Prejudice and Cultural Differences:

An Exploration of Intercultural Connections Between U.S. and International Students

by

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses the dynamics of U.S. and international students studying together in the United States. This study investigates lived experiences as well as the effects of a first-year foundational course on the development of intercultural connections between students. The first-year foundational course hoped to provide the ideal conditions that allowed for prejudices to decrease and friendships to form. This study draws on four primary theories and perspectives: Acculturation, Intergroup Contact Theory, Transformative Learning and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy. This qualitative action research study uses multiple types of data: instructor journals, student journals, individual interviews, and photovoice. The themes identified include growth and development, independence, friendships, moments of similarities, prejudices and behaviors, superiority and apathy, and belonging to the majority or minority. The themes indicate that the research study provided a foundation for study participants to further explore how to incorporate intercultural experiences into their lives in the future and beyond.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this to my family and friends who provided support over

the past 3.5 years. This is dedicated to:

My parents, Bill and Nancy, for being a guiding force throughout my entire life.

My brother, Michael, for being a supportive older brother and keeping me
grounded in reality.

My nieces and nephew, Lexi, Tayler and Caleb, for reminding me of the little joys
in life. I cannot wait for Tayler to become an ASU Sun Devil next fall!

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the tears and the joy. We did it!

This is dedicated to everyone in my life who has helped get me to where I am today.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Overview

Educational exchange can turn nations into people, contributing as no other form
of communication can to the humanizing of international relations.

— Senator J. William Fulbright, 1983

Throughout history, students from across the world have been crossing borders,

both national and state, in order to seek the educational experiences that they desire.

Bevis and Lucas (2017) observed that "as early as the second century BCE, the

attendance rolls of the city-state's schools of philosophy and rhetoric attest to the

admission of foreigners in comparatively large numbers" (p. 15). These educational

exchanges have allowed a diverse group of people from a variety of places to be enrolled

together at educational institutions to learn thoughts, ideas, and theories in environments

where diversity is encouraged, yet inclusion is not always present. International students

are defined as those who study at educational institutions in countries that require the

issuance of non-immigrant visas. While international students have been wandering the

planet for centuries, the first recorded instance of international students in the United

States was not until the late 18th century (Bevis & Lucas, 1997).

Beginning in 1919, the Institute of International Education (IIE) began conducting

a census on the number of international students in the United States. Over the course of

the ensuing century, various immigration laws in the United States and in other countries

before and after World War I and World War II made it difficult for students to study in

the United States (Bevis & Lucas, 1997). Following the events of September 11, 2001, the United States instituted immigration policies and the Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), which did much to systematize educational exchange for international students. Prior to September 11, 2001, the tracking system for students was paper-based and did not allow for an effective database of all international students in the United States. With this new electronic system created, U.S. government agencies were able to more effectively monitor international students in the United States allowing the government to process more international student visa applications for study at U.S. institutions. Additionally, with travel accessible to more people in the United States and around the world, the mobility of individuals has increased, which has allowed students to study in many different places. Lastly, the perception of the quality of higher education institutions in the United States continues to attract students looking to obtain a highly valued U.S. university degree.

The introduction of international students into the higher education environment in the United States creates an opportunity for educational exchange to motivate individuals from various backgrounds to learn from one another in ways that can lead to meaningful dialogue. Meaningful dialogue and intercultural connections are important in today's environment where globalization has caused an increase in nationalism, which fears allowing the flow of ideas and humans across boundaries (Baker, 2018). Additionally, globalization has also increased a populist ideal of national protectionism for individuals looking to preserve the rights and abilities of those deemed original inhabitants of their respective country (Quinton, 2019; Altbach & De Wit, 2015). As different people explore new territory, it is important that we celebrate our differences

and acknowledge our similarities if we wish to live in a world where all human beings are afforded the right to live a healthy, safe and prosperous life.

Purpose Statement

In order to provide U.S. and international students at Arizona State University (ASU) with opportunities to have meaningful dialogue, the purpose of this phenomenological action research qualitative study was to explore the conditions that could allow U.S. and international students during a first-year foundational course at ASU to successfully develop intercultural connections. This study further explored whether the perceptions of prejudice experienced by international and U.S. students studying together impacted their views of the other group and on their desired acculturation strategies both for themselves and other group members. Lastly, this study investigated whether a theoretical-based multi-cultural transformative learning curriculum contributed to an increase in intergroup relations.

The theory of transformative learning was used as a lens, which focuses on the experiences caused by a disorienting dilemma. Studying in a foreign country or culture and/or beginning an undergraduate degree program in a new setting can be considered a disorienting dilemma for students in the United States. Transformative learning theory is defined as "the process whereby adult learners critically examine their beliefs, values, and assumptions in light of acquiring new knowledge and begin a process of social change" (Mezirow, 2003). Additionally, in order to develop a curriculum that encouraged a multi-cultural perspective, culturally sustaining pedagogy is another concept that I built into this study because it "seeks to perpetuate and foster - to sustain - linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of schooling for positive social transformation" (Paris &

Alim, 2017, p. 1). These pedagogical perspectives guided my intervention that aimed to explore the dynamics between U.S. and international students with the goal of decreasing prejudice and increasing intercultural connections. As such, this study examined:

Research Questions

1. How did feelings of prejudice, both negative and positive, held by international and U.S. students influence their perceptions to build intercultural connections?

2. How did acculturation strategies and contact between U.S. and international students influence their perceptions to build intercultural connections?

3. How did the interactions within a first-semester foundational course infused with a culturally sustaining pedagogy influence the perceptions U.S. students had of international students and vice versa?

4. How did a first-semester foundational course infused with a culturally sustaining pedagogy influence international and U.S. students to desire to explore intercultural experiences in the future?

This study was not only important to international educators, but also signaled a step towards moving from just celebrating diversity to promoting inclusivity. Foundational courses for first-year students play such an important role in laying the groundwork for the remainder of their undergraduate journey. Students have the opportunity to develop college-level skills, while learning resources and models that will allow them to be successful in their chosen degree path. By bridging the foundational nature of a first-year course with important issues of cultural differences, personal exploration and friendships with persons of different backgrounds, this research study was designed to help U.S. institutions develop intentional ways to promote intercultural connections between a

diverse student body. The significance of this work to promote intercultural connections should not just impact students themselves but also supports the charter of ASU, which celebrates not only those that we include but how they succeed as well (ASU, n.d.). Through the success of all ASU students including both U.S. and international, ASU could continue to be the number one school in the United States for innovation by intentionally creating a culturally plural learning environment.

National Context

According to the Institute of International Education's (IIE) Open Doors Report (2019) published on November 18, 2019, the number of international students studying in the United States was 1.09 million (IIE, 2019). This figure was for the 2018-2019 academic year, which was the fourth year in a row where international student enrollment at U.S. institutions exceeded one million. This is the greatest number of international students in the United States in all of recorded history according to IIE's student enrollment data. Additionally, according to the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2018), there were 19.6 million students attending postsecondary institutions in the United States during the fall of 2018. Of these 19.6 million students enrolled in U.S. post-secondary institutions in the fall of 2018, over 10 million identified their race as White, whereas over 8 million students identified their race as Black, Hispanic, Asian/Asian-American, Native American, or two or more races. As Geary (2016) stated, "higher education institutions share a common belief that diversity in their student bodies is important for them to achieve their goal of providing a quality education" (p. 528).

Yet simply bringing a diverse group of students does not make it an inclusive environment for all students. According to Rose-Redwood (2010), although U.S. institutions have focused on recruiting a large number of international students to their campuses, they have failed to stimulate intentional social interactions between students (p. 389). This gap in programming highlights a diverse student body that U.S. institutions must be intentional with in order to increase intercultural connections between these different student groups.

Comparing the number of international students in the United States with the number of U.S. students enrolled during the same year shows that U.S. students account for a much larger portion of overall enrollment at U.S. institutions of higher education. The two top countries of origin for international students studying in the United States were China and India with these two countries equaling more than 50% of all international students (IIE, 2019). Even though they make up a small portion of total enrollment, IIE (2019) estimates that these one million students contribute approximately 42 billion dollars to the U.S. economy, which is a significant amount of money for such a relatively small number of individuals. Additionally, NAFSA: Association of International Educators, which was formally known as the National Association of Foreign Student Advisors, indicated that international students also created almost half a million jobs during the 2018-2019 academic year (NAFSA, 2019). This means that international students contribute significantly to the finances of the U.S. higher education system as well as the overall U.S economy.

As the United States remains a top destination for international students, institutions of higher education must be sure to not treat these students just as individuals

to help balance their institutional budgets (Choudaha, 2016). Many institutions around the United States charge international students a higher tuition rate than in-state and out-of-state U.S. students, which is typically justified by an increase of services provided to international students. Yet, many international educators would disagree that these tuition dollars result in increased services because international offices feel the burden to provide this wide range of services to international students in addition to immigration compliance support including financial aid funding, career guidance and cultural adjustment. According to some reports, international students pay three times the amount as in-state students (Semotiuk, 2018). However, just because international students are extremely interested in obtaining a degree in the United States to increase their human and social capital, institutions need not treat these students only as resources to keep their budgets in line. Yet because U.S. higher education institutions are facing financial constraints, it makes recruiting international students an important stream of resources. This recruitment is typically justified because of the diversity and economic impact that international students bring to campuses, which actually benefit U.S. institutions more than the students themselves (Yao & Viggiano, 2019). Since undergraduate students usually enroll in an institution for four years, they have become a more reliable funding source and therefore part of an increased focus of international student recruitment plans. Immediately following the events of September 11, 2001, international graduate students were a larger share of the total international student population in the United States. However, over the past five years the trend has reversed, which means that undergraduate students are now a larger share of the total international student population in the United States (IIE, 2019).

Undergraduate first-year students studying in the United States for the first time typically face issues relating to the differences in culture they are experiencing in their new host culture environment. These cultural differences are in addition to the normal adjustment process that incoming undergraduate students face during their first year of study. Yeh and Inose (2003) stated, "mental health and personal concerns including language barriers, academic difficulties, financial difficulties, interpersonal problems with American students as well as with their conational students" (p. 16), contribute to the challenges for first-year international students. Due to these challenges, institutions must take into consideration the supportive resources and services that are provided to new international students.

The American Council on Education released a three-part report entitled *Internationalization in Action: Internationalizing the Co-curriculum* (2014) that stated "international students are subject to the same stressors as domestic students, and perhaps more, with the added pressures of cultural adjustment" (p. 9). University personnel must be mindful of the role that U.S. higher education institutions can play in the lives of new international students. Being away from their home culture, family, and their way of life increases international students' needs to make new communities to provide support that many U.S. students receive from their family and friends who are physically and logistically close to them during the first year of study (Yan & Sendell, 2016). If universities do not provide and cultivate supportive environments, then these new international students can face a host of challenges when studying in the United States.

Ethical considerations from U.S. institutions must be given to address these challenges if the United States wants to continue to recruit international students from

around the world. U.S. students play an integral role in this support system as Williams and Johnson (2011) stated, "having a domestically based social support system is important for easing the acculturation process and for the successful adaptation of international students to their host culture" (p. 41). Furthermore, Geeraert, et al. (2014), stated "contact with host nationals has been associated with lower levels of acculturative stress, and higher levels of well-being and adjustment in both student and migrant samples" (p. 87). However, the diversity of the student body does not always lend itself naturally to intercultural connections between U.S. and international students. Tawagi and Mak (2015) stated, "cultural inclusiveness along with the dimensions of contact, could also conceivably promote more positive intergroup attitudes between domestic and international students" (p. 343). In their study, Williams and Johnson (2011) found that a little over 40% of their domestic student participants had one or two international student friends, while almost 60% did not have any international student friends at all (p. 44). How to effectively engage U.S. students in this support system for international students has plagued higher education institutions due to the different needs and characteristics of each unique group of students.

The most important reason to engage international students with U.S. students is because the exchange of education and ideas has the ability to transform humanity, which was a goal of the former Senator William Fulbright, for whom the Fulbright Program is named. Therefore, we must ensure that international students and U.S. students are able to learn, grow, transform and collaborate through their intercultural connections.

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Situational Context

According to the IIE (2019), ASU is the number two public institution in the United States for hosting international students. In the fall 2019 semester, 9,224 international students enrolled as degree-seeking students at ASU's four main campus locations: Downtown Phoenix, Polytechnic, Tempe, and West (ASU, 2019). This represented a decrease from fall 2018, yet still kept ASU in the top ten overall for hosting the most international students in the United States (IIE, 2019). Additionally, these students hailed from 135 different countries, conceivably making ASU a global community for faculty, staff and students. From these 135 countries there were 3,160 students from China and 2,652 from India, which were the top two countries represented at ASU (ASU, 2019).

With regards to U.S. students, ASU hosted 65,654 during the fall 2019 semester with 83% of these students pursuing an undergraduate degree (ASU, 2019). White students represent the largest population of U.S. students followed by Hispanic and then Asian-American students, which highlights the diverse backgrounds of this U.S. student group as well. Even though a large number of international students attend ASU, they still face a variety of challenges when they study in a foreign country as they are entering into a new culture that is different from their home culture.

Beginning Stages of Research Study

With this information in hand, during the fall 2019 semester, I conducted cycle one of this research study, which allowed me to explore the challenges faced by international students while studying in the United States. This exploration continued in the spring 2020 semester, in which I collected data from both international and U.S.

students about their experiences at ASU. These beginning cycles allowed me to better understand the challenges faced by international students and to understand the role U.S. students play in their overall adjustment to their experience inside the United States.

Acculturation Challenges

Although U.S. students are the majority group on campus, compared to their international student counterparts, they are still impacted by the presence of both international students as well as other culturally and linguistically different students on campus. The interactions between these culturally different groups of students highlights the concept of acculturation, which is the experience of interacting with two or more different cultures at the same time. In defining acculturation, Redfield et al. (1936) stated, "acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups" (p. 149). Acculturation poses challenges to international students in the form of English-language comprehension, new life experiences, financial difficulties, homesickness, making connections with U.S. students and differences with regards to the U.S. education system (Kumi-Yeboah, 2014; Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2014; Ra & Trusty, 2017). The impact of acculturation on U.S. students is not always clear, due to a perceived lack of engagement with international students, which therefore indicated an immediacy for the goal of this research study.

Acculturation Challenges at ASU

Acculturation challenges for international students were identified in the initial cycles of this research, which was conducted in the fall 2019 and spring 2020 semesters.

Interviews from these semesters highlighted that students struggled with English language skills, academic differences, and social support from U.S. students. One of the students I interviewed in cycle zero during the fall 2019 semester talked about their connections with U.S. students and indicated that it usually began in class, however, after class it was hard to maintain the same connection. The student from China stated, "Americans are nice and friendly and even if I'm meeting someone for the first time, and we have a really good time. But then, I won't be motivated to meet them again." The student was not able to articulate what caused the decrease in motivation, however, cultural differences between themselves and U.S. students seemed to play a role. Additionally, in cycle zero, another student described the experience of being at a campfire during a first-year student retreat with other students from their degree program; they stated, "but then after a while, I feel like I'm away from them or from the way they think, and talk. So, I tried to find international students instead." These comments were echoed from other participants demonstrating the challenges these students faced in developing friendships with U.S. students with a preference for connecting with co-nationals or other international students.

As I delved deeper into cycle one, the issue of friendships also became a theme during the analysis yet the results differed from cycle zero. During cycle one, one student struggled to maintain a friendship with a U.S. student, while another student thrived having multiple U.S. friends. The student I interviewed from China indicated that the only close U.S. friend they had was someone from the Barrett Honors College who expressed a desire to learn about Chinese culture. This mutual interest in learning about each's others cultures facilitated a friendship between them. However, the student from

India that I interviewed decided to join a Greek fraternity, which is a bedrock of the U.S. collegiate experience, indicating that the majority of their friends were from the United States. These different viewpoints highlighted the importance that friendships played in their lives which impacted their acculturation. This path led me to the current focus of this research study.

Acculturation Strategies and Intergroup Relations

When two groups of individuals are interacting like U.S. and international students, each person and group can utilize and believe in four broad categories of acculturation strategies. These categories include *integration, assimilation, separation* and *marginalization*, which take into consideration how much connection individuals maintain to their home culture and how much they seek to connect with their host culture (Berry, 1997). Each one of these strategies has the potential to involve acculturative stress. Whereas international students may choose to use one strategy of acculturation since they are the minority group, U.S. students as the majority group may expect international students to utilize a different acculturation strategy. Although research exists about outcomes of the acculturation process for the international student experience, we do not know the role U.S students can play to mitigate the symptoms of these stress-related factors for international students. In exploring this phenomenon within the Australian higher education system, Tawagi and Mak (2015) stated, "research has shown a noticeable divide between international and domestic students, with generally low levels of intergroup interactions and particularly of friendships" (p. 341).

Increasing intergroup relations is vital to breaking down the opinions, feelings of prejudice and lack of intercultural connections between international and U.S. students.

In introducing intergroup contact theory, Pettigrew (1998) stated, "the theory [Intergroup Contact Theory] posits Allport's four conditions and friendship potential as essential situational factors for positive intergroup outcomes – less negative stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination" (p. 76). With U.S. students as majority group members and international students as minority group members, the exploration of intergroup contact hoped to aid in building intercultural connections to provide support for international students to be successful while studying in the United States.

ASU's International Students and Scholars Center

Currently, I am a Director in the International Students and Scholars Center (ISSC) which is a department in the Academic Enterprise Enrollment division at ASU. This division is charged with student enrollment and retention related goals for students at all of ASU's learning locations and includes other departments such as Admission Services, Financial Aid and Scholarship Services, and the Registrar's Office. Currently, the ISSC has 25 full-time staff members and 24 part-time student workers to help meet the needs of ASU's international student population. Most of these personnel resources go towards ensuring international students comply with the regulations set forth by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Department of State.

Even though this is the main function of our department, we also provide other services for ASU's international community. However, of the 25 full-time staff members in the ISSC, only two solely focus on non-immigration regulatory work, while others, including myself, play a role in both areas. We are one of only a few offices at ASU charged with only supporting international students – yet another indication that there are not a lot of additional resources provided to this group of students. The prevailing

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assumption is that international students should be able to access all student resources that are available to everyone, however, there is no intentional effort to find ways to educate and/or include international students in these resources. In reality, most international students at ASU view the ISSC as "the" office that supports them during their time at ASU. Even though we do not oversee tuition charges, housing, meal plans, health services, etc., many students believe that the ISSC will be able to assist them with issues related to these topics.

In my role in the ISSC, I lead a team that provides immigration advising to students who contact the ISSC in-person, over the phone and through email with a variety of questions and concerns in addition to also overseeing one staff member that provides an assortment of programs to help engage international students beyond immigration compliance. These engagement programs include personal, professional, academic and leadership initiatives that are meant to help mitigate the acculturation factors faced by international students. One of the biggest programs that I used to play a role in was ASU's International Student Orientation that is offered before the beginning of each academic semester. Historically, we have not been able to engage U.S. students in an intentional way during this program at ASU, leaving international students to develop new connections with their fellow co-nationals or international student peers as they begin their degree at ASU.

Additionally, I serve in other roles that are equally important to me outside of my usual job duties, such as the staff advisor for the Indian Students Association and the co-chair for the Tempe campus Committee for Campus Inclusion. This committee under the purview of the Vice Provost of Inclusion and Community Development provides

trainings and resources to promote inclusive practices on our campuses. More significantly to this research study, I am an instructor for ASU's UNI 120 Academic Success courses. Sections of the course that I have taught previously have had just U.S. students or just international students. My goal for this final research study was to create a section of this course for both U.S. and international students to learn together in a culturally diverse classroom environment. Since the curriculum is designed for U.S. students in order to build a foundation to be successful as a college student, I revised this curriculum in meaningful ways to support the development of intercultural connections through a culturally sustaining pedagogy.

Personal Context

In 2010, I left behind my life of eight years in New York City where I worked for a boutique entertainment law firm with clients like America Ferrera and Michael C. Hall to move to a small U.S. territory in the South Pacific Ocean. Over the next three years, I taught 11th grade English to students in American Samoa who were technically English-language learners but since American Samoa is a U.S. territory, I was required to follow a curriculum and use resources obtained from the mainland United States. My Samoan students were expected to learn and understand the writings of David Henry Thoreau and Nathaniel Hawthorne to name a few. This experience instilled a belief in me that culture plays an important role in how educational experiences are received by different students from around the world. Furthermore, it highlighted the importance to create education learning opportunities that incorporate a variety of cultural perspectives so that students experience education that meets them where they are, not where they are expected to be.

Western notions of education do not consider the multitude of perspectives that exist with regards to what should be learned and how it should be taught.

This huge shift in careers was influenced by Greg Mortensen and his work in Pakistan and Afghanistan to bring education, most importantly girls' education, to rural areas controlled by the Taliban, which is chronicled in his books *Three Cups of Tea* (2007) and *Stones into Schools* (2009). Although I am fully aware that there is much controversy today surrounding Mortensen's work, these books, at the time, made me see the impact education can have on individuals and humanity as a whole, which imparted in me a passion to inspire people to seek the educational opportunities that they desire. I also realized the importance of developing relationships with host country individuals as this led to my successful experience as a minority group member in a culturally different environment. Without these intercultural connections, I would not have been able to learn, connect and engage in the new environment that I immersed myself in for three years.

After realizing my passion for educating international students, and recalling my own experiences with the concept of acculturation when I was working in a foreign culture, I made it a professional goal of mine to help international students adjust to a new culture, connect with host culture peers and be successful during their time in the United States.

Over the course of the past few years, I watched as the initiatives I created in my role with the ISSC failed to attract a large number of students, both international and U.S. Could this have been because these programs and initiatives were not tied to an academic course, which is the primary focus for many students? Or perhaps the ISSC initiatives

that were created failed to properly provide reasons to U.S. students on why they should engage and participate with international students while they are studying in the United States.

Subsequently, I have wondered if I had been too naïve in my quest to create a non-academic environment in my role in the ISSC where students from different cultural backgrounds can develop meaningful connections and learn the ways in which they are different and the ways in which they are similar. Even though I spent time living and working abroad in a foreign culture for three years, I do not think I truly understand how the various acculturation strategies and mindsets impact the dynamics between majority and minority group members in a post-secondary school setting.

Therefore, it is important to understand how ASU, including faculty and staff, can truly create an environment where U.S. students and international students do not focus on their immigration status but instead find commonalities that can build intercultural connections. Both U.S. and international students need to learn to be comfortable with being uncomfortable in a culturally diverse environment because there is no doubt that our world will become more connected over the course of the ensuing century. If these connections can be made, then perhaps prejudice about groups of students can decrease creating a world where all human beings are able to live in harmony without feelings of superiority and exclusion.

COVID-19 Context

As the year 2020 began, the world was impacted by the introduction of the COVID-19 global pandemic. This pandemic created problems for students as they wished to continue and/or start their college experience due to social distancing and

lockdown orders. While the pandemic has continued to ebb and flow over the course of the ensuring years, there still continued to be a great impact on the student experience and this research study during the Fall 2021 semester.   ASU required all students and instructors to wear face masks inside the classroom for the entire duration of the fall 2021 semester. Since face masks were worn, it prevented myself as the researcher and the study participants from being able to discern facial expressions from each other, which are an important form of communication. Additionally, many students sought out online courses to decrease their possibilities of contracting the virus. There is no doubt that this shift in expected behavior during the pandemic and the impact on everyone's mental health has impacted the lives of both U.S. and international students studying at ASU.

Over the course of this introductory chapter, I have provided a brief history of educational exchange and international students in the United States while exploring ASU's role as a leader in international student enrollment. Since ASU is an institution with a large and diverse student body it allowed for this study to explore the dynamics between U.S. and international students in an intentional way. Through this qualitative research study, I explored the conditions that could allow for diverse students to develop intercultural connections. Educational exchanges between students have the power to transform lives and yet there continues to be missed opportunities both at ASU and within the larger U.S. higher educational landscape to provide a space for these meaningful connections. Over the subsequent chapters, I will provide further details as to how this study was conducted in my local context at ASU. This chapter will conclude with a list of important terms that have been introduced throughout this chapter and additional terms that will be introduced over the ensuing chapters.

Definition of Terms

The following key terms are relevant to the treatment of this topic in the scholarly literature, and also represent the vocabulary that will be used throughout this study:

- Culture: According to UNESCO, "culture is that set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of a society or social group, encompassing all the ways of being in that society; at a minimum, including art and literature, life-styles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions, and beliefs" (2001). Additionally, I would add these traits are passed down from one generation to the next and include aspects that can be seen above the surface of life and below the surface as well. In fact, more aspects of culture are below the surface, which make it harder to identify cultural differences between individual people.

- Host Culture: This term is used to denote the majority culture that is "hosting" the minority group. In the context of this study, U.S. students would be considered to be part of the host culture and the majority group on campus.

- Home Culture: This term is used to denote the minority group and the connection to their native culture. In the context of this study, international students would consider their home culture to be the culture that they left to study in the United States.

- Co-national: In the context of this study, the term co-national is meant to indicate individuals who are from or share the same home culture. As an example, students from India who interact with or associate with other students from India would be considered co-nationals.

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- International student: In the United States, international students are citizens or permanent residents of a country other than the United States to which they intend to return after completing their degree program. International students at ASU are generally classified as individuals on a F-1 or J-1 nonimmigrant visa. International students are not eligible for U.S. federal aid or other financial benefits, such as work study, while attending schools in the United States.

- U.S. student: U.S. students are citizens or lawful permanent residents of the United States, or are individuals who have been granted Asylee, Refugee or Paroled in a public interest status by the U.S. government. U.S. students are eligible for U.S. federal aid and other financial benefits while attending schools in the United States.

- Intercultural connection: In the context of this study, intercultural means involving a mutual exchange of ideas and cultural norms, whereas connection infers a kind of relationship. Therefore, an intercultural connection means individuals from more than one different culture forming some kind of relationship. The depth of these relationships was explored in this research study.

- Prejudice: More often than not, prejudice is considered to be negative feelings towards someone or some group created by preconceived notions. However, Allport (1954) preferred the definition of prejudice from the New English dictionary which stated prejudice as a "feeling, favorable or unfavorable, toward a person or thing, prior to, or not based on, actual experience" (p. 6).

- Globalization: I have chosen to use Giddens (1990) definition, which states that globalization refers to "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa" (p. 64).

- First-year student: This term is used to note an individual who is in their first year of undergraduate study. This term is chosen instead of the more popular term, freshmen, so as to include individuals from the range of gender identities.

- Acculturation: As stated earlier in Chapter 1, Redfield et al. (1936) stated, "acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups" (p. 149).

- Intergroup Contact Theory: in summarizing Allport's (1954) original research, Pettigrew and Tropp (2005) explored intergroup contact theory when the following conditions are present, "(a) equal status between the groups, (b) common goals, (c) intergroup cooperation, and (d) the support of authorities, law or custom" (p. 264). Additionally, a fifth condition of friendship forming was included to support the idea of decreasing prejudice.

- Transformative Learning: Transformative learning theory is defined as "the process whereby adult learners critically examine their beliefs, values, and assumptions in light of acquiring new knowledge and begin a process of social change" (Mezirow, 2003).

- Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: Building upon culturally relevant pedagogy, Paris and Alim (2017) stated that culturally sustaining pedagogy "seeks to perpetuate and foster - to sustain - linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of schooling for positive social transformation" (p. 1).

- Teacher-centric: As Paulo Freire (2000) described in his work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, a teacher-centric classroom defines an environment where the teacher is the master and the student is purely a pupil. Freire describes certain conditions of a teacher-centric environment including, "a) the teacher teaches and the students are taught, b) the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing and c) the teacher thinks and the students are thought about" (p. 73).

- Student-centric: In opposition to a teacher-centric environment, Freire (2000) describes a student-centric environment that envisions a classroom where a teacher shares material with students for their consideration and then learns about the ways in which students consider the material. Freire (2000) stated, "the teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach" (p. 81).

CHAPTER 2

FRAMEWORKS AND RELATED LITERATURE

In the previous chapter, I outlined how I began my journey as an international educator and why I am passionate about supporting students through their attainment of a higher education degree. I also provided information related to the current status of international education, more specifically, international students studying in the United States, and illustrated the historical nature of educational exchange programs.

This chapter will be presented in three sections, which will focus on the various frameworks and related literature that informed and influenced my desire to study the dynamics between U.S. and international students at ASU. In the first section, I will provide an explanation of the theoretical perspectives that are central to the problem of practice: the term acculturation and intergroup contact theory. These ideas are being explored to fully understand why there are challenges for international students and U.S. students to develop intercultural connections when studying together in the United States. In the second section, I will synthesize the related literature regarding challenges faced by international students who are central to the problem of practice and will discuss how this literature informed and impacted the direction of this research study. The literature identified will address various challenges including; cultural differences, academic challenges faced by international students in student-centric environments, and building relationships with U.S. students. These themes shaped the direction of this research study and will help readers better understand the context in which international students enter the host culture of the United States and struggle with their identity and relationship with

U.S. students who are part of the dominant society as they pursue a higher education degree. Finally, in the third section, I will explore the pedagogical concepts of transformative learning theory and culturally sustaining pedagogy that framed the intervention of this research study and will highlight how these theories sought to influence the participants in this research study.

This research study assumes that the exchange of educational experiences is a vital component of the U.S. higher education system as well as to the relationships between nation-states around the world. The focus on this research study was timely since it is important to develop individuals from around the world who have the skills and abilities to understand and interact with people from a variety of backgrounds in the 21st century. The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) includes eight competencies in order to best prepare students for career readiness. One of the eight competencies is global/intercultural fluency, which is defined as "value, respect, and learn from diverse cultures, races, ages, genders, sexual orientations, and religions. The individual demonstrates, openness, inclusiveness, sensitivity, and the ability to interact respectfully with all people and understand individuals' differences" (NACE, n.d.). This global competency cannot be developed without an intentional effort to bring together people from diverse backgrounds together for important moments of reflection. As we have seen with the COVID-19 global pandemic, the research required to study the virus and develop a vaccine against it required collaboration of researchers across national boundaries. As the world faces rising crises, such as climate change and growing populist beliefs, cultivating skills and abilities in young people is critical to the health of the planet. The continued progress of our humanity is dependent on healthy and constructive

relationships between people of different ethnic backgrounds, religions, values, beliefs, gender identities, sexual orientations, socioeconomic statuses, etc. This research study highlighted the importance of supporting and developing all students with goals of providing a more just world for the next generation.

Theoretical Framework

I will begin this first section by explaining two important ideas that are connected to the notion of an international student leaving their home country to move to a new country to complete a U.S higher education degree at ASU. These terms, acculturation and intergroup contact theory, help address challenges U.S. and international students face when studying together in the United States.

Acculturation: the ways in which two or more cultures interact

As referenced earlier in Chapter 1, the term acculturation, first introduced by Redfield, Linton and Herskovits (1936), is important to consider when addressing the challenges of U.S. and international students interacting together in an environment. The term acculturation was further developed by Graves (1967) into psychological acculturation, however, it has been steadily been referred to as acculturation due to the work of Berry (1990, 1995, 1997, 2005). It is important to remember that international students grow up and are developed as human beings in one, or more, cultures. As Liu and Dong (2018) stated, "being born and raised in a specific culture provides individuals with a perspective to explore this world. This built-in perspective will never be unlearned when new perspectives are introduced" (p. 123). Upon being raised in these cultures, an international student then enters a new country and cultural environment to complete a university degree. Most first-year students are between 18-20 years old, which means that

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they have spent at least 18 years growing up in one, or more, different cultural environments and then try to adjust to the new cultural environment of their chosen university during their first year of study.

