NAVIGATING INTERCULTURAL SPACE: A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF COLLEGE STUDENT LEARNING IN A GLOBAL VILLAGE LIVING-LEARNING PROGRAM

Brendan James O'Farrell
University of Kentucky, brendan.ofarrell@uky.edu
Digital Object Identifier: https://doi.org/10.13023/ETD.2016.468

Click here to let us know how access to this document benefits you.
STUDENT AGREEMENT:

I represent that my thesis or dissertation and abstract are my original work. Proper attribution has been given to all outside sources. I understand that I am solely responsible for obtaining any needed copyright permissions. I have obtained needed written permission statement(s) from the owner(s) of each third-party copyrighted matter to be included in my work, allowing electronic distribution (if such use is not permitted by the fair use doctrine) which will be submitted to UKnowledge as Additional File.

I hereby grant to The University of Kentucky and its agents the irrevocable, non-exclusive, and royalty-free license to archive and make accessible my work in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known. I agree that the document mentioned above may be made available immediately for worldwide access unless an embargo applies.

I retain all other ownership rights to the copyright of my work. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of my work. I understand that I am free to register the copyright to my work.

REVIEW, APPROVAL AND ACCEPTANCE

The document mentioned above has been reviewed and accepted by the student’s advisor, on behalf of the advisory committee, and by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), on behalf of the program; we verify that this is the final, approved version of the student’s thesis including all changes required by the advisory committee. The undersigned agree to abide by the statements above.

Brendan James O'Farrell, Student
Dr. Beth L. Goldstein, Major Professor
Dr. Jeffrey P. Bieber, Director of Graduate Studies
NAVIGATING INTERCULTURAL SPACE: A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF COLLEGE STUDENT LEARNING IN A GLOBAL VILLAGE LIVING-LEARNING PROGRAM

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education at the University of Kentucky

By
Brendan James O’Farrell
Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Beth Goldstein, Associate Professor of Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation
Lexington, Kentucky

2016

Copyright © Brendan James O’Farrell 2016
ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

NAVIGATING INTERCULTURAL SPACE: A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF COLLEGE STUDENT LEARNING IN A GLOBAL VILLAGE LIVING-LEARNING PROGRAM

The American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU) has termed our century “The New Global Century” and begun touting the importance of internationalization and global learning outcomes as a necessity in the post-9/11 era. These outcomes suggest students should be immersed in an unprecedented level of intercultural difference and rest on an assumption that student success is contingent upon students’ ability to navigate intercultural difference. Institutions across the country have embraced strategic interventions designed to support intercultural exchange and learning. This study focuses on intercultural learning as it unfolds in one such intervention: the international living-learning program (LLP).

The study situates itself in two contemporary fields of research—literature tied to intercultural learning and literature tied to LLP outcomes. While a large number of studies focus on LLP outcomes and other studies focus on intercultural outcomes (Bennett, Volet, & Fozdar, 2013; Deardorff, 2006; Ogden, 2010), fewer studies focus on the process of intercultural learning itself (Taylor, 1994). Even fewer studies (Miller, 1996) focus on this process in the context of international LLPs.

This study is a narrative analysis of the intercultural learning of undergraduates living in an international LLP. Data was collected through a series of semi-structured interviews that followed the experience of fourteen undergraduate students (nine American and five international) living in one international LLP. The primary framework guiding the study is John Dewey’s philosophy of learning. This philosophy argues that learning is socially-constructed and takes place as an interaction between a given individual and his surrounding environment. For this reason, the study’s two primary research questions are designed to explore the nature of intercultural learning in context: 1) How do students navigate the intercultural space found within an international LLP? And 2) How do students learn interculturally? That is, what does the process seem to be for each student?
The study identifies three key exemplar patterns of intercultural navigation: 1) circumnavigation, 2) organized navigation, and 3) independent navigation. Employing a theoretical framework that intentionally includes Western (Mezirow) and non-Western (Vygotsky) theories of learning, the study examines “space” as social performance and in doing so unpacks the connection between navigation and intercultural learning as socio-cultural process. Key findings highlight the manner in which environmental factors (e.g., cultural hierarchies, national trends toward privatization, an institutional culture of consumerism, and programmatic structures unique to the LLP) interact with students’ personal goals, motivations, and experiences to shape and define patterns of navigation and intercultural learning a priori. The study concludes with a discussion of the theoretical and practical implications these findings pose for scholars and practitioners alike.


Brendan James O’Farrell
December 1, 2016
NAVI

GATING INTERCULTURAL SPACE: A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF COLLEGE STUDENT LEARNING IN A GLOBAL VILLAGE LIVING-LEARNING PROGRAM

By

Brendan James O’Farrell

Beth Goldstein, PhD
Director of Dissertation

Jeff Bieber, PhD
Director of Graduate Studies

December 1, 2016
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work would not be possible if it were not for the support of others. To my parents, Carol and Gerry O’Farrell, who instilled in me a love of learning as well as a love of literature, writing, travel, and education: thank you for everything you have done for me throughout my entire life.

I would also like to thank my various committee members: Dr. Linda Worley for her willingness to serve as an external committee member and her love of story; Dr. Kenneth Tyler for his kind and patient way of listening and for insisting that I read Vygotsky; Dr. Tony Ogden for serving as a professional mentor to me over the years, letting me tag along at private NAFSA meetings, and encouraging me to view international education as a distinct profession; Dr. Jeff Bieber for being a colleague and a friend and introducing me to a broad spectrum of research in the field of higher education and encouraging a healthy dose of skepticism along the way; finally, Dr. Beth Goldstein, my chair and champion, who consistently offered me just the right amount of challenge and support, proximity and space. Beth, I told you this recently, but it bears repeating in writing: my dissertation feels authentic to who I am and that is a testament to you. Thank you for offering me an education that was personal and individualized. Thank you for listening and thank you for being you.

There are many other luminaries lurking around the halls of Taylor and Dickey buildings that inspired and/or encouraged me along the way as well, such as Dr. Fred Danner, Dr. Jane Jensen, and Dr. Clint Collins just to name a few. Then there are my colleagues and friends, fellow dissertators such as Casey Shadix, Marianne Young, Becky Unites, and Whitney Black who have reminded me that I am not alone in this long
journey. I have also had wonderful supervisors and mentors in Drs. Nancy Johnson,
Scott Kelley, and Randa Remer. Your encouragement and support have been
instrumental. Randa, your support in particular, has been transformative. Thank you.

I started with family and so it seems only appropriate that I end with family as
well. I also want to thank my in-laws John and Mary Burke who modeled what a PhD in
the family could look like and encouraged me to follow suit when I showed interest in
doing so. Finally, there is Rachel. Although I am not sure you have read a single word
of my dissertation (yet!), every word written has been a gift given by you. Thank you.
Thank you for the endless hours of wrestling Finnegan in the grocery store and thank you
for loving me enough to allow me to do this.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES ........................................................................................................................................... viii
LIST OF TABLES ................................................................................................................................................... ix
Chapter One: Introduction .................................................................................................................................. 1
  Study Background and Rationale .................................................................................................................. 1
  The Research Questions ............................................................................................................................... 4
    A discussion of the word “navigate.” ........................................................................................................... 5
    A discussion of the word “space.” ............................................................................................................... 6
  Study Significance & Organization .............................................................................................................. 7
Chapter Two: A Conceptual Framework for Intercultural Learning ............................................................. 11
  John Dewey: A Philosophy of Learning as Democracy and Experience .................................................... 11
    Democracy and Education. ......................................................................................................................... 11
    Experience and Education. ......................................................................................................................... 14
  Mezirow: Transformative Learning Theory .................................................................................................. 16
  Taylor ............................................................................................................................................................ 18
  Vygotsky and the Role of the Socio-cultural ................................................................................................. 22
  Conceptual Framework Conclusion: A Dialectic and Synthesis ................................................................. 27
Chapter Three: Intercultural Learning in Policy and Programming ............................................................... 30
  The Historical Importance of Intercultural Learning in LLPs in American Higher Education ...................... 30
  Literature Review .......................................................................................................................................... 35
    Intercultural learning in LLPs ....................................................................................................................... 35
    Intercultural learning in LLPs and more broadly. ......................................................................................... 39
Chapter Four: Methodology and Design.......................................................................................................... 47
  Methodology .................................................................................................................................................. 47
    Narrative analysis as methodology. ........................................................................................................... 47
    Narrative analysis as method. ....................................................................................................................... 48
    Benefits of narrative analysis. ..................................................................................................................... 52
    Limitations of narrative analysis. ................................................................................................................ 54
  Design .......................................................................................................................................................... 56
    Data collection. ............................................................................................................................................ 56
    Setting the stage: An overview of the Global Village LLP. .......................................................................... 58
    Participant selection. .................................................................................................................................. 63
    Data analysis. ............................................................................................................................................... 66
    Positionality. ............................................................................................................................................... 69
  Biographical sketches of student participants. ................................................................................................. 70
    Claudia ......................................................................................................................................................... 71
    Katherine ..................................................................................................................................................... 72
    Lydia ............................................................................................................................................................ 74
    Meghan ......................................................................................................................................................... 75
    Melody ......................................................................................................................................................... 76
    Natalie ......................................................................................................................................................... 78
Chapter Five: Exemplar Patterns of Navigation and Learning .................................................. 89

Patterns of Intercultural Navigation and Learning ................................................................. 90
  Pattern I: Circumnavigation .................................................................................................. 91
  Pattern II: Organized Navigation ....................................................................................... 91
  Pattern III: Independent Navigation (Intercultural Heroes) ............................................... 92
Exemplar Navigation Patterns, a Summary ............................................................................. 93

Exemplar Learning Biographies ............................................................................................ 94
  Sarah from England .......................................................................................................... 94
    Life before America and meditations on meeting the other British students ............. 94
    Life at UK, Semester I, Interview I ............................................................................. 100
    Life at UK, Semester II, Interview II .......................................................................... 101
  Ilene from Japan: Circumnavigation, Organized Navigation ............................................ 113
    Setting the stage: Hometown and first encounters ....................................................... 113
    On family and typicality .............................................................................................. 113
    On previous intercultural experience ....................................................................... 115
    Ilene in America, one month in ................................................................................... 117
  Ms. Sponge Bob Square Pants from Mississippi: Circumnavigation, Organized Navigation .............................................................................................................. 120
    Life prior to the Global Village LLP .......................................................................... 120
    Previous intercultural experience .............................................................................. 123
    Life on campus, Interview I ....................................................................................... 131
    Life on campus, Semester II, Interview II .................................................................. 132
  Return to Ilene from Japan .............................................................................................. 141
  Roni from New Hampshire: Independent Navigation ....................................................... 145
    Setting the stage, life before college .......................................................................... 146
    Life at UK: Interview I .............................................................................................. 148
    Life at UK: Semester II .............................................................................................. 152

Summary of Exemplar Learning Biographies and Patterns .................................................. 159

Chapter Six: Learning in Context ........................................................................................ 161

A Discussion of Larger, Environmental Factors ................................................................. 161
Programmatic Influence on Intercultural Learning .............................................................. 180
  Formal organized navigation ......................................................................................... 183
  Haphazard organized navigation ................................................................................. 187
  An extracurricular interface .......................................................................................... 190

Chapter Seven: Conclusion ............................................................................................. 208
  Findings ....................................................................................................................... 209
    Theoretical implications .......................................................................................... 212
    Programmatic implications ....................................................................................... 216
  Limitations & Future Research .................................................................................... 222
  Positionality Revisited ............................................................................................... 227
Appendices ...................................................................................................................... 233
  Appendix A: Protocol for Student Participants ........................................................... 233
  Appendix B: Group Interview Protocol for RAs ........................................................ 236
  Appendix C: Interview Protocol for Faculty/Staff Professionals .................................. 239
  Appendix D: Campus Map and Room Layouts .......................................................... 241
References ....................................................................................................................... 243
Vita .................................................................................................................................. 250
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Taylor’s (1994) model of intercultural competency..............................20
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Study participants.................................................................64
Chapter One: Introduction

The first time I met Ilene Yamaguchi and H. Fukuzawa was not for an interview or actually anything at all related to my research study. As it turns out, I ran into these two Japanese students randomly a few days before the start of the fall semester. They were meandering across campus, puzzling over the foreign landscape around them. One of them spoke in Japanese and gestured toward a winding walkway. The other shook his head and pointed in the opposite direction. They stopped, then, to consult a piece of paper. They were standing at a crossroads. The academic heart of campus—replete with historic buildings (one as old as 1872) and the mature landscape to go with it (tall, sprawling trees and hostas, some variegated, some king-size, some marbled vanilla and green)—stood just before them. A younger, more practical side of campus stood behind them. It included parking lots and a legion of new residence halls. At least two were still under construction. When I asked Ilene and H. if they needed help, they seemed caught off guard but accepted. They were looking for the University of Kentucky International Center, “the building with all the flags.” I walked with them for a little while and then pointed them in the right direction. The document they had been consulting was a campus map—a navigation tool, of sorts—something that had been given to them by the institution, something that was designed to help them make sense of the foreign space constructed around them.

Study Background and Rationale

Today American higher education is routinely analyzed through a global lens (Altbach & Knight, 2007). The number of international students studying in the United States has more than doubled since the early 1990s and now totals more than one million
annually (Institute of International Education, 2016). These students are said to contribute more than 32 billion dollars to the U.S. economy (NAFSA, 2016). Meanwhile, the number of U.S. students studying abroad for credit has grown even more rapidly. In 1991-92, 71,000 American students studied abroad. Today, that number has more than quadrupled to over 310,000 (Institute of International Education, 2016).

Student mobility trends such as these are a product of globalization. They are also the result of intentional internationalization efforts by U.S. colleges and universities.¹ The American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU) has even termed our century “The New Global Century” (Kuh, 2008). Institutions and policymakers alike have begun touting the importance of internationalization and global learning outcomes as a fundamental necessity in the post-9/11 era (Kuh, 2008).

These learning outcomes are based on an assumption that today’s students are immersed in an unprecedented level of diversity and intercultural difference.² These outcomes also assume that student success—both as it is defined on a personal and much broader socio-cultural level—is contingent on students’ ability to navigate intercultural

¹ To clarify, I am making a distinction between the terms “globalization” and “internationalization.” The former represents a broad, socio-cultural economic force that interconnects the world. The latter represents institutional policy and practice designed to enhance international exchange and global understanding.

² Although I personally feel that the terms “diversity” and “intercultural difference” can be used interchangeably, I occasionally use both because of the manner in which they may be perceived by various readers and audiences. Generally speaking, diversity literature tends to emphasize types of difference (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) found within a single nation (e.g., the United States). Intercultural literature, on the other hand, tends to highlight types of difference found in international/cross-cultural settings—hence its use in the field of international education. However, it should be noted that intercultural literature also concerns itself with the types of intra-cultural difference often discussed in the diversity literature.
difference in a manner that enables them to move forward in life as engaged and productive citizens. To this end, scholars and practitioners have coined varying terms, such as “diversity appreciation,” “global citizenship,” and “intercultural competence,” that attempt to articulate one’s ability to navigate intercultural difference in an effective manner (Deardorff, 2006; Ogden, 2010; Stearns, 2009). Meanwhile, institutions have embraced these lofty terms in marketing materials and formal internationalization plans alike, though their exact meaning is often nebulous at best. To rectify this issue, Deardorff (2006) collected extensive feedback from both field experts and higher education professionals to arrive at the following definition of “intercultural competence:” the “ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 248). As Taylor (1994) notes, however, a lot of the literature tends “to follow a similar path—that of identifying the characteristics indicative of the intercultural competency and/or developing a model of how it should be conceptualized” (p. 155). Less research has attempted to outline the related intercultural learning process in depth and in a manner that connects it thoughtfully and intentionally to adult learning theory (Taylor, 1994). Intercultural learning is precisely where my conceptual interest rests. What is the nature of intercultural learning? What is its process and what does it look like in context? To answer these broad questions, this study embraces an equally broad conceptual framework (Chapter Two) that is grounded in the philosophy of John Dewey and intentionally connects intercultural learning to contemporary theories of adult learning such as transformative learning theory (Mezirow and Taylor) and socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky).
In an attempt to contextualize intercultural learning in a manner that is helpful for scholars and practitioners alike, the study focuses on one specific type of intercultural space that has become increasingly popular during “The New Global Century:” the international LLP. These intercultural spaces are the concrete result of strategic internationalization plans is the proliferation of international living-learning programs (LLPs). As Inkelas and Soldner (2011) note, LLPs are strategic “interventions” (my quotation marks) designed to support student success in the face of increased student diversity. International LLPs typically tie themselves to campus internationalization plans directly and regularly state goals like “supporting the on-campus adjustment of international students,” “promoting intercultural exchange between U.S. and international students,” and “supporting diversity appreciation.” In this sense, international LLPs offer a convenient and fortuitous point of entry into the world of intercultural difference and intercultural learning in American higher education today. For this reason, the study highlights the international LLP as a specific point of entry.

The Research Questions

As discussed, more research designed to explore the nature of intercultural learning in context is needed and international LLPs offer a fortuitous point of entry. To this end, I have developed the following primary research question: How do students navigate the intercultural space found within an international LLP? A second, primary question follows: How do students learn interculturally? That is, what does the learning

---

3 Borrowing from Inkelas’ and Soldner’s (2011) definition, I define a LLP as a residence, hall-based undergraduate program with a particular topical or academic theme.
process seem to be for each student within the international LLP? Because my study is
guided by Deweyan philosophy, it explores each student’s learning experience in context.
That is, it explores the politics of that learning experience and in doing so examines how
the intercultural experience is shaped and influenced by the individual and environment
working in concert.

**A discussion of the word “navigate.”** Before moving on, I should state that I use
the word “navigate” intentionally for a few reasons. First, the word implies movement.
This is apropos to an exploration of learning, for learning suggests forward movement or
progress in a most essential way. Because this study explore intercultural learning in a
LLP over the course of an academic year, it is not surprising that a trajectory would
present itself in the lives of the participants, that there would be a beginning, middle, and
end in which the student could take a step back and say, “This is where I was then. And
this is where I am now.” Second, the word “navigate” implies agency. It implies student
will, a hands-on approach to manipulating the rudder and changing the course of the ship.
It also implies a conscious and self-reflective approach to education that—in the spirit of
Deweyan philosophy—actively selects those types of experiences capable of living,
fruitfully and creatively, into the future. Pedagogically speaking, this diction honors and
empowers the students. In terms of methodology and design, it configures the students as
active “participants” rather than passive “subjects.”

As implied, the word “navigate” is also rich with metaphor. It conjures notions of
international travel and distant journey, nautical exploration into unchartered waters and
worlds unknown. It implies the mystery and romance of grappling with the other, which
raises the last point regarding the word “navigate.” In addition to agency, it implies a
phenomenological other (e.g., coarse seas, foreign lands, or exotic strangers) that exists outside and beyond the individual. Conceptually speaking, this is an important point because it acknowledges the manner in which objective experience—a phenomenological landscape—interacts with the individual on a subjective and internal level as Dewey (1938) articulated in his Principle of Interaction. In terms of this research, then, the word “navigate” fits well, for international LLPs are often marketed to incoming American students as a place to experience international culture and make friends from around the world.

**A discussion of the word “space.”** I have chosen the word “space” intentionally as well. “Space,” as opposed to another word like “diversity” or “difference,” connotes something that has been constructed and performed. Therefore, when I say the study will explore how students navigate—not intercultural difference—but intercultural space, I am acknowledging a long line of relevant thought and literature outlined in Chapters Two (A Conceptual Framework for Intercultural Learning) and Three (Intercultural Learning in Policy and Programming). It is a conceptual framework that champions the socially-constructed nature of the world and the manner in which culture, cognition, and ideology are transmitted to the youth through the environment established and performed by history, society, and the more learned and experienced. Given my interest in space as such, the study considers the learning environment of the LLP itself, including its policies, practices, and structures as well as its position on campus and within higher education more broadly. The study also explores how the various participants perceive and access the intercultural difference experienced and encountered. In doing so, it investigates the socio-cultural environment that shapes and co-creates the students’
experiences as well as their personal navigation of the intercultural space at hand. In this sense, the words “navigate” and “space” work well in juxtaposition. While the former (i.e., “navigate”) empowers the individual participants and gestures toward the Western theories of psychology and human development outlined by scholars like Mezirow and Taylor, the latter (i.e., “space”) speaks to Vygotsky-esque socio-cultural theory.

**Study Significance & Organization**

This study, a narrative analysis of intercultural learning in the context of an international LLP, offers a new perspective on the ongoing conversation surrounding intercultural learning in higher education. The dissertation is organized into six chapters, including this introductory chapter. Chapter Two outlines the study’s conceptual framework. The philosophy of John Dewey is used as a foundation for this framework and so Chapter Two begins with an overview of his conceptualization of learning in relation to the constructivist notions of democracy and experience. To this end, this opening section of the chapter unpacks some of the basic points and assumptions offered in his seminal works, *Democracy and Education* (1916) and *Experience and Education* (1938). One of the basic points addressed is that education and learning exist as an interaction between the individual and the environment, which invites a broader theoretical perspective leery of binaries, such as individual vs. environment. The chapter, then, uses this foundation to synthesize theoretical perspectives that may—at first glance—appear rather contradictory. This includes an investigation of transformative learning theory as articulated by Mezirow and Taylor as well as an exploration of Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory.
Chapter Three presents salient literature designed to help frame the study’s scope and methodology, particularly as it relates to intercultural spaces such as international LLPs. To this end, the first section found in Chapter Three reviews LLP learning outcome research related to intercultural learning followed by a review of the same in the more specific context of internationally-themed LLPs. The second section reviews a body of literature that explores intercultural learning in higher education contexts other than LLPs.

Chapter Four offers an overview of the study’s methodology and design. Narrative analysis is first discussed more broadly and philosophically as a methodology before being dissected as a specific type of qualitative research method with various forms, benefits, processes, and limitations. The second part of Chapter Four spells out the concrete particulars of the dissertation’s design, including the nuts and bolts surrounding participant recruitment and selection, data collection, and applied approaches to data analysis. This chapter also offers the first attempt to situate the reader with the data directly via a list of study participants. This chapter also offers a short biographical sketch for each of the students who participated in the study. These biographical sketches are based on Interview 1 data only, meaning they typically only include biographical background information, motivations and goals for joining the LLP, as well as their first impressions and experiences upon entering the LLP at the beginning of the year. Although narrative analysis was the primary method employed, the study also utilized field observations as well as textual analysis of institutional documents. Chapter Four highlights this work toward triangulation while acknowledging the study’s inherent limitations with a final discussion on author/researcher positionality.
Chapter Five (Exemplar Patterns of Navigation & Learning) offers some of the study’s major themes or findings. The first part of the chapter reveals the manner in which the student participants navigated the intercultural space found within the LLP and in doing so also delineates the connection between navigation and intercultural learning. The second part of the chapter presents four “learning biographies” that exemplify the patterns as they emerged from the data. In this sense, the learning biographies are designed to illuminate the various patterns of navigation and learning by grounding them in the concrete particulars of the data, the actual events of the participants’ lives. Unlike the short biographical sketches presented in Chapter Four, these learning biographies are based on data generated via Interviews 1 and 2. Consequently, these lengthier biographies read more like a life story that outlines the given student’s background and then follows that student’s intercultural experience in the Global Village LLP over time, from the beginning of the academic year until the beginning of the second spring semester. The biographies are thoroughly grounded in the data as presented by the students and also illustrate the dissertation’s conceptual framework. If the focus of Chapter Five primarily rests on the individual, Chapter Six intentionally takes a step back and out to consider larger environmental factors shaping the various individual experiences. “Learning in Context” is the title of this penultimate chapter as well as its major theme. To this end, Chapter Six explores environmental factors such as Global Village structure and programming as well as broader institutional variables, including a national and local trend toward privatization and the student-consumer paradigm. Chapter Seven summarizes the study’s major findings and presents theoretical and practical implications. Limitations are revisited and recommendations for future research
are provided. Finally, this concluding chapter introduces the author as “the final participant, character, and narrator” of the study and explores this concept in relation to a final discussion on positionality.
Chapter Two: A Conceptual Framework for Intercultural Learning

This chapter builds a conceptual framework for an examination of intercultural learning. Two major, contrasting theories underlie much of the extant research on intercultural learning: transformative learning theory (Mezirow/Taylor) and socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky). Transformative learning theory stems from a school of Western thought that emphasizes individual psychology whereas Vygotsky’s work hails from a non-Western tradition that focuses primarily on socio-cultural context. This pairing situates intercultural learning in a broad, near-contradictory theoretical context. But the philosophy of John Dewey offers a broad and dynamic foundation to support both theories simultaneously. Thus, this chapter first offers a brief overview of Deweyan philosophy, highlighting the manner in which it can support and synthesize the theories of Mezirow/Taylor and Vygotsky. The chapter will then turn to Mezirow/Taylor and Vygotsky.

John Dewey: A Philosophy of Learning as Democracy and Experience

Today John Dewey is widely known for his contributions to the philosophy of education and American pragmatism. His 1916 work *Democracy and Education* and its 1938 companion *Experience and Education* are particularly germane to the learning theories discussed below and the nature of intercultural learning in international LLPs.

*Democracy and Education.* As the title suggests, democracy and education are fundamentally linked. For Dewey, the purpose of education—regardless of the particular field or subject—is to support the promotion of democracy. Democracy, for Dewey, is a social construction in which all members learn, share, and thrive through active collaboration and engaged citizenship. The connection between democracy and
education is bilateral. That is, Dewey argues that education should support democracy and also that education occurs communally via socio-cultural transmission. “Even in a savage tribe,” he writes, “the achievements of adults are far beyond what the immature members would be capable of if left to themselves. With the growth of civilization, the gap between the original capacities of the immature and the standards and customs of the elders increases” (Dewey, 1916, Chapter 1, para. 6). He concludes that human “life demands teaching and learning for its own permanence” (Dewey, 1916, Chapter 1, para. 14).

In addition to highlighting the link between democracy and education, *Democracy and Education* makes an important distinction between formal education and experiential learning. Formal education, Dewey explains, is needed in advanced societies in which bodies of knowledge are so great that the vast amount of information must be codified in digestible symbols. These codes or “studies,” then, must be transmitted from the learned teachers to the immature youth. Conversely, experiential learning takes place informally and occurs through the everyday transmission of culture and human experience. On this note, Dewey argues that the natural impulses found in the youth do not agree with the life customs of the group into which they are born. Thus, they must be directed and/or controlled. Most frequently, this happens indirectly through the teaching/learning of social mores and conformity trends. Social situations in which the behaviors and actions of the youth are perceived, categorized, and understood by the mature elicit a form of social control that is not personal or coercive but communal and shared (Dewey, 1916).

Regarding both formal education and experiential learning, Dewey asserts the role of the socio-cultural environment. On this note, he claims that the knowledge and culture
of a society cannot be transmitted to the immature directly but only indirectly through the environment. He describes the environment as the sum of all conditions acting on the individual. Language is paramount here. And, again, the socially-constructed nature of this environment (including its language) is particularly important. “The bare fact that language consists of sounds which are mutually intelligible,” he writes, “is enough in itself to show that its meaning depends upon connection with a shared experience” (Dewey, 1916, Chapter 2, para. 11).

Regarding the (intercultural) learning that occurs in an international LLP, I would like to reiterate two key points posited within Democracy and Education (Dewey, 1916). One, learning is a socio-cultural phenomenon in which the more experienced in a community shape, fashion, and transmit the cultural knowledge, mores, and norms necessary for participation in that community. But importantly, this endeavor—that is, learning as a socio-cultural phenomenon—is done in conjunction with the less experienced members of that community. The experience of living life and constructing meaning within it is a joint venture that can only take place relationally through language and other highly subjective mediums that comprise the human environment. In the case of a university-based Living Learning Program (LLP), these subjective mediums could include everything from the normative behaviors of the students and resident assistants to the policies, practices, and curriculum of the LLP itself. A second critical point worth reiterating is that education—whether it be formal or experiential—should promote democracy. That is, it should promote engaged citizenship, community, and inclusivity. I believe both points are fundamental to the type of intercultural learning that is championed in the modern context of international LLPs. Whether it is struggling to
speak a new language, striving for a stated goal such as the pursuit of global citizenship, or learning how to develop a successful intercultural roommate relationship (Miller, 1996), the LLP participant must be actively engaged and willing to rely on the experience and knowledge of others. Assuming the community strives towards a collaborative and democratic environment, each member of the community will need to learn to work collaboratively and democratically with a wide-range of students.

*Experience and Education.* Deweyan philosophy as it relates to intercultural learning and international LLPs is by no means limited to *Democracy* (1916). In fact, *Experience and Education* (1938) seems to mark the full evolution of Dewey’s thinking on education and learning. In it, he revisits and expounds upon many of the ideas addressed in *Democracy* (1916). As the title suggests, he is particularly interested in exploring the notion of experience and experiential learning in much greater detail. The following quote speaks to this point:

> Just as no man lives or dies to himself, so no experience lives and dies to itself. Wholly independent of desire or intent, every experience lives on in further experiences. Hence the central problem of an education based upon experience is to select the kind of present experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences (Dewey, 1938, Chapter 2, para. 4).

*Experience* (1938) also famously addresses the conflict between “Traditional” and “Progressive” Education. The former refers to a pedagogical approach in which the subject matter is transmitted from the mature to the youth. In this sense, Traditional Education is content-based and teacher-centered; the students are conceptualized as passive vessels in need of specific, disciplinary knowledge. Progressive Education—
developed as a counterpoint to Traditional Education—purposely stresses the “expression and cultivation of individuality,” “learning through experience,” individual students’ needs and whims, and the importance of the present. Ever a slayer of binaries, Dewey was not content with this Traditional/Progressive dichotomy and sought to dismantle it accordingly. To this end, Dewey continues to stress the inherently social and constructivist nature of education throughout *Experience*.

As he does in *Democracy* (1916), he also continues to stress the importance of community and democracy in fostering a student-centered yet structured form of education and learning in which the teacher takes the role of an experienced member of the learning community. In this sense, Dewey (1938) is neither arguing for Traditionalism nor Progressivism but rather a new education that is student-centered and potentially transformative. At the heart of this new education is his Philosophy of Experience, which entails the following two principles: 1) the principle of interaction (the notion that the objective experience interacts with the individual on a subjective and internal level) and 2) the principle of continuity (the notion that past and present experiences affect and influence future experiences).

As the quote above suggests, Dewey (1938) argues that experiences are educative only if they allow for future growth and learning by living “fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences.” This also suggests that some experiences—or at least a given individual’s reading of those experiences—may come with certain limitations that prove mis-educative. Consider, for example, a U.S. student participating in an international LLP. Now imagine this student fails to consider notions of culture and privilege and walks away from the experience believing some international students (e.g., all Chinese
students) are messy and rude. Not only does this interpretation of the experience do a disservice to the LLP, it also debilitates the U.S. student’s ability to relate to others more broadly and democratically. Similarly, if the institution unwittingly creates a LLP environment in which certain students feel isolated or marginalized, the learning potential of the space at hand is squandered and those individuals become disenfranchised. This type of philosophical framework offers a strong working lens to examine intercultural learning while considering the theories of Mezirow/Taylor and Vygotsky in concert. Dewey’s philosophy works well with both of the theoretical traditions because it deconstructs learning from both a socio-cultural perspective as well as an individual, psychological perspective and does so simultaneously.

**Mezirow: Transformative Learning Theory**

Jack Mezirow is a contemporary scholar who specializes in adult learning and is primarily known for transformative learning theory. Mezirow (1994) writes, “Learning is defined as the social process of constructing and appropriating a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience as a guide to action” (pp. 222-223). This definition aligns with Dewey’s Philosophy of Experience and its principles of interaction and continuity. For Mezirow (1994), individuals possess “meaning structures” or frames of reference that they bring to the learning process. Meaning structures are comprised of one’s “meaning perspectives” and “meaning scheme.” Meaning perspectives are “broad sets of predispositions resulting from psycho-cultural assumptions which determine the horizons of our expectations” (p. 223). He describes a meaning scheme as a more specific manifestation of a meaning perspective. For instance, the feelings and beliefs one holds toward a specific concept (e.g., the Islamic
religion, appropriate hall behaviors, or capitalism) constitute one’s meaning scheme that are derived from more abstract meaning perspectives (e.g., one’s thought on religious thought and belief, normative behaviors for institutional environments, or one’s beliefs on governance). “We resist learning anything that does not comfortably fit our meaning structures,” he writes, “but we have a strong urgent need to understand the meaning of our experience so that, given the limitations of our meaning structures, we strive toward viewpoints which are more functional: more inclusive, discriminating and integrative of our experience” (Mezirow, 1994). At times, one may experience a “disorienting dilemma,” such as the death of a loved one or sudden unemployment, that creates so much discomfort that the individual is more likely to grapple with his meaning structures on a personal level, reflect on his life, and critically examine his meaning perspectives. This is the basis of transformative learning. But it is important to remember that Mezirow’s theory, like Dewey’s philosophy, argues that learning is interactional and that learning is based on the individual’s ability to use past and present experiences for productive movement into the future. Thus, Mezirow (1991) defines transformative learning in these words:

The process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective; and, finally, making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings. (p. 167)

He also stresses that individuals resist learning anything that fails to fit comfortably in their current meaning structures and argues that this includes “efforts to understand a
different culture with customs that contradict our own previously accepted presuppositions (Mezirow, 1991, p. 168). To extend transformative learning theory into intercultural learning, Taylor (1994) developed a model of intercultural competency based directly on Mezirow’s work.

Taylor

In his “model of intercultural competency,” Taylor (1994) defined intercultural competency as “an adaptive capacity based on an inclusive and integrative worldview which allows participants to effectively accommodate the demands of living in a host culture” (p. 154). Although his study did not address international LLPs, the focus on host culture living could arguably be applied to both international and domestic students living in an international LLP. This is because international LLPs presumably create environments that both groups may find foreign.

Taylor’s model consists of five components that stem directly from Mezirow’s theory. The first component, “Setting the Stage” is analogous to Mezirow’s notion of “meaning structures.” Taylor describes this as the degree of “learning readiness” that a person brings to each new intercultural experience. This degree of readiness could be influenced by the individual’s personal goals for the experience, former critical events, and/or previous intercultural experience. The second component, “cultural disequilibrium” is very similar to Mezirow’s disorienting dilemma. Taylor notes that cultural disequilibrium can be intensified by issues like gender, marital status, socio-economic status, and race. He also explains that it can be muted by previous experiences of marginality, host language competency, and experience in the host culture. The third component, “cognitive orientations,” is applied to the individual’s mindset as he is
experiencing the cultural disequilibrium. Does the person have a reflective orientation or a non-reflective orientation?

The fourth component in Taylor’s (1994) model is “Behavioral Learning Strategies.” As the title suggests, it actively explores means by which a person’s level of intercultural competence can increase. Particular behaviors include observing cultural difference, participating in intercultural settings, and befriending someone of difference. The strategies have the potential to lead to more educative intercultural experiences. In turn, these experiences can help the individual increase her level of self-confidence and expand his worldview. This increase in self-confidence and expanded worldview is what Taylor calls an “Evolving Intercultural Identity” and marks the fifth and final component of his model. Note that his model (Figure 1) intentionally ends with a word as open-ended as “evolving” and is decidedly cyclical in form and design. As he writes, “Intercultural identity is evolving because there is always the potential for greater competency with each new intercultural experience” (p. 167). This quote is particularly important because it suggests, similar to Deweyan philosophy, that learning is inextricably tied to experience, is a life-long process, and is beholden to Dewey’s principles of interaction and continuity.4

---

4 It should be noted, however, that learning may not always be toward greater hybridity or interculturalism. In fact, the “learning” associated with some experiences may lead some individuals to greater bias and ethnocentrism. Although this consideration is not addressed in Taylor’s (1994) work, Deweyan philosophy is much broader and accounts for this conceptual lens. This concept is explored in more depth and in relation to the study’s data in the proceeding chapters.
Figure 1. Taylor’s (1994) model of intercultural competency.

To illustrate the full potential of Taylor’s model in the context of an international LLP, let’s consider a specific example. Imagine a U.S. student visiting the room of a Japanese student. Upon entering the room, perhaps the U.S. student does not think to remove his shoes and this takes the Japanese student by surprise and makes him uncomfortable, which is evidenced by his body language—a tense posture, a slightly furrowed brow. This tension might cause both students a small level of stress and thus could be associated with a very minor and specific example of cultural disequilibrium. If the U.S. student happens to notice these unspoken cues via a reflective cognitive orientation and has enough awareness of what Taylor terms (intercultural) “learning readiness,” then this interaction might prove educative. That is, the U.S. student might learn how to act more appropriately and successfully in this type of intercultural setting.
If so, the example of the American student observing the cultural practice of removing one’s shoes upon entering a room would also reflect Taylor’s (1994) first intercultural behavioral learning strategy, observation. If the American student were to take off his shoes the next time he visited the Japanese student’s room, this would be tantamount to Taylor’s second behavioral learning strategy, active participation. And if a constellation of efforts like these led to the development of a friendship between the two students, then both students would be employing Taylor’s third and most advanced behavioral learning strategy, befriending an intercultural other. Taylor argues that this is the most advanced intercultural behavioral learning strategy because it offers sustained opportunity for intercultural experience and the other can share “tacit” cultural knowledge with the cultural outsider. In effect, this would approximate what modern Vygotskians, such as Brown and colleagues (1989), have labeled an educative “apprenticeship.”

As this point suggests, the philosophical orientations of Mezirow/Taylor and Vygotsky complement one another. In the vein of Dewey, both theoretical models have constructivist roots and posit that learning is interactional. However, importantly Mezirow’s emphasis lies squarely with the individual. That is, his and Taylor’s theoretical framework implies that development and learning are both propelled forward by intra-psychological processes that originate within the individual. Building directly on Mezirow, Taylor’s model of intercultural competency consequently offers a psychological exploration of intercultural learning that is squarely situated within the individual and can only touch on a broader dyadic level. While interaction with the environment is a central and implied tenant of the model, the model is not designed to consider the principle of interaction in context. In this sense, it lacks the breadth of
Deweyan philosophy that encourages one to consider socially-performed constructs, such as the environment and community, broadly. For this reason, my conceptual framework turns to Vygotsky.

**Vygotsky and the Role of the Socio-cultural**

Although his work in psychology and semiotics did not garner much attention in the United States until the second half of the 20th century, today Lev Vygotsky is recognized as one of the founding fathers in the field of socio-cultural psychology.\(^5\) And it is this—his heavy and primary emphasis on the socio-cultural—that distinguishes his work from that of Mezirow and Taylor. Like transformative learning theory, socio-cultural theory has the potential to be quite useful when considering the nature intercultural learning in the context of international LLPs. That being said, the two theoretical approaches offer different insights and perform different tasks. In an attempt to better illuminate the benefits of Vygostkian theory, I will outline some of his most basic principles.

Perhaps the most basic assumption of Vygotsky’s (1978) socio-cultural perspective is that knowledge and cognitive development are subject and context-specific, socially-constructed by the respective society and culture at play. In this paradigm, as in Deweyan philosophy, knowledge is culturally transmitted from the mature adults of a society to the immature youth via distinct cultural tools, such as music,

---

\(^5\) Like Piaget, Vygotsky’s research and theory stemmed from his reflections on child development. Consequently, several of the examples presented below involve child development. That being said, I will attempt to connect and apply his most basic concepts and principles to adult/college-student development, particularly as it might apply in the context of an international LLP.
math, and technology as well as more abstract “tools” such as normative behaviors, values, and beliefs. For Vygotsky, the most common and fundamental tool in the ongoing process of human development is language.

To be clear, the presence of language is not the same as human cognition in the Vygotskian perspective. That is, Vygotsky (1978) believed one can experience thought separately from language. Nevertheless, he felt strongly that human language was the fundamental factor shaping and structuring higher-level mental processes. In this sense, language is at the root of thought and cognition, but it is important to remember that language exists outside the individual, a priori to the developing youth, in an evolving dialogic that is controlled by history, society, and conversing individuals alike. This brings us to a second fundamental assumption of the Vygotskian perspective: culture—the driving force propelling cognition and development—is controlled outside the individual. This, of course, is closely related to the first principle outlined above—knowledge and cognition are socially-constructed—but it deserves to be considered discretely.

A brief example clarifies this distinction. Imagine a young child growing up in a home with two deaf parents. Because the parents’ primary mode of communication is sign language, the young child will likely attempt to communicate in sign language as well. Just as a young child growing up in a “hearing” household will mimic his parents’ speech by babbling with his mouth, so too will this young hearing child of deaf parents attempt to mimic her parents by “babbling” with her fingers. In this example, we see that the child’s thought process (as mediated through language) is fundamentally shaped by the culture and context of her unique environment. In an even more commonplace
example that directly applies to international LLPs, consider the cultural forces shaping the participants before the students arrive on an American campus. An incoming Russian student will likely speak Russian as his first language just as an incoming U.S. student may more likely speak English. Their language as well as their associated worldviews and intercultural development have all been shaped by the unique culture and set of experiences they bring with them to the LLP.6

A final assumption undergirding Vygotskian development is the belief that inter-psychological processes precede intra-psychological processes. To illustrate this point, Vygotsky outlines the developmental process associated with a young child learning how to point:

At first the indicatory gesture is simply an unsuccessful grasping movement directed at an object and designating a forthcoming action. The child tries to grasp an object that is too far away. The child’s hands, reaching toward the object, stop and hover in midair…Here we have a child’s movements that do nothing more than objectively indicate an object. When the mother comes to the aid of the child and comprehends the movement as an indicator, the situation changes in an essential way. The indicatory gesture becomes a gesture for others…And only afterward…do children themselves begin to use the movement

6 For this reason, I will be discussing the life story approach to narrative analysis in my methodology and design section below. This approach will prove useful in helping one generate data on past experiences, such as those a student would bring with him to the LLP. While it is plausible that a given student, such as a polyglot from Switzerland, would enter the LLP with a higher level of intercultural maturity, it would be important to remember the Vygotskian/socio-cultural point that knowledge is context specific. Thus, the Swiss student may, indeed, have a high level of intercultural maturity in most contexts but may be rather inexperienced in other cultural contexts (e.g., interacting with Asian students).
as an indication. The functions of the movement itself have undergone a change here: from a movement directed toward an object it has become a movement directed toward another human being. The grasping is converted into an indication...this movement does not become a gesture for oneself except by first being an indication, that is, functioning objectively as an indication and gesture for others, being comprehended and understood by surrounding people as an indicator. Thus the child is the last to become conscious of the gesture.

