industry where the elimination of a small program, the creation of a new interdisciplinary minor, or even the renaming of a department is considered dramatic change, these are important questions.

Like with freeing ourselves up to make mistakes and laughing at ourselves while living in another country, as we stumble about at times or say things incorrectly, we will be able to see more from outside the boundaries and parameters of our known contexts. Children growing up have curiosity and every experience is new for a time. The first haircut. The first trip on an airplane. Why would we ever turn off that curiosity and exploration? At some point, there seems to be a declaration, “This is my known space. The borders are from here to here. I feel comfortable and in control in this space. I’m not moving.” The appeal of that is not lost on me, but having stepped out from the shore in so many cycles, found the foods and people and experiences I never would have otherwise, it is difficult to not want to look over the next hill.

Rosenberg's (2021) charge to higher education in the face of Covid-19 and all the recent changes is not "preserving the status quo," but to "free ourselves up to ask some fundamental and uncomfortable questions:"

- What if, instead of beginning with cost, we began with the more profound question of impact?
- That is, what is the desired impact of higher education on the society we serve, and what form of education will have that impact?
- This would lead us...to the contemplation of some issues that are broader in scope than simply cost, for while affordability is inseparable from impact, it is far from its only determinant.

Bauman (2001) talks of the agendas, core values and "canon of political correctness" and the "ideology of ideologies" and "...the invocation of 'multiculturalism'" and the "territorial sovereignty" (pp. 124-125, 110). He summarizes by saying, "On one hand, everything can be done to faraway, other people's places, without going anywhere. On the other, little can be prevented from being done to one's own place, however vigilantly and stubbornly one tries to hold one's ground" (p. 110). In community, working collaboratively, it "...implies the solidarity of explorers: while we all, singly or collectively, are embarked on the search for the best form of humanity" (Bauman, 2001, p. 135).

Dogma does not mean the absence of thought, but the end of thought.

G. K. Chesterton

Humility – the key ingredient

Iterative cycles of learning depend on the choice of response and the disposition of the person. When having an openness and willingness to be stretched, each iterative cycle offers additional layers of learning. Perhaps in the present cycle, we are more ready to find healing missed before

or to make meaning that was elusive in previous passes. “Every instant of every day is in fact an invitation to humble ourselves” (Martin, 2012, p 113). Participants described humility as the “gateway” and the “door” and being “foundational” to building relationships and community. The lack of humility was spoken of too, “I think if you’re not being humble...it’s hard to hear the other perspective and the other opinion...” Also, “You can’t have belonging without some degree of humility.” Beyond the international student journey and the challenges to feel in control that educators may face, The Child-Expert Cycle seems most present in the daily encounters between all humans, where image management, zero-sum thinking (Bauman, 2001, p. 27), and a bent toward changing others is more present. We can seem less receptive to our own growth and transformation so much as the need for others to make adjustments.

Higher education stakeholders as the vanguard

HEIs can commonly function as worlds unto themselves with a layer of separation from the non-campus world outside. In that regard, there is the potential to create community on campus as a model and vanguard for what could happen outside of the campus borders. Like the “petri dish” of a military base or the “incubator of ideas” that the United States can be, as participants described them above, the campus can, perhaps, more easily get it right through their unified vision, diversity, and internationalization programs. In the predominant social narrative of “division” and “polarization,” there is also the opportunity to change the conversation and salve the wounds. “Along with this distress comes the knowledge that each of us, myself included, is participating in creating this world. If it is true that we are creating this world, then each of us has the power to heal its woundedness” (Block, 2010, p. xi). If one team on the campus begins to function more collaboratively, trusting another, allowing for their “complementarity” (Bateson, 1986, pp. 78, 118), recognizing that their differences are rich

ingredients adding to the dish, other offices and departments on campus may want to get in on that. If the whole campus begins to figure it out, others outside of the campus may see that and perhaps want to emulate the effect.

It comes back to the basic unit of any two people interacting. Depending on the manner in which one is present with the other is important. Listening as celebrated in this document will also be a key part. Beyond the factors of good listening already described, there is the model found in Boyle's (2017) description of this person he knows. It provides an example we can aspire to that encompasses both presence and listening:

I most remember and admire his keen skill at listening. If you were speaking to him, he wasn't looking over your shoulder, eyeing a more important person on the approach.

Nothing and no one else existed in that moment but you and whatever you were going on about. (p. 171)

This level of presence in any human interaction will deepen the connection on a micro level and accelerate the community building process on the macro level. In the interaction comes the power of that contrast and connection possible in that moment, which ripples outward from there. Community can be built one conversation at a time and "one room at a time" (Block, 2010, p. 98). Most importantly, the domestic and international students graduating will go out into the world having lived in that type of community. And where they find it missing in the future, they will know the loss and may seek to recreate it. The action plan described below and in Appendix F will facilitate ongoing conversations where culturally disparate people are gathered together. This will fit with the community definition, as participants described it, by having a "shared purpose," everyone contributing, and building the skills and compassion and empathy that will help prepare all for the future.

When one reality is not permitted to disturb another one, it is one of the first signs of totalitarianism.

Applying the research to a local campus – Action Plans

From this study as implemented, a planned action will be to continue building de facto community with stakeholder on the Millersville University campus around the questions and challenges of building community. There are several intercultural engagement programs designed and ready to begin, once access to in-person activities is possible post-Covid. The following three strategic goals are outlined in detail in the action plan developed from this research: establishing a successful Living-Learning Community; implementing focus groups in the form of Professional Learning Communities to work collaboratively on community-building activities on campus; and creating an Intercultural Book-Movie Club. Fuller details of these plans are seen in Appendix F. The findings of this study will be significant in designing the curriculum and structure of each of these programs specifically named.

There are additional actions that can be explored after these initial three, also drawing from the research, including adjustments toward meeting the felt needs of international students at each stage of their journey on campus, especially focusing on orientation and first-year seminars. The research will also contribute to student service and community engagement activities in the intensive English program on campus. Other potential programs that can build on this research and these priorities are faculty and staff seminars focused on intercultural skills, perhaps in partnership with existing professional development and engagement programs already in existence on campus. There is also the possibility to explore of a host family/mentor family structure that allows the student more direct support from a surrogate family.

One final idea that grew out of the research was adding instruction and testing in the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, which is universal according to their research, as informed by one study participant certified in this area. Discussions around common ground and differences in

this way could contribute to recognizing how each person, domestic or international, is operating by a different system internally, which could then facilitate the understanding of others types of difference.

The importance of putting culturally disparate campus stakeholders into rooms together is supported by research, such as from Glass, et al. (2015):

For example, rather than framing the ‘lack of interaction between international and U.S. students’ as a failure of individuals who need to possess greater intercultural competence, a network perspective suggests that universities might be better off helping interconnected groups on campus – and influential individuals within those groups – to create stronger linkages that connect diverse student populations. (as cited in Hoekje and Stevens, 2018, p. 88)

In these activities, the goal will be to raise awareness and understanding, to plant seeds of empathy and mutual support, and to help culturally disparate individuals find common ground. An analogy that was helpful during the research and could be a tangible activity in focus groups and seminars would be a surprising activity from color theory in art education. It would be to show how disparate colors react off of and affect each other when put in juxtaposition. So often we only see the point of contrast where the surfaces meet, where in reality, there is so much common ground just beyond that surface. As an example of this, study Figure 5.5 – Color Theory Sample¹⁶; once you see the contrast clearly, use your finger to cover where the two blocks meet. This will allow you to see how much more common ground the two blocks have. The same can be true of people. We can learn to not lead with difference and dealbreakers and to

¹⁶ See more example at <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2521023/Dont-believe-eyes-These-blocks-SAME-shade-grey.html>.

look past the surface. Activities like these may contribute to increased understanding and awareness. They can help create a sense of belonging for participants new to campus and new friendships for all. Ideally, what happens in the room can be a microcosm of what could happen on campus, and if HEIs take up this charge, what can happen in society.

Meaning-making will ideally be found at the individual level, which will hopefully feed into the macro-level changes. Block (2010) describes “Conversations that count.” In order to “create a community of accountability and belonging, we seek conversations where the following is true.” He outlines these objectives:

- An intimate and authentic relatedness is experienced.
- The world is shifted through invitation rather than mandate.
- The focus is on the communal possibility.
- There is a shift in ownership of this place, even though others are in charge.
- Diversity of thinking and dissent are given space.
- Commitments are made without barter.
- The gifts of each person and our community are acknowledged and valued (p. 102)

Building on these objectives, it is worth noting van Manen’s (2016) explication of phenomenological method and the power of anecdotal narrative, i.e. hearing each other’s stories:

- To compel: a story recruits our willing attention;
- To lead us to reflect: a story teds to invite us to a reflective search for significance;

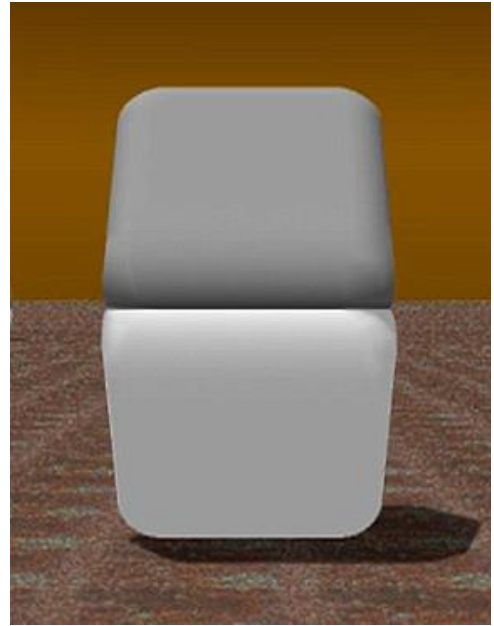


Figure 5.5 – Color Theory Sample

- To involve us personally: one tends to search actively for the story teller's meaning via one's own;
- To transform: we may be touched, shaken, moved by story; it teaches us;
- To measure one's interpretive sense: one's response to a story is a measure of one's deepened ability to make interpretive sense (pp. 120-121).

See Appendix F for a fuller explanation of action plans, including timelines and evaluation methods.

Each of us constructs a life that is her own central metaphor for thinking about the world.

Mary Bateson (1989, p. 241)

Implications for Future Research

There are number of additional threads of future research drawn from the emerging learning in this study. Connections between topics and disciplines and other emerging learning goes well beyond what this document could contain. As noted earlier, there were shifts in how the study could be conducted due to Covid-19 and the access and proximity people could have to each other with the safety protocols during lockdown. There is a sad irony to this which has been touched on in the writing up of the study. In short, it is looking at how we can leave our known rooms where we are comfortable and mover out into the hallway (O'Shaughnessy, 2014, pp. 14-15), or even visit other people in their rooms. The study is about mingling, about being with people who have lived different sorts of lives and see things in different ways. Yet, these would be very unheroic acts during a global pandemic where lack of movement and being locked down is the protocol. As one participant explained, the spread of the virus has demonstrated how mobile and interconnected the world has become such that the solution is to stop moving, to stop crossing borders, to stay inside, and depending on the person's interests, binge watch television or catch up on one's reading. Not moving or mingling is right now considered the most heroric.