Acculturation explores what happens to an individual when they come into contact with a new cultural group for an extended period of time and how this contact impacts their understanding of their home and/or host culture. Berry (2005) defined acculturation as, "a process of cultural and psychological changes that involve various forms of mutual accommodation, leading to some longer-term psychological and sociocultural adaptions between both groups" (p. 699). The term acculturation was initially viewed as a group construct exploring how one group influences another group (Graves, 1967). However, in addition to the impact of an entire group, individuality has also been explored as an important facet of this phenomenon. Although acculturation is not meant to express a positive or negative connotation to the process, it does typically refer to groups or individuals who are changing through the exposure to a new cultural environment. The individual or groups experiencing more acculturation are typically referred to as the acculturating group (Berry, 2005). U.S. and international students in this research study were part of an acculturating group since changes occurred in both throughout my intervention, however, U.S. students adapted less than their international student peers, which is common when exploring acculturating groups.

An individual in an acculturating group is bound to experience a wide variety of changes as they continue to maintain contact with a new cultural environment. These changes include physical, biological, cultural, interpersonal and psychological (Berry et al., 1987). Berry's (1990, 1995, 1997, 2005) seminal work focuses on cultural,

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interpersonal and psychological changes that occur during the process of acculturation. Some of these changes are dependent on a) whether or not the person chose to acculturate, b) their overall ability to move through the process of acculturation, and c) the length of time that they are expected to be in contact with new culture (Berry, 1990).

A person studying in their home culture with a peer from a vastly different culture, may only experience certain aspects of the acculturation process. However, an international student beginning their studies in a four-year degree outside of their home culture may experience the process of acculturation more deeply because they know they will be living in their new cultural environment for an extended period of time. Even though not all international students intend to stay permanently in the United States, the period of time it takes to complete a degree, especially for those who start at the age of 18, can force a student to deal with the process of acculturation in order to be successful during their studies. It is important to acknowledge that an international student has a home culture, which has provided them with a cultural background that informs their experience throughout the acculturation process.

On the other hand, since acculturation is meant to address two groups from different cultural backgrounds, we cannot forget that role that U.S. students play in the acculturation process for both international students and for themselves. As outlined in Chapter 1, due to the sheer size and scope of their numbers, U.S. students are considered the dominant group in this acculturation framework involving international students as the receivers. While Berry (1990) did not spend significant time considering how the dominant group is changed due to the receiving group, it is part of the process I sought to uncover through the course of this research study. This is one of the areas where this

study sought to assist to fill in the gaps of existing literature. The ways in which U.S. students may change due to their contact with international students was worth exploring because constant exposure from different ideas could have caused a change in their beliefs, values and cultural identity characteristics.

Berry (1989) identified characteristics that should be considered from both the dominant group and the receiving group to understand how their interactions may cause changes within both groups. Berry proposes that purpose, length, permanence, population size, policy and cultural qualities should be unpacked and asked of each group in the acculturation experience, which may inform the changes that occur. In addition to the impact of the dominant group on the receiving group, Berry (1989) also highlights that other individuals in the receiving group may influence the overall acculturation experience of those in the receiving group. Figure 1, adapted from Berry (1989) highlights the relationship between both groups and how they may influence each other through this acculturation process.

Figure 1

The relationship between dominant and receiving groups in acculturation adapted from

Berry (1989).
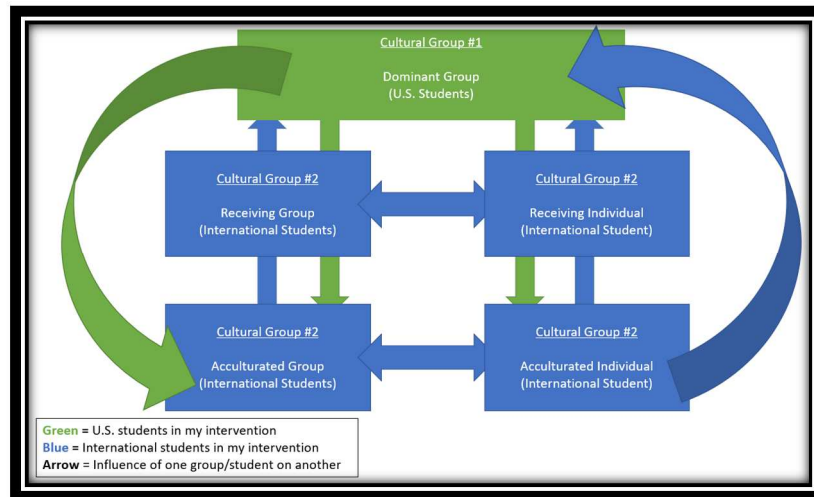
Berry (2005) stated, "the cultural experiences that accompany individuals into the

acculturation process need description, in part to understand (literally) where the person

is coming from and in part to establish cultural features for comparison with the society

of settlement" (p. 702). In other words, we must consider a baseline from which to

understand the acculturation process for each of the individuals in both the dominant and

receiving groups. Geert Hofstede, a researcher who explored cultural dynamics across

countries in a seminal study of IBM employees, identified cultural dimensions that can

explain how various countries or cultures view certain aspects of life within their society.

One of more relevant dimensions to this research study is regarding whether a culture is

considered collectivist or individualist (Hofstede et al., 2005). According to Hofstede et

al. (2015), a collectivist culture is one that focuses on the "we" within their society

typically having strong family roots. An individualist culture is one that focuses on the

"I" within their society where personal fulfillment is of utmost concern (Hofstede et al.,

2005). On the individualism scale, South Korea has a score of 18, China a score of 20, and India has a score of 48. On the other hand, the United States has a score of 91 (Hofstede et al., 2005). These scores are out of 100. This highlights one aspect of the cultural differences that impact each individual that is studying at ASU through the acculturation experience. The more similar the two cultures are, the less the acculturation process will impact an individual. This is not the case at ASU, however, since the majority of international students come from China and India, which present a variety of cultural differences with the United States.

Acculturation Strategies: ways to adjust to a new culture

In order to navigate acculturation, Berry (1997) has identified four strategies that individuals can utilize or believe in when acculturating between two groups; *integration, marginalization, separation* and *assimilation*. These strategies take into consideration two essential questions. The first question deals with whether an individual wants to maintain a connection to their home culture. The second question deals with whether the individual wants to build a relationship with their new host culture. Figure 2, adapted from Berry et al. (1987) highlights the two-dimensional acculturation model that answers these two questions in combination with each other. I explore these questions in depth to provide an explanation of how the various acculturation strategies were utilized, chosen, or forced upon international students by U.S. students or themselves.

Figure 2

Acculturation Strategies adapted from Berry et al., (1987).

Connection to Host Culture

Low   High

Connection to Home Culture

High

Low

Separation   Integration

Marginalization   Assimilation
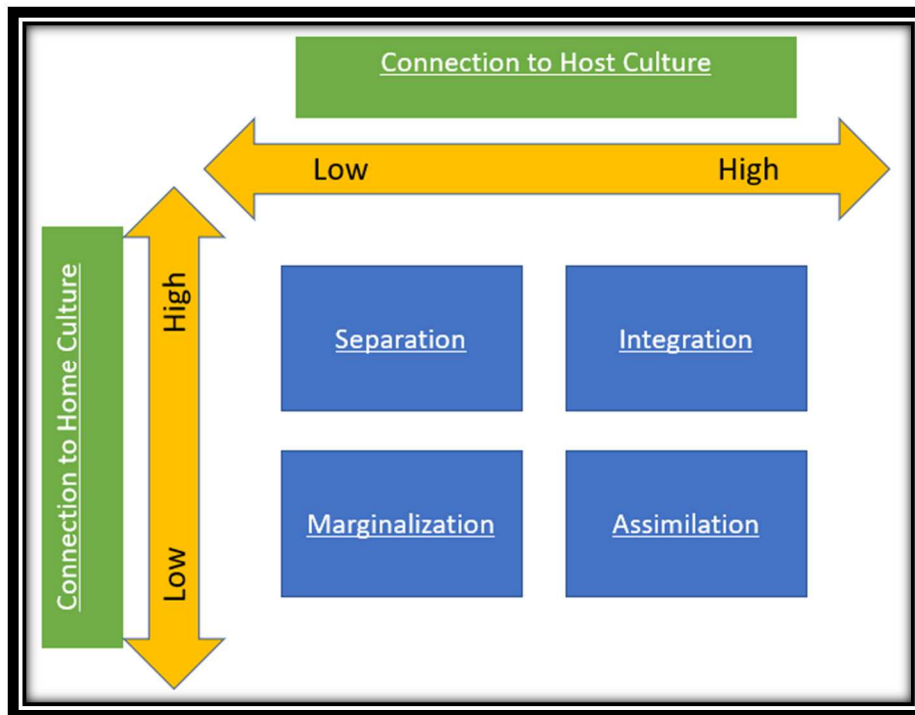
Integration

       If an international student wants to or is expected to maintain a connection to their

home culture and build a relationship with their host culture, the strategy is called

integration. This strategy allows a student in the receiving group to develop an in-depth

understanding of two or more cultures. Berry (1997) stated, "there is some degree of

cultural integrity maintained, and at the same time seeking, as a member of an

ethnocultural group, to participate as an integral part of the larger social network" (p.

705). Of the four strategies, *integration* has the most positive connotations because an

individual is able to connect with both their home and host cultural environments. By

maintaining their connection to their past life and fully exploring their present life, a

student who uses the *integration* strategy can be said to experience the "best of both

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worlds." Although the *integration* strategy is viewed positively by both the dominant and receiving group, it is not always clear if the dominant group understands the true characteristics of this strategy. Members of the receiving culture can sometimes view the idea of *integration* as a way to integrate **into** the host culture versus the ability to integrate oneself between **two** cultures. Negotiating between two vastly different cultures requires more work to develop and maintain relationships within two cultures at the same time. Students in particular from China and India might potentially face identity issues if they try to navigate the spaces of both cultures they are a part of due to the cultural differences between their home culture and host U.S. culture.

Marginalization

On the opposite end of the spectrum from *integration*, the *marginalization* strategy has the most negative connotations because the individual does not want to connect with any culture. If a student does not want to maintain a connection to their home culture nor build a relationship with their host culture then the strategy is called *marginalization*. This can happen when an international student is forced to leave their home culture but does not feel comfortable or has not chosen their host culture. Some international students are told by their parents where they are going to study and what major they are going to pursue. Other students may be offered comprehensive scholarships, which determine in what countries they will complete their studies. Therefore, this strategy may not be an intentional one for international students as this has been reported to cause more feelings of loneliness and confusion (Berry, 2005). At the same time, those in the dominant group may see this strategy used in practice by those in the receiving group and be confused about their choice. Why would a student

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choose to ignore their own culture and study in the United States if they are not going to connect with U.S. culture either?

Berry (2005) stated, "in the case of marginalization, cultural conflict is a variable feature of daily life, and is usually resolved by seeking little involvement in either culture" (p. 708). However, some researchers question the validity of this strategy due to the assumed complete lack of apathy of the individual to engage with any cultural environment, however, Berry would argue that this validates the strategy completely. In a study conducted by Sullivan and Kashubeck-West (2015), the authors noted that there was a large number of students in their study who identified with using the *marginalization* strategy. Sullivan and Kashubeck-West (2015) stated, "this new finding could be accounted for by the different experience of being an international student, compared with being a member of an immigrant group" (p. 6). The authors surmised students in their study identified with this strategy because international students are granted short term visas and usually struggle with the academic differences of their host institution. Furthermore, the majority of international students actually return to their home culture after completing their studies and/or after one to three years of work experience using Optional Practical Training (F-1 visa) or Academic Training (J-1 visa), which are provided by their student nonimmigrant status. This could also contribute to the viewpoints of U.S. students who do not wish to engage with international students knowing that it may just be on a temporary basis.

Separation

Furthermore, if a student wants to maintain a connection to their home culture but not build a relationship with their host culture, then the strategy is called *separation.* This

strategy might be used by a student who is confused by or does not agree with the cultural values or beliefs of the United States so they continue to do what they know rather than put themselves in uncomfortable situations. This strategy may also be utilized by international students if they do not feel that those in the dominant group are open or receptive to their place within the host culture. Some international students in the United States struggle to understand the separation of church and state, the idea of free speech, systemic concepts like racism and sexism, and views of the LGBTQIA+ community. This lack of understanding and acceptance of these concepts could lead international students to ignore important aspects of their host U.S. cultural environment.

These cultural differences may cause them to avoid building a strong relationship with the cultures of the United States. The strategy of *separation* where an individual indicates their desire to maintain connected to their home culture, but lacks the interest in building a relationship with their host culture, also has negative connotations. This is especially true of the perceptions from members of the host culture or dominant group. Heng (2018) showed that faculty and staff believe some international students choose to separate themselves from their host culture. As such, Heng (2018) stated, "in their [faculty] opinion, Chinese students tend to congregate and are uninterested in acculturating or improving their English via socializing" (p. 23). Potential reasons why some international students create strong communities with their co-nationals instead of their U.S. peers will be explained later in this chapter.

Unfortunately, these perceptions by those in the dominant group tend not to consider the struggles that international students face when experiencing acculturation and being a member of a minority group during their studies in the United States.

Additionally, what role does the dominant group play in helping international students learn about certain aspects of U.S. culture which may be different from their home culture? Instead of thinking that U.S. culture is the best, cultural aspects of the United States could be presented as educational events.

We also cannot forget the role that language may play in the decision of a student to use the *separation* strategy or not. As will be explored later in this chapter, English language skills are a challenge for many students from non-English speaking countries, which may contribute to a lack of confidence and ability to engage with their new host culture. This provides another reason why this research study was so important because there was a possibility that these two groups could have learned from one another about their own cultures so the *separation* strategy was not utilized or perceived.

Assimilation

Finally, if a student does not want to maintain a connection to their home culture but does want to build a relationship with their host culture, then the strategy is called *assimilation* (Berry, 1997). Initially, in the exploration of acculturation, this strategy was thought to be the only way to acculturate (Berry, 2005) and in many ways is the viewpoint held by many in the dominant group. Berry (2005) stated, "assimilation is not the only form of acculturation; it has not always taken place and it is rarely the goal that is espoused by acculturating groups" (p. 706). The *assimilation* strategy may be used if a student ultimately wants to remain in the United States or is actively fleeing their home culture perhaps as a refugee student, so they would prefer to learn and adapt to the cultural aspects of the United States. Some populations who experience acculturation may not have a choice in whether or not to maintain or build relationships with their

home and host cultures, yet some international students have chosen to leave their country to pursue their degree.

Many individuals in the host culture or dominant group tend to think that visitors including international students should *assimilate* into U.S. culture. This could also be said of the Trump Administration who believed that individuals seeking to immigrate to the United States should be able to speak English and possess certain desirable skills and abilities thought to be important for an American citizen (Díez, 2019).

In my work with the ISSC, I have the opportunity to collaborate with various departments around campus to ensure services are being provided for our international students. At one meeting, a member of ASU's housing department posed a question to the group asking how we as a committee could better help international students *assimilate* into the residential hall experience. This question was posed because over 30% of new first-year international students chose to move out of their residence hall within the first month of the fall 2019 semester. Immediately when the word *assimilate* was used, I understood why international students might experience challenges when studying in the United States because members of the host culture are expecting them to forget their home culture and adapt to their host culture environment. Over the course of our discussion, none of my colleagues posed the question of what U.S. students, faculty or staff or even ASU as an institution could do to assist international students with their adjustment while acknowledging the role U.S. students play as well. The responsibility seemed to solely lie with international students who must learn how to *assimilate* into "our" culture. This tension certainly cannot be easy for an international student to navigate especially during their first semester in the United States.

This *assimilation* attitude has been perpetuated for years by the dominate culture who assume that individuals should replace their former world view with a completely new worldview gained through the acculturation process. Berry (2005) stated, "it was assumed that non-dominant groups and individuals would move from some 'traditional' way of living to a way resembling that of the dominant society" (p. 706). Although it was troubling to hear this viewpoint shared by a colleague of mine during our meeting about supporting international students, it was not surprising. For some, there tends to be the viewpoint that international students should *assimilate* into U.S. culture because it is better than other cultures around the world.

This detailed discussion of acculturation highlights how an international student who enters a new cultural environment is faced with a variety of strategies to help them move through their life considering the various cultural environments that they are embedded in. Additionally, while dominant group members views on these strategies are not always explored, this research study explored how U.S. students identify and communicate strategies that they hold in regards to their international student peers.

The process of acculturation, including the various strategies that individuals can utilize through the process, indicates that two groups must come together and will be influenced by their interactions. Acculturation has the ability to impact both the dominant group and the receiving group, though the impact may differ depending on the group and depending on the strategy at play. Yet the notion of continuous contact is vital for the exploration of acculturation especially in the context of this research study involving international and U.S. students. Taking a step back, I will now explore intergroup contact theory to describe the ways in which contact can help two groups change their prejudiced

views towards each other. This theory is important to explore in combination with acculturation because changing views of prejudice can inform the acculturation strategy used and supported by both international and U.S. students.

Intergroup Contact Theory: the ways in which groups overcome prejudice

As briefly introduced in Chapter 1, intergroup contact theory began as a hypothesis identified by Gordan Allport (1954). This hypothesis grew out of the idea that individuals hold some degree of prejudice towards individuals or groups that they do not understand or do not have sufficient information about. Even 70 years removed from Allport's initial writings on this topic, we can still see evidence of prejudice because people are different in so many ways that it is impossible to say that we comprehend every different aspect of a person or group that we do not understand. Therefore, there is an inherent sense of prejudice towards something that we do not know because we lack the knowledge, and potentially the drive, to learn more about the other. As referenced in Chapter 1, Allport (1954) prefers to use the definition of prejudice from the New English dictionary because it assumes that prejudice can be both negative and positive in nature. As such, Allport (1954) defines prejudice as, "a feeling, favorable or unfavorable, toward a person or thing, prior to, or not based on, actual experience" (p. 6). This definition highlights that it is undeniable that individuals will hold feelings towards a group of people that is not always based on fact but rather on limited experience or knowledge. Therefore, what initially began as a hypothesis and has since developed into a theory, intergroup contact is assumed to decrease prejudice and have positive effects on intergroup relations. Although as Ensari and Miller (2006) stated, "simple contact alone is not sufficient to reduce discrimination" (p. 599).

Over the course of the ensuing years, this concept of intergroup contact has been explored in a variety of settings including desegregation efforts within the military, public housing projects, interracial workers in South Africa, and views on homosexuals, drug users and the elderly (Pettigrew, 1998). In all of these instances, intergroup contact with certain conditions, first outlined by Allport (1954) and then later expanded upon by Pettigrew (1998) resulted in members of different groups changing their views on the other group and contributing to improved social relations.

The intergroup contact hypothesis first proposed by Allport (1954) suggested that positive effects to intergroup contact occur when four conditions are met. Imai and Imai (2019) summarized these conditions as, "first, interactants from different groups ideally have equal status. Second, they should pursue common goals. Third, to pursue the common goals, they should cooperate. Fourth, authority support is necessary to make the intergroup contact positive" (p. 69). All four of these conditions were explored in this study; however, it is important to note that this initial hypothesis was expanded upon by further research and studies, which was finally articulated by Pettigrew (1998) with a fifth condition related to the notion of friendship. Pettigrew (1998) believed that cross-group friendship was important to the reduction of prejudice between two groups by stating, "the contact situation must provide the participants with the opportunity to become friends" (p. 76). This last condition added by Pettigrew (1998) is vital to the central tenet of this research study as I hypothesized that the international students and U.S. students in my intervention would develop intercultural connections. This potential development required an intentional effort to help the two distinct groups of students to understand the end goals of the study. The expectation was that these conditions would

contribute to building intercultural connections. I will explore each of these conditions of intergroup contact theory more in-depth.

Conditions of Intergroup Contact Theory: what is needed to change prejudice

Equal Status

The first condition of intergroup contact theory is that of equal status. This condition proposes that individuals from the two groups within the contact situation have an equal status between each other and not some form of hierarchical relationship. Ultimately, this condition proved difficult to ensure within this research study because, as I have articulated previously, international students are viewed as a minority group on campus due to the sheer size of their population. However, regardless of their nationality, both groups of students were degree-seeking undergraduate students in their first semester at ASU. As undergraduate students they shared a sense of equality because of their shared status as ASU first-year students. However, there was a disconnect with the equity between these groups of students due to aspects such as the differences in language skills, prior academic knowledge and cultural understandings. It was imperative that I tried to promote this sense of equal status so international students felt a sense of equality between these two groups of students so that this condition could be met (Pettigrew, 1998).

Commons Goals

The second condition to meet is having shared goals between the two groups. Pettigrew and Trapp (2005) stated, "in striving to win, teams comprising members of different groups must work together and rely on each other to achieve their shared goals" (p. 265). The common goal that international and U.S. students share is obtaining an

undergraduate degree from ASU with a more immediate goal of receiving a passing grade in this UNI 120 course. At the end of the day, instructors are aware that the number one goal for each student is to pass their classes. Although the level of degree with which one will pass a class varies, all students in theory want to pass so that they can move on to the next class, which will ultimately end with the completion of their degree program.

Another way in which common goals were addressed in my intervention was through the completion of a group project. In my intervention, students needed to work in small groups to identify a real-world problem that they wanted to address. Through research, interviews and exploration, students then presented a final product that addressed the problem they chose and potential solutions to address it. Each group had at least one U.S. student and one international student ensuring they worked towards this common goal together. This project further aided students in understanding the shared goals amongst them as students in my intervention.

Cooperation

The second condition of common goals leads very carefully into the third condition, which is that of cooperation. Cooperation in this research study was critical during the group project assignment, which was suggested as a good way to increase cooperation in school settings. Everett (2013) stated, "Aronson's [Elliott Aronson] 'jigsaw technique' structures classrooms so that students strive cooperatively" (p. 2). In the group project setting, group members needed to rely on each other to learn and complete their task, which required an overall sense of cooperation. Pettigrew and Trapp (2005) went on to state that "intergroup cooperation that then took place encouraged the development of positive relations between the groups" (p. 265). As individuals

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cooperated with each other, new knowledge about their peers was gained through the experience which resulted in intercultural connections developing between students.

Support of Authorities

The fourth and final condition identified by Allport (1954) suggested that support from authorities and/or institutions are vital for the success of intergroup relations. My official role with the ISSC at ASU, which includes the position of Designated School Official allowed students to infer the level of support I have from ASU as an institution. Within my own intervention, as the instructor, I supported and encouraged intercultural connections between students as this was almost explicitly why I chose to study this phenomenon. As Pettigrew & Trapp (2005) stated, "authority sanction establishes norms of acceptance and guidelines for how members of different groups should interact with each other" (p. 265). As the authority in my course, I required that groups contain at least one international student and at least one U.S. student so that students understood they were to interact with each other in a collaborative manner. However, outside of my intervention, and potentially other courses taught by other instructors, there is no stated guideline from ASU as an institution that mandates or encourages interactions between these two groups of students. ASU does not have a foreign language requirement for all degree programs, though there are certain curricular requirements for cultural diversity and global awareness. However, it is not certain if these courses that fulfill these general education requirements for undergraduate students include intentional ways that individuals can interact with each other or are they just about raising awareness of different viewpoints. It is my goal that with the success of this research study, more

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institutional support at ASU for intergroup relations between U.S. and international students in all classrooms will be provided.

Friendship Forming

Having described the initial four conditions from Allport (1954), it is essential to discuss the fifth dimension added by Pettigrew (1998). As Imai and Imai (2019) stated, "the contact situation should help interactants from different groups become friends" (p. 69). Intergroup contact theory proposes that if these conditions are met it will facilitate positive intergroup relations between groups. However, the notion of friends and friendship is not something that one can always predict because individual characteristics beyond student status will determine whether or not two people will become friends. However, Pettigrew (1998) stated, "Allport's conditions are important in part because they provide the setting that encourages intergroup friendship" (p. 76).

In practice, the encouragement of friendship is more realistic than committing to the actual development of friendships since there are many other factors that determine who will become friends or not. Additionally, while some friendships may be established quickly, other friendships can take months or even years to develop. As Tawagi and Mak (2015) stated, "cross-cultural friendships allow for growth in acceptance, respect, and ultimately appreciation of differences between individuals from different cultures" (p. 342).

Since the intervention I taught was only 16 weeks in length, it was unclear whether definitive friendships would actually be formed by the end of it. As Imai and Imai (2019) stated, "international students who experience prejudice from host nationals may feel excluded, leading to loneliness" (p. 68). Therefore, my assumption was that by

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encouraging the formation of friendships, it supported the overall conditions of intergroup contact theory for the development of intercultural connections. Figure 3 highlights the five conditions of intergroup contact theory and how these conditions created an environment in my intervention for the development of intercultural connections.

Figure 3

The conditions of intergroup contact theory adapted from Pettigrew (1998).
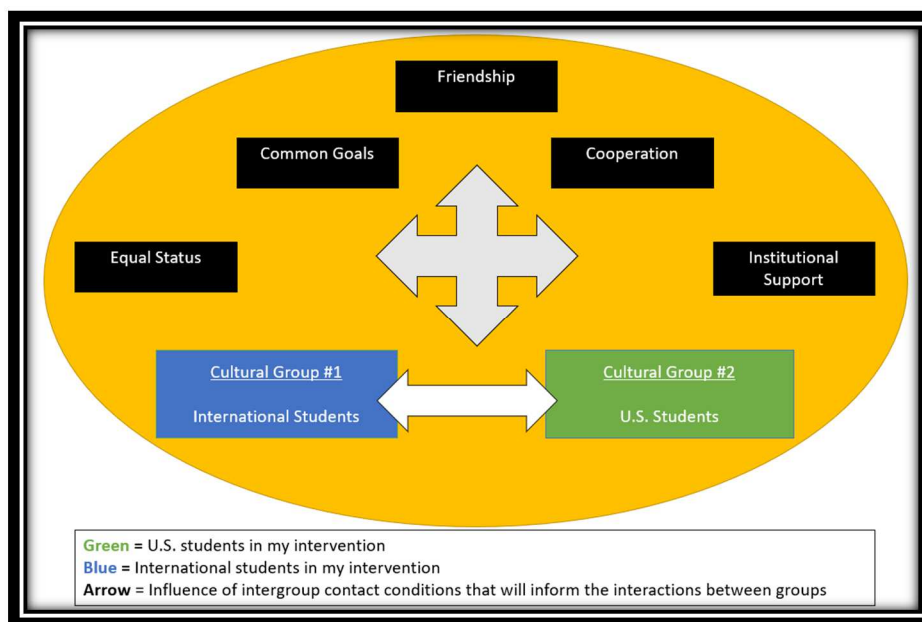
Intergroup Contact Processes of Change

Now that I have described the conditions of intergroup contact theory that I created within this research study, I would like to describe ways in which the processes of change can occur through these conditions. These processes include learning about the out-group, changing behavior, generating affective ties, and ingroup reappraisal (Pettigrew, 1998). Learning about the out-group requires U.S. students to take an active role in learning more about the backgrounds and cultures of their international student

peers. Changing behavior can be a precursor to changing attitudes, so it is important that students try to change their behavior after learning something about their peers. Changes in behavior could have taken the form of how students greeted each other in class or how they responded to each other in class discussions. Generating affective ties requires individuals to develop positive emotions such as empathy to demonstrate an understanding of their experiences. Empathy is a key concept that was explored throughout my intervention. Lastly, ingroup reappraisal illustrates the changes in attitudes and perspectives of the ingroup members through the learnings about the outgroup members and the experience of intergroup contact.

Furthermore, Pettigrew (1998) suggests that as ingroup members, U.S. students in this context, spend more time getting to know outgroup members, international students, ingroup members could find themselves spending less time with other ingroup members. This could be caused by the new information about the outgroup members which changes their opinions on the ingroup itself.

Intergroup contact theory is vital to explore in combination with acculturation because of how they interact with each another. Acculturation only happens when constant contact occurs between two or more groups of people. Intergroup contact theory describes the conditions of contact that should be present if there is the goal of improving relations between the groups who are in contact with each other. Figure 4 highlights the relationship between acculturation and intergroup contact theory to describe the basis for contact within this research study. The five conditions of intergroup contact theory need to exist in order to create positive interactions between U.S. and international students. Also interacting with these five conditions are the strategies of acculturation because each

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strategy can be utilized or perceived to be the way in which individuals should interact. Exploring the interplay between these conditions and strategies was a vital component to study in this intervention.

Figure 4

The relationship between Acculturation and Intergroup Contact Theory.
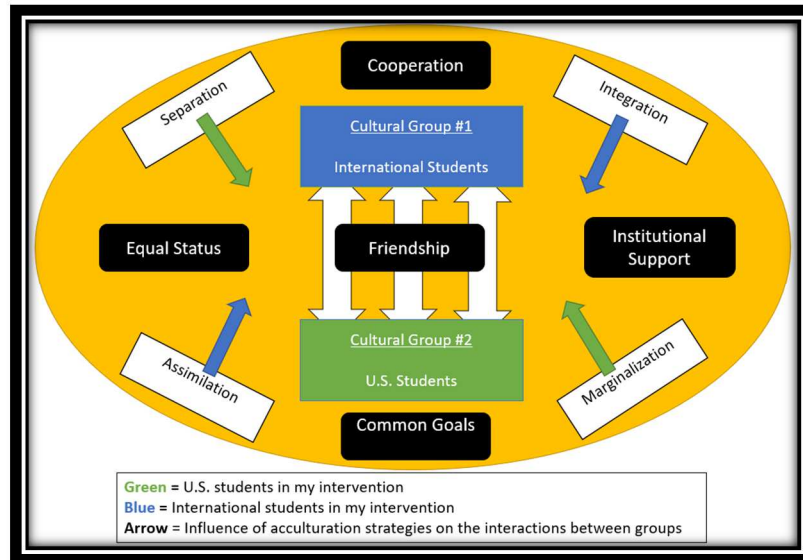
Related Literature

Having established the conceptual framework exploring acculturation and intergroup contact theory in relation to the dynamics between U.S. and international students, I will present related literature that addresses challenges experienced by international students during the course of their studies in the United States. It is important for readers to understand the challenges that international students face as members of the minority group in adjusting to their new host culture and educational environment. The related literature addresses a number of issues of which I will focus on the following: *academic adjustment*, *English-language proficiency* and ultimately, *the desire for relationships with U.S students*. Each of these issues will be explored further.

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Academic Adjustment: challenges inside the classroom

Academic adjustment to the U.S. higher education academic environment is one of the most pronounced challenges for international students studying in the United States. These challenges stem from the fact that the academic environment in the United States is very different from the academic environment in other cultures. Some of the challenges include communication skills, critical thinking skills, and pedagogical differences (Heng, 2018). I will address each of these challenges individually.

With regards to communication skills, the challenges presented include both speaking and writing as many students find what they know about communicating is different from the expectations held by faculty and students in U.S. classrooms. One of the reasons why Chinese students in particular struggle with their oral communications skills has to do with the differences from what they were taught in school and what they are expected to use in the U.S. classroom. Yeh and Inose (2003) stated, "it may be especially distressing for students who cannot express their academic ability in English well, because many of them have had high academic achievement in their home countries" (p. 16). Learning the correct grammatical way of communicating in the English language is not the same as the way native English speakers use the language in their everyday lives. Even in the classroom, where communication exercises play a large role in the classroom structure, these differences can cause international students to feel insecure with their communication abilities because they are not used to using their communication skills in this way to dialogue and/or debate classroom content. Although many individuals are not comfortable with public speaking or giving oral presentations, international students from China, in particular, come from a culture where not being

seen is more important. Struggling to find their place in the classroom to share their opinions is not easy for them to overcome. Yet when considering the conditions of intergroup contact theory, it should be clear in these classroom interactions, that both U.S. and international students share the common goal of obtaining a college degree. Yet as Sandhu and Asrabadi (1994) stated, "apparently foreign students are ultrasensitive and perceive rejection in the verbal and nonverbal communication and behaviors of some U.S. peers" (p. 444-445). The strategies of acculturation including *separation* or *marginalization* highlight a connection to communication skills that presents challenges for international students in the United States.