(Vygotsky as quoted in Wertsch, 1985, p. 64)

This example illustrates a rather profound and paradoxical axiom of Vygotskian thought: socio-cultural cognitive development is rooted in biology. However, it also brings us back full circle, re-emphasizing the fact that cognitive development is socially constructed and context specific. Wertsch (1985) attempts to clarify this point by highlighting the fact that the child’s reaching out is first only understood to be the indicatory gesture—that is, a sign of communication—by the mother. Only slowly and over time does the child begin to understand this sign of communication and his dialogic relationship with the other. This example, therefore, clarifies the manner in which inter-psychological processes shape and precede intra-psychological processes. Of course, in doing so, the example also highlights the strong role of the community in learning and development. Much like Dewey argues in *Democracy*, this example illustrates the manner in which the behaviors and actions of the less experienced are perceived, categorized, and understood by the more experienced in a manner that is tantamount to a form of social control that is not personal or coercive but communal and shared.
To apply this concept to the context of an international LLP, consider the same American/Japanese dyad discussed above. The American student fails to remove his shoes before entering the room of the Japanese student. This act—a symbolic gesture—only takes on its full meaning for the American student after he receives feedback and guidance through continued and sustained interaction with the Japanese student. In short, the Japanese student guides the American student in his learning and understanding of Japanese culture, the lingua franca of this particular room at this particular moment. In this sense, we see the Japanese student taking on the role of the more experienced, but we should also note that this is an example inter-psychological exchange preceding intra-psychological understanding. Revisiting this same dyadic example helps illustrate how a Vygotskian perspective enhances our ability to read and interpret a single event through a different lens. However, we would be shortchanging Vygotskian theory if we limited its application to the dyadic level.

Just as Dewey describes the environment as the sum of all conditions acting on the individual, the socio-cultural perspective of Vygotsky (1978) encourages us to consider any number of means by which culture shapes learning. Consider a menu of LLP programs designed to enhance cultural awareness and student-led discussions centered on intercultural difference. Now consider the visual symbols one might encounter in a LLP (a row of international flags here, perhaps an iconic red London phone booth there). Think about the architectural design of the residence hall, the institutional process surrounding roommate assignments, the manner in which conflicts are addressed, and the community’s policy on linked coursework (to have or not to have, etc.). All of this—whether it is intentional or not—creates a curriculum that instructs the
students in their experience. Implicitly or explicitly the curriculum guides them in their navigation of intercultural difference. Will the journey be an educative one that enhances and enriches the students’ experience with intercultural difference moving forward? Or might the curriculum be designed and experienced in such a way that it only punctuates perceptions of difference with feelings of isolation and marginality? Humans are complex. They are messy. As I set out to collect my data, I anticipated that most of the participants’ journeys would be circuitous and unique, particular to their personal situation and experience. Consequently, I suspected many of the participants’ experiences might move from educative and expansive at times to challenging and limiting at other times. Regardless, I decided to include the Vygotskian perspective because it encourages us to consider the role of the environment and the manner in which socio-cultural constructs and processes precede and shape intra-psychological thought.

**Conceptual Framework Conclusion: A Dialectic and Synthesis**

I have outlined Deweyan philosophy as it pertains to education and learning. At its core, Deweyan philosophy is a holistic, constructivist philosophy of education that seeks to deconstruct binaries. It acknowledges the role of the individual while acknowledging the importance of the socio-cultural. In proposing a new, dynamic education, it acknowledges the merits of traditional and progressive education and melds them accordingly. It argues that education and learning are both rooted in experience and democracy and consequently all types of learning—whether formal education or experiential learning—have the potential to be educative and political. This philosophy’s dynamic nature has the ability to inform, coordinate, and synthesize the merits of
transformative learning theory (Mezirow and Taylor) with that of socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky).

The merits of this theoretical framework includes a level of specificity not seen in Deweyan philosophy, particularly as it relates to intercultural learning. For instance, the work of Mezirow and Taylor offer models that outline learning as process and intentionally and explicitly consider modern intercultural contexts. Taylor’s (1994) model, for instance, specifically outlines the learning process as evidenced by interculturally competent expatriots living and working abroad. The data generated by this study suggests that Taylor’s (1994) model offers a relevant and helpful lens through which intercultural learning can be study in the context of an international LLP. However, his model ultimately attempts to investigate intercultural learning as a psychological process only. His model makes no effort to explain intercultural learning beyond the dyadic, interpersonal level.

Vygotsky’s theoretical work, by contrast, emphasizes the manner in which a wide spectrum of socio-cultural forces actively shape and propel cognitive development, including intercultural learning. This Vygotskian spectrum accounts for everything from dyadic human interactions to the manner in which broader, inter-psychological processes are constructed and internalized. Whether that be the internalization of specific cultural tools (e.g., language) or the internalization of larger constructs (e.g., cultural hierarchies or a given culture’s approach towards education), Vygotskian theory appropriately questions the role and power of the individual. This socio-cultural framework allows the data generated for this study to be interpreted and understood in areas where Taylor’s (1994) model fell short. For example, the first component of that model (Setting the
Stage) accounts for the previous, personal experiences of the individual but fails to account for the previous experiences and socio-political structures of the culture from which the individual was borne. The data generated for this study suggests environmental factors, such as a culture of consumerism as well as a global trend toward privatization to name only two, shape and pre-fashion what the individual brings to each intercultural context.

Yet the force of Taylor/Mezirow emphasis on the individual cannot be lost, for individual factors such as a given student’s personal goals, motivations, cognitive orientations, and previous intercultural experiences equally shape the learning context. Deweyan philosophy works well as an anchor for these competing theoretical perspectives because it situates education and learning as interactions that develop in an ongoing dialogic between the individual and the environment. It is this dynamic quality of the philosophy that undergirds the study’s conceptual framework.
Chapter Three: Intercultural Learning in Policy and Programming

Now that a conceptual framework for intercultural learning has been introduced, the study’s focus turns to an investigation of intercultural learning in policy and programming. As discussed in Chapter One, the proliferation of international LLPs in the U.S. is the direct result of strategic internationalization plans within higher education. Given the assumed connection between international LLPs and intercultural learning, it only makes sense that these intercultural spaces should be investigated in more depth. However, before this inquiry can begin in full, it is important to note that international LLPs do not exist in a vacuum, nor is there a single model. There is, indeed, a near-infinite range of LLPs types that vary in structure, size, and concept. LLPs also come in a variety of themes, ranging in everything from the creative arts and engineering to business and service-learning. It is also true that LLPs enjoy a long and vibrant history. Deweyan philosophy and John Dewey himself actually feature prominently in this history. The following section therefore turns to a historical overview of LLPs.

The Historical Importance of Intercultural Learning in LLPs in American Higher Education

LLPs represent a communal approach to learning and higher education that is arguably as old as universities themselves. In the United States, the importance of this communal approach is evidenced in the rhetoric espoused by our first institutions in their earliest days. Harvard University’s first president, for instance, President Henry Dunster

---

7 As a reminder, I am working from Inkelas’ and Soldner’s (2011) definition, which defines LLP as a residence, hall-based undergraduate program with a particular topical or academic theme.
(1640-1654), is quoted as saying, “learning alone might be got by lectures and reading; but it was only by studying and disputing, eating and drinking, playing and praying as members of the same collegiate community, in close and constant association with each other and with their tutors, that the priceless gift of character could be imparted to young men” (Morrison, 1995, p. 252). Dunster’s argument rests on an assumption that learning requires community, but interestingly his argument implies that community is built on diversity and difference. His use of the word “disputing” is important here. By referencing disputation, he argues that conflict and diversity of thought comprise an essential component of community. Meanwhile, his diction “eating and drinking, playing and praying” as well as his phrasing “in close and constant association” makes the overt argument that participation—mental and physical, communal and democratic—is fundamental to the learning process. In other words, problems may arise. Differing opinions are a fact of life, but learning to navigate those differences is a critical life skill. This was more than 350 years before George Kuh and the AACU coined this century “The New Global Century.” Yet the underlying assumption found in both arguments is essentially the same: student success is contingent upon one’s ability to navigate intercultural difference in a manner that enables one to move forward in life as an engaged and productive citizen. Democratic participation is not always tidy, dispute resolution not always fun. Yet they are vital.

As Inkelas and Soldner (2011) note, this approach to higher education in colonial America was inspired by the Cambridge/Oxford model in which students and instructors lived in close, tight-knit residential colleges that were designed to promote intellectual exchange and social interaction in almost every context, from the lecture halls to the
Despite these deep historical roots, the “Oxbridge” model eventually fell out of favor and a new, discipline-based approach to learning inspired by more modern German universities came into fashion. Inkelas and Soldner (2011) note that by the late 1800s, the Germanic model had become the force *du jour* in American higher education, particularly among the land grant universities that were funded by the Morrill Act of 1862. In turn, many institutions began emphasizing individual research and graduate-level study that was often siloed and focused on the needs of a single professional or field—not a community-based desire to build the character of young men. Despite the popularity of the discipline-based approach throughout the early 1900s, John Dewey began to write fervently and eloquently in favor of a new type of education that re-positioned students as active learners who should be encouraged to co-construct learning and knowledge in consultation with the more mature and knowledgeable educators found within a given community or institution (See Chapter Two). While he did not argue against the importance of the technical and objective knowledge that was held on such a pedestal in Germanic model, he strongly championed a more communal approach to learning. He loathed the idea that students were mere passive vessels in need of content-delivery. Instead, he called for a democratic approach to learning that fuses formal, in-class learning with more informal, experiential learning. For these reasons, Dewey is regularly cited as the inspiration for the modern-day LLP and its philosophical underpinnings (Inkelas & Soldner, 2011).

---

8 The works of many researchers and theorists, such as Austin, Kuh, and Tinto, proved instrumental to the author’s understanding of LLPs, but the meta-analysis of Inkelas and Soldner (2011) proved especially helpful.
Tinto (2003) actually credits Alexander Meiklejohn, a contemporary of Dewey’s, as creating the first modern LLP. Meiklejohn founded The Experimental College at the University of Wisconsin Madison in 1927 and designed it so that a relatively small group of students would live together in a single residence hall while pursuing a common curriculum and set of co-curricular activities that were largely student-led. A fundamental goal of Meiklejohn’s Experimental College was the promotion of broad, critical thinking in the tradition of a liberal arts education and democratic engagement. Despite a great deal of attention and a favorable review from John Dewey, The Experimental College was dissolved only five short years later in 1932 due to a number of issues including budgetary shortfalls and a lack of faculty and administrative buy-in. Ironically, as Inkelas and Soldner (2011) note, these are two pitfalls that continue to plague LLPs today.

By the second half of the 20th century, American higher education had changed dramatically. Once a luxury generally reserved for the nation’s elite, access to college grew exponentially due to post-war growth and federal incentives such as the G.I. bill. Massification became an enduring trend of the 1950s and 60s and the number of students attending college grew exponentially. The spike in student enrollment also increased diversity. America’s conceptualization of higher education shifted from something akin to a social club for elite white boys to a more democratic vehicle for economic opportunity and upward mobility. Unprecedented numbers of non-traditional students—including women, first-generation students, as well as a broad range of underrepresented populations as defined by race or ethnicity—began matriculating in colleges and universities across the nation. Meanwhile, international student mobility trends
continued to increase exponentially, particularly in the American context. By the 1990s, a chorus of voices were calling for educational reform that placed greater emphasis on the quality of undergraduate education, particularly at large public research universities that were struggling to meet the demands of an increasingly diverse student body (Inkelas & Soldner, 2011). What could be done to improve the undergraduate experience, including learning, retention, and post-graduation return on investment? These were just a few of the areas for which the public was beginning to demand greater transparency and accountability.

Meanwhile, contemporary reformers, such as George Kuh (2008) and others, have begun to argue that the increase in student diversity has also brought a diversity of learning styles and that colleges and universities have a responsibility to adapt their teaching styles accordingly. Institutions, they reason, should strive to create more inclusive and flexible learning environments designed to serve a variety of students and help them bridge the socio-cultural gaps that could hinder access and success. To this end, they called for Dewey-esque educational reform. They argue that traditional lectures should be exchanged or supplemented by more active, student-centered approaches that accommodate different learning styles and diversity, such as the international diversity characteristic of “The New Global Century.” Because LLPs are said to offer students a greater sense of belonging, increase motivation, and ease the transition to college, it is easy to imagine why they have become popular in contemporary higher education.

Inkelas and Soldner (2011) note, however, that an equal amount of accountability and assessment have not been applied to the explosion of LLPs. The research conducted to date, in fact, presents a complicated picture that calls their value and efficacy into question.
question (Inkelas & Soldner, 2011). The next section briefly reviews this research before turning to related literature focused on international and intercultural learning.

**Literature Review**

As one might expect, extensive research has been conducted on LLP and intercultural outcomes. The thrust of this research, however, has been limited. While a large number of studies focused on LLP outcomes (Inkelas & Soldner, 2011) and other studies focused on intercultural outcomes (Bennett, Volet, & Fozdar, 2013; Deardorff, 2006; Ogden, 2010), fewer studies have focused on the process of intercultural learning itself (Taylor, 1994). Even fewer studies (Miller, 1996) have focused on this process in the context of international LLPs. Given the prevalence of international LLPs and the assumed connection between those LLPs and intercultural learning, more research designed to explore the nature of intercultural learning in the context of international LLPs is needed.9

**Intercultural learning in LLPs.** This section reviews general LLP learning outcome research (e.g., peer/other interaction, openness to diversity, etc.) that arguably

---

9 For the sake of clarity, I should state that I am not using the terms “international” and “intercultural” synonymously. While the former relates to nationalities and something occurring between two or more countries, the latter is a broader term that can denote cross-cultural (or international) phenomena as well as intracultural phenomena or both simultaneously. For instance, imagine a group of American students—some from rural Appalachia, others from a very large city like San Francisco or New York—studying abroad in the heart of Paris on the border of a well-to-do Chinese neighborhood and north-African neighborhood. It is possible that these American students will struggle with the intercultural difference found within their own American group just as some of the French citizens from the two surrounding neighborhoods may struggle with one another. Of course, there could be American/French points of struggle as well. This short example illustrates the dynamic and complex nature of intercultural situations.
could be associated with or defined as intercultural learning. First, it reviews studies that analyze general LLPs. Then it moves to those few studies that intentionally focus on international LLPs. The section ends by examining studies that explore intercultural learning more broadly in higher education contexts other than LLPs.

Colleges and universities regularly claim that LLPs help students transition to college life more smoothly by helping them form positive faculty and peer relationships. The findings of many studies (e.g., Inkelas, Johnson, Lee, Daver, Longerbeam, Vogt, & Brown, 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980) eagerly support this claim. However, as Beckett (2006) and others have noted, a common critique of LLPs is that they regularly create exclusive communities that separate students of difference and prevent the students in the LLPs from interacting with difference. Interestingly, Pike (1999), studied peer interactions and included a survey item phrased “interact with people who are different from you”—and concluded that LLP participation bolsters this type of positive peer interaction. Although, unfortunately, he did not spend much time discussing the findings surrounding this particular survey item, they do fall within the realm of intercultural learning; Deardorff (2008) and others argue that intercultural competence includes a unique ability to interact with someone from a different culture.

Just a few years later, Pike (2002) made “openness to diversity” the focus of his LLP study by analyzing over 500 student surveys from a single, large Midwestern university. The surveys included the feedback of four groups: students who lived off campus, students who lived on campus in traditional residence halls, as well as two types of LLPs (one with linked coursework and one without). Using a path analysis technique, he determined that living on-campus—whether it be in a traditional residence hall or
either type of LLP outlined above—had a positive impact on students’ openness to diversity (e.g., “I enjoy talking with people who have values different from my own”). and that LLP participants were more likely to have a broader range of relationships with people different from themselves than those students who lived off campus. This finding may not be too surprising. After all, on-campus living assignments are often random, making meeting new and different types of people somewhat inevitable. More interestingly, however, Pike (2002) found that students participating in the LLP with linked coursework proved to be significantly more open to diversity than the other on-campus participants, suggesting that some LLP structures, (e.g., linked coursework) support intercultural learning particularly well.

Inkelas, Johnson, and colleagues (2006) considered three similar outcomes by collecting student survey data from three universities. A path analysis technique was used on the three outcomes, all of which could be considered to fall under the realm of intercultural learning: diversity appreciation (which included a “learned about other racial/ethnic groups” item), positivity of diversity climate (which included a “frequency of cross-racial interaction” item), and the frequency of interactions with diverse peers (which included an “attending social events together” item). They found a statistically significant relationship between LLP participation and all three outcomes, though the effect sizes proved inconsequential for all three outcomes.

In perhaps the most comprehensive and focused study to date to examine the relationship between LLP participation and intercultural learning, Soldner (2011) used the 2007 National Study of Living-Learning Programs (NSLLP) to examine the development of diversity appreciation among white students living in international/global
themed LLPs. “Diversity appreciation” included three items: (a) “Since coming to college, I have learned a great deal about other racial/ethnic groups; (b) “I have become aware of the complexities of inter-group understanding;” and (c) “I have gained a great commitment to my racial/ethnic identity since coming to college.” The NSLLP includes data from over 20,000 undergraduate respondents in over 600 LLPs from some 50 colleges and universities throughout the U.S. Soldner (2011) used latent mean modeling to determine whether statistically significant mean differences existed between the outcome scores of living-learning participants and their peers in traditional residence hall environments. In an attempt to make sure the outcome being measured was an appropriate fit for the group, he consulted the NSLLP data and selected the outcome (i.e., diversity appreciation) based on the feedback provided by the stated desired outcomes of the participating LLPs in the NSLLP. This design feature answered Inkelas and Weisman (2003), Wawrzynski and Jessup-Anger (2010), and others call to move beyond grouping all LLP participants into a single category. Ultimately, Soldner (2011) found that white students participating in international LLPs reported means on the NSLLP diversity appreciation outcome measure that were statistically indistinguishable from their non-LLP peers. This led him to conclude that LLPs—“at least as currently implemented and measured—do not contribute to this important outcome” (p. 282).

However, Soldner’s (2011) findings do offer an important caveat: even though LLP participation did not have a direct impact on diversity appreciation, he found that peer conversation (including “discussions with those with different religious beliefs” and discussions regarding “views on multiculturalism and diversity”) did have a direct, positive, and statistically significant relationship on diversity appreciation. And,
importantly, white students participating in international/global LLPs reported higher levels of peer conversations surrounding topics like diversity than those students living in traditional on-campus housing. This finding mirrors Inkelas and colleagues’ (2007) findings, which reported a medium size effect, as well as Longerbeam’s (2005) study, which concluded that these types of peer conversations do, indeed, have a direct impact on students’ openness to diversity. This conversation echoes the one above regarding the indirect effects on retention, persistence, and degree attainment. That is, it appears that even if the relationship between LLP participation and intercultural learning is tentative at best, the research does point to a positive indirect relationship. And if LLPs support positive learning outcomes by generating mediators, such as substantive peer and faculty interaction, that is valuable information for researchers and practitioners alike. This realization is something that has been duly noted in the extant literature for the last thirty years from Pascarella and Terenzini (1980) to Inkelas and Soldner (2011).

**Intercultural learning in LLPs and more broadly.** While there is a dearth of literature like Soldner’s (2011) that focuses on intercultural learning in the context of international LLPs, an emerging body of literature does explore intercultural learning more broadly. And, unlike the studies just referenced (Inkelas, Johnson, et al., 2006; Longerbeam, 2005; Pike, 1999; Pike, 2002; Soldner, 2011), it is not bound by methods that fall prey to the nested data concerns that occur when one combines data from multiple institutions. Nor does it fall prey to the inherent limitations stemming from data that is exclusively self-reported via survey questionnaires. While large swaths of this research are not particularly relevant to the exploration of international LLPs, some studies do offer pertinent and complementary points of discussion.
For instance, Bennett, Volet, and Fozdar’s (2013) qualitative, mixed-methods study examined the development of an unlikely intercultural relationship at an Australian university. The “dyad” consisted of a monolingual, white Australian student and a multilingual Vietnamese student. The authors reported that the literature “overwhelmingly suggests that in institutions where English is the language of instruction, monolingual local students rarely mix with international students who are not fully proficient in English” (Bennett et al., 2013; p 533). They argue that this unique dyad thus offered an exemplar that should be studied further. Using narrative analysis of semi-structured interviews, survey responses, and institutional data, the team concluded that “despite evidence of ‘passive xenophobia,’ anxiety, and cultural homophily characteristic of intercultural interactions on campus,” positive intercultural relationships can thrive on campus. They went on to claim that these relationships support the development of what Deardorff (2006) and others have termed “intercultural competence” (pp. 547-548).10 To this end, the authors argue that there is great potential for institutions to create structures and interventions, (e.g., protracted, cohort learning) that would support internationalization and nurture intercultural learning and development.

10 Deardorff, D. (2006) collected extensive feedback from both field experts and higher education professionals to arrive at the following definition of “intercultural competency:” the “ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 248). Critical to this definition is the understanding that what is deemed “effective” and “appropriate” must be considered from the other’s perspective.
Had it not been published a year earlier, Campbell’s (2012) “Promoting intercultural contact on campus” could easily be mistaken as a direct response to Bennett et al.’s (2013) call to action (it can also be interpreted as a clear response to campus internationalization efforts). In this mixed methods study, Campbell (2012) outlines an experiential “buddy project” designed for an intercultural business communication class. The project was an official part of the class that was designed to 1) help newly-arrived international students (mostly from China) transition into local social life more easily and 2) help the local host students enrolled in the class (mostly New Zealanders) contextualize theories of culture, intercultural communication, and intercultural competence. Campbell (2012) used thematic analysis to analyze journal entries submitted by the host students and student survey feedback shared by the international students to determine that the project had successfully achieved both goals. Similar to Bennett et al. (2013), she concludes that strategic interventions are needed to increase cultural contact on campus and fulfill institutional internationalization efforts. Notably, however, neither study specifically addressed (or even mentioned) what has become a rather common intervention across many American campuses—that is, international LLPs.

Notably, Miller’s (1996) study provides a rare instance of research designed to investigate the nature of intercultural bonding and learning in the context of a specific international LLP. Although Soldner (2011) did study diversity appreciation in the specific context of international LLPs, his investigation was limited to survey data collected through the NSLLP and as such was broad and distant in nature and susceptible to “nested data concerns” (Inkelas & Soldner, 2011). Moreover, the investigation was
limited to the diversity appreciation of white students only; no attempt was made to understand the intercultural learning from the perspective of the international students—let alone the unique intercultural perspectives of non-white Americans. Finally, Soldner’s (2011) study was designed only to measure gains in diversity appreciation as witnessed via survey feedback. No attempt was made to describe how the learning occurred. Enter Miller (1996).

Miller’s (1996) ethnographic study researched the variables associated with a “successful” intercultural roommate relationship as developed in the context of a single international LLP at a large Midwestern tier-one research university. To this end, she used a combination of on-site observation, informal discussions, and formal interviews to examine the relationship of 41 U.S./foreign roommate pairs. She categorized the roommate pairs into two categories. The first included foreign students with significant exposure to European and/or American culture. The second included roommate pairs in which the foreign student was not European and did not have significant experience with Western culture before arriving on campus.

A “successful relationship” was defined as one that supported the internationalization goals of the LLP and university. “Successful relationship” was also defined as “one where the two roommates could come to appreciate their cultural difference and begin to learn how to operate within the rules of one another’s cultures” (p. 109). For roommates in the first category in which the foreign student already had significant experience with Western culture, the development of a successful relationship often happened automatically and naturally. In stark contrast, 71.4% of relationships in the second category (pairs including a non-European foreigner) proved to be
unsuccessful. She observed that in order to build a successful relationship, students in this second, more challenging category needed to make adjustments in their values and behaviors. Regarding the 28.6% successful minority in the second category, Miller (1996) wrote, “roommates learned to accept and appreciate one another’s difference, altered their expectations for communication and roommate roles and learned how to accommodate one another’s needs…[they] were compatible as roommates, spent time together and considered one another good or best friends…They became less ethnocentric and more accepting of or appreciative of cultural difference” (pp. 110-114).

Based on these findings, she posited a hosting and parity hypotheses to explain the interpersonal development of a successful relationship. In contrast to Soldner (2011), her work actively researched intercultural learning from the perspective of both American and international students. And, in true qualitative fashion, her work differentiated itself by offering a thick description of how those relationships are developed and experienced in context. As suggested above, the fact that Miller’s (1996) study examines intercultural learning (e.g., successful international roommate relationship development) from both the American and international student perspective within the specific context of an international LLP renders it singular in its scope and depth.

Despite its usefulness, Miller’s (1996) study does come with its own limitations. Like Bennett et al.’s (2013) study, Miller chose the dyad as her point of focus and in doing so limited her exploration of student learning to learning occurring on the individual or dyadic level. Her focus was on how the individuals within a given dyad changed their attitudes and behaviors to accommodate, support, and nurture the intercultural relationship. She did not explore learning as a socio-cultural phenomenon
and so consequently did not explore larger socio-cultural manifestations such as the LLP itself as a social performance—a space structured, controlled, and performed by the policy and practices of the larger institution. This limitation is not a flaw of the study, but rather a matter of focus and design.

The qualitative work of Nespor (2000) offers another approach to qualitative analysis and notions of learning. He argues that public “space,” such as the space one would encounter within an international LLP, is a social performance that is produced through social interactions. He also argues that some populations are disadvantaged and frequently isolated in their social geography and not granted participatory access to spaces that grant social and cultural capital. While his work focuses on K-12 students in a national context, his approach could readily be applied to an intercultural, post-secondary context. As a point of entrance, Nespor argues that school field trips have the potential to break the lack of access that a given, disadvantaged population may have to a particular public space (e.g., an art museum) that could prove enriching and transformative. But he also argues that the same field trip has the potential to become a marginalizing experience that re-produces the students—not as democratic participants in the shared public space that is the art museum—but rather as outsiders who are separated by status, cultural capital, and consistency of access. In this sense, the socially-constructed space that the disadvantaged population experiences does not facilitate intercultural understanding but actually only works to punctuate isolation, borders, and difference. Central to Nespor’s (2000) argument is a belief that the public space of the art museum is socially-constructed—not only by the people themselves—but also by the school’s curriculum and programming. In other words, the school’s policies and
practices surrounding the field trip shape the space as well as do the students’ experience therein.

As suggested, the space at hand could just as easily be an international LLP at a four-year college or university. Such a LLP could be an educative space that enriches students’ intercultural understanding as well as their tolerance for diversity and difference, but it could just as easily be a marginalizing space that reinforces isolation, stereotypical thought, and intercultural misunderstanding. What kind of experience and access do the participating students have to complex international spaces, such as the one in the LLP, and how does the institution’s “curriculum” shape their experience in the LLP? As Karin Fischer (2013) asked in her ethnographic essay about Chinese students who were studying at Michigan State University but struggling to fit in socially and culturally, “Most [of these students] will return home with what they came for—an American degree. But will they get an American education?” Her point is an important one that is reinforced by Nespor’s (2000) work: just because a given student is granted access to a particular space, does not mean that the access is helpful or educative. Indeed, the institution’s policies, practices, and curriculum surrounding and performing the space in question may leave a lot to be desired.

As discussed, this study uses a broader conceptual framework, one that includes holistic theories of development (e.g., transformative learning theory) and non-Western theories of development (Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory) to explore the nature of intercultural learning at the individual and/or dyadic level and on a grander, socio-cultural level. In this way, the conceptual framework for this study is designed to support a contextualized understanding of intercultural learning. The next chapter turns to a
discussion of methodology and design, with attention to explaining how the research approached examination of students’ intercultural learning situated in person, place and time.
Chapter Four: Methodology and Design

Methodology

Narrative analysis as methodology. A qualitative research design for a study of intercultural learning in the context of an international LLP allows inquiry about how and why participants experience these intercultural spaces on a personal level, in a particular place and time. This study embraces narrative analysis, a method of qualitative research that concerns itself with human story and the act of constructing story. So, why does story matter?

In her collection of essays entitled The White Album, Joan Didion (1979) makes a poetic and deceptively simple argument about the nature of story in human life:

We tell ourselves stories in order to live...We look for the sermon in the suicide, for the social or moral lesson in the murder of five. We interpret what we see, select the most workable of the multiple choices. We live entirely, especially if we are writers, by the imposition of a narrative line upon disparate images, by the "ideas" with which we have learned to freeze the shifting phantasmagoria which is our actual experience. (p. 11)

On one level, she is speaking about the emotional primacy of storytelling. We tell stories because they sustain us emotionally. But on a second, more complicated level, Didion

11 I should state upfront that there is quite a debate of terminology regarding the labels “story” and “narrative.” Some use the two words interchangeably. Others argue critical distinctions exist between the two (e.g., “story” refers to an objective sequence of events with a beginning, middle, and end whereas “narrative” focuses on the construction and representation of this objective sequence of events). Because I believe how the student tells the story matters, I often use the terms differently to emphasize this very point and distinction.
(1979) is making a rather complex philosophical argument. Epistemologically, she is arguing (and I would agree) that we tell stories because it is our way—the human way—of knowing the world. Ontologically, I believe she is arguing (and, again, I would agree) that we have to tell stories just as we have to breathe. That is, storytelling is not only something we do because it sustains us emotionally. It is something we do because it is essential to our survival. It is embedded in our world and experience a priori. In the end, as Didion’s quote so eloquently alludes, we are storied beings. Narrative is how we make sense of the world and how we are constructed within it. If my goal is to understand the how and why of my participants’ experience, then it only makes sense that I should embrace the storied nature of their lives, the stories they tell as individuals and the stories that define them a priori as human beings. To this end, this study embraces narrative analysis in both methodology and design.

**Narrative analysis as method.** As a qualitative research method, narrative analysis is not concerned with whether or not a story might be ‘true’ but rather what the story’s narrative reveals about the narrator and her social context (Riessman, 1993). Narrative analysts believe narratives are a site of identity construction (Riessman, 1993) as well as a dynamic medium through which the analyst can see and gage the culture, politics, and social position of the speaker (Lawler, 2002) and the manner in which she attempts to construct meaning from “the shifting phantasmagoria which is our actual experience” (Didion, 1979). For this reason, argue that narrative also provides a window through which the analyst can view student learning and development. Is a given student drawing meaning from a given experience in way that is productive and educative? In the context of intercultural learning, is the student learning to navigate intercultural
difference in a manner that allows him—in the words of Mezirow (1994)—to “strive toward viewpoints which are more functional: more inclusive, discriminating and integrative of our experience” (p. 223)?

Emphasizing the narrative rather than the narrated event may align narrative analysis with deconstructionist thought or the idea that the sign (or the system of signs as the case may be when discussing narratives) actually represents the absence of the thing itself. However, for the purposes of my research I do not believe that narrative analysis should follow this radical line of thought to its most extreme conclusion—that a natural world of concrete phenomena with objective events simply does not exist. Ontologically, I believe a natural world does exist in which real phenomena flux and thrive. Epistemologically, however, I believe we can only come to know this world through our subjective experience and our subjective experience of the world is inherently social. Therefore, it follows that our perception and understanding of the world and our experiences within it will be socially-constructed.\(^\text{12}\) For me, this is where the crux of narrative analysis rests—not in a radical dismissal of the natural world—but rather in an intentional focus on the socially-constructed nature of that world by humans.

Borland (2010) highlights this socio-cultural focus by arguing that an inherent duality exists within narrative in which both parts stand as social performance. We can view the performance of a personal narrative as a meaning-constructing activity on two levels simultaneously. It constitutes both a dynamic interaction

\(^\text{12}\) I would like to note that this methodological point falls in line with Deweyan philosophy, particularly in regard to his Principle of Interaction.
between the thinking subject and the narrated event ([the speaker’s] own life event) and between the thinking subject and the narrative event ([the speaker’s] assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence’). As performance contexts change, as we discover new audiences, and as we renegotiate our sense of self, our narratives will also change. (p. 413)

The distinction made here is more nuanced than the distinction between narrative and narrated event. Borland (2010) is focusing on the social construction of two different relationships (the relationship between the individual and the phenomenological event and the relationship between the individual and the narration of the phenomenological event). In doing so, she is engaging the idea of social constructionism inherent in narrative analysis. On one level, the narrative is something the speaker constructs—often unconsciously—in an attempt to create meaning and make sense of a particular event and the world around her. How and why she chooses to construct the narrative grants her stability and identity. On a second level, the narrative is a rhetorical performance constructed in a particular way for a particular audience. In other words, the audience will change the performance. Narrative analysis, then, should seek to examine a given narrative on both levels: one, a private act of meaning-making; the other, a public performance, a rhetorical act.

I should clarify, however, that even the first level, the action of private meaning-making is just as socially-constructed as the latter. Above, for instance, I argued that humans are “storied” beings. I claimed that narrative is how humans make sense of the world and how they are constructed within it. Lawler (2002) echoes this line of thought by arguing that popular stories and common cultural texts exist in the public mind,
granting us a catalogue from which we can form personal narratives and identities. This claim follows a long line of work rooted in literary and cultural theory that claims our language and lexicons as well as our modes of speaking, communicating, and storytelling are shaped, *a priori*, by various conventions of form, genre, and culture that are socially-constructed. In this sense, even a private act of meaning-making composed narratively by a given individual is shaped and limited by the social world around her as well as that world’s socially-constructed antecedents. Of course, this line of thought also reflects Vygotskian logic and the belief that inter-psychological processes precede intra-psychological processes. In the context of narratives related to an international LLP, this methodological approach ties in nicely with the work of Nespor (2000) and encourages us to consider the institutional environment, the curriculum of the LLP, and how these forces may be shaping the students’ experience of the given intercultural space.\(^{13}\)

In summary, I have outlined the following key features of narrative analysis:

- Narrative analysis views both narrative and the world itself as social constructions;
- Narrative analysis is not concerned with “the truth” (or the narrated event) but rather the telling and interpretation;
- Narrative analysis reveals identity construction;

\(^{13}\) Although Nespor’s work complements my methodological approach well, his application of an ethnographic method is quite different than narrative analysis. Whereas Nespor’s ethnographic design attempts to describe—*on behalf of the students*—how (intercultural) space is accessed and experienced, by employing a narrative analysis technique the participants in this study have been given the opportunity to speak for themselves.
Narrative analysis highlights the cultural, political, ideological, and developmental learning markers of the storyteller.

Narrative analysis also highlights the socio-political and cultural contexts in which stories are told;

Narrative analysis reveals two (socially-constructed) relationships: 1) the relationship between the narrator and the narrated event and 2) the relationship between the narrator and audience;

Narrative analysis exists in time, acknowledging a temporal division between past and present and a connection there between.

**Benefits of narrative analysis.** As a research method, narrative analysis brings a host of benefits. As discussed above, narrative analysis acknowledges audience and performance in such a way that larger contexts and histories become illuminated. Changes in the plot structures of divorce narratives, for instance, may reveal changes in gender relations and power dynamics over time (Riessman, 2012). Similarly, the diction and syntax found in a set of “coming out” stories can reflect political shifts and historical trends (Riessman, 2012). In the context of intercultural learning, narratives may reveal moments of struggle (e.g., culture shock or disorienting dilemmas) or a form of learning that has only taken place over time and through reflection. The point here is not that stories change with time—although, this is a true and an important point in itself. Rather, the point is that close analysis of stories reveals *how* the social actors creating the narratives construct and experience their lives. From this standpoint, narrative acts generate agency because they allow individuals to shape and make meaning of their lives.
In this way, as Rosenwald and Ochberg (1992) explain, static subjects become active participants:

How individuals recount their histories—what they emphasize and omit, their stance as protagonists or victims, the relationship the story establishes between teller and audience—all shape what individuals can claim of their own lives. Personal stories are not merely a way of telling someone (or oneself) about one’s life; they are the means by which identities may be fashioned. (p. 1)

It should be noted, then, that narrative analysis is particularly useful for studies of subjectivity and identity development (Riessman, 1993). But it should also be noted that this attention to human agency reflects a political and ethical position:

Any [research] finding—a depiction of a culture, psychological process, or social structure—exists in historical time, between subjects in relations of power. Whereas traditional social science has claimed to represent the experiences of populations and cultures, [narrative analysis]…states that we cannot speak, finally and with ultimate authority, for others (Riessman, 1993, p. 15).”

This belief reflects a post-positivist methodology and with it at least two more concrete benefits: ethical awareness and scientific humility.

Finally, there is another aspect of narrative analysis that has been particularly beneficial to my research. As Riessman (1993) explains, “Studying narratives is additionally useful for what they reveal about social life—culture ‘speaks itself’ through an individual’s story. It is possible to examine gender inequalities, racial oppression, and other practices of power that may be taken for granted by individual speakers” (p. 5).

Since my study explores intercultural learning in an international context, this benefit of
cultural illumination has proven itself relevant and useful (see Chapter Six: Themes and Findings).

**Limitations of narrative analysis.** Ironically, the benefit of cultural illumination discussed above offers a nice segue into a discussion of narrative analysis’ limitations both on a general level and in relation to my own research. To reiterate, narrative analysis acknowledges the interpretive nature of narrativizing as well as the inherently biased nature of all narratives. This is true not only of the participants’ narratives but also of the super-narrative or meta-narrative constructed by the analyst even when it is meticulously co-constructed with the help of the participants. In other words, just because narrative analysis claims to be conscious of context, bias, and positionality does not mean it is capable of transcending these realities. Narrative analysis does embrace subjectivity and champions it as a strength, but, inevitably, this subjectivity becomes valid fodder for a rational line of attack (Stake, 2010). “It’s not objective. It’s not scientific. It’s just too subjective.” These are all common complaints. Just as culture “speaks itself” in the confines of participants’ stories and interview responses, so, too, does it speak itself in the context of the researcher’s meta-narrative. Riessman (1993), for instance, writes, “Western, white, middle-class interviewers seem to expect temporally sequenced plots and have trouble hearing ones that are organized episodically” (pg. 17). Because I am a Western, white, middle-class male, this is a concern I attempted to heed thoughtfully as I conducted interviews with students from around the world.

Many other limitations come with narrative analysis. It can be excruciatingly slow going for instance. The interviews I conducted required a good deal of organization and
planning—not to mention a good amount of time (some up to two hours). The transcription process involved in narrative analysis can be even worse in this regard. It requires a tremendous amount of patience and an almost robotic-like attention to detail that may or may not generate relevant data. Of course, the question of relevance is contingent upon the research questions being asked as well as the thematic patterns materializing along the way. And because narrative analysis is steeped in a tradition of emergent design that often embraces an iterative process, one crucial piece of data may not appear particularly germane until it is given a second or third look in relation to other data sets that may or may not be complete. Stake (2010) speaks to this challenge and the manner in which it affects qualitative research’s applicability in the field: “The phenomena being studied…are often long and episodic and evolving…and the results pay off little in the advancement of social practice” (p. 29). Narrative analysis raises ethical questions as well. Even though I claimed this particular field of qualitative research engenders agency and voice for participants that might otherwise be relegated to the periphery, its highly personal nature can infringe on participants’ privacy and lead to uncomfortable situations, potentially even entrapment (Stake, 2010).

Despite all these flaws, narrative analysis remains a valuable resource, particularly because its self-reflexive methodology actively acknowledges these limitations and seeks to illuminate notions of power and bias, context and position. To return to some opening comments, I have committed myself to a qualitative study of intercultural learning in the context of an international LLP because I am interested in learning how my participants experience intercultural spaces and how they learn and grow in these spaces. Consequently, their stories matter. How they construct and communicate their stories,
how they use these stories to understand themselves and the world around them, how their stories reflect their learning and growth—all of this—reveals the personal experiences of my participants in context, in a particular place and time that stands in relation to a wide swath of variables and factors: nationality, culture, and the contemporary policies of higher education to name only a few. For these purposes, I now turn to a discussion of the research design.