The central metaphor of this study has been one of crossing borders, taking another step across the boundary from your previously known lifeworld, to stand at the intersection of cultures and disciplines, and build bridging social capital. As people move through the phases of change and subsequent transitions, in exchanging thoughts and words and hearing the stories of culturally disparate people, there is the potential to more find the common ground we share. We can gain new insight into our own lives and journey instead of defaulting to conflict, one-upmanship, and other forms of hierarchical thinking. Isaacson (2021) has written on the lives of many well-known people who through their creativity and scientific breakthroughs have changed the world and how we live in it, such as Albert Einstein, Leonardo da Vinci, Benjamin Franklin, Steve Jobs, and most recently, Jennifer Doudna, the Nobel Prize winning scientist whose team is helping the world understand genetic coding. Isaacson explained that these very creative people who have made such impact typically work at the intersection of science and the humanities. They think outside of the box, but they also know what is in the box. There is a famous quote attributed to Einstein: "Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world, stimulating progress, giving birth to evolution." Isaacson explained that the quote is often misunderstood. Einstein *had* the knowledge, that is what was inside the box, so was then *freed up* to move outside of those bounds to expand the vision of what was possible (Alda, 2021). In writing about the emerging learning from this study, a similar framework is in play, that if we need not feel the need to change another or to "win" the conversation, as one participant put it, we are free to travel with another for a time and see what they might show us.

Another implication for future research would be to isolate samplings of population more distinctly in order to compare findings. Many of the participants had lived abroad or traveled in

the geographical and physical sense and were already hooked on those benefits. It would be helpful to do a study that more clearly delineated responses from a sample that has had the benefits of another type of living, such as multiple generations in one area with extended family and traditions and rootedness to a single geographic area.

There were new areas of common ground that were identified in analysis and reflection during the study. One of these was the sense of feeling like an outsider. This is easy to recognize in an international student's journey. However, it would be interesting to explore whether all people have felt this way in some contexts and why. If the study were done anew, I would add that question in the same framing as the questions similarly to the ones on belonging, "Where did you feel like you were an outsider?" and, "What about that context made you feel that way?" I am curious to explore these relationships alongside the pressure people feel to conform in order to fit in. Bateson (1989) said of our higher education contexts:

Nothing in our tradition gives interdependence a value comparable to symmetry. It is difference that makes interdependence possible, but we have difficulty valuing it because of the speed with which we turn it into inequality. This means that all of the relationships in which two people complement each other – complete each other, as their differences move them toward a shared wholeness – man and woman, artist and physician, builder and dreamer – are suspected of unfairness unless they can be reshaped into symmetrical collegiality. (p. 104).

As Isaacson's subjects have demonstrated and Khazan (2020) and Cain (2012) wrote about, being different and having a voice unlike others leads to breakthroughs and solutions not conceived of otherwise.

The original intention of the study was to include focus groups of culturally disparate people in conversation together. The survey and interview instruments would have been smaller in scale and done a sampling of perception and global competency before and after the focus groups, with the interviews going more in depth on the impact of the time with others who were different. As safety protocols around Covid-19 would allow, future research can be done in this configuration. The present study brought a depth of new understanding and awareness that would help plan and facilitate future studies in this way, as well as the interactions outlined in the action plan. One unanticipated outcome of the present study was recognizing how group size seems to affect the pressure felt to conform or not, as well as the comfort level people felt in sharing openly, deeply, and reflexively in the way they did in 1:1 interviews. The level of connection made 1:1 with participants was a serendipitous effect which helped take the study to a deeper level of content and engagement than I now believe would have occurred otherwise. It also very effectively answered the primary research question of how these conversations can impact building community.

**Now they could look back over the lands they had left, laid out behind them far below.
Far, far away in the west, where things were blue and faint, Bilbo knew there lay his own country of safe and
comfortable things, and his little hobbit-hole.
He shivered.**

J.R.R. Tolkien, The Hobbit

Conclusion

...the average person can never again be caught in the grip of patterned behavior of which he has no awareness. While it is true that culture binds human beings in many unknown ways, the restraint it exercises is the groove of habit and nothing more. Man did not evolve culture as a means of smothering himself but as a medium in which to move, live, breathe, and discover his own uniqueness.

Edward Hall, Understanding Cultural Differences

One of the hoped for outcomes of this study is new awareness for the participants, the readers, and the researcher. The goal is to begin to see with new perspective and recognize the value of taking a few steps back to see a bigger picture or a different picture and to take a step or two into lesser known territories. The ultimate goal is to recognize the symbiotic and beneficial relationships human beings have and that there is far less separating us that connects us. Though Adler's words written in 1975 offer hope, they can easily seem unrealized.

As interactions across barriers of human existence increase, and as the world comes closer to the physical realities of the global village, new understanding of change experiences will hopefully broaden the challenges to ethnocentrism, chauvinism, and nationalism (p. 22).

Like many destinations we may never reach, the journey is still worthwhile. Community is a porous container which people may flow in and out of, as they choose. It is well worth recognizing the benefits of spending time together in shared spaces. Though some things are easier when we are alone, and there are times for that, the things that can happen when we are together are unlike any other possibilities. The definition of what "community" is, how people perceive it, and the level of desire they have for it seem equally porous and unbound. Bauman (2001), who called out the "ideal" of community provided this summary:

In community, we all understand each other well, we may trust what we hear, we are safe most of the time and hardly ever puzzled or taken aback. We are never strangers to each

other. We may quarrel – but these are friendly quarrels, it is just that we are all trying to make our togetherness even better and more enjoyable than it has been so far and, while guided by the same wish to improve our life together, we may disagree how to do it best.

(p. 2)

University campuses by their very nature mimic this container of culturally disparate individuals thrown together for a time. Like the sidewalks crisscrossing the lush green commons of the physical campus, which is often lined with eclectic architecture, multiple lifeworlds and cultures also intersect for a time, providing an opportunity for learning unlike any other. Bauman (2001) contrasts the ideal with another take on life now, as we:

happen to live in ruthless times, times of competition and one-upmanship, when people around us seem to keep their cards close to their chests and few people seem to be in any hurry to help us...What the word (community) evokes is everything we miss and what we lack to be secure, confident and trusting. (p. 3)

In such waters, “The success of a voyager depends in part on his or her navigational skills and in part on the wind and weather and tides” (Putnam, et al., 2003, p. 271). The more we can build our skills in these areas, the better prepared we are to travel successfully.

As with the widespread concept of Ubuntu permeating African cultures, we have a choice of how to respond to our humanity, the things we all share and how we might be integrated as diverse threads that make the tapestry stronger. Or, in contrast, we might choose in our encounters to lead with our differences or the need to win or the agenda to change others, and thereby tearing the fabric apart. Within that “culture clash” is the “bold interplay of contrasting patterns” (Khazan, 2020, p. 4).

One with ubuntu is careful to walk in the world as one who recognizes the infinite worth of everyone with whom he or she comes into contact. So it is not simply a way of behaving, it is indeed a way of being!

The fundamental meaning of the proverb is that everything we learn and experience in the world is through our relationships with other people. We are therefore called to examine our actions and thoughts, not just for what they will achieve for us, but for how they impact on others with whom we are in contact. (Ngomane, 2019, Kindle book locations 49-52)

Interculturalists are needed to stand on the border between worlds and even disciplines in order to facilitate awareness and deeper understanding. They can act as guides, helpers, and hosts to those who would like to travel across the gap from the known to the unknown.

When it comes to education and personal transformation, the type of travel promoted here is very effective and sifts the person faster than a life of comfort and familiarity. This reality has great potential for contributing to what we think of as education. Opening our stance in this way to what learning can be allows more portals into transformation. Bridges (2004) describes the potential for a “personal development that views transition as the natural process of disorientation and reorientation marking the turning points in the path of growth” (p. 4). The deconstruction-reconstruction, disintegration-reintegration factors of transition are the foundation for The Child-Expert Cycle. Learning to see this framework may help us in navigating the unexpected and unplanned. We might learn not to see “lifequakes” and disruptions as some sort of breach of contract to a planned life full of comfort and convenience, which does not seem to reflect any human experience, so much as a chance to be stretched and prepared for later cycles of experience. As we listen to each other and share our stories, there is tremendous potential to

find meaning and purpose in these reflections. We might find mutuality with others and better understanding of self.

For the characters in the stories, there is also the potential to find meaning and connections in the chapters of our lives and how the segments and seasons fit together. We can appreciate on a deeper level where certain characters enter and exit the story give and the impact they had, giving us new insight into our own journeys. International students traveling to live for a time and study in another culture cannot help but be thrown into this cycle of transformation. Hoekje and Stevens (2018) reminded us that “‘home’ is expected to be set aside in pursuit of a new and different identity” for international students, where there is “room for the new (that) does not completely reject the old” (p. 124). Those of us working to support them can be more aware and be informed helpers at the border crossings if we are also tuned into our own movement.

The credibility of our actions and words will be enhanced by the level of traveling we ourselves are doing. We have a choice of how we respond to the unknown or being out of our comfort zones. The manner in which we act as hosts or guests in any interaction will impact our effectiveness:

We usually associate hospitality with a culture, a social practice, a more personal quality to be admired. In Western culture, where individualism and security seem to be priorities, we need to be more thoughtful about how to bring the welcoming of strangers into our daily way of being together. (Block, 2010, p. 153)

Internationalization on a college campus is about “welcoming of strangers into our daily way of being together.” To echo earlier points, “our way” implies that everyone is being affected and has the opportunity to grow and change. This is “the *starting point* of all togetherness” (Bauman,

2001, p. 10). If from within our lifeworld or discipline or culture, we let egocentrism reign and insist on the other person changing to be like us, then it would seem we are not building community. Humility is lacking. Hierarchical thinking prevails.

Like with the explanation of good listening that participants provided, we seem to know the basics of how to do better at attending to each other, being more present in the moment, and yet, we often choose not to act on what we know. Is changing our conversation about community and how we are together another body of knowledge where we can expand the borders? This wisdom unapplied seems to be hurting us as humanity. When 91% of participants recognize the increased understanding and benefits that come from interacting with people who are culturally disparate, why then do we not engage with others more? Participants grappled with this questions, as did the research. They pointed out that introverts having to perform as extroverts as is difficult. They noted that there seems to be so much conflict. Conflict is uncomfortable. People would rather not engage for fear of offending. We all seem to be walking on a layer of egg shells instead of building bridges strong enough to support our differences. As some people intimated, fitting in and not being rejected is preferable, so it feels safer to disengage and step back.