The use of critical thinking skills in a U.S. classroom is integral for the development and practical application of the knowledge gained. Students from China and India have indicated that many of their lessons in K-12 schooling required rote memorization of facts and information, which did not require or allow students to challenge facts to discover the authenticity of information learned. Heng (2018) stated, "Wen [Chinese student] attributed the 'exam-oriented' system in China for restricting divergent thinking as students were 'very afraid of making mistakes' and taking risks…since there was only one correct answer for standardized tests" (p. 29). Due to these differences, Chinese students in their study communicated that they felt a sense of inferiority to U.S. students because they were not able to apply critical thinking skills to learned concepts. This notion of inferiority can lead to the adoption of a *separation* acculturation strategy due to a lack of understanding of how to conduct themselves inside the U.S. classroom. If an international student is struggling to think critically according to U.S. educational standards and feels less than their U.S. peers, they may compare their

skills to those of a U.S. student which may cause them to be fearful about engaging with their U.S. peers. On the other hand, U.S. students may view this choice of *separation* strategy in a negative way, which could further perpetuate negative intergroup relations.

Evidence of pedagogical differences presenting challenges inside the classroom for international students is highlighted by the work of Kumi-Yeboah (2014) who studied the challenges of graduate students from the African continent studying in the United States. Data from this study highlighted that students from the African continent are not used to the classroom environment because of their previous educational experiences. Kumi-Yeboah (2014) quoted a student who said, "here, students are actively engaged in the lesson and professors give points for participating in class discussions and students to field-based projects and make presentations in class about findings. This learning style was new to me" (p. 119). It is not to say that international students will not eventually overcome these challenges, yet U.S. institutions should remember that it is especially difficult to change your way of doing something that you have done for a long time within your first year of study. To that end, Heng (2018) reported that most international students eventually become more accustomed to these pedagogical differences over time, yet they still struggle initially during their first year of study as they learn to navigate these differences.

The academic adjustment issues that I have discussed impact the experiences of the international students studying in the United States including those in my intervention. The root of these adjustment issues lay within the educational upbringing of these students who are not used to the skills required for a U.S. classroom. Heng's (2018), Kumi-Yeboah and James' (2014) and Kumi-Yeboah's (2014) studies show that

international students struggle because of the kind of communication skills they are

taught in K-12, the lack of critical thinking skills required, and the pedagogical nuances

of the U.S. classroom. These challenges do not stem from a lack of abilities rather a lack

of experience and exposure. Students who feel they lack abilities may experience

difficulties in navigating their new classroom environment with their U.S. peers. Such

challenges can result in behavior that is not what U.S. faculty and students expect of their

international pupils and peers.

English Language Proficiency: navigating language inside and outside the classroom

Although not all international students in the United States are English-language

learners, many students only learn English in formal school settings causing them to

struggle in a U.S. classroom. However, students from China in particular struggle with

their perceptions of their own English-language communication skills. Zhang and Jung

(2017) stated, "students' personal assessment of their own skills and proficiency of

English are related to their acculturative stress yet their actual testable proficiency is not"

(p. 25). This highlights that Chinese students who learn English in the K-12 school

environment do not perceive themselves to have adequate English skills for the U.S.

classroom. As a classroom instructor who has taught first-year undergraduate

international students in previous cycles and including this final research study, I can

attest to the difference between perceptions and abilities. Yeh and Inose (2003) stated,

"higher frequency of use, fluency level, and the degree to which participants felt

comfortable speaking English, predicted lower levels of acculturative distress among

international students in our sample" (p. 23). Many of my students exceled in their

written assignments, which indicated that they were capable of communicating in the

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English language, however, they were extremely nervous to use their verbal English

skills in the classroom. Additionally, some students in previous cycles noted in their

written assignments that they actually spoke up more in their class because it was an

international student only section. Unfortunately, since this final research study included

both U.S. and international students, I did not see a high level of comfort from the

international students in this intervention. Due to the combination of U.S. and

international students in my intervention, English-language skills were very important to

be cognizant of as I suspected this was going to impact international students comfort

level with their U.S. peers. In an exploration of the historical challenges of international

students from Asia who are English-language learners, students experience challenges

such as:

> language barrier, poor communication skills, difficulty in understanding
> long and complex sentence structures used by some professors, inability to
> grasp American slang expressions unconsciously used by some professors
> in class, the difficulty of working with groups on class projects, and being
> uncomfortable with open-ended class discussions. (Akanwa, 2015, p.
> 278).

Faculty should eliminate assumptions that all the students in their classroom have

experiences with the English-language teaching methods that they are using. In order to

overcome these challenges, faculty members must understand that different teaching

practices may be required to help international students learn in a U.S. classroom

environment.

Furthermore, like most U.S. institutions, ASU has a score requirement for

students from non-English speaking countries for the Test of English as a Foreign

Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) in

order to be admitted into a degree program. Therefore, some faculty might assume that international students at ASU have the adequate skills to be successful in the English language. Yet, standardized tests are not always an accurate indicator of skills or abilities. Some faculty members assume that since international students have received a certain score on these English-language tests they should be proficient in the classroom with their English language skills, yet just like the SAT is not an accurate predictor of abilities for U.S. students, the same can be said of the TOEFL or IETLS for international students. Kumi-Yeboah (2014) also found language skills to be a challenge for graduate students from the African continent as well. Kumi-Yeboah (2014) stated, "the majority of the participants affirmed that learning a new language was difficult in the beginning, as they had difficulties in communicating with students, faculties, and others" (p. 121). Again, over time students became more comfortable so the challenges become less pronounced, however, at first it was not easy for them to learn a new language in the U.S. classroom environment. Due to aspects of U.S. culture, this can occur for both students who are proficient and not proficient with the English language.

English-language proficiency skills are an important part of the acculturation process for international students and even U.S. students who are English-language learners. In order to be academically successful, English-language learners must learn to develop new skills that will provide them the resources that will allow them to feel comfortable in a U.S. English-speaking classroom environment. Zhang and Jung (2017) stated, "'students' comfort level using English was negatively correlated with all acculturative stress dimensions, including perceived discrimination" (p. 10). If U.S. institutions wish to help English-language learners overcome aspects of acculturative

stress caused by English-language proficiency, appropriate resources and services must be provided.

Additionally, if there is a language barrier between the students, this could also present an additional challenge as communication skills are important for establishing a connection. Johnson and Sandhu (2007) reported that international students fear embarrassment having to ask U.S. students to repeat themselves or provide further explanation, which can create a barrier to establishing relationships between the two groups of students. Though I often wondered how U.S. students would fare if their situations were reversed.

Relationships with U.S. Students: the desire to make connections while in the U.S.

As discussed, language and academic differences inside the classroom can cause international students to experience an extra burden of stress when studying in the U.S. These stresses are also compounded by their desire to connect with U.S. students. In cycle two, conducted during the spring 2020 semester, which was revised due to COVID-19, I surveyed international students about their relationships with U.S students. 92% (23 out of 25) of students indicated that they wished they had more U.S. friends. During previous cycles, which I conducted prior to COVID-19, most of the students I interviewed talked about in some way or another how their interactions or relationships with U.S. students impacted their time at ASU. Some students struggled to build friendships outside of the classroom setting; others stated that they did not feel that they had anything in common with their peers, while others stated how important it was for them to have U.S. friends to support their journeys. A common sentiment from most of the students I interviewed is illustrated by one student who stated, "I can ask questions

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for them [U.S. students], but the rest of the time, like out of class, we don't have a lot of things to say, a lot of things to talk about." This student went on say that there was a closer connection to other international students because they shared similar experiences of being different. This is a common sentiment from many international students including those I interviewed in previous cycles who indicated that they had more friendships with co-nationals and other international students because they felt they had more in common with them.

As previously stated in Chapter 1, international students are a minority population on the campuses of ASU with only 10% of the total in-person student body representing other countries than the United States. Although this is certainly a large number, as noted previously with ASU being ranked as the number two public institution in the United States chosen by international students, their proportion of the overall student body is small. Due to this factor, international students in many ways need to establish allies with U.S. students in order to adapt to their new cultural environment. U.S students can have a positive effect in decreasing some of the dimensions of acculturative stress for international students. Akanwa (2015) stated, "international students who made friends with American students have the advantage of overcoming 'acculturative stress' and also perform better in their education than those who do not maintain such relationships" (p. 280). Although, these friendships may be beneficial for international students, it is not easy in some spaces for international students to strike up conversations or develop relationships with U.S. students. Additional studies have shown that establishing relationships with U.S. students will help reduce loneliness or homesickness (Ammigan, 2019). Being in the United States which has a strong independent culture may cause

international students from interdependent cultures to experience homesickness because they miss their family and support systems (Johnson & Sandhu, 2007). Yeh and Inose (2003) stated, "in order to cope with such distress, international students with interdependent selves strongly desire alternative social networks that can validate their sense of self" (p. 24). Ammigan (2019) further recommended that in order to establish relationships with U.S. students, international students would benefit from using collegiate initiatives such as community service programs, student organizations, and social activities in residence halls as opportunities. Instead of the extra-curricular activities, U.S. institutions could also create co-curricular experiences like my intervention to provide such opportunities for intercultural connections.

Yet, many factors influence the ability of U.S. and international students to develop and maintain relationships. Williams and Johnson (2011) reported that xenophobic attitudes towards international students increased after the events of September 11, 2001. Additionally, students from China reported feeling discriminated against during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic (Qi et al., 2020). Anti-Chinese sentiments were experienced by many international students from China that in many ways could be attributed to the use of the term "China-virus" to describe COVID-19, which was used by the Trump Administration (Viala-Gaudefroy & Lindaman, 2021). With overall perceptions to international students changing due to geopolitical events, Williams and Johnson (2011) stated, "contextual factors associated with the receiving society are important contributors to the acculturation process and outcomes for immigrants and other acculturating groups, including international students" (p. 42). This implicates U.S. students as members of the receiving society as having an important

effect on the experience of international students studying in the United States. In their study Williams and Johnson (2011), stated "[of the U.S. domestic students in their study] 43% reported having one or more international student friendships and 57% of participants not having any friendships with international students" (p. 44). Even those who identified as having international friends, the majority of them classified the relationship as more of an acquaintance. With almost 40% of study participants indicating that they do not have international student friends, it supports the notion that these friendships are not common. Yet, even when relationships are established, international students indicate that they are typically superficial relationships with no real depth (Williams & Johnson, 2011).

In cycle two, I also surveyed U.S. students about their relationships with U.S. students with 100% (5 out of 5) indicating they only had one or zero international friends. Johnson and Sandhu (2007) stated, "international students report that Americans are very friendly and sociable, but they complain that their relationships are more like acquaintances" (p. 16). Cultural differences regarding social relationships and the meaning of self between the two groups of students contribute to the challenges of establishing and maintaining relationships (Johnson & Sandhu, 2007).

In order to create college environments that are inclusive and representative of the world where people from different backgrounds are celebrated and valued, creating relationships between international students and U.S. students are crucial. Additionally, it has been established that these relationships assist international students with the development of skills that will aid in their adjustment to their new cultural environment, including the U.S. education system, and decreasing their overall acculturative

experience (Akanwa, 2015). Establishing relationships with U.S. students is not only a desire of international students, but there are also benefits for both student populations.

Ra and Trusty (2017) stated, "universities and colleges can promote a cultural sensitive campus and encourage both American students and international students to be open to different backgrounds and an exchange of cultural values" (p. 286). At the end of the day as noted in the section on the acculturation, when two groups come into contact both can be changed. Williams and Johnson (2011) stated, "participants with international friends had higher levels of open-mindedness than those without friendships" (p. 46). U.S. students have the ability to change as well due to their interactions with international students. Since studies have shown that international students experience less acculturative stress due to relationships with U.S. students, it is vital that U.S. institutions provide opportunities for these interactions to occur.

Having detailed the related literature of the challenges that international students face while studying in a new cultural environment, I have highlighted how these challenges can be viewed through the term acculturation and intergroup contact theory. As a natural progression of this research study, the dynamics between U.S. and international students rose to become an important issue that was worth further consideration. As Wang et al. (2018) stated, "although many universities have been providing activities and events for international students, the interactions that these students have may still be limited primarily to other international students. Universities could strive to improve American student involvement in these offerings" (p. 838). As such, the course I taught, which served as the intervention for this research study, brought together U.S. and international students into one classroom environment. In order to

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create an environment to support both international and U.S. students, I will next explore the pedagogical concepts of transformative learning and culturally sustaining pedagogy that served as a guide for my intervention. This framework will guide the ways in which I as an instructor and international educator worked towards providing an inclusive environment where all students had the ability to succeed and grow.

<p align="center">**Pedagogical Concepts for Intervention: Best Practices to Incorporate**</p>

The pedagogical concepts that I explored in the intervention for this research study are the theory of transformative learning and culturally sustaining pedagogy. Transformative learning, which was identified by Jack Mezirow (1978), is a theory that begins when a person experiences a disorienting dilemma. Culturally sustaining pedagogy "asks us to reimagine schools as sites where diverse, heterogeneous practices are not only valued but sustained" (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 3). These concepts help explain what U.S. and international students face when beginning their undergraduate studies in the United States and how they are challenged to change their frames of reference due to their interactions with one another. These concepts can be applied to acculturation and intergroup contact theory because they are at their roots the very essence of a transformative learning moment. Therefore, through the theory of transformative learning and culturally sustaining pedagogy, I will explain how I tried to create an inclusive environment where inside my classroom both U.S. and international students created new meaning of their experiences and challenged their previously held views of the other. Since international students leave their home culture, they desire to be a part of world where education matters and humanity is celebrated for its diversity. U.S.

students have the capacity to share a similar thought which could have been developed through this intervention.

Transformative Learning: the development of new meaning-making systems

Transformative learning, identified by Jack Mezirow (1978), acknowledges that individuals create meaning-making systems that allow them to give meaning to their experiences to guide future experiences. It is a theory that always begins when a person experiences a disorienting dilemma. Ritz (2010) defined a disorienting dilemma as, "an experience incongruent with one's frame of reference and impacting how one perceives subsequent or new experiences – prompts critical reflection on the experience and why one cannot make meaning of it" (p. 162). Transformative learning theory asserts that meaning-making systems include frames of reference regarding personal relationships, cultural beliefs, attitudes and practices, religious doctrines, linguistic preferences, etc. (Mezirow, 2003).

Many students find the leap between high school and university to be challenging because they are being tested in different ways than before. For students who may experience a disorienting dilemma when beginning their undergraduate degree, their meaning-making system may not provide them with the tools to make sense of their new cultural environment. Additionally, if an international student, specifically, is unable to make sense of their situation based on a previous frame of reference, they may question their cultural identity because of the disorienting dilemma of studying in the United States. Therefore, regardless of one's student immigration status, new college students are impacted by a disorienting dilemma when they begin their life as a new college student, which may be experienced differently depending on their student status. As such,

the theory of transformative learning outlines ten steps that an individual may go through during a transformative learning experience. It was my goal that these steps were to guide the semester outline of my intervention exploring the dynamics between U.S. and international students. These steps first identified by Mezirow (1978) include:

1. A disorienting dilemma

2. Self☐examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt or shame.

3. A critical assessment of assumptions.

4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared.

5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships and actions.

6. Planning a course of action.

7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plan.

8. Provisional trying of new roles.

9. Building competence and self☐confidence in new roles and relationships.

10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspectives.

Ultimately, these ten steps indicate a general prescribed journey for an individual having a transformative learning experience, however, the flow between the steps is not always linear and not every person will experience each phase in the same way. As Kumi-Yeboah and James (2014) stated, "there are situations where adult learners do not have to go through the above-mentioned experiences for transformative learning to occur" (p. 30). It can also be suggested that other aspects such as culture, society and spirituality have an impact on the transformative experience of an individual. I looked at the various

ways in which this transformative learning theory presented benefits and challenges for new college-going U.S. and international students.

An integral part of the transformative process is the notion of critical thinking and reflection. As Sahin and Dogantay (2018) stated, "in this transformation process, meaning structures can change only with the help of critical thinking and reflection on the context, content, process or propositions" (p. 106). However, as I noted earlier in the section addressing the academic challenges for international students, critical thinking is a skillset that is a challenge for many international students. In some education contexts as I have highlighted earlier, the concept of critical thinking is not something that is encouraged in the classroom. Therefore, Sahin and Dogantay (2018) pointed out that if a student was part of a teacher-centric environment, they may not have had the chance or willingness to engage in critical thinking to challenge their own beliefs and values. Since many students from China and India grow up in teacher-centric environments, the act of critical thinking and reflection may be challenging for them to develop. If they are unable to critically think, then they may be unable to make new meaning of their experiences causing them to retreat and use the *separation* or *marginalization* acculturation strategies. In order to encourage critical thinking skills in international students, Christie et al. (2015) stated, "workshops, embedded in action research projects, where students are introduced to the theory of transformative learning and provided with tools to develop critical analytical reflection could be used as a model for a critical awareness course" (p. 22). Therefore, I sought to use a student-centric environment that explored and tried to develop critical thinking skills in all of these students. Through this development of skills, international students should be better positioned to make sense of their new

experiences within the frame of their current way of thinking while challenging assumptions and beliefs. Additionally, depending on the background and K-12 experiences of the U.S. students in my intervention, it was also possible that their critical thinking skills could be further developed as well. As Christie et al. (2015) stated, critical thinking, "helps us critique our own thought processes, our points of view and fields that shaped them" (p. 22). Hence the focus of this theory in this research project with new undergraduate students at ASU exploring their first semester of college.

In relation to the concept of critical thinking is the notion of independent thinking which can be explored through the cultural component of independence versus interdependence, which was briefly mentioned earlier. Independent thinking allows a student to arrive at a conclusion that the information they are learning is true or reasonable. Critical thinking takes it a step further by allowing a student to process information in a logical way. Critical and independent thinking tend to be found in cultures where independence is espoused because students are encouraged to think for themselves and reflect on their learning. Cultures can typically be categorized as people within the society who believe in independence or interdependence. Students from China and India prize interdependence over independence due to the centrality of family and the overall collectiveness of their cultural societies. This idea undoubtedly came into conflict with the notion of independence, which is central to many western countries including the United States. Additionally, the duality of independence and interdependence could also be present in many Latinx students who grow up in similar interdependent cultures and families. Christie et al. (2015) stated, "transformative learning is another term for independent thought" (p. 22). This concept could present challenges for international and

U.S. students who are not used to thinking critically and independence as it may cause a shift in their frame of reference. Mezirow's argument central to this idea summarized by Sahin and Dogantay (2018) stated, "this independent thinking process helps adults to have autonomous thinking skills, which is essential and crucial to take place and live in a democratic civil society and for making moral sound decisions" (p. 109). Unfortunately, not all international students come from democratic societies where independent thinking is encouraged. As such, this can present challenges for an international student studying in the United States who knows that this way of thinking will not be supported once they return to their country of origin. However, if an international student is to make sense of their acculturation process and their intergroup relations in U.S. culture, which they are experiencing, it may require self-reflection or critical thinking.

A final factor to consider regarding transformative learning experiences that could greatly impact an international student more than a U.S. student is the idea that once the experience has happened, it cannot be reversed. Due to the process of self-discovery and realignment of thought, it is simply impossible to unlearn something and pretend that you do not know something. Your future self will always be impacted by the knowledge and/or skills that you obtained through the transformative experience. A potential reason why international students may be leery of these transformative experiences is because as noted earlier, most will eventually return to their home country, which may or may not be supportive of the new frame of references that they might develop. Ritz (2010) stated, "this action was not perceived as an unwillingness to revise their frames of reference, but rather a result of knowing that they were returning to a cultural context where their future actions could not be guided by an expanded meaning-making process" (p. 164). This can

also contribute to the acculturation strategy utilized by international students because they are keenly aware that eventually they will return to their home culture environment.

The potential for future conflicts may cause an international student to choose not to connect with their host culture because overall the transformative learning experience may not be a good idea for their future self. Therefore, transformation will only occur if the individual believes it to be absolutely necessary for survival (Christie et al., 2015). Since the literature on U.S. students interacting with international students is limited, it is unclear how the inability to go back after a transformative learning experience will influence a U.S. student from interacting with international students. However, Williams and Johnson (2011) found in their study that U.S. students with international student friends had high levels of open-mindedness. Open-mindedness typically results in less prejudiced thoughts towards out group members, which in this case would be international students. Therefore, I sought to explore U.S. students' willingness to develop more open-mindedness through the course of their interactions with international students in my intervention.

Kumi-Yeboah (2014) recollected for her study that "participant's transformative learning experiences occurred as a result of their ability to develop self or inner awareness from their previous knowledge and assumptions or reality of issues" (p. 123). Ultimately, I assumed that this would transpire for the U.S. and international students in this research study too. The sense of greater awareness for themselves and their place within our society is at the root of a transformative learning experience. It is clear that the ten steps outlined by Mezirow (1978) helped guide my intervention to create new meaning making systems for both U.S. and international students.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: a student-centered cultural approach to teaching

In addition to transformative learning, I also explored a culturally sustaining pedagogy inside my classroom to facilitate intercultural connections between students. Due to the cultural differences between the two groups of students I included in this research study, it was important to identify a culturally-based pedagogical strategy that allowed me to focus on the variety of cultures represented in the classroom. This statement is made understanding that both U.S. students and international students are not monolithic groups respectively. However, since the UNI 120 course I taught was created within a specific context by a group of instructors for a mainly U.S. student population, it did not allow for cultural inclusiveness that was important for the goals of this study. The current curriculum of the course that I taught continues many western beliefs and values that are not central to the cultures of many international students that come from collectivist or interdependent cultures. Instead of continuing the white middle class mindset through the current curriculum, I used a culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2017) to ensure all cultural viewpoints were considered. Paris and Alim (2017) reconceptualized the seminal work of Ladson-Billings's (1996) article *Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy* introducing Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, as a theory that, "asks us to reimagine schools as sites where diverse, heterogeneous practices are not only valued but sustained" (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 3). Paris and Alim respected Ladson-Billing's work but recognized a need to move it further to support the evolving nature of individual identities. Many international students are also people of color who are usually lumped together as one group simply because of their international student status. This status is typically looked down upon as a hindrance or a deficit because students are not

able to live up to the standards of the U.S. education system. Yet, even in the state of Arizona and at ASU, where over half of the student body is non-white, the majority of students are from culturally diverse backgrounds.

As Paris and Alim (2017) stated, "CSP positions dynamic cultural dexterity as a necessary good, and sees the outcome of learning as additive rather than subtractive, as remaining whole rather than framed as broken" (p. 1). Quite often, students from culturally diverse backgrounds are assumed not to have the important skills required to succeed in the U.S. education system because of the perception that they have limited social capital towards education. However, instead of viewing this as a negative aspect of a student's life, educators could benefit from drawing on their experiences as strengths to be developed even further. Heng (2018) reported on claims from faculty members in the United States who believed that international students from China lacked skills that are viewed as important to courses in a U.S. classroom. Yet, many international students are usually quite academically successful in their high school experiences, which indicates that they do not lack important skills, it just might mean that the skills they developed are different than what is expected of them in the United States. Therefore, a pedagogy that celebrates many cultures, including many cultures of the United States that are not part of the dominant discourse, allows students to develop an understanding of a person that is different in many ways from them. Ladson-Billings (2014) stated, "cultural competence refers to the ability to help students appreciate and celebrate their cultures of origin while gaining knowledge of and fluency in at least one other culture" (p. 75). In order to develop this cultural competence amongst both U.S and international students, I, as the instructor of my intervention, committed to specific activities that were drawn from the

work of Richards et al. (2007) as culturally responsive activities, which allow faculty to infuse a culturally sustaining pedagogy into their classroom environment. These activities included:

1. Acknowledge students' differences as well as their commonalities

2. Validate students' cultural identity in classroom practices and instructional materials

3. Educate students about the diversity of the world around them

4. Promote equity and mutual respect among students

5. Assess students' ability and achievement validly

6. Foster a positive interrelationship among students

7. Motivate students to become active participants in their learning

8. Encourage students to think critically

9. Challenge students to strive for excellence as defined by their potential

10. Assist students in becoming socially and politically conscious

By using these activities in my intervention in addition to the learning objectives prescribed by ASU, I created an environment for students from many different backgrounds to succeed that required transparent communication between myself as the instructor and between the two groups of students. This is because it was not just about developing an awareness of other cultures, but the adoption of different emotions and behavioral skills, which contributed to the development of intercultural connections. Through this culturally sustaining pedagogy infused learning process, international and U.S. students were exposed to each other with a quality of contact taking into consideration the conditions of the intergroup contact theory that resulted in changes for

both groups of students. These changes, whether big or small, with a focus on friendship building is important for the continued growth and stability of our country and the world.

Transformative learning theory and culturally sustaining pedagogy were used as frames for my intervention in this research study because of the ways in which acculturation and intergroup contact theory interacted with and influenced the disorienting dilemmas of these students to initiate change. While exploring transformative learning has benefits to help students deal with the process of acculturation, there were also potential concerns for students in allowing themselves to truly have a transformative learning moment. However, it was my belief that by enabling U.S. and international students to make sense of their experiences studying together in the United States through the lenses of transformative learning and culturally sustaining pedagogy, they would be better able to be successful as a college student. Another reason to explore the theory of transformative learning was because of the similarities to an action research study itself, which looks at something wrong in a specific context. Something that is wrong and needs to be addressed in a specific context can be viewed as a disorienting dilemma much in the same way that a disorienting dilemma causes transformation in an individual to occur. By adding culturally sustaining pedagogy practices to cultivate intercultural learning, students should have had a culturally transformative learning experience. Therefore, using the theory of transformative learning and culturally sustaining pedagogy in this research study seemed most appropriate.

Gaps in the Literature: areas which my research can contribute to the field

Ever since I began the process of exploring this problem of practice, I came into contact with a plethora of literature related to the international student experience. This literature was primarily focused on the experiences of students in the United States, but it also focused on other parts of the world as well that attracted a large number of international students. Through this exploration of literature, I came to understand that there were many pieces to the puzzle of the international student experience that needed to be explored in combination together. In various pockets of the conversation, one could find studies discovering the impact on international students related to acculturation, or transformative learning experiences and even intergroup relations, yet the new lens that I created by weaving these concepts together was entirely absent. By applying these three concepts just mentioned plus culturally sustaining pedagogy, I created a new viewpoint not yet applied to the studying the dynamics between U.S. and international students.

Central to the literature I found was an exploration of acculturation and acculturative stress experienced by international students in the United States. Research studies (Yeh & Inose, 2003; Sullivan & Kashubeck-West, 2015; Ra & Trusty, 2017; Zhang & Jung, 2017) have explored how acculturation impacts international students in a variety of ways. Through these studies, various explanations and reasons were given as to why international students need additional support and the ways in which the support can be given. Support from host culture individuals was typically present in these findings yet multiple suggestions were provided as to how to provide this support. Curricular suggestions were rare yet when studied it seemed to highlight the potential for further research in this academic setting. Yan and Sendall (2016) suggested to, "provide more

discussion and interactions opportunities. Pure lecturing and in-class videos are not the preferred way of learning for either international or domestic students" (p. 49). In order to facilitate personal connections, discussions and interactions were a core component of the educational activities in my UNI 120 course.

Another central piece of the literature discovered was in relation to transformative learning experiences. These studies (Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2014; Kumi-Yeboah, 2014; Sahin & Dogantay, 2018; Christie et. al., 2015) applied the theory of transformative learning to the experiences of international students. The findings from these studies also highlighted similar challenges for international students like those found with acculturation studies that can be attributed to differences in educational systems and support received from their host institutions. As Kumi-Yeboah (2014) stated, "adult learners experience facilitated transformative learning through the development of new perspectives" (P. 123). This research study had the power to do so through the semester-long process of this UNI 120 course.

A much smaller piece of the puzzle that was unearthed in my literature review was the influence of intergroup contact theory on international and U.S. students. As previously stated, this theory has been applied to many settings including those related to racial desegregation efforts, yet there was minimal literature within the world of international higher education. Turner and Feddes (2011), Imai and Imai (2019) and Tawagi and Mak (2015) were some of the few scholars applying intergroup contact theory in this area. However, as Tawagi and Mak (2015) stated, "further investigations on relations between international and domestic students could also examine the effects of extended and imagined intercultural contact" (p. 350). My intervention presented the

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opportunity to do so through a semester long research study with intentional contact between these two groups of students. These pieces of literature in relation to intergroup contact theory seemed to scratch the surface with much unchartered territory left to uncover.

Lastly, as I sought to ensure a curriculum for my intervention that included the cultural perspectives of every learner, there was little research to be found within the world of international students and bringing their unique cultural backgrounds to the classroom. Paris and Alim (2017) gathered many researchers to apply culturally sustaining pedagogical practices to a variety of education settings. The closest educational setting to the international student experience that was explored looked at the experiences of immigrant youth in the United States. This K-12 exploration has some similarities yet many differences to the experiences of undergraduate international students at ASU. International students studying in the United States are considered nonimmigrants due to their visa status which means that there was room to explore a culturally sustaining pedagogy in this research study. The use of this pedagogy was also supported by MacGregor and Folinazzo (2018) who stated, "culturally relevant pedagogy, focusing on both the dominant culture and the ethnic students, will be beneficial for both DSs [domestic students] and ISs [international students]" (p. 323).

Over the course of this chapter, I have aimed to provide an overview of a variety of frameworks both theoretical and pedagogical to understand the challenges that international students and U.S. students experience when learning together in the United States. Figure 5 incorporates transformative learning, cultural sustaining pedagogy, intergroup contact theory and acculturation to explore the potential benefits of decreasing

prejudice between U.S. and international students and the possibility of intercultural connections.

Figure 5

The guiding principles of research study
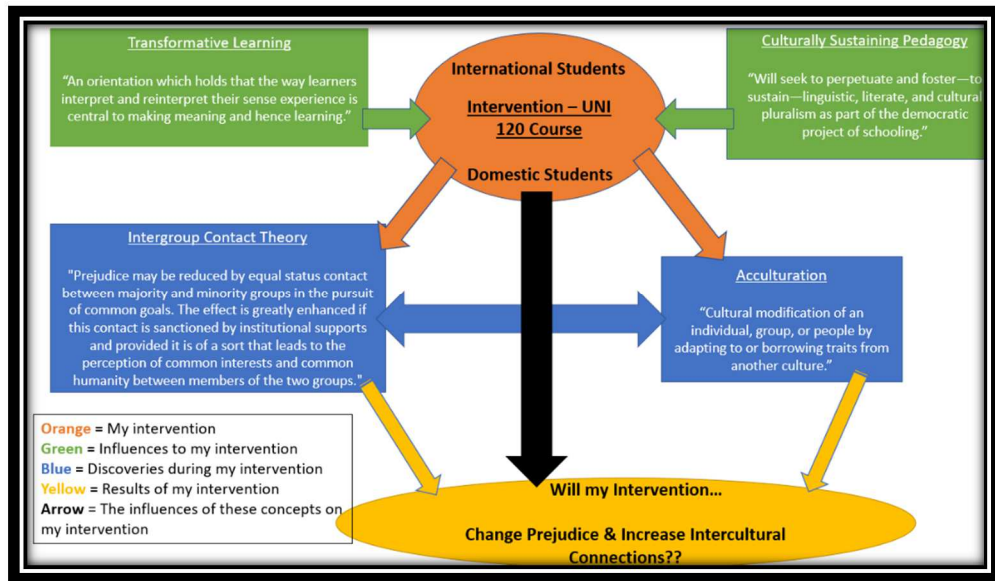
This research study espoused to create an environment where infinite possibilities exist. U.S. and international students were capable of developing intercultural skills that may prove useful for the future careers. They could have also learned about other cultures in significant ways that could have altered their previous thoughts or beliefs. These students could have also developed friendships with each other changing the current typical experience of living two separate lives within the same educational institution. Through their experiences, it was possible that their new beliefs could have inspired or led to others developing new meaning making systems that could change the course of a piece of our society. While these possibilities may have seemed grander than life in the context of this research study they were important goals to strive for. Central to this discussion is the theory of transformative learning because of its inherent connection to

the struggle of students to adjust to a new learning and cultural environment at the start of their collegiate experience. Mezirow (1978) stated, "perspective transformation is a generic process of adult development; it is a kind of learning – perhaps the most important kind – that enables us to move through the critical transitional periods of adulthood" (p. 15). Next, I cannot forget how a culturally sustaining pedagogy allows for a cultural rebirth of students pushing them into a new educational experience. As Lee and Walsh (2017) stated, "by building on students' cultural and linguistic flexibility, the schools give students a sense of belonging, encourage academic confidence and achievement, and foster cultural pluralism" (p. 203). Laying these concepts with intergroup contact theory adjusts the views of each student seeing their peers in new ways. These ways should have changed their prejudiced views which may hold them back from accepting their peers as unique individuals. As Turner and Feddes (2011) stated, "it emerged that the more time participants spent with outgroup friends, the more positive was their attitude towards the outgroup in general" (p. 915). Finally, at its very essence this experience was bringing together different groups resulting in changes for all involved, which is the very definition of acculturation. As Fox et al. (2013) stated, "acculturation is a long-term, lengthy fluid process that can result in lasting change across multiple dimensions to involved members of the minority culture, as well as the aspects of the dominant society involved in the interaction" (p. 270). Therefore, it can be said that all of these concepts were imperative when creating the foundation for building intercultural connections between U.S. and international students. In the next chapter, I will explain how I built and researched an environment with U.S. and international first-year students at ASU using these frameworks.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

After reviewing various theories, related literature and pedagogical concepts that contribute to the theoretical perspective in the previous chapter, this chapter will detail the specifics of this research study. Included in this chapter is the following information: (a) the setting and the participants (b) the timeline for this study, (c) the role of myself as the researcher, (d) the data collection instruments, (e) a detailed explanation of my intervention, (f) the procedures for data collection and data analysis, and (g) the ways in which I addressed trustworthiness throughout this research study.