**Design**

**Data collection.** This study followed the experience of fourteen undergraduates living in the Smith Hall Global Village LLP during the 2015-16 academic year. Because the study was designed to explore the learning that takes place via intercultural experience, I interviewed each of the students twice, once close to the start of the academic year in August/September and a second time between December and February. The interviews ranged in duration anywhere from thirty minutes to two hours and were semi-structured in form. In this case, semi-structured means that some questions were pre-formulated and asked of every interview participant while other questions varied based on the specific background and experience of the given participant as well as the context of the particular interview. The list of questions used has three parts (see Appendix). The first part (questions 1-3) was designed to get a better understanding of the students’ intercultural experience and background prior to living in the Global Village. The second part (question 4) was designed to give me a better

understanding of their motivation and goals for entering the community. The third part (question 5) was designed to explore their current intercultural experience in the Global Village and their evolving intercultural identity. In many cases, the questions asked in the second interview were identical to the questions asked in the first interview. This type of repetition was used to gauge how the given student’s intercultural experience and evolving intercultural identity may have changed over time. Because I would often preface the question by sharing and discussing the student’s responses from the first interview, this approach also granted me the opportunity to employ a second level of “member checking.”

The questions were informed by the study’s conceptual framework and designed to explore learning in context—the experience of the individual as shaped by the surrounding environment. For this reason, I completed a series of secondary interviews with employees affiliated with the Global Village LLP (e.g., academic partners and residence life professionals, including resident assistants (RAs) and a more senior resident director). These professionals and student employees actively co-create the intercultural space found within the LLP while offering a different perspective than the student participants. In addition to these secondary interviews with professional staff and student employees, the design pursued triangulation via textual analysis of related institutional documents (e.g., housing brochures, residence life websites, and local news articles) as well as field observations of the campus and at a limited number of specific LLP-related program offerings (e.g., induction ceremonies, kick-off events, and connected course class meetings). The crux of the data, however, was generated via interview. In total, I conducted 31 interviews.
Setting the stage: An overview of the Global Village LLP. An officially designated international community living space has been a part of the University of Kentucky (UK) campus culture and history for at least twenty-five years. Although the actual building no longer exists and the space socially constructed therein was never branded as a “LLP” by the institution, Jewel Hall housed an international-themed community on campus from 1991 until 2004. In 2005, that community moved to Smith Hall and was officially named the “Global Village.” A description of the Global Village from a 2012-13 bulletin reads as follows:

Smith Hall, located directly behind Kirwan II on south campus, is a nine month hall open during academic recesses.\(^{15}\) Smith Hall is home to the Global Village... This is a living-learning community designed to build *cross-cultural friendship and understanding*. This community is made up of students from the U.S. and many other countries. Students live together and share cultural perspectives from around the world through the experiences of daily life and specialized programs. First-year students enroll in courses that have an international focus (University of Kentucky, 2012; Italics mine).

I italicized the portion above regarding “cross-cultural friendship” because the notion of intercultural friendship relates to the various theories discussed in my conceptual framework. Intercultural friendship also emerged as a major theme of the data and is discussed as such in the following chapters. The UK Housing Brochure distributed

\(^{15}\) This policy allowed for international students to have a continuous place to live, including over university breaks.
throughout 2014-15 promoted the Global Village for the upcoming 2015-16 year (i.e., the actual year of the study):

Global Village Community. For first-year students interested in broadening their understanding of world issues and cultures. This community provides interaction with staff, connected UK 101 course\textsuperscript{16} taught in hall, intentional room assignments pairing students with differing backgrounds and programming dedicated to helping to create a sense of global community on campus.

LOCATION: Smith Hall (University of Kentucky, 2014; Italics mine).

I italicized the portion above regarding “connected coursework and intentional room assignments” because, like intercultural friendship, these two components of the LLP environment emerged as major themes of the study and consequently are reviewed in more depth in the coming chapters. Generally speaking, the block quotes cited above, both drawn from official institutional documents, offer a brief overview of the Global Village and, importantly, highlight the manner in which the LLP has been marketed historically to current and prospective students. The institution conceptualizes and promotes the Global Village as an official LLP with organized structures and resources, including “intentional room assignments,” “programming,” connected “courses,” and designated “staff.”

The Global Village enjoys an administrative structure that matches this conceptualization. For instance, Smith Hall has a resident director, a trained and

\textsuperscript{16} UK 101 is a general first-year orientation class designed to aid new students in their academic and social transition from high school to college.
experienced residence life staff member who worked hard throughout the 2014-15 academic year to recruit, train, and onboard a team of student resident assistants (RAs) who have a background and skillset that matched the vision and intent of the Global Village. For example, the two RAs who were selected to live on the third floor with the Global Villagers are both bilingual, first-generation Americans. Similarly, UK assigned an academic partner to the Global Village administrative team. This person was a seasoned staff member with extensive international experience as well as extensive professional experience serving international students.

There is also an LLP superstructure in place at UK, which entails a centralized LLP office. This centralized LLP office is housed within the Office of Residence Life and provides recommended policies and procedures to the individual LLP communities. For instance, the centralized LLP office worked with UK Housing to coordinate an official application for every LLP on campus that was uniformly incorporated into the general housing application. The centralized LLP office also coordinated an official peer mentor application process designed to help the individual LLPs find and select peer mentors to live in the residence halls with the students. Unlike the RAs, the peer mentors are not official employees of the University and are not responsible for enforcing housing policies or disciplinary actions. They are, however, meant to serve as live-in leaders, who can offer advice and support to the other students around them. In the case of the

17 A note regarding campus nomenclature: At UK, there are approximately 14 individual LLPs like the Global Village scattered among the various residence halls across campus. Typically, these individual LLPs are referred to as living-learning communities (LLCs) or “residential colleges” whereas the “LLP” label is typically used to refer to the centralized LLP office in the Office of Residence Life.
Global Village LLP, this formal application process led to the selection of peer mentor EMP\textsuperscript{18}, a particularly mature individual with extensive international and intercultural experience (see biographical sketches). Finally, the central LLP office also provides guidelines for each of the individual LPPs to follow. For example, the Global Village was encouraged to create a list of community-specific goals as well as a portfolio of programs designed to support those goals. The former task was developed collaboratively by the academic partner, the peer mentor, and the resident director. Working together they established the following goals for the Global Village LLP:

After participating in the GV LLP, students will:

1. Develop a greater appreciation and understanding of difference and diversity.
2. Enhance levels of “Global Citizenship” as demonstrated through active participation and engagement in the LLC.
3. Support campus internationalization via understanding and support of international groups, programs, and opportunities offered on campus.

Regarding the second task, the academic coordinator and resident director worked together over the summer to prepare the following in-hall programming menu for the Fall 2016 semester:

1. September 10\textsuperscript{th} – Smith Hall Ice Cream Social
2. September 24\textsuperscript{th} - Food for Thought (Pasta and Pronouns)
3. October 5\textsuperscript{th} or 14\textsuperscript{th} – After Office Hours
4. October 20\textsuperscript{th} – Study Abroad Info Session

\textsuperscript{18} “EMP” is the pseudonym chosen by the student.
5. November 18th – Thanks-4-Giving

6. November 24th – International Thanksgiving

7. December 8th – Cookie Decorating

This calendar of events was shared with the students at Global Village kick-off meeting, an official orientation meeting that was designed to introduce the incoming participants to one another, the peer mentor, academic coordinator, and resident director. We see, then, that a decent amount of time and work was put into the Global Village so that it could be promoted to the incoming students as a fully-realized LLP in spirit as well as name.

However, as many scholars (Inkelas and Solder, 2011) and practitioners note, great variation exists from one LLP to the next, particularly when one analyzes structural issues such as budget, size, resourcing, programming, planning, and execution. This is particularly worth noting vis-à-vis the Global Village, which could be categorized as a rather small LLP. During the 2015-16 academic year, the LLP included a total of 21 participants, including EMP—the one and only peer mentor in the community. As the Fall 2016 calendar of events presented above suggests, the budget, too, is relatively modest. Although both the resident director and academic partner were assigned to provide administrative leadership to the LLP, the LLP actually only represented a small portion of their overall job responsibilities. For instance, the associated resident director was actually responsible for overseeing all 181 Smith Hall residents—not just the 21 Global Villagers. Meanwhile, the associated academic coordinator was responsible for supporting the cultural and social adjustment of every international student on campus. During the 2015-16 academic year, this totaled more than 1,900 students from more than 100 countries, approximately only 80 of whom lived in the Smith Hall residence hall. As
one can imagine, then, these two professionals had a limited amount of time and energy they could devote to the Global Village LLP. Ultimately, this lack of staffing and resourcing critically undermined the LLP—at least as it was commercially promoted to the students. This is particularly true as it relates to the “intentional room assignments” marketed to prospective incoming students in the UK Housing Brochure cited above. This shortcoming as well related shortcomings found in the connected coursework and in-hall programming are explored in more depth in the proceeding sections and chapters. To close this section, however, and emphasize the point that the Global Village LLP was on less than stable ground, it is worth noting that during the course of this study, UK officially announced that the Global Village would not continue to exist beyond the 2015-16 academic year. Just as Alexander Meiklejohn and The Experimental College witnessed at the University of Wisconsin in 1932, it seems the Global Village LLP was facing a lack of faculty and administrative buy-in.

**Participant selection.** Participants were recruited and self-selected from the community of students living in the Smith Hall Global Village international LLP and from affiliated faculty, staff, and administrators. Student participation in this study was limited to undergraduate students who were 18 years of age or older, male and female, and who were living in the Smith Hall Global Village international LLP at the University of Kentucky (UK) during the 2015-16 academic year. This population included a total of 21 American students who formally applied and were accepted into the LLP as well as
any international students who were assigned to the third floor where the LLP was housed.\textsuperscript{19} See Table 1 for an outline of the participants.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{American Students} & \textbf{Sex} & \textbf{Major} & \textbf{Race/Ethnicity} & \textbf{Roommate} \\
\hline
EMP* & M & International Studies & African-American & Not in study (American) \\
Roni & F & Japanese & White & Lydia (American) \\
Lydia & F & Undecided & White & Roni (American) \\
Melody & F & Psychology & White & Claudia (American) \\
& & & & \\
Claudia & F & Economics, and Spanish & Guyanese-American & Melody (American) \\
Meaghan & F & Journalism & African-American & Not in study (American) \\
Katherine & F & Environmental Sciences & White & Linda (China/Japan) \\
Natalie & F & Spanish & White & Not in study (American) \\
Bob & F & International Studies & White & Ilene (Japan) \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Study Participants}
\end{table}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{International Students} & \textbf{Sex} & \textbf{Major} & \textbf{Nationality (Race)} & \textbf{Roommate} \\
\hline
A & F & Biology & English (White) & Not in study (Saudi) \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Study Participants}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{19} NB: The international students did not have to formally apply to be included in the LLP. Some of the international students may have stated a preference for the Smith Hall Residence Hall, knowing that it housed the Global Village LLP, but, again, they were not required to formally apply as the American students were.
Of the 21 American students, only four (19%) were men; 17 (81%) were women. Because the interviews were conducted in English, one selection criterion was that the participants had to meet UK’s criteria for English proficiency. There was no rationale for limiting participation with upper age limits. Nor was there any compelling rationale to limit the participation of students beyond the criteria outlined above. The sample group was recruited via an in-person invitation that I personally extended at the opening kick-off meeting that was held in the lobby of Smith Hall at the beginning of the semester. All interviews and transcripts have been stored on a private, password-protected computer. Hardcopies have been stored in a locked drawer in a private office. Ultimately, the sample group of student participants consisted of 14 students (9 American students and 5 international students). Only two of the participants were male (14%), including one American student and one Japanese student. One consequence of both the population and sample being predominately female is that all four of the exemplars presented in Chapter Five are women. While the exemplars presented in Chapter Five are designed to offer a thick description and thorough overview of the intercultural navigation and learning patterns that emerged from the data, I do, also, want to offer a broader, more
comprehensive introduction to the data. To this end, I end this chapter by presenting a brief biographical sketch for each student participant.

**Data analysis.** After interviewing each candidate, I wrote a summary of the interview. The interviews were then transcribed. I then went back and coded each of the interviews. This was an iterative process in which I employed various levels of narrative analysis throughout each step. For instance, even as I was interviewing the students, I was mindful of the themes their stories entailed. I also tried to be mindful of the manner in which their stories reflected both a performance of their identity and the dialogic nature of our interviewer/interviewee relationship. The time that passed between each phase of the process (e.g., the interview, the summary of the interview, the transcription of the interview, then a reading of the transcript with additional coding, and finally re-readings and re-codings) granted me greater perspective and allowed me to reconsider the data in different lights. This process also enabled me to check my original findings for consistency and assisted me in tracking and defining broader patterns and themes emerging from all of the interviews as a whole. Writing was also a major component of my analytic process and this includes everything from writing my preliminary interview summaries to writing larger thematic reviews of multiple interviews to writing this, the final manuscript. My analysis, therefore, was a recursive process that follows the tradition of Braun and Clarke (2006) as well as many others who note that narrative analysis *as process* includes multiple phases and is anything but linear. While I hope this summary offers a brief explanation of my analytical process, I think it may be helpful to offer a more thorough overview of narrative analysis.
As a formal method, narrative analysis does not enjoy a single form. Riessman (2012), for instance, highlights at least three approaches to narrative analysis: one rooted in the structuralist tradition, one rooted in the life-story tradition, and a third, arguably more dynamic approach that may consider multiple narratives from multiple accounts or interviews and analyze them relationally and episodically. In this third tradition, more attention may be given to the social co-construction of narratives, the dialogic manner in which interviewer and interviewee interact to co-produce the stories being told. I did not subscribe to any one approach, but rather attempted to remain as flexible and pragmatic as possible, employing all of the methods when appropriate.

The life story approach proved particularly useful, allowing the unique context and trajectory of each participant’s life journey as related to intercultural learning. Questions 1-3, for instance, allowed me to explore the amount and type of international and intercultural experience my participants had before joining the LLP whereas question 4 allowed me to explore their motivations for joining. These questions, in turn, helped me better understand the participants’ experience in the intercultural space as well as their evolving intercultural identity (question 5). Ultimately, this method of analysis formed the structure of the exemplar learning biographies featured in Chapter Five. My method of analysis also included the structuralist approach as well as the more dynamic approach discussed above in which Riessman (2012) outlines the benefits of pulling multiple (maybe even disconnected) narratives from multiple accounts or interviews and analyzing them relationally and episodically. These methods of analysis also appear in the exemplar learning biographies as well as Chapter Six: Learning in Context. For instance, I occasionally include direct quotations from the students within
the biographies and often include a structural analysis of syntax and diction as well as pauses and space. I also occasionally include my own persona, questions, and responses in the biographies because doing so highlights the social co-construction of the narratives, the dialogic manner in which my presence as the researcher and interviewer has shaped, influenced, and co-produced my participants’ stories. At times, then, the analysis offered in the following chapters may emphasize specific details of process, such as researcher-participant power dynamics, question formation, and transcription. As someone who loves stories for the sake of entertainment or “story for the sake of story,” however, I must admit that too much attention to detail can cause a budding researcher like myself to “lose sight of the forest”. For this reason, I have made a conscious effort to balance any structuralist or dialogic techniques with larger, content-oriented (e.g., life story) approaches.

My method(s) of data analysis are consonant with the philosophical and conceptual framework. As I have already explained, the primary research questions are shaped by Deweyan philosophy. This provides a broad and dynamic foundation that allows the data analysis to be guided and informed by the other theories of the conceptual framework. Do the participants’ experiences in the Global Village fail to fit comfortably in their current meaning structures? Are they able to transform these meaning structures in a productive manner? These analytical questions guided by the theory of Mezirow, for instance, were applied to data generated through question 5 and analyzed via the methods discussed above. Meanwhile, field observations, textual document analysis, and staff interview data allowed me to consider environmental factors in the vein of Vygotsky-esque socio-cultural theory. Taylor’s (1994) very specific model of intercultural
competency has helped shaped the interview questions and thus provided a concrete frame for applying the various methods of narrative analysis. Interview questions 1-4, for instance, were tied to what Taylor labels “Setting the Stage.” Meanwhile, question 5 was tied to the other components of his model: “cultural disequilibrium,” “cognitive orientations,” “behavioral learning strategies,” and “evolving intercultural identity.” Although the conceptual framework guided my questions and inevitably shaped the data, it is important to stress that the framework was not used teleologically but rather as an ongoing tool of illumination. Some of the particular themes that emerged, such as privatization and the student-consumer paradigm discussed in Chapter Six, were thoroughly grounded in the data and generated from a “bottom-up” process.

**Positionality.** My methodology embraces subjectivity and bias, so it is only appropriate that this chapter ends with a discussion regarding positionality. As acknowledged, I am a Western, white, middle-class male who made a point of researching students from a variety of cultures and nations. I am also a passionate higher education professional with over a decade of experience in the field of international education and have been working at the University of Kentucky for more than six years. During this time I have worked extensively with LLPs, including the Global Scholars LLP—another UK LLP that was discrete from the Global Village but was nevertheless housed within the intercultural space that comprises Smith Hall.20 Consequently, I have a fair amount of direct experience and tacit knowledge surrounding the institutional

---

20 I use the past tense here intentionally, for the Global Scholars LLP is no longer in existence.
policies and practices that shape and influence the intercultural space constructed within Smith Hall. Academically, I have a strong background in literature, writing, and literary analysis that I believe has sharpened my analytic ability and rendered it well suited for a study steeped in narrative analysis. More recently, this academic background has been broadened and enhanced through my doctoral studies in educational policy and evaluation with a specific focus on higher education. I believe this education is particularly important to mention because it both informs and tempers the professional passion I have for the fields of international and higher education.

**Biographical sketches of student participants.** The biographical sketches stem from interview one data. Consequently, the sketches outline the students’ pre-college backgrounds as well as their hopes and motivations for the future. In some cases, they also entail first experiences and impressions of life at UK and life in the Global Village. EMP’s biographical sketch provides a notable exception. Because he had already been living in the Global Village for many semesters at the time of our first interview, his sketch entails more extensive impressions and experiences drawn from his time in the LLP as well as more analytical abstraction drawn from my conceptual framework and related conversation of intercultural learning. Some of the other sketches may allude to analytical abstraction as well. For instance, Melody's sketch alludes to a difficult life transition as a "disorienting dilemma”—a term coined by Mezirow and discussed in depth in Chapter Two. The biographical sketches make no attempt, however, to fully unpack, apply, and explain the theoretical implications of these abstractions (this work will be handled in subsequent Chapters Five (Exemplar Patterns of Navigation and Learning) and Six (Learning in Context)). In this sense, the biographical sketches are
only meant to serve as an introductory snapshot, something that can ground, guide, and situate the reader as he progresses into the final chapters. Without further ado, the biographical sketches follow below. The first-year American students are presented first, followed by the international students. The final sketch offered is that of the LLP’s peer mentor EMP.

**Claudia (American, roommate of Melody—also American).** Claudia is from Frankfort, Kentucky. She described her family as typical for the area in their behaviors and pastimes, which include things like shopping and going out to eat. However, she noted that her family was different in terms of race, ethnicity, and extended family heritage. She is the only child of a Christian, ex-Marine from rural Kentucky and a Muslim, stay-at-home mother from Better Hope, Guyana. She identifies herself as “mixed” and said she was still exploring her religious identity. Although she struck me as typical for a “girl from Kentucky” in both dress and speech, she had the intercultural experience of visiting her extended family in Guyana on multiple occasions and often stayed with them for long periods during her childhood summers. She had also been on “touristy” vacations, short jaunts to places like Australia, Brazil, and the Caribbean.

Claudia came to UK as a “FLIE” major, combining Foreign Language and International Economics, with plans to specialize in accounting, Spanish, and international economics. Her motivations for joining the Smith Hall Global Village included a general interest in culture and a desire to meet international students: “I'm just really interested in all types of cultures,” she said. “Because living in Frankfort, Kentucky I didn't have...it wasn't that diverse at all. It didn't have that many people from other countries or nations to talk to or get to know—besides like my family.” She was
also hoping to learn another language (in addition to Spanish) from friends living in the hall and mentioned that she had aspirations to join the U.S. Foreign Service in the future. At our first interview, she had only been on campus for a few days but already felt right at home. She spoke enthusiastically about interactions she had already had with Japanese and European students living on her floor. She relayed a story about giving two Brazilians peanut butter for the first time, which they all loved. She also reported loving her roommate Melody from Pittsburg. “She is just like me!” she said. “I couldn't have asked for a better roommate.”

**Katherine (American, roommate of Linda—Chinese/Japanese student).**

Katherine is the only student in the study who is from Lexington, Kentucky. She grew up in a predominately white suburb located just a few minutes outside of downtown. Her mother is a stay-at-home mom and her father works in the sales department of a large, international company that occasionally sends him to Japan for business. Both her parents are originally from the area. Katherine chose UK because of the Global Village LLP but also for financial reasons: a scholarship and the low cost of in-state tuition. She is majoring in natural resources and environmental studies and minoring in Spanish.

The summer before her junior year of high school, Katherine participated in a sister cities exchange program that paired her with a high school student named Alex in County Kildare, Ireland. Alex and his family were originally from Moldova and had only moved to Ireland four or five years before Katherine went to visit them. The experience was particularly memorable for her because she learned about the culture and people of Ireland and also that of Moldova, and saw firsthand how the two could overlap. A few weeks after Katherine went to Ireland, Alex stayed with her family in Lexington for ten
Katherine traveled to Italy with her family when she was in the sixth grade and also had traveled extensively around the U.S. According to her, the Irish exchange program was her most meaningful intercultural experience to date.

Katherine did not identify any concrete goals for her time in the Global Village other than to make lots of friends. She intended to study abroad in Spain but did not directly relate this to living in Smith Hall. I asked her if she had a goal of practicing Spanish in the hall and she said she did—to an extent, at least before coming—but had recently learned that she knew of only one or two Spanish speakers in the Hall. She reported that the LLP had not had too many events in the first three weeks, but they did have a few, such as an international game night. She definitely considered those experiences to be intercultural because she had the opportunity to interact with international students. It was exactly what she had imagined before starting her life in the Global Village. She also talked about attending a Global Village-related ice cream social at the UK international center. She had a conversation with a Chinese student there and was utilizing it as a way to gain into insight into China and Chinese culture:

It was actually really interesting…He asked if I was an only child or if I had any siblings. And I said I had a brother. And he said he always wished he would have been able to have a sibling because it was kind of lonely [as] an only child. And I forgot about that rule in China where you're only supposed to have one child….It was just interesting because I know there are some only children in the U.S., but I feel like they don't talk about being lonely as much. But he said he really wished he would have been able to have a sibling.
Lydia (American, roommate of Roni—also American). Lydia hails from Frankfort, Kentucky. She attended Franklin County H.S. and grew up in an economically mixed neighborhood on the eastside of Frankfort. Both Frankfort and her high school had a lot of racial and ethnic diversity but were segregated by race and income such that the wealthier parts of town were mostly white. She grew up with her mother in a duplex situated in the geographic center of that economic diversity, with nicer homes down the street in one direction and lower-income apartments in the other.

Her mother is an administrative assistant at the Administrative Office of the Courts. Her father, who she sees “more than I did when I was little,” also lives in town and works in a factory. She was undecided on her major at the time of our first interview but was definitely minoring in French. She had no previous international experience. Her most memorable intercultural experience before coming to college was the friendship she enjoyed with two of her three best friends who both happened to be Mexican-American. She enjoyed being in their homes, eating dinner with their families, and seeing how they had more family-oriented birthday parties than she was used to. She also discussed a trip to Washington, DC, surrounded by different languages and cultures at the monuments.

At the time of her first interview, she had hopes of studying abroad (probably in France) and was also interested in doing something like Peace Corps upon graduation. She anticipated that living in the Smith Hall Global Village would help her choose a major and speculated that her major might have an international focus. More than any other interviewed student, she seemed knowledgeable about the Global Village programming. She participated in related events sponsored by the UK International
Center, such as Living in the U.S.A.—a program designed to help international students transition to American customs and norms. She was looking forward to the international Thanksgiving that she had seen promoted in marketing materials she had come across before coming to UK.

**Meghan (American, roommate of another American, who did not participate in the study).** Meghan is a soft-spoken, African-American, pre-journalism major from a small town of 20,000 people about an hour south of Louisville, Kentucky. In her interviews, she proved herself to be polite—even formal at times—as when she insisted, repeatedly, on calling me “sir.” She described her hometown as small and laidback, very different from Lexington, with little to no traffic. In terms of diversity, she described her hometown as having a “good mix of races.” She noted that it was mostly white but also noted that there was a significant amount of African-Americans (26%, in fact) as well some “islanders” from Guam and others from Central and Latin America. Her family consists of her mother, step-father, and five-month old baby brother. Her mother has a degree in business but now works in mental health. Her step-father works in an auto factory. She described her family as typical for her hometown. To illustrate the point, she spoke of their behaviors: “We wake up, go to school, go to work—just like everyone else.” She once visited the Bahamas as part of a family cruise, but that was her only international experience to date. When I asked her about her most meaningful intercultural experiences, she spoke about an experience that occurred in her English class in high school. A classmate stood before the class and spoke about his faith in God. She was impressed with his confidence and desire to share his beliefs in a public setting, but did not share his faith and felt uncomfortable with the fact that he was allowed to
speak on this subject matter in a public school. She joined the Global Village because she wanted to study abroad in France and thought that the Global Village would be the best place to learn more about education abroad opportunities. Before coming to campus, she had hoped that she would be able to live with an international roommate—perhaps someone from France—but when she arrived, she learned that her roommate was from North Carolina. Her fellow suitemates were American as well.

**Melody (American, roommate of Claudia—also American).** Melody is confident, outgoing, and welcoming. She’s the type of social butterfly who, at eighteen, greets every person she passes in the hall and introduces herself to new acquaintances with the firm handshake one expects of a business professional. She hails from a wealthy suburb of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, which she described as extremely homogenous: white, wealthy, Christian, and conservative. None of this pleased her. “Unfortunately,” she explained, “there's not a lot of diversity from my school. At all really. There's probably like an average of like three black people per grade. So, that I would say that is one downfall to the city. There is not a lot of diversity.”

Even though her grandmother is Mexican and her grandfather is a Greek Orthodox priest, Melody said that her immediate family was similar to the neighborhood around them—parochial and white—not the kind of people who are interested in getting to know people who are different from them. In part, Melody decided to attend UK because she wanted to meet people different from herself—hence the Global Village.

Melody is an education/psychology double major with a minor in Spanish. She participated in an eight-day tour of Spain with her high school. However, her most memorable intercultural experiences prior to coming to UK for college were rooted in her
life in America: the trials and tribulations of attending, a competitive and diverse performing arts high on the opposite end of town; then the challenges and lessons of transferring back to the wealthy and homogenous public school in her suburb.

I would say before [attending the diverse performing arts school], I probably wouldn't have gone out of my way to talk to [the exchange students] and to get to know them as much. But just being at [this different kind of school] and seeing how different people are…it was very easy to just kind of fit in, because everyone was so different, nobody cared. You know, everyone was very unique and special, and they weren't afraid to be. I mean it's a performing arts school. Nobody was afraid to be who they wanted to be. And then you come to [the public suburban school], and everyone is exactly the same. It's like cut out copies of everyone. Everybody wears the same clothes and does the same things and has the same beliefs. Transitioning back to [this school] was very difficult for me.

This difficult transition proved to be a “disorienting dilemma” for Melody, one that she explained ultimately allowed her to be more understanding, empathetic, and helpful to some high school exchange students. Although she had only been on campus for ten days at the time of our first interview, these transformative experiences from high school seemed to serve her well in her new intercultural environment. She reported being close with all the British students on the floor and also having a tremendous relationship with her roommate Claudia, a Guyanese-American student from Kentucky. They and a few other international students on the floor had just returned from an all-day hike to the Red River Gorge, an impromptu outing that Melody had coordinated.
Natalie (American, roommate of another American, who did not participate in the study). Natalie comes from a picturesque town in northern Kentucky, which she describes as homogenous, mostly Catholic/Christian, Republican, exclusively white, and occasionally racist. This was the case when some people in her neighborhood hosted something akin to a blackface BBQ/pool party that featured a skin-painting theme. Natalie did not witness this event, but just hearing about it was enough to disgust her. She differentiates herself from her neighbors by seeking experiences that allow her to interact with difference. Throughout high school she volunteered at a “K through 8” program designed for disadvantaged children living in inner-city Cincinnati. The Global Village LLP was actually a major reason she settled on UK. A little ironically, however, she chose to room with a friend from high school, though this mostly had to do with her nut allergy. She was concerned that it would be an inconvenience for someone else.

Natalie is a Spanish/marketing double major with a minor in international business. When I asked her to discuss pre-college intercultural experiences, she spoke of her relationship with Ana, a close friend from Sweden. Ana’s grandparents live in Natalie’s neighborhood, so they have interacted intermittently over the summers and winter holidays ever since they were little girls. Natalie even had the opportunity to visit Ana in Sweden the summer before her junior year. However, Natalie’s most memorable intercultural experience to date actually occurred the summer before she came to UK. This was a two-week service-learning program in Costa Rica that allowed her to immerse herself in community service, Spanish lessons, and guided reflection focused on cultural awareness and critical perspectives on international service-learning.
Although she had only been on campus for a week at the time of her first interview, she reported liking the Smith Hall Global Village. It was already changing her for the better. She liked the fact that everyone in the hall had the same interests. She liked being around all of the international students. The LLP made it easier for her to be more social, outgoing, and community-oriented:

I think it's definitely made me more prone to say ‘hi’ to people and introduce myself right away. I feel like if I [were] living in a regular dorm and I wasn't in an LLP, I probably wouldn't be as social with the people in the hallway because I’d be afraid they would think I was weird. I mean, I guess it's nice to know that here, probably everyone wants to meet people too. Especially the [students] coming from other countries that don't have any friends here. I'm sure that would get really lonely if people never talked to you.

**Roni (American, roommate of Lydia—also American).** Roni is a Japanese major/international business minor originally from New Hampshire. Although she did not live in the Smith Hall Global Village her freshman year, she did live on campus. Besides EMP, the official Peer Mentor of the LLP, she is the only returning student in the Global Village. For a more thorough description of her background, please see Roni’s longer learning biography in Chapter Five.

**Ms. Sponge Bob Square Pants (American, roommate of Ilene—Japanese student).** Ms. Sponge Bob is an international studies major from Mississippi and proved herself a natural storyteller, someone very comfortable sharing stories and anecdotes from her hometown and beyond. Although she was excited to be joining the Global Village LLP and glad to have a roommate from a country like Japan, she was frequently
tied up with the school marching band, which demanding long hours away from Smith Hall. For a more thorough description of her background, please see Ms. Sponge Bob’s longer learning biography in Chapter Five.

\textit{A. (British, roommate of a student from Saudi Arabia, who did not participate in the study).} A. is a biology/chemistry double major from England. She is studying at UK via a full-year exchange program. She is well traveled and had already been to America several times before coming to UK. She is from a small, bucolic farming village just a few short minutes outside of Manchester, the second largest city in England, which she characterized as “extremely diverse.” She had several significant intercultural experiences before coming to UK, including a ten-day school trip to Beijing that intentionally partnered her and her classmates with Chinese students from a sister-school. While there, they were immersed in the daily routines of Chinese high school life. She also participated in a six-year exchange program with a girl from Spain named Yolanda. Over the years, they both spent a minimum of three summers with one another. A. credited this intercultural friendship with building her confidence, specifically as it pertains to meeting new people who may be different.

At the time of our first interview, A. had been on campus two weeks and felt that living in Smith Hall definitely counted as another strong, intercultural experience. She was struggling to navigate her relationship with her roommate, a devout Muslim from Saudi Arabia, who practiced her faith by praying five times a day and set her alarm at 6:45am to do so. For this reason, she had requested a new roommate, but the RAs asked her to work on a roommate agreement. A. was not sure how the situation would work itself out because she understood that her roommate needed to pray at certain times of
day. She was also struggling to navigate and interpret U.S. communication styles. All
the Americans on the floor were so friendly and outgoing. Were they really friendly or
were they just being American? She was learning to be patient with this and "not taking
people at face value."

Certain aspects of UK troubled A. Several players on the men’s soccer team
lived in Smith Hall. They appeared to be more interested in playing soccer than studying.
And all the pomp and circumstance surrounding the sorority recruitment process was
“immature.” She clarified that the girls themselves were not immature. Rather the bid-
day process and everything leading up to it was immature. Why did the University
support it? This theme of “immaturity” surfaced again when A. noted that she was
turning twenty-one in a few days. Most of the Americans in Smith Hall were much
younger. They also acted much younger, particularly when it came to alcohol and basic
life skills like doing laundry. They were still fun to hang out with, however.

A.’s social network in Smith Hall consisted of the other British exchange students
as well as two American Global Villagers, roommates Melody and Claudia (see above).
She did not interact with the Asian students because they only hung out with themselves
and didn’t bother speaking English. Her experience in Beijing had been different. She
interacted with the Chinese students the whole time there, but that was different. That
type of interaction had been built into the program. When I asked her what official
Global Village events she had attended thus far, she answered sincerely, “I don’t know.
Have there been any?” She then listed several informal experiences that she had been
involved in, such as a hike to the Red River Gorge with Melody, Claudia, and some of
the other international students, mostly the other British students. She enjoyed that experience very much.

**H. (Japanese, roommate of an Ethiopian-Indian student who did not participate in the study)**. H. is twenty-one and a computer science major. He is at UK on a one-year exchange program and this is his first time in the U.S. His home university is located in Nagoya, the third largest city in Japan, but he is originally from a rural town in the Tokai region known for a shrine of a famous emperor. He laughed when I asked him about the diversity of his neighborhood. There is “very low diversity,” he said, mostly "old Japanese." Outsiders rarely move in due to a lack industry and business. “It’s a very closed environment,” he said in summary. Consequently, H. was stunned by the amount of diversity on UK’s campus. He spoke of all the Chinese students, as well as the white and black American students. “It feels like I am a movie world," he said.

When H. was in high school, he participated in a short, ten-day Australian exchange program. He lived with a host family in the deep and rural Outback and described the experience in positive terms. However, on his last day in the country, he was in Sydney when some white locals “teased” him because of his Japanese appearance—his facial features and the color of his skin. The event confused and sadden him. Before this incident, he did not believe that discrimination existed. In fact, when it occurred, he had to look up the word “discrimination” to help him better understand what had happened. Because of this negative experience, he is now more empathetic. He goes out of his way to help *gaijin* in his hometown (foreign tourists occasionally come to see the shrine of the famous emperor).
His motivations for coming to UK on exchange were manifold. Part of his coming to UK was determined by his home university based on his TOEFL score. But he also loves “KFC” and wanted to try it in Kentucky and believed that UK looked like a big and beautiful university. He also had an academic interest in UK’s media studies. In terms of goals, he wanted to learn to speak English fluently, get a non-Japanese girlfriend, and make friends with native, English speakers.

At the time of our first interview, approximately one month after he had arrived, he had made no American friends in Smith Hall. “Frankly speaking,” he said, “I’m seldom to speak to other people. Some girls speak to me, but other …people can’t speak to me. But I’m shy, so I can’t speak with other person.” He did, however, go on to explain that he had made friends with several Japanese and Malaysian students and they had introduced him to some American students who lived off campus and had an interest in Asian studies and Japanese language. He considered his roommate a friend as well. He was originally from Ethiopia but grew up in India and spoke English fluently. His little brother was one of their suitemates and he liked Japanese anime. The other suitemate seemed nice as well. He was another international student, but H. could not remember from where.

Ilene (Japanese, roommate Ms. Sponge Bob—an American student). Ilene is a linguistics major from Japan. Except for a two-week study abroad program in Taiwan, she had never been outside of Japan or away from her family for any extended period of time. She certainly had never been anywhere so foreign or Western as the United States of America. Although she had been looking forward to studying abroad in the U.S., she found herself feeling exhausted and lonely. Even the daily exchanges she encountered on
her way to and from class—“Hey, how are you?”, “What’s up?”, etc.—were exhausting for her. Her roommate from Mississippi was frequently not in their shared room, but even when she was, Ilene found communication difficult. The roommate spoke English so quickly and typically only watched television when in their room. For a more thorough description of Ilene’s background and experience, please see her longer learning biography in Chapter Five.

_Linda (Chinese/Japanese, roommate of Katherine—also American)._ Linda is a twenty one year old hospitality and tourism major. Originally from China, she and her family moved to Osaka, Japan when she was fourteen and she’s lived there ever since. This is her first time in America. She is studying at UK on a one-year exchange program. Her first interview took place early in the fall semester, but at this time she had already been on campus for the previous spring semester and had spent the summer traveling around America.

Prior to this exchange experience, her most memorable intercultural experience was adjusting to life in Japan. She described life in China as loud and noisy and contrasted this with the quiet and private life she encountered in Japan. She told a story about how she and her siblings got in trouble with an angry neighbor and the Japanese police shortly after they arrived in the country. Her parents were not at home and she was terrified. This was a very traumatizing experience for her—one that she still remembered vividly nearly seven years later. She also talked about her struggles with the Japanese school system. This proved to be a challenging cultural adjustment for everyone in her family.
Unfortunately, most of her experience in America were negative. She argued that American students are not friendly and clarified that she specifically meant that they were not friendly to Asian students. She criticized the campus environment around her. Asian students, she argued, were segregated and mostly only welcomed to hang out with one another. She also spoke about how difficult life can be without a car and compared it to Japan where public transportation is so much more accessible. During her summer break, she traveled to L.A. alone where she was almost kidnapped by a man on the street. When I asked her what she had learned from her exchange experience to date, she said she learned that America was no longer the dreamland she had once imagined. Americans were rather superficial and gossipy—particularly the white girls she had met on campus. She has grown colder as a result. In Japan, she would invite acquaintances to go out and do things. Occasionally, she would even host and coordinate the events. She never does this in America because no one ever shows interest.

Towards the end of our first interview, Linda said, “But I really like it here [at UK].” This shocked me. She said she likes the nice dorm rooms and new buildings. The professors are caring and the TAs go out of their way to help her when she struggling with her coursework. She believed she was growing more independent, which gave her a sense of freedom and made her feel more like an adult. However, if it weren’t for her Asian friends who helped her when she was down, she wouldn’t like America. She was ready for her final semester to begin. She had spent the previous semester living in one of the new residence halls. Smith Hall was older, but it was a much easier space to meet and interact with people. She even reported being friends with her American roommate Katherine who just so happened to be white.
Sarah (British, roommate of an American, who did not participate in the study).

Sarah is a geography major from England. Although she had traveled in Europe and Africa before, she had never been to America and anticipated her year-long exchange program in America would be her biggest adventure of her life. She wanted to focus on her studies and gain a better understanding of America by exploring its geography. She did not, however, want to go on trips with the other British students. She considered herself very different from them and wanted to distance herself. For a more thorough description of Sarah’s background and experience, please see her learning biography in Chapter Five.

EMP (Global Village Peer Mentor and Smith Hall Government President, American, roommate of another American, who did not participate in the study). EMP is the lone American junior in the Smith Hall Global Village. He is also the only student to have lived in the LLP previously and actually did so for his first and second years as well. In that time, he has had a number of different roommates, including roommates from Germany, China, and America. EMP, himself, is from Louisville’s historic West End, a black neighborhood often labeled “Ghetto” by outsiders. Although EMP is also black and takes a lot of pride in his neighborhood, it was clear that large part of his identity and upbringing stemmed from his father’s life-long service in the Army National Guard. Because of this background, EMP had traveled extensively with his family and also seemed to internalize—naturally and gracefully—the kind of organization, professionalism, and pleasant deference one associates with idealized, familial-military life. Outstanding leadership was apparently another organic byproduct of this
upbringing; in addition to serving as the LLP’s only Peer Mentor, EMP was also the Hall Government President.

He set himself apart from the other American participants in the way he was able to articulate specific, substantive, and personal intercultural experiences about which he has taken the time to reflect. In one example, he relayed a story in which he was teaching at a private school in Ghana as part of an alternative spring break program. One day the headmaster encouraged him to cane one of the disobedient students. In another example, he spoke about a rather heated debate that he engaged in with a Smith Hall student from Nigerian. This student was significantly older than EMP and arguing a particularly conservative point of view regarding women’s rights. In both instances, EMP made it clear that he navigated intercultural ambiguity—not always easily—but thoughtfully.