If we can learn to reframe difference and the motivation for engagement to focus on curiosity and understanding and connection, difference no longer needs to be thought of as “conflict” because no one is trying to judge or win a debate or change the other person. We can work with and even appreciate the “gift of dissent.” This then becomes more about two humans interacting in a circle that bounds their collective understanding of something, and traveling together for a time, they work collaboratively to see if they can expand that boundary in a mutually beneficial way. They can listen to each other’s stories of the journey so far and go deeper beyond the surface where snap judgments and categorizing take place.

Part of the understanding that can be expanded, beyond that of any given topic, is simply a fuller understanding of each other. There are things we will know on the other side of the conversation that were unknown and unimaginable when we began. Again, though, this works best when humility is present and judgment and hierarchical thinking is not. Rettig (2017) reminds us of the “fundamentalism” (Weingarten, 2021) explained earlier, “Nonetheless, beliefs are just that: beliefs.” Rettig says:

Almost all assumptions we are making about the world are subjective and a result of the cultural conditioning that we have received by living in a particular environment...In other words, while being confronted with people from other cultural backgrounds, by definition we will constantly face situations where our own beliefs differ significantly from those of the other side.

There is the natural human tendency to seek sameness (Bauman, 2001, p. 115). Incidents arise out of assuming sameness in others and being annoyed when they do not meet our expectations (Storti, 2007, pp. 66-67). Part of the answer to why we move away instead of toward others who are different is obviously that it is difficult and uncomfortable. Another thing we seemingly know but do not always act on is that many things we end up valuing most and that are meaningful and impactful in our lives are on the other side of challenge and discomfort. When we reflect on times when we leapt forward in our growth or had new epiphanies of understanding, they often come after the disruption of a hardship.

Among the choices of response we can make to living in the increasingly diverse world around us, is the level of commitment we will make. We can choose not to impose stories or place our interpretations as an overlay on the person or objective data or realia surrounding us. We can choose not view people as “surfaces” to simply swipe away. We can choose not to view

people as tasks that we multi-. We can make a commitment to the other person that we will not view any given moment as fragile with us on the verge of declaring the deal broken if a certain trigger word is uttered. With a posture of holding a cancellation stamp above one's head ready to bring it down, tearing our clothes and saying, "You're dead to me," we are seemingly not working to build community.

College student voices in the study called it "entitlement" to hold to the "privilege" of thinking our ways of thinking are defined as normal and right and are not to be considered otherwise. We can commit to being better "drivers" in conversations, not cutting people off as quickly, not tailgating them so they will go at a different speed, and not honking our horns at them by interrupting. Doran, et al. (2021) give these helpful reminders from the perspective of negotiation: "treat every relationship as a long term relationship; model respectful behavior, regardless of how you are being treated; (and) try to frame yourself, and see the other, as an ally with whom you are working with against a mutual problem." We can make the commitment to use the better habits. We can take the higher roads that seem well within our awareness but that we seemingly give ourselves a pass on. Humanity can easily default to the lowest common denominator, in the absence of any resistance in the other direction which might call us to aspire for something better.

For those seeking to find kinship and experience community in its best forms, this study is meant to be an invitation to travel in a different manner. There are new and different trails that can be followed. In conversations, we can look for common ground in our stories rather than beginning our interaction by handing our business cards of positionality and demarking the fundamentalist beliefs present in each person (Weingarten, 2021). These choices of response have been framed around being a hero in one's own story. There is the choice of being an

Accidental Tourist or an *Intentional Traveler*. Perhaps all of us can learn to move between spaces, as if rooms in a hallway, recognizing that there is value in each room (O'Shaughnessy, 2014, pp. 14-15). We might learn from those who are at home in another room and begin to feel more at home there ourselves. Sojourners do this all the time, pausing here and there to see what they may find. In receiving sojourners, we can hopefully create a space where they do not have to choose only the room we favor or feel forced to stay in a room where they feel less comfortable.

To finish, think back to those international students arriving in a new world, stepping out of that tunnel, with all the questions of identity and competency and belonging that hang in the air around the new sights, smells, and other cultural clues. Can we be as brave as they are in taking those next steps? Will international students find a contingency of friendly and inviting faces from the school there to receive them? When the cycle starts all over again in the resident hall and in the first classes and in the dining areas, what will happen next? Are we willing to step out of our own tunnels, leaving the known, and be open to new understanding we could not achieve any other way? Can we not only be hospitable to these visitors to our lives but to all the other travelers we encounter? We can choose to listen, build relationships, and seek to solve problems together. What lies on the other side of these interactions could be a new, different, and inclusive space that we could never have conceptualized earlier...on our own...or any other way.

So the journey is over and I am back again where I started, richer by much experience and poorer by many exploded convictions, many perished certainties. For convictions and certainties are too often the concomitants of ignorance. Those who like to feel they are always right and who attach a high importance to their own opinions should stay at home. When one is travelling, convictions are mislaid as easily as spectacles; but unlike spectacles, they are not easily replaced.

Aldous Huxley

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Appendix A – Survey Instrument

| # | SURVEY Question/Feature | Type of Question | Category | Area being explored |
|----|---|------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|
| | <p>Consent Form (Online)</p> <p>STATEMENT OF CONSENT</p> <p>I have read the information described above and have received a copy of this information. I have asked questions I had regarding the research study and have received answers to my satisfaction. I am 18 years of age or older and voluntarily consent to participate in this study.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES (→ Takes participant into live survey.)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> NO (→ Takes person to End/Submit.)</p> | Set up | Set up | Consent or Exit Survey |
| | <p>BUILDING COMMUNITY SURVEY</p> <p>This is a survey is designed to study the key elements of building and living in community. It should take about 10-15 minutes to complete.</p> <p>Thank you for participating in this study.</p> | Set up | Introduction | |
| | ABOUT YOU | Title of Section | | |
| 1. | <p>Which of these best describe how you learned of the survey?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The primary researcher contacted me directly</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> A friend/family member shared with me</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> A work colleague shared with me</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Sent to me through a group/office on my campus</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Social Media/Professional Network Link</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</p> | MC | Demographics | Connection to Survey (Source) |
| 2. | <p>Which of these best describes you?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> College or University Student</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Faculty or Staff Member at higher education institution</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Community Member in Lancaster, Pennsylvania area</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Community Member in another part of the world or the U.S.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</p> | | | |

| | | | | |
|----|--|-----------------|--------------|---|
| 3. | What is your age? <input type="checkbox"/> 18-25 <input type="checkbox"/> 26-35 <input type="checkbox"/> 36-50 <input type="checkbox"/> 51-69 <input type="checkbox"/> 70+ <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer | MC | Demographics | Age, confirming 18 and over for study |
| 4. | Please describe the setting where you have spent the most years of your life growing up, whether more rural (country) or urban (city) or other? (If other, please describe.) Rural (more out in the country, away from cities) <input type="checkbox"/> Urban (mostly in cities) <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | MC | Demographics | Exploring responses related to exposure |
| 5. | How long have you lived/studied in your present location? <input type="checkbox"/> 1-6 months <input type="checkbox"/> 7-12 months <input type="checkbox"/> 1-3 years <input type="checkbox"/> 4-9 years <input type="checkbox"/> 10-19 years <input type="checkbox"/> 20+ years | MC | Demographics | Length of time in location |
| 6. | How many siblings are in your family of origin? <input type="checkbox"/> 0 sisters/brothers <input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 sisters/brothers <input type="checkbox"/> 3-4 sisters/brothers <input type="checkbox"/> 5+ sisters/brothers <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | MC | Demographics | Family Size |
| 7. | How would you describe your race? <input type="checkbox"/> Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Black or African American <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic or Latino <input type="checkbox"/> Native American or American Indian <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/> White <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | Text | Demographics | Race |
| 8. | What is the country of your citizenship? <i>(*Country list available 8/22/20 from https://www.listofcountriesoftheworld.com/.)</i> | Drop-Down List* | Demographics | Country |
| 9. | If the U.S. is your passport country, in which state/territory/armed forces context do you live? • DOES NOT APPLY | Drop-Down | Demographics | For cross-checking data |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alabama (AL) • Alaska (AK) • Arizona (AZ) • Arkansas (AR) • California (CA) • Colorado (CO) • Connecticut (CT) • Delaware (DE) • District of Columbia (DC) • Florida (FL) • Georgia (GA) • Hawaii (HI) • Idaho (ID) • Illinois (IL) • Indiana (IN) • Iowa (IA) • Kansas (KS) • Kentucky (KY) • Louisiana (LA) • Maine (ME) • Maryland (MD) • Massachusetts (MA) • Michigan (MI) • Minnesota (MN) • Mississippi (MS) • Missouri (MO) • Montana (MT) • Nebraska (NE) • Nevada (NV) • New Hampshire (NH) • New Jersey (NJ) • New Mexico (NM) • New York (NY) • North Carolina (NC) • North Dakota (ND) • Ohio (OH) • Oklahoma (OK) • Oregon (OR) • Pennsylvania (PA) • Rhode Island (RI) • South Carolina (SC) • South Dakota (SD) • Tennessee (TN) • Texas (TX) • Utah (UT) • Vermont (VT) • Virginia (VA) • Washington (WA) • West Virginia (WV) • Wisconsin (WI) • Wyoming (WY) • American Samoa (AS) • Guam (GU) • Northern Mariana Islands (MP) | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|

| | | | | |
|-----|---|-----------|-------------------|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puerto Rico (PR) • Virgin Islands (VI) • Armed Forces Africa (AE) • Armed Forces Americas (AA) • Armed Forces Canada (AE) • Armed Forces Europe (AE) • Armed Forces Middle East (AE) • Armed Forces Pacific (AP) | | | |
| 10. | <p>What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> No schooling completed <input type="checkbox"/> Nursery school to 8th grade <input type="checkbox"/> Some high school, no diploma <input type="checkbox"/> High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED) <input type="checkbox"/> Some college credit, no degree <input type="checkbox"/> Trade/technical/vocational training <input type="checkbox"/> Associate degree <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's degree <input type="checkbox"/> Master's degree <input type="checkbox"/> Professional degree <input type="checkbox"/> Doctorate degree | Drop-Down | Demographics | For cross-checking data |
| 11. | <p>Which of these is most tied to how you think of your own identity?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Being a unique individual, there is no one else like me <input type="checkbox"/> Being part of a small group of friends <input type="checkbox"/> Being part of a team or company or club (or some non-family group) <input type="checkbox"/> Being part of a family <input type="checkbox"/> Being part of a group or a community <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | MC | Cultural Dynamics | Individual or Collective Identity base |
| 12. | <p>Which of these best describes your feelings about change?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> I do not like change at all. <input type="checkbox"/> I do not prefer change. <input type="checkbox"/> Change happens, so I need to deal with it. <input type="checkbox"/> I am okay with change. <input type="checkbox"/> I am very comfortable with change. | MC | Disposition | Related to Change |
| 13. | <p>How would you describe your patterns related to staying in or stepping out of your comfort zones? (<i>"Comfort zones" could be thought of as the situations or places or activities you are most familiar with and used to. They are known to you. "Stepping out of your comfort zones" would be doing something very different to you, or unknown, and less comfortable.</i>)</p> | MC | Disposition | Growth Mindset |
| 14. | <p>Which of these best describes you?</p> <p>(<i>"Introverted" typically describes someone who gets energy back from time spent alone; they enjoy people and have friends, but being in large crowds</i></p> | MC | Disposition | Introversion |