Before describing the methods for this research study, it is important to articulate the ways in which I framed this study and analysis through the lens of qualitative research with an emphasis on phenomenological methods. Qualitative research is one of many ways that a researcher can approach their research as they aim to explore an area in which they are passionate about (Bhattacharya, 2017). I chose to conduct a qualitative research study because this kind of research allowed me to explore what is the central phenomenon of this topic. I began the process of this research wishing to investigate the overarching topic of global citizenry and how this informs the work of educators, more specifically international educators like myself. This idea of global citizenship is at the root of the dynamics worth exploring between U.S. and international students. Therefore, as Creswell and Guetterman (2019) stated in regards to qualitative research, I was interested in, "exploring a problem and developing a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon" (p. 16). This fascinated me because life and the ways in which humans

experience life is central to my preferred way of thinking. I am constantly seeking to understand why things in life transpire the way they do and wish to find meaning behind our shared humanity. Therefore, it became clear to me that conducting a qualitative research study was the path that I was destined to choose. As Given (2016) stated, "qualitative research is a human-focused approach to research design, which aims to delve deeply into people's experiences, perceptions, behaviors, and beliefs" (p 2). As a person and as a researcher, delving into our experiences and uncovering why we do what we do and why we think what we think is the most important contribution I would like to make to the field of international education. By including a variety of student voices in this research study, I was able to uncover diverse perspectives of ideas and thoughts.

In exploring qualitative research, it was important to consider the viewpoint in which the research study was approached as this informed many of the study's processes and methods. Phenomenology emerged as a methodological perspective that aligned with my viewpoint because as van Manen (1990) stated, "phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature and meaning of everyday experiences" (p. 9). By exploring the nature of how prejudice influenced and informed viewpoints of students depending on their cultural perspectives, I gained meaning into their experiences that only they as individual humans could articulate. By uncovering the lived experiences of each study participant, it is the assumption that we can uncover the structures and systems in place, which allowed me to articulate and interpret the meaning behind these experiences. As van Manen (1990) stated, "phenomenology attempts to explicate the meanings as we live them in our everyday existence, our lifeworld" (p. 11). In order to uncover these deeper meanings of our existence, I drew upon qualitative research

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methods that allowed me to look at the central phenomenon of this research study with a heightened sense of awareness. Given (2016) stated "by combining textual methods with direct, human-focused methods, researchers can gather rich, deep data about the range of human experiences in their studies" (p. 3). As I combined textual methods of data from the students' lived experiences including their own academic journey at ASU, I was able to incorporate their actual words and emotions through interviews and photos. Through this thorough exploration using qualitative research methods, I will now explore the ways in which I gathered rich data in this research study.

Setting and Participants

In my role in the ISSC, I help provide resources and plan initiatives that have not been utilized by a large number of international and U.S. students at ASU. Therefore, this research study was conducted through my role as a part-time instructor of a UNI 120 Academic Success section that was open to both international and U.S. students. The UNI 120 Academic Success course is offered through the University College at ASU and was designed to help students that have been identified as potentially low-level learners from their secondary school experience by providing them with tools, resources and strategies to be successful with their undergraduate academic journey. This course has been attributed to higher retention and graduation rates for U.S. students that have taken the course and a higher cumulative grade point average as well.

Traditionally, international students are not required to take this course because only students that have been identified with a specific Colorado Index (CI) score have this course added to their undergraduate degree major map (Colorado Department of Higher Education, 2019). The CI score is calculated based on the students' high school

GPA with their score on the ACT or SAT test combined. ASU requires U.S. students with a CI score of 93 or less to enroll in UNI 120 Academic Success before they are eligible to graduate regardless of their major. ASU does not assign a CI score to incoming international students; therefore, this course is not traditionally placed on their degree major map. However, during the fall 2020 semester, I was able to teach a section of this course recruiting both U.S. and international students even though the semester was heavily impacted by COVID-19.

During previous cycles of this research study, I used the prescribed curriculum of an alternative course entitled UNI 220 Mindset Connections, with the spring 2019 semester being the first time this course had a section for international students exclusively. It was also the first time that that the course was taught by a professional staff member who works every day with international students: me. Since this study began as an exploration of the challenges faced by international students during their undergraduate careers, this course seemed the most appropriate. In the spring 2019 and fall 2019 semesters, a mixture of students from their second semester at ASU, all the way through their final semester at ASU enrolled in my sections of this course. The primary target for this course had been those students at ASU identified as experiencing academic challenges through either academic probation or being off-track in their major. However, the content of the course is relevant to any college student who wishes to discover more about themselves as well as important traits and mindsets that will assist them with completing a university degree successfully. The UNI 120 curriculum is meant for first-year students whereas the UNI 220 curriculum is meant for those who have struggled during their time at ASU and need help to get back on track. Upon contemplating the

experiences of the previous cycles of research where I taught a UNI 220 Mindset Connections section for international students on academic probation, it was determined that to align with the ultimate goal of this research study, it would be better to utilize the UNI 120 Academic Success course as a foundation for my intervention. Upon receiving approval from the Director of the Success Courses, each subsequent section of my UNI 120 Academic Success course was involved with this research study in some way or another.

International and U.S. students enrolled in my UNI 120 Academic Success section participated in the final stages of this research study during the spring 2021 and fall 2021 semesters, however, only data collected from students enrolled during the fall 2021 semester are included in this final dissertation report. Up to 20 students were able to enroll in my section with ten slots reserved for international students and ten slots reserved for U.S. students. This equal representation from both student groups, was to allow for an equal status, which is an important condition of intergroup contact theory previously described in Chapter 2. The ten international students in this final research study during the fall 2021 semester were from China (1), Cyprus (1), India (7) and South Korea (1), which with the exception of Cyprus represent countries with a large number of international students at ASU. I did anticipate that there would be more students from China as they are the largest group of international undergraduate students at ASU. Potential reasons for a lack of interest from students from China will be explored in Chapter 5. The ten U.S. students in this final research study during the fall 2021 semester were from Arizona (3), California (3), Illinois (1), New York (2) and North Carolina (1). Based on enrollment trends I assumed most U.S. students would be from the state of

Arizona, therefore, I was pleasantly surprised that these U.S. students represented a variety of cultural backgrounds including some who were actually born outside of the United States though they are now a U.S. citizen or permanent resident. The U.S. students who were recruited to join my section were students identified as having a CI score of 93 or below, who were already asked to take this course in their first semester. Even with many different sections to choose from, I was able to recruit ten U.S. students to join my specific section. Since international students do not have a CI score, I utilized data from international students' admissions applications to identify new international students with zero academic credits prior to joining ASU. Therefore, these U.S. and international students beginning their university undergraduate degree at ASU who just moved to Phoenix from their home and/or country of origin or host cultural environment were specifically recruited to join my UNI 120 course for this research study. This meant that students were the aged between of 18 and 20 years old, with the majority being 18 years old. This also meant that all of these students were navigating an important passage of time in their life, as well as a new cultural environment and a new academic environment at the same time.

Timeline

This research study began in earnest in the fall of 2019 when I identified a problem of practice in my professional work setting at ASU and began speaking with international students about their experiences. This study continued to take shape over the subsequent academic semesters as specific pieces of this research study were developed and revised. As expected, over the course of the subsequent semesters, this research study moved into new directions to meet the actual local context in my area of influence.

Beginning in the fall 2019, this research study consisted of four stages. Stage one took place during the fall 2019 and spring 2020 semesters as I explored the challenges of international students in the UNI 220 Mindset Connections sections that I taught to international students only. Over the course of these semesters, I collected feedback from the students in my classes and those outside my classes who were just beginning their studies at ASU to better understand the challenges they were experiencing as an international student at ASU. The focus of this research study was on the aspect of acculturative stress and how this impacted their time at ASU. After the spring 2020 semester, data from surveys and interviews illustrated that one of the biggest challenges for international students was developing friendships with U.S. students. This was when this research study pivoted towards the second stage.

The second stage took place during the fall 2020 semester, which was the first time I was able to recruit both U.S. and international students to join my UNI course. Due to discussions with the Director of Success Courses, it was decided that I would teach a UNI 120 Academic Success section since the focus of this research study became first-year undergraduate students specifically. The initial goal of this semester was to explore teaching methods and curriculum choices that would aid these students in exploring the dynamics between U.S. and international students. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, many goals for this stage were difficult to implement due to many realities beyond my control. The first challenge was the inability of many international students to be able to obtain a F-1 visa permitting them to travel to the ASU to begin their studies in person. As such, many international students were forced to start their first semester at ASU remotely from their home country, which presented many time zones issues due to the

time of day my UNI 120 course was offered. Therefore, while ten international students initially signed up for my section, only five remained after the first week of classes. However, only two of these students were able to make it to ASU by the start of the semester. Another reality that impacted all of the students in my section and learning in general was the modality in which classes was taught. Due to safety precautions, ASU created a new instructional mode called ASU Sync, which allowed for synchronous learning regardless of the students' physical location. This meant that my section was taught via Zoom technology with almost all of the students staying home and joining class via this online method. While learning activities were adapted to meet this new modality of learning, with no actual face-to-face interactions between students, it was not possible to explore many of the curricular aspects of my intervention that would have explored the relationships between themselves as U.S. and international students.

Additionally, the power dynamic that may have been created with international students stuck in their home country, and U.S. students facing less restrictions, did not meet the conditions of intergroup contact theory, which made me uncomfortable. As such, I relied on an online survey instrument to gather data from both U.S. and international students about their thoughts and feelings regarding the other student group. This data resulted in interesting conclusions regarding the realities of friendships between U.S. and international students.

The third stage took place during the spring 2021 semester in which I again sought to recruit first-year international and U.S. students to participate in my UNI 120 Academic Success course. Unfortunately, due to administrative issues with setting up my section, I was not able to recruit U.S. students to join this section. I was only able to

recruit five international students to join the class, however, again due to the realities of

COVID-19, most of these students were still back in their home country beginning their

studies via ASU Sync.

The final stage took place during the fall 2021 semester in which I taught a UNI

120 Academic Success section for first-year international and U.S. students who

participated in all aspects of the final stage of this research study. Data from these study

participants was collected over the course of the semester and were analyzed as the final

results of this research study.

Role of the Researcher

As an international educator and researcher, I was involved in all aspects of this

research study. This research is not only important to me as a socially conscious human

being, but also as an international educator who trusts in the power of education to create

change. Using data available to me as a Director in the ISSC and as an Instructional

Professional for Success Courses, I recruited all of the participants who enrolled in my

UNI 120 Academic Success section through email. I ensured that each participant was

aware of the purpose of this study as well as the potential negative impacts and perceived

benefits of participating in this study. Additionally, I utilized the theory of transformative

learning and culturally sustaining pedagogy to revise the curriculum content for my UNI

120 Academic Success section to incorporate the ten steps of transformative learning and

ten activities of culturally responsive activities previously outlined in Chapter 2. This was

the basis of my intervention, which will be described later.

Furthermore, in the final stage of this study I created specific weekly journal

prompts that students submitted privately through Canvas, the learning management

system, that aligned with the acculturation strategies and intergroup contact theory conditions as well. While implementing the new curriculum in my intervention, I also observed students in this study that allowed me to complete detailed instructor journals each week after the class finished. I also read and reviewed their weekly journal assignments. Additionally, using questions from quantitative instruments used in previous quantitative research studies exploring conditions between international students and U.S students, I created and conducted semi-structured interviews with four students from the class roster of my intervention. These students were chosen to try and represent diverse experiences and backgrounds within this research study. My goal was to have the students represent different countries, majors at ASU and hopefully gender, however, that was not possible since four females declined my invitation to join this portion of the research study. I was be able to interview each of these students at the beginning of the semester, during the middle and then again at the end of the semester to chart their journey over the course of the semester. Unfortunately, one of the students failed to show up for their middle interview, however, they did participate in the first and last interview. Lastly, I used photovoice as an artistic form of qualitative data collection which was to allow students to document their lives in conjunction with the research questions of this study. At the end of this research study, I triangulated all of the data to provide an analysis of the dynamics that occurred between these international and U.S. students as well as to provide advice for other ASU faculty and staff to more effectively support intercultural connections between U.S. and international students during their time studying at ASU.

Instruments

All data collected through the various instruments in this study were qualitative because as Berry (1990) stated, "we need to shift our focus away from general characteristics of acculturation phenomena to a concern for variation among individuals in the group undergoing acculturation" (p. 210). Additionally, as stated by Koo et al. (2021), "we recommend further exploratory qualitative study to capture students' genuine and vivid experiences of acculturative stress and adjustment difficulties so that in-depth life stories behind factors found from this study can be presented" (p. 9). Since most studies have looked to explore these dynamics using quantitative or mixed-methods data collection methods, it was important that I looked at this study through a qualitative lens to provide a different perspective. Therefore, this study aimed to tell the stories of the specific international and U.S. students enrolled in my UNI 120 course during the fall 2021 semester.

Overall Data Collection Timeline

Table 1 below summarizes how various pieces of data were collected during the stages of this research study. Each of the instruments will be described after the table. Each stage will be identified in the table and will include all of the data collection instruments as well as the actions and procedures that I took throughout each stage of this study.

Table 1

Study timeline and data collection inventory

Timeline	Instrument	Actions	Procedures
Stage 1 – Fall 2019 Semester	Student journals	Participants responded to journal prompts	Reviewed student journals
	Semi-constructed interviews	Selected participants were chosen for face-to-face interviews	Reviewed interview transcripts
	Student survey	Students were emailed to complete online survey	Reviewed survey data
Stage 2 – Spring & Fall 2020 semesters *(impacted by COVID-19)*	Student survey	Created and implemented student survey on experiences with students from the other group	Reviewed survey data
	Classroom Observations	Conducted classroom observations	Reviewed classroom observations
Stage 3 – Spring 2021 semester *(impacted by COVID-19)*	Classroom observations	Conducted classroom observations	Reviewed classroom observations
	Student journals	Participants responded to journal prompts on intercultural experiences	Reviewed student journals
Stage 4 – Fall 2021 semester	Instructor journals	Crafted instructor journals	Reviewed instructor journals
	Student journals	Participants responded to journal prompts on intercultural experiences	Reviewed student journals
	Photos	Designed and communicated picture taking instructions for alignment with research questions	Reviewed submitted photos for themes and ability to answer research questions
	Semi-structured interviews	Designed interview protocol and conducted semi-structured interviews	Transcribed and reviewed interview transcripts

Description of Data Collection Instruments

  I will describe in depth the data collections methods that I utilized in the fourth and final stage of this research study. More information about these data collection methods can be found in the Appendix.

Instructor Journals

  In the final stage of this research study, I crafted instructor journals each week after each class session in the UNI 120 Academic Success section that I taught. Specifically, I wrote about and included observations in order to notice the behavior and language of each of the study participants, and additionally, their reaction to the intervention that I was implementing. A more detailed description of these instructor journals can be found in Appendix A. These instructor journals also focused on behaviors and actions that I observed taking place between study participants such as interactions between students and how they negotiated the space of the classroom together.

  As Creswell and Guetterman (2019) stated the benefits of making observations include, "the opportunity to record information as it occurs in a setting, to study actual behavior, and to study individuals who have difficulty verbalizing their ideas" (p. 214). By observing these students, this allowed me to notice any changes in their behaviors from the beginning of the semester prior to them engaging with aspects of my intervention to the end of the semester after participating in aspects of the intervention. Due to the English-language proficiency skills of some of these students, instructor journals were useful in helping me determine what they struggled with in my course because I was able to observe their body language instead of just relying on them to speak out loud in class. With that being said, due to COVID-19, ASU required all

students and faculty to wear masks inside the classroom during the fall 2021 semester. The wearing of masks inhibited my ability to observe facial expressions from my student participants. In referencing previous studies, Berry (1990) indicated that observational methods were appropriate ways to assess acculturation experienced by certain individuals since physical behaviors play a large role in acculturation experiences.

Student journals

The second instrument I used for data collection were weekly journals that the students in my UNI 120 Academic Success section submitted throughout the academic semester. To support the importance of writing for students in the classroom, the National Council of Teachers of English (2014) stated, "words are powerful tools of expression, a means to clarify, explore, inquire, and learn, as well as a way to record present moments for the benefit of future generations" (p. 2). Writing is such an important way for individuals to reflect on themselves in order to try and make sense of what is happening in their lives. Especially with opportunities for students to be distracted by technology, educators must consider new ways for students to be self-reflective. Everett (2013) conducted a study to understand the benefits of self-reflective writing for first-year students in higher education through the use of class journals. Everett (2013) stated, "journal writing also provided students with opportunities for self-discovery and personal growth. Some students expressed an appreciation for the opportunity to stop, write and reflect" (p. 219). In a study concerning international students, Heng (2018) stated that over the course of their study participants wrote four journals, "to reduce memory recall bias and encourage deep reflection" (p. 25). Self-reflective journal writing, especially for English-language learners is a powerful tool because some students are more comfortable

with the written word. I observed this in my previous UNI 220 Mindset Connections sections where a few of the Chinese students rarely spoke in class but provided a deep reflection of their experiences in their journal assignments. Student journals are a central component of the Success Courses curriculum because of the importance of self-reflection in the course learning outcomes.

Furthermore, Everett (2013) stated, "through the reflective thinking process, many students came to understand the personal benefits derived from reflective journal writing" (p. 219). Included in the standard curriculum for UNI 120, students are expected to complete journal assignments throughout the semester responding to a prompt that instructors are able to select from a variety of prompts. I tailored the journal prompts for this research study incorporating the ten steps of transformative learning and culturally sustaining pedagogies to allow students to self-reflect on their transformative experiences studying together at ASU. These journal submissions were submitted electronically in the learning management system and were downloaded for analysis. Two examples of journal prompt questions include; "What has been the hardest aspect of beginning your studies here at ASU? Why?" and "What have you learned about other cultures from your interactions with U.S./international students?" A full list of journal prompts can be found in Appendix B. Additionally, at the end of the semester, students were expected to review their journal assignments and write a reflection paper on how they changed since their journals were written initially. This in and of itself was a self-reflective exercise, which aligns with the steps of transformative learning and was included in this research study.

Photovoice

The next data collection method that I incorporated in the final stage of this research study is the use of Photovoice. Leavy (2017) stated, "photovoice is a practice that merges photography with participatory methods" (p. 234). As a qualitative researcher, I was interested in allowing study participants to express themselves in non-traditional ways because it allows humans, who are inherently diverse, the opportunity to communicate in ways that are non-verbal, which is almost a universal language. These non-verbal forms of communication were to aid English-language learners with describing their lived experiences throughout the course of their first semester at ASU.

This practice allowed students to use a camera to capture moments and experiences in their lives that connected to this research study. As the old saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words. Therefore, I sought to explore how words could be communicated through the use of taking photos as they navigated the dynamics of creating intercultural connections with their peers. At the beginning of the semester, students were given instructions on how to complete and submit photos throughout their journey to document their experiences from their own perspectives. As Corcoran (2018) stated, photovoice is a "tool that gives people the opportunity to photograph their everyday life providing a basis for critical discussion around personal and community issues" (p. 178).

Wang and Hannes (2014) utilized this method during their study exploring the perspectives of Asian students studying in Belgium. They wanted to capture the challenges associated with their adjustment to their new cultural environment through the use of this data collection method. Wang and Hannes (2014) stated, "compared with

traditional data collection techniques such as observation and interviews, photovoice may help reveal the deeper and hidden emotions and feelings which are difficult to be captured by words only" (p. 70). Their study supports the effectiveness for using this data collection method in this research study with U.S. and international students.

Considerations were addressed so that participants understood the rules of privacy when taking pictures for this research study. Each study participant was expected to take and submit at least 16 pictures over the course of the semester that was included as a class assignment, which were broken down into two different groups that related to the various themes presented in Chapter 2. The first eight pictures focused on their initial experiences with acculturation and prejudice while beginning their college career in a culturally diverse environment. The second group of eight pictures focused on their experiences of developing intercultural connections with their peers and how their feelings of prejudice may have changed over the course of the semester. Two examples of photovoice prompts include; "Take a photo that expresses how you feel about people who are from a different culture than you" and "Take a photo that expresses how you feel about your desire to build intercultural connections with your peers." A full list of photovoice prompts can be found in Appendix D. These visual images aided in answering the research questions that I set forth for this study. It is important to remember that visuals are becoming more common place in our society and was something that today's college-aged students are familiar with in their everyday lives. As Wang and Hannes (2014) stated, photovoice as a data collection method will allow these study participants to "facilitate the expression of thoughts and feelings of some participants who may have difficulties or feel reluctant expressing their points of view verbally" (p. 70). This non-

verbal data instrument added variety and a diverse perspective from the other instruments

I used, which were solely verbal. This also added to the process of triangulation during

the analysis stage.

Semi-structed Interviews

The final collection method I utilized in this research study was semi-structured

interviews. My goal was to revise and then utilize questions from previously used

quantitative survey instruments to construct the questions for these semi-structured

interviews. Creswell and Guetterman (2019) indicated that open-ended questions through

interviews allow individuals to explore reasons that cannot be answered in simple closed-

ended questions. Furthermore:

> if the point is to demonstrate that over time or over generations beliefs,
> abilities, or even general intelligence (as defined and measured by the
> larger society culture) change in the acculturating group in the direction of
> the normal in the larger society, then the task is rather easy. But the
> meaning (or 'depth') of these changes is much more difficult to specify.
> (Berry, 1990, p. 223)

As outlined earlier, I interviewed students at the beginning of the fall 2021 semester

during the first few weeks of the semester, during the middle of the semester and then at

the end of the semester during finals week. Ritz (2010) indicated that conducting multiple

interviews is imperative when exploring the ten steps of transformative learning as these

interviews will allow participants to take "into consideration that new learning

experiences are not necessarily interpreted by one's existing frame of reference" (p. 162).

During the third interview at the end of the semester, participants were asked to reflect on

their feelings of their disorienting dilemma and how they navigated the acculturation

process. Additionally, during the second and third interview, students had the opportunity

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to provide a voice to their photo submissions by answering questions to provide more perspective to their artistic work. Wang and Hannes (2014) stated, "the combination of photos and voice was expected to reveal a more authentic picture of life experiences and conditions" (p. 70). This allowed them to provide context or an explanation as to why they chose to submit their photos and how they believed they were connected to the themes of this research study. In order to allow participants to prepare for their interviews, participants were sent the interview questions in advance. Heng (2018) stated, "many Asian international students prefer having time to contemplate more thoughtful questions or comments before sharing" (p. 25). Since these study participants knew what questions they were to be asked in advance it hopefully allowed them to prepare how they would answer the questions in a language that may not be their native tongue. In order to conduct these semi-structed interviews, I designed an interview protocol for the first interview, which was the same for each participant. The questions were designed to allow participants to identify how they were initially experiencing the disorienting dilemma of studying at ASU as a first-year student. Sample questions from the first interview include; "Do you think U.S./international students are interested in learning about your home culture?" and "What challenges do you think you'll face when trying to develop intercultural connections with your peers?" A full list of interview questions can be found in Appendix C. In a similar fashion to Ritz (2010), the second and third interview protocols were tailored based on the data collected for each individual participant from their first interview. This allowed me to ask specific questions that related to the experiences of each participant in their second and third interview. For all of their interviews, I conducted member checks with the participants allowing them to

confirm the themes identified from their transcribed interviews. Finally, I triangulated the instructor journals, student journals, photovoice submissions and semi-structured interviews to verify the themes I identified. Table 2 highlights the four research questions and how each of these data instruments helped answers these research questions. As a reminder, here are the four research questions:

1. How did feelings of prejudice, both negative and positive, held by international and U.S. students influence their perceptions to build intercultural connections?

2. How did acculturation strategies and contact between U.S. and international students influence their perceptions to build intercultural connections?

3. How did the interactions within a first-semester foundational course infused with a culturally sustaining pedagogy influence the perceptions U.S. students had of international students and vice versa?

4. How did a first-semester foundational course infused with a culturally sustaining pedagogy influence international and U.S. students to desire to explore intercultural experiences in the future?

Table 2

Research questions and alignment to data collection instruments

Instrument	Research Question
Student journals	RQ #1, RQ #2, RQ #3, RQ #4
Semi-constructed interviews	RQ #1, RQ #2, RQ #3, RQ #4
Photovoice	RQ #3, RQ #4
Instructor Journals	RQ #2, RQ #4

Intervention

After providing an overview including a timeline and the various instruments that were utilized to collect data during this research study, I will now provide a more in-depth explanation of the intervention I implemented. I utilized my UNI 120 Academic Success course as an opportunity to introduce new curriculum that was infused with the theory of transformative learning and a culturally sustaining pedagogy. As was detailed in Chapter 2, there are ten steps of a transformative learning experience outlined by Mezirow (1978):

1. A disorienting dilemma

2. Self☐examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt or shame.

3. A critical assessment of assumptions.

4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared.

5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships and actions.

6. Planning a course of action.

7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plan.

8. Provisional trying of new roles.

9. Building competence and self☐confidence in new roles and relationships.

10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspectives.

Additionally, as outlined in Chapter 2, Richards et al. (2007) suggested culturally responsive activities to ensure a culturally sustaining pedagogy. These activities include:

1. Acknowledge students' differences as well as their commonalities

2. Validate students' cultural identity in classroom practices and instructional materials

3. Educate students about the diversity of the world around them

4. Promote equity and mutual respect among students

5. Assess students' ability and achievement validly

6. Foster a positive interrelationship among students

7. Motivate students to become active participants in their learning

8. Encourage students to think critically

9. Challenge students to strive for excellence as defined by their potential

10. Assist students in becoming socially and politically conscious

I integrated these ten steps of transformative learning theory and culturally responsive activities into the curriculum of my UNI 120 Academic Success course using specific activities, discussions, assignments, and tasks that were unique to my section. As the revised curriculum was created, it was important to remember how cultural differences impact how information is presented to and received by international and U.S. students from different backgrounds. These initiatives were drawn from and influenced by my personal teaching experiences both in a K-12 classroom and an ASU instructor, educational pedagogies and the mindsets designed specifically for this university-wide course. Those mindsets include:

1. Awareness

2. Empathy

3. Optimism

4. Creativity

5. Collaboration

6. Rebellion

7. Confidence

8. Prototyping

9. Risk Taking

10. Evaluation

Through an integration of these three lists, I devised a revised curriculum for my UNI

120 Academic Success section that allowed U.S. and international students to explore the

acculturation process and their own sense of prejudice towards the other group

throughout the course of the semester. The goal was for the curriculum to be scaffolded

in such a way that as a student was experiencing the process of acculturation, they were

guided through the steps of transformative learning at the same time. The curriculum was

infused with culturally responsive activities to ensure that a vast array of cultural

perspectives was celebrated and acknowledged to ensure that there was no dominant

cultural perspective. This curriculum was taught over a 16-week period that also included

a group project, which furthered the learning experiences of these study participants.

Weekly lesson plans can be found in Appendix H. Finally, I utilized student journal

prompts that I devised to reinforce the concepts presented in class by the transformative

learning and culturally relevant focused lesson plans. These journal prompts incorporated

the steps of a transformative learning experience as well as the various acculturation

strategies, which include *integration, assimilation, separation* and *marginalization*. All of

these components of my intervention allowed me to conduct this research study in my

UNI 120 Academic Success section with international and U.S. students to try and answer the four research questions of this study.

Final Stage Data Collection

The final stage of this research study is the main focus of the data analysis in Chapters 4 and 5 of this final dissertation paper. The data collected from this stage was provided by a variety of instruments, which have just been detailed in this chapter, to allow me to understand how international and U.S. students experience the dynamics of their intercultural connections. During the fall 2021 semester, I taught a UNI 120 Academic Success section for first-year international and U.S. students who were all in their first semester of studies at ASU. In order to fully assess the impact of beginning a university degree in a new environment, which is a disorienting dilemma, those students who have recently arrived to ASU were the most appropriate group of students to study.

Timeline of Final Stage

Table 3 will outline the timeframe for the fall 2021 semester in which I collected the various pieces of the data for a detailed analysis.

Table 3

Data collection timeframe for final stage for fall 2021 semester at ASU

Time	Instrument
1. August, 2021 – December, 2021	1) Weekly Instructor Journals
2. August, 2021 – December, 2021	2) Weekly Student Journals
3. August, 2021	3) Semi-Structured Interview #1
4. September, 2021	4) Photovoice Submissions #1
5. October, 2021	5) Semi-Structured Interview #2
6. November, 2021	6) Photovoice Submissions #2
7. December, 2021	7) Semi-Structured Interview #3

The four types of data were collected during the fall 2021 semester. Each week during the 16-week course, I crafted instructor journals based on observation notes from class taken in a notebook, which were then transcribed into electronic files. Again, these instructor journals can be found in Appendix A. Additionally, students submitted self-reflective journals for ten weeks during the semester. These journals proved to be a great window into the lives and experiences of these study participants. Again, these student journals can be found in Appendix B. All students were also asked to submit eight photos at two points in the semester. The first eight pictures focused on their initial experiences with acculturation and prejudice while beginning their college career in a culturally diverse environment. The second group of eight pictures focused on their experiences of developing intercultural connections with their peers and how their feelings of prejudice may have changed over the course of the semester. Again, these photovoice instructions

can be found in Appendix D. Finally, four students were interviewed using semi-structured questions to assess their initial thoughts on acculturation and any feelings of prejudice they had while being in a culturally diverse classroom environment. These interviews were recorded using the Otter ai computer system which transcribes the words of the interviewer and interviewee automatically. I then reviewed each interview to correct any errors or misunderstandings in the transcription. Based on the responses after the first interview protocol, the second and third interview protocols were designed. Included in both the second and third interviews were questions regarding their photovoice submissions. Sample questions related to their photovoice submissions included; "What is the message that you wanted to convey with this photo?" and "What inspired you to take this photo?" The final interview also asked participants to predict whether they will continue to develop intercultural connections with other students beyond this research study. Again, more information about these semi-structed interviews can be found in Appendix C. The second and third interviews followed the same transcription process as the first interview protocol. All of these pieces of data were then downloaded to a secure password protected folder for analysis. You can find the various data collections instruments in more detail in the Appendix. Figure 6 highlights the ways in which my intervention including the theoretical framework and pedagogical concepts that I chose were connected to the data collection methods of this research study.