When I asked him how he thought he had changed as a result of living in the Global Village over the years, this is how he replied:

Really just understanding that, no, not everyone is gonna have your same view…the idea of ‘Okay, why do you have that view? What made you think that way? What's your history with the point?’ And that's not to get deep and psychological on people all the time, it's just I get really interested in seeing where they're coming from, and after two years of living here I really [can manage] conflict. If I have a person talk about themselves and their history, then they're more likely to calm down and become more open minded and at least listen to my point of view. And they may not agree with it, but understand that, ‘Hey, this is how other people here think.’
While this perspective and his related stories reveal intercultural sensitivity and self-awareness, they also reveal that EMP is an individual who is capable of authoring his own opinions. He is skilled at making personal value judgments that take cultural context into consideration. This coupled with his formal leadership positions suggest EMP’s actions are appropriate and effective in an intercultural setting. His interview revealed that he has developed an authentic appreciation for difference that stems from two points: 1) an understanding that diversity exists within every culture and 2) a desire to explore the particular within the general:

Whenever I deal with a lot of international students—even the American students here—I know that...no two students are ever gonna be alike. They might come from the same country, the same school...they [may even] have the same history like we do here. [But] there's no reason why if we go into just this one category, they're all gonna act like this. I can expect them to have certain mindsets to a degree, but I have to remember they're a person. You can't categorize a person that you've never met before.
Chapter Five: Exemplar Patterns of Navigation and Learning

This chapter presents the study’s major themes and patterns. The first part of the chapter reveals the manner in which the student participants navigated the intercultural space found within the LLP and in doing so delineates the connection between intercultural navigation and learning. Three exemplar patterns of intercultural navigation and learning are introduced. This portion of the chapter is primarily abstract in nature. The second part of the chapter presents four “learning biographies” that exemplify the patterns as they emerged from the data. In this sense, the learning biographies are designed to illuminate the various patterns of navigation and learning by applying them to the concrete particulars of the data, the actual events of the participants’ lives. Unlike the short biographical sketches presented in Chapter Four, the learning biographies are based on data generated via Interviews 1 and 2. Consequently, these biographies are lengthier and read more like a life story that outlines the given student’s background and then follows that student’s intercultural experience in the Global Village LLP over time, from the beginning of the academic year until the beginning of the second spring semester. These biographies also include an ongoing application of the dissertation’s conceptual framework. However, it should be noted that the essential patterns of navigation and learning outlined in this chapter emerged organically from the collected data. In this sense, the exemplar patterns of navigation and learning articulated in the chapter are thoroughly grounded in the data and the conceptual framework is used—not teleologically—but rather as a tool of illumination. The chapter ends with a summary of the exemplar learning biographies and navigation patterns.
Patterns of Intercultural Navigation and Learning

By the time I was finished interviewing all of the participants, I had over 30 hours of recorded interview data stemming from 31 discrete interviews as well as hundreds of pages of summary and transcribed data. In an attempt to “take a step back” and save myself from getting lost in the proverbial weeds, I eventually returned to the primary research questions guiding my study: 1) How does the student in question navigate the intercultural space found within the Global Village LLP? And 2) How do students learn interculturally? That is, what does the learning process seem to be for each student within the LLP. In regards to the first question, three broad patterns of navigation emerged: 1) circumnavigation, 2) organized navigation, and 3) independent navigation. I will discuss each of these three exemplar patterns in more depth below, but before doing so it is important to note that these navigation patterns should not imply a strict “stage” model of intercultural development in which students move from a less advanced stage (e.g., circumnavigation) to a more advanced stage (e.g., independent navigation). Rather, I posit that a given individual’s navigation pattern may shift back and forth depending on situation and context. In regards to the second question, it should be noted that I am positing that a connection exists between intercultural navigation and learning. That is, the data generated for this study suggest students who navigate space differently learn differently. As will be explored via the learning biographies below, if a given student avoids intercultural space by following a pattern of circumnavigation, for instance, it is unlikely that he would meet and befriend international students. This, in turn—a lack of interaction with the cultural other—would limit his ability to accrue the type of intercultural experiences that would lead to greater intercultural understanding,
interaction, and learning in the future. This line of thought reflects my conceptual framework, particularly the philosophy of John Dewey, for he argues that learning is inherently a socio-cultural activity that takes place in community. In this sense, learning occurs as participation, as democratic interaction. It occurs experientially and holistically and therefore is not limited to cognitive realms alone. Indeed, physical movement, including navigation—metaphorical and real—shape and co-create a given individual’s subjective experience of the world around him.

**Pattern I: Circumnavigation.** In asking how each participant navigated the intercultural space, it became clear that many of the students were not actually navigating it all. Although they were physically present in the environment—living, sleeping, and studying in the same quarters as the other students—they struggled to access the intercultural space at hand. Rather than connecting and engaging with the intercultural difference surrounding them, each—in their own way—appeared to be circumnavigating it. For examples of this pattern, please see the learning biographies of Sarah, Ilene, and Ms. Sponge Bob below.

**Pattern II: Organized Navigation.** Although 71% of the participants’ pattern of navigation and learning fell into the category of circumnavigation at one point or another, most of the students were able to explore other patterns of navigation that enabled them to interact with the cultural others around them. Typically, this pattern of interaction occurred only episodically—not linearly or consistently—and only in specific situations in which formal structure and support was provided by the institution—hence the term organized navigation. For some of the students, this support came via formal interventions such as the guidance offered by instructors in credit-bearing coursework or
facilitators in formal, in-hall co-curricular programming. For other students, organized navigation happened more organically and haphazardly as a byproduct of larger institutional structures. For examples of this pattern, see the learning biographies of Ilene and Ms. Sponge Bob below.

**Pattern III: Independent Navigation (Intercultural Heroes).** As the phrase itself suggests, this pattern occurred only when students were able to navigate the Smith Hall Global Village intercultural space independently—without formal support, guidance, or structure provided by the institution. Three students (besides EMP) fell into this pattern. Two were American and one was British. Regarding the two American intercultural heroes, these two students—like the other American participants—were interested in getting to know the international students living around them. They also shared similar goals and motivations to the other participants in the study. What set them apart from the other students, then, was not a matter of goals or motivation nor was it a matter of previous international experience or greater knowledge of the cultural other. Rather a willingness to initiate more substantive and sustained social interaction with the international students set these two students apart. In both cases, this willingness stemmed from previous experience dealing with personal alienation that led to increased empathy, a desire to help others, and, importantly, an intra-psychological tendency to view oneself as an intercultural guide or hero. For this reason, I often refer to these independent navigators as “intercultural heroes.” As Roni put it, “It’s that adventure of them [the international students] having trouble…and me being able to kind of help them.” For a better understanding of this pattern as evidenced by an American student,
see Roni’s learning biography below. For a better understanding of this pattern in the life of an international participant, see aspects of Sarah’s learning biography also below.

**Exemplar Navigation Patterns, a Summary.** To review, three broad navigation patterns emerged from that data: 1) circumnavigation, 2) organized navigation, and 3) independent navigation. These patterns emerged after a thorough thematic analysis of 31 discrete interviews and primarily in response to the following question: How does the student in question navigate the intercultural space found within the Global Village LLP? As discussed many of the students struggled to access the intercultural space found within the LLP. In fact, the majority of students participating in this study (10 out of 14 or 71%) fluctuated between patterns of circumnavigation and organized navigation, meaning they frequently struggled to access the intercultural space within the Global Village and were only able to do, sporadically, via formal interventions or haphazardly through larger, institutional structures, such as random roommate assignments. It is worth noting that only one of the five international students who participated in this study fell into a pattern of independent navigation, suggesting the larger American cultural context made it easier for the U.S. students to navigate the intercultural space within the LLP. This should not be terribly surprising. After all, the intercultural space found within the Global Village is not only constructed and performed by the student mix therein. As Vygotsky reminds us, this socially-constructed environment is equally shaped and performed by larger environmental factors such as the hegemonic culture, national trends, and institutional factors such as policy and practice. The significance of the environment will be discussed in Chapter Six. A final note before jumping into the exemplar learning biographies. As suggested, intercultural learning and navigation—
particularly navigation as it relates to social interaction with the cultural other—are directly related to one another. For this reason, intercultural relationships and intercultural friendships (or a lack thereof) surface throughout the learning biographies as a major theme.

**Exemplar Learning Biographies**

As discussed in Chapter Four, all four exemplar learning biographies happen to be women. The first is an international student from England. The last is an American student from New Hampshire. The middle two exemplars comprise an intercultural roommate dyad—one a linguistics major from urban Japan, the other an international studies major from rural Mississippi. Because this study is interested in socio-cultural learning and communal structures such as roommate dyads, the two middle learning biographies are presented in tandem with interpolated sections from each interwoven throughout. This literary form not only reflects the study’s conceptual framework but also the manner in which I, the researcher, experienced the data. That is, the students did not divulge their learning biographies to me in linear fashion nor did they share them with me in a single setting. Each learning biography includes multiple narratives that emerged, episodically and iteratively, through a dialogic process of co-construction that occurred throughout the interview process. For instance, my first and second interviews with Ms. Sponge Bob occurred, respectively, prior to my first and second interviews with Ilene. This order inevitably shaped how I heard and experienced their stories.

**Sarah from England: Circumnavigation, Independent Navigation.**

*Life before America and meditations on meeting the other British students:*

“The fact that they couldn’t do that. That made me sad.” Sarah is a nineteen-year-old
geography major from England. She is studying at UK via a one-year exchange program and was assigned to an American roommate who did not participate in the study. Originally, she is from a sleepy farm town with an older demographic and picturesque cliffs settled along a river. She characterized her family as fairly typical for the area, but made a point of noting that many families in the area came from old money and consequently were much wealthier. She described her family as “lower, middle-class” but stressed that they were not on the “doll” and never had been. That being said, they never had extra money for vacations or the like. She had been working a long time to save up money for her year in America and took pride in this fact. In fact, she was making a point of not hanging out with the other English students in Smith Hall. They came from wealthier families and had been to America several times already. She learned this quickly, in the first few days, when she and the other international students had arrived on campus before the Americans were allowed to move in. The other English students did not value the experience like she did. She had never been to the U.S. and wanted to marvel at all the idiosyncrasies that make America so profoundly different from England: the wide roads and expansive spaces; the large “sky scrapers” downtown; the modern, industrial way the cities were organized into grids; the fact that there are shopping malls—just like she had seen in movies; and the fact that everyone—literally everyone—drives everywhere. All of these things were a novelty to her, something she wished to relish and revel in, but the other English students did not have time for this. They rushed her. They dismissed her. “Yes,” they said, “that’s just America.” She sighed as she spoke about it: “I felt like I wasn’t allowed to enjoy America when I was with them.”
In spite of her limited travels within the United States, Sarah did have the opportunity to visit Uganda via a “twinning” program that was sponsored by her high school. This experience gave her the confidence to travel to America on her own. It also changed the way she viewed the world and herself. In total, she was in Uganda for two and a half weeks. She and thirteen other students as well as a few teachers from her high school worked for an entire year putting together fundraisers designed to support their journey as well as a financial gift for the Ugandan school they all eventually visited as a group. While there, they visited several farming schools around the area and even taught a few English history lessons at the main school with which they were twinned. They lived in small guesthouses associated with the school. This school was located in a village center and living there for the short period of time that she did, afforded Sarah greater insight into Ugandan culture:

There was a bigger sense of community. Like all the kids would play together [and] you couldn't really tell who was the mother of which kid because the kids would just be running everywhere because, almost that there was nothing, really, to worry about in that sort of [personal security] sense because they knew everybody in the community… You know, the only threats were external threats…So yeah, we stayed at the school there and, every night there would just be sort of all these younger kids there and I think they were sons and daughters of the people who worked at the school but, we didn't really know who their parents were, but [we] played with them [and] had a good time. They loved the cameras and the phones and they knew how to work them even though they didn't have them. So that was kind of strange, that they sort of knew how to play games on
the phones and that kind of thing. Like, some Western sort of technologies had reached them but, you know, they didn't have a lot of experience with them.

Sarah also waxed eloquently about the manner in which this experience taught her that the world was “smaller but also larger” than she could have ever realized. She marveled about the resiliency of Ugandan life—the ability to be happy with less—and also noted that some aspects of human life are universal: “We might not have the same experiences, [but] we still feel the same emotions…We still know what it takes to get to a place where we're happy and we all still have dreams of things we want to do.”

Seeing the Ugandan school system in such an up-close and personal manner proved challenging for Sarah.

They're smart kids, like they know the same things as a kid—an English kid, an American kid—that age would know, and they worked harder, like, if that makes sense. So, I think that was definitely surprising. I think it's quite easy just to think these people in poor areas have no potential, if that makes sense. Like, ‘Oh, if they had potential, they'd overcome those circumstances.’ But they don't [have access]. If they were in this country or in England, they would have the opportunity to come to college or university. It's just they don't there, even though they put in so much work… They worked hard because they knew this was, like, they're not stupid, they know this is the way out of the life their parents lived and a lot of them, it was a boarding school because a lot of them, their parents would be off, sort of, working to get the money to send them there and then just sending the money. So, I remember speaking to a few of the kids and they just wouldn't have seen their parents for six, seven months—some of them
[for] years. Like, they know their parents would literally write to them; they know they’re out there doing the best they can for them, but they don't have the same connection.

In addition to speaking about the distance forced upon these students and their parents, Sarah witnessed the Ugandan healthcare system and shared that this experience also challenged her greatly.

We visited a hospital there, which is sort of one of the worst parts of the trip, because we got to see like these places where, you know, people sort of died and they weren't anything special. They weren't even cleaned. There was literally not even like a mattress on a cot bed. That kind of thing and the fact that [Ugandans] want[ed] to give everything to someone [they] loved [but couldn’t]… The fact that they couldn't do that, that made me sad.

As our conversation of Uganda continued, it became clear that Sarah had lingering feelings of remorse and shame. She and her classmates were treated like honored guests and given the best guesthouses. The community put on plays and musicals for them. It was clear that the community members were pulling out all the stops, going out of their way to treat them in a highly revered fashion and this made her feel guilty. When I asked her, “Why? Who cares? Maybe that’s part of Ugandan culture to treat their guests in this honored way,” she expounded by saying she did not feel worthy because she had not done anything with her life to deserve this type of treatment. She was no better than they were. In fact, in terms of educational accomplishment, she felt that she was less accomplished than them. That is, she felt that her knowledge of the world and academic subjects was comparable to that of the Ugandan students, yet she and her British
classmates had been reared in a country with greater access and opportunity. This fact troubled her. “I felt like if they were going to treat me that way,” she said, “I should be bringing their community some life-changing research, some type of solution, something more valuable than just some money.” This lingering guilt now motivated her. She was hoping that her studies in geography would give her the opportunity to accomplish something that she could one day take back to the people she met in Uganda. To this end, she explained that her motivation for coming to UK was primarily academic. She wanted “to get good marks” and travel so that she could get a better understanding of U.S. geography—her academic focus of her major. Unlike the majority of international students I spoke with, Sarah wanted to travel around the Commonwealth of Kentucky. She wanted to go camping and hiking so as to gain a better understanding of the local geography.

All of this background information falls into what Taylor (1994) would call “setting the stage” and reveals a few things about Sarah. For one, she has a significant intercultural and international experience under her belt. Perhaps, more importantly, she is an observant and reflective individual who took the time to observe the cultural others around her, gave deep consideration to their way of life, compared it to her own, and used the experience to broaden, inform, and guide her actions moving forward. Her personal goals have been shaped deeply by this personal experience. All of this conjures Deweyan philosophy (as well as Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning) and suggests Sarah might be particularly well-suited and primed to access and take advantage of the intercultural space found within the Global Village. However, this only proved to be the
case in indirect and unexpected ways. In fact, in many ways, she really was not able to access the Global Village intercultural space whatsoever.

**Life at UK, Semester I, Interview I: “She’s a nice person but annoying at times.”** In her first interview, Sarah reported that her relationship with her U.S. roommate Lonnie was both an interpersonal and an intercultural challenge. Sarah described Lonnie as a “nice person but annoying at times.” According to Sarah, Lonnie talks a lot—constantly really—and is over the top religious. She interjects her faith into any pause in the conversation and even interrupts conversations she is not participating in to interject comments about her faith and religion. She also has a strict moral code that includes behaviors such as never wearing makeup, which she regularly points out to people and uses as a springboard to begin another conversation about her religion.

Sarah said that Lonnie had a rough upbringing and believes this may have stunted her social development and probably leads her to cling to her religion in a potentially troubling fashion. She went on to state, somewhat sympathetically, that some of Lonnie’s “annoying” tendencies reflected personal insecurities and emotional instability. To this point, she emphasized, again, that she believed that Lonnie was a good person and that she did not wish her any ill. She simply did not consider her an ideal roommate.

Sarah originally described this roommate situation as an interpersonal challenge, but when I asked her if it also reflected an intercultural issue, she thought about it and agreed that it did. She argued the excessive presence of religion in Lonnie’s life reflected the strong presence of Christianity, religion, and churches she had witnessed throughout the U.S. ever since she arrived. She stressed that she was not conflating Lonnie with
America. Rather, she believed Lonnie’s religious fervor was a single reflection of America’s strong religiosity. This ability to distinguish Lonnie from the rest of America reflects a more sophisticated understanding of culture, acknowledgement that diversity exist within predominant cultural trends. This same maturity surfaced during a different point in the interview when Sarah speculated that first year students in America seem to be more immature, as a general rule, than first year students in England. NB: She noted that there were exceptions to the general rule and also speculated that she believed the immaturity she was referencing may be a phenomenon of first year students only—not all Americans students. She speculated that the immaturity was probably influenced by the dormitory culture of in loco parentis that she felt may, ironically, engender greater dependency and immaturity.

While this relationship with her roommate was challenging, Sarah reported, otherwise, everything was going quite well. She managed to distance herself from the other British students—quietly, diplomatically. And now that the Americans had moved in, she was making an effort to get to know them and it seemed to be working. Unlike the other British students, who were all still hanging out in a group, Sarah was hanging out with several American students, including Lydia, Meghan, and one other Global Village student who did not participate in the study. At the time of this first interview, she had only been living in LLP for three weeks.

**Life at UK, Semester II, Interview II: “It feels like we have to live with each other more.”** Sarah’s second interview took place in February, approximately six months after she arrived on campus. I started the interview by reminding her of her goal to earn “good marks” and asked her how her classes were going. She earned a 4.0 her first
semester and reported enjoying her classes, particularly her geography and geology coursework, which included classes in geomorphics, geohydrology, computer mapping, and a related field studies course. Her professors were more relaxed than what she was accustomed to back in England, easier to approach and relate to. Yes, they were accomplished experts with significant research under their belt and they were busy individuals—she realized this—but they had fewer students in their classes and so were able to interact more with the students like her. I wondered if all of this reflected a cultural difference in the educational systems, but Sarah disagreed. She suspected the difference was due to the fact that she was finally taking upper-division classes—something she never had the opportunity to do at her home university. She also noted that her geography department here in the U.S. was much smaller than her home geography department, particularly regarding student enrollment numbers.

Thanks to her field studies class, Sarah visited several geographically unique areas in Kentucky and beyond, including the Kentucky River, the Red River Gorge, Mammoth Caves, and the verdant hills surrounding Shaker Village. She also visited Gatlinburg and the Great Smokey Mountains National Park with Christian Student Fellowship (CSF), an outside, church-affiliated organization. Nevertheless, traveling in America was significantly more difficult than she had anticipated. She could not afford a car and this apparently was the only practical mode of transportation. Public transportation was not as accessible and convenient as it was back home. Yes, there was Greyhound—the national autobus company—but their fleet of busses typically only traveled to urban centers. She wanted to continue visiting rural areas. This caused her some stress during her first semester. After all, exploring the geography of America was
one of her primary goals. But she reported feeling better about the situation now because she had recently booked a 21-day cross-country tour of America with a British travel company. She was looking forward to participating in that after that semester ended.

I asked what Sarah’s life and experience within the Smith Hall Global Village had been like to date. She reported that she barely spoke with the other British students living in the hall and was proud of this fact. She did, however, say that she spoke with Sophia, who was another exchange student from her home university back in England. She was majoring in Earth & Environmental Studies. Because of this, Sarah reported that they had a lot in common and enjoyed one another’s company. Sophia, however, did not live in Smith Hall and Sarah did not regularly see her. In fact, they only ran into one another occasionally and it was never planned.

I noted that Sarah’s report of Smith Hall—of her life in the residence hall to date—included not speaking with others and only occasionally speaking with a non-LLP acquaintance who lived on a different side of campus. I called this to her attention and asked her about it. Before moving to the U.S., she imagined that her life in the Global Village would be different. She imagined that Smith Hall would be full of international students, which, she noted, it mostly is. But she also imagined that it would be full of American students who had all chosen to be in Smith Hall because of their interest in international students and international issues. She came to realize that this was not the case. Many of the American students, she found, were assigned to Smith Hall randomly—not because they had applied to be a member of the Global Village LLP. Moreover, she found that even some of the Global Village LLP students were less “keen” to learn about other cultures and countries than she had anticipated. Cliques between
some ethnic groups existed as well. For instance, she noted that the Brazilians and Asian students only hung out with themselves. In spite of this, she said that everyone was friendly with one another for the most part and occasionally there were events, such as a recent Super Bowl party, in which the cliques intermingled. (This was not a Global Village-specific event, but rather a hall-wide event. She said approximately thirty students attended and that it was held in the main lobby).

She reported that her relationship with her roommate Lonnie hit a tipping point in November when she walked into their room and found Lonnie, curled on the floor, crying, screaming, and moaning. The incident disturbed her deeply. She wanted to help, but did not know how. Lonnie was talking in tongues—apparently this was another religious episode—and Sarah did not know if it would be appropriate for her to intervene. Eventually, she backed out of the room slowly and quietly shut the door behind her. The two spoke again afterward, but the incident never came up. To Sarah’s knowledge, Lonnie never knew that she had witnessed this event. Sarah was torn, both during the incident and in the days following. Ultimately, she considered the incident to be a sign of mental illness and chose to view it through a student-consumer lens. Although she wanted to help Lonnie, she came to conclusion that she was not a therapist. She did not know how to help nor was it her responsibility to help her therapeutically. She was only a student after all, and, besides, she was paying a lot of money to live in Smith Hall. Eventually, she asked to be re-assigned rooms and her request was quickly accommodated—in part, she said—because the incident had been well-documented. (According to Sarah, Lonnie’s episode was so loud that she received several noise complaints from others living on the floor). Shortly after the incident, Sarah was moved
to a room on the first floor that was completely empty. She enjoyed having the space to herself in the beginning, but eventually came to find it depressing. She did not have a roommate, which meant that the half of the room across from her was completely barren. There was nothing on the walls or desk. In fact, there was nothing on the bed save the naked mattress.

Interestingly, Lonnie came up in a few of the other students’ interviews, though she was always portrayed in a positive light. Others mentioned that she was, indeed, religious but no one reported that she was overbearing. They described her as friendly and outgoing, someone who definitely had a unique identity but was also very much open to diversity and difference. She, herself, (at least as it was described to me by one of the other participants, who claimed Lonnie as a best friend) wore a lot of black and embraced an “emo/goth” style of dress. The RAs I interviewed actually reported that Lonnie was one of the few students living in the LLP who was able to navigate the various cultures and social circles independently. Like another Argentine student, who did not participate in the study but surfaced regularly in the narratives of others, Lonnie befriend people from all nationalities and interacted with them regularly. One of the RAs also mentioned that she—like he himself—happened to be Pentecostal. So her religion came up as part of her cultural identity, but it was never referenced in a problematic context with the exception of Sarah’s narratives. Similarly, no one beside Sarah ever suggested that Lonnie had a troubled past or any lingering psychological issues. Quite the contrary: she was only described in positive—even exceptional—terms. Long story short: it appears that Sarah’s roommate relationship with Lonnie proved to be both an interpersonal and intercultural challenge that she was not prepared to navigate alone. Rather, she chose to
view Lonnie’s different behavior as a sign of mental illness and eschewed that difference by demanding a new experience much like an unsatisfied customer might at restaurant or hotel. Ultimately, then her navigation pattern in this situation proved to be one of circumnavigation.

In December, a girl named Sam from California moved into Sarah’s new room on the first floor. Apparently, Sam had been experiencing roommate conflicts of her own. Initially, Sarah and Sam hit it off. However, Sarah reported that sometimes she felt alienated when she and Sam were hanging out with their suitemates. All three girls were American and they would spend a lot of time reminiscing about American movies and television shows from their childhood. Being from England, Sarah was not familiar with any of these cultural artifacts. But she found her American suitemates were not interested in taking the time to explain any of it. “I felt left out,” she said. She categorized the experience as an intercultural experience that she associated with being the only British student in the group. Her relationship with these three American students only worsened. Initially, she alluded to these challenges as a general unwillingness among some of the Americans students living in Smith Hall to consider and discuss cultural differences that existed between America and the United Kingdom. However, she went on to explain that this evolved into her feeling misunderstood and excluded.

One time when I was talking about the British health system and the British student loan company… [I felt] a bit of tension there [with Sam and my suitemates] because I [was] talking to people who are paying so much for medical care and college tuition and [these things are] handled easier in England, so I guess that can be perceived as though I'm saying like it's always better in England
but, yeah, I just want to so say, ‘This is how we do it [in England]’ because I kind of thought that that was what [the Global Village] was all about. I guess. Yeah, sometimes [my talking about England] can be perceived as ‘[She thinks everything is] better in England and she doesn't like it in America.’ Yeah… We used to sort of hang out together like a group of three. And then they started like, leaving me out of things and I could tell there like, was something going on, but I didn't pressure them because if they didn't want to hang out with me anymore, then that was fine. That's their choice. That's when I decided to start doing things by myself and I was happy with that and then the other night my suitemate was trying to send a text to my roommate—a kind of mean text about me—but she sent it to me by accident instead. And then we had a situation where I was upset and my roommate sort of realized that she was in a situation that she didn’t want to be [in], and was saying things she didn’t want to [say] and felt like she couldn’t get out of it. She had to keep saying sort of these mean things and leaving me out, but she didn't want to anymore and she apologized, said ‘I'm sorry,’ sincerely to me about everything that went on and some of it I didn't even know [about]…Basically [she] apologized and I forgave her. [My suitemate] hasn't apologized to me so I can't forgive her right now…It was just them taking things I [said] the wrong way and I apologized for stuff like that. Kind of like I said, ‘Sometimes I don't think before I say things, like how they are going to be perceived or whatever, but [suitemate] hasn’t responded at all. I think she was at the time [I apologized] mad at herself, and she took it out a bit on my roommate, thinking that my roommate had gone and said all of this stuff to me and gone
behind her back, when it was her who made the mistake of sending the text to the wrong person. I think she is a bit mad about that and I don’t know if she has cooled off now or anything. So yeah that’s the situation.

I broke from my typical interview script to offer Sarah sympathy. I observed that she was in a complicated and unpleasant situation but seemed to be handling it graciously. She agreed that the situation was difficult. “Yeah,” she said, “it was tough because [I had gone home to England for the winter holidays] and I had like been with my family, been with my friends, and then I came back and then it seemed like I’d lost these people who I thought I was friends with, and I felt kind of like alone.” But she also asserted that some good was coming from it: “But, yeah, it was fine because this is when I sort of went looking for things like this is when I signed up for CSF [the church affiliated group that took her to Gatlinburg]…It’s like something happy has come from it if that makes sense.”

In addition to joining CSF, Sarah went on to explain that she had also signed up for a few classes and out-door opportunities through the student recreation center. She explained that formal organizations and structures like these as well as some of her classes granted her the opportunity to make “acquaintances” that she enjoyed conversing with. Perhaps her most meaningful social interaction in America came from working at the Starbucks housed within the campus library. She worked up to twenty hours a week there and reported learning lots about coffee and the culture of coffee. She also said she felt a “sense of community” there, explaining that when it “gets sort of busy and stressful…you have to keep a good community to sort of survive in that. So I feel…a good relationship between all the colleagues there.” When I asked her about her friend network, the only friend she mentioned by name was Sam, the current roommate with
whom she was still working through the conflict discussed above. Based on her own definitions, she had very few friends—if any. She acknowledged this to be the case and discussed it reflectively:

I've learned to branch out to more things and almost the fact that I'm only here for a year makes me care less about, like, the things which I would maybe have got hung up on in the past, sort of like friends falling out and people that I think don’t like me…It’s like I’ve got this mindset that I’m here for a year, so I’ll just do [the things I want to do] now, because I’m going to be four thousand miles away very soon, so if I do something to embarrass myself, I’m not going to have to live with it for very long, and I feel like that’s been like a good life lesson, to sort of put yourself out there and to experience new things, and I’ve found that, like, the positive rewards from it have, like, much outweighed the negatives. So that’s definitely sort of a good thing I’ve learned. Almost, to be sort of more comfortable with myself, doing what I want and taking chances and getting more involved in things… by myself…In the past, I would never have done [things like CSF, the Student Rec outings, and Starbucks on my own], but since coming here, it’s sort of something which I’m more open to doing, and almost seek it out…because I realized, like, it opens up more opportunity and more learning experiences, and I enjoy it. Almost every time I’ve done it, I’ve enjoyed myself.

Building upon this level of reflection, I reminded Sarah of her first interview. Speaking of her time in Uganda, she said that her big “take away” was a deep-rooted desire to give back. She walked away feeling motivated. She wanted to take advantage of all the opportunities and privileges that were afforded to her by virtue of her birth nationality. In
this sense, her take away was fundamentally linked to other people, a sense of obligation to go back and help the people of Uganda. When I inquired about what might be her big take away upon leaving America, she spoke as an individual, as a young adult with a growing sense of self-reliance:

I guess I feel like I'll be more independent or more ready to be sort of by myself... When I graduate, I'll sort of be more ready to do so, because I [will have] spent less time with [my English classmates] and I [will] have also gone off by myself and done this by myself. So it's very different from what I felt from leaving Uganda.

Sarah continued that she felt like this life-lesson would prove helpful. She acknowledged that, eventually, she would become a working adult like her older sister before her. This would require greater independence. Her sister no longer lived in their sleepy hometown, after all. She had taken a job in London as an accountant and was living alone.

Sarah also suggested that all the drama she had experienced in Smith Hall—the roommate fights that she personally had been embroiled in as well as the general immaturity she had observed among some of the first-year American students living in the Global Village—would prove helpful to her in the future. It encouraged her to pay less attention to the opinions and “pettiness” of others. She believed this would be a valuable skill that she could take with her into the professional world.

As we continued to speak, it became clear that Sarah felt conflicted. She was trying hard to frame her narrative in a positive light. Independence and self-reliance can be great things. She even acknowledged that these qualities could support her in her desire to develop a level of professional expertise that—one day, eventually—would
allow her to return to Uganda as a person of substance. Yet independence comes with separation—maybe even a degree of isolation. And it was this—feelings of loneliness and isolation—that continued surfacing throughout both of Sarah’s interviews. Towards the end of her second interview, we looked up and noted that it was snowing outside. She concluded our interview by talking about some distinctions she was beginning to delineate between America and England, observations regarding political division and a geography of exclusion.

There are things that we get in England that you—that we don't get in America. Because England is a small country. I feel like in America some people just get lost and forgotten. There's more, I guess it's more like ethnic minorities that get forgotten. It feels like being poor in America is very different [than] being poor in England… In England it's perfectly normal to take public transport, take the bus or anything, but here it's like, ‘Don't take the bus, you'll get stabbed!’ …And I feel that distinction. There are areas in America, like, in every town and every city [that] you're not supposed to go, but it's less like that in England. Yeah, I don't know if it's because of the benefits system and accounts or housing or anything, but yeah there's less of sort of like, In England being poor isn't like something which relates to being an ethnic minority as much as it [does] here…Yeah, and it feels like people are less likely to be forgotten in England. In America, there's a huge range of different cultures, different mind sets. In England there's still a big range, but it's a smaller, more contained country and it feels like we have to live with each other more …And people tend to live more together. While here, it's like…‘these people will be republicans [and] these
people will be democrats’ and so it's like they never really meet each other…it's like very kind of geographically [determined]. Where you are from, will dictate probably what you think and…maybe [even] your religion [and] your acceptance to some ideas. And in England it feels much more intermingled, just because of the size of the country…So, I guess I just miss being from a small country.

The loneliness Sarah feels is palpable. Yet, she insists many positive things have come from her experience in America. She is more independent and more comfortable with herself. She is also more patient and forgiving of others. She is not afraid to get out and try something on her own. The tipping point she hit when she walked in on her roommate screaming on the floor—really a “disorienting dilemma” amid several, smaller protracted disorienting dilemmas associated with her ongoing “cultural disequilibrium”—and then the social turmoil she found herself embroiled in with her new American suitemates, all of this, she felt, caused her to grow and change. That is, her view and understanding of herself had expanded as result of this ongoing experience. Although she did not develop any significant friendships with any of the residents in Smith Hall, she does—in her own way—manage to navigate that space independently. Indeed, the level of independence she embraces therein enables her to immerse herself more fully and robustly in various intercultural spaces that exist beyond Smith Hall. She joins a local church group. She goes on campus recreation trips. Perhaps most noticeably, she begins working at a distinctly American coffee shop where she is surrounded by a team of American colleagues and claims to find a sense of community in this professional experience. These contradictory narratives—one of a student struggling to connect interpersonally within the Global Village, the other about a young, independent adult
immersing herself in a foreign culture via numerous extracurricular activities—are both a part of Sarah’s story. This complexity underscores the fact that an individual’s given pattern of intercultural navigation will vary by situation and context and the model of intercultural learning posited by this study is meant to be anything but linear.

Ilene from Japan: Circumnavigation, Organized Navigation.

Setting the stage: Hometown and first encounters. Ilene Yamaguchi was born in Kasugai, Japan—a town of approximately 300,000—just north of the large Nagoya metropolis located in Aichi prefecture. She is in the midst of a one-year sojourn, studying in America on exchange from her home university where she is a studious linguistics major. She is the roommate of Ms. Sponge Bob, an American Global Villager from Mississippi. At twenty-one, Ilene is older than the average Global Village participant, but not necessarily more experienced—at least when it comes to international travel. Before arriving at the University of Kentucky, she had never been to the U.S. In fact, she had never been anywhere in the West and had only been outside of Japan once for a short program in neighboring Taiwan one summer prior.

On family and typicality: “I don’t know about typical family in Japan.” Ilene is one of two children in her family. Her older sister, like her father, is a systems engineer. Ilene’s mother studied this same field as a student but worked as a stay at home mom for

---

21 Among other things, Aichi prefecture is famous for being the home of Toyota—one of the most widely-recognized commercial brands in the world. The fact that Toyota’s largest vehicle manufacturing plant in North America is located just north of Lexington, KY and the University of Kentucky underscores the prevalence of intercultural exchange on a corporate level and reinforces globalization as a tangible phenomenon—something shaping our physical and social geographies alike—not to mention our educational environments.
the majority of Ilene’s childhood. She reported that her mother now works as a staff member in the medical school at the same university in Nagoya where Ilene studies linguistics. When I asked Ilene if she considered her family to be typical she laughed a little sheepishly.

Ilene: I don’t know [Laughs.] But maybe yes.

Brendan: Why do you say maybe yes?

Ilene: I don’t know about typical family in Japan, but maybe in my hometown. I said my mom doesn’t work. I think this is typical for my hometown. 22

Ilene went on to explain that her father no longer lives at home but now lives on his own in Chiba, Japan so he can be closer to his work assignment. Before this move, he had commuted two hours by train twice a day so that he could see his family. Ilene explained that this type of arrangement—where the father moves away for work—was not too common for her hometown of Kasugai but more common in the larger cities such as Tokyo or Osaka. When she moved to Nagoya to attend university, for instance, she learned that several of her classmate’s fathers also commuted great distances or moved away from the family so they could more easily support them with their work. 23

22 Interestingly, Ilene is reluctant to make generalizations about Japan, a country that routinely is characterized as quite homogenous. This reluctance presumably has to do with the fact that she, herself, is Japanese and her life experience in Japan has led her to the conclusion that “typicality” is quite difficult to define even in a country like Japan that is arguably more homogenous than most. As we see below, however, Ilene is more willing to make generalization about other cultures and nationalities.

On previous intercultural experience: “They don’t eat in the kitchen.” When I asked Ilene, about her most memorable intercultural experience before coming to America, she spoke of her time in Taiwan. She had been there for a month, participating in a school-sponsored study abroad program in a more rural town south of Taipei. She had hoped to go someplace farther away like England or Germany, but Taiwan was much closer and cheaper, so she chose that and was happy to go. She enrolled in two courses while there—one on the environment, which she enrolled in because it was taught completely in English and another on Taiwanese culture that was taught in English and Japanese. Overall she described the experience as very meaningful for her because it was her first time away from home as well as her first time out of the country. She reported having to grapple with and overcome cultural difference by accommodating her own behaviors and attitudes, such as how she eventually embraced the Taiwanese tradition of eating at the popular night markets. (Coming from Japan, Ilene initially found this casual style of street dining to be a little off-putting and voiced concerns about its degree of cleanliness and sanitation). Somewhat curiously she then jumped to share a related observation: “In Taiwan they don’t cook anymore. So I lived in the dorm, but they don’t eat in the kitchen. We [only] went out to eat. Even if they live in [an] apartment, they go out to eat outside. [Even] my Taiwanese friend says that her mom doesn’t cook. They [only] go to eat outside. So that is different.” While Ilene constructed this aside to illustrate her awareness of cultural difference between Japan and Taiwan, it also reveals that she is willing to make broader generalizations about a given culture based on little evidence. In this case, she is making generalizations about Taiwanese dietary habits based on her limited observations of a specific subpopulation (college students enrolled at
a single institution during a single summer) and the anecdote of one friend. I offer this piece of analysis here for two reasons: 1) The tendency to make broader generalizations about a given culture based on limited evidence is a pattern that presented itself multiple times throughout the interview data and generally speaking is a narrative pattern that appears with students who have less intercultural experience; 2) It should serve as a reminder that Ilene had limited intercultural experience before coming to America.

When I asked her what she learned about herself by going to Taiwan, she reported, "I learned that [even] if I can't speak English fluently, I can [still] communicate with other from another country—that I can be friends. When I went to Taiwan, I couldn't speak English fluently, but, I could [still] make many friends from Taiwan or from China or from other countries." She went on to explain that this required both her and the cultural other to adapt their communications styles by simplifying speech patterns and utilizing non-verbal communication strategies, such as "gestures" as Ilene said. While this type of behavioral accommodation is a hallmark intercultural sensitivity as well as human development more broadly, Ilene also reported that it supported her cognitive/emotional development in such a way that she became more culturally aware and empathetic toward cultural outsiders living in Japan:

It is hard for [Japanese people] to be used to [foreign accents]. Before going to Taiwan, I didn't know [foreign] students staying at my university. . .[or what] kind of difficulty [they experience] because I hadn't tried to go somewhere, to leave. But, after that, after going to Taiwan, I noticed some points, some difficulties to living in another country.
She went on to explain that she started serving as both an academic tutor and cultural mentor for international students at her home institution, helping them with everything from their studies to setting up a bank account (a particularly byzantine process in Japan). So, although Ilene had limited intercultural experience before coming to America, it is important to note that she did participate in an international experience that she found meaningful. It was an experience that resulted in an evolving level of intercultural sensitivity that, as Taylor (1994) would say, “set the stage” for her experience in Smith Hall.

*Ilene in America, one month in: “I feel loneliness.”* Ilene explained that her motivation for coming to the University was primarily academic. She wanted to take coursework in linguistics (her major). However, she also stated that she was excited to take a few communications courses at UK, as this field of study was not an option for her at her home university and she had heard wonderful things about this UK department from a previous exchange student from her home university who had attended UK the year before. A little disappointedly, she reported that the one communication course that she was registered in for the fall semester was actually canceled for reasons unbeknownst to her, but she was looking forward to enrolling in others for the spring semester. She stated that her goals for the academic year were to 1) improve her English language ability and 2) make friends, particularly friends who were not from Japan. Despite articulating these goals and living in a residence hall that was advertised as being supportive for intercultural exchange, Ilene did not experience many meaningful interactions with the other community members. In fact, she reported spending most of her time alone in her room.
Ilene also reported that her relationship with her roommate from Mississippi “Ms. Sponge Bob” was virtually non-existent. Ms. Sponge Bob was a member of the university marching band and consequently was regularly at practices that kept her away from the residence hall both on the weekends and late into the evenings. When Ms. Sponge Bob was present in the room, Ilene reported that she spent most of her time watching T.V. while Ilene spent most of her time studying. Ilene did say that Ms. Sponge Bob invited her out for lunch one day and so she joined Ms. Sponge Bob and a few of her American friends for lunch at a nearby campus cafeteria. However, Ilene reported that Ms. Sponge Bob and her friends spoke English so quickly that Ilene did not understand most of the conversation and consequently felt rather left out. She did not plan on going out with them again. Sadly, feelings of alienation and loneliness like this proved to be a major theme of Ilene’s first interview. In spite of her desire to improve her English and make as many non-Japanese friends as possible, Ilene reported that her friend network within Smith Hall was exclusively Japanese and even that friend network was limited to three students. In fact, when towards the end of the interview I asked Ilene what she had learned from her experience in America to date, she stated:

I learned I don’t like being alone. [Until this point in my life] I [always] lived with my family. Now I live with my roommate, but if my roommate is gone somewhere and if I stay in my room alone I feel loneliness. I didn't know this [feeling] when I was in Japan, but I don't like it.

When I asked Ilene how she attempted to overcome these persistent feelings of loneliness, she told me she spoke with Japanese friends via phone. Initially, I assumed she was referring to her Japanese friends and family back in Japan, but as our
conversation unfolded, I learned that she also meant her three Japanese friends living in
Smith Hall:

Brendan: So do you [just] stay in your room or how do you overcome that?

Ilene: I chat or text on my phone with Japanese friends here or friends in Japan.

Brendan: Okay, and when you say you chat on your phone or text with your
Japanese friends here, do you mean in your hall?

Ilene: Yeah

Brendan: You don’t visit them in person?

Ilene: No, because I don’t know what they are doing.

Brendan: You could just ask them what they are doing.

Ilene: If I have the right time, I just call my friends in Japan.

Brendan: But you said you have Japanese friends in Smith Hall—on the third
floor and second floor. With them, you don’t interact with them in Smith Hall
except for text?

Ilene: Yes.

Brendan: Alright, so when I asked you what you learned about yourself you said
you learned that you don't like loneliness. Anything else?

Ilene: Nothing.

Brendan: Have you changed behaviors because of your experience in America?

Ilene: No.

As I imagined Ilene, sitting in her room by herself, texting with another lonely
Japanese exchange student just a floor beneath her or—worse yet—texting away while
her American roommate sat on the other side of the room watching American television,
both of them *alone together*, each isolated within her own technological silo, I must admit the critical and detached eye with which I hoped to study Ilene’s life began to wane. I was genuinely worried for this student. The fact that Ilene’s roommate, Ms. Sponge Bob, was from Mississippi and spoke proudly about the “good ol’ boy” system did little to assuage my concern. The fact that she did so with a thick Delta draw and occasionally laughed as she told stories that—to my mind—were little more than a series of racist tropes helped even less.