| | | | | |
|---------------------|---|-------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| | <i>can be tiring. "Extroverted" means a person gets more energy from being with large groups of people.)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Very introverted <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat introverted <input type="checkbox"/> A mixture of both (ambiverted) <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat extroverted <input type="checkbox"/> Very extroverted | | | |
| ABOUT OTHERS | | Title of Section | | |
| 15. | It upsets me to see someone being treated disrespectfully. <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree | MC | Disposition | Empathy (Greater good, 2020) |
| 16. | I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the other person's point of view. <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree | MC | Disposition | Empathy (Greater good, 2020) |
| 17. | I find that I am "in tune" with other people's moods. <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree | MC | Disposition | Empathy (Greater good, 2020) |
| 18. | I sometimes try to understand people better by imagining how things look from their perspective. <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree | MC | Disposition | Empathy (Greater good, 2020) |
| 19. | Which of these choices given is most important to you? <input type="checkbox"/> PURPOSE - Finding meaning and purpose in lived experiences <input type="checkbox"/> SUCCESS - Getting a good education and setting myself up for a career | MC | Cultural Dynamics | Meaning Making |

| | | | | |
|-----|---|------|----------------------|---------------------|
| | <input type="checkbox"/> MONEY - Earning a good income <input type="checkbox"/> RELATIONSHIPS - Friends and family relationships <input type="checkbox"/> ENJOYMENT - Enjoying myself / Having fun | | | |
| 20. | Which of these statements best describes how you face new situations or things unknown? <input type="checkbox"/> I like the new/unknown. <input type="checkbox"/> I'm okay with the new/unknown. <input type="checkbox"/> You have to live with the new/unknown. <input type="checkbox"/> I don't like the new/unknown very much. <input type="checkbox"/> I hate the new/unknown. | MC | Cultural Dynamics | Ambiguity Tolerance |
| 21. | In a few words, describe a situation where you felt you truly belonged. <i>(BELONGING, or a sense of belonging generally means feeling accepted or that you feel you are included as a member.)</i> | Text | Belonging | Belonging Factors |
| 22. | Thinking of the situation you described where you felt you belonged: what about it made you feel like you belonged? | Text | Belonging | Belonging Factors |
| 23. | What do you feel is most helpful toward building community with others? | Text | Community | Community Factors |
| 24. | What do you feel works against building community? | Text | Community | Community Factors |
| 25. | Which of these do you feel is the most important toward building community? <input type="checkbox"/> Acceptance of others, even if different <input type="checkbox"/> Conversations, talking to each other more <input type="checkbox"/> Relationships, building more relationships <input type="checkbox"/> Empathy, increasing our ability to feel what others feel <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding, increasing our understanding of each other <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | MC | Community | Community Factors |
| 26. | If you were in a large room filled with a variety of diverse people from all over the world, who do you feel it would be easiest for you to talk to? <i>(Imagine that the room and situation was one where you felt comfortable being present.)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Someone who has different political views <input type="checkbox"/> Someone who has different ideological or religious beliefs <input type="checkbox"/> Someone who is a different race <input type="checkbox"/> Someone who is from a different country | MC | Culturally Disparate | Readiness |

| | | | | |
|-----|--|----|----------------------|------------------------------|
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Someone who is from a different socio-economic status | | | |
| 27. | <p>If you were in a large room filled with a variety of diverse people from all over the world, who do you feel it would most difficult for you to talk to?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Someone who has different political views <input type="checkbox"/> Someone who has different ideological or religious beliefs <input type="checkbox"/> Someone who is a different ethnicity/race <input type="checkbox"/> Someone who is from a different country <input type="checkbox"/> Someone who is from a different socio-economic status </p> | MC | Culturally Disparate | Readiness |
| 28. | <p>How many relationships do you have with people outside of your race?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3-5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6-9 <input type="checkbox"/> 10+ </p> | MC | Relationships | Diversity, exposure |
| 29. | <p>Which best describes how you feel about building relationships with those different from you?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Very comfortable <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat comfortable <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat uncomfortable <input type="checkbox"/> Very uncomfortable </p> | MC | Relationships | Diversity, exposure |
| 30. | <p>How strong is your interest in improving your own communication skills for relating to people different from you?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Very interested <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat interested <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Not very interested <input type="checkbox"/> No interest at all </p> | MC | Relationships | Readiness, Global Competency |
| 31. | <p>How strong is your interest in listening to the ideas, beliefs, stories, or experiences of people who are different from you?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Very interested <input type="checkbox"/> Moderately interested <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat interested <input type="checkbox"/> Not very interested <input type="checkbox"/> No interest at all </p> | MC | Relationships | Readiness, Global Competency |

| | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|-------------------------|----------------------|--|
| 32. | How strong is your interest in learning about other cultures? <input type="checkbox"/> Very interested <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat interested <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Not very interested <input type="checkbox"/> No interest at all | MC | Relationships | Readiness, Global Competency |
| ABOUT SOCIETY AND THE WORLD | | Title of Section | | |
| 33. | Which of these statements feels most true? <input type="checkbox"/> I have no control over the things that happen in my life. <input type="checkbox"/> I have little control over the things that happen in my life, but can change some things. <input type="checkbox"/> It is about even between things I can control and things I can't control. <input type="checkbox"/> I have a lot of control over the things that happen, but not everything. <input type="checkbox"/> I have complete control over the things that happen. | MC | Cultural Dynamics | Locus of Control |
| 34. | Which best describes your experience with language(s)? 100% (All) <input type="checkbox"/> I can carry on a conversation in 1 language. <input type="checkbox"/> I can carry on a conversation in 2 languages. <input type="checkbox"/> I can carry on a conversation in 3 or more languages. <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | MC | Cultural Dynamics | Exposure, openness to other cultures, readiness and value placed |
| 35. | Which best describes your experience? <input type="checkbox"/> I have not VISITED another country. <input type="checkbox"/> I have VISITED 1 other country. <input type="checkbox"/> I have VISITED 2 other countries. <input type="checkbox"/> I have VISITED 3 or more other countries. <input type="checkbox"/> I have LIVED in 1 other country for longer than 2 months. <input type="checkbox"/> I have LIVED in 2 or more other countries for longer than 2 months. <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | MC | Cultural Dynamics | Exposure, openness to other cultures, readiness and value placed |
| 36. | What in your life would you say has shaped your identity the most? (<i>In other words, what has helped form you into the person you are today</i>) | Text | Identify | Formation factors |
| 37. | What do you think would make it most difficult for you to approach someone different from you to have a conversation? | Text | Culturally Disparate | Relationships |
| 38. | How could spending time with culturally different people possibly affect or impact you?" | Text | Culturally Disparate | Impact, interest, readiness |

| | | | | |
|-----|--|----|--|--------------------------------------|
| 39. | <p>Which best describes how long would you listen to someone you did not agree with or who had very different beliefs/values/opinions than you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> I would listen until they finished speaking, then be sure I understood their viewpoint. <input type="checkbox"/> I would listen until they finished speaking, then I would share my viewpoint. <input type="checkbox"/> I sometimes interrupt to share my viewpoint. <input type="checkbox"/> I would listen until I heard something I disagree with, then interrupt with my viewpoint. <input type="checkbox"/> I would not listen and/or I might walk away. | MC | Disposition , Culturally Disparate | Communicati on |
| 40. | <p>How would you describe your level of commitment to building community where everyone feels a sense of belonging?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Very committed <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat committed <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Not very committed <input type="checkbox"/> Not committed; it's not really necessary/important | MC | Disposition | Community Building, readiness |
| 41. | <p>How important do you think it is for college students to develop skills for relating globally and to those different from them? <i>(Especially as you imagine them graduating and stepping out into the job market and the world.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Very important <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Not very important <input type="checkbox"/> Not important at all | MC | Disposition | Global Competencies, readiness |
| 42. | <p>How important do you think it is for anyone of any age to develop skills for relating globally and to those different from them?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Very important <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Not very important <input type="checkbox"/> Not important at all | MC | Disposition | Global Competencies, readiness |
| 43. | <p>How strong is your interest in participating in small group conversations with a variety of participants from different backgrounds, if made available to you?</p> | MC | Community | Movement to Action, readiness |

| | | | | |
|-----|---|------|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| | <p><i>(The focus of the group would be talking about topics such as in this survey and working together to build up community.)</i></p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Very interested <input type="checkbox"/> Moderately interested <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat interested <input type="checkbox"/> Not very interested <input type="checkbox"/> No interest at all </p> | | | |
| 44. | <p>How strong is your interest in attending a workshop on building multicultural/intercultural communication skills and global competencies, if available?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Very interested <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat interested <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Not very interested <input type="checkbox"/> No interest at all </p> | MC | Community | Movement to Action, readiness |
| 45. | <p>How important is it to you personally to feel like a you belong as a member of the community or situation in which you are living?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Very important <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Not very important <input type="checkbox"/> Not important at all </p> | MC | Cultural Dynamics | Felt need? |
| 46. | <p>Are there any other concluding thoughts you would like to share, as you have reflected on these survey questions?</p> <p><i>(For example: Is there some way in which you may be thinking differently from having done this survey? Do you plan to do anything differently?)</i></p> | Text | Intervention measure | Movement to action |
| 47. | <p>Do you have any feedback on this survey format or questions? Is there a question you wish you were asked you could answer here? Did any question cause confusion?</p> | Text | Survey instrument | Effectiveness and improvement |
| | Interview Willingness | | | |
| | <p>Would you be willing to be interviewed? (Please answer below.)</p> <p><i>About the interview: Your responses are anonymous. However, if you are interested in being interviewed to explore a few of these topics more deeply, that would be very helpful to the study. Interviews would take 45-60 minutes, conducted remotely by video call, and would be scheduled at a date and time convenient to you.</i></p> <p>Would you be willing to be interviewed in relation to this survey, if asked?</p> | MC | Interview Consent | Willingness to be interviewed? |

| | | | | |
|--|--|---------------------------|--|--|
| | <input type="checkbox"/> YES (Takes participant to hidden section to provide email contact. See “INTERVIEW Willingness below.) <input type="checkbox"/> NO (Takes participant to end/Submit.) | | | |
| | <p>INTERVIEW Willingness</p> <p>You indicated YES you would be willing to be interviewed, if asked.</p> <p>Please provide an email address where you may be reached to schedule an interview.</p> <p>(Confirm Email)</p> <p>Thank You</p> <p>Thank you for saying you would be willing to be interviewed. It will not be possible to interview everyone who is willing, but I will be in touch with you to keep you informed. Again, thank you for your participation in this study!</p> | Section based on response | YES → goes to this page (NO → goes to SUBMIT/end of form) | Allows for contact information for scheduling interview. |

References (Survey Related)

Greater Good (2020). Empathy Quiz. *Greater good magazine: science-based insights for a meaningful life*. (Community survey questions 13-16 adapted from this source.) Retrieved 8/22/2020 from https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/quizzes/take_quiz/empathy#:~:text=It%20draws%20from%20three%20scientifically,Questionnaire%2C%20developed%20by%20Sally%20Olde%20rbak.