Figure 6

Theoretical Framework, Pedagogical Concepts and Data Collection Alignment.
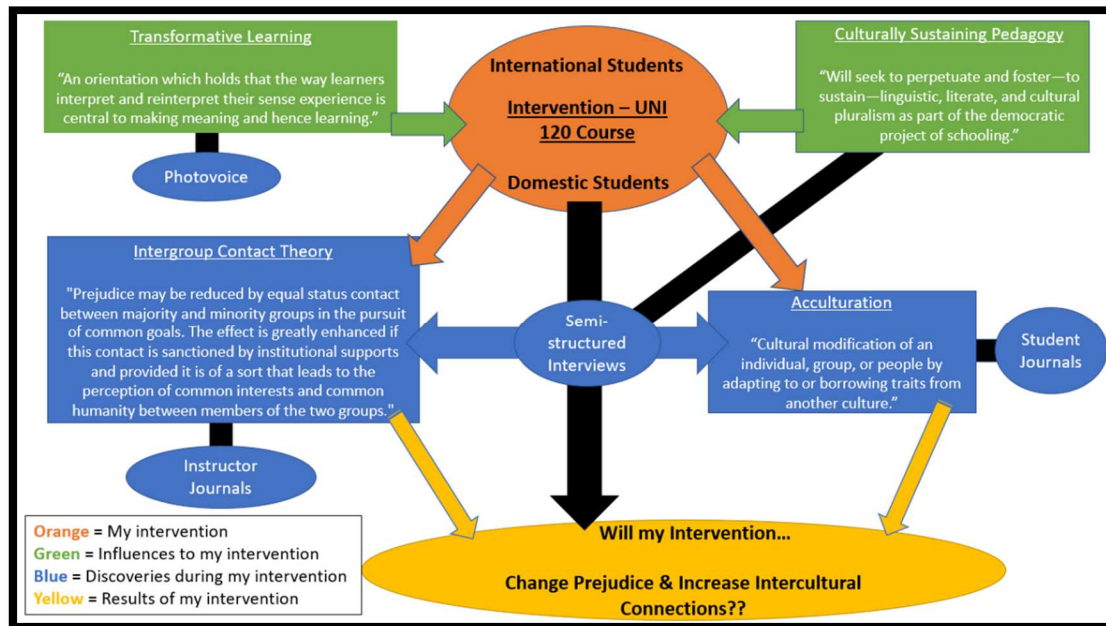
Data Analysis

Each of the pieces of data were analyzed separately in chronological order as they were collected. The analysis process began as soon as the first pieces of data were first collected so that the process remained iterative throughout the entire research study. For example, each week when journals were submitted, I would code all of the journals from that week as a set, in order to remain consistent with the timeline and themes presented in the class. I continued to collect other pieces of data, while simultaneously analyzing initial pieces of data, which informed future data that I collected and analyzed. Since this analysis process of qualitative data was interpretative, my interpretations of the data I collected were specific to me as the researcher and this specific research study.

At first, I reviewed each piece of data that I collected using an initial coding method. In my initial review, I wrote notes in the margins of each text document or

visual, which as Creswell and Guetterman (2019) stated, "may be short phrases, ideas, concepts, or hunches that occur to you [me, the researcher]" (p. 242). Since this is an open-ended approach, it allowed me to "create a starting point to provide the researcher [me] analytic leads for further exploration" (Saldana, 2021, p. 149). After writing these notes, I then reviewed them for any patterns, similarities or contrasting differences. As Saldana (2021) also stated, "initial coding breaks down qualitative data into discrete parts, closely examines them, and compares them for similarities and difference" (p. 148). This method is particularly useful for studies that have a wide variety of data forms, which pertains to this study as I had student journals, instructor journals, interviews and photos as data collection instruments. During this initial coding process, I began a list of the notes that I made on each piece of data so that I could keep track of the ideas I was generating as I continued the coding process. Some of these initial codes also were connected to the various theoretical perspectives and ideas that I explored in Chapter 2. After I completed the initial coding process for a set of data, I wrote a memo summarizing the big ideas that were present from that analysis. As Saldana (2021) stated, "a personal debriefing or 'reality check' by the researcher is critical during and after the Initial Coding of qualitative data, thus an analytic memo is written to reflect on the process thus far" (p. 151). This reflection was also coded for initial ideas, which were then added to my initial code book. This initial coding process was completed for each set of data (a set of four interviews, a week of journals, etc.) so that I could open my eyes to the initial thoughts and ideas that students were communicating to me through their written words and physical behaviors. Since my class was 16 weeks long, I decided to break up the coding process into three different pieces. After I completed the initial

coding process for weeks 1-6, I then began the second coding phase for those weeks. Weeks 7-11 were then the second pieces of data to go through the second coding phase. Finally, weeks 12-16 were the last to go through the second coding phase. However, it should be noted that as I began the second coding phase for weeks 1-6 and then weeks 7-10, I continued to complete the initial coding process for each week as they happened. This allowed for both an iterative process while also being able to incorporate ideas generated through the latter weeks into the second coding phase.

The second phase of the coding process was conducted using the Concept Coding strategy. Saldana (2021) stated, "a concept is a word or short phrase that symbolically represents a meaning broader that a single items or action – a 'big picture' beyond the tangible and apparent" (p. 152). This coding method felt appropriate for this research study because of the way I view the work that I am passionate about. As a creative thinker who challenges notions of right and wrong, the Concept Coding strategy allowed for open interpretations beyond what was tangible and observable. This strategy was also chosen because as Saldana (2021) stated, "concept coding might serve research genres as phenomenology, ethnography, and grounded theory" (p. 153). Due to my interest in social issues and critical theories, I found this type of coding to be helpful as I explored broader social themes and ideas that are important when exploring the cultural dynamics between these two groups of students. Therefore, as I re-coded each piece of data using this strategy, new concepts and ideas were highlighted and added to a new list that I was able to monitor over the course of the coding process. As recommended by Creswell and Guetterman (2019), once a piece of text is coded, I then made a list of all of the codes in order to identify similarities between words. This list of concept codes was informed and

grew out of the initial codes that I identified through the first phase of the coding process. Again, the iterative process of coding allowed for a substantial list of codes and ideas that continued to flow during my analysis. As I completed the concept coding process for each piece of text, I began to identify text passages from the data itself that aligned with the codes identified. I continued this process of identifying text passages throughout each individual piece of text and visual document. For the codes identified from student journals and semi-structured interviews, I conducted a member check to ensure that the student agreed with the codes identified from their text documents. Participants were able to agree and/or disagree with any of the codes identified, which were then taken into consideration for further review and analysis. Fortunately, students did not disagree with any of the codes I identified, however, in some instances they wanted to clarify their positions. This clarification involved them explaining that they were open-minded and willing to expose themselves to this overall process, however, as I will address in Chapter 4, sometimes our words do not match our actions.

Once all of the initial and concept coding was completed for all pieces of data, I then continued to code for a third and fourth time using the Pattern Coding strategy. As Saldana (2021) stated, "pattern codes are explanatory or inferential codes, ones that identify a theme, configuration, or explanation. They pull together a lot of material from first cycle coding into more meaningful and parsimonious units of analysis" (p. 322). This process further involved combining my lists of codes to try and reduce these lists of codes in half. The initial list of codes presented after my third coding phase highlighted 41 different codes that I identified from all of the pieces of data I analyzed. After defining each code, I again sought text passages from the data itself that spoke to each code. For

many codes, I was able to identify multiple text passages that helped illuminate the core meaning of the code. This then began the work of lumping similar codes into categories, which allowed me to go from 41 codes to 13 categories. Again, as categories were created, I made sure that each was different and definable so that I could ensure that they stood apart from each other as separate categories. Finally, with the remaining 13 categories, I was able to articulate seven main themes. Creswell and Guetterman (2019) stated that themes are identified by "examining codes that the participants discuss most frequently, are unique or surprising, have the most evidence to support them, or are those you might expected to find when studying the phenomenon" (p. 245). Since time plays an important part of this research study, I then sought to organize the themes in an interrelated way in order to connect the themes to the chronology of the fall 2021 semester and the ten steps of a transformative experience. This then allowed for a comparison across all of the different data collection instruments.

With multiple kinds of data collected, the final thematic analysis involved the process of triangulation. By triangulating my analysis, Creswell and Guetterman (2019) stated, "this ensures that the study will be accurate because the information draws on multiple sources of information, individuals or processes" (p. 261). In a qualitative research study, triangulation is vital for corroborating data from each participant to ensure that the themes are present across individuals throughout the entire research study. As Kumi-Yeboah (2014) stated in their study, "field notes and reflection journals were utilized to establish evidence of the interview data and evaluate the viability of the in-depth interviews" (p. 114). Additionally, this triangulation helped to eliminate my own researcher bias towards the participants and the themes identified through the analysis

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process. Finally, once all of the themes were identified and quotes had been selected to illustrate each theme, I then looked to see if the themes were able to answer the four research questions. As previously stated, below are the four research questions. Chapter 4 will explore the results of my analysis to answer these questions regarding the dynamics between U.S. and international students.

1. How did feelings of prejudice, both negative and positive, held by international and U.S. students influence their perceptions to build intercultural connections?

2. How did acculturation strategies and contact between U.S. and international students influence their perceptions to build intercultural connections?

3. How did the interactions within a first-semester foundational course infused with a culturally sustaining pedagogy influence the perceptions U.S. students had of international students and vice versa?

4. How did a first-semester foundational course infused with a culturally sustaining pedagogy influence international and U.S. students to desire to explore intercultural experiences in the future?

Trustworthiness

As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, it was important to me that I conduct a qualitative study for this research study because this allowed me to uncover aspects of this phenomenon that could not be discovered through purely quantitative measures. With this choice of conducting a qualitative research study, I must address how I ensured that this study was reliable and valid. In the world of quantitative data there are many ways in which researchers can ensure that their study meets the rigorous demands of quality research, however, in the world of qualitative research, as Creswell and Miller (2000)

stated, "we define validity as how accurately the account represents participants' realities of the social phenomena and is credible to them" (p. 124-125). With that being said, as a researcher I worked to ensure that my account represented the reality of these study participants so that an accurate portrayal was described. Yet additionally, the kind of researcher that I am informed the way in which I tried to ensure the accuracy of my portrayal. I am a kind of researcher that sees the world in which we inhabit to be constructed by the reality that we believe ourselves to live in. Our experiences determine who we are as individuals and inform how we view the world that we are participating in, which allowed me as a researcher to uncover the context in which this study existed and the context of the lives of these study participants. If this study were to be replicated with 20 different students at ASU in a different academic semester, I would uncover vastly different themes because the explorations can only be attributed to the people with which the knowledge was constructed. Creswell and Miller (2000) stated, "constructivists believe in pluralistic, interpretative, open-ended, and contextualized (e.g., sensitive to place and situation) perspectives toward reality" (p. 125-126). Through this lens, I aimed to abide by eight measures of criteria described by Tracy (2010) to provide trustworthiness to this research study, which include; "worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, creditability, resonance, significant contribution, ethics, and meaningful coherence" (p.839). Table 4 will outline the criteria for quality qualitative research to address the concept of trustworthiness in this research study.

Table 4

Criteria and strategies for trustworthiness

Criteria	Question	Strategies
Worthy Topic	Was this study addressing a worthy topic?	• Connected to lived experiences of current students at ASU • Explored relevant current literature
Rich Rigor	Did this study follow principles of rigor and variety?	• Spent significant time with participants • Connected to theoretical constructs • Relied on previous data instruments for inspiration • Utilized iterative data analysis
Sincerity	How did I highlight honesty and transparency throughout this study?	• Recognized researcher bias • Provided self-reflective analysis throughout study • Admitted challenges throughout process
Creditability	How did I ensure creditability and trust from others?	• Offered thick description of study • Employed recognized research methods • Triangulated different data collection methods to identify themes • Asked for peer reviews of findings
Resonance	How did this study reverberate and affect others?	• Presented background details to allow connections to context • Identified transferable findings
Significant Contribution	How did I leave a significant contribution to the field through this study?	• Incorporated previous research findings and relevant literature • Contributed to existing theories and expanding viewpoints
Ethics	How did I incorporate issues of right versus wrong in this study?	• Admitted shortcomings, biases and beliefs • Protected participants from harm
Meaningful Coherence	How did I create a coherent study throughout the entire process?	• Purposeful sampling of participants • Debriefed with participants and stakeholders • Applied member checking • Explored improvements for future research

A worthy topic is relevant and significant, which was absolutely present in a world in which higher education continues to be a commodity around the world that is sold to humans from many different countries. In this research study, rich rigor was found through the time spent with these participants, which was 16 weeks and by using complex and a variety of data instruments. As I have indicated in Chapter 1, I constantly reflected on my own experiences and how this may have influenced this study leading to a sincere effort to be transparent throughout this process. As a qualitative researcher, it was vital to provide a thick description of the topic to increase the creditability of the study, which will be further explored in subsequent chapters. International educators around the United States may benefit from these findings allowing the themes to resonant throughout the community seeking to support international students in the United States. This contribution to the field will be practical and theoretically sound so that a significant number of stakeholders may benefit from the results. A research study taking into consideration such complex human interactions and diverse perspectives challenged the ethical dilemmas that I needed to consider so that the human subjects in this study were treated with care. Finally, I expected that this research study would achieve the goals it set out to do with meaningfulness and purpose that will allow for interconnections across disciplines and stakeholders. By following these criteria set forth, I strived to be a successful researcher as Tracy (2010) described, "the most successful researchers are willingly self-critical, viewing their own actions through the eyes of others while also maintaining resilience and energy through acute sensitivity to their own well-being" (p. 849).

This chapter described all of the characteristics of this research study including the setting and participants, overall timeline, my intervention, data collection instruments, the process of data collection and analysis and the ways that I sought to ensure trustworthiness in this study. Additionally, I have articulated why I chose to conduct a qualitative research study to explore this important topic. Through this analysis, I was able to understand the dynamics between U.S. and international students studying together in a culturally diverse classroom experience. Focusing on the transformative learning theory and culturally responsive activities with my UNI 120 Academic Success students allowed a melding of ideas that are important to student success in our 21st century environment. As Wenger (1998) stated, "education is not merely formative – it is transformative" (p. 263). How were the lives of these U.S. and international students transformed through this research study?

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The previous chapter provided an overview of the methods that were utilized for this research study. Most importantly, the data collection instruments were explored that brought forth the results presented in this chapter. With that being said, this chapter will be presented in multiple parts. The first part of this chapter will give a brief overview the student profiles included in this research study. It is integral to know the stories of these study participants to fully understand their lived experiences through the course of this research study. The second part of this chapter will explore the findings as they relate and connect to the four research questions. After coding and analyzing my data through multiple cycles, I identified multiple themes, which I found to be the most relevant. These themes include *are you in or are you out, aren't we the best, do you want to be friends, what makes us so different, what do we have in common, Am I an adult yet,* and *do I want to change? /Am I transformed?* These themes presented in the form of hypothetical questions posed by students connected to the inquisitive nature of my personality. The findings will be presented in order of the four research questions with an overall discussion to follow. Furthermore, Table 5 communicates the themes and subcategories as well as assertations made by me, the researcher. An assertion refers to "a statement that proposes a summative, interpretive observation of the local contexts of study" (Saldana, 2021, p. 18).

Table 5

Themes, categories, and assertations

Themes and categories	Assertations

Are you in or are you out?
   1. Majority vs. Minority
   2. Having Privilege
   3. Self-segregation
   4. Segregating due to prejudices
	1. U.S. students wield more power and privilege than international students in the U.S. higher education environment.

Aren't we the best?
   1. Acting better/Acting like we don't care
   2. Speaking English Clearly
   3. We all have accents
	1. U.S. students were more apathetic to the experience and were unable to empathize their international peers.

Do you want to be friends?
   1. Connections piercing through loneliness
   2. Friendship Seeking
   3. Celebrating our Commonalities
   4. Sticking together
	1. All students just want to find their community in their new society.

What makes us so different?
   1. Assimilation vs. Integration
   2. Unique cultural perspectives
	1. Our backgrounds provide perspective to how we view life.

What do we have in common?
   1. Majority vs. Minority
   2. Common goals
   3. Academic struggles
	1. Students will always share things in common but how much do those commonalities allow for connections is unclear.

Do you want to be friends?
   1. Friendship Responsibility
   2. Quality of Connections
   3. Friendship Formation
	1. The level of commitment to friendship building varies depending on student status.

Am I an adult yet?
   1. Becoming independent
   2. Learning to be who I am
	1. Becoming an adult is one of the hardest experiences to navigate.

Do I want to change? / Am I transformed?
   1. Developing mindsets for growth
   2. Transforming through reflection
	1. Who can say if I've been changed for the better? I do believe I have been changed for the better.

I will share the profiles of the study participants whose names have been changed to protect their privacy. Their names were chosen at random trying to incorporate a multitude of names including those from other countries and cultures. Table 6 highlights these students and important characteristics that influenced this research study. Their profiles are then summarized below the table.

Table 6

Study Participants Biographical Information

Name	U.S./ Int'l	State or Country	Degree	Participated in Interview	Age	Fall 2021 GPA
Francis	U.S.	New York	Interior Design	Did not accept	18	3.29
Samuel	U.S.	Arizona	Computer Science	Was not invited	18	0.60
Brady	U.S.	Illinois	Business	Was not invited	18	3.52
Samir	U.S.	California (born in India)	Computer Systems Engineering	Accepted	18	3.81
Sarah	U.S.	New York	Psychology	Did not accept	18	2.80
Chris	U.S.	California (born in Uzbekistan)	Industrial Engineering	Was not invited	18	1.73
Utkarsh	U.S.	California (born in India)	Computer Science	Did not accept	18	4.12
Jason	U.S.	North Carolina	Justice Studies	Was not invited	18	0.00
Max	U.S.	Arizona (born in Germany)	Civic and Economic Thought	Accepted	18	2.80
Betty	U.S.	Arizona (born in South Korea)	Molecular Biosciences and Biotechnology	Was not invited	18	N/A
Jean-Marc	Int'l	India	Electrical Engineering	Accepted	18	2.80
Leonardo	Int'l	India	Computer Science	Was not invited	18	3.31
Kemi	Int'l	India	Business	Was not invited	18	3.37
Rohan	Int'l	Cyprus	Business	Accepted	20	3.88
Angie	Int'l	South Korea	Biological Science	Did not accept	19	4.23
Chethan	Int'l	India	Computer Science	Was not invited	19	4.19
Jialong	Int'l	India	Computer Science	Was not invited	18	2.50
Sai	Int'l	India	Computer Science	Was not invited	18	3.92
Sonali	Int'l	India	Digital Culture	Was not invited	19	3.86
Stefanie	Int'l	China	Elementary Education	Did not accept	19	4.14

Student Profiles: U.S. Students

Francis is 18 years old and hails from New York. She currently pursuing a degree in Interior Design. At the end of the fall 2021 semester, her cumulative GPA was 3.29. She declined to participate in the interview portion of this research study.

Samuel is 18 years old and hails from Phoenix, Arizona. He is currently pursuing a degree in Computer Science. At the end of the fall 2021 semester, his cumulative GPA was 0.60.

Brady is 18 years old and hails from Illinois. He is currently pursuing a degree in Business. At the end of the fall 2021 semester, his cumulative GPA was 3.52.

Samir is 18 years old and originally hails from India but now lives in California. He is currently pursuing a degree in Computer Systems Engineering. At the end of the fall 2021 semester, his cumulative GPA was 3.81. He participated in the interview portion of this research study.

Sarah is 18 years old and hails from New York. She is currently pursuing a degree in Psychology. At the end of the fall 2021 semester, her cumulative GPA was 2.80. She declined to participate in the interview portion of this research study.

Chris is 18 years old and originally hails from Uzbekistan but now lives in California. He chose to use an "American" name in class instead of going by his legal name. He is currently pursuing a degree in Industrial Engineering. At the end of the fall 2021 semester, his cumulative GPA was 1.73.

Utkarsh is 18 years old and originally hails from India but now lives in California. He is currently pursuing a degree in Computer Science. At the end of the fall 2021

semester, his cumulative GPA was 4.12. He declined to participate in the interview portion of this research study.

Jason is 18 years old and hails from North Carolina. He is currently pursuing a degree in Justice Studies. He was enrolled in this UNI 120 class but never attended a class session so he received an EN grade. At the end of the fall 2021 semester, his cumulative GPA was 0.00. He is included in this report because he was officially enrolled in this UNI 120 course and submitted his consent letter, however, he did not submit any pieces of data collection.

Max is 18 years old and originally hails from Germany but now lives in Phoenix, Arizona. He is currently pursuing a degree in Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership. At the end of the fall 2021 semester, his cumulative GPA was 2.80. He participated in the interview portion of this research study.

Betty is 18 years old and originally hails Phoenix, Arizona though she noted that her parents moved to the United States from South Korea before she was born. She is currently pursuing a degree in Molecular Biosciences and Biotechnology. She withdrew from this UNI 120 class and the rest of her fall 2021 classes after final semester grades were due and after she stopped attending this UNI 120 class after week 2. Only her first two journal entries were included in this research analysis. Since she withdrew from all of their fall 2021 classes, she does not have a cumulative GPA.

Student Profiles: International Students

Jean-Marc is 18 years old and originally hails from India. He is currently pursuing a degree in Electrical Engineering. At the end of the fall 2021 semester, his cumulative GPA was 2.92. He participated in the interview portion of this research study.

Leonardo is 18 years old and originally hails from India. He is currently pursuing a degree in Computer Science. At the end of the fall 2021 semester, his cumulative GPA was 3.31.

Kemi is 18 years old and originally hails from India. She is currently pursuing a degree in Business with a minor in Fashion. At the end of the fall 2021 semester, her cumulative GPA was 3.37.

Rohan is 20 years old and originally hails from Cyprus. He is currently pursuing a degree in Business. At the end of the fall 2021 semester, his cumulative GPA was 3.88. He participated in the interview portion of this research study.

Angie is 19 years old and originally hails from South Korea. She chose to use an "American" name in class instead of going by her legal name. She is currently pursuing a degree in Biological Science. At the end of the fall 2021 semester, her cumulative GPA was 4.23. She declined to participate in the interview portion of this research study.

Chethan is 19 years old and originally hails from India. He is currently pursuing a degree in Computer Science. At the end of the fall 2021 semester, his cumulative GPA was 4.19.

Jialong is 18 years old and originally hails from India. He chose to go by the first letter of his name instead of going by their full legal name. He is currently pursuing a degree in Computer Science. At the end of the fall 2021 semester, his cumulative GPA was 2.50.

Sai is 18 years old and originally hails from India. He is currently pursuing a degree in Computer Science. At the end of the fall 2021 semester, his cumulative GPA was 3.92.

Sonali is 19 years old and originally hails from India. She is currently pursuing a degree in Digital Culture. At the end of the fall 2021 semester, her cumulative GPA was 3.86.

Stefanie is 19 years old and originally hails from China. She chose to use an "American" name in class instead of going by her legal name. She is currently pursuing a degree in Elementary Education. At the end of the fall 2021 semester, her cumulative GPA was 4.14. She declined to participate in the interview portion of this research study.

Themes

The remainder of this chapter will include a detailed discussion of the themes that emerged during the data analysis phase of this research study. These themes arose through multiple cycles of coding and analysis, which highlighted the importance and relevance to the original purpose of this research study. Although I will explain each theme as it relates to specific research questions, it is important to recognize that many of the themes appeared to provide context to many if not all of the research questions. In accordance to ensuring my research findings are trustworthy as mentioned in Chapter 3, I will provide rich and detailed descriptions of these themes. I will explore these themes as they connect to each research question.

As previously stated, the themes identified include *are you in or are you out, aren't we the best, do you want to be friends, what makes us so different, what do we have in common, Am I an adult yet,* and *do I want to change? /Am I transformed?* Are you in or are you out highlights how the concepts of privilege and majority status inform interactions between students. Aren't we the best infers how U.S. students feel compared to their international student peers. The theme, do you want to be friends explores the

dynamics that inform the development of friendships between students. What makes us so different and what do we have in common explore the commonalities and differences between students. Am I an adult yet looks to uncover the developmental journey of the study participants into adulthood. Finally, do I want to change and am I transformed look at the impact of the intervention on the study participants. These themes will be presented in connection to the four research questions of this study.

Research Question #1:

How did feelings of prejudice, both negative and positive, held by international and U.S. students influence their perceptions to build intercultural connections?

This research question in many ways was the most important to ask because it ultimately was going to inform the behaviors of students and their ability to build intercultural connections with other students. As it was noted in Chapter 1 and communicated in this research question itself, prejudice can be both negative and positive even though the majority of the time it is assumed it to be negative. However, it cannot be ignored that individuals have prejudices towards many different people and groups, which informs how they interact with these people and groups. As Guillen and Ji (2011) stated, "some domestic students appeared to harbour deep prejudices and resentment against Asian international students, while international students have also expressed disillusionment after failed attempts to integrate with domestic students" (p. 595). Exploring how these prejudices influence their perceptions to build intercultural connections was key to understanding if the end result was going to be the forming of friendships between students. The first theme identified that helps to answer this research question is *are you in or are you out?*

Belonging to the Majority/Minority: are you in or are you out?

Even though there was a desire to create a community where students felt as though they had a common goal, it was hard to ignore the inherent differences between international students and those who were classified as U.S. students. Based on the instructor journals and their journal submissions, it could be stated that both groups of students seemed to accept the reality of the inherent differences between them as if they were something that cannot be changed or cannot be changed within the current environment. The first major subcategory of this theme is *majority vs. minority.*

Majority vs. Minority

As stated in Chapter 1, the sheer number of U.S. students on campus create an atmosphere where they are in the majority and international students are in the minority. Even though two of the U.S. students in my UNI 120 course did not fully participate in the course and the research study leaving only eight U.S. students compared to ten international students; everyday it still felt as though the U.S. students knew they were in the majority. In the instructor journals, I observed U.S. students tended to take control of small group activities while their international peers followed their lead and remained quiet throughout. Additionally, U.S. students acted as though their international peers were mere visitors instead of being equal members of the ASU community. Taking the community at large that ASU exits within into consideration, again while the community is diverse in some areas, there are still more U.S. individuals compared to those from other backgrounds. Yet, it cannot be ignored that prejudices exist and will cause people to act differently towards people. Max, who is a third culture kid, which I will address more

later, seems to think that U.S. students have this power or ability to decide whether or not they should be friends with international students. He stated in an interview:

> Unfortunately, discrimination and prejudice are everywhere. Everyone is prejudiced though this is inevitable when living in our world. I personally think most of the discrimination that happens against international students is social. A lot of people don't really want to become friends with international students.

Samir, another third culture kid, presented an interesting perspective as someone who feels like they are both an international and U.S. student. In his journal, Samir stated, "I have been an international student before, and now I know what it means to be a U.S. student. I have felt prejudices from both sides." Social interactions are exactly what international students crave and yet it seems as though U.S. students are withholding these friendships from them because of their prejudices towards their international peers.

Having Privilege

With the Black Lives Matter movement sweeping through the United States and other countries in the Summer of 2020, the idea of who has privilege was very commonplace in everyday conversations. Privilege, or having privilege, is the idea that some group of people are afforded opportunities based on their status as in-group members over other individuals who are not in the in-group. This could not have been more apparent as students explored the idea of accents. Both international students and U.S. students commented on the accents of their international peers in a way in which it was clear that international students are the ones with accents and U.S. students do not. Yet, this itself highlights the kind of privilege that U.S. students have over international students. Accents are relative to the context in which they are being talked about because if this research study was being conducted in India and students from the U.S. were in the

minority then they would be told that they have an accent. Does not everyone have an

accent? Rohan who appears "white" and feels like he can pass as a U.S. student

commented on how he feels as if people are interested in talking with him until he opens

his mouth. In an interview, he stated, "But again, I feel like whenever I open my mouth

and they listen to my accent or they listen to different language teachers, then they, they

look down upon you." This highlights another privilege that white international students

have over their international peers of color. In our member check feedback session, he

further stated that he felt lucky compared to the Indian and Chinese students at ASU

because he feels like he can fit in more than they can due to the color of his skin.

Another way in which privilege was apparent was during the group project

assignment. A few U.S. students were frustrated by their experience of working with their

international peers. One U.S. student was extremely frustrated by the technology abilities

of his international group member. This student assumed that every student would be

familiar with Google docs and other aspects of technology that are used in the U.S.

classroom. Chris stated in his journal:

> Her sharing one document took twenty minutes of communicating back
> and forth and when I did receive the file I was surprised to find it was a
> Microsoft file. I guess I assumed that everyone had used google drive
> since 6th grade like me so getting over this step of her trying to figure out
> how to share the file was slightly difficult.

This goes to show that his frustration about his peers' abilities which then impacted his

ability to work with his group mates over the course of the assignment. It should be noted

that his group frequently turned in assignments related to this project very late.

Finally, Samir commented in the second interview how important it was to understand aspects of U.S. culture in order to be able to accomplish certain assignments in his classes. He stated:

> Especially since a lot of projects and homework, especially in English class and such, tend to do with, you know American things like right now we're doing something on movies and music. So, it'll be quite difficult, if you're in an international student to, you know, talk about those things.

As a third culture kid, he struggled at times, but was grateful for his years in the United States as it helped him acclimate to aspects of U.S. culture that permeated curriculum and assignments. U.S. students have this privilege over their international peers because their experiences are more in line with the realities of the classroom that is created by faculty in the United States. More work needs to be done with faculty in order for them to expand the curriculum they utilize in their classrooms.

Self-Segregation

The subcategory of self-segregation came directly from the mouth of Max. In the first interview, I asked him how much time he spends socializing with international students. He indicated that he was not spending much, if any, time with international students. When I asked him why not, Max stated, "Honestly, I feel like I don't know how to describe it but it feels like self-segregation, sort of, on both sides." It should be noted that Max was not born in the U.S. so he comes to this experience with a very complicated identity. One of the most frequent ways in which I saw students self-segregate was every week in the classroom. I first noticed this during week two and then subsequent weeks of the semester. In an instructor journal, I stated, "The first thing that I noticed when I walked into the classroom was that the students who were already in the classroom were

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sitting in the same seats as the first week of class." While I know that students can be creatures of habit with where they sit in the classroom each week, it could not be ignored that the right side of the classroom had six or so international students, while the left side and back side of the classroom was dominated by the U.S. students. Their positions in the classroom extended into many of the small group pairings that formed each week as students got together for in-class activities. Unless I made a conscious effort to ask students to work with peers that they were not familiar with, U.S. students tended to work with other U.S. students and international students wanted to work with other international students. This was the most obvious during a class activity in which groups were asked to make the best flying paper airplane. Immediately when students were instructed to get into groups of their choosing, the five Indian male students tried to get into two small groups. Additionally, three of the most outgoing U.S. students also immediately grouped together as well. Throughout the class activity, you could see the U.S. students were having fun and not taking the task too seriously, however, the five Indian male students seemed to be very competitive and taking the task very seriously.

In the beginning of the semester as Rohan was struggling to find people to connect with, he submitted Picture 1 with the following caption, "I feel like I locked myself out and I'm acting differently. I find it hard to make friends." As I analyzed Picture 1, it is important to note that Rohan felt that he had locked himself out, not that he was being locked out by others. This sense of locking oneself out from others aligns with the notion of self-segregating because it is a choice to do so due to the level of discomfort felt. By self-segregating and acting differently at the beginning of the semester, he struggled to connect and make friends with his peers.