**Ms. Sponge Bob Square Pants from Mississippi: Circumnavigation,** 

*Organized Navigation.*

*Life prior to the Global Village LLP: “This is real common in Mississippi.”* Ms. Sponge Bob is from Cornando, Mississippi—a small town of approximately fifteen thousand—a few hours south of Memphis, Tennessee and is the roommate of Ilene from Japan. She came to UK to study international studies and quickly proved herself to be a natural storyteller, someone who liked to talk and did so with a thick, West Mississippi accent.

She noted that Cornando is about a fourth African-American, but that there were also several, “Mexican and South American” areas in town. “If you’d asked me a year or two ago,” she said. “I would’ve said it’s a very small town. It still is a really small town, but it’s gotten to be a little bigger recently, but that’s probably bigger for Mississippi—not for other states.”

Ms. Sponge Bob is the oldest child in a family of five. Her father teaches A.P. U.S. History at the high school she attended but formerly worked as an emergency medical specialist. Her mother works as a local attorney, specializing in commercial real
estate and property management. “Then I have two little sisters that are twins and they're eleven,” she went on. “It’s awful.” When I inquired why this was awful, she laughed an infectious laugh. “I don’t know,” she said. “One day they'll gang up on you and then the next day they'll gang with you against the other one. It's so bipolar I can't even figure it out. I always joke one of them got all the estrogen and the other one got all the testosterone because they're two separate people. It's awful.”

In spite of this colorful depiction, she described her family as typical for Cornando and did so by explaining that they were well-connected within the “good ol’ boy” system:

Well, my mother, she was— …Tennadelta is another little subsection of Cornando. She was raised in Tennadelta and she— …Cornando is a big town but at the same time it's also a small town and it works very well with the good ol’ boy system. That's kind of how most families in Cornando are. They work off the good old boy system. My mother, she is very much so in on the good ol’ boy system. She knows everybody and everybody knows my mother. My dad, not so much. He was born in Memphis. But my mom— …If I was going to say a typical Cornando family, I would say a suburban family with like two to three kids, maybe a few dogs and cats and I would say they're somewhere inside that good ol’ boy system.

When I asked her to expound on what she meant by the “good ol’ boy” system, she said that “is where you benefit off of your relatives…This is real common in Mississippi.” She interjected her own story with the following aside: “And thank God there's another name for me in this [interview] because when I say this, they're going to beat me up in
Cornando.” She continued: “When people run for like elections and stuff, a lot of times it's the people who have family who have lived there who will get the part. It's kind of like that.” Our conversation stayed on this topic for some time. She went on to explain that her mother knew many judges in the area and stated that her mother could get out of anything. “I've never gotten a speeding ticket,” she said as way of example. “But I've also never had to worry about getting a speeding ticket…So that is a rundown of the good old boy system and it's corrupt and it's awful, but I love to benefit from it. And that's terrible.”

As her first interview continued, it became clear that she loved her family and hometown and had a deep sense of place. When, for instance, I asked her about her neighborhood, she explained that it was nice, mostly white, and located near the center of town. She made a map of her hand and pointed to the center.

I'd say it’s like the main point of Cornando. This is like Wal-Mart, Kroger, little like restaurants and stuff. I would say I was like, right there. Right on the outside of it, everything else is like land and forest type things and like a few farms here and there. It's really green, like everything's green, it's just a big forest. Yeah it's,

---

It is important to note that Ms. Sponge Bob expressed both a sense of pride and guilt multiple times throughout this portion of the interview. As we continued talking about the good ol’ boy system, she asked for reassurance that her real name would not be used. I assured her that it would not be used and also reminded her that she did not have to discuss anything she did not want to. She asked if the names of her hometown would be used and I said I would apply pseudonyms to them as well. “Okay,” she said, offering her consent. “That's good. That works. All right.” She then continued talking freely: “Well, if you know people who are at the top, you can get out of a lot of stuff.”
it's beautiful. I've never seen anything prettier than Mississippi, but then I'm biased.

When I asked her why she chose to leave Mississippi and come to UK, she told me the following:

I always used to tell people, most people don't like, in Cornando, a lot of people don't go to college elsewhere other than Mississippi, so when people would ask me why I chose to come to Kentucky, I would give them this. I would say, 'I'm not diagnosed, but I'm pretty sure I have some form of ADD or ADHD, because I can't stay in one place for very long'. And, that's kind of how my mind works too. Yeah, I can't physically stay in one place for very long and I also can't mentally stay in one place for very long. I have to be on to the next thing, I guess you could say. And so…I guess, I had to kind of learn something else. I had to see something different. I needed to experience something other than what I had always had.

Previous intercultural experience: “The world is really weird.” When I asked Ms. Sponge Bob to tell me about her most meaningful intercultural experience prior to UK, she said, “That one's super easy. This is actually the reason I decided to [study] international relations.” She then jumped into one of her meandering and entertaining stories about her hometown and a woman by the name of Miss Russell. This one started with a discussion of her neighborhood, which was just being built at the time and a reminder that her twin siblings were not yet born. She explained that there were only three or four houses in the neighborhood at that time and few kids. She was six. Her mother was frequently away from the home because she was in law school and her father,
too, was frequently away from the house because he was working as an EMS.

Consequently, Ms. Sponge Bob spent most of her time with her grandmother, who owned a small dachshund. This is where the story of Miss Russell began:

So there was this woman who lived directly across the street from me and her name was Miss Russell. The way I met her was right before my grandmother died, about a year before she died I had gotten a dog for my birthday. And his name was Lex. She actually named him. Lex [was] a little dachshund. Apparently those originate from Germany. He used to like get out and run around and he was like really bad. Miss Russell across the street found him one day and she brought him back. She fell in love with Lex. She loved him so much. Because she didn't have any family in the state other than her husband and her daughter who lived in Washington state. She didn't have much from Germany, which is where she was from, and so she just like fell in love with my dog. I would start going over to her house a lot and she—probably the reason I'm so frickin' fat—because she would like feed me all this food. Like she would make me all this German food and she gave me like cream soda. She would tell me about Germany and she'd tell me all these stories. She actually gave me a bunch of collectibles. She didn't have any grandchildren. She would give me like these little ornaments from Germany and she like knitted me a sweater one time and she kind of started to play the role of my grandmother [after she died]…And I just... I've always been a sucker for stories. That's my thing. I love to hear stories. And she really did like put that in me because she would just sit there and tell me all these stories and I just fell in love with it. I loved hearing about how they lived
and I loved hearing about how her transition was and just everything about it I loved it. That's why I chose international relations because I just... I don't know. It's like an addiction now. Like I love to learn about the differences and it's because of her.

Accepted at face value, this story appears to be a powerful one in Ms. Sponge Bob’s life. It implies that Miss Russell was an influential figure throughout her childhood, one that even inspired her choice of major. Later, however, when I asked Ms. Sponge Bob if she had ever been overseas, she told me that she had been to Germany a few summers ago with her grandfather but said that the trip was not particularly memorable. She relayed a brief story about a German man yelling at her because she put her feet up on a railing at a bus station and this had apparently offended him. She concluded, by saying, “I mean, I can’t really remember much about that trip to Germany to be honest with you.” I was surprised that she did not connect her experience in Germany to Miss Russell. When I inquired about this, she revealed that Miss Russell had moved to Washington a few years after Ms. Sponge Bob’s grandmother had died. They did not stay in contact after those few short years when they lived across the street from one another when she was a young child. Ms. Sponge Bob assumed the elderly woman must now be dead.

When I asked Ms. Sponge Bob if she had any other meaningful intercultural experiences, she launched into yet another meandering line of animated stories about the community of Cornando. As way of forewarning, I should state this is where the racist tropes alluded to above appear:
I’ve met so many people. I had a best friend named Tony. [Ms. Sponge Bob laughs jovially.] Cornando has a lot of illegal Mexican immigrants. A lot of them were in [marching] band with me. One of the things about when you’re in band and you’re a section leader—at least in Mississippi, I’m not sure how you do it here—the people that you’re over, they are your kids. That’s just how we refer to…that’s just how we do it. [More laughter.] One of my kids, his name was…uh, he was from Mexico, and, oh my God, he was like the funniest thing I have ever met…We’d always sit there and…because his name was…Yuriel. Yuriel, [Laughing more.] that was his name. But we’d always make fun of him. We’d call him “Urinal.” [More laughter.] Yeah, Yuriel, he’s an illegal immigrant from Mexico. And I loved him to death. He just …I don’t even know how to describe it. Obviously he’s my kid. And he’d just sit there and do the funniest things. Like [at our high school] we had to get parking passes. And of course he couldn’t get a parking pass [because] he didn’t have a driver’s license. He was driving around without a driver’s license. And he had to pay off a kid for their parking pass. And it was like just so funny…these things that they would have to do to live here. Like it was just the funniest thing. I could not—oh, my god—I could not deal. And like all the time, like we used to make fun of him so bad for being Mexican and we'd just sit there like—he'd make fun of himself for being Mexican. It's so funny. God, I can't even think of all the stupid stuff he's done. Like, he'll go around and he'll be like, ‘oh, I'm an Illegal or Mexican, whatever.’ Like, he'll just make fun of himself, and he'll tell everybody. He doesn't care who you are, he'll tell you. And he's not even worried. Actually, I hate to like change
so quickly, but I just thought of another one. I was actually, I wouldn't say I was raised by her, but when I had to have a babysitter a whole lot when I was a kid. You know, especially in those years when my mother was still in school and my dad was an EMS worker and my grandmother was ill. And she died from cancer, so it's like a few years, she was really ill, couldn't take care of me. So, we had a woman who would come, she'd clean our house and she would babysit me. Oh man, what's her name? I don't know why I can't remember her name. She like frickin' raised me almost. I'll think of her name eventually. I almost couldn't remember Yuriel's name, and he's like my kid, so it'll come to me in a minute. But she, she was an illegal immigrant from Mexico, and so was her husband. Now, her husband, while she was with us, he actually got deported back to Mexico. And we helped her. My mother helped her with that, and kept her in the States, and she had like three kids, I wanna say, and only one of them was relatively close to my age, so me and him hung out a lot. He'd come to work with her and I mean, I was really young for this, I mean, this is like age four to age seven, that I stayed with her the most. Yeah, but she definitely had a really big impact on my life too, because I kind of learned. It was really weird for me to sit there and watch someone like clean up after me, and like, clean my room and cook my food. And, though I knew, you know, I knew where she lived, she lived in a trailer park, probably the one in Fuzbit, now that I think about it. But it was weird for me to see her come and do all of this when she had like three kids at her home. Her husband was being deported. She didn't have much income. So it was like really weird for me and I kind of learned from that too.
Obviously, Ms. Sponge Bob’s stories are troubling. They reflect a racist socio-cultural environment that Ms. Sponge Bob actively participates in and co-creates. She portrays Yuriel as though he were a pet. She makes a pun that associates his name with human waste. And she talks of his challenges and ongoing state of oppression as a reliable source of entertainment. Meanwhile, she struggles to remember the name of the “illegal” woman who almost “frickin’” raised her. Analyzed from this perspective, the cultural others in Ms. Sponge Bob’s life are little more than objects designed to service her private needs: follow the marching band rules that she sets; clean the house that she dirties; cook her breakfast, lunch, and dinner; and, finally, in the case of Ms. Russell, feed her sweets and entertain her in times of loss and loneliness. In this sense, it seems Ms. Sponge Bob is all too eager to confirm ugly stereotypes we hold of the Deep South—unwitting but eager. Yet there is also another lens through which we can and must understand these stories. And that is through a lens of potential, hope, and change—a lens of intercultural learning:

Brendan: What did you learn from [watching this woman come to your house]?

Ms. Sponge Bob: I learned that it's a really weird world.

Brendan: And what do you mean by weird? …

Ms. SpongeBob: The world is weird because the house… we lived in a pretty good size house. She did not. She had just as many kids as we did. It’s just different because we see on TV that there’s a suburban family—I think it’s called the atomic nuclear family—I think. Is that what it's called?

Brendan: Yeah, the nuclear family.
Ms. SpongeBob: Yeah, we see that and we think – I don’t wanna say we think that’s how it should be—but when we think of family that’s what we think of. And I would say that my family is pretty close to that, but … at the same time it wasn’t and at that the same time it was 1,000 times closer to being that nuclear family than hers would have ever been. And it wasn’t because of— …I don’t really know what it was because of. I mean, I do but I don’t at the same time. I don’t want to say it was because of where she was from. It certainly wasn’t because of her ethnicity. But I think it would have been…because where she was from, it would have been hard for her to find a job— …I think the American dream is real, but I don’t think that the American dream is actually very conceivable for everybody. Anybody who puts their mind to something can do it. I do believe that. I want to believe—[Ms. Sponge Bob trails off before starting again]. But there [are] a lot of boundaries, like, there’s… I don’t know what she could have done in Mexico, but in America she couldn’t have been an attorney like my mother. She couldn’t have afforded to go to school like my mother. And it was like all your life growing up in America you hear that you can be whatever you want to be—and that is true—but it’s also not true. Because she worked harder than any woman I’ve ever seen. But she was barely making ends meet. So that’s what I mean when I say the world is really weird.

In the selection above, we see Ms. Sponge Bob express sympathy for the unnamed cultural other. Although she did not recognize the fact that Yuriel’s challenges stemmed from broad, systemic forms of social injustice, this selection reveals that she is
actively struggling to understand and fully articulate notions of privilege, oppression, and “boundaries” that fundamentally limit the reach and potential of the American Dream.

Shortly after this exchange, I asked Ms. Sponge Bob about her motivations for participating in the Global Village and she reminded me of Miss Russell. She also finally remember her caregiver’s name:

I loved her stories and I loved learning about different cultures. I love storytelling because I love to hear how people are different than me. And with me meeting with Russell, me getting that experience. And then with me almost being raised, my God I feel so, I don't know why I can't remember her name? Cruz, Jesus, Cruz. Okay, me being raised, almost raised by Cruz, it like opened up my world, because like, God, how different people are, just by little things, where you're from…and then at the same time we're so similar. That's like awesome for me. I love it. And so that was why I chose international relations and also why I chose Global Village, because I just love it. It's like there's not gonna be a day of me living here with these people that I'm not gonna learn something different, and I'm not gonna experience something different in every sense of the word. You know, I'm never gonna have a moment when I say, 'Wow, same old things.'

Ms. Sponge Bob is a product of her environment. At times, this reality manifests itself in the racist tendencies she unwittingly reveals as she spins stories, ebullient and bright, of her friends and neighbors back in Mississippi. Other times, this reality appears rather

25 A prominent subtext of Ms. Sponge Bob’s learning biography is, indeed, cultural orientations and cultural hierarchies. In fact, cultural hierarchies, such as racism, surface
more elliptically, in the unstated ellipses nestled within her sentences, as she yearns but struggles to articulate, aloud, the injustices facing Cruz. Meanwhile, only moments before, she demonstrated great pride in a sprawling network of nepotism known as the “good ol’ boy” system. In short, she is a complex person. One who claimed to choose to live in the Global Village LLP because she desperately wanted to hear new stories and “learn something different.” All of this, as Taylor (1994) would say, “set the stage” for her experience in the Smith Hall Global Village.

_Life on campus, Interview I: “Sometimes I’ll have to explain myself more in depth.”_ At the time of our first interview, Ms. Sponge Bob had been on campus one week and classes had not begun yet. For most students, the week before classes is a fun-filled week of both formal and informal social activities that have students running across campus from one event to the next. Free food and T-shirts abound. However, Ms. Sponge Bob reported feeling “terrible” about her first week because she had not participated in much outside of an intensive, all-day, every-day orientation for the UK marching band. This was a major commitment that required her to leave her room every morning at 8:00am and typically kept her away until 10:00pm. Consequently, she had not met many people in the Global Village, which she reported was actually her primary goal for the semester. She did, however, acknowledge that she was living with an international student from Japan by the name of Ilene. She reported that this relationship in many of the participants narratives. For a more thorough discussion of this subtext, please see Chapter 7.
was going well generally—that Ilene was “really sweet”—but also admitted that the situation came with some minor challenges:

Sometimes she can't find the right words to say and so I'll try and understand what she's trying to say and sometimes I'll have to explain myself more in depth, but I mean things have been pretty good. We haven't really had many issues. Temperature maybe. She only wants the room on like 90 and I'm over here and I want it on like 65 because I can't sleep if the room isn't freezing… Actually, I think she and I are going to go hang out because we haven't had much time to do that and go get lunch.

This statement suggests Ms. Sponge Bob and Ilene’s relationship shows promise. The fact that Ms. Sponge Bob adapts her behaviors (e.g., “explain myself in more depth”) and apparently genuinely wants to get to know Ilene better suggests the potential for more substantive intercultural interaction and understanding moving forward. However, the same statement reveals they have had little substantive interaction to date and that challenge and conflict have arisen. How the relationship would unfold still remained a mystery—particularly in light of both students’ background and history.

*Life on campus, Semester II, Interview II: “There are definitely some things that I've thought twice about since I've been here.”*26 My second and final interview with Ms. Sponge Bob occurred in late January. She had been on campus for a little more than four months and had also spent some time back in Mississippi for the winter

26 This interview occurred on Thursday, January 4th 2016, which was approximately one month before Ilene’s second interview on Thursday, February 4th. Inevitably, this ordering shaped the way I heard and experienced the interviews.
holidays. She reported that she had done fairly well in her first semester of coursework—including an introductory Arabic class that she had enrolled in—and was still studying international relations. She had begun a second semester of Arabic. In contrast to these milestones, she did not seem to be making much progress toward her original goal for the year—to make as many friends as possible with the other students in Smith Hall:

Last semester, I just did the thing that I did all through high school without even realizing I did it. Which was making band my number one. I don’t think it should have been my number one. I wasn’t in Smith Hall as much as I should’ve been. So I really didn’t give myself as much of an opportunity to meet as many people as I could have…I don’t know why, but I just clung to band. We cling to things that are familiar to us and so I think I did that without even realizing it.

I asked her if she had had many intercultural experiences in Smith Hall—either through formal, Global Village programs or, more organically, through informal interactions with people in the hall. She replied, “I think it’s all intercultural.” She told me that she knew there were people from England, Scotland, and Sweden living on the floor but that their English was so perfect that it could actually be difficult to determine whether or not they were American. She mentioned the large contingency of Brazilians living on the third floor and said their English was the “one give away.” She ended by saying, “So it can actually be difficult to tell. I don’t think people really think about it. I think we just kind of all mingle together. It’s actually kind of cool.” Despite her suggestion that it was “cool” and that she was mingling with the international students, I did not get the impression this was the actually the case. “My question,” I pressed her, “I guess, is not really whether or not this is an intercultural environment but what kind of intercultural
interactions you’ve had. Have you had many interactions where you're actually getting to know these people, experiencing their culture and discussing it with them?” She admitted that she was not—not really anyway. “Sometimes,” she said. “It’s kind of like I'm just here and everybody's passing [me] by.”

But then she continued: “I think that [the] one person that I've actually gotten [into] a huge part of doing that with is my roommate, Ilene. Like we are actually like really good friends.” She explained that once the rigors of band season had died down with the less-than-inspiring football season, she and Ilene found themselves spending a good amount of time together in their room. She said they talked alone together, frequently and at length—sometimes for two hours or more. They discussed important matters. Ilene, for instance, told Ms. Sponge Bob about her relationship with her boyfriend—how they met, the struggles that came, inherently, with a long-term relationship (he was still in Japan), and her plans and anxieties regarding an upcoming visit. Ms. Sponge Bob, in turn, listened carefully and gave her advice. Regarding her boyfriend’s upcoming visit, she shared travel tips—where Ilene should take her boyfriend and the little places they should visit once they got there, the kind of inside travel advice one could only get from a local.

Ms. Sponge Bob claimed this budding friendship also gave her greater insight into Japanese culture and life:

…And we were talking about like the U.S. and then we were talking about Japan, and, oh my God, … The coolest thing to this day that I think I've ever heard was “The Japan Thing”… In Japan, they can’t go and get a job in the same kind of way that we can here. You know, here you just go whatever, apply for any job
you want to, just go and do it. If you graduate college and you want to apply in
May, get yourself up, go apply in May. If you want to wait until October, go
apply in October. But she was telling me like how in Japan it's so structured you
can't do that… Like when she was talking about it, it just seemed like mechanical
robots. Oh, and she was talking about the way they have to dress and it's so
structured. Like she has to wear certain things every single day. She said once
she graduates she can never wear leggings or pants for the rest of her life except
for like Saturdays and Sundays or something. I couldn't believe it.

Although it was a little hard for me to follow at first, it became clear that Ms. Sponge
Bob was describing the Japanese phenomenon known as “Shushoku Katsudo”—a highly
structured employment search process that may appear a little odd when viewed through
an American lens, particularly the lens of a young American who has never been through
a formal search process herself. Ms. Sponge Bob’s testimonial, indeed, makes it clear
that she finds the process foreign and bizarre, but she also says things that imply she is
also beginning to understand Shushoku Katsudo from the perspective of Ilene. For
instance, she explained sympathetically that the rigidity of the process is stressful for
Ilene: “I know she's worried about it because of being here, but I think she's just trying as
hard as she can to get in with it.” She also acknowledged similarities between this
foreign process and her own American culture: “We're raised to go and get a job. I think
they're raised to go and get a job, just a little bit differently.” As she continued discussing
“The Japan Thing,” she even made a point of evaluating the two cultures in a
comparative light:
So you know how here in America we think that some things in other countries are just barbaric and they're awful or whatever because we've never grown up with it? But those people are like totally okay with it because that's all they've ever known. And they don't see an issue with it because that's how they were raised. I think that's kind of the same thing. I think she's kind of indifferent about it, you know?

Ms. Sponge Bob also shared that her feelings and attitudes toward this particular cultural practice were evolving:

I think at first I probably felt like ‘Oh, wow, that really sucks,’ like a sympathetic sort of view. But just the way that [Ilene] talks about her indifference with it, that's just the way it is. So, I mean, you know if that's the way it is, like who am I [to judge]? Who am I? Just because I was able to grow up here doesn't mean I should look down at anybody who wasn't. And it's not like there's anything wrong with their way. It's just not my way. That's the thing with people, they think it's either my way or the highway and that's not the case. I'm definitely not one of those people. I'm not a my way or the highway type person.

While this statement reveals that Ms. Sponge Bob cultural understanding of Japan and the Shushoku Katsudo is evolving, it also reveals that Ms. Sponge Bob is able to use Japanese culture as well as her relationship with Ilene as an active platform for self-reflection, a helpful mirror that allows her to explore her own values and identity.

Nevertheless, Ms. Sponge Bob remains a product of her environment and her environment is not limited to the present alone. As Ms. Sponge Bob’s fellow Mississippian William Faulkner once famously wrote, “The past is never dead. It’s not
even past.” In the case of Ms. Sponge Bob this means she did not arrive on campus as a *tabula rasa* but rather as a politically and culturally situated individual from West Mississippi. Someone whose experience of the cultural other was shaped and complicated by the socially-constructed narratives of that particular environment. I was reminded of this fact towards the end of our second interview, when our conversation turned—following Ms. Sponge Bob’s lead—to the topics of Donald Trump and the Syrian refugee crisis.

…You know, …that might be one of the biggest ways I have changed. Of course I'm still... Let's say, politically, I'm still an independent. I'm still a very open-minded independent. But there are definitely some things that I've thought twice about since I've been here and if I wasn't here I wouldn't think twice about it. Like immigration. So the biggest thing right now is Trump and immigration. Of course, as far as the Mexican immigration goes, and I hate Trump. Let me just get that out. I hate Trump. He's such a... He's such a word that I can't say while I'm being recorded…Oh my god. He is just a pig. And so like as far as his Mexican immigration ideas, I always hated it. I always thought he was a sly little B-A-S-T-A-R-D. But so more recently his Muslim policies, in Mississippi that's the one thing we don't have a whole lot of. We don't have a whole lot of Muslims. So I've never met as many as I have now [in Smith Hall and at UK]… And definitely being in the Arabic program, I'm meeting a ton more. But I think if I were still in Mississippi and if I had never met many... I think maybe I met like maybe two in my entire life, which is crazy there. But if I was still there, I might think a bit differently… So I want to... I'm a helping person. Like, I want
to help people. I love helping. I love helping people. Like the Syrian refugees is
specifically what I'm going to talk about. … I want to help them really badly, but
I am terrified to help them. That's why Trump is winning so bad because he's
spreading fear and that's what gets people is fear. That's how he's going to do it.27
…[Anyway,] I'm afraid [to help Syrian refugees] because I've never... I mean I
care about my life, but I care about my family's lives more than I care about my
own. I don't want to think that anybody cares about a small town in Mississippi
because I don't think they do quite frankly but I'm going to do... I'm a fighter. I'm
not a lover. You know that term? I fight and I'm not going to stop fighting to
keep my family safe and so I almost kind of feel like if I help them and their
families, and this kills me, I was just telling [a friend] this a few weeks ago and,
oh my God, it was breaking my heart. I feel like if I help their families, I could be
possibly hurting my family because you know not that I think that they're all
terrorists. I can't possibly think a thing such as that and definitely none of my
friends here have ever spoken, Muslim friends here, have ever spoken anything
such as anything like that. It's completely... It's crazy to think so, but it still scares
me. Like if there are 200,000 let's say [and] only 100 or 200 turn out to be
terrorists, I don't know what that could do. And just one person who wants to hurt
mass amounts of people, that terrifies me because I can't live without the people
in my family. And so if I was still in Mississippi, I feel like I would be less hurt

27 Ms. Sponge Bob made these comments approximately three months before Donald
Trump won enough delegates in the Republican primaries to become the presumptive
nominee for the GOP.
about it because you know I've never... Let's say I'm in Mississippi. I've never met many Muslims before, so I don't know who they are as people... All I know is with news media, which is a horrible thing, I think being here... You know, I've met so many people who do affiliate themselves with the religion of Islam. I'm studying Arabic so of course I'm around that all the time. And they're great people, you know. Not that I would have ever thought anything other, but I think just definitely being here and meeting them, it definitely just cleared my thoughts as far as what the media put in and as far as what you hear. I don't [know]... it's just being here, I've had so much opportunity to actually... like create a political opinion based on my experiences. So while, yes, I still really want to help those people and their families, I'm still very scared that I would be hurting my family in that sense or protecting my family less.

There is a lot happening in this selection. It is long and rambling. It reminds us that Ms. Sponge Bob loves to talk. It also reminds us that she loves her family and takes great pride in Mississippi. It shows us that she is incredibly complex—a messy, complicated human being with a stream of contradictory thoughts and feelings. On the one hand, she wants to help the refugees. On the other hand, she believes they could be terrorists. Meanwhile, she characterizes Donald Trump as a fear-mongering demagogue and to some extent also realizes her own way of thinking has been shaped by similar influences in the media. She acknowledges that her new collegiate environment of higher learning has taken her far away from her home and exposed her to people who are markedly different from the people she knows in West Mississippi. She understands that these new experiences have forced her to “think twice about some things” and given her the
“opportunity” to form her own opinion based on her own personal experiences. Yet the selection ends with her clinging to the improbable (if not irrational) concern that if she were to help a Syrian refugee, she would also be hurting her family. This is not where our second interview ended, but it is where this conversation stopped. There was no further reflection regarding Donald Trump or her complicated desire to help Syrian refugees. Nor did I encourage her to question these stances any further. I did ask her what she thought of the good ol’ boy system now that she had been away from her hometown for more than a semester and she replied quickly: “I love it. I really benefit from [it]. So I can't really say that I hate it. But there really aren't that many people that don't benefit from the good ol’ boy system, especially in Cornando.”

After the interview ended and my recorder was turned off, Ms. Sponge Bob informed me that she was hoping to transfer to Ole Miss. She had already begun working on her application. Nevertheless, she described her time at UK and her time in the Smith Hall Global Village as a “privilege.” She concluded the interview by saying:

I haven't met as many people as I want to, but I've met nearly every person [on the third floor]. I can't remember their names, but I've met nearly every person and we've all had like a short little talk and just like... I don't know. I just love hearing people's stories and where they're from and what they do. It's just so cool to me...It's like I get to have short conversations—what I've allowed myself to have [anyway]… I don't know. I kind of think not going to school in Mississippi was just great... Because like there's so many people here, so many people from other areas of the world, of the nation, so it’s really nice to hear how people live differently from you, you know? Everybody has a story and I love stories. That's
why I keep talking about them.

**Return to Ilene from Japan: Interview II, four months in (Roommate of Ms. Sponge Bob).** Ilene and I began her second interview by discussing the progress she thought she had made toward achieving the goals she had outlined in her first interview. She felt that her English language ability was definitely improving, particularly her “daily English” and to a lesser extend her “academic English.” During the fall semester, she struggled to understand what was being said in class and so went to great lengths to record every class/lecture and listen to it multiple times in her room and take notes and look up words as she was listening to the lectures. She said this improved her English language both in and out of class. She reported that her daily English improved because she became more comfortable with basic conversational scripts that she could use on the way to and from class with friends. “How are you? What’s going on? How are classes going?” etc. As the second interview progressed, however, I witnessed her tell long stories that included multiple characters and settings and it became clear that her level of fluency had improved rather dramatically and she was now far beyond the process of simply following basic conversational scripts.

As I inquired about her second goal, that of meeting new people and making new friends, particularly American friends, I expected to hear less progress and did—at least at first. Ilene said that she had become “lazy” toward the end of the fall semester. She said she was busy with her classes and simply did not have the energy to reach out to new people. I took the opportunity to turn the conversation to Ilene’s roommate relationship with Ms. Sponge Bob and braced myself. Yes, Ms. Sponge Bob did share plenty of anecdotes that suggested that she and Ilene were getting along fairly well as roommates.
A few of her anecdotes even suggested they were exchanging ideas about their own cultures and discussing those differences in a substantive and supportive manner that allowed each individual roommate to reflect on her own personal values and cultural identity. That being said, all of these promising anecdotes were relayed by Ms. Sponge Bob. Yes, in her first interview, Ilene did report that she went out to lunch with Ms. Sponge Bob, but Ilene also shared that this was a lonely experience that left her feeling isolated and disenfranchised. Presumably, Ms. Sponge Bob would have looked back on this lunch and said it had gone well, completely oblivious to Ilene’s personal feelings.

Thus, I braced myself. I waited for Ilene’s side of the story.

“Ilene,” I began, “in our first interview, you reported that your relationship with your roommate wasn’t very meaningful. You said you liked Ms. Sponge Bob because she had things like a microwave and cleaning supplies that you could use, but you also said you really couldn’t understand what she was saying because she spoke so fast and you also said you didn’t see her that much because she was always at band practice. How would you describe your relationship with Ms. Sponge Bob now?” Ilene paused for a long time before she spoke. Finally, she asked, “What is this word—meaningful relationship—what does it mean?” “It’s important to you,” I explained. “An important relationship.” I was not anticipating what Ilene said next: “No, she now is my friend.”

Ilene, then began to tell a story that made it clear that she really was making progress—not only with her “daily English” as she referred to it—but also with her second goal of making American friends:

I remember one important thing. During the last semester. I guess it was in November. At the end of November. I was really depressed. Because I had one
group project in my [linguistics and gender] class. We had a meeting. We got
together at 9:00pm or 10:00pm—9:00pm, but two members didn’t come so we
couldn’t start the project, so we waited for them until 10:00pm. So we had one
hour free time. And we were talking one hour, but I couldn’t join the talking.
The other members…I knew one of them. I asked her to let me see her notes, but
I didn’t know the other members and they were all American. So when they were
talking, I totally couldn’t understand what they were talking about. They were
talking about a TV show, but I didn’t know that TV show, so I had completely no
idea what they were talking about. And because I was quiet, no one paid attention
to me. And before the conversation started…we all arrived at separate times. I
arrived second and one of the other members, he arrived and he asked me about
things from the last class [from which he had been absent] and so I explained
about the things from the last class. But after the members got together, he asked
the same thing again to another member. So I thought maybe he didn’t
understand me or maybe he didn’t trust me because of my English or because I’m
a foreigner. So I felt really tired after that. So I left. And I felt that my English
[had] not improved then. So I came back to my dorm room. At first, I didn’t feel
like talking about that to Ms. Sponge Bob. But for some reason—I don’t know
why—I started explaining my situation [to her]. [Then] I asked her about my
experience. And she agreed with me. She’s studying languages now. Arabic I
think. And she listed to my situation about speaking a foreign language in a
foreign country. And she said if she were in the same situation, she could not do
that. She could not understand the others speaking and she agreed with me. It’s

This short story entails what—for Ilene—is both a profound, disorienting dilemma as well as the start of a major transformation. That is, her cultural and linguistic isolation in America causes her to feel “really depressed.” She believed others may not trust her with even the most basic exchange of information—not only because she is a non-native speaker—but also perhaps because her very foreignness may render her fundamentally untrustworthy in their eyes. If you put yourself in Ilene’s shoes, a young stranger in a strange land, completely by herself, it is hard to imagine a direr situation. But, in the end, it is this disruptive experience that forces Ilene to take initiative and speak with Ms. Sponge Bob, actually start a conversation like two friends might have, something she reported never doing before this moment. This behavioral change leads to the start of an authentic intercultural friendship. Ilene now reports that Ms. Sponge Bob is a genuine friend. In other parts of the second interview, for instance, she reports that she and Ms. Sponge Bob have been spending a lot more time together, interacting regularly, and participating in on-going conversations about one another’s lives. She explained that Ms. Sponge Bob still watches a lot of T.V. in their room, but she also reported that she feels comfortable asking Ms. Sponge Bob about watch she is watching and Ms. Sponge Bob will always take the time to tell her about whatever she happens to be watching. She
relayed an anecdote about one specific movie Ms. Sponge Bob happened to be watching one night. It was one of Ms. Sponge Bob’s all-time favorite movies. Ilene could not remember the name of the movie, but it was filmed in and around Ms. Sponge Bob’s hometown in Mississippi and embraced the location of the film as one of its major themes. The movie also featured a song that Ms. Sponge Bob loved, partly because it included lyrics about her newly adopted state, Kentucky. As Ilene relayed this story, it became clear that she was telling me this story—not because she remembered all the details—but rather because she found it important. It was meaningful because it gave her a better understanding of American culture—not generic American culture writ large—but rather real, American culture, tacit knowledge regarding a specific place in Western Mississippi. Of course, Ilene also chose to tell this story because it elucidated the way she understood and made meaning of her experience in America and within the Global Village LLP.

During our first interview, Ilene reported that she learned that she does not like to be alone. Whether she realized it or not, she painted a picture of loneliness and alienation. Approximately four months later, by the time of interview two, Ilene was reporting that she had learned meaningful ways (e.g., intercultural friendship) not to be alone in America. Ilene’s relationship with Ms. Sponge Bob had changed from a meaningless one to one of significance and meaning. The two had become more than roommates. According to Izuho, they took turns listening to one another’s stories. They expressed sympathy and validated one another’s concerns, joys, and frustrations. In short, they had become friends.

Setting the stage, life before college: “And the road that he passed on, my bus took every single day.” Roni was born and raised in a small New Hampshire town with less than 5,000 people—a town she described as “just really, really white.” She was assigned to Lydia as her roommate, also American. Roni is passionate about all things Japanese, including anime, J-pop, Japanese history, and, of course, the Japanese language itself. In fact, she chose to attend UK specifically because it offered a major in Japanese as well as a minor international business, an academic offering she found to be rare. The fact that she happened to have an aunt living in Louisville was an added bonus.

Roni has strong, clearly defined life-goals that include being the first UK student to study abroad at Waseda University via a new exchange program, winning the nationally competitive Boren scholarship, and eventually landing a national security job for the U.S. government that would allow her to work in Japan upon graduation. Despite these specific goals, all of which directly relate to Japan, she actually has never been to Japan (or any other country for that matter). That being said, she has a deep connection to Japan and it appears authentic and informed—at least, to the extent possible for someone who has never been there before.

In high school, Roni attempted to participate in a rotary Japan program, but she was not selected for this opportunity. This slight proved to be one of only many things that left a bitter taste in her mouth and left her excited to get away from her small town for college. She was, however, able to participate in a U.S./Japanese exchange program known as “LABO” in high school. This entailed her and her family hosting a different Japanese student in their home for one month for three summers running. Each summer proved to be a good experience for Roni, but she said her last experience with LABO was
the best because she was paired with a student named Hiroko, someone Roni explained felt a like a friend. “We both like very similar things,” she shared. “We both like the same music, the same anime. And we just, like, we both like playing similar games. And we just felt very similar.” She reported that this was her most meaningful intercultural experience prior to college, for she had never had the opportunity to travel overseas, which is something in which she placed great value. She also explained that her relationship with Hiroko was important for her future:

When I go to Japan I'll have someone that I can like, that I'll be able to remember, that I'll be able to hang out with. That I feel like I'll be able to be immersed in the culture because I already know someone, that I'll have like that link to the culture already. So it's like it's, it's helped me… Because I intend to eventually live in Japan. And I want to be more a part of the culture and not someone who's just visiting.

Parts of Roni’s story are sad. She told me that she is the youngest of six children and that her oldest sibling is twenty years her senior. She remarked that this made her father and oldest brother closer in age than she and her brother. She argued that this—both the size of her family and the differences in age—made her family atypical for her hometown. She also reported being bullied her entire life, from the time she was in elementary school to the time she was in high school. When I asked her to describe her hometown, she started to say it was nice—a perfunctory response—but stopped to speak honestly: “the teenagers are horrible.” She said they treated her like she was subhuman and eventually leveled with me: “I really don’t like [my hometown] at all.” In a different part of the interview, she shared that her parents were divorced and, perhaps most
tragically, that her sibling Sebastian had recently and unexpectedly died in a car accident when she was a senior in high school. “And the road that he [died] on,” she said, “my bus took [it] every single day.” Sebastian was not her closest sibling in terms of age but certainly in terms of friendship, interests, and appearance. “He and I also looked a lot alike,” she said, “like we were male and female versions of each other.” He was the person who first introduced Roni to anime—the person who inspired her to fall in love with all things Japanese.

*Life at UK: Interview I: “So when I came here, I liked myself—[I felt] like I was part of something.”* I interviewed Roni during the first week of classes and it became clear—really, in a matter of minutes—that she was not going to be my typical interviewee. Before the interview began, she encouraged me to use my smart phone to record the interview instead of the Dictaphone I had brought. She even went so far as to pull up the app that she recommended so I could download it right there in front of her. This struck me as a little intrusive but good intentioned nevertheless. She also proved different in the simple fact that she was beginning her second year on campus—something that was unique among the American Global Village students. She had not participated in the Global Village her freshman year nor had she lived in Smith Hall. This helped her cultivate an informed opinion on the state of the residence halls generally, which she was eager to talk about:

One of the reasons I actually wanted to live in Smith and Global Village [was] because of the dorm style. It’s a two-person, not a two bedroom style. I hate the new style [of residence halls]. I will say it bluntly: I hate the new style, because RAs are having trouble with students not interacting with their roommates
because they’re in separate rooms. Those rooms are best for seniors. Seniors who are interested in just getting their work done, just trying to get out of here. There should be no freshman put in those dorms. Especially the international students.

In addition to sharing this opinion, she also shared critical feedback regarding roommate assignments within Smith Hall. Like many other students I interviewed, she was disappointed that she had been paired with someone who shared her nationality. Even her suitemates were Americans and the fact that two of them were sorority girls only exacerbated the problem in her mind. It was clear that she considered the same nationality roommate assignment to be—not only a personal problem—but a problem affecting many students, particularly all of the international students. She criticized the University for not thinking through the roommate assignments more carefully.

Roni’s mode of communication also proved different. Although her answers were full of stories, they were rarely linear. They often entailed long tangents and jumped around in place and time, connecting past and present as she moved from one topic to the next. For instance, it was not until late in the interview that I realized her brother Sebastian was dead. She had referred to him off and on throughout the interview and had always done so in the past tense (e.g., “My brother Sebastian liked anime too.”), but I did not pick up on the clues. Eventually, however, I understood what she had been trying to tell me all along:

Roni: People didn't start treating me like I was human [in school], until my brother passed.

Brendan: Oh, I'm sorry.
Roni: Yeah, it was bad. That's why I kept using the past form. I offered my condolences—not only because she had lost her brother—but also because she had been bullied. I was starting to feel quite bad for this young student sitting before me, but then she started to tell me about her experience at UK. In typical “Roni fashion,” her explanation moves circuitously, jumping from past to present:

Ever since I came here, I felt— …like when I was at home I never really felt—… like my parents had each other and my older sister had her fiancé… And my other sister had her boyfriend. And my older siblings have their kids. For me, it's like, it was him [her dead brother Sebastian]. So when I came here [to UK], I liked myself, [I felt] like I was part of something.

While this particular statement is still tinged with sadness, it is also the beginning of a positive testimonial regarding her collegiate experience to date. It, as well as the quote below, suggest UK offers Roni a sense of community and belonging that she was lacking in New Hampshire:

And when I came [to UK], I fell in love with how the teachers are. And they're amazing teachers, amazing Japanese professors. And just so far I've loved all my classes, even like the beginning year, like the core classes. Like, I took WRD 110 and like the teacher that I had, he was really, really funny. Like he made the class like you would want…I didn't mind going to class because of the teacher. He was really nice.