Appendix B – Interview Protocol

Community Building – Interview Questions *(draft v.4, 11-4-2020, finalized from IRB submitted version)*

Introduction

- ☐ With Survey → Signed consent form
- ☐ My hope is to ask questions clearly, and if they are not clear, to help make them so.
- ☐ You may ask to stop or opt out of the interview at any time.
- ☐ Having answers is helpful, if I'm getting the questions right, but if you would like to opt out of a question, that is fine too, maybe saying something like, "I'd rather not answer that..."
- ☐ I want to assure you that this information will be kept confidential and under lock and key or password.
- ☐ All data gathered or specific quotes would be done anonymously.
- ☐ It will be most helpful to my study if I can transcribe this interview, so can verify that it seems accurate to you to be sure I've captured your thoughts correctly.
- ☐ Knowing it will remain private, do I have your permission to record this?
- ☐ About This Study: As explained with the survey, this study is looking at building community. These questions will relate to the themes in the survey around this topic.

Tier 1 – Follow-Up on Survey Questions – The Ones We Grappled With

| # | Question | Exploring / Lit Theme |
|---|--|-------------------------|
| 1 | Do you remember having any thoughts that stuck with you after you took the survey? | Survey as Intervention? |
| 2 | Did you find you were thinking or doing anything differently, from having reflected a bit on the survey questions? | Survey as Intervention? |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| | | |
| 3 | How would you describe your feelings about <u>change</u> , as it comes up in life? | Transition |
| 4 | <p>How would you describe your feelings about facing <u>unknowns</u> or getting <u>pushed out of your comfort zones</u>?</p> <p><u>Has someone ever convinced you to do something you really didn't want to do or that you knew was out of your comfort zone and you ended up doing it and found that you really liked it or really enjoyed it?</u></p> <p>How do you think about that experience now? Positive?</p> | Transition, Comfort Zones |
| 5 | <p>On the survey, there was a question about how long you might listen to someone who was very different from you, maybe someone who had very different beliefs/values/opinions/culture entirely.</p> <p>a) How would you describe your interest level in having connections with people different from you in some of these ways?</p> <p>b) What are your thoughts about having a friendship with someone very different from you in some of these ways?</p> <p>c) Can you tell me more about how you imagine yourself handling a situation like that with someone whose opinions or beliefs or politics are very different? (Maybe you have a real situation to reference.)</p> <p>d) <i>(If needed)</i> How would you describe your interest level in talking with someone <u>from another culture</u> or <u>learning about their culture</u>?</p> | Conversations with culturally disparate, Listening |
| 6 | <p>You may remember a couple of questions about entering a room full of “a variety of diverse people from all over the world,” who may be very different from you in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • political views • religious beliefs • ethnicity/race • gender identity / sexual orientation • country or culture • socio-economic status | Conversations with culturally disparate |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| | <p>You were asked who might be <u>easiest</u> to approach for you and who might be most <u>difficult</u> to approach:</p> <p>Can you tell me more about your thoughts and feelings reflecting on this question now?</p> | |
| 7 | <p>As asked on the survey, how might you reflect now on the question:</p> <p>a) How could spending time with people very different from you impact you personally?</p> <p>b) How might it impact our society?</p> | <p>Conversations with culturally disparate → Impact</p> |
| 8 | <p>As asked on the survey, how might you reflect now on the question:</p> <p>a) How important do you think it is for people to develop skills for relating to those different from them?</p> <p>b) ...or especially the idea of becoming more of a global citizen?</p> | Skills |
| 9 | <p><i>(If not answered in the above)</i> Do you have any other thoughts now on <u>what contributes</u> to building community and what <u>works against</u> it, as explored on the survey?</p> | Community building |

(Break?)

Tier 2 – This Sections Involves Reflecting a Little Deeper on the Same Themes

| # | Question | Exploring / Lit Theme |
|----|---|--|
| 10 | <p>a) How would you describe what comes to mind when you think of the word “community”? (a definition or description)</p> <p>b) How does sense of belonging or inclusion or diversity fit into this idea?</p> <p>c) By that definition, are there communities that you are part of?</p> <p>d) What do you think matters the most about community?</p> <p>e) How important is it to you personally to be part of a community?</p> | <p>Community, impact</p> <p>Also: Values, beliefs, etc. Ideas while reading Saldana.</p> |

| | | |
|----|---|--|
| 11 | <p>Tell me what you think about <u>humility</u> as it might relate to building relationships (the way we have discussed) or in building community.</p> <p>a) What about <u>empathy</u>? (<i>Same question on impact</i>) <i>(Dictionary definition, Oxford Languages: Empathy = the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.)</i></p> | Attributes, skills, impact on community |
| 12 | <p>How would you describe what good <u>listening</u> is? And also tell me how you think this might relate to building relationships or building community.</p> | Attributes, skills, impact on community Listening |
| 13 | <p>Alan Alda, who many know from the TV show <i>M*A*S*H</i> and from his movies, spends much of his time now doing training on communicating well.</p> <p>a) He said, “I discovered a few years ago that for me I wasn't really listening unless I was willing to be changed.”</p> <p>b) What do you think about his statement, “...I wasn't really listening <u>unless I was willing to be changed</u>”?</p> | Listening |
| 14 | <p><i>Globalization</i> is where businesses operate or have influence worldwide, and where there is international trade and exchange?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In higher education, the word <i>internationalization</i> is used, which includes making the curriculum more international, preparing students to be globally competent, and might include intercultural exchange programming like study abroad, or helping international students who studying here in the U.S. <p>a) What are your thoughts about internationalization? <i>(Drawing out questions, if needed)</i></p> <p>b) What would you imagine as <u>points for</u> or <u>against</u> it?</p> <p>c) Are efforts to internationalize something you would be interested in being part of if it applied in your context?</p> | Internationalization / Globalization Readiness |
| 15 | <p>Can you think about a major change or two in your life, where you had to go through a transition? That is, your life was clearly different after the event(s) than before.</p> | Transition, learning |

| | | |
|----|--|--------------------------|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>You don't have to describe it</u>, just have it as a point of reference. • <i>For example, I might say, "...becoming a father, or living in another country."</i> <p>Do you have a case in mind?</p> <p>As you think back on the change(s):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) How would you describe <u>something you learned or perhaps saw differently</u> after the event or change than before? b) Did you see yourself or <u>who you were – your identity</u> – in a different way? c) If you can imagine that this change or transition <u>had never happened</u> in your life, how would things in your life perhaps be different? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>(For example, I might think about, "If I had not moved to Africa with my family....")</i> | |
| 16 | <p>In 2020, we are having the common, global, lived experience of being in quarantine because of the global pandemic of Covid-19.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For many people, this is a disruption to much of what they may have had planned for their lives, such as weddings, or how graduations have been done, the workplace, etc. • There is definitely a life we knew before, the period we are in now, and we are all hopeful for a new beginning that we'll one day call "normal" again. • There is disorientation and loss. <p>When you think of your life over these past several months:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) How are you doing with having been forced out of what you knew as normal into functioning in a new way? b) What are some things you may be learning or perhaps seeing from a different perspective during? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Related to this: do you think these would have happened had we not been in this pandemic situation? c) <i>(If time or applicable)</i> Do you have any observations about how we solve problems or think when we've had to cross a border from what we've known? | Transitions, hard things |

| | | |
|-----------|--|---|
| | <p>○ (On the margins, fringes, multidisciplinary)</p> <p>My study is on building community.</p> <p>d) Do you have any observations about how does being locked down at home and being socially isolated affect things? ...affecting community or relationships?</p> <p>e) Have you been observing anything about relationships or connection or intimacy using these video call apps like Zoom?</p> | |
| 17 | <p>Again in the context of 2020, with a global pandemic going on, and adding the larger conversation about race:</p> <p>a) Is there an attribute or skill you wish you had to better navigate these times? (Or an area you would like to improve on? This doesn't mean we're bad at something, maybe just want to get better.)</p> | Skill building |
| 18 | <p>More About My Study – I am looking at building community, how people feeling included or belonging affects this, and especially how conversations with those different from us may have an impact.</p> <p><i>My specific research question is:</i></p> <p>How do conversations between <u>culturally disparate people</u> impact building community?</p> <p>a) Do you have any questions or thoughts about this?</p> | RQ: Conversations with Culturally Disparate People → Impact Community |
| 19 | <p>Lastly:</p> <p>a) Is there a question you wished you had been asked or could answer? Or...do you have...</p> <p>b) Do you have any other concluding thoughts you would like to share?</p> | |

Appendix C – Codebook Samples

| Theme | Category | Code | Example |
|--------------------|-------------|---|--|
| Community | Challenges | 1. Challenge (Hardships, Problems, > Energy Drain, fatigue, Stress) | 00:08:38 So being here by myself when I first came in here. It was really hard to adapt. |
| Community | Community | 2. Common Ground | And because at the end. It just turned out to be like 17:54 We kind of like are equal at some point there are some even though we might be different with other like with 10% but like 90% of the time we're kind of similar me like |
| Community | Community | 3. Communication (Listening , Communication Channels, having communication, etc.) | 00:42:19 This kind of like they're just words but listening from ...active listening can transform us. |
| Community | Community | 4. Conformity (Pressure to Conform) |(he said) human beings are made to really to conform. 00:14:35 ... we try to adapt to our environment and we try to, like I said, gravitate towards people who are very similar to us, and I said, Well, I don't know, I don't agree with that. I don't. |
| Community | Demographic | 5. Diversity (Re range of voices, Diversity, Differences, honored or not) | 00:40:08 But I can see it back home that people are just like 00:40:13 They're all the same. |
| Identity Formation | Disposition | 6. Attitude (Choice of Response)(Optimism, Hopefulness, Choice of Response, etc.) | And he was like, you cannot change everyone's minds and you cannot let something (of) that kind of ...upset you... |
| Identity Formation | Disposition | 7. Bias (Prejudice, Xenophobia, Positionality) | and to, I think, take away a lot of prejudice that we have when we meet people from different backgrounds. |
| Identity Formation | Disposition | 8. Introversion/Extraversion | But I'm better...much better as an introvert. |
| Identity Formation | Feeling | 9. Authenticity (Able to be self, Not feel like child [expertise], Transparency, Honesty, real, true, integrity) | I tend to be very open book, so I mean if you ask me something generally tell you. |
| Identity Formation | Feeling | 10. Identity (Related to perceiving or understanding self. Related to roles. Person Defined By (Role, etc.), Externals / How we perceive ourselves. /Self-Perception, roles we fill or play, etc. / Perception of Reality. / Consider: Blind spots (Denial, lack of awareness) / "I mean, partly like my identity with relation to my family. | because prior to that, I was always working as a university professor 00:11:51 So then I left that I started my own private school now I don't have that either. And I'm not at the university. So what am I just the private English Tutor Online and |
| Identity Formation | Feeling | 11. Offense ("Walking on egg shells", Worry over causing offence and/or being offended) | just because I don't want to come across to them in any way offensive....You know, to me, I look at it more from a personal perspective and rejection of me... |
| Identity Formation | Feeling | 12. Outsider (Status of not feeling included, Marginalized, On the periphery of the context) | 01:38:13 But to stand up and say something you're at risk of being marginalized. 01:38:20 Or even worse than marginalized, outright ridiculed. |
| Identity Formation | Growth | 13. Adjustment (Acculturation, Adapting, Settling In) | But even that just being around being around everybody for longer. It's, it's like running in a different gear, you know, |
| Identity Formation | Growth | 14. Growth (Affected /Transformation/Learning → Impact) / Lifelong Learning, Self-Actualized (Expand or | 00:19:39 So I think it's very important because you grow as a person and then you realize like, yeah, we have differences. But then we also have similarities and |