Picture 1

A photo taken by Rohan
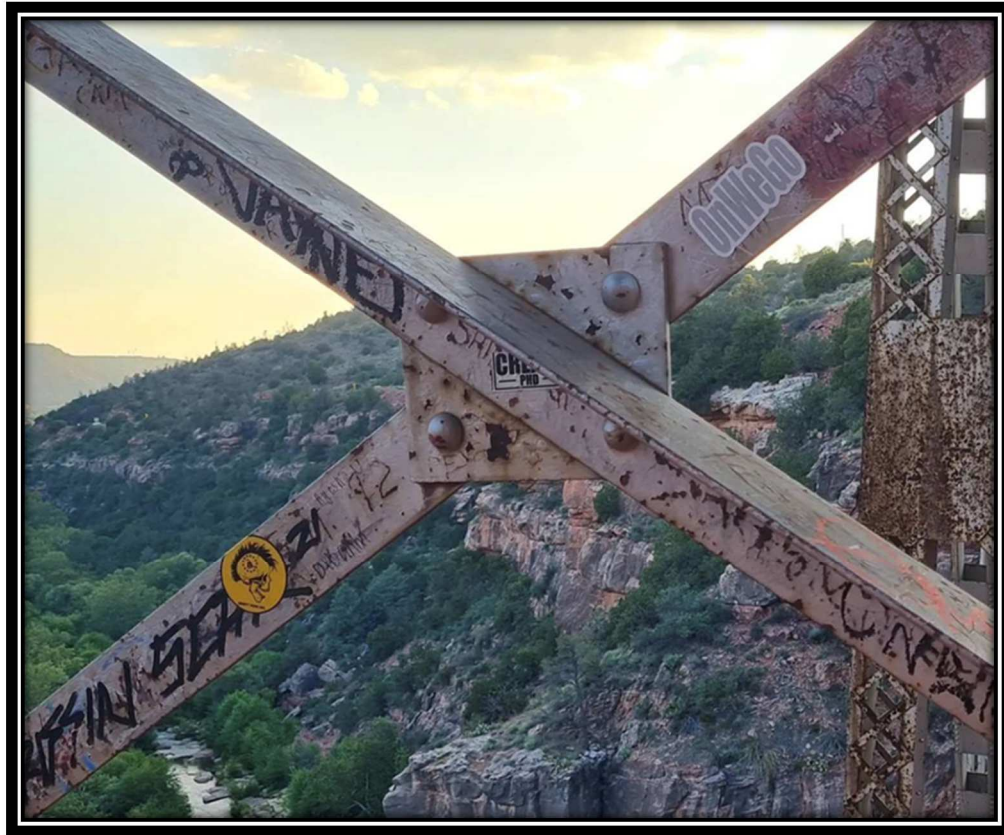
In the final interview with Samir who was born in India but moved to the U.S. as a child and as such is classified as a U.S. student highlighted this notion of self-segregation in a very clear way. During the first photovoice submission, Samir submitted Picture 2 with the following caption, "the swimming lanes represent different ideas of international and U.S. students." When I pressed Samir to explain his picture and caption in the interview, he went on to acknowledge that these swimming lanes separate international students from U.S. students in many ways. Samir stated:

> International and American citizens have their differences. Which is kind of like how swimming lanes were used as different, like areas for sort of training and stuff. And we were split into lanes of like the faster kids would be in this lane and then, sort of, in that sense, or if we were doing

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> different strokes, and that sort of kind of made me think about how we are different, and in some ways, we kind of stick in our own lane. Most of the time.

This goes to show the ways in which some students are not able to articulate that there are lanes created that help divide U.S. and international students from each other and their experiences.

Picture 2

A photo taken by Samir
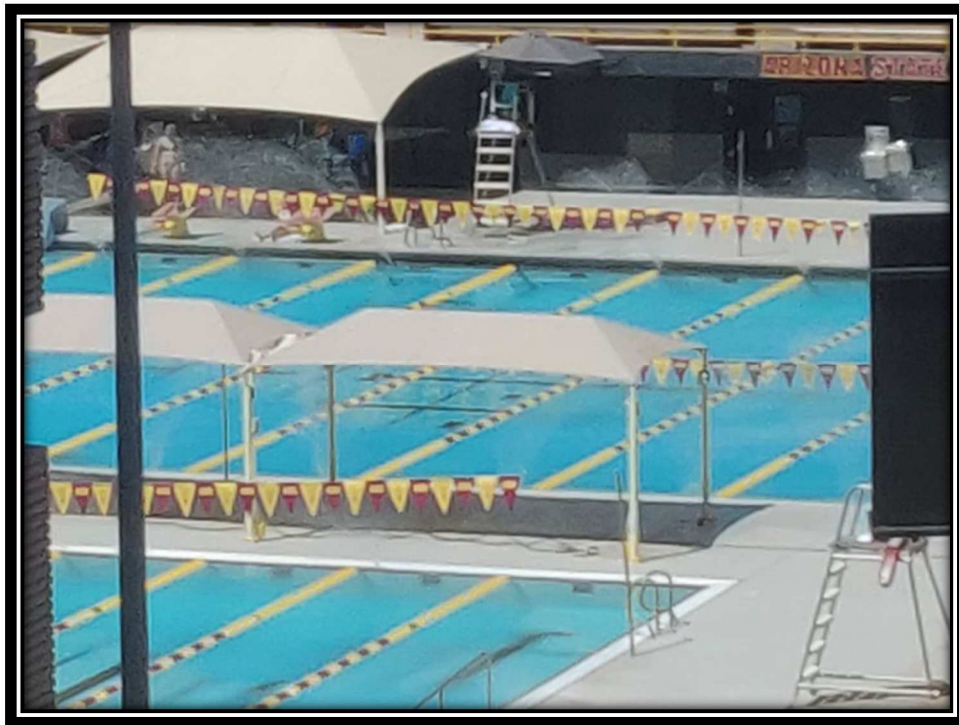
Segregating due to prejudices

The final subcategory in this theme of belonging is how prejudices actually inform how students segregate or keep to themselves. As stated earlier, all individuals have feelings of prejudice towards people and groups that they do not fully understand. This could not have been truer of the U.S. and international students in this UNI 120

course. In her first photovoice submission, Stefanie submitted Picture 3 with the following caption, "I have a prejudice that U.S. students are individualistic."

Picture 3

A photo taken by Stefanie

Coming from a collectivist culture, the notion of individuality would be in tension with her viewpoint that being part of a group is better than being recognized as an individual. This may have contributed to her struggles to connect with individuals who she finds to be overly concerned with themselves instead of the experiences of the group.

Sometimes each group of students had the same feelings of prejudices towards the other group. Such was the example in which both U.S. and international students felt as though the other group thinks they are smarter than the other. It is unclear whether U.S.

students made this assumption because they knew they had to take this course, and they may have known that the international students did not. While it certainly was more common for U.S. students to feel as though international students think they are smarter than U.S. students, it was definitely felt by international students who felt as though U.S. students think they are smarter than international students. Utkarsh, who is another third culture kid, still experienced prejudices towards international students regarding their intelligence. In his journal Utkarsh stated, "some of my feelings of prejudice towards international students include thinking that they're probably smarter than U.S. students." This idea that one group was smarter than the other created a sense that one group was better than the other, which probably made some students uneasy about creating friendships with students in the other group. Max also stated some extreme prejudices that I believe contributed to his behaviors and statements which indicated his lack of interest in connecting with international students. In his journal Max stated, "In my mind I have this image of international students that they are extremely rich and that their families are probably evil and exploit the lower classes in their country." Other prejudices included those of international students who believed that U.S. students only cared about partying and having fun. Since many international students feel pressure to succeed academically, this prejudice may have prevented them from making friends with students they assumed to be partiers so that this lifestyle did not interfere with their studies. Many of the prejudices felt by international students were believed because of things they saw in the media or in U.S. pop culture. Jialong went on to state in his journal:

> Before coming to college, the only exposure, I have had to U.S students was through popular culture. This obviously does not show them in the best of light with most shows and movies overdramatizing the lives of teenagers. So, what I expected was party going, rude, brash and the notions I had seen or heard wasn't the best.

This shows how much U.S. media including films and television influence the beliefs of people outside the U.S. While some international students acknowledged that these prejudices were wrong, were they able to truly get past these thoughts to try and create intercultural connections?

One final prejudice that I would like to address was communicated by Angie who was one of two East-Asian students in the class. She feared anti-Asian hate based on the news and events that led to the persecution and killings of many Asians in the U.S., which rose after the outbreak of COVID-19. In her journal submission, Angie stated, "I had a prejudice that U.S. students would racism me because I can't speak English well and because I am Asian. This is because I heard a lot on the news that Asians are being killed because of racism just before I came to the U.S." Some would tie this back to comments made by the Trump administration, which were previously addressed in Chapter 2. This sense of fear about how East-Asians would be treated in the U.S. gave her pause for concern as she navigated friendships here in the U.S. It cannot be denied that situations that break into the public's consciousness can do a lot to create and inform prejudices. If it can be assumed that police officers are prejudiced towards African-Americans, then it surely can be said that the U.S. public's general feelings about East-Asians post COVID-19 was negative.

All of these subcategories highlight the ways in which prejudices informed their perceptions of other students in the class and beyond.

We're Better and We Don't Care: aren't we the best?

In relation to the notion of majority vs. minority comes the theme that indicates that U.S. students think they are better than the rest. Whether this is because of their majority group status, or their English-language abilities or even their better understanding of the U.S. education system; it was clear that U.S. students tended to think they were better than their international student peers. This sense of superiority was also felt by their international student peers. If we think we're better than someone, are we really going to try and be their friend?

Acting better/Acting like we don't care

As I incorporated the ten steps of transformative learning into the journal prompts, one of the journal prompts asked students to consider an aspect of another culture that they have learned that they would want to incorporate into their own lives. Many of the international students spoke of something about U.S. culture that they found admirable that they wanted to try and do within their own lives. However, none of the U.S. students indicated the same. Some U.S. students flatly denied that they had learned anything about another culture, while even those that did made no mention of how they would incorporate it into their lives. In her journal Francis stated, "I feel like I haven't learned much about anyone's culture in this class because I haven't really talked to anyone about their culture." Each week as students were in partner conversations about the class theme that week, students were asked to share how the topics related to their own culture. If Francis did not ask about the cultures of her classmates, this indicates a certain aura that U.S. students gave off thinking that they were better than others. The feelings were received by international students as well. Leonardo stated in his journal, "I

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feel many [U.S. students] are very biased and are not very open/considerate about differences in people. They have this sense of superiority." At the end of the semester, Leonardo indicated that he did not have any U.S. friends, which could be because of the perception of bias he experienced during the research study.

U.S. students also presented to myself and their peers that they just do not care about school. In the member check feedback session, the international students stated that they felt as though U.S. students think that they are "too cool" for school so that is why they do not put in a lot of effort. This took the form in the number of assignments that U.S. students submitted into the learning management system as well as their outlook on the group assignment. One week after class, I held back a group that had not turned in their assignment. Sonali, the only international student in the group, indicated that the night before the assignment was due she messaged her group members about the assignment. None of the U.S. students replied to her message so they ended up not submitting this part of the project on time. This general sense of apathy could also be attributed to the final grades that each of the students earned in the class. As I will detail later in this chapter, all but one of the international students earned an A in the class as they submitted every single assignment. As I was about to post their final grades, I even had two international students email me because they thought they were going to get an A- in the class and they wanted to know what they could do to bring up their grade to a letter A grade. On the other hand, over half of the U.S. students had a grade lower than an A and I got the impression that they did not care about their performance in the class. Strangely enough, on the last day of class, Samuel, one of the U.S. students who ended up receiving an E in the class indicated that he only showed up because he did not want

to fail the class. However, since he turned in a minimal amount of assignments, even perfect attendance was not going to give him a passing grade for the class. If the U.S. students in the class were not taking the experience or class seriously, how could this impact their desire to build connections with international students outside of class?

Speaking English Clearly

As mentioned previously, the grasp of the English-language can cause quite a lot of stress for international students from non-English speaking countries. Many U.S. students believed that their international peers would not know English very well. In her journal Francis stated, "I thought that it may be difficult to communicate with some of them because I thought they might not speak English well." While some were pleasantly surprised to learn they were wrong, Francis became very frustrated by the English-language skills of her peers especially during the group project assignment. Again, Francis stated, "something I noticed while working with my group is that it is sometimes hard to understand what the other person is trying to communicate because of language. They have trouble talking to me because English is not their first language." What particularly struck me about her comments was her use of the word "me." She could have said that she has trouble understanding them because English is not their first language, however, she put the blame on them for their inability to communicate in English. International students also commented on the usage of slang words which caused frustration because they could not understand what their U.S. peers were actually trying to say. In her journal Sonali stated, "While communicating through text, I notice some of my group members using abbreviations that I have never heard before and even use phrases like 'I bet' when they agree to something. The way they communicate shows

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a lot about how they take matters day to day in life." Needless to say, the group project assignment, which was supposed to provide another basis for finding a common goal between students, provided a very frustrating experience for Sonali where she felt like she was in the minority.

Finally, in class one week, Brady who was seeking a partner for a class task, chose to ask a student who was three seats away from him instead of the student sitting right next to them. The student right next to him was Stefanie from China, whereas, the student he chose was Kemi from India. While most students from India speak multiple languages, they do speak English from a very young age and tend to have a stronger grasp of the language compared to their East-Asian counterparts. I could not help but assume that Brady intentionally chose Kemi because of their better English-language skills. If Brady was going to go out of his way to form a partnership with a better English-speaking student, are U.S. students really going to try and make friends with international students who may not speak English as their first language outside of class?

We all have accents

As stated earlier, everyone has an accent, however, the prominent perception is that international students are the ones with an accent. Some international students spoke about the frustration they felt when they felt dismissed by U.S. students because of their accent. In her journal Kemi stated:

> As an Indian, when I introduced myself in a class and mentioned that I am from India, some people were making faces at me and were simply ignoring me when I tried talking to them. I was very gloomy and ran back to my dorm room crying.

Well she may have perceived that U.S. students were making fun of her because of her accent, Brady seems to have chosen her because of her better English-language skills. I believe this shows how international students feel like U.S. students think they are stupid when they speak with their accent. However, we know that an accent does not indicate one's intelligence. A very interesting thought was a comment made by Chethan regarding how accents are received by U.S. students. He was communicating a sense of prejudice felt by him because he believed U.S. students do not understand international student accents. However, in his journal Chethan then stated:

> This is largely observational and personal, as I have seen and experienced this problem myself. Moreover, as per my observation by interacting with students, teachers, and other people, I find that this issue is much less prevalent in the case of an instructor or an upperclassman but rises astronomically when interacting with freshmen and sophomore year students.

This indicates that he believes his classmates who were first-year students had less of an understanding of accents than their older U.S. peers. He also went on to state that he thinks U.S. students need to be more exposed to individuals with accents in high school so they are more welcoming to those with accents once they get to college. Again, if you feel like you are being judged for your accent, are you really going to try and make friends with those who you think are judging you?

Friendship: do you want to be friends?

When first-year students begin their studies in college, most, if not all are seeking connections with other students. Even though some students come to college with friends they knew from high school, the most prominent experience they face is navigating a new social order and culture with their new community. However, since students are away

from their support systems that got them through the previous years of their lives, they are now faced with the prospect of trying to create a new support system. That is not to say that individuals from their former support system may not find a role in their new support system, however, this new system will be built with people that are new to their lives and who are experiencing similar things with them. And yet at the beginning of college, there is an inherent sense of loneliness that students experience as they continue to navigate their new experiences, which was evident from the comments made in many of their initial journal entries.

Connections piercing through loneliness

Most, if not all of the study participants, stated how they felt lonely at some point during the semester. Most students felt this emotion at the beginning of the semester as they were navigating their new lives. I had originally thought that U.S. students would feel less lonely because they are closer in proximity to their former support systems, however, comments made by both U.S. and international students indicated a great sense of loneliness. In his journal, Brady, a U.S. student, stated:

> Well the first thing that was hard for me when I first began at ASU was deeply missing my family and the other people that supported me and the people I love back at home. It was hard for me because I won't be able to see my whole family and friends for three months.

Although Brady was concerned that he was not going to see his family for three months, some international students can go three years without seeing their family. With that being said, international students also felt a strong sense of loneliness and homesickness. At the beginning of the semester, Kemi in her journal stated, "I get homesick at times. I miss my bed, the comfort of my pillow and every single thing and corner of my home."

Feeling homesick is something that many international students feel when they are away from their home country. However, this was also felt by U.S. students too. In his journal Max stated, "I've struggled a lot coming to ASU. One of the things I struggled with most at the beginning was homesickness." It should be noted that Max's family lives about 20 minutes away from ASU's Tempe campus. Loneliness and homesickness also have the ability to create a sense of fear in a person's life when they assume that they may not be able to get past it. Chethan stated in his journal, "what if I am never able to make friends throughout this course." As these statements indicate, a sense of loneliness and a desire to not be lonely was a driving factor for students to try and make friends with other students. However, this desire to make connections with students inside this classroom was not as strong as their behaviors which suggested a stronger desire to make friends with people in their residence hall or in major-related classes.

Friendship Seeking

So how did students seek friendships as they began their first semester at ASU? One of the most common ways for individuals to connect and start friendships in the 21st century is through the use of social media platforms. During the first two weeks of the semester as I was waiting for class to start and after class had finished, I noticed students who had worked together over the course of the class exchange social media contacts so that they could stay in touch. However, it should be noted that popular social media platforms vary across cultures and countries. Whereas Facebook, Instagram and TikTok are popular with many U.S. students, WeChat, for an example, is the most popular social media platform for students from China. In one exchange, I noticed that the international student had to download Snapchat so they could connect with the U.S. student since they

did not share common social media platforms. I also think this is another example of where U.S. students were in the majority and international students were in the minority. The international student had to meet the U.S. student where they were at instead of finding a compromise. During an interview with Jean-Marc he commented on how he had exchanged Snapchat accounts with Francis and they had been connecting on there but then she stopped. Jean-Marc stated, "And then, [Francis], you paired me up with her as well. We were streaking on Snapchat for a day or so. And then she stopped sending streaks back, so I'm like, okay, whatever." The concept of streaking indicates that two users send a picture to each other each day in order to keep the streak alive. Having a streak with someone that lasts for many days or even months is something to be proud of. You could sense the disappointment in Jean-Marc when Francis broke their streak and stopped sending pictures to him.

Some international students even commented on how they used social media prior to arriving at college to try and start developing connections with other students in advance of the semester beginning. In many ways social media allows students to connect in a way that is most common with their generation, however, it also allows students to hide behind their true realities to project a way of life that may not be completely true.

Another way in which first-year college students try to meet friends, which was a common statement presented in student journals, is the idea of students going to events, joining clubs and other collegiate activities. However, more than U.S. students, this was a very common statement from international students. In his journal Jialong stated:

> I have been attending various events all over campus to try and interact with more people and experience new and different things. There was a fall event held by the CSA. It was an amazing experience. We made

> Chinese lanterns and they made us try on traditional attire and there were various performances too. I also made a few friends at the event as well. Also, the international students' events are good fun. You get to meet new people and get free food and to be honest I don't think anything is better than friend's, free food and not having to do the dishes after.

While I believe it is safe to assume that U.S. students were also seeking friendships, they did not comment on how they were trying to do it like their international peers did. In fact, one U.S. student stated that they did not make any intentional effort to adapt their behaviors to connect with different students, and yet at the end of the semester, this same student said that they had zero international student friends. However, towards the beginning of the semester, Sarah stated in her journal:

> I personally don't do anything different to reach out to any students with different backgrounds. It is not because I do not want to become friends with them, I just personally do not alter the way I speak to other people based on their race, ethnicity, gender, or any other reason.

Although I do not believe that we should treat people differently, the ability to adapt how we interact with people based on cultural differences is important to consider in the space of intercultural connections. For an example, the way we greet individuals with a handshake in the United States is not a greeting that is customary in all cultures around the world. This led international students to talk more about loneliness, about trying to not be an introvert and about trying to connect with people in which they shared common interests.

Celebrating our Commonalities

As will be addressed later in this chapter, students undoubtedly faced moments where the differences between them were obvious in many ways. However, it cannot be ignored that there were many commonalities as well. Ultimately, this is what binds

people together when they can share similar interests, thoughts, ideas, values and/or beliefs. In some sense it was interesting to see how students commented on their similarities between them. Some students, particularly U.S. students, found that there were no explicit differences between themselves and international students. In her journal, Sarah went on to state, "People of differing ethnicities listen to music, watch tv, and are interested in pop culture just like everyone else." I would agree that a lot of different people listen to music and watch tv, however, are people from different ethnicities, as she put it, watching the same tv shows and listening to the same music?

The biggest ways in which I saw students finding similar connections was through sports, music and food. Sports is a very big part of the U.S. collegiate experience; however, sports also play a big role in the lives of all individuals regardless of their country of origin. During an interview, Samir stated that he went to an ASU football to try and meet people and ended up sitting next to another student who was also by themselves. This student was from India, which is where Samir is originally from. When I asked Samir why he decided to sit next to this student, he stated, "well, you know, he was also Indian, and you know, it made me want to pursue, I guess, to be friends with them, and I didn't have anyone else so I was like, you know, why not, let's see what happens." This was a moment where Samir, who is still toggling the line between U.S. and international cultures felt more like of an international student because football is not a sport that he grew up with as it is very U.S. centric. However, soccer is very popular around the world and is very popular with international students as well. As Jean-Marc was trying to navigate the beginning of the semester, he stated how he visited the fields of the Sun Devil Fitness Complex (SDFC) many evenings to try and find other guys to

play a pick-up game of soccer with. In the interview, Jean-Marc stated, "a couple of weeks ago I just walked down to SDFC, I saw some people playing soccer, I just joined them. So yeah, I know those guys as well although just a few of them are U.S. students but yeah it was fun." Again, while Jean-Marc and Samir were not connecting with students in our class through sports, they were using sports to try and create connections with other students they met on campus.

Additionally, music and food also allow students to find connections with each other. During the first class, I paired a U.S. student with an international student for basic introductions. Besides asking students to share demographic characteristics about themselves with their partner, I also asked each pair to identify one thing they had in common with each other. Most of the pairings talked about music being something that they both really liked. As I stated in the instructor journal, "as I listened to the things they had in common it seems as if they were similar in many ways. Music was a big common trait among many pairs. Although they did not state what kind of music they had in common." However, it should be noted that most pairs did not acknowledge a genre of music that they had in common just that they both enjoyed music itself. I think that goes to show that even when there are similarities, sometimes those similarities expose differences too.

Just like sports and music, students talked about food and how it can bring people together. Sharing a meal together or even one friend cooking a meal for another friend is a great way to create bonds. However, the food preferences for each student group is slightly different. Sonali, a student from India who identifies as vegetarian shared a story

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about how she and her U.S. roommate tried to connect about food. In her journal Sonali

stated:

> For example, I was really happy to see my roommate making me try her mom's beef pie and cinnamon cake and telling me how it's a family tradition and they have it every Christmas morning. I come from a tradition where cooking is an art and way more complex and when she asked me what we bake in India, it was hard to explain to her that baking in an oven, per se, is a western practice and even though I do use an oven in India, our authentic cooking styles are way different and complex. Somewhere I felt that it was very difficult for me to explain her my tradition whereas she knew I understood American culture very well. I am unable to tell her anything related to my culture because she is always equating it with hers and it becomes difficult for me to get out of, just to make her understand that turmeric is good in your food as well as on your skin. Somewhere I feel that she doesn't want to know about other traditions because she has a preoccupied mindset that hers is, in some way, superior and it is a very shallow way to look at it but I notice her facial expressions each time I tell her something about back home.

So, while there is a sense of commonalities, there always seemed to be a point where they

commonalities created conflict because the minor details were much more different than

anyone would have anticipated. However, it certainly cannot be ignored that as first-year

students of the same generation they did share many commonalities but it does not mean

they are not different too.

Sticking together

As students acknowledged that prejudices do exist and they sought to create

connections with other students, there was a growing theme that was clear through this

research study as well as previous research studies. International students feel more

comfortable connecting with other international students even those from different

countries than their own. As fellow minority students, they share similar perspectives in

what they are trying to navigate in their new-found society. Stefanie talked about

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connecting with other students from China so that she does not feel alone. Stefanie stated in her journal, "I eat with my Chinese friends every day. It makes me feel like I am not the exception." As someone from a culture that is very collectivist in nature, which China is, according to Hofstede et al. (2005), it is understandable why Stefanie would want to be with people so she doesn't have to stand out in the group. Kemi, a student from India addressed the connections she was making from students from many different countries. She stated in her journal:

> Life here in America is absolutely different. You get to meet people from all over the world. It's just not Americans. I have made friends from Laos, Vietnam, Uganda, Russia, China, South Korea and the list just goes on. I had an idea about meeting new people from all over the world but I did not think about the fact that I'll make more of international student friends than the American ones.

Again, this relates back to the concept of majority vs. minority because as minority students, they tend to develop connections with other minority students who they presume are also feeling alone in their new culture.

As I explained all of the above themes, it is critical that these themes be viewed in relation to research question #1, which asked, "how did feelings of prejudice, both negative and positive, held by international and U.S. students influence their perceptions to build intercultural connections?" Prejudices are thoughts that individuals have about another person or group of people. Unfortunately, as I explored research question #1, I do not believe the answer is straight forward. Yes, it can be stated that prejudices informed their ability and desire to build intercultural connections, however, we also realize that our prejudices are not always founded in truth or reality. Nevertheless, more instrumental in identifying their perceptions to build intercultural connections were how much they

were willing to navigate through those prejudices and if they found value in trying to build intercultural connections. For the most part, even when U.S. students believed themselves to be very similar with their international peers, it did not translate into the actual development of intercultural connections. There just was not the same level of commitment to the development of intercultural connections from U.S. students that there was from international students. At the end of the day, is it because U.S. students are the majority and do not need international students or are the differences just that much more apparent than they are willing to admit?

Research Question #2:

How did acculturation strategies and contact between U.S. and international students influence their perceptions to build intercultural connections?

This research question critically looked at the two theoretical perspectives that provided a framework for this entire research study. Acculturation and intergroup contact theory go hand in hand due to the way in which they provide context for two different groups coming together in a shared environment. Furthermore, these perspectives, which were explored previously in Chapter 2, sought to explain how to frame the experiences of two groups coming together with the hopes of being changed over the course of the experience. Acculturation looks to see how both groups are changed through the experience of contact, while intergroup contact theory prescribes the kind of contact that is necessary to eliminate prejudices. How these perspectives were present and included in the lives of these study participants were important to explore as I hoped to see the building of intercultural connections between students. However, it should be noted that these perspectives were not easy for these study participants to grasp without additional

context for them to understand the place they hold within the dynamics of two student groups learning from each other in a classroom environment.

In this section, I will present two high-level themes and their sub-categories. The first high-level theme is prejudices and behaviors, which explores assimilation vs. integration, and unique cultural perspectives. The second high-level theme is moments when we are the same, which explores majority vs. minority, common goals, and academic struggles. Next, the first theme of prejudices and behaviors will be explored.

Prejudices and Behaviors: what makes us so different?

U.S. and international students are two different groups on campus, which bring unique and different perspectives to life as a college student. However, the opportunity to learn about the diversity of what makes us different and to see how this changes our perceptions of intercultural connections was paramount to this research study. Cultural differences were alive and well within the world of this research study because individuals from many different cultural backgrounds were participants. As stated earlier, neither U.S. nor international students represent a monolith and so even within these two different groups of students, many cultural differences were apparent. Some of these cultural differences include topics like food, which was previously explored as a similarity, however, other ideas such as the sense of time, sense of work ethic, sense of right and wrong, and sense of humor permeate life in many different ways. Individuals who come from different backgrounds can be frustrated by their peers when the differences impact their experiences with them. The sense of work ethic was something that came about during the group project assignment since this entailed a group of students working together towards a common goal. However, many of the international

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students felt frustrated by the effort of their peers and disappointed that their peers did not care about the assignment as much as they did. The group project also showed that even when working towards a common goal together, it is easier to accomplish said goal when the individuals share a common level of understanding. In her journal Kemi stated, "One of the main things is that it is easier to work with people who have similar interests like you than those with different interests." If these different approaches to a group project were evident, then clearly their approaches to intercultural connections needed to be understood and explored.

Assimilation vs. Integration

Assimilation and integration represent two of the four acculturation strategies that individuals can use when interacting with a different group of individuals. As was explored in Chapter 2, there are many reasons why individuals may choose these strategies and why other individuals expect people to use these strategies as they are negotiating through the experience of acculturation. These two strategies seemed to be the most prevalent in this research study due to the action and words used by these study participants. To refresh our memory, when an individual uses the assimilation strategy, they are trying to connect with their new host culture environment while not maintaining a connection to their home culture (Berry, 2005). This could not have been truer for one of these study participants, Jean-Marc. Jean-Marc was someone who through his words and actions clearly indicated that they were going to do everything in their power to connect with their host culture while not spending too much time thinking about or worrying about their home culture. At the end of the semester Jean-Marc even indicated that he had around 20 U.S. friends that he considered to be good and/or best friends and

yet he also had no desire to build connections with other international students or even other students from India. In his last photovoice assignment, Jean-Marc submitted Picture 4 with the caption, "Honestly, in the future, I only want to develop friendships with U.S students."

Picture 4

A photo taken by Jean-Marc

When I asked him to explain his picture and caption in the final interview, Jean-Marc stated:

> Because I think I've spent most of my life 11 years of my life around Indian students, things like that. So, I just like, I guess you could say that I'm bored of that. And I don't really want to go back to that. Honestly, I

just want like the friends the US students that are my friends are way better in a way I guess you can say.

His commitment to immersing himself into U.S. culture could be explained by a number of factors, which include time spent previously in the U.S. when he was a child or his belief that he only had one or two friends from India that he cared about, or perhaps it was his commitment to trying to build a life for himself after he completed his studies. It was clear throughout the semester as Jean-Marc started to adopt certain behaviors, started dressing with certain items of clothing and his immersion into ASU athletics that Jean-Marc believed using the assimilation strategy would be the best for him if he wanted to build intercultural connections with U.S students. Jean-Marc also stated in his journal:

> Next semester, I'm taking "TCL 111 – Latinx Cultural Studies" as my elective. Motivation has played a huge role in my course selection since I want to learn more about Latin culture, because its influence on Arizona is significant and it's really interesting to me. This is one of the biggest ways I'll be connecting with people from a different background from mine, and learning about them, at least in the near future. I honestly can't wait for the spring semester to begin!

This showed that he also recognized the diversity of U.S. culture and was taking specific steps to learn as much as he could about the various parts of U.S. culture. This assimilation belief heavily impacted his experience in this research study as well as his first semester at ASU.

The integration strategy is considered to be the best of both worlds because individuals are trying to build a connection with their host culture while maintaining a connection to their home culture at the same time. However, as stated earlier, some individuals think it is about integrating into one culture instead of being able to integrate across two or more cultures. Some U.S. students thought it was important that

international students are able to come to the U.S. to learn about the great things the U.S. has to offer. In his journal Brady stated:

> I would say it is a very valuable resource for international students to be able to come here and experience how Great American culture is. We have the most complex and unique systems in the world and it is amazing that students from across the world get to come here and experience what makes the United States so great.

This gives the impression that he believes that international students should assimilate into U.S. culture instead of trying to toggle the line between their home and host cultures. However, though Jean-Marc was an anomaly, most of the other international students wanted to integrate themselves between U.S. culture and their home culture. Sonali stated in her journal:

> I am living in 2 zones here, i.e., the present and the future and the thin line between them is my current position where I am able to see myself changing for my vision and in my opinion, change is not to be feared.

But is it this act in the eyes of U.S. students that prevents them from trying to establish more connections with international students? Many of the international students from India talked about how they wanted to connect to their families when India was celebrating major holidays. This was one way in which they sought to maintain a connection to their home culture because these events were deeply engrained in their former way of life. Further exploration on how these actions by international students are received by their U.S. peers will help to understand if these behaviors prevent U.S. students from trying to develop deeper connections with international students.