In addition to loving her coursework, Roni shared that she loved the co-curricular and extracurricular opportunities afforded by UK, particularly those related to Japan. She reported serving as an officer in a Japanese culture club on campus. She also talked
about participating in a community-based organization known as JASK (The Japan American Society of Kentucky). “I’m also part of the International Student Council,” she went on, “I help out with their summer events. I [also] help any time the Japanese [department] needs help… I really just like helping. Which is why I didn’t mind helping out with [your] research.” I mentioned that Roni struck me as intrusive when it came to the particulars of my research methods, but I also described her as well-intentioned, which I hope the quote just above reiterates. Like all of the students in my study, Roni was volunteering her time and energy out of kindness and for this I was grateful. I was also happy to hear that UK was proving itself to be a good fit for her personally, particularly since I now knew how rough her life in New Hampshire had been. In addition to loving her classes and co-curricular involvement opportunities, Roni reported that she was particularly smitten with Smith Hall:

I’ve already loved it and I only just moved in yesterday…I’m only two or three rooms down from two of my Japanese friends that I met last year who I’m so close to. I [also] met two British students… They’re really sweet. And then I met the new Japanese students that are here. It’s funny, I was going back into my room and all of a sudden I noticed, because I’m right on the edge, right near the common area…I realized all my Japanese friends were in the common area. And I went ‘Oh, I can go hang out with them.’ And they were going to the midnight pancakes, so we all went to that [and that’s how I met the new Japanese students.]

When I asked her about her hopes for the upcoming year, she made it clear that she wanted to bring her helping nature, intentionally, to the community found within the Global Village. She spoke at length about something called “Drama Fever,” a website
where one can access dramas from around the world and watch them in their original language. In addition to the Japanese dramas, she shared that she also loved watching Korean and Taiwanese dramas and used them as a way to access and better understand these Asian cultures. “Watching dramas,” she explained, “they actually can get you hooked in. I feel like I have a better pronunciation of Japanese words because I watch all these Japanese shows.” She had recently become a “Drama Fever Fire Starter.” “I’m the only one on campus,” she said proudly. She went on to explain that this was an official leadership position connected to the website that would support her in encouraging other students to become fans. She mentioned EMP (the Smith Hall Government President) and the academic partner associated with the LLP by name and stated that she had plans to work with both of them to incorporate Drama Fever into the Global Village. “I [want to] work with Global Village just so we can [have] more events to get people to interact with each other,” she said, “just hanging out, showing the international students what America is like, and international students showing Americans what their country is like.” As our first interview was winding down, I found myself wondering what Roni’s experience in the Smith Hall Global Village would actually be like after she had some time to settle in. Although she was already engaged academically and co-curricularly and reported having a strong, pre-existing social network on campus, I wondered how her personality would mix with those around her in the residence hall.

*Life at UK: Semester II: “It's that adventure of them having trouble…and me being able to kind of help them.”* Roni’s second interview took place in mid-February. She wondered why I was still using my old Dictaphone. I shrugged and offered a platitude about change being difficult. In spite of the truth in this statement, change
continued to be a welcome presence in Roni’s life. As our interview unfolded, it became clear that attending UK was still one of the most positive experiences of her life and it seemed to be only getting better since she had moved into the Smith Hall Global Village. Alas, she did not make progress spreading Drama Fever as she had hoped, but she had no trouble taking advantage of the intercultural space at hand. She reported doing so organically, completely on her own. And the staff members I interviewed confirmed that this was the case; Roni was one of the few students in the Global Village LLP who routinely interacted with various national groups throughout the hall. For instance, there was a large group of Brazilians living on the third floor. Almost everyone was friendly with them, but very few people reported spending much time with them, partly, they explained, because the Brazilians typically stayed together in large groups and only spoke Portuguese. Roni told me that she would actually stop them and ask them what they were talking about and when she did so they would take the time to speak to her in English. Consequently, she knew several of them by name, reported spending time with them, and considered them to be friends. Except for those students who were paired via roommate assignments, Roni was the only American Global Villager who reported having any real interaction with the Asian students. Predictably, she had become particularly close with several of the Japanese students. In fact, she claimed that it was easier for her to befriend the Japanese students than her fellow Americans. When I asked her why this was the case, she said:

I think it's that adventure of them having trouble, not having trouble, but them not knowing the English language completely and me being able to kind of help them but then they reversed the situation where I'm trying to learn Japanese and then
they can help me. So that feeling of knowing that I can help someone and that
someone can return the favor, an America could never fill that [role].

She also shared several stories revealing that her interactions with the Japanese students
were more than simple interactions. She explained she was socializing with them
frequently and this often occurred off-campus in settings that proved to be enlightening.
Not only did these experiences help her with her Japanese, they also gave her greater
insight into Japanese culture. For instance, by watching them, she reported gaining a
better understanding of how to bow contextually, how and when to make eye contact, and
how—even more generally—one is expected to interact with people of different age
categories in Japanese culture. While she reported learning several important and
interesting things from her Japanese language classes and other related classes, such as
the “Meiji to Modern” class she was enrolled in, she argued that her learning potential
was limited in formal, in-class settings. By interacting with the Japanese students around
her, she could learn experientially, by actually observing and participating in the culture
herself.

One specific example that she spoke about in great length was a Kinga Shinnen or
New Year’s party that she attended with several of her Japanese friends in Frankfort. She
explained that this party was a formal and expensive ($200 per ticket) black tie affair that
she and her friends were able to attend only because they volunteered their time for
several hours checking the guests’ coats at the door. Apparently, several high-ranking
officials were in attendance. She described the event thusly:

Like I just volunteered at a JASK event, which is Japan America Society of
Kentucky. It was for Kinga Shinnen. Kinga Shinnen is like a New Year's event. It
was held at the governor's mansion, actually, in Frankfort. There were over 200 guests. I got to meet the governor\textsuperscript{28} who actually I found out, grew up in New Hampshire [and] studied Japanese too. And then I also got to meet the Consular General who is [Japanese and] on the governor’s [level] and works in Nashville… I also got to meet a lot of business relations and [see] how my [Japanese] friends were kind of using this experience to [network]… and I was able to hear the difference of like how their speech is different. Because in Japanese—unlike in English how most of our speech is very similar we just maybe change the vocabulary, but our speech styles are pretty much the same. But in Japanese they have Keigo, which you use for someone above you, so someone you have respect for. You wouldn't use it for your family members, you know, your father or your mother, you have respect for them but you just wouldn't use it for them. Like for a teacher or for a boss or something like that or even for a senior member. If you were a brand new business office worker, you would use this style of speech with [senior colleagues]. And I noticed, like, how my friends reacted around the Japanese business professionals [at this party]. I've been trying to figure out what words to use for Japanese business professionals, like

\textsuperscript{28} Ironically, the governor being referenced is Matt Bevin. I say “ironically” because one of Matt Bevin’s first governing acts upon being inaugurated was to drastically slash the higher education budget in the Kentucky commonwealth. (He was also largely criticized for publicly disparaging and specifically taking aim at liberal arts majors, such as French literature, even though he apparently—as Roni suggests—\textit{did} study Japanese language and culture as an undergraduate at another public university). At any rate, his policies and actions regarding higher education directly relate to the culture of privatization explored in Chapter Six.
compared to how [my friends] chat with each other in the dorm, or in the
residence hall. They, like, the style of their speech, they pretty much take out
most of the sentence structure. That's just how it is in Keigo Japanese, like they
could pretty much take out everything and the verb and it would still make sense.

As our second interview progressed, it became clear that Roni was enjoying her time in
the Smith Hall Global Village and finding ways to interact substantively with the
international students around her. In addition to the Japanese students she had met and
befriended throughout her freshmen year, she had become particularly close with two
new Japanese students who moved into Smith Hall at the same time she had. One of
these students was Yoko—the first ever Waseda University exchange student to study at
UK. Roni met her the night she introduced herself to all of the Japanese students sitting
in the common area and joined them for a midnight pancake dinner. As Roni spoke
about her friendship with Yoko, it became clear that this was an important relationship.
As she reflected on their interactions throughout the fall semester, she argued that Yoko
made her better, particularly as it related to her study habits. She also was imagining the
ways the relationship would continue to improve her Japanese language skills in Japan.

I'm not the best at studying, but whenever I would study with her I felt like I
could focus more than when I'd study alone because I felt that influence of a
friend watching me. Or I'd be able to, like, we'd stop and we'd be able to talk
about something [for a little while] and that makes me want to study more than
studying alone, which is mainly what I did last year.

As she did with Hiroko, Roni was thinking of her relationship with Yoko as it could
pertain to her future life in Japan:
[And when I'm in Japan] I feel like with her I'm also going to want to attempt to speak in English because that's what I'm used to. But then it'll kind of force me more to speak in Japanese with her…instead of [speaking to another] American or a foreigner in Japan…I'll be more [likely] to go to her and I'll feel comfortable speaking in English with her, but also speaking in Japanese with her. Like, I'll have that comfort of trying to use my Japanese with her rather than if I tried it with let's say a foreigner [or a Japanese stranger].

Again, we see that Roni believes that interacting with the Japanese peers around her allows her to experience the Japanese language and culture in a way that she cannot via formal, in-class learning. We also see that she acknowledges the importance of reciprocity, the manner in which she can help her Japanese peers but also the manner in which they can help her. In this sense, she recognizes that these relationships offer intercultural value only via exchange, an active collaboration of give and take. However, Roni’s relationship with Yoko transcends the transactional. That is, she views her relationship with Yoko as something much more significant than a means of accessing Japanese culture and knowledge. Indeed, there relationships has become a genuine friendship and a best friendship at that:

[Yoko] kind of helped me realize like how I am with, like, if I get closer to a friend. Because in high school I never got really close to like one person. Like really never got close to a friend and how I would feel around [a friend]. Like how I could call a friend a best friend. And with Yoko, I know I can call her a best friend. I just feel close to her because we have similar interests and [personalities]…[She is] just someone that I [am] comfortable around.
The fact that she and Yoko shared similarities creates a parallel between this friendship and her relationship with Hiroko (the LABO exchange student from high school). And I am sure Roni would characterize her relationship with Hiroko as a friendship as well. However, it is also clear that Roni viewed her relationship with Yoko differently. She and Hiroko had only been together for a few short weeks, whereas she and Yoko had been close friends for five months now. This relationship in particular had taught her how to interact with people (something she struggled with in high school) and sustain a meaningful friendship. She reported that her friendship with Yoko gave her greater insight into her own personality and also shared that she had had the opportunity and privilege of hosting Yoko at several family events, including Thanksgiving at her aunt’s house in Louisville, Christmas in New Hampshire, as well as a cousin’s wedding.

Toward the end of our second interview, Roni confirmed that she was still planning on studying abroad at Waseda University. She had now attended several appointments and meetings with various professors, advisors, and coordinators across campus to discuss the exchange application process as well as related scholarship and letter of recommendation opportunities. She was imagining her future life in Japan more frequently and more fully:

If I get accepted to Waseda, our roles are going to be reversed completely.

Because [Yoko’s] saying that ‘Oh, for New Year's, if I'm there, her mother wants, her parents want to meet me because of how my family let her stay with me. And so I'm really hoping to get accepted to Waseda because I really want to experience that opposite role of having someone around who is a local.
Although this life-imagined reveals that Roni is hoping for something tangible in return—something akin to a local guide or host to reciprocate her kindness—Roni’s sentiments also illuminate the fact that she is looking for something more: “Just someone that I [can be] comfortable around,” someone, it seems, who will continue to be her best friend.

Summary of Exemplar Learning Biographies and Patterns

As discussed, the four learning biographies presented above are meant to serve as exemplars, as they can be used to explain the prototypical patterns of intercultural navigation that emerged from the data. Although all four exemplars chosen were women, this choice reflects the study sample and population which were both predominantly female. Sarah’s learning biography reflects the circumnavigation pattern, for she never really accessed and participated in the intercultural space socially constructed within the Smith Hall Global Village. In fact, her interactions with the cultural others therein often left her feeling isolated and alone. The learning biographies of both Ilene and Ms. Sponge Bob reflect the patterns of circumnavigation and organized navigation. Each student reported feeling profoundly isolated in the Global Village. As Ms. Sponge Bob put it, “It's kind of like I'm just here and everybody's passing [me] by.” Yet eventually both students found a way to access and actively participate in the intercultural space found within the Global Village. As it turned out, this sense of inclusion and participation did not occur via intentional interventions controlled by the institution, such as connected coursework or formal co-curricular programming. Rather, it happened organically and haphazardly through the random housing roommate assignment process that placed them with one another. In this sense, the organized navigation that occurred
was not “organized” intentionally but rather randomly through larger environmental structures. Finally, Roni’s biography reflects independent navigation. Her pattern of navigation rendered her an “intercultural hero” because it demonstrated substantive interaction with the cultural others around her that stemmed from her own pro-active actions. Whether it was taking the time to introduce herself to the Japanese students in the hall and inviting them to a free pancake gathering or imagining engaging, in-hall programming for others, Roni routinely initiated intercultural interaction in a manner that was independent and unique. As we saw in her biography, this pattern of navigation stemmed from a desire to help others, and, importantly, an intra-psychological tendency to view oneself as an intercultural guide or hero. Ultimately, this tendency allowed her to form substantial intercultural friendships, which, in turn, allowed her to navigate the intercultural difference and space around her more fruitfully and thoroughly into the future.
Chapter Six: Learning in Context

This chapter explores learning in context. To this end, the chapter discursively investigates a broad spectrum of salient environmental factors working to co-create the intercultural space performed in and around the Smith Hall Global Village. The first part of the chapter uses field observations as well as the interview data to cover a broad range of environmental factors, including a national trend toward privatization, campus culture, as well as institutional policy and practice. A second portion of the chapter considers the impact of programming on intercultural learning and in doing so sheds more light on the environment’s role in shaping the patterns of navigation presented in Chapter Five. The final portion of the chapter reconsiders Taylor’s (1994) model of intercultural competence as a model for intercultural learning as socio-cultural process.

A Discussion of Larger, Environmental Factors

A quick stroll around campus renders it clear: change is afoot. Construction is everywhere. New buildings are being erected. Men and women in hardhats abound. Cranes, bulldozers, and rebar dot the entire campus landscape. At the time of this study, the University was in the middle of an aggressive infrastructure development project totaling more than $1.9 billion. While UK touts this work as a major accomplishment—the result of “increased philanthropy and effective financial management”—it also acknowledges the role of new partnerships in this ongoing development (University of Kentucky Office of the President, n.d.). In some cases, these “partnerships” consist of outsourcing University operations to private corporations. The University’s dining services provide a significant example. In 2014, the University’s Board of Trustees
approved a multi-million dollar contract with a multinational corporation known as Aramark. This partnership eliminated a number of university-funded positions and quickly ushered several new fast food chains, such as Taco Bell, Aqua Sushi, and Einstein Bagels, into the heart of campus. One of the flagship restaurants brought into campus at this time was a café known as *la Madeleine*.

*La Madeleine* is housed in the corner of a building known as “The 90”—a $32 million, 80,000 square foot structure that was financed by Aramark (Blackford, 2014). The building is a stylish building reminiscent of the corporate architecture one might find in Silicon Valley. It features long clean lines, tall open atriums, and floor to ceiling windows. In spite of all of this, *la Madeleine*—located in the northeast corner of the massive structure—does its best to remain the quaint, “country French café” it proclaims itself to be. The interior features a (faux) stone fireplace that divides the space into smaller sections. Pictures of baguettes and mini-lemon tarts adorn the walls. When I enter the men’s bathroom, I am greeted by a pleasant French voice (female) coming over an invisible speaker system. *Bonjour*, she says. *Dining at la Madeleine is like visiting the French countryside. Let’s practice a few phrases: Yes...oui, no...non,...What time is it?...Quelle heure est-il? Try all of these phrases here at la Madeleine or on your own. Remember: practice makes perfect. Listen for other quick French lessons coming up. A French melody of some kind comes to the foreground. (Is that an accordion? One cannot be too sure while washing one’ hands). After a moment, the woman with the pleasant accent continues: *When placing your order at la Madeleine, it’s great to know your French numbers. Here’s how you say one through ten in case you’d like to try them: One...un, two...deux, three...trois.* A little artificial? Most certainly. But it creates a
nice commercial experience for which the students are willing to pay. During the school year, a steady stream of students in Kentucky blue can be seen entering the restaurant. They come and go, sipping cappuccinos and nibbling croissants as they walk to class. Smith Hall is less than 100 yards south.

I bring all of this up for a few reasons. Learning does not occur in a vacuum. As Dewey argues, learning exists as an interaction between the individual and his environment and that environment is all-encompassing. It extends far beyond the content of a given lesson plan. It includes the teacher as well as the socio-cultural constructs guiding the teacher’s curriculum. Language, as Vygotsky reminds us, is a critical part of this environment—perhaps the most critical component. But the environment also includes factors such as national trends, state policies, and institutional culture. As is the case at many public institutions, the education offered by the University of Kentucky has increasingly become a private good (Altbach & Knight, 2007). As state appropriations decrease, tuition costs facing students increase exponentially. The corporate landscape surrounding Smith Hall, then, reflects a national trend towards privatization. But this corporate landscape has also become part of the environmental texture or what Vygotskians might call the environmental “scaffolding” shaping the manner in which students live and learn.

Just in front of Smith Hall stands the newly-erected Woodland Glen Residence Hall complex, a series of five massive residence halls that appear something like a walled fortress. They also function something like a fortress. To ensure student safety and security, the rooms in each of these residence halls can only be accessed after navigating a front desk check-in system as well as a series of electronically locked doors and
elevators that require the swipe of an activated student ID. The actual bedrooms themselves—all of them—are completely private, designed for a single student. Gone are the days of actual roommates. Gone, too, are the communal bathrooms designed for an entire floor. Today’s student, living in the Woodland Glen complex, is afforded a private bathroom that he need only share with one other student. He is also afforded many other amenities, including a sleek black refrigerator, granite counter tops, as well as a Tempur-pedic mattress. The mattress alone would likely cost north of a thousand dollars at retail. Yet the greatest selling feature—by far—is the privacy afforded by the single room. An administrator I spoke with explained that the University had done the research and determined that this is what prospective students desired, it is what they wanted. Single rooms meant that the students would not have to worry about the distractions of a roommate. They could move about freely and alone, keeping their schedule, thoughts, and behaviors entirely to themselves. Behold: privacy, distance, and space—bright-shining commodities, luxuries of the 21st century learning environment.

Like the venti-sized coffee drinks served at la Madeleine, luxury comes with a price. One of these new Woodland Glen dorm rooms costs a little more than $1,000.00 per month plus mandatory dining costs. This is more than double the cost of many off-campus housing options that surround the campus and may be located just as closely to the classroom buildings. I stress this disparity because it highlights the institution’s move toward privatization and a consumer-based paradigm. Even though research consistently reports that living on campus positively relates to student involvement, retention, and academic success (Astin, 1999), UK has made a conscious decision to privatize in such a way that the cost of on-campus room and board is now more than the cost of in-state
tuition (University of Kentucky Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships, n.d.). This simply makes the cost of living on campus too expensive for many students. For the others, those who choose to live on campus and pay the full cost of attendance that currently ranges from $28,000.00 to $43,000.00 per year (University of Kentucky Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships, n.d.), this inevitably only contributes to the reality that today’s student is equal parts consumer, equal parts learner.

At approximately $880 per month, Smith Hall is less expensive than the Woodland Glen complex but not by much. Yet it looks and feels significantly different than the Woodland Glen residence halls. It is much smaller for one and was built more than a decade ago. Consequently, it does not feature as much technology and does not appear as sleek in design. When you walk into the lobbies and down the halls, you see fliers and posters adorning the walls and doors, announcing various campus events. (This type of “clutter” is not permitted in the new residence halls for fear of fire). The biggest difference between Smith Hall and the newer Woodland Glen residence halls, however, is the amount of communal living space present within the building. It starts in the individual rooms—the dorm rooms where the students actually sleep—and spirals out. For starters, every bedroom is designed to be shared by two students. In other words, the traditional concept of “roommate” is still intact in Smith Hall. Moreover, each roommate dyad shares a communal bathroom with another roommate dyad so that in reality the individual bedrooms really exist and function as a four-person suite in which more human contact and social interaction becomes inevitable. Katherine, for instance, explained that she met her fellow suitemates shortly after moving in because she locked the shared bathroom from her side and as a result unwittingly locked them out so that
later—long after she had left the bathroom—they had to come over, introduce themselves, and show her how to unlock it. The same scenario actually surfaced in Roni’s first interview when she reported that this was a common occurrence for many people on the floor. While this may seem like a rather frivolous example, it highlights the point that something as small as the locks on the door, coupled with the suite-style room design found in Smith Hall, can create a basic type of social interaction that is less likely to occur in the Woodland Glen complex.

The halls in Smith Hall are also wider and not nearly as long, meaning each suitemate has significantly less distance to walk to the building’s various hall-wide communal areas and is simply more apt just to sit and “hang out.” Smith Hall also includes significantly more of these hall-wide communal spaces. Unlike the new residence halls, Smith Hall features a communal kitchen, multi-purpose room, and multiple study areas on each floor. Rather than offering several community spaces on every floor, the Woodland Glen complex, by contrast, typically only offers one or two. In the case of kitchens, the Woodland Glen complex offers only one kitchen for the entire residence hall. Although these kitchens come with state of the art stainless steel appliances and stylish granite counter tops, they are typically no bigger than the kitchens found in Smith Hall. Yet the residence halls in the Woodland Glen complex (University of Kentucky, n.d.a) are much larger, some housing as many as 782 residents compared to Smith Hall’s 181 (University of Kentucky, n.d.b). The size of the classrooms and lobbies located on the first floors of the new buildings—when measured per capita—are typically much smaller as well. The hallways in the Woodland Glen complex often appear long and empty, akin to what one might expect to find in a large, modern hotel. As a matter of
layout, then, it is much more likely that a student living in Smith Hall will run into other students organically and meet someone new or engage in a conversation.

It is worth noting that the lack of communal space found in Woodland Glen complex was, presumably, created by design, for each square foot dedicated to communal space is a square foot that negatively impacts the number of beds the institution can fit into the building. Communal space, therefore, has a negative impact on the amount of revenue generated by the student residents. One might ask, “Really? Is the University that concerned with revenue?” The answer to that question is yes and no.

In fact, the University does not oversee the new residence halls. The Woodland Glen complex was actually built by a private corporation known as Educational Realty Trust or EDR. Like UK Dining, UK Housing has recently been privatized and outsourced. This private-public partnership between UK and EDR is responsible for the construction of fourteen new residence halls on campus. This is an on-going project costing more than $422.3 million in total. By the time the project is complete every residence hall on campus, save Smith Hall and two others beside it, the modern EDR-built residence halls that cost and weigh significantly more on the private student pocketbook (Blackford, 2015). Although I never asked any of the participants in my study about these new residence halls, remarkably, more than half of the students I interviewed brought this topic up independently, rendering it a major (albeit unexpected) theme. For example, when I asked EMP what he had learned by living in the Global Village LLP for more than two years, he launched into a comparison between Smith Hall and some of the newer, EDR-built residence halls:
There is always a smiling face in here. My biggest thing about being in Smith Hall is that I never felt like I was alone here. With us only having 180 residents in the building, it's very easy to meet someone new. That's actually why I keep living here. For instance, the newer buildings like Woodland Glen or Central, for instance, they're nice, they're great hotel style suites, but they're hotels. And that's really the hardest thing about it, you can't get the kids to interact. [In Smith Hall,] I can come out to the lobby and sit in front of the fireplace for 10 minutes and someone is gonna walk up to me reading a book, and it's like, ‘Hey, what you reading?’ And I just don't find that in many other residence halls around here.

Roni was even more outspoken on the topic. Because she arrived a few days late at the start of the semester, she was not able to participate in the Global Village’s opening kick-off events but argued that the open layout in Smith Hall made it easier for her to interact with the international students.

Well, technically, I didn’t actually get to join [the opening events] because I wasn’t here. So I haven’t really done anything yet exactly with the Global Village, I’ve just kind of done it on my own, bumping into [the international students in the hall] or living two rooms down from them. One of the reasons I actually wanted to live in Smith and Global Village is because of the dorm style. It’s a two-person, not a two bedroom style. I hate the new style. I will say it bluntly, I hate the new style, because RAs are having trouble with students not interacting with their roommates because they’re in separate rooms. Those rooms are best for seniors. Seniors who are interested in just getting their work done, just trying to get out of here.
These block quotes reflect EMP and Roni’s ability to navigate the Smith Hall intercultural space independently, following the intercultural hero pattern, but both quotations also offer objective insight into some of the differences found between Smith Hall and the newer, EDR-built residence halls. EMP is correct, for instance, to imply that the new residence halls are much bigger and arguably less social. The students’ testimonials also reflect the distinctions discussed above regarding the social implications of architectural layout and design. Linda, the Chinese-Japanese student who participated in the study, actually spent her first semester on campus living in one of the EDR-built residence halls. She was in one of the new Woodland Glen residence halls and insisted that the architectural layout as well as the single style rooms made it significantly more difficult for her to meet people. She argued that the open suite-style she and the other students enjoyed in Smith Hall had a direct impact on her ability to interact and connect with others:

When I lived in Woodland Glen, we [had] private rooms, so I'm not as close with everyone. So every time, when I go back to my room, I just stay in my room.

But here [in Smith Hall], I'm really close to my roommate. She's really nice, and my suitemate, she's from Brazil and we talk to each other. Like, compared to Woodland Glen, I feel more easy to talk to everyone and easily make friends here. And my roommate [Katherine], she's really nice….We always eat lunch together. And sometimes, we even go to the gym to do Zumba together.

So here, I feel, I feel more like close with everyone. But when I live in Woodland Glen, I am not that close with my [the person in the room next to
me], and we just say hi and goodbye, that's it. And here, we say more than that, we talk about what happened every day, yeah.

In her first interview, Linda shared that most of her experience in America had been largely negative. She argued that Americans were not friendly to Asians students and stressed that this was particularly true of “white girls” on campus. As the quote above suggests, however, Linda eventually became friends with her (white) roommate Katherine and generally enjoyed a more social and inclusive experience—in large part—because of Smith Hall’s architectural layout. This appreciation and preference for Smith Hall was by no means atypical. Indeed, every student who broached the subject matter independently with me—again, more than half my participants—insisted s/he preferred Smith Hall to the newer EDR-built residence halls. It is worth noting that this strong preference existed in spite of the flashy amenities (e.g., granite counter tops, Tempur-Pedic mattresses, and single-style rooms) associated with the newer residence halls.

Simply put: the participants liked the Smith Hall architectural layout because they believed it to be more conducive to social interaction and community building. However, it is important that their appreciation for Smith Hall’s design was relative, distinctly in relation to the newly-erected EDR complex. As Linda’s testimony reveals, the architectural layout of the newer residence halls impacts everything from one’s social experience to something even more basic: simple human interaction. A physical geography of isolation, then, can exacerbate a social geography of division and loneliness. Far too often, the results were nothing short of tragic. In fact, during the course of this brief study, two students committed suicide. Both students did so alone, in
the privacy of their single-style dorm rooms housed within the EDR-owned Woodland Glen complex. I am told these were the first suicides on campus in more than 16 years. 29

When we look at the testimonials of EMP, Roni, and Linda (as well as the other students), we see that the corporate landscape surrounding Smith Hall created a point of comparison for the Global Villagers. They used the corporate landscape as a mirror of sorts, a tool by which they could positively reflect on their own experience and the manner in which that experience was shaped by the Smith Hall physical environment. As the interviews progressed, however, it became clear that aspects of UK’s move toward privatization also hindered social interaction in Smith Hall. This was particularly true of intercultural interaction—not to mention intercultural learning. The roommate assignment process within Smith Hall offers the most glaring example. For instance, many of the participants I interviewed expressed frustration with the fact that they were not paired with an international or American roommate. I did not ask students any questions directly related to the roommate assignment process. Rather, like the disdain expressed for the new residence halls, this theme emerged organically—typically when I asked the students to reflect on their expectations before arriving on campus. For example, when I asked A. what she hoped her life would be like while studying at UK, she immediately zeroed in on the roommate issue. “It was a lot more different than I expected. I thought that because we’re living in the Global Village, like, I’d have an

29 To be clear, I am not suggesting that the private rooms caused the suicides, but I do wonder what might have been different had these students shared a bedroom with another student. I also note, only incidentally, that this anomalous spike in suicides occurred as the majority of old, residence halls with traditional roommate designs and more communal spaces were being demolished in preparation for the new residence halls.
American roommate and stuff and I don’t.” This was during her first interview in which she also explained that the majority of her social interactions to date had been with the other British exchange students. This is not terribly surprising, particularly given the fact that other British students flanked her room on either side. By the time of A’s second interview, little had changed. Her friend network was almost exclusively British. Whether hanging out in Smith Hall or exploring downtown, she spent most of her time with the other English exchange students living beside her. H, the young man I interviewed from Japan, was similarly hindered by the housing assignment process. Before arriving, he had hoped and assumed that he would be paired with an American student. After all, this is why he selected to live in the Smith Hall Global Village. Yet, shortly upon arriving, he learned that his immediate roommate would be a young man from Ethiopia. Although H grew to appreciate his Ethiopian roommate (as well as his other non-American suitemates), he believed this was yet one more factor hindering his ability to meet Americans.

So, how does this roommate assignment pattern relate to UK’s move toward privatization? Actually, the relationship is surprisingly direct. When UK Housing was outsourced to EDR, UK stopped funding several related positions. As was the case when UK Dining was outsourced, some of the pre-existing housing positions (and employees) were acquired and retained by the private corporation, but several were not. As it turns out, the UK employee who had been responsible for executing the individual room assignments for the Global Village LLP was not retained. Although the academic partners associated with the Global Village LLP were made aware of this and worked with EDR to request that American and international students be paired together, this
move toward intentionality never came to fruition. “Yeah,” one participant stated, “I guess that’s just one of those things that fell through the cracks.” Consequently, only six of the 14 students I interviewed were half of an international/American roommate dyad; of the nine American students I interviewed, only three were paired with an international roommate. As discussed, some Global Villagers were structured in American/international roommate dyads. And, in some cases (e.g., the Ilene/Ms. Sponge Bob dyad), the roommate assignment appeared to be the only environmental factor supporting the students’ ability to access and navigate the Smith Hall intercultural space. It is important to remember, however, that these pairings were accidental—the result of a random housing process. The staff members I interviewed for this study explained that the majority of American students living in the Global Village (not just the majority of students participating in this study) were assigned to fellow American students—not the international students for which they had yearned. This, then, is how the institution’s move toward privatization presented a fundamental barrier to intercultural learning. Ultimately, this institutional practice proved to be a detriment to intercultural interaction. Indeed, arguably, it was one of the strongest environmental factors shaping the pattern of circumnavigation seen throughout the study.

The roommate assignment process, therefore, offers a tangible example of the way in which UK’s move toward privatization hindered intercultural navigation and learning within the Smith Hall context. The broader, pernicious, and related culture of consumerism explored above also proved detrimental within the Smith Hall context. As discussed, the education offered by UK has increasingly become a private good (Altbach & Knight, 2007). The more students are asked to pay for their education, the more likely
they are to view it as a financial purchase—and understandably so. The shift here is a subtle yet profound one related to agency. In the new student-consumer paradigm, education is no longer constructed and understood as a personal journey—that is, as something the students should need to grapple with socially, emotionally, and intellectually. Rather, the associated financial costs put on the students reconfigure education as personal journey only in part. More than ever before, education is socially-constructed as a commodity for purchase. Active participation is no longer as popular or important. After all, students are paying a lot of money, so goes the argument, and they deserve to be treated accordingly. Other scholars, such as Naidoo and Jamieson (2005), have addressed what this paradigm shift means in the context of the classroom, in relation to student grades and teacher evaluations. They argue many students, products of the consumer-based culture, are more likely to demand “As” because they are paying tuition and related course fees at increasingly alarming rates. For the purposes of this study, I prefer to focus on how this culture shift affects intercultural navigation and learning in the context of an international LLP. Before turning to that focus directly, I offer one theoretical but important point of comparison: whether the context in question happens to be the classroom or dorm room, the consumerist paradigm undermines the work and learning of the student. By monetizing one’s education—which that be formal, in-class learning or what Harvard President Henry Dunster argued could only be attained holistically and communally within the residence halls—we have, ironically, cheapened the worth of the education, the value of the degree as well as the work of the student. I return once more to this first president of Harvard’s famous proclamation:
Learning alone might be got by lectures and reading; But it was only by studying and disputing, eating and drinking, playing and praying as members of the same collegiate community, in close and constant association with each other and with their tutors, that the *priceless* gift of character could be imparted to young men” (Morrison, 1995, p. 252, italics mine).

Although Dunster was making an argument about the same holistic benefits championed by modern-day LLP proponents, his argument—perhaps unwittingly, perhaps anachronistically—also addresses some of the concerns associated with the student-consumer paradigm. Yes, his use of the word “priceless” conjures this notion directly, but, once again, his use of “disputing” is important as well. Conflict, he seems to be arguing—maybe even a little discomfort—is vital to learning and *priceless*. The testimony of EMP, the Smith Hall student president and Global Village peer mentor, exemplifies this point.

EMP quickly set himself apart from the other American participants in his first interview in the way he was able to articulate specific, substantive, and personal intercultural experiences about which he had taken the time to reflect upon. There was the example of Ghana. The headmaster of the school where he was working asked him to cane a disobedient student. Then there was the heated debate that he engaged in with the older Nigerian student, who was living in Smith Hall and actively and boisterously criticizing the women around him for not dressing more conservatively and coming from a culture that considers birth control acceptable. In both cases, both in Ghana and during the dispute in Smith Hall, EMP was forced to grapple with viewpoints, ideologies, and cultural orientations that were utterly foreign to him. These situations were not pleasant
for him nor were they clear cut, yet they afforded him experience. In the end, these experiences were applied to a life’s worth of other experiences—a concatenation of relevant and important intercultural moments—that, together, enabled him to learn how he could navigate intercultural ambiguity and difference in a manner that was personal and appropriate or, as Dunster would have stated it, in a manner that reflected the “priceless gift of character” (Morrison, 1995, p. 252).

Unfortunately, the student-consumer paradigm acculturating many students today makes it more difficult for the students and institutions alike to engage and utilize these profoundly rich intercultural experiences that can include stress, struggle, and discomfort. The Global Villagers who followed a pattern of circumnavigation exemplify this point most clearly. Consider Sarah’s learning biography a second time. When she walked in on her roommate Lonnie speaking in tongues, she literally circumnavigated the situation by backing away slowly and shutting the door. She also chose not to speak about it with Lonnie. Rather, she chose to view it through a lens of mental health (e.g., Lonnie has a mental illness). She also chose to view the experience through a student-consumer lens:

Realistically, I am paying this money to be in this bed. I should have no responsibility…to the person I'm living with other than, like, keeping it clean and everything. And so, I didn't want to end up being almost a counselor...And yeah, I kinda, wanted to…just concentrate on having a good time and while I'm here instead of concentrating on her problems and her issues...So I asked the RAs and the RD if there was anything which would be easier for me to just move into, because again, I didn't feel comfortable in that room anymore. They managed to move me.
As we know, Sarah was eventually moved—not only out of that particular room—but out of the third floor and Global Village altogether. In this sense, this level of circumnavigation required the official approval and support of the institution, including the Office of Residence Life, UK Housing, as well as the Global Village LLP. While I am certain there were plenty of valid reasons to support this decision, it is important to remember that Lonnie—although she was not officially a participant of this study—surfaced in the narratives of multiple participants as an incredibly well-adjusted, mature, and active member of the Global Village community. In fact, the RAs reported that she one of the few students who was able to navigate the various cultures and social circles independently.

The interview narratives of A, the other participant from England, reflects a similar pattern of circumnavigation that has been shaped culturally and a priori by the student-consumer paradigm. Although she spent most of her free time with the other British students, she was initially assigned to a Saudi roommate. A reported that this young woman was quite nice but also a devout Muslim who prayed five times a day, including every morning at 6:45am. Consequently, she asked to be assigned to a new room. Before doing so, the RAs asked her to discuss the situation with her roommate and complete a “roommate agreement”—a document designed to help both students improve communication and resolve any conflicts. A reported that she completed the document in a perfunctory manner, but never really addressed the issue of praying directly with the Saudi student because she was afraid doing so might offend her. After turning in the roommate agreement, she was allowed to move out of the room. The new roommate to whom she was assigned was—just like her—from the United Kingdom.
In the cases of Sarah and A, then, we see two students facing a level of discomfort that is foreign and strange. Both students are from England and the discomfort they face is directly tied to the religious identities of their foreign roommates. Both students acknowledge that the situations are distinctly intercultural. In fact, the situations are exactly the type of experience marketed by the LLP in its promotional materials. Yet both students ultimately circumnavigated their situations by requesting a new experience. The institution reacted with a programmatic intervention designed to facilitate meaningful interaction. Yet meaningful interaction never occurred. In both cases, the interventions were experienced by the students as slightly unpleasant but necessary hoops that would eventually yield them greater comfort and ease—similar, I suppose, to the experience one faces when one has to call customer service. My point here, to be sure, is not evaluative. I am not placing blame on the students nor am I placing blame on the RAs or Resident Director. However, it is worth noticing that both students were ultimately prevented from acquiring the type of intercultural experiences that had been promoted by the LLP.

After reflecting on her first semester in the Smith Hall, Katherine observed that she and her fellow Global Villagers typically socialized in cliques based on nationality: Groups get together, people from the same culture, and then it’s hard to kind of get to know those people cause they hang out altogether and then I end up hanging out with just Americans…It’s hard to go outside of your group…I think it’s just because people are more comfortable with people from their own culture…and it’s easier.
Her statements ring true. It is often easier for people to socialize with people from their own culture. This is particularly true for students who may not have much previous intercultural experience. However, as evidenced by the majority of Global Villagers, this also proved true for students like Katherine, Sarah, A, H, Ilene, Linda and many others who came to the LLP with significant international and intercultural experience. It seems apparent, therefore, that the patterns of intercultural navigation and learning exhibited by the majority of Global Villagers were not just a product of the various individuals’ past experiences. Rather, it seems these patterns were equally shaped by the culture and space of the LLP itself. That space was a performance and product of many factors, including the student-consumer paradigm in which comfort and ease are often prioritized over that of education and learning.

Not all was lost. Even though several of the American Global Villagers, like Katherine, reported primarily interacting only with the other American students, they still enjoyed living in an internationally-themed space. Take Lydia from Kentucky. Like many participants in the study, Lydia dreamed of rooming with an international student and picking up a foreign language around the hall. Neither of these things happened, but she still enjoyed being surrounded by international students. Sometimes she would say “hello” to them as they passed her in the lobby. Other times she could hear them speaking in their native tongues. A little artificial? Sure. But it creates a nice experience, one for which at least the 21 Global Villagers were willing to pay. I suppose it is a little like going to the bathroom at la Madeleine in that way:

When placing your order, it’s great to know your French numbers. Here’s how you say one through ten in case you’d like to try them: One…un, two…deux, three…
My argument is that learning takes place in context and culture is certainly part of that context. This encompasses campus cultures, including UK’s culture of privatization and the student-consumer paradigm. Vygotsky (1978) argues that the culture shapes the personal, precedes the individual. This certainly appears to be the case in Smith Hall. That is, the patterns of intercultural navigation and learning exhibited by the participants in this study (as well as institution) were routinely shaped by the national trend toward privatization and the student-consumer paradigm a priori.

**Programmatic Influence on Intercultural Learning**

If the privatization of higher education is a defining feature of Smith Hall’s hidden curriculum, then we should also consider the overt curriculum. In the previous section, we did consider some specific, incident-based interventions such as the roommate agreement provided to students facing conflict. However, as seen in Chapter Four, the Global Village is commercially marketed to prospective students as an official living-learning program that includes connected coursework as well as ongoing, in-hall co-curricular programming. The manner in which these programmatic structures shaped the students’ experience varied by individual. As discussed in Chapter Five, the majority of participants in this study were, occasionally, able to follow a pattern of intercultural navigation other than circumnavigation. Because this occurred mainly in specific situations in which formal structure and support was provided by the institution, this pattern of learning was termed organized navigation. For some students, this support came via formal interventions such as the guidance offered by instructors in credit-bearing coursework or facilitators in formal, in-hall co-curricular programming. For other students, organized navigation happened more organically and haphazardly, as a
byproduct of larger institutional structures. In an effort to clarify this distinction, the next section of this chapter outlines two sub-patterns of organized navigation that emerged from the data: 1) Formal Organized Navigation and 2) Haphazard Organized Navigation.

However, before we explore these two sub-patterns in depth, we should address what appears generally to have been a fundamental lack of programming. As discussed in “Setting the Stage: An Overview of the Global Village” (Chapter Four), the LLP was not particularly well-resourced nor was it on stable financial ground. The academic coordinator and resident director worked hard to put together a calendar of events that included seven in-hall programs specifically designed for the LLP, but most of these programs were small and social in nature, such as the “Ice Cream Social,” that was held on September 10th. Attendance was reportedly low at all of these programs save “Pasta and Pronouns,” which is explored in more depth below. However, poor attendance is not terribly surprising given how stretched the academic coordinator and resident director were, as the amount of time they are able to interact with the students may presumably influence attendance. Remember: the LLP only consisted of 21 students—literally a fraction of the total student population for whom these two professionals were responsible. We also know that the private outsourcing of UK Housing to EDR had a direct impact on the fundamental organization of the program itself.