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|---|---|
| | | Protect) (Fuller Self or Self-Actualization)/resilience, adaptability, Potential for Growth, etc. | |
| Skill Building | Choices and Actions | 15. Acceptance/Rejection (Actions outward to others, also Inclusion/Exclusion) | 00:14:56 Yeah, like right now like in this in the current like political climate. It's like, it's so easy for me to just write off someone that's a Trump supporter, but 00:15:05 It's not that easy. |
| Skill Building | Choices and Actions | 16. Contribution (Also Responsibility) | 01:02:57 So how can I be a good member of the team to help us get where we need to go. |
| Skill Building | Choices and Actions | 17. Intentionality (Take Action, Level of Proactiveness, takes work and devoted effort) | 00:56:05 So it takes again back intentionally trying to overcome that, especially if there's somebody that we can't get away from or the live next door or whatever but |
| Skill Building | Choices and Actions | 18. Labeling (Categorizing, Stereotyping – Prejudging or categorizing without relating // Labeling, categorizing, or otherwise prejudging other humans without truly interacting with or knowing them.) | And so I think it's really important just to really listen and get to know people and not categorize and stereotype into this is what they appear to be or they they seem the same to me. |
| Skill Building | Outcomes | 19. Benefits | So yeah, definitely. 00:30:12 By knowing from ...like talking with a lot of people with different experiences ...with different with past experiences you definitely grow. |
| Skill Building | Outcomes | 20. Creativity (New Ideas, Solutions) | allows for the creation of different viewpoints different ideas and such. |
| Skill Building | Outcomes | 21. Empathy | 00:21:36 I mean I think number one creates a lot more empathy, compassion, |
| Skill Building | Outcomes | 22. Equity (Level, Same for all) | And I think a lot of it is related to the unequal distribution of resources. 02:08:58 Whether it's gold or oil or power or property or whatever it might be. 02:09:03 We continue to keep killing each other. |
| Skill Building | Outcomes | 23. Meaning (Meaning-Making, [Shared] Purpose, Calling) (Goals, Vision, etc.) | I've learned, I think, and I always someone was asking me about what's been like the most meaningful experience on the ship and ...with my patients and... |
| Skill Building | Outcomes | 24. Skills (New Skills, Strategy, Tips, especially Global Competency Skills, Communication or Soft Skills) | ...almost everyone is exposed to more and more cultures. And that is going to require... more adaptability |
| Skill Building | Transition | 25. Helper (Helpers, Mentors, Models) | So that's why military police teaching all those things were attractive to me because I'm helping other people 00:35:45 And 00:35:48 Yeah, I think. 00:35:50 |
| Skill Building | Transition | 26. Inevitability (Preparedness) | (Globalization) I think it's inevitable. You know, |
| Skill Building | Transition | 27. Unknown/Known | about something we're in some unknown situation and we don't know how to respond feel this lack of control right 24:25 |
| Value of Interaction | Interchange | 28. Hierarchical (Nationalism, Xenophobic, Superiority, Territorial → Creates ranking, “One-Up” of Other [Tannen]) | people who think that they're entitled because of how smart they are ...successful they think they are...how much money you have...humility is just so important ... especially in interacting with other people. |
| Value of Interaction | Interchange | 29. Surface / Depth (e.g. small talk, deeper connections) | Those individuals that can't 00:27:26 move beyond that superficial level. 00:27:32 Are those people that I have the most difficulty with having conversations and I'll quickly leave that |

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|---|---|
| Value of Interaction | Lifeworld | 30. Ethnocentrism/Egocentrism | 45:46 People believing they know better than others and such as made things infinitely more difficult. You know, for our society. Since Covid and these elections and all that sort of stuff that happens. |
| Value of Interaction | Lifeworld | 31. Exposure (New Things, Exploration, Cycles, Iterations, Loops > Increased > future things) (Lack of Exposure With, Lack of Experience) | (Lack of Exposure) We are not a transient people. A lot of people are born in a small town and they stay in a small town and they never leave their county, and that's the only world that they know |
| Value of Interaction | Lifeworld | 32. Family (of Origin) / Family Influence (Formation) / Growing Up (Context) | 00:20:02 Well, if I'm convinced I keep telling myself like blue is the best color because that's what 00:20:09 My parents told me and my grandparents and like part of my culture is like blue is the best color there is. I haven't even looked at anything else. So you're just FAMILY CONTEXT 00:20:20 Like narrow focused on that's blue. |
| Value of Interaction | Lifeworld | 33. Zones (Comfort Zones, Learning Zone Theory, Specifically related to: Control – Degree of comfort, Comfort / Discomfort /feeling unsettled, uncomfortable) | 35:41 Like an individual comfort zone. Maybe they don't feel comfortable with a person from another culture like in their community. |
| Value of Interaction | Relating | 34. Contrast (As mirror or lens, Seeing differences, possibly benefits from seeing contrast) / (Power of) Contrast (Know self more by difference) | 01:28:13 So, you know, 01:28:16 When you start to learn about other people who are different than you. It helps you look at yourself differently. |
| Value of Interaction | Relating | 35. Relationships (Network, web, People, Seen as Valuable <> Seen as Disposable) | And so I was just so stressed the whole time and 00:09:37 I was just trying to 00:09:41 Get friends. 00:09:44 Like make good relationships with people in here, which was really hard for me because it's a different culture to 00:09:53 |

Sample of research journal visual coding



Appendix D – Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted through Kutztown University. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before you decide whether or not you want to participate in the study. The University requires that you give your signed agreement if you choose to participate.

This study is being conducted by:

Daniel McClary, student in Doctor of Education program.

Title of the Study:

Crossing Boundaries Without a Passport and the Impact on Community

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this research study is examine how creating a sense of belonging and building community is impacted by experiences of life, especially interaction people who have different lived experiences and perspectives.

Procedures:

If you agree to participate in this study, we would ask you to participate in a short survey, which typically takes 10-15 minutes. Completing the survey can be the end of participation. However, anyone who is interested based on their reflections in the survey, may express willingness to be interviewed. Interviews would take 45-60 minutes, conducted remotely by video call, and would be scheduled at a date and time convenient to the participant.

Risks or Discomforts, and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Risks or discomforts seem unlikely related to the content of this study and based on testing of the survey and interview instruments. Participation could possibly have the risk and/or discomfort of memories or feelings associated with unpleasant events related to community that the participant may have experienced.

There are no monetary compensations for participation. It is voluntary in nature, which also contributes to the potential impact of the study.

Confidentiality and Anonymity:

Records will be kept private and will be handled in a confidential manner to the extent provided by law. In any report or presentation, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a research study participant. You will remain anonymous.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty. You may discontinue participation at any time.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is:

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dmcc1315@live.kutztown.edu
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College Of Education
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15200 Kutztown Road
Kutztown, PA 19530

You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later regarding the research study, you may contact the researcher listed above. If you have any questions or concerns about the rights of research participants, please contact the IRB Committee at Kutztown University at 484-646-4167.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the information described above and have received a copy of this information. I have asked questions I had regarding the research study and have received answers to my satisfaction. I am 18 years of age or older and voluntarily consent to participate in this study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix E – Communication samples

Setting up interviews

Subject: Follow-up to survey on community – Interviews

Dear Students, Friends, and Colleagues,

Thank you for participating in my research survey on building community. I hope you found it interesting.

Thank you also for saying YES, you are willing to be interviewed. That helpfulness is so appreciated!

As I mentioned in the survey, I will not be able to interview everyone, but it is great to have willing participants. I was not sure how big the response would be.

For your awareness, there have been more than 160 people who have done the survey so far, and more than 50% said they'd be willing to be interviewed. 27 countries are represented, so we're all part of a very global conversation!

I wanted to write to you today just to confirm that I got your YES. It will take me a week or two to arrange for the interviews possible. I will be reaching out individually to set times. I will also keep everyone informed of my progress. Thank you for your patience as I sort through all the information that has come in.

If you happened to get this message in error or had not meant to be open to being interviewed, please just reply and let me know.

Have a wonderful day!

I'll be in touch soon.

Daniel McClary

Dear _____,

Thank you for participating in the survey and being willing to be interviewed. I have been able to sort through the input and can set interviews now.

Would you please go to this [link](https://www.meetingbird.com/m/BkMYuZR_D) and choose a one-hour block that works well for your schedule? Or paste this link into your browser: https://www.meetingbird.com/m/BkMYuZR_D

Ideally, if I can schedule the interviews to be completed by December 5 or earlier, that is helpful for the study timing.

Due to the number of people involved, I thought this method would be the simplest way to set a time convenient for you. Once I get an alert of your time, I will send you the text of your answers from the survey as a reference.

Please let me know if you have any questions or if I can be of help in any way. Thanks, again!

Daniel McClary

Appendix F – Action Plan

(Introductory material omitted intentionally.)

Step 1: Define your end goal

The puzzle of practice for this study and these planned actions is toward better understanding this isolation and clustering in the experience of international students on campus. Millions of international students are studying in and making a substantial economic impact on U.S. higher education institutions (IIE, 2020). Hoekje & Stevens (2019) give this charge:

enrollment of international students represents a remarkable opportunity for colleges and universities to engage in a much-needed cultural change within higher education that it is the opportunity to undertake organizational and pedagogical practices that meet *the needs of the students of today* (p. 2, emphasis added).

Among the “needs of the students of today” are global competencies, which include being aware of different cultural dynamics and being able to respectfully navigate communication and collaboration across these differences. International students are often not integrated into the full life on campus, even though pay full tuition to be there and are desirous of making American friends. They end up in the periphery of classroom activities and social functions (Hoekje & Stevens, 2018, p. 105). All campus stakeholders lose out from this reality.