Unique cultural perspectives

One aspect that I did not consider prior to beginning this research study was the notion of third culture kids. I assumed that all of the U.S. students in my intervention

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would be from families who had been in the U.S. for a long time and would identify with many aspects of typical U.S. culture. Unfortunately, even though I should have, I did not consider that there could be some U.S. students who were immigrants themselves or whose parents recently immigrated to the U.S. These students who were born in another culture but then moved to the United States as children created a dynamic in which they have an identity made up of multiple cultural perspectives. It could be assumed that someone who connects with multiple cultures and understands how hard it can be to navigate life in a new culture would be sympathetic to others also navigating a new culture, yet there were many individuals in this group who did not want to put themselves out there for international students. One such third culture kid, Max, commented on how he does not stand up for international students when he hears them being talked about negatively. In an interview, Max stated, "if it's generalization about international students that I think is wrong, I won't, I don't personally like to confront things like that." Max further went on to say towards the end of the semester that discrimination is very real and that doors exist in front of international students as they try to navigate through these doors. I asked Max in his interview if he himself had put any doors in front of international students and he responded, "I don't think I have personally, but I don't think I've opened any doors either." This illustrates the tricky place that these students exist within. They understand the plight of an international student because they were once one themselves, however, they are also not comfortable going out on a limb to help international students either. To summarize this point, Max stated in his journal:

> The U.S. is a racist country in my personal beliefs and just because of that, if you can look like the dominant culture. Then when you learn about the

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> things of the dominant culture and fit in with the things in the dominant
> culture then it's a lot easier to just become the dominant culture.

This perspective shows that Max wanted to be seen as part of the majority so he continued to want to build connections with U.S. students instead of international students.

Moments We Are the Same: what do we have in common?

After exploring acculturation and the strategies included, we must continue to explore the conditions of intergroup contact theory and how important they were on the development of intercultural connections. As discussed in Chapter 2 the conditions of this theory are equal status, common goals, cooperation, institutional support and the prospect of friendship making. From the very first class, I made it clear to these study participants that the desired goal of this research study was for them to develop connections and build friendships. This constant reminder made it clear that this condition was constantly present during the course of this experience. I also believe that institutional support was present as well because I communicated that myself and my colleagues were interested to see how this dynamic played out in this class to see if future classes could be replicated with a similar focus. However, beyond these 2 conditions, I think it is important that I explore the other three conditions more deeply.

Majority vs. Minority

Equal status is the first condition of intergroup contact theory, which could mean that it is one of the most important conditions to try and meet. As I have previously stated, I hoped that due to the sheer fact that both groups of students were first-year students at ASU would go a long way to achieving the goal of equal status. However, as I

have presented earlier in this chapter, it was also clear that while there were some things that made them have an equal status, there were other things that indicated that their status was not equal. One of the biggest ways in which they are not equal is with regards to their immigration status. U.S. students are afforded different opportunities and abilities because they are a U.S. student while international students have strict rules and regulations that they must follow. Two important ways in which they differ are in regards to course enrollment and employment opportunities. U.S. students are not bound by a minimum number of credits that they must take each semester, where international undergraduate students must be enrolled in at least 12 credits to maintain their immigration status. Furthermore, international undergraduate students must be enrolled in at least nine credits of in-person courses. U.S. students are free to take as many classes as they wish and classes that are offered in any kind of modality. Additionally, U.S. students can work on or off campus and are not subject to a certain number of hours they can work each week. However, on the other hand, international students can only work on campus without additional authorization, and should they want to work off-campus it must be through two forms of authorization and must be connected to their major. During the member check feedback session, I asked some of the international students if they felt like their U.S. peers understood the realities that international students face due to their immigration status. Chethan, Leonardo and Rohan commented that they did not think their U.S. peers understood at all and often presented a look of surprise at the restrictions international students face. While I cannot say for certain whether this lack of understanding of how immigration regulations impacted their desire to build intercultural connections, it is clear that U.S. students do not try and understand and empathize with

the confines and regulations that international students face. When we are able to empathize with people, we tend to be able to connect with them more. Unfortunately, I do not believe that equal status was ultimately achieved due to these distinctive differences between what it is like to be a U.S. student versus what it is like to be an international student at ASU.

Common goals

The second condition, which in some ways is then tied to the third condition of cooperation is common goals. When individuals from differing groups share common goals, they may be better suited to decrease their thoughts of prejudice. One of the ways in which I sought to create a common goal in my intervention was by assigning a group project assignment. This group project tasked each group with identifying a real-life problem that they wanted to try and solve. Topics ranged from materialism, mask wearing, the importance of art and how to create world peace. By selecting a topic that all group members agreed to allowed them to bring their own selves to the project and assignment. Most students found that this assignment did help create the sense of a common goal and for many this commonality helped them reduce the barriers that they may have faced with each other. However, there were certain ideas that came about through the process which both supported and negated this condition. Brady who has made previous comments about the greatness of the United States and liked to flout ASU's mask wearing policy, seemed to have a very eye-opening experience during his group project assignment. In his journal Brady stated, "Overall I think it was interesting that they were sharing their cultures to me because us American citizens don't know what cultures are like in other countries." While I do not think that this translated into Brady

building stronger intercultural connections with his peers, it did show him that he has a lot to learn from his peers and could benefit from exposing himself more to people from different backgrounds. Brady's comments also relate back to the notion of U.S. superiority as he noted that U.S. students do not know about other cultures besides U.S. culture. On the other hand, in his journal Leonardo, stated:

> It has taught me that even thought people might have different cultures when we work in a team it would not really matter because we have a common goal and there will be fewer disagreements with regards to cultural conflict amongst people. Overall, I feel good about working with people from different cultural background, it is also very interesting to know about their viewpoint on a certain issue because I am a strong believer that one's culture can influence their decision making and the way they approach problems.

Still, besides Leonardo, other students indicated that at times the cultural differences between group members made the group project experience harder because sometimes these differences clashed. Utkarsh stated, "it is usually easier to work with people who have the most in common with you." Furthermore, Sonali stated, "I have also noticed a slight difference in working style." If these statements are indeed true, is it possible that the group project assignment, which showed students how differences can impact an academic assignment, perhaps made students feel hesitant about creating intercultural connections with students outside of class. To that end, Max also addressed how there actually may be a difference in goals, which creates tension between U.S. and international students. Max stated, "there are different social goals. I've noticed that we're [U.S. students] more socially driven. And I've seen a lot of international students are more academically driven." If different viewpoints became obvious in an academic setting, how would these differences impact the idea of building a friendship?

Academic struggles

It is important to continue the exploration of the academic setting because this also impacted the perceptions of intercultural connections. While some of these thoughts are related to prejudices felt by others, it also relates to the idea of equal status. As was stated in Chapter 2, international students can struggle with adjusting to many different aspects of the U.S. classroom environment. At the beginning of the semester, Leonardo stated in his journal:

> The hardest aspect of beginning my studies in ASU has been to adapt to the new education system, it is very different from education system used in my home country and the teaching methods are different as well. I would say that they are more innovative and student centric and consider the real-world value a student will gain from learning.

These academic challenges are multitude, however, one of the ways that I found it to have the biggest impact in this research study was with regards to the use of technology. Again, this relates to the notion of privilege and what previous experience brings us, however, many different technology platforms are utilized in a classroom, which creates challenges for some. Whether it be how to use Google docs or even how to create a narrated PowerPoint presentation, these challenges faced by international students were apparent. As Max communicated when he was surprised by the lack of understanding regarding Google docs by his international peer, I believe this was just another way in which U.S. students felt superior but also another reason why they did not initiate friendships with international student peers. However, this can be readily explained by a lack of exposure not a lack of ability. As the title of Heng's (2016) study indicates, different doesn't mean deficit.

Having explored these themes, I will now seek to share how these themes answer research question #2, which asked, "how did acculturation strategies and contact between U.S. and international students influence their perceptions to build intercultural connections?" Ultimately, I believe that these theoretical perspectives provided context as to why some wanted to build intercultural connections and why some did not. Each student in this research study was different and approached their first semester very differently. I also cannot state that I learned about everything that happened during their first semester at ASU that could have impacted their desire to build intercultural connections. With that being said, the tension between assimilation and integration definitely highlighted the willingness or fear about building intercultural connections. Additionally, even though many of the conditions of intergroup contact theory were present in this research study, it goes to show that even with these conditions in place, they cannot predict the building of intercultural connections. Friendships and connections are built on so many different levels and yet while it was clear that there was a common goal between students, I also think the common goal highlighted that one cannot ignore the differences that are also in place too.

Research Question #3:

How did the interactions between U.S. and international students within a first-semester foundational course infused with a culturally sustaining pedagogy influence or change U.S. students and vice versa?

As previously stated, Redfield et al. (1936) stated, "acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural

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patterns of either or both groups" (p. 149). Therefore, it was critical to understand how each group of students may have been influenced by their participation in this research study with peers that are different from them. I had hoped that each group would be significantly influenced and/or changed by the interactions with their peers with a hope that U.S. students may start to realize how beneficial it can be to interact with their international student peers. If changes were to occur, this would demonstrate reciprocity between their interactions. The two major high-level themes presented here include friendship and independence. How are friendships formed provide explanation for the first high-level theme, while the movement towards independence explores the second high-level theme. Next, I will explore the high-level theme of friendship.

Friendship: do you want to be friends?

The ultimate goal of this research study was to see if two groups of students could create friendships through an environment that was built and catered to this specific experience. Having seen international students struggle to make friends with U.S. students when there is no intentional effort or instructions on how to do so, pushed me to create a space where international students might feel more equipped to build these friendships. However, through the creation of this intervention, I also sought to see how students as individuals might change or be influenced over the course of the experience. International students tend to ask, whether it is said out loud or not, "do you want to be friends?" The same cannot always be said of their U.S. peers.

Friendship Responsibility

Where does the burden lie? Who is responsible for initiating friendships? These questions were important questions to try to explore during the analysis phase of this

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research study. As it has been said before, the burden seems to lie with international students. The general sentiment communicated by U.S. students was that they have their friends already so if international students want to be their friend, then they have to make the effort. To that end, in her journal, Francis stated:

> When I first moved here, I made so many friends on the first night. The group we created slowly dispersed and of the original 15, only 10 of us remained close. We continue to hang out every day. Going to lunch together, hanging out between classes, and going out at night together. I'm sure we've all made a few friends from our classes or have some high school friends here but, none of us have really branched out to make new friends.

It was clear from the rest of her journal that this group of friends she made consisted of other U.S. students. Additionally, as was stated earlier, Jean-Marc tried to build a connection with Francis through Snapchat, only for Francis to stop communicating to him. So even when Jean-Marc tried to build a connection, it was not received well by his U.S. peer. Another example of where the responsibility may lay comes from the final interview with Max. I was asking Max to explain a picture from his first photovoice submission. He submitted Picture 5 with the caption, "This photo is another beautiful landscape that made me think about how nice it would be to become friends with international students."

Picture 5

A photo taken by Max
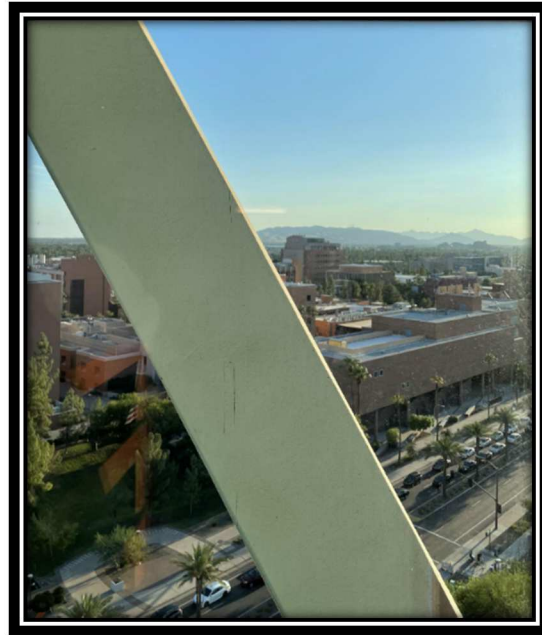
Max explained that he thinks the world is a beautiful landscape and different people represent various parts of this landscape. By meeting international students, he will have a fuller understanding of what it takes to build a beautiful landscape. However, when I asked him if he was going to try and connect with more international students next semester, he quickly replied, "Probably not." The desire seemed to be there, the interest and understanding why it is important to meet people from different backgrounds was there. However, they are just words as he will not follow up his words with actions. So, if he is not willing to do so, then who will take the responsibility to do so? Is it always the job of an international student to strike up a friendship with a U.S. student?
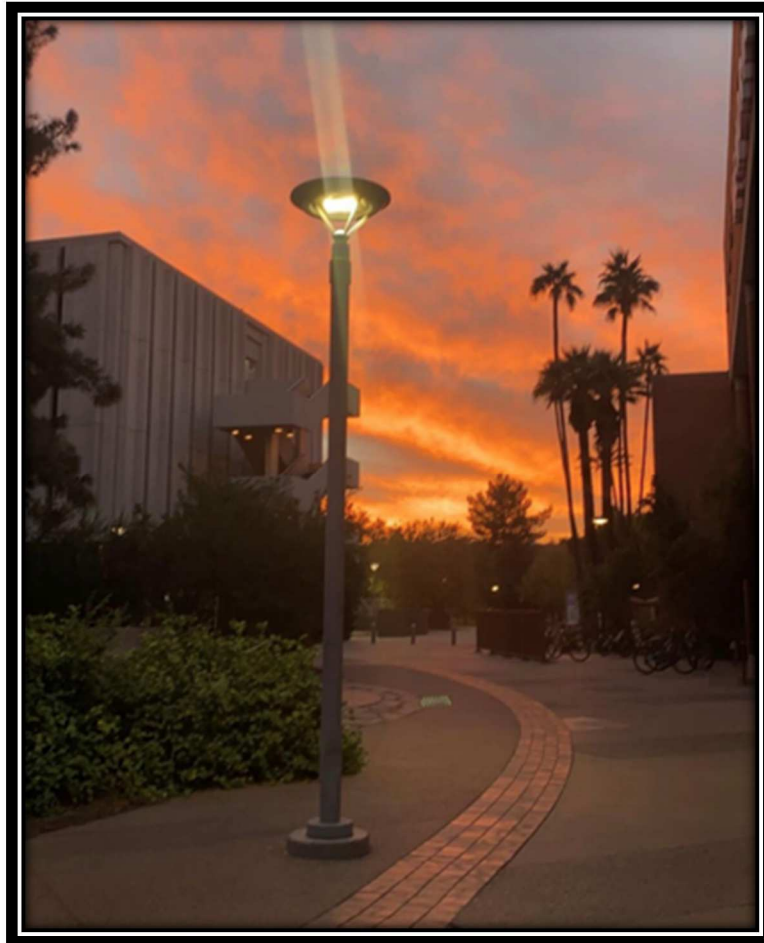
Quality of Connections

During the last class session, I asked students to comment on the connections they had made with peers both inside this research study and outside it as well and then to

describe the quality of these connections. The quality of friendships is something that was addressed in Chapter 2 and always seems to be a point of contention when looking at other research studies that explore this phenomenon. Most international students said that they had around three or four people in this research study that they would consider to be a good friend or classmate. However, Sarah, a U.S. student, stated that the only person she would consider to be her friend was Chris, another U.S. student, as he ended up becoming her boyfriend. Additionally, when I asked the U.S. students how many international student friends they had from inside or outside of this class, their answers ranged from one to three friends. When I then asked them to state the quality of these friends they said they were just classmates. This confirms data from previous research studies, which indicate that international students tend to think more highly of their friendships with U.S. students than U.S. students think of their friendships with international students.

That being said, Francis submitted Picture 6 in the final photovoice submission. Her caption stated, "although I don't have many international friends, I would describe the friendships that I have with them to be beautiful." I was not able to determine how many international friends she actually had, however, her belief that they are beautiful may be an example where words do not align with our actions based on previous comments made by her with regards to her interactions with her group members and Jean-Marc. This mismatch in words versus actions was also present in Max as well. The word beautiful also does not indicate any level of friendship that was provided to students throughout my intervention. Would she consider someone who is a classmate of hers to be a beautiful connection?

Picture 6

A photo taken by Francis

On the other hand, all of the international students described friendships they had made with U.S. students outside of the class as good friends. This continues to show that there is a difference in perceptions on the quality of connections between students. If U.S. students think less of their friendships with international students than international students think of their friendships with U.S. students, where does the lack of agreement on the perspective come from?

Friendship Formation

Another question I asked students at the end of the class was whether they think my intervention helped them make connections with students from different backgrounds. All of the U.S. students who answered the question said the intervention did not help them, whereas all of the international students said it did. Furthermore, all of the U.S. students stated that their feelings of prejudice had not changed over the course of the semester, whereas all of the international students indicated that their feelings of prejudiced had changed as a result of their participation in my intervention. Changes occurred more on the part of international students and less on the part of U.S. students. International students continued to seek friends as two international students from India stated that they were not able to meet enough friends in their first semester so that was one of their biggest goals for the next semester. I did not hear similar comments from the U.S. students in the class, which leads me to believe that they are less concerned about developing friends with peers than compared to their international student peers.

Independence: am I an adult yet?

The fall 2021 semester lasted 16 weeks, which can be seen as a long time when one is trying to build a new life for themselves away from their family and friends. In the U.S., we typically refer to individuals as being an adult once they turn 18 years old, however, for many this time in their lives also starts a new phase in their lives when they move out of their family home and go to college to build a new independent life. This journey through the beginning of adulthood can be difficult to navigate especially when you have moved your life across the world and are doing so in a new cultural environment.

Becoming independent

Becoming independent tends to be a goal for many 18-year olds who are out on their own for the first time. However, learning how to become independent has its challenges especially when faced with a new academic experience in a new cultural setting. While all students struggle with becoming independent, more U.S. students talked about this challenge than international students. U.S. students talked about the struggle to hold themselves responsible and accountable for their own actions. Chris, a third culture kid, stated in his journal:

> I think that the hardest part about beginning my studies at ASU would be being able to hold myself accountable for all situations. As an example, before I moved my parents would hold me accountable for things I didn't do like not wake up on time or not finish my homework, and I would be able to finish everything with them pestering me. At the time I thought this was the most annoying thing in the world and I was always mad at them because they weren't treating me like an adult. But now that I'm in my own dorm and the only person who lives with me is a roommate who is just as irresponsible as I am, I miss the reminders and the nagging because now I have to fend for myself.

It is important to note that Chris' family lived in California and he had the opportunity to visit his family and friends whenever he wanted. Another U.S. student, Sarah wrote about how she feels like international students are more independent because they cook their own meals. She seemed to indicate that she was envious of their behaviors and wanted to try and change her behaviors as well. In her journal Sarah stated:

> Ever since I've been fending for food by myself, I haven't been cooking as much as I would like. Not only is it a stressor for my wallet, I can't help but have my health in mind when I am eating any kind of food I either got on campus or from the POD. So, then I would have to say that cooking my own food is something that I have seen the international students do that I would like to incorporate into my everyday life.

This is just another example of the kinds of struggles that U.S. students face that can be seen as differences versus international students. International students do not frame their experiences of learning to become more responsible; they frame it in the way that they must adjust to their new life. They too are probably learning how to be independent and even if they are coming from cultures that are more interdependent in nature, the very act of traveling to study and live in a new environment gives them a broader perspective in which to address their journey to independence. And yet it does remain clear that this intervention gave students the confidence to try and tackle these challenges as they continued to navigate them during their time at ASU. In his final interview, Rohan stated:

> Talking to people with different backgrounds gives you the chance to challenge pre-existing ideas that you have developed by growing up on the other side of the globe. Challenging these ideas, will give you the chance to grow and mature, and think of solutions to problems in life you wouldn't normally thing of. I will definitely continue connecting with people from different backgrounds as my experience in the U.S. continues, and use the knowledge I gain to better myself.

Rohan began the semester very insecure about himself and his place at ASU because he felt so different from everyone else. In addition to feeling lonely, he felt that his experience of coming from a small island country exacerbated his perceptions of feeling different. To see him state the above quote at the end of the semester shows how far he traveled over the course of my intervention.

Learning to be who I am

As students were contemplating their journey over the course of the semester, they were able to articulate profound statements that indicated that their journey has opened their eyes to new thoughts and beliefs. When we have the chance to learn about different people and ways of life, we get an intimate view of how people are shaped and

developed by their experiences. Many students addressed how they have come to a deeper understanding that each person is unique and comes to life with their own perspective and way of being. When we finally accept that we must learn to appreciate these things that make us unique, we are better suited to approach life with an open heart and mind. Sai, at the end of the semester stated in his journal:

> What makes each one of us different or unique as an individual in this universe are the qualities that lie within us. Everyone has their own strengths and weaknesses, hence only the individuality of a person is respected, as it is the quality that makes them different from others. Intercultural learning plays a crucial role into the overall development of a person. Meeting people from varied background helps us learn new ways to approach problems.

Although I cannot state with 100% certainty that my intervention helped to develop this shift in mindset all on its own, it is clear that this multicultural classroom that allowed students to connect over a variety of topics, gave students a new-found appreciation for humanity and what each person brings to this world.

I looked to uncover the truth as it relates to research question #3, which stated, "how did the interactions between U.S. and international students within a first-semester foundational course infused with a culturally sustaining pedagogy influence or change U.S. students and vice versa?" People change over time, that can be stated with an absolute sense of truth. However, discovering and determining what causes the change is not always easy to identify. The students who participated in this research study undoubtedly changed over the course of these 16 weeks, and yet I cannot say it was definitely my intervention that created the change. Was it the sense of time that took students from the beginning of the semester to the end? Was it the relationships they developed in their residence halls? Was it their level of confidence growing as they

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accomplished one task after another? Was it the culturally infused first-year experience course that I taught that provided them with a safe environment to grow and learn about themselves and others? Hopefully, with some level of certainty we can say it was probably all of the above. And yet that being said, I will say with a high level of confidence that it was the international students in my intervention who were influenced and/or changed the most. When I asked students at the end of the semester if they had been changed by the different students in this class, all of the international students stated that they had been changed. However, of the few U.S. students who chose to answer the question, they stated that they had not been changed. Even with those statements, I know that there were changes in U.S. students, it may just have been harder for them to see. As has been mentioned, Brady was a student who constantly talked about how great the U.S. is and how lucky international students should feel coming to the U.S. And yet at the end of the semester, Brady stated in his journal, "I am blessed that I was in a group with international students, not only I experienced their culture but I became good friends with them and I would like to thank the professor for picking me and them in a group." While I have no doubt that Brady may have been telling me something that he thought I wanted to hear, I do believe that he had a profound experience working with his Indian group members in my intervention. We may not see all of the benefits and changes that occurred due to my intervention immediately, but hopefully it will continue to create moments of change for these study participants in the future.

Research Question #4:

How did a first-semester foundational course infused with a culturally sustaining pedagogy influence international and U.S. students to desire to explore intercultural experiences in the future?

This last research question was intended to understand if my intervention had an impact on study participants to explore intercultural experiences in the future. I had high hopes for my intervention because at the end of the day, I wanted to help change the landscape for international students studying in the United States. I believe that if more international students develop connections with U.S. students during their time in the U.S. then both international students, U.S. students and their respective countries will be for the better. I also believe that if we expose ourselves to different intercultural experiences, we will see life and the people who we interact with in a more welcoming attitude. So, as I created my intervention and sought to think into the future, I wanted to see if the experience I was creating was going to increase their desire to develop intercultural connections moving forward. I have addressed some comments already that help provide context for this question, however, I also think it is important to understand the ways in which people change and how this might impact them in the future. The final high-level theme to explore is growth and development, which focuses on our ability to change and be transformed. My intervention created a space for all students to reconsider their previously held views and exposed them to a future of possibilities. The theme growth and development will now be explored.

Growth and Development: do I want to change? / am I transformed?

Whether we want to admit or not, we are changed by our experiences. When we are changed, we transform into something new. This transformation is hoped to be positive but sometimes it is also negative. Understanding whether or not the students in my intervention have changed and if this change will create a desire to have more intercultural experiences is critical. We might also be able to consider whether or not students will choose to study abroad, study a foreign language, obtain an internship in another country, or even go on an extended trip in a country vastly different from their own. These desires for intercultural experiences can open our eyes to so many different viewpoints, languages, beliefs, cuisines, attitudes and experiences. Therefore, did these study participants articulate this sense of curiosity after completing my intervention?

Developing mindsets for growth

My intervention that was described in Chapter 3 sought to introduce students to ten mindsets that were important for the overall curriculum of the class. Each week students had the opportunity to explore these mindsets through their journal assignments (see Appendix B & F). By connecting these mindsets to the transformative learning experience and other theoretical perspectives in this study, students were able to reflect on whether these mindsets were strengths or weaknesses for them. As they reflected on their weaknesses and strengths, they were able to position themselves in the future by further developing areas that were of interest to them. Empathy was a mindset that kept coming back over and over again over the course of the semester. When we have empathy for others, we can better understand where they are coming from and what they are experiencing. When we understand that different people struggle with things that we

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do not struggle with, we can provide guidance and support to help them through their struggles. Students commented that this intervention helped them learn about other cultures and develop a better understanding of the world. The intervention also allowed students to build a network that they can draw upon in the future should a need arise. Jean-Marc stated in his journal, "Learning and connecting with people from backgrounds different to yours helps you grow, create awareness and crush stereotypes." The intervention was also able to help build character and provide a space for personal exploration. During his final interview Samir stated, "[this class] it's more about self-reflecting who you are and sort of building on your own character." Additionally, students were able to develop a better sense of resilience that will allow them to persevere in the future. Chethan stated, "Humans are social beings, and thus, connecting with other people are an essential part of survival." Finally, Utkarsh, at the end of the semester stated in his journal:

> I just have to open my mind to new possibilities and people because this will allow me to expand my circle in life. It'll allow me to know more information about the world and become a global citizen. I would be much more informed about the world than I would be if I only interacted with people who were the exact same as me.

These statements clearly indicate moments of self-reflection and growth that can be attributed to their participation in my intervention. As I previously stated, my initial goal when I started contemplating this research study topic was to explore the idea of global citizenship, so it was interesting to see Utkarsh state his desire to become one himself after participating in my intervention.

Transforming through reflection

The last written assignment from these study participants asked them to answer the question "how has learning with a diverse group of students impacted your experience learning about Creative Problem Solving this semester?" The answers to this question were simply astounding. Since reflection is such an important part of the transformative learning experience, it was vital that I provided them an opportunity to reflect on their overall experience with the curriculum and their peers. While I have just focused on a few students in each of the previous themes, I want to share statements from each student who submitted this assignment to show how they were transformed through my intervention.

Leonard earned an A in this UNI 120 class. I believe Leonardo's growth can be summed up by saying that he enjoyed learning about his comfort zones and how to break out of them. Leonardo stated:

> After hearing different views from different people about the problems, tasks and hypothetical situations that were given in this course, I noticed that few thoughts and opinions provided about the problem were very imaginative and it really caught my attention, it influenced my way of thinking and it encouraged me to be more creative in solving problems and to move away from the traditional way of thinking, I critically analyzed why and how they have come up with such opinions, this made me consider more factors that might influence what is perceived as a problem and a solution.

Being able to step outside of our traditional box and challenge our way of thinking, will go a long way to becoming someone who is open to a variety of ideas and thoughts.

Jean-Marc was also someone who had a transformative experience as he sought to assimilate into U.S. culture. He earned an A in this UNI 120 class. When reflecting on his

moment of epiphany, I would say that he enjoyed learning with different people as it created new and different experiences. Jean-Marc stated:

> Learning with a diverse group of students as we had in our class has really had an impact on my experience – in a good way. If we would have had exclusively either international or US students in our class, the experience would hardly have been as good as it has been, mainly because each faction of students thinks in a similar way, more or less. The class conversations would have been boring and unintuitive, with everyone agreeing with what one person says.

I often wondered if it was right to bring in U.S. students to this experience as it was initially my goal to create a better experience for international students. However, as Jean-Marc notes, having only one group instead of both would have drastically changed the experience for all involved.

Francis' journey over the course of the semester was interesting to watch because she started out seeming so interested in connecting with her international peers. She earned a B in this UNI 120 class. However, I believe that as the only U.S. student in her group project, this experience was frustrating for her and I worried that she was going to retreat back into her former ways of acting. She may indeed do so, however, her thoughts indicate to me that she was excited to have expanded her knowledge through the diversity in our class. Francis stated, "While facing these troubles, I learned to be a more patient and understanding person. I have to be able to understand cultural differences, and time issues. I also learned how to understand different cultures." As we learn about different cultures, we can better understand the people around us.

Brady also had an interesting journey to observe because he initially seemed to be the most resistant to the experience, however, by the end of the semester, I believe he was positively impacted by the group project experience. He earned an A in this UNI 120

class. Brady sounds like someone who was not knowledgeable about other cultures besides the U.S. His focus on the greatness of the U.S. at the beginning of the semester seemed to dissipate as the semester continued. By the end of the semester, I believe that Brady's experience helped him learn about the vast differences between U.S. culture and many other cultures of the world. Brady stated, "The three group members I had were from India and I am honestly glad that I got to hear what their culture is like in their country, how much different it is here than India and share their experience of what it is like in the U.S. than in India." By exposing ourselves to intimate aspects of another culture, we may slowly start to question our own thus providing us with a life that brings together the aspects we like from many different cultures.

Kemi is not someone we have heard from much, and yet, I feel as though her final thoughts demonstrate the ways in which this intervention will change these students for the better. She earned an A in this UNI 120 class. Kemi stated, "Learning with a diverse group of people helped me to enlighten myself about different cultures and how one's background and upbringing play a vital role in making significant decisions in their life." Kemi is open to adapting and learning about the different cultures in the world.

Rohan was such a willing participate in this research study and I could not be more grateful to have watched his journey from a shy, timid student into someone with confidence and a realization of who they want to become. He earned an A in this UNI 120 class. Rohan stated, "I was ecstatic to join this class, as by learning about how people from different backgrounds think makes you understand that there is no wrong or right, I like to call it spectrum of success." Rohan's ability to see that when we talk about right

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vs. wrong, there isn't always a clear answer. Being able to grasp this, will hopefully allow him to admit when he is wrong in the future.

As a third culture kid, Samir brought a unique perspective to his experience especially as I learned about his upbringing in San Jose, California, which is a very multi-cultural city. He earned an A in this UNI 120 class. In many ways, I bet Samir was exposed to more intimately to cultures in high school than he has been at ASU thus far. Samir stated, "there have been times in the class where someone had a completely different idea and I found myself liking their idea a lot more than mine. In hindsight I would say to myself, 'how did I not think of that.'" Samir can be seen as trying to expand his knowledge through diversity.

As we try to understand the differences between us, Chethan stated, "I was able to pinpoint how the viewpoints of a student from the U.S. subtly differ from that of an international student." Although this may sound simple and obvious, I think it illustrates that he was building an understanding of the differences between students. He earned an A in this UNI 120 class as well. Understanding these differences will go a long way to overcoming miscommunications and misinterpretations.

Jialong was the only international student who did not get an A in this class, however, that was not due to his lack of effort. He earned a B in this UNI 120 class. With that being said, Jialong stated:

> The diversity in this class has made me want to become more culturally aware and meet more people who do not share the same thought processes or culture or beliefs as I do and to learn more about people and cultures and how exactly do they differ from each other and what is the reason for this and to find similarities between cultures as well.

Jialong's journey can best be described as being very excited that he exposed himself to different thoughts and beliefs, which is something we all should be willing to explore.

Sarah is the one student who commented that they only friend they made in the class was her current boyfriend. However, she earned an A in this UNI 120 class. This was an interesting development because during the first class, she talked about being from New York City where she was exposed to many different cultures. After she shared this information, I assumed she would be open to the entire process, however, she started to retreat each week until I felt like she was no longer interested in this research study. That being said, she did state, "I feel most importantly, we learned how to integrate these creative problem-solving skills into our everyday lives at school, in our jobs, and when we are interacting with our peers." In summary, Sarah feels like the skills obtained through this intervention will set her up for success in the future as she can incorporate these skills into many aspects of her life.