Ultimately, it seems a confluence of all these factors was fundamentally undermining the 2015-16 Global Village LLP, literally, from its inception—that is, the kick-off meeting that was officially held to initiate the start of the LLP year. This is where the calendar of events was handed out as well as when the affiliated staff members introduced themselves. The vast majority of the international students were standing
toward the back of the room throughout this meeting. The American students, on the other hand, were primarily sitting in the furniture located in the center of the room closer to the academic partner and resident director. Several of the international students, such as Ilene and H, actually arrived late—hence their position toward the back periphery. It did not come as a complete surprise, then, when I asked A. from England during her first interview which LLP programs she had attended and she replied, “I don’t know. Have there been any?” Meanwhile, at the time of her first interview—nearly a month into the program—Ilene reported knowing virtually nothing of the LLP whatsoever. For example, she had no idea that the LLP was primarily based on her floor of the residence hall, nor did she realize that her roommate Ms. Sponge Bob was an official member of the LLP. Like A., she suggested that she had attended zero Global Village programs. When I pushed her on this and mentioned that I had seen her at the kick-off meeting, she seemed genuinely confused, as though she did not remember being at the meeting or only walked into it accidentally. Actually, this may have been the case, for the kick-off meeting was held in the main lobby, which is also the main thoroughfare used to enter and exit the building. So, whether it was poor listening or poor articulation, I think it is fair to say that the Global Village suffered from a fundamental lack of communication, particularly vis-a-vis the international students. This theme was present from the time of the kick-off meeting to the last interview conducted in February, and, again, multiple factors—from a lack of staff and resources to the privatization of UK Housing—contributed to this strain. As discussed, the Global Village was discontinued after the 2015-16 academic year and no longer exists. One could tie this to the LLP’s weak programmatic structure, but that is related to many other factors, including a lack of
administrative buy-in. Moreover, Global Village programming—strained or random as it might have been—did occur and did impact the students’ navigation and learning. To explore this point in more depth, I now turn to the two sub-patterns of organized navigation that emerged from the data: 1) Formal Organized Navigation and 2) Haphazard Organized Navigation.

**Formal organized navigation.** Regarding organized navigation via formal interventions, consider UK 101—the Global Village’s only connected course. UK 101 is offered campus-wide as both an on-going academic and cultural orientation to life at UK. It comes with a standard curriculum provided by a central UK 101 office and is designed to support students’ transition to UK. The Global Village section of this course, however, is specifically customized to facilitate intercultural exchange and understanding among American and international students. During the time of this study, the Global Village UK 101 section was taught by the LLP’s academic partner, a seasoned and compassionate staff member from the UK International Center whose primary role and responsibility on campus is to serve and support international students. This staff member committed herself to facilitating thoughtful and inclusive interactions between the American and international students throughout the duration of the semester.

She appears to have been successful in this endeavor. Several of the participants I interviewed revealed that this class was the one place they were able to interact more substantively with the cultural others around them. The experiences of American participants Lydia, Meghan, and Natalie (see biographical sketches) exemplify this point. Each of the students reported that their friend networks within Smith Hall were exclusively American. Each reported that they were friendly with the international
students and would greet or acknowledge them whenever they happened to see them in
the hall, but their interactions never progressed past these superficial exchanges. Yet
both Lydia and Megan pointed to UK 101 as an intercultural space in which they were
able to interact with international students and talk with them directly on more
substantive topics like cultural values and life in international students’ home countries.
It is worth noting, however, that this class was not required of Global Villagers. In fact,
of the 28 students enrolled in the class, only 14 were Global Villagers and these 14 were
all American. The international students who enrolled in the class did not live in Smith
Hall and were not members of the Global Village. Thus, in the case of UK 101, it served
as a space of organized navigation only for a limited number of the American Global
Villagers.

How was the UK 101 intercultural space accessed and navigated by the
international students? Unfortunately, none of the international students in the class
participated in the study, so I was unable to ask them about this directly. Based on field
observations, however, I am able to state the following: the physical space of the
classroom itself, which was located in the lobby of Smith Hall, was inclusive in nature.
The walls, for instance, were adorned with cultural symbols from around the world. A
map of the world was hanging on the back wall. Each student’s name was neatly listed
along the periphery. Taut branches of yarn ran to a constellation of cities scattered about
the continents, a visual demarcation connecting each student to his or her home country
and city. The mix of international and American students sat together in crowded yet
quaint rows, engaging each other in small talk before and after the class. On the day I
attended, 22 students were in attendance and approximately half—based on speech and
dress patterns—appeared to be international. Eight of the students appeared Caucasian. Fourteen appeared non-white. Two of the women wore hijabs. The American instructor and peer instructor (also American) stood at the front of the class and made efforts to call on both American and international students regularly. They also made a point of facilitating small group discussions designed to put the students in dialogue with one another directly. In short, the UK 101 environment appeared diverse and inclusive. Moreover, it appeared that this positive environment had been carefully cultivated by a caring and thoughtful instructional team that encouraged the international and American students to participate equally.

That being said, the two topics covered on the day I attended—stress management and academic integrity and rights—were only explored within the American context. For instance, there was no attempt to discuss FERPA or plagiarism in relation to the educational laws or academic regulations of the international students’ home countries. In this way, on this particular day, UK 101 was not used as a curricular vehicle for intercultural learning. Rather, it was used as a curricular vehicle for the assimilation of students—both American and international—into UK’s institutional culture. Based on interviews with the instructor as well as several of the enrolled American students, I know that this section of UK featured diversity and intercultural difference as the primary content area during a few days of instruction. I assume that these conversations were fruitful—not only for the American students, as the participants in my study attested—but also for many of the enrolled international students. However, not all intercultural spaces achieve their desired effect. This is even true of those educational spaces like UK 101 that are structured, actively and intentionally, by a knowledgeable and caring
individual. Case in point: some of the Global Village in-hall programming that was specifically designed to promote intercultural understanding and inclusion ironically achieved the opposite effect from time to time.

Take “Pasta and Pronouns.” This was an in-hall program specifically designed and promoted by the Global Village LLP, in which a trained diversity officer led a discussion on socially-constructed identity markers, such as race and gendered pronouns. After a more theoretical discussion of these identity markers and their social implications, the facilitator encouraged the students to think about the cultural traditions and values of their home nation: How do these identity markers shape who they are and what they experience in Smith Hall? What about at UK at large? Discussion of this program surfaced in many of the interviews conducted for this study. For instance, the Resident Director pointed to Pasta and Pronouns as the most successful program of the year. In addition to it being well attended, she noted that it was particularly well attended by American and international students alike. Better yet, many of the students lingered after the formal lecture, continuing their own conversations over a free pasta dinner—hence the program title. At the time of her second interview, Meghan declared Pasta and Pronouns to be the most meaningful intercultural experience of her life. The fact that she had the opportunity to discuss issues like race and gender in the lobby of her residence hall with students from around the world was an empowering and gratifying experience for her. Ilene’s experience of this program was different, however. She actually cited Pasta and Pronouns as a cultural event that exacerbated her sense of loneliness and alienation as a Japanese foreigner. According to her, the program did not offer the opportunity for her and the other students to interact during the lecture and afterward all
of the students ended up eating with the students they already knew. The Americans ate with the Americans. The Brazilians ate with the Brazilians. And the Europeans ate with the Europeans. She was the only Japanese student who attended the program and she arrived alone. She felt so lonely eating spaghetti by herself—in a small room surrounded by others—that she left shortly after the food was served.

For Ilene and Meghan alike, the Pasta and Pronouns program was, in the words of Dewey an “educative experience” that guided them in selecting future experiences but that is not to suggest that the experiences were always productive or educative from an intercultural standpoint. Applying the analytic framework of Nespor (2000), the program was also a social performance, one formally orchestrated by the University. For Meghan, the performance was empowering. It granted her intentional space for reflection and participation with the cultural other. But Ilene reported that “It was not comfortable for me.” For her, Pasta and Pronouns was a space of exclusion, an experience that only punctuated her feelings of alienation and estrangement. As a result, she chose not to attend any other in-hall programming.

**Haphazard organized navigation.** Some participants in the study experienced positive, educative forms of organized navigation in a more organic fashion. In these cases, organized navigation was typically shaped by larger, institutional structures that fell into place haphazardly—not through formal interventions designed with intercultural learning in mind. The roommate dyad presented by Ilene from Japan and Ms. Sponge Bob from Mississippi provides one such example. These two students were assigned to one another randomly—not through any type of personal preference system or roommate questionnaire. Nevertheless, the structure created by this random assignment inherently
rendered their small dormitory room an intercultural space dictating intercultural interaction. As with the case of Sarah, who requested a new room assignment after walking in on her roommate speaking in tongues, it is possible for students to circumnavigate a given intercultural roommate assignment. However, as the narratives of both Ilene and Ms. Sponge Bob attest (see learning biographies), the artificial structure offered by a random roommate assignment can lend itself to more substantive intercultural interaction.

The intercultural interaction shared by Ilene and Ms. Sponge Bob amounted to little in the beginning. Ms. Sponge Bob was so busy with band that she regularly was not in the room. Even when she was present, Ilene struggled to understand her language. Slowly, however, the two began to interact more. Ms. Sponge Bob “tried to explain [herself] more in depth.” This helped Ilene a little, but she was still struggling. She spent most of her time alone and struggled to understand everything that was said in her classes. After a growing sense of loneliness and frustration brought Ilene to a tipping point, she reached out to Ms. Sponge Bob for help. It is important to note, however, that she did so—not because she considered Ms. Sponge Bob a friend—but rather because she was the only other present body in the small dormitory room to which she was randomly assigned. By the time of their second interview, it became clear that this random roommate assignment had become a profound environmental factor, expanding both students’ capacity for intercultural growth and learning. They were no longer merely roommates. They were friends, someone in whom the other could confide and share their lives. Both students also acknowledged the intercultural nature of their relationship and valued it as a vital component of the friendship. Had either student not been paired with
the other—had both found themselves assigned to a single room, for instance—it is plausible that neither would have moved beyond a pattern of circumnavigation within the Smith Hall Global Village. Simply put, neither student seemed capable of navigating this particular intercultural space independently. Rather, their intercultural experience within Smith Hall fluctuated between patterns of circumnavigation and organized navigation. As discussed, this trend was shared by 10 of the 14 (71.4%) students who participated in the study.

It is worth remembering, then, that the patterns of navigation espoused by this study are not meant to suggest a universal or unilateral course of development; individuals may shift back and forth from one pattern of navigation to the next and the student’s pattern of navigation may vary based on situation and context. Consider Ilene and Ms. Sponge Bob as two examples. Although both students’ learning biographies were offered as examples of organized navigation, both students initially shared narratives of circumnavigation. As Ms. Sponge Bob said, “It's kind of like I'm just here and everybody's passing [me] by.” She actually said this during her second interview—after she and Ilene had developed a successful intercultural friendship. So even though she was able to navigate the intercultural space of her shared bedroom, she was not able to navigate the intercultural space of the residence hall at large, for that space did not afford her the same level of organized (albeit haphazard) guidance. Again, the point here is that a given student’s pattern of intercultural navigation is situational and may fluctuate. Perhaps Sarah’s learning biography exemplifies this point most palpably. After all, she had significant international and intercultural experience, including an immersive experience in Uganda that enabled her to give deep consideration to the way
of life she witnessed in Uganda and compare it to her own in England. Ultimately, she used the experience to broaden, inform, and guide her actions moving forward. It appeared, therefore, as though she would have been particularly well-suited to navigate the Global Village independently, but, ultimately, she fell into a pattern of circumnavigation that left her feeling isolated and disenfranchised from this particular intercultural space. Again, context matters.

**An extracurricular interface.** The Global Village participants are not two-dimensional characters trapped in the single setting afforded by the LLP. Indeed, all of the Global Villagers leave the building and participate in a broad array of curricular and co-curricular programming that may have nothing to do with the scope of the LLP but still inevitably impact their intercultural learning as well as their experience in Smith Hall upon returning. It was, for instance, Ilene’s group project in a class that had absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with the Global Village that triggered the disorienting dilemma that eventually led her back to speak to Ms. Sponge Bob in her room. It also goes without saying that all of the participants have social lives that include experiences that extend far beyond the confines of Smith Hall. For this reason, I turn now to a brief consideration of extracurricular activity. Once again, the learning biography of Ilene presents a relevant case study. As noted, both the curricular and co-curricular environment around Ilene often left her feeling disenfranchised. During her second interview, however, she shared that she began attending a local Baptist church and Bible study during the fall semester and this proved to be a positive venue for connecting with other international students as well as Americans students. She explained that this endeavor was not at all a religious one for her but rather only social, an organized
communal outlet that gave her the opportunity to interact with others, participate in weekly dinners in the food court at the local shopping mall, and therefore see and experience American culture.

I highlight this particular extracurricular activity—participation in an affiliated, off-campus Christian organization—because, remarkably, three out of the five international students interviewed for this study mentioned participating in a similar or the very same Christian organization. In each case, the international student did so, like Ilene, not for religious or spiritual purposes but rather as a way to experience American culture and social interaction. This fact coupled with various interview feedback suggest that the LLP programming was not a sufficient conduit to the American culture and social interaction that the international students craved. This point is not meant to be evaluative nor should it be entirely surprising. After all, the Global Village is designed to be an intercultural space—not an American space. Nevertheless, this line of thought does raise an important point with practical and theoretical implications alike: supporting students in productive, healthy, and fruitful intercultural navigation is not always straightforward or easy. Focusing on the individual, Taylor (1994) would argue that a given participant might not have the “context of learning readiness” needed to navigate a given intercultural space in a positive manner. However, as was the case with Ilene at Pasta and Pronouns, we would be remiss if we failed to question the role the institutional and cultural environment in co-creating that “context of learning readiness.” Ultimately, patterns of intercultural navigation—whether they be patterns of circumnavigation, organized navigation, or independent navigation—exist as socially-constructed interactions—performances played out dialogically—between the individual and
phenomenological other, regardless of whether or not that other be person, program, or something else altogether.

**A Second Look at Taylor’s (1994) Model of Intercultural Competence: Intercultural Learning as Socio-Cultural Process**

So, how do students navigate the intercultural space found within an international LLP? Although I have offered several exemplar patterns of navigation in an attempt to answer this question, I hope that by now it is also apparent that the answer, as always, is that it depends. It depends on the individual. It depends on the environment and the manner in which that environment is socially performed. Finally, it depends on the manner in which the individual interacts with the environment. Still, I did propose a second primary question at the start of this study—How do students learn interculturally? That is, what does the learning process seem to be for each student within the international LLP? As discussed in Chapter Five, the overlap between intercultural navigation and learning is natural when working from a Deweyan framework that conceptualizes learning as a socio-cultural process that happens in community, via experienced-based participation and democratic interaction. I hope this chapter has brought the role of context and environment to the fore, yet I do not want to lose sight of the role of the individual within the intercultural learning process. In an attempt to balance the interaction between the environment and individual, I turn again to Taylor’s (1994) model of intercultural competence.

As a reminder, Taylor’s (1994) model is firmly rooted in the transformative learning theory of Mezirow (1991) who defines transformative learning thusly:
The process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective; and, finally, making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings (p. 167).

Although transformative learning theory (like Taylor’s model of intercultural competence) argues learning to be a continuous life-long process, it also posits that the catalyst for structural change is anchored in specific moments in time and experience. Mezirow (1991) called these galvanizing moments “disorienting dilemmas” whereas Taylor (1994) coined the term “cultural disequilibrium” to situate the discussion more squarely in the field of intercultural learning. Ultimately, the data generated for my study did confirm that Taylor’s (1994) model of intercultural competence was useful for better understanding the intercultural learning process of my participants, but the model’s utility should not be misconstrued as definitive. To illustrate this point, I will map aspects of Ilene and others’ learning biographies onto the five components outlined in his model of intercultural competence. However, I will also pause to outline several inherent limitations associated with the model. In doing so, I hope to repurpose his model so that it may be used to further illuminate intercultural learning as socio-cultural process.

---

Ilene’s experience presents an ideal case for us consider vis-à-vis Taylor’s model simply because the cultural disequilibrium central to this conceptual framework actually occurred as Ilene was in the middle of her year in the Smith Hall Global Village and features prominently in her narratives and because she progressed from a stark pattern of circumnavigation to a strong pattern of organized navigation that rested on her relationship with Ms. Sponge Bob.
“Setting the stage” is the first component in Taylor’s model and is defined as the degree of “learning readiness” one brings to each new intercultural experience. This learning readiness is shaped by the individual’s goals for the present experience, former critical events, as well as previous intercultural experience. As Ilene was entering the Smith Hall Global Village LLP, her degree of learning readiness was relatively positive and strong. She was quite excited to be in America and studying abroad for a full academic year. She had goals to improve her English language ability and make friends with the American students around her. She also had a significant international and intercultural experience under her belt. That is, she had studied abroad in Taiwan for a month the summer prior to coming to America. During this time, she had to grapple with various cultural challenges, such as speaking a new language and eating on the streets. Ultimately, this experience increased her level of empathy and cultural awareness. She even began volunteering as an academic tutor and mentor for the international students studying at her home university in Japan. In spite of all these positive factors, Ilene’s learning readiness also had several limitations. Although she had been to Taiwan, for instance, she had never been to the West. In fact, before her short visit in Taiwan, she had never been outside of Japan. Coming to America for an entire academic year by herself, therefore, was profoundly different. She was worried about her language ability. Although she had been studying English her entire life and did well enough on the TOEFL exam to participate in the exchange program, she considered herself far from fluent and had never been immersed in an English speaking society. Her race, too, set her apart from the majority of Caucasian students studying around her. All of this, in the
words of Taylor (1994), “set the stage” for Ilene’s time and experience within the Global Village LLP.

“Cultural disequilibrium” is the second component of Taylor’s (1994) model and is not entirely dissimilar to the more popular notion of culture shock. Taylor argues that cultural disequilibrium is the spur propelling change in the learning process. “Its emotional nature,” he writes, “is the driving force that pushes the participant to become interculturally competent…Participants describe an experience of dissonance between the host culture and their primary culture, feeling out of control and struggling to regain a balance in their life” (p. 161). He stresses that this emotional state can manifest itself in protracted states of frustration and loneliness as well as shorter and more tumultuous incidents. This type of cultural disequilibrium is apparent throughout Ilene’s experience in America. She spends the majority of her time alone in her room. She gets frustrated because she cannot understand everything in her lectures and she finds mastering the material discussed in class incredibly more difficult than she did in Japan. When, in our first interview, I asked her what she had learned from her experience in America to date, she replied, “I learned I don’t like being alone.” Eventually, this ongoing experience of cultural disequilibrium came to a head for Ilene in the context of a group project she was working on for a class. We explored this critical moment in her learning biography above as it pertained to her personal patterns of navigation, that of circumnavigation and organized navigation. Let us revisit that critical experience a second time, this time with Taylor’s (1994) model in mind:

I remember one important thing. During the last semester. I guess it was in November. At the end of November. I was really depressed. Because I had one
group project in my [linguistics and gender] class. We had a meeting. We got
together at 9:00pm or 10:00pm—9:00pm, but two members didn’t come so we
couldn’t start the project, so we waited for them until 10:00pm. So we had one
hour free time. And we were talking one hour, but I couldn’t join the
talking. The other members…I knew one of them. I asked her to let me see her
notes, but I didn’t know the other members and they were all American. So when
they were talking, I totally couldn’t understand what they were talking about.
They were talking about a TV show, but I didn’t know that TV show, so I had
completely no idea what they were talking about. And because I was quiet, no
one paid attention to me. And before the conversation started…we all arrived at
separate times. I arrived second and one of the other members, he arrived and he
asked me about things from the last class [from which he had been absent] and so
I explained about the things from the last class. But after the members got
together, he asked the *same thing again* to another member. So I thought maybe
he didn’t understand me or maybe he didn’t *trust* me because of my English or
because I’m a foreigner. So I felt really tired after that. So I left.

Taylor’s (1994) model posits that one’s experience of cultural disequilibrium can
be intensified or muted by social identity markers, such as race, gender, or marital status
as well as previous experiences of marginality, host language competency, and previous
experiences in the host culture. The data generated by this study supports this claim. For
instance, although Ilene does not address her race explicitly above, she does so implicitly
when she explains she felt that her project partner did not trust her because of her
nationality. Linda, the Chinese-Japanese exchange student who participated in this study,
articulated this dynamic even more directly when she articulated a distrust of “white girls” and argued that they actively exclude Asian students on campus based on their culture and race. In the end, Ilene’s ongoing state of cultural disequilibrium, which reaches a tipping point during the group project, eventually becomes the catalyst for change. After she leaves the group meeting, she goes back to her room and attempts to regain balance in her life:

At first, I didn’t feel like talking about that to Ms. Sponge Bob. But for some reason—I don’t know why—I started explaining my situation [to her]. [Then] I asked her about my experience. And she agreed with me. She’s studying languages now. Arabic I think. And she listed to my situation about speaking a foreign language in a foreign country. And she said if she were in the same situation, she could not do that. She could not understand the others speaking and she agreed with me. It’s hard. It’s very difficult to use [a] second language. So I felt better after talking with her. Explaining my situation. I got agreement. ‘Sympathy’? Is that the word? Sympathy. I got sympathy. So I felt better. So I view our relationship [as a genuine friendship] not only [something I can use for my] English skills. But sharing our situation. Sharing our situation, changed our feeling. Changed our relationship.

The third component of Taylor’s (1994) model is “cognitive orientations.” He argues that there are two orientations, reflective and non-reflective, and posits individuals utilize different cognitive orientations in the face of cultural disequilibrium. Although his model does not offer a great deal of specification on this particular point, I would argue that given individuals may shift back and forth between cognitive orientations based on
their personal experience and situation. For instance, reflection was not as active or present in Claudia’s account of her life in the Global Village, but one can easily imagine that she would have adopted a more reflective orientation had she experienced more cultural disequilibrium. Ilene, on the other hand, clearly utilized a reflective orientation. In Japan, she operated as a perfectionist when it came to her studies and was able to do so with relative ease. This suited her well because she wanted to be prepared for shushoku katsudo, the highly structured recruitment process Japanese students seeking post-graduation employment must enter. But her perfectionist approach to her coursework proved more challenging in America, partly because all of the content was in English. After considerable reflection, she came to the conclusion that her desire and attempt to master all of the material she faced in class just as perfectly as she had in Japan became a major point of stress for her—one that contributed significantly to her loneliness in America. Ultimately, this reflection guided her throughout the transformative learning process. As Mezirow (1991) would state it, she became “critically aware” of how and why her assumptions surrounding schoolwork and shushoku katsudo were “constraining the way she perceived, understood, and felt about the world around her” (p. 167). Consequently, she changed these “structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective” (Mezirow, 1991).

In addition to expanding one’s meaning perspective, Mezirow (1991) argues that transformative learning also includes “making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings” (p. 167). This sentence reflects the fact that the process of change one undergoes is more than a cognitive state alone. Holistic in nature, transformative learning does address cognition head-on, but, like Deweyan philosophy, it also accounts
for the manner in which one “acts upon” the environment around him. The fourth component in Taylor’s (1994) model is “Behavioral Learning Strategies” and addresses this dynamic, mind-body quality of the theory directly. As the title suggests, it actively explores concrete means by which one can increase one’s level of intercultural competence. Particular behaviors include observing cultural difference, participating in intercultural spaces, and establishing intercultural friendships. Taylor posits behavioral learning strategies such as these can lead one to more intercultural experiences moving forward and also have the potential to expand his self-confidence and worldview. He coins this expansion of one’s confidence and worldview an “Evolving Intercultural Identity” and marks it as the fifth component in his model of intercultural competence.

The data generated for this study substantiated the logic and progression of these two components—“Behavioral Learning Strategies” and “Evolving Intercultural Identity”—within Taylor’s model. Time and time again, behavioral patterns surfaced within the students’ narratives and the concrete examples provided did, indeed, suggest that these patterns of action determined their level of interaction with intercultural difference and consequently shaped their evolving intercultural identity. Roni, for instance, shared that she made a point of introducing herself to the Japanese students she saw sitting in the common area on the first day she was moving in and invited them all to join her for a pancake dinner. This may seem like a rather minor or commonplace action, but it is important that this behavioral pattern was extremely rare within Smith Hall. Most of the American students I interviewed reported little to no interaction with the Asian students on the floor and stated things similar to what Claudia said when asked about them: “I haven’t gotten their names. They talk really quietly. But I don’t see them
that much.” Not only did Roni see them, she was excited to see them—excited enough, in fact, that she went to them, introduced herself, and invited them to join her in a social activity. While this reflects her intercultural hero pattern of navigation, it also reflects Miller’s (1996) hosting hypothesis among American-Asian dyads.

Ultimately, this ongoing behavioral pattern enables Roni to establish a profound friendship with Yoko that increases her own self-confidence and changes the way she views the world. Through her relationships with Yoko, she has a better understanding of friendship, or, in her own words, “Like how I can call a friend a best friend.” For Roni, Yoko has become someone she can make commitments and take risks with, someone in whom she can share and confide. It is important to remember that this friendship is also fundamentally intercultural and as such it grants Roni access to what Taylor (1994) termed “tacit” cultural knowledge that she could not otherwise experience or see. For instance, when she attended the *Kinga Shinnen* (New Year’s) event at the Governor’s mansion, she was able to observe Yoko and her other Japanese friends interact with the high-ranking Japanese professionals in *Keigo* (formal Japanese). Similarly, her friendship with Yoko allows her not only to observe but actively participate in Japanese culture. When she imagines herself living in Japan, she imagines that she will be more likely to speak Japanese with Yoko or Hiroko (her LABO exchange friend from high school): “I’ll be more likely to go to her and I’ll feel comfortable speaking...Japanese with her. Like, I’ll have that comfort of trying to use my Japanese with her.” In this sense, intercultural friendship provides Roni the safety to fail. As a consequence, Roni’s confidence and worldview expand and work to develop her evolving intercultural identity. This, of course, will serve her well as she prepares to live in Japan moving
forward. This reinforces the important fact that Taylor’s (1994) model does not represent a strict stage model of development constricted by linear movement. Rather, the model posits that intercultural competence is a *life-long* process; the evolving intercultural identity presenting now within Roni will only continue to grow, develop, and “set the stage” for her next intercultural experience in Japan. Ilene’s pattern of transformation is similar. During the beginning of the year, Ilene spent her free time alone and primarily only communicated with those around her via text. When I asked her what she had learned from her experience, she replied, “I learned that I don’t like to be alone.” By the time of her second interview, however, Ilene had learned ways not to be alone in America. Her English had improved and she had learned to balance her schoolwork with her social life. She had also learned to break the mold she and Ms. Sponge Bob had established within the room. When Ms. Sponge Bob was watching T.V., for instance, she found ways to include herself. She would ask Ms. Sponge Bob what she was watching and Ms. Sponge Bob, in turn, began to articulate and share the tacit culture around her. This budding friendship improved Ilene’s self-confidence and ushered a change in perspective. In short, it fostered her “Evolving Intercultural Identity.”

I hope this running application of Taylor’s (1994) model onto the data elucidates and substantiates the model’s relevance, but the model also comes with inherent limitations. As discussed in Chapter Three (Conceptual Framework), his model often fails to account for some of the broader, socio-cultural implications established by Deweyan philosophy and Vygotskian theory. To be fair, Taylor’s model champions intercultural friendship as a key behavioral learning strategy. Indeed, he argues that it is the most advanced learning strategy because it offers *sustained* opportunity for
intercultural experience in which the cultural other can share “tacit” cultural knowledge with the friend. This argument was substantiated by the data generated throughout this study. Roni’s friendship with Yoko grants her tacit knowledge of Japan just as Ilene’s friendship with Ms. Sponge Bob grants her access to and understanding of American culture. In effect, these intercultural friendships approximate what modern Vygotskians, such as Brown and colleagues (1989), have labeled an educative “apprenticeship” in which a more knowledgeable other (MKO) guides the less-learned within a “zone of proximal development.” In this sense, Taylor’s model does make some room for socio-cultural theory. Ultimately, however, his model stems from Mezirow’s work and is firmly rooted in a psychological investigation of the individual. “The transformation of becoming interculturally competent is anchored,” he writes, “within the individual. It is this on-going process of the individual’s internal system that is at the core of intercultural competency” (p.157). His model, therefore, is not equipped to explore learning that extends beyond the individual or dyadic level. Another major limitation of his model is rooted in the fact that his sample only included individuals he deemed to be interculturally competent after screening for a specific set of criteria (e.g., each was 25 years of age or older, each lived and worked in a host culture for a minimum of two years, and each spoke the host language as his or her primary form of communication).

31 It should also be noted that these intercultural friendships served as hearty and more resilient conduit for intercultural navigation than did other types of intercultural relationships. For instance, a classmate or tutor could also play the role of the MKO in intercultural setting, as could a roommate. However, a friend is a particularly powerful form of MKO because friendship comes with a level of resiliency that allows the relationship to persist and thrive in the face of structural barriers such as a new floor/roommate assignment. The navigation and learning patterns of Sarah and A., the two British students who asked for new room assignments, exemplify this point.
No attempt was made to examine the intercultural learning process for individuals who may not be interculturally competent nor was any attempt made to examine the role of the cultural majority or host beyond sharing tacit information at the dyadic level.

I, on the other hand, am interested in exploring intercultural learning in the American higher education context and am consequently very much interested in exploring what this process looks like broadly, including for less experienced individuals. The philosophy of John Dewey proved quite helpful in this respect. His principle of interaction frames education as interplay between the individual and the environment and his principle of continuity highlights the manner in which past and present experiences affect and influence future experiences. As discussed, he describes the learning environment as the sum of all conditions acting on the individual. He is thinking holistically, then, and in doing so encourages us to consider learning patterns more broadly. Consider the first component of Taylor’s (1994) model again. Taylor limits this component he entitles “Setting the Stage” only to what the participant brings to each new intercultural experience; his model makes no attempt to account for the environment in which the participant is situated. This is a significant limitation. It means his model cannot account for the impact student mobility trends (e.g., a dramatic increase in the number of Brazilian students) may have on social interaction within a given hall. It also means his model cannot account for other critical factors such as staffing ratios, connected coursework, in-hall programming, or related financial budgets. As was evidenced in the data generated for this study, these kind of contextual threads can and do prove critically important to the makeup of environmental fabric and the experience of the individuals enveloped therein. Consider the architecture on campus.
move towards privatization—and the effect this privatization had on the housing assignments process. These institutional trends had a direct and tangible impact on the intercultural learning found within the Global Village LLP. Indeed, the majority of participants in the study proved incapable of accessing the intercultural space independently. This fact brings us back to Dewey’s principle of continuity and a central point of my findings: if students do not have the past and present experiences needed to access and navigate the intercultural space found within an international LLP, they may circumnavigate that space altogether—even, ironically, as they find themselves immersed within that space.

So the “context of learning readiness” is not determined by the individual alone, the socio-cultural environment is equally responsible for its co-creation. That is an important point tied to Dewey’s (1938) principle of interaction. A second, related, and equally important point is tied to Dewey’s (1938) principle of continuity. That is, Taylor’s (1994) model does not account for the manner in which “the context of learning readiness” is shaped by past socio-cultural constructs that inherently precede and influence the present socio-cultural context. In other words, Taylor limits the learning stage only to what the individual brings intra-psychologically to the intercultural experience; he does not address the cultural orientations and inter-psychological processes of the individual, which Vygotsky argues precede and propel the given individual’s personal psychology. Again, the narratives of Ilene and Ms. Sponge illuminate this point, for they, like all of the students, brought several unseen cultural differences with them into the LLP—not just private and personal factors.
For instance, Ilene, in spite of her personal goals being social in nature, explained that her motivations for coming to UK were, indeed, primarily academic. She wanted to study linguistics and communications and did so with her career primarily in mind. She attempted to improve her English—not by going out to lunch with her roommate—but rather by recording her lectures and going over them by herself in her room with a dictionary in hand. She rarely attended any in-hall programs and did not consider joining any UK-sponsored clubs or organizations. In this sense, her learning readiness, as shaped and defined by her Japanese culture, prepared her for American coursework. Nespor (2000) and Fischer (2013), however, would be right to question whether or not she was actually prepared for an American education. In short, she approached her education in America as a Japanese student would—not as a (typical) American student does.

Ms. Sponge Bob’s learning biography arguably reveals the important manner in which previous socio-cultural constructs and cultural orientations precede and shape the present context of learning readiness espoused in Taylor’s (1994) model even more palpably. As discussed, the journey towards intercultural competence is a life-long process and may come in fits and starts. This certainly appears to be the case with Ms. Sponge Bob. Toward the end of her learning biography, for instance, we see her grappling with questions posed by the media and incendiary figures, such as Donald Trump. She wonders, rather tortuously, if she is able to be sympathetic toward the plight of Syrian refugees without putting her family in danger. This emotional turmoil could be the disorienting dilemma preceding transformative learning. Her personal knowledge of the Muslims she knows from her Arabic class in Kentucky does not fit comfortably in her current meaning structure that implicitly and strongly links Muslims with terrorism and
thus she is emotionally torn. This internal conflict suggests that her meaning perspective, shaped by her life and upbringing in Mississippi, is actively being challenged by her current environment. As she herself tells us, “There are definitely some things that I’ve thought twice about since I’ve been here and if I wasn’t here I wouldn’t think twice about it.” She transitions then to talk about Donald Trump and how much she hates his stance on “Mexican immigration ideas” before she begins grappling with the question of Syrian refugees. Her disdain for Donald Trump’s views on immigration is very much a conscious reflection of her values and beliefs surrounding immigration. Yet this conscious reflection stands in stark contrast to the degrading and offensive way she talks about her Mexican “kid” and fellow band member Yuriel, suggesting some of her cultural biases may very well be unconscious. This is plausible. After all, as Riessman (1993) reminds us, culture speaks itself—regardless of the speaker’s awareness. In this sense, Ms. Sponge Bob’s stories of Yuriel may reflect a vestige of her Mississippi environment but also an incongruity between “past” and “present” cognitive structures. After all, it is not clear that any transformation has occurred; it is only clear that she is beginning to question some of her past assumptions. Should she move back to the particular socio-cultural environment she inhabited in Mississippi, the one in which she called Yuriel “Urinal” and laughed as she recounted his hardships as an “illegal” immigrant, it is hard to imagine these past assumptions changing at all. My main point here is not that the journey toward intercultural competence comes in fits and starts, though this is certainly true. Rather, as Dewey and Vygotsky would argue, the journey towards intercultural competence is shaped and predetermined by the socio-cultural environment past and present, including those environments’ linguistic scripts, political tropes, and cultural
orientations. Again, the inter-psychological precedes the intra-psychological. Or, as Ms. Sponge Bob, said it: “There are definitely some things that I’ve thought twice about since I’ve been here and if I wasn’t here I wouldn’t think twice about it.”

The data from this study suggest that the intercultural education promoted and championed by the Global Village LLP varied by individual. For many of the participants, it is safe to say the education routinely struggled to yield fruitful and creative intercultural experiences. In some instances, such as when Ilene attended “Pasta and Pronouns,” the education may even have even unwittingly exacerbated cultural borders and feelings of isolation. The majority of the participants, however, were not limited to a single pattern of learning and navigation. For instance, almost every student who exhibited a pattern of circumnavigation was able to also—if infrequently—experience a form of organized navigation. Finally, a few, such as Roni, were able to select fruitful and creative intercultural experiences independently. These findings are not meant to be evaluative. Rather, I hope these findings illuminate how students navigate intercultural spaces such as the intercultural space found within a given international LLP. I also hope the findings offer a broader socio-cultural understanding of the intercultural learning process espoused by Taylor’s (1994) model of intercultural competence.
Chapter Seven: Conclusion

In the world of narrative, regardless of the particular form or genre, it is not uncommon to end with the beginning, so let us start with the initial research questions for this study regarding intercultural navigation and learning: 1) How do students navigate intercultural space, such as the space found within an international LLP? And 2) How do students learn interculturally? That is, what does the learning process seem to be for each student within the international LLP? To answer these questions, the study narrowed its focus to a particular space—the Smith Hall Global Village. This LLP was located in a particular place and time: the University of Kentucky in 2015-16. Significantly, this was an American institution amid “The New Global Century.” It was also a campus under physical construction. I anticipated the social-construction of campus. In fact, I chose the word “space” because it implies human performance and social interaction.

Methodologically, I embraced social-constructionism as a guiding principle. I did so because I believe story is our way—the human way—of knowing the world and because I wanted to learn how students experience intercultural space on a personal level. To this end, narrative analysis was embraced as the primary method of inquiry, but these efforts were triangulated with field observations as well textual analysis of institutional documents (e.g., housing brochures, residence life websites, and local news articles). My research protocol—specifically my interview questions—were strongly guided by my conceptual framework, which included the educational philosophy of John Dewey as well as the theoretical work of Jack Mezirow, Edward Taylor, and Lev Vygotsky. Consequently, my interview questions were designed to explore learning in context—the experience of the individual as shaped by the surrounding environment.
Ultimately, this study followed the experience of fourteen undergraduates living in the Smith Hall Global Village LLP through the 2015-16 academic year. Because learning implies change and time, I interviewed each student twice. Throughout the research process, an iterative process to be sure, I returned—always—to my primary research questions: How do students navigate the intercultural space found within an international LLP? And 2) How do students learn interculturally? The answer to both questions is that it depends. It depends on the various factors comprising the individual. The conceptual work of Mezirow (1991) and Taylor (1994) proved helpful on this front. It also depends on the various factors comprising the environment. Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory proved indispensable here. Finally, it depends on the interaction of the individual and the environment working in concert with one another, over time, moving from past to present, gesturing towards the future, which shall, eventually, become the past. These are not my thoughts but rather those of John Dewey. His philosophy helped me keep these principles of interaction and continuity at the fore and reminded me that education and learning are democratic processes that happen in community as discussed in Chapter Two.

Findings

Some scholars may scoff at the use of the phrase “findings,” for they may argue that “findings” suggest a specious line of thought [especially for a constructivist] in which new knowledge is not constructed but stumbled upon, just as one might stumble upon a rock and pick it up to find something novel waiting beneath. Yet, the phrase works well for a study on navigation. As discussed the word “navigation” conjures notions of movement, agency, and a romantic, phenomenological other. It also conjures
a notion of travel, discovery, and, yes, findings. These findings are biased and personal to be sure, but they are findings all the same. Here, then, I reiterate my central findings:

1) If students do not have the past and present experiences needed to access and navigate the intercultural space found within an international LLP, they may circumnavigate that space altogether—even, ironically, as they find themselves immersed within that space.

2) Present experiences within the context of an LLP are not limited to the experiences of the individual students alone. Present experiences are equally shaped, created, and performed by the environment. In the case of the Global Village, that environment included everything from scarce programming and mismanaged roommate assignments to the physical environment of the residence hall as well as the corporate landscape redefining campus geography. The environment also included a culture of privatization and consumerism. Finally, that environment included a lack of faculty and administrative buy-in, which led the Global Village to close its doors permanently at the end of the 2015-16 academic year. Of course, this type of buy-in (or a lack there of) does not occur overnight or even over the course of an academic year, which leads to the next finding.

3) The interaction that occurs between the individual and environment is not constricted to the present alone. Both the individual and the environment have been shaped a priori by their socio-cultural antecedents. For instance, the instability facing the Global Village LLP stemmed from a protracted lack of institutional support as well as a national trend toward privatization that had
occurred over time. Meanwhile, the “context of learning readiness” that each individual brings into the environment has just as equally been shaped—not only by the previous personal experiences of the individual—but just as equally by the previous experiences of his culture and society. The manner in which a young student from Mississippi sees and experiences intercultural difference, for example, is not unrelated to the manner in which her previous socio-historical environment constructed racial and class difference for her ideologically and politically. This point brings a prominent subtext of the students’ learning biographies to the fore: cultural orientations and hierarchies. Cultural hierarchies like racism and colonialism surface in the language, thought, and navigation patterns of students like Ms. Sponge Bob, Linda, and Sarah. Meanwhile, cultural orientations, such as Ilene’s “Japanese” approach to a college education, equally guide and shape the navigation and learning. These cultural systems are larger than any one individual. They structure and position all members of a society on a socio-political continuum that exists historically and consequently predate and pre-fashion the experiences of every individual a priori.

4) The manner in which students navigate intercultural spaces directs the manner in which they learn. In other words, navigation shapes learning. To offer greater context and extend the work, I turn to a discussion of the theoretical and practical implications these findings may have on scholarship and practice. To this end, the discussion below is presented in two parts: theoretical and programmatic.
Theoretical implications. This section addresses the manner in which the study has led to a better understanding of past theories, particularly Taylor’s (1994) model of intercultural competence. As discussed, in Chapter Six, his model is not equipped to explore learning that extends beyond the individual or dyadic level. By using the second and third findings highlighted above—that present experiences are shaped by the socio-cultural environment just as much as they are by the individual (the second finding), and that the educative interaction that takes place between the individual and environment need not be limited to the present (the third finding)—the current study proposes extending certain limitations of his model so that a more robust model of intercultural learning as socio-cultural process emerges. This point returns this discussion to a conversation regarding cultural systems, such as cultural orientations and cultural hierarchies. Again, the case of Ms. Sponge Bob offers a strong point of entry. A cultural hierarchy of racism is a prevalent cultural structure within her Mississippi environment and it is one that situates her socio-politically in a position of power vis-à-vis the cultural others in her life like her Mexican friend Yuriel. This cultural hierarchy is one that surfaces in the racist diction of her narratives as well as their plot and structure. That is, the cultural other is routinely marginalized as a source of entertainment and comfort in her accounts. In this sense, she is wholly complicit in the racism. Yet, her narratives (e.g., “The world is really weird.”) also reveal that she is struggling with her position of power in this cultural hierarchy and struggling to navigate a sense of guilt and remorse. Helms (2008) offers a refined identity development model that are designed to help White people like Ms. Sponge Bob replace internalized shame with a more positive and supportive understanding of cultural others that also allows for a sense of pride in her
own White identity. Helms (2008) work provides just one example of a theoretical model regarding cultural hierarchies that the current study could support and further, and this, in turn, would only further a more robust understanding and reconfiguration of Taylor’s (1994) model.