The action plans outlined are designed to intentionally facilitate interactions, which does not tend to happen naturally between domestic students, faculty, and staff. All will benefit from more exposure to different people. International students will have the cultural exchange intended, instead of defaulting to only finding belonging in groups Chinese or Indian or Saudi students. Bateson (1989) captures this ideal, saying, “We need to look at multiple lives to test and shape our own.” Instead, we find on campuses that “the best of our young men and women are educated by faculties deeply committed to continuity. Most of them have spent their entire

lives in a single institution, often surrounded by the apparent tranquility of a small town, and may no longer be intellectually flexible or open to change” (pp. 16-17).

The guiding research question is: How do conversations between culturally disparate¹⁷ people impact building community? Secondary questions are forming as the research continues, which are: How does increased contact impact sense of belonging and inclusion in a context of community? How does increased exposure affect empathy? How does increased exposure to differences, such as foods, cultures, beliefs, and aesthetic experiences, impact future choices made about stepping out (of comfort zones) or not? The study has had to be adapted repeatedly in response to the rapidly changing world of international education this past year, both in response to Covid-19 and sweeping changes in immigration law that affects whether international students can come to our campus and how long they can legally stay. To that end, the planned focus groups will have to come later as an intervention. The initial survey to gauge readiness for internationalization was made more robust with the hope of serving as a type of intervention. Interviews will then be conducted from within sample groups taking the survey. Participants were recruited from the following demographic samples for the survey and interviews, and to open channels of invitation to later focus group activities.

- *Higher Education International Students* – recruited by general email from the Millersville University Office of International Programs and Services on behalf of researcher.
- *Higher Education Domestic Students* – recruited through collaboration with Campus Life and Transition and Orientation office personnel at Millersville University. Students were emailed directly from those offices and an invitation was placed on the *Get Involved* web page.

¹⁷ The phrase “culturally disparate individual” is used throughout Ward, et al. (2001).

- *Higher Education Faculty and Staff* – recruited by individual emails from researcher to coworkers in the various service offices and academic departments on campus.
- *International Workers and Third Culture Kids* (Pollock and Van Reken, 2001) – recruited by individual email and social media messages through professional network of researcher.
- *Local Residents* – recruited by individual email and social media messages.

In refining the focus of this study, it was helpful to create a full action plan that captured the steps to date and rehearsed how the full study could be completed in a timely way. New layers of later study are identified in this fuller plan. The following three strategic goals from the larger action plan will be considered in more detail here: establishing a successful Living-Learning Community; implementing focus groups in the form of Professional Learning Communities to work collaboratively on community-building activities on campus; and creating an Intercultural Book-Movie Club. Participants for the action plans outlined here will be recruited from the initial research and via the same methods noted above.

Strategic Action 1: Establish a Living-Learning Community (LLC)

Research Inquiry to Address: How do conversations between culturally disparate people impact building community?

Format Note: Numbered items align across table, e.g. Action #1 aligns with Responsible Party #1, etc.

| Goals & Objectives | Time Frame | Action Steps & Activities | Responsible Parties | Evaluation |
|------------------------------------|-------------|--|---|--|
| Research LLC | 2021 Spring | 1) Attend Training Session on LLCs. 2) Read book on LLCs (Kurotsuchi Inkelas, et al., 2018). 3) Attend PLC w/ other leaders of existing LLCs. | 1) Housing Office (<i>Hereafter "Housing"</i>), Primary Researcher (<i>Hereafter "Researcher"</i>) 2) Researcher 3) Researcher Housing, LLC leaders | 1) Attendance good 2) Material gleaned, interwoven in larger research study 3) Attendance, good engagement on topic, input from existing LLCs |
| Plan LLC | 2021 Spring | 1) Secure Stakeholder Commitment 2) Name LLC/Any branding 3) Confirm a go (Covid-19) 4) Design & Launch Web Page 5) Build Housing Application 6) Plan for international student recruitment 7) Plan for domestic student recruitment 8) Curriculum Design | 1) Researcher, Housing, Office of International Programs & Services (IPS), MU Leadership (<i>Hereafter "MU"</i>) 2) Researcher, IPS, Housing 3) Researcher, Housing, IPS, MU 4) Housing, input from Researcher 5) Housing, input from Researcher 6) IPS, Researcher 7) Housing 8) Researcher | 1) Written confirmation 2) Naming/Branding ready, idea = "International Connections LLC" 3) Official MU decision 4) Web page online 5) Application on Housing website as option 6) LLC option integrated into pre-arrival communications, methods confirmed 7) Housing integrates into their new student, pre-arrival processes 8) Outline of curriculum, ¹⁸ plan for integration (see next phase) |
| Recruit Participants (10 IS/10 DS) | 2021 Summer | 1) Enact IPS Recruitment Plan 2) Enact Housing Recruitment Plan | 1) IPS 1) Housing | 1) 10 International Students (with 1-2 reserves) 2) 10 Domestic Students (with 1-2 reserves) |

¹⁸ Ideas: Student Success Seminars (e.g. intercultural skills, self-care, etc.); IPS events already planned (e.g. NYC trip, International Tea Times, International Education Week, etc.); Intercultural Book-Movie Club (see below); MU Campus options (e.g. Ropes Course [team-building], sports events, concerts, etc.); Lancaster Community Activities (e.g. Amish tour, ethnic restaurants, refugee fair, minor league baseball game, etc.).

| | | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------|--|--|--|
| Implement LLC Program | 2021 Fall | 1) Integrate LLC with new student orientation (NSO) 2) Use NSO to set up and “seed” future activities → Events Schedule for Term 3) Run Curriculum | 1) MU Orientation Office, IPS, Researcher 2) Researcher, Housing 3) Researcher | 1) *Engagement Level, Active Discussions, Good Attendance, Post-NSO Survey, good sign-ups headcount for events 2) Same as above 3) Same as above |
| Evaluate LLC | 2021 December | 1) Consider *, feedback, facilitator observations → Evaluate & adjust for spring | 1) Housing, IPS, Researcher | 1) Completed debrief meeting, notes of any adjustments |
| Repeat LLC | 2022 Spring | 1) Evaluate Cycle 2 (of Spring 2021) 2) Follow Implement Steps above, e.g. a “go,” recruit, etc. | 1) Housing, IPS, Researcher 2) All stakeholders | 1) Successful year 1 LLC 2) Recruitment Easier for year 2? 3) New feedback, ideas, topics, events grow from year 1 |

Strategic Action 2: Implement Focus Groups – Professional Learning Communities (PLC)

Research Inquiry to Address: How do conversations between culturally disparate people impact building community?

Format Note: Numbered items align across table, e.g. Action #1 aligns with Responsible Party #1, etc.

| Goals & Objectives | Time Frame | Action Steps & Activities | Responsible Parties | Evaluation |
|--------------------|-------------|---|--|--|
| Plan for PLC | 2021 Fall | 1) Make PLC Plan: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Plan format. Identify potential projects & activities for collaborative intercultural interaction Set Schedule Plan out curriculum¹⁹ / tie to LLC and Research Inquiry (draw from research, pilot PLC, literature review, especially Community models [Block, 2010]) → Create community in the room → into wider campus, into community, etc. Set launch dates (Meeting 1, recruitment, etc.) 2) Create invitation/recruitment materials and templates | 1) Researcher, IPS, MU 2) Researcher | 1) Plan complete, incorporates <i>PLC Meeting Format</i> notes (See footnote 4). 2) Completed materials & templates |
| Recruit Members | 2021 Fall | 1) ID recruitment pool list, drawing from survey, interviews, LLCs, MU campus, and Community 2) Send invitations (Implement recruitment) 3) Confirmations and reminders → Final roster confirmed | 1) Researcher, IPS 2) Researcher 3) Researcher | 1) Completed List 2) Invitations Sent 3) Final Roster Set |
| Meeting 1 | 2022 Spring | 1) Hospitality Factors (room reservation, refreshments, set-up, etc.) 2) Good Beginning – Tone Setting Plan (bonding, collaboratively setting vision and charter for group, identifying projects and direction, etc.) → Follow <i>PLC Meeting Format</i> . | 1) IPS, Researcher 2) Researcher | 1) Peace of Mind! 2) Successful first meeting = Plan Facilitates well – But Allows for Flex, some bonding, etc. |
| Meetings 2ff | 2022 Spring | 1) Build on Meeting 1 Plan – Keep identifying action points and rehearsing future goals. | 1) Researcher, PLC | 1) Successful 2 nd meeting, and following |

¹⁹ *PLC Meeting Format* → Always include warm-up, time to bond a bit more, small group time with collaboratively solving a question/issue and discussion, debriefing time with large group discussion, setting goals for next meeting.

| | | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--|
| | | 2) FEEDBACK: End first cycle (term) → Confirm Schedule for next cycle (term) | 2) PLC, Researcher | 2) Feedback tools (informal survey, etc.) |
| Evaluate PLC | 2022 Spring (End) | 1) Consider feedback, facilitator observations → Evaluate & adjust for spring | 1) Researcher | 1) Completed feedback gathering, notes of any adjustments |
| Promote PLC | 2022 Spring (End) | 1) If successful based on above: look for ways to “brag” and promote the PLC within campus communication channels, local media outlets, etc. → toward future recruitment | 1) PLC, Researcher | 2) New channels of sharing identified, possibly enacted |
| Expand | 2022 Summer | 1) Possible Future Actions: a. Launch 2 nd PLC? b. Launch 3 rd PLC? c. Conduct in varied contexts off- campus 2) Follow steps above per PLC → tracking and maintain all methods established | 1) Researcher 2) Researcher | 1) Decision on new launch(es) 2) Implementation of new launches |

Strategic Action 3: Create an Intercultural Book-Movie Club

Research Inquiry to Address: How do conversations between culturally disparate people impact building community?

Format Note: Numbered items align across table, e.g. Action #1 aligns with Responsible Party #1, etc.

| Goals & Objectives | Time Frame | Action Steps & Activities | Responsible Parties | Evaluation |
|--------------------|------------|--|--|---|
| Plan Club | | 1) Plan format (Integrate with LLC Curriculum, any connections to PLC?) How will book/movie choices be made? (Researcher has lists, but more buy-in if rotation with all members.) 2) Create Starter List of Intercultural Movies and Books and other materials | 1) Researcher, Center for Academic Excellence at MU 2) Researcher | 1) Plan Ready 2) List Done |
| Recruit Members | | 1) ID recruitment pool list, drawing from survey, interviews, LLCs, MU campus, and Community 2) Send invitations (Implement recruitment) → Include first book allowing reading time and/or announce Movie (w/ opt. pre-work) 3) Confirmations and reminders → Final roster confirmed | 1) Researcher, IPS 2) Researcher 3) Researcher | 1) Completed List 2) Invitations Sent 3) Final Roster Set |
| Meetings Begin | | 1) Follow <i>Book-Movie Club Format</i> ²⁰ . Allow time for conversation on format and structure and next meetings → Agreement on direction and vision? | 1) Club Members, Researcher | 1) Good first meeting, affirmed vision for club, etc. |
| Evaluate | | 1) Consider feedback, facilitator observations → Evaluate & adjust for next cycle. (Possible to grow larger, i.e. group of 10+, small groups into large group discussion?) | 1) Researcher | 1) Completed feedback gathering, notes of any adjustments |

²⁰ *Book-Movie Club Format* → Would alternate by month between movie and book, allowing two months for reading book with a gathering time in between. Ideal is to meet monthly except holiday (Late November-December) and summer breaks.