Ultimately, Taylor’s (1994) model is rooted in transformative learning theory and consequently views intercultural competence as a life-long process in which intercultural experience and learning lead to greater intercultural experience and learning. Although his model is cyclical in nature, theoretically speaking it is still just a little too tidy. For instance, it does not actively explore scenarios in which a given individual’s pattern of learning may shift back and forth depending on situation and context. Sarah’s learning biography provides an excellent example of why this is an important consideration. As her learning biography reveals, a great deal of fluidity exists among a given individual’s patterns of navigation. This just reiterates the notion that knowledge is contextual, learning is situational, and the intercultural learning process is anything but linear.

Another theoretical implication grounded in the data generated by this study involves an expansion and clarification of Taylor’s (1994) notion of an “evolving intercultural identity.” He argues that one’s evolving intercultural identity “consists of changing values, greater self-confidence, and a change in perspective” and posits that the perspective transformation is the most telling change. Yet he only provides three examples: 1) greater inclusiveness of other points of view, 2) contextual relativism, and 3) recognizing the commonality of humankind.

The data generated for this study suggest that students with more intercultural experience and maturity are more apt to acknowledge that diversity exists even amid
cultural norms and predominant cultural trends. Inversely, the tendency to make broader generalizations about a given culture based on limited evidence is a pattern that presented itself multiple times throughout the interview data and generally speaking is a narrative pattern that appeared with students who have less intercultural experience in the given context. For instance, in Ilene’s learning biography, she is reluctant to make generalizations about Japan (her home country), but relatively quick to do so about Taiwan. Similarly, Linda is rather quick to make generalizations about “white girls”—at least, that is, until she begins sharing a room in Smith Hall with Katherine who is white and also just so happens to be “really, really nice.” Katherine, too, shared that she went through a similar change in perspective: first when she participated in a high school exchange program in which she found herself living with a Bosnian family in Limerick, Ireland and again in the Global Village as she befriended the Saudi girl with whom A. had initially roomed. (Before Katherine met Madia (the Saudi girl), she had assumed everyone in the Middle East was Muslim, but Madia assured her this was not the case; she informed her that she also knew many Christians in the Middle East). In both cases, Katherine’s understanding of the cultural other (whether that be “Ireland” of the “Middle East”) was complicated and broadened. This type of discernment—a tendency to seek complexity and detect diversity, even among veritable cultural norms—reflects a level of intercultural sophistication and maturity that is not explicitly addressed in Taylor’s (1994) model. EMP arguably exhibited the most advanced evolution of this intercultural skill among the students. As was presented in his biographical sketch, he spoke about this perspective quite openly as a part of his ongoing worldview:
Whenever I deal with a lot of international students—even the American students here—I know that…no two students are ever gonna be alike. They might come from the same country, the same school…they [may even] have the same history like we do here. [But] there's no reason why if we go into just this one category, they're all gonna act like this. I can expect them to have certain mindsets to a degree, but I have to remember they're a person. You can't categorize a person that you've never met before.

EMP’s narratives also presented another sign of intercultural maturity that was not addressed or articulated in Taylor’s (1994) model but does nevertheless fit with his notion of an “evolving intercultural identity,” particularly as it relates to increasing self-confidence: that is, his ability to make personal evaluations and decisions while taking cultural difference into consideration. For instance, more than once now, I alluded to the fact that EMP has had to grapple with some particularly difficult intercultural situations in his life, such as the time a Ghanaian headmaster asked him to cane a young, disobedient pupil as well as the time he entered a heated debate with the older Nigerian student in Smith Hall. In both instances, EMP took the cultural other’s perspective into consideration as well as the relative cultural context in which the situation happened and used those factors to guide and moderate the manner in which he navigated the ambiguous situations. In the Ghanaian scenario, although he was morally outraged that he would be asked to cane a young boy, he acknowledged that corporal punishment was an institutional norm that may have also been a norm within the larger Ghanaian culture. For this reason, he did not openly criticize the headmaster or the policy, but he did refuse to personally participate in the behavior. Meanwhile, although he felt the older Nigerian
student was entitled to his conservative and restrictive views concerning women, he felt compelled to combat those views vocally and actively, particularly because the argument was occurring in an American context. Like his ability to discern diversity amid predominant cultural trends, this second ability to make difficult decisions while taking cultural context into consideration expands and clarifies how scholars and practitioners alike could further Taylor’s (1994) notions of increasing self-confidence and an evolving intercultural identity.

A final theoretical implication of this study relates to one of the major limitations inherent in Taylor’s (1994) model. As addressed in the previous chapter, one confine facing his research is rooted in the fact that his sample consisted only of individuals he deemed to be interculturally competent. No attempt was made to examine the intercultural learning process for individuals who may not be interculturally competent nor was any attempt made to examine the role of the cultural majority or host culture beyond sharing tacit information at the dyadic level. I, on the other hand, am very much interested in exploring intercultural learning on American campuses, particularly for students who may have less intercultural experience. To this end, I now turn to a discussion of practical or programmatic implications that may be of more interest to practitioners in the field.

**Programmatic implications.** This subsection briefly addressed how the study led to a better understanding of intercultural learning in LLPs. Consider the fourth “finding” outlined above: The manner in which students navigate the socially constructed space found within an LLP shapes how they are able to learn interculturally. As discovered, students who circumnavigate intercultural space often fail to access that space and in
doing so are prevented from interacting with the cultural other in a substantive way that provides opportunity for future intercultural growth and learning. Meanwhile, the intercultural learning opportunities offered to students following a pattern of organized or independent navigation are wholly different, for they afford students *substantive and sustained* interaction with the cultural other, and consequently have the transformative potential to expand and broaden their intercultural identities and learning.

Bennett, Volet, and Fozdar’s (2013) studied an unlikely and positive intercultural student dyad that thrived and served as a discrepant case to the body of literature that “overwhelmingly suggests that in institutions where English is the language of instruction, monolingual local students rarely mix with international students who are not fully proficient in English” (p 533). They argued that the dyad overcame a culture of homophily and passive xenophobia in a manner that was conducive to intercultural learning. They reasoned, therefore, that institutions should create structures and interventions, such as protracted cohort learning experience, designed to support internationalization and intercultural learning. Although they did not specifically consider international LLPs, the Smith Hall Global Village—at least as it was promoted in concept—could provide one such intervention. As this study suggests, however, more attention and resources on the part of the institution should be actively and intentionally dedicated to structuring intercultural dyads for the students. Ensuring *every* LLP participant be paired with a cultural other from a different nation would be a welcomed, first step for international LLPs. A second and more ideal step would be to ensure that every participant be structured into a dyad based on a common interest. For instance, an American student interested in French language could be paired with a French-speaking
international student. Other points for consideration could include intercultural/international dyads based on shared academic interests. As was evidenced in the case of Ilene and Ms. Sponge Bob, even if every international student were simply paired randomly with an American student—even this would lay the groundwork for excellent potential. Of course, that is not to say that that potential would be realized.

As was evidenced in the case of Sarah (England) and Lonnie (U.S.A) as well as A. (England) and Madia (Saudi Arabia), random pairings—even random American/international pairings—do not always thrive in the context of an international LLP. This is not surprising, of course. As Residence Life professionals can readily attest, interpersonal differences routinely fracture American/American dyads in which culture plays no (apparent) role. For this reason, providing multiple layers of intervention designed to provide substantive and sustained intercultural interaction should be the ideal for international LLPs. The research of Pike (2002) proves relevant to this point as he found that students participating in the LLP with linked coursework proved to be significantly more open to diversity than the other on-campus participants, suggesting that this specific LLP structure supports intercultural learning particularly well. Although his research makes no attempt to explain why this is the case, the current study offers insight into how organized navigation, such as the guidance students may receive in a formal classroom setting, can encourage intercultural interaction and reflection. For instance, Lydia, Meghan, and Natalie each reported that their connected UK 101 course was the only intercultural space in which they were able to interact with international students and talk with them directly about more substantive topics. Although it was not a connected course, Ms. Sponge Bob’s narratives reveal that her Arabic class allowed her
similar opportunity. Of course, one of the major challenges facing the Global Village was that it included only one connected course (e.g., UK 101), a course that was not required of every student. In fact, the majority of international students living in and around the Global Village were not enrolled in the course.

Even if a given international LLP participant happens to be paired with an American roommate and actively participates in formal programming connected with the LLP, the results can still be rather disheartening. Take the case of Ilene. Although she was not enrolled in the connected UK 101 class, she did attend official in-hall programs that were sponsored by the LLP and led by experienced professionals. One of the programs’ assumed goals (as well as that of the LLP generally) was that the students would walk away with a greater appreciation of diversity that would improve their interactions with difference and the cultural other. However, as we saw with Pasta and Pronouns, Ilene walked away feeling incredibly isolated and uncomfortable. In fact, the program only added to her feelings of cultural isolation and political marginalization. Although Ms. Sponge Bob eventually helped her overcome these feelings, it is worth remembering that initially this roommate assignment exacerbated her feelings of alienation.

The research of Fischer (2013) and Nespor (2000) raise important considerations here regarding students like Ilene—cultural others—in an American setting. Fischer’s (2013) work, for instance, is right to question whether international students like Ilene are prepared for an American education. Meanwhile, Nespor’s (2000) study reveals the unattended yet pernicious ramifications of forcing students into an educational space for which they are not granted the cultural and social capital needed to access that space.
fully. One limitation found in this line of research, however, is that the mode of inquiry has primarily been ethnographic in nature, meaning the participants were not allowed to speak fully and completely for themselves. Given the political nature of this qualitative work and its emphasis on student experience, it only follows that the students should be able to speak directly for themselves, in their own voices. The current study thus offers a unique perspective and methodology (narrative analysis) to the ongoing conversation. In my second interview with Ilene, for instance, when I suggested that her relationship with Ms. Sponge Bob may not be meaningful, she stopped and corrected me. “No,” Ilene said, “she now is my friend.” She continued then to tell the story of their friendship and she did so at length, using her own words and voice to construct the narrative. I am not arguing that her narratives undermine the critical claims of Fischer (2013) and Nespor (2000)—far from it, in fact. I think their work, supported by my own research, legitimately calls into question the institutional preparedness of certain educational programs to accommodate students of difference. That being said, the voices of students like Sarah, Ilene, Linda, Ms. Sponge Bob, Roni, EMP, Natalie, H., A., do offer valuable insight that can be used by practitioners to improve student learning environments.

Campbell’s (2012) study entitled “Promoting intercultural contact on campus” outlines a successful experiential “buddy project” that was embedded in an intercultural business communication class. As presented in the literature review for this study, the embedded buddy project was designed to 1) help newly-arrived international students (mostly from China) transition into local social life more easily and 2) help the local host students enrolled in the class (mostly New Zealanders) contextualize theories of culture, intercultural communication, and intercultural competence. The learning biographies and
narratives of Roni, EMP, and Melody—the three American participants who managed to achieve a level of independent navigation autonomously as intercultural heroes—offer insight into how a given (American) institution might enable, and, yes, even teach its American students to support and help newly arrived international students. As a reminder, what set these three students apart was not a matter of goals or motivation nor was it a matter of previous international experience or greater knowledge of the cultural other. Rather it was a willingness to initiate more substantive and sustained social interaction with the international students. In all three cases this willingness stemmed from a desire to help others and an intra-psychological tendency to view oneself as an intercultural guide or hero. This discovery is not too different than Miller’s (1996) findings that led her to posit a hosting hypothesis in which successful intercultural roommate relationships thrived only when the American roommates actively adopted a persona of accommodation for the Asian students. This suggests there may be a need for yet another layer of intervention within international LLPs. That is, international LLPs hoping to facilitate sustained and substantive intercultural interaction among its community members would be wise to build in additional components that go beyond intentional roommate assignments and required connected coursework. Embedded buddy projects or even more general expectations in which all of the entering LLP participants—not just a single peer mentor like EMP—are primed to take on specific leadership roles and responsibilities that are stated explicitly and required either through curricular or co-curricular avenues that include guided reflection and discussion could go a long way to supporting the development of other autonomous intercultural heroes. On this note, it is important to remember that the vast majority of the students in this study
were not capable of navigating the Smith Hall space independently but were able to do so via organized navigation. Even in those cases in which the organized navigation occurred completely haphazardly with little to no help from the institution, the result regularly yielded positive and educative intercultural learning experiences, particularly for those students who were afforded substantive and sustained opportunity for interaction with cultural others.

A final but major implication of this study that is both theoretical and practical in nature is that context matters. Once again, learning does not occur in a vacuum. The suggestions outlined above for practitioners in the field, therefore, are not meant to be prescriptive on any level of detail. For instance, I make a point of speaking generally in my call for “layered intervention” within LLPs. The exact number of layers and the parameters of those layers would, of course, need to vary by institution and LLP community, taking the local ecology into consideration at every turn. This emphasis on the local and particular offers an appropriate segue to the next section.

Limitations & Future Research

In Chapter Three, I acknowledge two germane areas of literature related to this study. The first area focuses on LLP outcomes (Inkelas & Soldner, 2011) while the second investigates intercultural outcomes (Bennett, Volet, & Fozdar, 2013; Deardorff, 2006; Ogden, 2010). While there is an assumed connection between international LLPs and intercultural learning, only a few studies (Miller, 1996) have selected this specific context as a point of entry. Meanwhile, the majority of studies focusing on LLP outcomes are skewed toward large, quantitative studies that fall prey to various designs features such as nested data and self-reported survey data. I argued that more research
designed to explore the nature of intercultural learning in international LLPs was needed and so chose a qualitative method of study intentionally designed to explore intercultural learning in a specific international LLP in a specific context. This decision came with consequences.

Like any study, the current study has more than its share of parameters and limitations. The sex of the participants provides one obvious example. As discussed, of the 21 American students who officially applied and were accepted into the Global Village LLP, only four (19%) were men which led to the sample and selected exemplars being similarly skewed toward women. Where are the men and why are they not participating in this type of international LLP programming to the same extent as women? It is well documented that men are underrepresented in the field of education abroad as well. Are there other intercultural spaces that would be better suited to explore intercultural programming and learning for men? In terms of race and ethnicity, the sample offered more diversity. Of the nine American participants, two—including EMP and Meghan—were African-American while Claudia was Guyanese-American and self-identified as Latina whereas the two RAs interviewed for the study were Guatemalan-American and Mexican-American respectively. Other students, such as Melody who self-identified as Caucasian claimed ethnically diverse heritages referencing a grandmother who was Mexican as well as a grandfather who was a priest in the Greek Orthodox Church. As alluded and discussed, the international students in Smith Hall came from various world regions, including Europe, Asia, South America, Africa, and the Middle East. Another limitation of this study relates to language. All of the interviews were conducted in English. This made sense because English was the
currency—the *lingua Franca*, if you will—of the institution as well as the LLP. Every student who participated in the program had to meet the standard UK admission criteria surrounding English language proficiency. Many of the international students I interviewed were native English speakers and even those like Ilene, H., and Linda, who were not native English speakers could still converse clearly in English at the time of their first interview. By the time of their second interview, they were all achieving higher levels of fluency. Nonetheless, Riessman (1993) is right to argue that culture speaks itself in the narratives of interview participants and Vygotsky (1978) reminds us that the most basic socio-cultural building block is language itself, the very words, syntax, lexicons, and diction afforded to us by the hegemonic cultures at hand. Inevitably, then, different themes, patterns, and nuances would have presented themselves differently had some of the interviews been conducted in Chinese, Japanese, etc. Given the fact that my study concerned itself with student voice, culture, and agency, further multi-lingual research focusing on intercultural learning in American campus settings would be a welcomed addition.

Other limitations have to do with the specific LLP itself, the Smith Hall Global Village. This was an LLP on the fritz. Consequently, it was one in which many of the successful outcomes associated with the LLP’s stated goals and intentions came, organically, from the individualized efforts and motivation of the students working in isolation. Arguably, less of the success, such as those instances where substantive and sustained intercultural interaction did occur, stemmed from strategically designed structures and interventions administered actively and consciously by the institution. This is not to distract from the planning, programming, hard work, skill, and expertise of
the various professionals and student professionals that went into making the Global Village. The RAs, peer mentor, academic partner, and resident director—to name only a few—accomplished a significant amount of work that proved instrumental and invaluable to the Global Village experience. In spite of this, the Global Village was officially “sunsetted” at the end of the 2015-16 academic year due to a lack of faculty and administrative buy-in. Research highlighting a more robust and thriving international LLP would be a worthy contribution to the field and could, potentially, be applied to both intercultural research as well as LLP literature.

The current study was also decidedly holistic in nature. Once more, Dewey argues that learning is an interaction between the individual and the environment and the environment is the sum of all factors acting on the individual. That presents a profoundly broad range of variables for consideration—admittedly, a tall order for almost any researcher. To help me in this endeavor, I followed the stories and voices of my students. I attempted to present a depiction of their experience as guided by their words and stories, triangulated by field observations and document analysis. This led me to examine the impact of some programming (both formal and hidden) in more depth. Examples include the roommate assignment process and roommate agreements as well as the official kick-off meeting, UK 101, and specific in-hall programs, such as Pasta and Pronouns. I also examined larger environmental factors, such as the national and local trend toward privatization and consumerism. This, of course, is only a fraction of all factors acting on the individual. Future studies could isolate a new matrix of environmental factors to study in more depth, including the socio-historical contexts of individual’s childhoods. A budgetary and staffing analysis provides one another example. A demographic analysis
as related to student mobility trends based on culture and nation offers another avenue.
Then there are more personal factors to consider: language fluency, age, degree progression, education abroad type and duration to name only a few. All of these factors, studied in isolation or combination, could prove useful to furthering the literature and knowledge creation.

The word “limitations” and the borders implied therein should not be interpreted through a pejorative light. Parameters are everywhere. They are the lines of difference that make the world interesting. It should come as no surprise, then, that a qualitative study like the current one has profound limitations of its own. Many of these limitations are practical and technical in nature. These limitations are addressed at length in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four also addresses methodological challenges associated with narrative analysis. How can a mode of analysis that concerns itself with the narrated event—rather than the objective events themselves—be of use to practitioners? What if student memory of facts is faulty in recounting the narratives? What if the participants’ accounts—rhetorical performances designed for a present moment and present audience—alter the events as they actually occurred? These are fair questions that highlight real limitations with narrative analysis, but there is a point to considering the role of memory. There is power in the stories people choose to tell. Oral history, after all, is a version of the past—not an objective account of the past, nor is it meant to be. Similarly, memory is a reflection of the past—not the past itself. This is important, not because the past itself is lost, but rather because the reflection and telling offers researchers something new. The narrative, as social performance, is a site of identity
construction. Constructing narrative also requires a process of reflection and this process of reflection is not unrelated to the learning process espoused in the theories of learning outlined in this study’s conceptual framework (Chapter Two). Just as culture speaks itself in the narratives of participants, learning, too, emerges and takes form, as students reflect and articulate their experiences aloud. Ilene’s learning biography highlights this point fully. Whether or not her story regarding the disorienting dilemma she experienced in the library is “factual” is not the point. Rather, the point is how she uses this memory, this story, to guide her learning and life moving forward. Beyond these methodological concerns, narrative analysis also presents questions regarding personal bias and the ethical treatment of student participants. I have decided to end, therefore, with a final discussion on positionality.

**Positionality Revisited**

If positionality seeks to understand social positions and the underlying cultural and political dynamics shaping those positions, ethnography is suspect at best. Who are the people being described and how do their customs and cultures relate to that of the ethnographer? Narrative analysis *does* allow the participants to speak for themselves, but ethical risks come with this level participation. Stake (2010), for instance, reminds us that participation can come with a loss of privacy that may lead to difficult and uncomfortable situations—in some cases maybe even entrapment. While the content of the interviews found in the current study never approached entrapment, remember that more than one participant did stop her interview to ask where and how the data would be presented and what was at stake for her personally. For example, let us revisit Ms. Sponge Bob’s learning biography. As she was talking about her family’s participation in
the “good ol’ boy” system, she actually stopped the interview to ensure that her real name would not be used. When I assured her that I would be using the pseudonym she had chosen for herself and reminded her that she did not have to share anything she did not feel comfortable sharing, she granted her consent once more. “Okay,” she said, “That's good. That works. All right.” She continued speaking freely: “Well, if you know people who are at the top, you can get out of a lot of stuff.”

There are most definitely questions of social position for us to consider here. That is, Ms. Sponge Bob seems to be admitting—openly and with a good deal of pride—that she eagerly participates in a system of corruption. She also seems to be acknowledging—again, openly—that this may be perceived as off-putting by some, maybe even illegal. Her social position in this particular instance, therefore, is quite complex. Her words are an active attempt to position herself in a space of power and privilege. Yet she also realizes that this particular social performance could be interpreted negatively by others. In this sense, she is aware of the other’s gaze and actively works to navigate that force in a cautious and circumspect manner.

She may not, however, be completely aware of my gaze and the power it wields as the researcher constructing this study’s meta-narrative. At the end of the day, I am yet another participant in the study—only the narrative I construct, will, most likely, be the final one as well as the one that holds the most power and capital. This is a responsibility that weighed heavily on me throughout the duration of the study. It is a concern I weighed at every stage of the research process and a worry I applied to every participant. I am sure that it will come as little surprise, however, that I struggled with this responsibility the most when I thought about it in relation to Ms. Sponge Bob—the young
student from Mississippi who described herself as ‘fat’ and spoke with a thick-Delta drawl—the young woman who routinely failed to remember the names of the cultural others around her and referred to at least one of them as her “kid” and laughed as she called him “Urinal.” Ms. Sponge Bob. Who is she? Am I reading her correctly? Am I treating her fairly? These are just some of the questions I found myself grappling with—not only when dealing with Ms. Sponge Bob—but really when dealing with all of the participants, students and professionals alike.

More than once, I found myself judging Ms. Sponge Bob. Whether the word associated with that judgment happened to be “racist,” “uncultured,” or “Southern,” judgment was present all the same. I also found myself questioning her. She told me that she and Ilene had become friends, but she also struck me as someone who might be confused about this—yes, an unreliable narrator of sorts. To be sure, my distrust of Ms. Sponge was directly related to the manner in which she spoke about the good ol’ boy system and the demeaning manner in which she spoke about her Mexican “friend” Yuriel. However, if I am being honest with myself, my distrust probably also had to do with her Southern identity. My own admission of bias (and guilt) is not unrelated to observing that some of the participants—specifically those students who seemed to exhibit a greater degree of intercultural maturity and experience—were more apt to acknowledge the fact that diversity and difference exist everywhere, even amid normative culture patterns writ large.

Even though the fault of making over-generalizations about a particular cultural group may be the sign of less intercultural experience, intercultural learning—as I have said many times now and continue to learn—is anything but linear. Even an adult like
me, someone who has extensive international and intercultural experience, is still capable of “backsliding” into stereotypical thought patterns that limit those around him, particularly those who might come from a different culture with less political clout and capital. The fact that I, myself, am also a Southerner only complicates the point. I was born in Tennessee and, with the exception of a few years in Australia and Japan, I have only lived and worked in the South. When it comes down to it, I am just as “Southern”—whatever that word means—as Ms. Sponge Bob.

So, why am I prone to look at Ms. Sponge Bob in such a dismissive light? I actually take a certain amount of pride in being (a progressive) from the South. It is a (physical) place and (social) location which I embrace. I have so many friends and family members who have actively fled the South over the years. Many of them did so eagerly. They look back at me (and the social spaces encompassing me) and they shake their heads. Sometimes they have come back for a wedding, but, more frequently, to visit their parents (older professors at one of the local universities). “How do you do it?” they say, gesturing to the people and worn-down geographies around them. “I would go insane.”

Yet the South is my home. I have chosen to make my life here. Not all of my friends and family have fled. And the cost of living is quite low—at least, relatively speaking—and this can lead to a wonderful quality of life, a level of simplicity that can be more challenging to come by in a city like San Francisco, Istanbul, or Madrid. These are all common talking points when old friends come back to visit. I may even add the following rebuttal, encouraging these disapproving visitors to see the South as a place for personal meaning-making: But the South needs people like us, competent and progressive
professionals, dedicated to improving the lives of those around them. It’s easy to do what you do in Seattle. Portland? Oh, come on! Please! The underlying assumption, I suppose, is an unconscious bias against all the people around me, a tendency to look down on the South just as many outside the South do, and, yes, a tendency to look down on Ms. Sponge Bob in a patronizing light just as she looks down on Yuriel in a patronizing light. I do not, however, believe that my intentions are bad. Nor do I get the impression that Ms. Sponge Bob’s feelings and intentions toward Yuriel are anything other than broad and kind-hearted. Yet, looking from where I sit—which as I write now, is a removed office within academe—it really is quite easy to detect the social injustice and rampant racism scattered throughout her stories.

Of course, it is also easy to see how Ms. Sponge Bob’s tales (as well as my own meta-narrative) are more than just stories. They are narratives—socially-constructed performances that reflect cultural and ideological orientations that hold meaning and may, on occasion, be quite pernicious in effect. The challenge that I see a little more clearly now, however, is not that these are the cultural and ideological orientations of two individuals who are incapable of change but rather that these are the cultural hierarchies and ideological orientations of socio-cultural processes that precede and shape us a priori. Our destinies, however, need not be limited to our cultural antecedents. Much of our story remains unwritten. Yes, Ms. Sponge Bob has internalized many of the racist tropes, stereotypes, and cultural hierarchies endemic to her native Mississippi. Yet we also see her questioning these tired perspectives. As she steps into the world anew, she meets cultural others, and struggles to make sense of them and the world around her in a way that affords opportunity—the chance to navigate her experiences more broadly and
fruitfully into the future. She challenges us along the way. She challenges me. Yet, like Joan Didion, I look for the sermon in the suicide. I search for the social lesson in the murder of five. In the narratives of the students, I seek gaps and fissures, points of incongruity that serve as gentle reminder: in the face of diversity and difference, we all have the potential for growth and learning.
Appendices

Appendix A: Protocol for Student Participants

Participant Pseudonym: Interview Time:
Location: Date:
Interviewer: Brendan O’Farrell Start: ___ End: ___

Introduction: Thank you for meeting with me today. Before we get started I would like to review a few essential components of the interview process. We’ll be talking today about your experience in the Global Village and other relevant intercultural experiences from your life. All information shared today will be kept confidential and will be linked to a pseudonym of your choice, not your actual name. We’ll review the consent form together and I will have you sign it before I begin asking you questions. You may choose to skip any question that you would prefer not to answer; participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may choose to remove yourself from the study at any time. There are no right or wrong answers and you can take as much time as needed to answer the questions.

Opening Questions (Questions about (Inter)Cultural Background)

1. Hometown. I want to get a better understanding of who you are and where you come from. To get us started, please tell me a little bit about your hometown.
   a. Make sure to get information about:
      i. Geographic location (e.g., “Where exactly is that located?”)
      ii. Population (e.g., “How big is your hometown?”)
      iii. Culture as perceived by the student (e.g., How would you describe the culture of your hometown? What’s it like compared to Lexington, KY?)
      iv. Diversity, Difference, and Demographics (e.g., How would you describe the diversity of your hometown? What are the demographics?)
      v. Hometown intercultural experience (e.g., Can you tell me about any meaningful or memorable personal experiences you’ve had with diversity or difference in your hometown? Why was this meaningful or memorable for you?)

2. Family. Tell me a little bit about your family. Would you say they are fairly typical compared to the average family in your hometown?
   a. Make sure to get information about:
      i. Race, culture, ethnicity, and S.E.S.
      ii. Size and structure.
      iii. Location and interaction with extended family.
      iv. Professions of parents and other important family figures.
Questions about Intercultural Experience

3. **Intercultural Experience.** I just asked you about any meaningful intercultural experiences you experienced in your hometown, but I’d like to return to this question more broadly. Can you please tell me about the most memorable or meaningful intercultural experiences you had in your life before coming to college?
   a. Make sure to get information about:
      i. Any relevant international experiences
      ii. Any relevant domestic cross-cultural experiences
      iii. Number, duration, and type (immersive, educational, touristic, etc.) of intercultural experiences (e.g., How long did you participate in this experience? Where did you stay? What did you do?”)

4. **Motivation.**
   a. Why did you decide to come to UK?
      i. What were you hoping to gain and experience by coming to UK?
      ii. What did you imagine your life would be like at UK?
      iii. Did you have any personal goals for coming to UK?
   
   b. Why did you decide to participate in the Global Village?
      i. What were you hoping to gain and experience by participating in the Global Village?
      ii. What did you imagine your life would be like in the Global Village?
      iii. Did you have any personal goals for living in the Global Village?

5. **Intercultural Experience related to the Global Village LLP.** Tell me about your experience in the global village thus far? What has it been like?
   a. What have been the activities of the Global Village so far? Which of these do you identify as intercultural? What about informal intercultural experiences at the Global Village –ones that come from living there, not from organized activity?
   b. What (intercultural) challenges have you faced by participating in the global village?
   c. Make sure to get information about:
      i. Roommate(s) (e.g., “Who do you live with? Where is he or she from? How would you describe your relationship with your roommate?”)
      ii. Locations within the residence hall where the person spends his or her time.
      iii. Social networks (e.g., Who do you spend time with in the Global Village? Who are your friends? Do you and your friends interact with others in the Global Village? What is that interaction like?)
      iv. Programming (e.g., “Which global village or resident hall programs have you attended thus far? What was your experience at those like? What did you do?”)

234
v. Connected coursework (e.g., “Are you in a class, such as UK 101, that is connected to the Global Village? What has your experience in that class been like?”)

d. After discussing all of these topics, I would like to return to two of the questions I asked you earlier.
   i. What would you say you’ve gained from these experiences thus far?
   ii. Do you feel as though you’re making progress towards your goals?
   iii. How would you say you’re changing as a result of your experience in the Global Village?
       1. Consider behaviors/learning strategies
       2. Consider identity (self-perception and world view)

Closing Question

6. Is there anything I haven’t asked you about your intercultural experience that you would like me to know about?

Potential Probes

Could you please describe that in more detail?
   Tell me more.
   Could you define that word for me?
   What does that mean to you?
   What did you do/say next?
   What happened?
   Please give me an example.
   Walk me through the experience.
   How did that make you feel?
   What would you say you learned from this experience?
   How would you say you changed because of this experience?
Appendix B: Group Interview Protocol for RAs

Participant Pseudonym: Location: Interviewer: Brendan O’Farrell
Interview Time:
Date: Start:____ End:____

Introduction to be covered by moderator:
Thank you for coming to this group interview. I want to start by thanking you all for taking the time to join us for our discussion related to your experience living in Smith Hall and in or near the Global Village LLP. I know you all have a lot going on so I appreciate you carving time out of your busy schedules to volunteer for this.
My name is Brendan and this group interview is connected to the research I am doing on undergraduates’ experience living in intercultural spaces like Smith Hall. You should have all received a copy of the Informed Consent Form in your email. I would like to take a few minutes to briefly go over that now so you know exactly what you are agreeing to by participating in this study. (Moderator will review the IC – do not read it to them but highlight the main points of each section. Have each participant sign a copy and offer to give them a hardcopy to take with them if they would like it).
So, today/tonight we will be discussing your experiences and perceptions living in Smith Hall and navigating intercultural spaces like the Global Village. There are no right or wrong answers only differing perspectives. We are interested in all points of view, so please feel free to share your perspective even if it differs from what others in the group have said. Also, we are interested in hearing from all of you. So, if you aren’t saying much, I may call on you by name. Feel free to have a conversation with one another about the questions. My role here is to ask questions, listen, and make sure everyone has a chance to share. Please keep in mind that we are just as interested in negative comments as well as positive comments so please do not feel the need to filter what you say.
Before we begin, let me share a few ground rules. This is a research project protected by confidentiality. That means when we write up or report the information from this study you will not be identified in that process by anyone on the research team. As we are group here today, I ask that we all respect each member’s confidentiality by not sharing what we discuss here with anyone outside the group. We will be on a first name basis and later in the event that any comments are attributed to a specific individual within the group, a pseudonym will be applied to the individual so that confidentiality will be maintained.
Also, we will be recording the session to ensure that everything that was said is accurately captured. Please speak up and only one person should speak at a time. We don’t want to miss any of your comments and if several people speak at once, the recording will get distorted. From time to time, you may also notice me taking notes. This is to help me capture and remember as much as possible from today’s group interview.
In total, I anticipate this group will last about ninety minutes. Let’s begin. We’ve placed name cards on the table in front of you to help remember each other’s names. Let’s find out a little about each other by going around the room one at a time. Tell us your first name, your major, and what you enjoy doing when you are not busy with schoolwork. (adapted from Krueger, 1994, p. 113)
Group Interview Question Protocol

Opening Questions:
1. **Introductions and Connections.** Let's go around the group and have each of you share your first name, year, major, and your role (e.g. R.A. or hall government representative) within Smith Hall, and why you wanted to be an RA or part of the hall government.
   - Seek clarification on how many of the interviewees have direct interaction with the Global Villagers as opposed to just Smith Hall residents generally.

Questions about Intercultural Relationships:
2. **Intercultural Relationships.** When I was reviewing the UK Res Life website, it said the Smith Hall Global Village was designed for students who are interested in building relationships with students from a different culture other than their own. Let’s start there.
   - Do you see students from different cultures forming relationships in Smith Hall?
   - How would you describe those relationships?
     - Seek concrete examples, including of activities together.
   - Do you notice any kind of patterns in the relationships?
     - Ask about networks and cliques
   - Have you witnessed any relationships break down or deteriorate?
     - What happened?
     - Why do you think that happened?

Questions about Learning Outcomes:
3. **Appreciation of Diversity.** One of the stated learning outcomes associated with the Smith Hall Global Village is that the participants develop a greater appreciation and understanding of difference and diversity. In what ways is this happening? Can you please share some specific examples to illustrate your point?

4. **Participation and Engagement.** Another stated learning outcome of the Smith Hall Global Village is that the participants will develop enhanced levels of “global citizenship” as demonstrated through active participation and engagement in the Smith Hall and larger surrounding community. Rather than discussing “global citizenship,” let me ask this: how would you describe the participation and engagement of the global villagers?
   - Remind RAs that the study is interested in both positive and negative examples and seek concrete examples.
   - Do some groups of students seem more or less engaged than others?
     - How so?
     - Why do you think that is?

Questions about Programming and Curriculum:
5. **In-Hall Programming.** Now I’d like for us to change gears a little bit and think about programming within Smith Hall that perhaps you coordinated or another group coordinated. Describe the programming in Smith Hall and the Global Village LLP.
   - What is your role in this programming?
   - In what ways has this programming supported or hindered the intercultural environment and relationships of Smith Hall? Again, I am interested in concrete examples, so please take a moment to think about this.
• Programming and Relationships. Can you remember any programs in particular where you witnessed intercultural activity?
  o What happened?
  o Which students were involved?

• Programming and Diversity Appreciation. What about the students’ appreciation of diversity? How would you say the programs have contributed to students’ engagement with diversity?
  o Seek concrete examples (What was said? What happened? Etc.)

**Final Question:**
6. Offer a brief summary then ask –
Have we missed anything? Is there some aspect of the Smith Hall Global Village experience we didn't discuss that you think we should?

**Potential Probes**
  Could you please describe that in more detail?
  Tell me more.
  Could you define that word for me?
  What does that mean to you?
  What did you do/say next?
  What happened?
  Please give me an example.
  Walk me through the experience.
  How did that make you feel?
  What would you say you learned from this experience?
  How would you say you changed because of this experience?
Appendix C: Interview Protocol for Faculty/Staff Professionals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Pseudonym:</th>
<th>Interview Time:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location:</td>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer: Brendan</td>
<td>Start:_____ End:____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Introduction**: Thank you for meeting with me today. Before we get started I would like to review a few essential components of the interview process. I am conducting a research project on the intercultural learning of undergraduates in the Global Village International Living-Learning Program (LLP). Consequently, I am interested in getting a better understanding of the Global Village—not only from the students themselves—but also from affiliated faculty and staff members at the University of Kentucky. We’ll be talking today about your experience with the Global Village and/or UK LLPs generally as well as related policies and programs. All information shared today will be kept confidential and will be linked to a pseudonym of your choice, not your actual name. We’ll review the consent form together and I will have you sign it before I begin asking you questions. You may choose to skip any question that you would prefer not to answer; participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may choose to remove yourself from the study at any time. There are no right or wrong answers and you can take as much time as needed to answer the questions.

**Opening Questions (Questions about the Global Village and One’s Professional Relationship)**

1. **Self-Introduction.** I want to get a better understanding of your relationship with the Global Village. Can you please tell me about your affiliation with it?
   a. Make sure to get information about:
      i. Professional title
      ii. Role
      iii. Frequency and type of interaction with the students

2. **Goals.** Can you please tell me, in your opinion, what are the goals of the Global Village for participating students? What type of experience(s) would you hope that a participant will leave the Global Village with at the end of the year?

3. **Curriculum and Programming:** What kind of programming does the Global Village offer participants? How does this fit into UK goals?
   a. Make sure to get information about:
      i. Connected courses
      ii. co-curricular programming
      iii. the connection between the goals and programming

4. **Efficacy.** Based on the goals you just discussed, how successful would you say the Global Village is in terms of producing the desired effects for its participants?
   a. Make sure to get thoughts about:
      i. International students
      ii. U.S. students
      iii. Challenges
      iv. Strengths
      v. A few concrete examples to illustrate any points.
vi. How do the policies and practices of UK (including Res Life, Housing, etc.) influence the efficacy of the Global Village?

**Closing Question**

5. Is there anything I haven’t asked you about the Global Village or the LLP landscape at UK that you think is important for me to know?

**Potential Probes**

Could you please describe that in more detail?
Tell me more.
Could you define that word for me?
What does that mean to you?
What did you do/say next?
What happened?
Please give me an example.
Walk me through the experience.
How did that make you feel?
What would you say you learned from this experience?
How would you say you changed because of this experience?
Appendix D: Campus Map and Room Layouts

Image 1. Smith Hall Four-Person Suite:

The Smith Hall four-person suite includes more communal space, such as the shared bathroom, that support a *organic* social interaction.

Image 2. Woodland Glen Private Dormitory:

Granite countertops and Tempur-Pedic mattress come standard in the Woodland Glen dormitory rooms. Each student has a private bedroom to him/herself.
This map highlights the portion of campus surrounding Smith Hall. Smith Hall is the crooked building near the center. The Woodland Glen Complex is comprised of the five large residence halls just two the right of Smith Hall. The 90 is the large square building in towards the top, left portion of the map, close to Smith hall. Dotted lines outline the future site of yet more large, EDR-built residence halls. Meanwhile, the complex of buildings with two towers in the center, represents the last of the older residence halls, which the University has plans to demolish in the near future.
References


Helms, J. E. (2008). *A race is a nice thing to have: A guide to being a white person or understanding the white persons in your life*. Hanover, MA: Microtraining Associates.
Inkelas, K. K., Johnson, D. Lee, Z., Daver, Z., Longerbeam, S. D., Vogt, K., & Brown, L. J. (2006). The role of living-learning programs in students’ perceptions of intellectual growth at three large universities. *NASPA Journal, 43*, 115-143.


Longerbeam, S. D. (2005). *Exploring the relationships among living-learning programs, peer interactions, critical thinking, and civic engagement on college student*


248


Vita

Brendan James O'Farrell

Education

Master of Arts in English and Writing
University of Tennessee
May 2007

Bachelor of Arts in English Literature and Literary History
Georgetown University
May 2003

Work Experience

Director, Interprofessional Healthcare Residential College
University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky
November 2014-Present

International Director, Gatton College of Business and Economics
University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky
November 2009-November 2014

Program Co-Director, Gatton in Brazil
University of Kentucky, Florianopolis, Brazil
Summer 2014

Program Director, Gatton in Ecuador
University of Kentucky, Guayaquil and Quito, Ecuador
Summer 2012

Consultant, Iraqi University Linkages Program
University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY/Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2011-12 Academic Year

Overseas Study Academic Advisor, Capstone International
University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama
August 2007-October 2009

Graduate Teaching Associate and Fellow, Department of English
University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee
August 2005-May 2007
English Teacher
AEON Corporation of Japan, Saga, Japan
September 2003-March 2005

Awards and Honors

The Katherine Anne Porter Prize for Fiction, *Nimrod International Journal of Prose and Poetry*
IEA Fulbright Scholar Fellowship, German-American Fulbright Commission
Richard Beale Davis Fellowship, University of Tennessee
Nominee for the Ken Freedman Outstanding Advisor Award, University of Kentucky