- BOOK TIMES = Gathering/Refreshments/Warm-Up; Book Discussion Time (Consider small groups into large); Confirm Next Meeting & Book (to be reading); Dismissal. New book every two months.
- MOVIE TIMES = Gathering/Refreshments/Warm-Up; Movie Viewing; Discussion; Confirm Next Meeting & Book (to be reading); Dismissal. Movie in between books, ideally 2 per term.

Step 3: Identify the resources needed

Because these Strategic Actions are rising directly from the research being done, a major resource will be the literature and emerging learning from the data of the research. All of these activities are cohesively integrated, so the energy and momentum of one goal can fuel others. The researcher and stakeholders identified are already in place. The necessary conversations and planning would be next, as outlined above. For all three of these goals, recruitment materials and productions is already a regular part of the IPS student worker load. The researcher has a background in art and design and can facilitate creation of promotional materials.

For the *Living-Learning Community*, the resources are already in place within the Office of International Programs and Services and the Housing Office. Leadership. The achievement of the LLC is in IPS's strategic plan and aligns with the University's EPPICC values of *Inclusion*, *Exploration*, and *Compassion* (Millersville University, 2019), as well as overall internationalization goals.

For the *Professional Learning Community* focus group, the resources described above relate directly. Additionally, the researcher has done a pilot study of this model previously and has a growing number of interested people on campus involved in that pilot, and joining in on the formal research survey happening now.

For the *Intercultural Book-Movie Club*, the major cost will be the books used, depending on how that is structured. Typically with the Center for Academic Excellence on the MU campus, books are purchased and provided for participants of a book discussion group that meets over the course of the semester. If it is possible to implement this activity via that channel, the book costs would be covered for participants who engage with the material and format. The logistics and any related costs of showing a movie to a group would need be considered.

Step 4: Monitor, evaluate and update plans

The monitoring, evaluating, and updating related to the all three of the strategic goals is outlined in the actual action plans above in sequence and with details. This approach was very helpful, as iterative cycles of evaluation run strong in this researcher, and, of course, represent good practice in educational planning. Beyond the steps outlined above, the researcher would hope to continue other good practices formed during the formal action research, including archival memoing and reflective journaling on the actions, connecting them back to or expanding on the literature and emerging learning from the initial research study. The goal would be to “shed even more light on (the) topic of interest, thus providing a stronger foundation of knowledge for the next cycle of (the) research” (Mertler, 2016, p. 221). The hope would be to use all or most of the reflection prompts gathered from readings on data-driven decision making, as described by Mertler (2016, pp. 217-222), which include:

- What were the intended and unintended effects of your actions?
- What educational issues arise from what you have learned about your practice?
- Did I really ask what I wanted to ask?
- Was I able to sufficiently answer my research questions?
- Might it be necessary for me to change the questions for the next cycle of my research and data collection?
- Did my research design end up being appropriate to address or answer my research questions?
- If not, is there another design that might work better?
- Were the data that I collected the most appropriate for enabling me to answer my research questions?
- If so, are there additional sources of data that I might want to include the next time?
- If not, what sources might I use instead?

- Do I need to alter my choices for analyzing my data, based on my answer to the previous questions?

I wanted to capture the prompts here for my own convenience later in implementing this action plan.

Conclusion

Developing this action plan from completed steps, into present action research, and looking ahead to strategic goals that will be informed by the research has been an especially helpful exercise. Organizing the details here will serve the future work well. Having completed this plan and the dreaming that drove it brings a new energy to the present stage of research and an anticipation for what can grow from it. Johnson (2008) talks of five possible outcomes from action research. Several of these seem possible from this study, including greater understanding of the situation, and a program or method found to be effective or ineffective (as quoted in Mertler, 2016, p. 218). As time goes on, my hope is to go beyond the college campus and into community contexts with tools and models that have worked for improving intercultural exchange. The same new awareness, empathy, and skills for relating to those different will be equally beneficial in the community at large. People can “reinvent themselves again and again in response to a changing environment” (Bateson, 1989, pp. 16-17). Put another way, O’Shaughnessy (2014) describes the need to be “people of the hallway,” able to move between rooms and traverse differences on a daily basis, rather than live in only one room and never venturing out (pp. 15-18). Perhaps, if these positive outcomes do come about, these actions can be part of the answer to the divisiveness seen within the United States over politics, social justice, or ideology.

Action Plan: OVERVIEW – Toward Study Completion and Future Action Steps

| Goals | Time Frame | Action Steps | Responsible Party | Evaluation Measure | Other Notes |
|---|--------------------|---|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| Survey of Related Literature | 2019-2020 | Culling reading list, finding key sources | Primary Researcher | Literature Review in Proposal | Feedback acknowledging extensiveness of review |
| Determine Study Design | Spring 2020 | Study Proposal | Primary Researcher | Successful Defense of Proposal | Affirmation of on right track |
| Adapting Study Design re Covid-19 | Spring 2020 | Study Design 2.0 | Primary Researcher | LSC, Chair approval | Eliminating focus groups, making survey more robust as possible intervention |
| Survey Prompts Written | Spring-Summer 2020 | Survey Draft Complete | Primary Researcher | LSC feedback, Cohort took and gave feedback | Potential for it to be more intervention like high. Structured 3-tier approach for triangulation. |
| Gather initial data | Summer 2020 | Pilot Study – Survey | Primary Researcher | Survey | 27 participants in trial |
| Gather initial data | Summer 2020 | Pilot Study – Interviews | Primary Researcher | Interview | Transcribed, Bought <i>Descript</i> account for tool |
| Codes Identified | Summer 2020 | Initial Codes | | | Coding practice on survey and interview data |
| Codes Member Checks | Summer 2020 | Member Checking of Codes | Primary Researcher, two from cohort | Alignment of codes | Agreement & Alignment of categories and codes |
| Goals | Time Frame | Action Steps | Responsible Party | Evaluation Measure | Other Notes |
| Final Study Tools | Fall 2020 | Survey and Interview prompts finalized | Primary Researcher | | |
| IRB Approval KU | Fall 2020 | IRB Application | Primary Researcher | Approval | Submitted 8.29.20, received 10.2.20 |
| IRB Approval MU | Fall 2020 | IRB Application | Primary Researcher | Approval | Letter given toward KU IRB. Upon KU approval, MU IRB approval rec'd 10.4.20. |
| Survey Launched – reach range of demographics | October 12, 2020 | Identify Participant Pools | Primary Researcher | Launch Worksheet | Acted out recruitment methods and target audiences from IRB |
| Memo Process | October 13, 2020 | Memo of ID participants and survey setup | Primary Researcher | Memo Template | Established Memo template and master archive to memo each step and emerging learning from data |
| Survey Monitor | October 19, 2020 | Monitor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wave 1 • Wave 2 • Wave 3 • Wave 4 (See memo) | Primary Researcher | Spreadsheet of Survey Responses. Demographics | 79 participants to date. Need more college students, International & Domestic. |

| | | | | | Need more outside of PA, more outside of U.S. |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|--|------------------------------------|--|--|
| Goals | Time Frame | Action Steps | Responsible Party | Evaluation Measure | Other Notes |
| Survey Pool | October 20, 2020 | Survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wave 5 (IS target) Wave 6 (Regional targets) | Primary Researcher | Spreadsheet of Survey Responses. Demographics | Watching to make sure it is not too large, then seeking out missing demographics. |
| Interviews | Oct. 25 – Nov. 1, 2020 | Schedule Interviews | Primary Researcher & Participants | Interviews Scheduled Nov 1-15, 2020, Interview Protocol, Descript & Phone Recorder | 62% of respondents willing to be interviewed. Chosen to have sampling from main demographics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> College/Univ. Student Faculty/Staff of HEI Community Member Lancaster, PA Area Community Member – Other Region of World Other |
| Survey Data Analysis & Memoing | October 25ff | Initial Coding, Analysis, Memoing | Primary Researcher | Spreadsheet of Data Initial Code Book | Start from scratch for most objective view. (Compare to pilot study later.) |
| Interview Data Analysis & Memoing | Nov. 5ff | Initial Coding, Analysis, Memoing | Primary Researcher | Spreadsheet of Data Initial Code Book | Start from scratch for most objective view. (Compare to pilot study later.) |
| Member Checking of Data | December 2020 | Ask cohort members | Primary Researcher, Cohort members | Samples of data | Follow procedure as before, using samples from each demographic |
| Literature Review | Dec. 2020-March 2021 | ID Key Lit, new and previous – READ and relate to analysis | Primary Researcher | Books/Articles set aside. Others put away (for now). | NB: Committee “no more lit. review,” but consider some new texts found? |
| Dissertation Writing | January-March, 2021 | Building on input above | Primary Researcher, LSC, Chair | Completed chapters | Building on proposal, writing new sections based on analysis |
| Successful Dissertation Defense | April 2021 | Dissertation | Primary Researcher, Committee | Approval by Committee | |
| Tool Development | Summer 2021 | <input type="checkbox"/> Worksheets <input type="checkbox"/> Activities | Primary Researcher | Tools used in focus groups, LLC, PLCs, etc. | |
| Living-Learning Community | Fall 2021 | LLC Implementation | Primary Researcher, MU Teammates | Program Design Registered Residents | Covid-19 permitting |

| Goals | Time Frame | Action Steps | Responsible Party | Evaluation Measure | Other Notes |
|-------------------------------|-------------|--|----------------------------|---|---|
| Focus Groups on Campus | Spring 2022 | PLC-like focus groups established | Primary Researcher | Format Design from Research, pilot study. Collaborative Problem-Solving > Community Building “in the room” | Chosen to have sampling from main demographics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College/Univ. Student • Faculty/Staff of HEI • Community Member Lancaster, PA Area • Community Member – Other Region of World • Other |
| Intercultural Book-Movie Club | Fall 2022 | <input type="checkbox"/> Establish format <input type="checkbox"/> Invite members <input type="checkbox"/> 1 st meeting | Primary Researcher, et al. | Intercultural Movie List Focus In-Group / Out-Group elements, finding common ground | Mingling of spheres, “intercultural,” toward more empathy and understanding, e.g. cultures, race, etc. |
| Goals | Time Frame | Action Steps | Responsible Party | Evaluation Measure | Other Notes |

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