Chris, another third culture kid, was a delight to watch over the course of the semester. He earned a C in this UNI 120 class. Although he struggled to turn in every assignment, he was an active participant in class. His experiences as a third culture kid really seemed to inform his perspectives and how he related to the topic of this research study. At the end of the semester, Chris stated, "I believe that it is very beneficial to have classes, where your interactions with international students are increased as the blend of cultures and approaches, helps both parties in one way or another." Chris seems to understand the exposing people to diversity helps everyone grow and change.

In class, Sai was one of the quieter students from India, however, his journal reflections always let me know that he was critically analyzing the concepts in this class

as he figured out his path forward. He earned an A in this UNI 120 class. Sai stated, "I believe that as a result of these encounters, my knowledge is expanding in a variety of areas, which is benefiting me in my overall development." Sai internalized this experience and recognized that our personal development is expanded through different encounters and experiences.

I enjoyed watching Stefanie over the course of the semester, because she was the only student from China in this research study. She earned an A in this UNI 120 class. It would have been interesting to have at least one male and one female from China as I would have been fascinated to see if their experiences differed. However, Stefanie navigated her first semester in the U.S. with curiosity and caution. When she shared with me that she had created a blog to share her experiences with her friends and family back home, it reminded me of how important it is to find the space for your family and friends who are miles away to be a part of your experience in their own way. In commenting on the group project experience, Stefanie stated, "working with other groups of students is like a clash of different cultures." She went on to say that she learned things from each of her group members which highlights her willingness to learn about herself and others through these cultural clashes.

Utkarsh was another third culture kid that I wish I had the chance to talk to more. He earned an A in this UNI 120 class. He did decline my invitation to participate in the interview portion of the research study, however, I found his journals and thoughts fascinating. I believe he benefited from a class that was mixed because it was also a safe environment for him as well as he navigated his first semester. Utkarsh stated, "The activities we participated in were rather unique and caused us to think about the world

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and specific challenges in new ways." Providing and creating a new way of thinking has the possibility to push Utkarsh and others down a new and exciting path that may not have been possible before their participation in my intervention.

Sonali's journal submissions always left me with more questions than answers, but as someone who is constantly asking questions, I felt as though I was having a running conversation with her over the course of the semester. She earned an A in this UNI 120 class. Her thoughtfulness, honesty, compassion and curiosity showed me that she was fully present as she navigated her first semester at ASU. Sonali stated, "I have also noticed difference in comfort levels and method of communication among people from the same background and outside." Understanding that not everyone communicates the same way will go a long way to feeling more comfortable with communicating with individuals from a variety of different backgrounds.

Finally, Max, the last third culture kid, was someone who intrigued me over the course of the semester. He earned a B in this UNI 120 class. He was very open and honest during his journals, however, he failed to meet me for our second interview. At one point he told me that his mother was a professor at ASU, and I always wondered how this influenced his journey as a first-year student. Max stated:

> Learning with international students is a very interesting thing to do. And the perspective that people are very different culturally from me got me to look at things in a very different way than if it were just American students. Getting a very different perspective than what I'm used to has helped some of these traits come much easier to me. And I'm happy that I was lucky enough to take place in this cultural exchange.

As I have previously stated, Max indicated he has no interest in meeting more international students in the future, however, I do people that he understands how

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learning with different people creates new opportunities. I am hopeful he will continue to find ways to expose himself to cultural diversity even if he is not intentionally making new international student friends.

After hearing from each of the students in this research study, it is important that we remember research question #4, which asked, "how did a first-semester foundational course infused with a culturally sustaining pedagogy influence international and U.S. students to desire to explore intercultural experiences in the future?" As one can see, all of the students indicated that they felt the experience to be very positive and allowed them to see things from new perspectives. Everyone seemed to acknowledge that people come from different backgrounds and bring with them their own thoughts and viewpoints. Usually we tend to associate with people who are similar to us and this was confirmed by some of the students. Although they also indicated that they were surprised to learn how much more comfortable they felt making connections with people who shared similar cultural backgrounds, it is clear that this class that contained eight U.S. and ten international students exposed all of them to different perspectives than what they were previously used to.

I also think it is important to acknowledge that none of the students indicated an impact on themselves that they believed to be negative in nature. Therefore, it can be said that the impact of learning with this diverse group of students was positive and allowed the students to see things from a different outlook. One student even acknowledged that it is important that not everyone agrees and that there is no standard sense of what is right or wrong. Each of us have our own moral compass and can be challenged by thoughts that are different from our own. This intervention was hopefully just a foundation for

them to explore different thoughts and experiences which will continue to push them to learn and grow. As one student noted, it is important that everyone is open to adapting or else these kinds of experiences will not have the kind of impact that they could. Whether it be about exploring cultural differences between them, or expanding their own knowledge from things they learned from each other, or acknowledging that being a part of a diverse learning environment increases their cultural capacity or finally the idea that we all adapt and change based on what we learn from others. It is clear that changes occurred over the course of the semester, and from their own words it sounds like they were changed for good. It is yet to be seen whether their participation in this research study will actually push them to experience more intercultural experiences in the future. Hopefully more to come.

Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter introduced you to each student that participated in this research study. Their voices and perspectives gave rise to the themes and subcategories that were identified through the analysis phase of this research study. These themes provided a rich context to understand the experiences of the U.S. and international students who learned to navigate through the dynamics of their interactions. Without their voices these themes would not have been articulated in such a way that helped to answer each of the four research questions. Table 7 will summarize the themes previously presented, how they answered each research question and which study participants provided data to help answer these research questions and develop these themes.

Table 7

Themes, categories, the connection to research questions and study participants

Themes and categories	Research questions	Study Participants
Are you in or are you out? 1. Majority vs. Minority 2. Having Privilege 3. Self-segregation 4. Segregating due to prejudices	1. How did feelings of prejudice, both negative and positive, held by international and U.S. students influence their perceptions to build intercultural connections?	1. Max, Samir, Rohan, Chris, Utkarsh, Jialong, Angie
Aren't we the best? 1. Acting better/Acting like we don't care 2. Speaking English Clearly 3. We all have accents	1. How did feelings of prejudice, both negative and positive, held by international and U.S. students influence their perceptions to build intercultural connections?	1. Francis, Leonardo, Sonali, Brady, Kemi, Chethan
Do you want to be friends? 1. Connections piercing through loneliness 2. Friendship Seeking 3. Celebrating our Commonalities 4. Sticking together	1. How did feelings of prejudice, both negative and positive, held by international and U.S. students influence their perceptions to build intercultural connections?	1. Brady, Kemi, Max, Chethan, Jean-Marc, Francis, Jialong, Sarah, Samir, Sonali, Stefanie, Kemi
What makes us so different? 1. Assimilation vs. Integration 2. Unique cultural perspectives	2. How did acculturation strategies and contact between U.S. and international students influence their perceptions to build intercultural connections?	1. Kemi, Jean-Marc, Brady, Sonali, Max
What do we have in common? 1. Majority vs. Minority 2. Common goals 3. Academic struggles	2. How did acculturation strategies and contact between U.S. and international students influence their perceptions to build intercultural connections?	1. Brady, Leonardo, Utkarsh, Sonali, Max
Do you want to be friends? 1. Friendship Responsibility 2. Quality of Connections 3. Friendship Formation	3. How did the interactions within a first-semester foundational course infused with a culturally sustaining pedagogy influence the perceptions U.S. students had of international students and vice versa?	1. Francis, Jean-Marc, Max, Chris, Sarah
Am I an adult yet? 1. Becoming independent *2.* Learning to be who I am	3. How did the interactions within a first-semester foundational course infused with a culturally sustaining pedagogy influence the perceptions U.S. students had of international students and vice versa?	1. Chris, Sarah, Rohan, Sai
Do I want to change? / Am I transformed? 1. Developing mindsets for growth *2.* Transforming through reflection	4. How did a first-semester foundational course infused with a culturally sustaining pedagogy influence international and U.S. students to desire to explore intercultural experiences in the future?	1. All

Overall, it can be stated that feelings of prejudice influenced students as they sought to build intercultural connections, however, these prejudices did not hold them back completely. It can also be stated that acculturation strategies and contact influenced their behaviors as they navigated through these connections. As with most experiences, the intervention I created provided additional context and information for the perceptions that they had of each other. However, most importantly my intervention gave them a new perspective on life that will help them navigate intercultural experiences in the future. As Liu and Dong (2018) stated, "through celebrating and embracing differences between and within cultures, the balance between host and immigrant groups can be achieved toward the goal of making our world become more pluralistic, rather than mechanizing of humanity into streamlined model minorities" (p. 124). If ASU wants to encourage these kinds of interactions between U.S. and international students, then intentional ways to embrace differences so that students become global citizens need to be explored and implemented. Students need to learn and uncover more than just superficial facts about their peers in order to understand the vastness of our humanity.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This research study sought to explore what would happen when U.S students and international students studied together in a first-year foundational course with the goal to create intercultural connections between them. The journey that led me to this final research study specified that one of the ways international students can feel more supported during their time in the United States is to develop connections with U.S. students. Although I had taught courses before with just international students that helped them navigate challenges they faced in the United States, I discovered that if I really wanted to see how U.S. students could support international students it was important to have them together in one classroom environment. The previous chapter detailed the various themes that I identified through the analysis phase and I sought to connect those themes to the research questions I posed for this research study.

Most importantly, I wanted to explore the phenomenon of this research study to uncover the thoughts, feelings and experiences of these research study participants. With 20 different students representing different cultures, backgrounds, religions, majors, languages and perspectives, each student went on their own journey over the course of the semester. Some international students created a community with other international students, while most of the U.S. students created a community with other U.S. students. Of course, there were some exceptions to this such as the case with Jean-Marc. Jean-Marc presented a similar experience to another Indian student that I interviewed in a previous cycle of this research study. Both students dove head first into the U.S.

collegiate experience finding ways to connect with U.S. students over their fellow international student peers. In fact, as previously stated, Jean-Marc made it very clear that he does not want to make friends with other international students during his time at ASU. Is it possible that his perspective will change over the next three years that it takes to earn his degree; possibly, however, that would be worth exploring in a follow up conversation with him in one or two years. Rohan is another international student who spoke of connecting with U.S. students more than international students as well. Though he did not state his unwillingness to connect with international students, he was able to connect with other U.S. students who felt slightly like outsiders but still were a part of the U.S. student group. Both of these students spoke so highly of their experiences at ASU during their first semester, that one cannot help but attribute their experiences to their intentional behaviors to connect with U.S. students. On the other hand, two Indian male students indicated at the end of the semester, that it was a very difficult semester for them because they failed to connect with other students during the course of the semester. Therefore, it can be assumed that the more international students connect and build a community with other students, particularly U.S. students, the more they feel supported as they navigate challenges during their first few months in the United States.

Yet, U.S. students play a vital role in the exploration of the dynamics between these student groups and even after this research study, I believe that more research is needed to truly understand where they are coming from and what motivates them or not to connect with students from different cultural backgrounds. In this research study, U.S. students, which were comprised of students from many different cultural backgrounds, presented a lackadaisical attitude towards the experience itself and to their connections

with international students. If they had not been participants in this research study, they may not have thought about their interactions with international students during their first semester at ASU. However, international students do not have the ability to not think about their interactions with U.S. students because they thrust themselves into the deep end of the pool when they decided to study in a foreign country. It is the job of U.S. institutions to ensure that international students have the resources so they are successfully able to swim in the deep end of the pool. The intervention explored in this research study provided a foundation for faculty to utilize, however, much can be done to enhance this academic experience. Finally, as has been previously stated, all of the students in this research study were impacted in some way or another through their participation in this research study. It can be stated that some were impacted more than others, however, regardless of the depth of the impact, the development of intercultural skills for all students will undoubtedly assist them as they continue to navigate their career at ASU and beyond.

Implications to Theoretical Concepts

As I seek to connect the findings of this research study to previously explored theoretical and pedagogical concepts introduced in Chapter 2, I would like to address how the themes identified relate to the ideas of first-year foundational courses, U.S. students, the role of the instructor, and the ability for students to share their personal experiences. My themes and these ideas indicate that future studies using the theoretical and pedagogical concepts explored in this research study are required. Since this was the first time these four concepts were applied together, it would be beneficial to study them again under different circumstances.

Foundational Courses

Although all of the goals of my intervention may not have been accomplished, there are many positive things that came as a result of my intervention. As noted in the previous chapter, many students by the end of the semester indicated that they had a transformative experience that influenced some aspect of their life. As a reminder, transformative learning theory is defined as "the process whereby adult learners critically examine their beliefs, values, and assumptions in light of acquiring new knowledge and begin a process of social change" (Mezirow, 2003). Some study participants went through the ten steps of transformative learning over the course of my intervention, while others stopped somewhere along the journey. Applying this theory to my intervention showcased the relevance of exploring individual growth in which change was desired. This goes to show how important these first-year foundational courses are in building a solid foundation for students when they are beginning their first year as an undergraduate student. As MacGregor and Folinazzo (2018) stated, "first-year experience courses, designed to help students integrate and acclimate to school culture, make friends, learn expectations, and discover their own strengths and weaknesses improve academic performance, as reported by domestic and international students" (p. 325). Each of these study participants hopefully feels more prepared in some aspect of their personal and educational lives to tackle challenges in the future based on their participation in this intervention.

U.S. Student Perspectives

Beyond the first-year foundational experience, one cannot ignore the role U.S. students played in this experience and how their role as the majority group member

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influenced both their own lives and the lives of their international student peers. As was confirmed by many U.S. student study participants in this research study, Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern (2002) stated, "many American college students felt frustrated, impatient, and uncomfortable when encountering communication obstacles with the international student community" (p. 621). These communication frustrations prevent individuals from believing that they can connect with their peers in meaningful ways. However, on the other side, international students believe that they are not being received as positively as they might wish to be. This extends beyond the superficiality that has been addressed previously. As Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern (2002) stated, "foreign students rank negative attitudes and a lack of cultural sensitivity among U.S. nationals as the greatest perceived barriers to successful intergroup relations" (p. 613) The biggest challenge for U.S. institutions and future researchers is identify ways to increase the cultural awareness of U.S. students towards other cultures and countries. By obtaining a better understanding of the cultures of the world, U.S. students may be more interested in developing connections with their international student peers. Mamiseishvili (2012) stated, "greater exposure to international education and international students increases American students' cultural sensitivities and global understanding and equips them with the skills to interact with people from diverse backgrounds in today's global workplace" (p. 2). These benefits go far beyond just the classroom but into the workforce that will dominant these students' lives for the rest of their career. And yet, contact alone does not reduce prejudice because again as Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern (2002) stated, "research indicating that frequent contact with members of an outgroup does not necessarily translate into improve intergroup communication and relations" (p. 625). As a

reminder the concept of acculturation is defined as, "a process of cultural and psychological changes that involve various forms of mutual accommodation, leading to some longer-term psychological and sociocultural adaptions between both groups" (Berry, 2005, p. 699). This study illustrated that further exploration on how majority group members can be adapted by these experiences are important to consider for future researchers. Previous studies have struggled to fully understand how majority group members are changed through acculturation, and this research study continues that theme. While I had hoped to fill in a critical gap in the validation of acculturation, the perspectives of U.S. students in this research study failed to indicate significant change. Identifying solutions to improve the ways in which these student groups contact with each other in other academic experiences should hopefully improve intergroup relations. This may allow for further exploration of majority group members as active participants in the acculturative experience.

Role of Faculty

The role of the instructor is important to address in this kind of learning environment. As Thomas et al. (2018) stated, "international and domestic students struggle to engage with each other and develop meaningful connections" (p. 1387). This was confirmed by the majority of these study participants with the possible exceptions of Jean-Marc and Rohan. While these two individuals may have been the exception to the rule, as an instructor, one cannot help but think of alternative ways that instructors can help facilitate these meaningful connections between students. Although adjusting to the U.S. education system is one challenge faced by international students, connecting with peers may indirectly aid in their adjustment. As Mamiseishvili (2012) stated, "faculty can

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also contribute to successful academic integration of international students by incorporating more cooperative learning activities into their classes to help them develop friendships with other students" (p. 15). It certainly was my goal to include culturally responsive activities that led to cooperative learning activities, however, I also know there is so much more that I could have done. Yet, there is hope that this theory can present a foundation for faculty to positively influence interactions between students. As Paris and Alim (2017) stated, culturally sustaining pedagogy "seeks to perpetuate and foster - to sustain - linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of schooling for positive social transformation" (p. 1). Faculty would be wise to continue to push forward with a culturally sustaining pedagogy to identify new ways to build connections between students. This research study should be the beginning of this theory becoming a bedrock to create intercultural connections that will fill in the holes that were identified in my literature review. Focusing on this pedagogical aspect of the curricular experience may allow for an even deeper understanding of this phenomenon. Thomas et al. (2018) stated, "the literature is clear that when relationships are formed between international and domestic students, there are numerous positive sociological outcomes for all involved" (p. 1388). Therefore, truly identifying the proper conditions that will lead to the forming of friendships between U.S. and international students should be the focus of future researchers including myself.

Self-Disclosure to Increase Connections

An area of literature that may shed some light on ways to truly develop connections between students was addressed by Imai and Imai (2019) in their study. They stated, "the findings indicate the possibility that international students who feel depressed

due to their experience of being prejudiced against may gain benefit from disclosing themselves deeply to host nationals" (Imai & Imai, p. 76). The act of disclosure creates an opportunity for students to share and divulge intimate aspects of their lives. As Imai and Imai (2019) went on to state, "self-disclosure refers to how intimately and fully people talk about themselves" (p. 72). While I certainly created moments where students worked in pairs on in-class tasks, I may not have provided them enough opportunities and/or instructions to share parts of their own lives with each other. It is also possible that while I had hoped that they would share aspects of their lives, I may have needed to create a more support environment to do so. Self-disclosure may go a long way in providing U.S. students with more information about cultures that they are not familiar with and help create opportunities to meet the fifth condition of intergroup contact theory, which alludes to friendship formation assisting with decreasing prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2005). The five conditions of intergroup contact theory may need to studied in isolation in order to better understand which conditions are absolutely necessary to change feelings of prejudice between two different groups of students. The act of self-disclosure with his group mates may have been the moment in Brady's journey where he transitioned from thinking the United States is so amazing to realizing due to his experiences with his group project members how different other cultures around the world are. How can these moments of self-disclosure influence their desire to build connections in the future? For example, Ensari and Miller (2006) stated:

> These educational programs can incorporate a personalization element by using the members of the respective groups to initiate such discussion by drawing on material from their own lives to emphasize the shared similarities that underlie their respective differences— thereby eliciting the benefits of self-disclosure and empathy" (p. 599).

If students are more aware of the lives and experiences of their peers, it is possible that they will be develop empathetic insights that will equip them to bond over their commonalities and discuss their inherent differences.

Presenting my findings in relation to the theoretical and pedagogical concepts that were included in this research study confirm that the choice to include them in this context proved fruitful. There are so many pieces to exploring the dynamics between U.S. and international students that I do not believe my findings would have been as rich had these concepts not been included. The responsiveness of these concepts to come through the themes I identified confirmed that they were appropriate under these circumstances. In fact, I believe that there is space for additional concepts to provide further perspectives that may illuminate the challenges for U.S. and international students to develop intercultural connections.

Limitations of the Study

As a novice researcher conducting my first full scale research study, I cannot ignore many limitations that may have impacted this overall research study and the themes I identified.

Scope of Research Study

The first limitation that I would like to address is the size and scope of this research study itself. With only 20 participants in this research study that was conducted using phenomenological qualitative research methods, it is simply impossible to generalize any findings beyond the context of this specific research study. As MacGregor and Folinazzo (2018) stated, "because the questions elicit participants' personal

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perceptions and experiences, there is a degree of subjectivity and inadvertent bias" (p. 307). This bias prevents any researcher from explicitly stating that they will have a similar experience in a different research setting. While that was not a goal of mine, it can prevent researchers and practitioners from implementing a similar study as their experience might be very different than mine. I would not have conducted this research study using other research methods, however, I understand that there are limitations that cannot be ignored when conducting a purely qualitative study. I would be lying if I did not admit that I am curious how this study may have been different if I had conducted a mixed methods research study instead.

Composition of Study Participants

The next limitation that I think is important to address is the make-up of these study participants. First, the U.S. students who participated in this research study were required to enroll in UNI 120 during their first semester at ASU because they had been identified as needing the support as they began their undergraduate career at ASU. This indicates that there were a variety of factors that contributed to why they were required to enroll in this class. When individuals are required to do something that they do not think they need to do, they sometimes do them begrudgingly. Therefore, it is possible that this explains the general apathy of the U.S. students during the course of their interactions with their international student peers. The international students who participated in this research study chose to because of what they read in the recruitment email. They were not required to enroll in the course, which means that they took the initiative to enroll because they wanted to participate in this unique cultural experience. With an inclination already to participate in such a unique academic experience their mindsets were curious

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and led them to be open to what may have transpired. I believe this inclination towards intercultural experiences put them on a different playing field than their U.S. student peers because they expressed a specific interest in participating in the experience. As Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern (2002) stated, "intergroup anxiety – the apprehension individuals feel when anticipating or experiencing social contact with an outgroup – is a highly prevalent emotion in intercultural contexts" (p. 613). To be clear, the U.S. students that did participate could have chosen another section of UNI 120 if they wanted to, however, perhaps my section was the one that fit with their schedule the best. In the future, working with a group of students who all are required to take this course or instead, all have the option to take this course because they wanted to could have a great impact on the dynamics between the students.

Lack of Female Voices

Another limitation that disappointed me greatly was the make-up of the individuals who agreed to participate in the interview portion of this research study. I wanted to have one male student and one female student from each student group to participate in the process, however, four females that I invited declined to participate in this portion of the research study. A lack of female perspectives in these semi-structured interviews prevented me from digging deeper into their experiences which may have highlighted different perspectives based on their gender identity. As Lowinger et al. (2014) stated, "females have a greater drive to make friends with native students and fit into the host college community" (p. 148). This was a critical voice missing from the interview portion of this research study. Furthermore, the two U.S. students came from very international backgrounds. I understand that in many ways that sounds ignorant

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because the United States is a country built on immigrants, however, the U.S. students that I interviewed were not born in the United States having immigrated when they were children. I believe this provided them with a different perspective from a student born in the United States. If U.S. born students had agreed to participate, what thoughts would have arisen that may have informed how a typical U.S. student interacts with international students? Finally, Max failed to show up for his second interview so I was not able to see his growth from the beginning of the semester to the middle and then to the end. There are unlimited possibilities to what I may have uncovered if we were able to have our second interview.

Dual Roles of Instructor and Researcher

The next limitation that I would like to address here is regarding the challenges I faced as the teacher and researcher of this research study. Having taught this course in its original format many times before, I am very comfortable as a teacher and enjoy working with students as they uncover parts of themselves through the journey of this UNI 120 course. Since I had taught this course many times before I think this prevented me from seeing new ways that I could have unpacked and delivered the content in a way that would have better aligned with the goals of this research study. Additionally, the pressure to revise the original curriculum so that it was more aligned with a culturally sustaining pedagogy highlighted to me that I am not a curriculum specialist. There are people who are trained in curriculum development and I am sure it would have benefited me if I had connected with someone who has more curriculum experience to ensure that the lesson plans I put together were the most effective way to deliver the content of the course that aligned with the goals of this research study. This may have also allowed me to ensure

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that I was creating creative spaces for the U.S. and international students to connect in ways that could have led to more intercultural connections. As Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern (2002) stated, "communication difficulties and cultural barriers may evoke adverse emotions that, in turn, give rise to prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviors" (p. 629). Furthermore, since I was the teacher on record, I was also responsible for grading students' work and overseeing the course policies. This sometimes put me in a difficult situation where I had to enforce a course policy even if I felt like it was not accommodating the needs of the students in this research study. Additionally, since I was grading their assignments and providing feedback, I was always nervous that my feedback on their assignments may have unintendedly influenced them and their experience. Although I understand that action researchers are exploring something within their local work setting, this additional role as a teacher who ultimately provided students with a grade in the course felt like an extra role that may have unduly influenced the outcomes I identified.

Impact of COVID-19

The final limitation that I do not think can be ignored is the reality that this research study was conducted during the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. As I previously shared, earlier cycles of this research study were greatly impacted by the realities of this global pandemic. Even though the fall 2021 semester looked very different at ASU than previous semesters during the pandemic, there were still issues that could have contributed to the overall experience. I believe one way in which this study was impacted by the pandemic was by the fact that myself and these study participants were required to wear face masks during each class session to adhere to ASU's policy.

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While face masks are used to prevent the spread of COVID-19, they do not allow facial expressions to be communicated to others who are looking at you. Due to the English-language skills and cultural backgrounds of these students, it is quite possible that I missed many different facial expressions that may have communicated their thoughts or feelings about the overall experience as well as their individual connections with peers during the class. The lack of facial expressions brings to the light the various ways in which individuals communicate which include both verbal and non-verbal forms of communication. Not being able to see a key part of non-verbal communications between students prevented me from uncovering all aspects of their reality. I wish I could go back and do it all over again in a reality in which COVID-19 is no longer a factor in the educational journeys that students are experiencing.

Future Considerations

Looking ahead to future research possibilities for myself or others, there are many areas that could be addressed in order to ensure an in-depth study that accurately explores the phenomenon between U.S. and international students. These considerations include ideas for replicating this study at ASU, utilizing different methodologies to answer these research questions and alternative interventions that ASU or other institutions could use to increase connections between U.S. and international students.

Replicating this Study at ASU

Firstly, I would recommend that all study participants be allowed to participate in the course without being told to do so. I believe that when individuals make choices for themselves their mindset is different than those who are forced to do something that they may not want to do. Additionally, I think it is important to have a group of individuals

who represent a cross section of cultural identities. Since there are more undergraduate international students from China than India at ASU, I assumed that there would be more Chinese students than Indian students in this research study. However, it was quite the opposite as there was only one student from China and seven students from India. I cannot help but ask myself how come more Chinese students did not want to participate in this research study. Was it a lack of interest, lack of understanding of the goals of the study, or was there a fear about participating in such an experience with U.S. students? If the international students represented many different countries so that there was no more than one student per country, this could highlight a different need for connections since these students would not have co-nationals to rely upon for support. Furthermore, since many international students from China struggle with their English-language skills, an intentional effort to address these English-language skills may impact their confidence to develop intercultural connections. That is to say that there are many possibilities that could be explored depending on the cultural backgrounds of the study participants. Further research could also explore students in the latter years of their undergraduate career or even explore students in the first semester of graduate studies. It is possible that graduate students who tend to be more focused on their studies might bring a different energy and commitment to the goals of the research study, including developing intercultural connections.

Different Methodologies

Additional future considerations include conducting a mixed methods research study so that both quantitative and qualitative data could be analyzed and triangulated together to present a different view of the concepts and goals that were present in this

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research study. There certainly are benefits to conducting a mixed methods study that may allow for findings to be more generalizable for future researchers.

Alternative Curriculum Choices

As you may recall, I previously mentioned that I have taught sections of UNI 120 that was just for international students. I believe it could be further explored to see what it might be like to teach two different sections of the course, one that would contain international students and one that would contain U.S. students. If it was possible to hold classes twice per week where one class day each section would meet independently with the second day being an opportunity to bring both sections together. I am curious if each group were to have one day by themselves where they could share experiences, frustrations and tips as students learn and develop intercultural connections would allow for more deeper explorations on the days the sections were to come together.

Revisiting with Study Participants in the Future

Finally, I myself am considering the possibility of trying to revisit this research study in one or two years. I am very interested to see how the lives of these study participants ebb and flow over the course of the next one to two years of their undergraduate career. I recall from my own undergraduate experience that my life during my first year was vastly different from the subsequent years so I would like to see what transpires in their lives. Will some students use this experience to dive deeper into their relationships with students from different backgrounds and/or will some continue down their current path of self-segregating themselves due to their own internal perceptions? A longitudinal study could uncover the long-term impacts of their participation in this research study.

Personal Reflections

This experience conducting this research study during the fall 2021 semester was very challenging for myself. Not only has the COVID-19 pandemic greatly impacted many aspects of my life as well as the lives of these study participants, however, the reality of the semester was very difficult for me. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect my work in the ISSC very much as the pandemic has continued to impact international students' ability and desire to come to the United States to start and complete their degree programs. Many international students still face difficulties in obtaining visas to come to the United States which has put the work of the ISSC on high alert to provide additional support services to students who are trying to come to ASU. As I continued to advance in my career in my office, additional responsibilities and oversight have increased the work that I must ensure is being done correctly. This additional attention that was required of me left me less time than I would have liked to be able to focus on this research study. There were definitely time management problems in which I felt the tug and pull between completing work for my job and then completing work for this research study. I cannot help but wonder how different this research study would have been if I had been able to give 100% of my attention to the entire project.

Connection to the International Students and Scholars Center

With that being said, I also wish that I had conducted a research study that was more aligned with my work within the ISSC. I specifically chose to conduct this research study within the world of my supplemental role at ASU because this allowed me to create an academic experience that I thought would be more beneficial for students compared to an extra-curricular experience that I could have created within my role in the ISSC.

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However, since this study was removed from my day-to-day work in the ISSC, it did not allow me to create and participate in a learning community with my colleagues that may have provided me with more support and feedback as I navigated through the challenges of the semester. If there were additional individuals who had a stake in my work, it could have allowed for collaboration that would have no doubt made the experience richer. I also fear that because this research study was conducted outside of my day-to-day work, I will have less of an ability to influence the future direction of support services that can be provided for international and U.S. students at ASU. I still hope that due to the outcomes of this research study, the Success Courses unit can incorporate the lives and experiences of ASU's international student population intentionally into these curricular experiences. Most study participants indicated at the end of the semester that future sections of UNI 120 should always contain U.S. and international students. Jean-Marc stated it best when he said:

> Because of cross cultural things. You know, you learn a lot about different cultures through class conversations, topics that we talked about. So yeah, this is one of the few classes that has, you know, actually, taught me stuff about how to be a better student academically, and I don't think that would have happened if it was only one type of students in that class. Because if you're just international students, then mostly international students have the same perspectives on life here. So, when you have a class with two different types of students, it just like really helps everyone else in the class as well.

I hope that I can still have an influence on making this come a reality even though I am not a full-time staff member in the Success Courses unit at ASU. Perhaps it is possible that I can find a way to bring more staff members from the ISSC into the Success Courses unit so that more culturally minded individuals are acting as instructors for these important foundational courses. The potential for this partnership between the ISSC and

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the Success Courses unit will no doubt have a great impact on the international student community at ASU. I hope that in a few years ASU will require all students, regardless of immigration status, to enroll in UNI 120 as I believe it benefits all students regardless of what experiences they bring to the beginning of their undergraduate degree. These foundational courses for first-year students also help with retention and graduation rates too. As Rust and Singh (2021) stated, "results indicated that students in first-year seminars that focused on study skills and health education had a greater intention to persist than first-year students who did not take those seminars" (p. 455). While health education is not the theme of UNI 120, I am confident that the curriculum of the UNI 120 course that takes into consideration a culturally sustaining pedagogy will help ASU students persist beyond their first year of study. Therefore, I would recommend that ASU and other U.S. institutions explore how these kinds of experiences will benefit first-year students. With an intentional effort to build a culturally sustaining pedagogy and train faculty appropriately, it is possible that a foundational course like this will promote intercultural interactions between diverse groups of students. This will then hopefully lead to the development of a group of global citizens ready to take on any challenge they may face as they navigate the current issues in our societies.

Conclusion

As an international educator, I strongly believe in the power of cultural exchanges in an educational environment. I would not have undertaken such an experience if I did not believe that connecting people from different backgrounds has benefits for all involved. Although this research study did not provide the results that I had hoped for, I do believe that the benefits experienced by each student outweigh any negative result. In

many ways I agree with this statement by Parsons (2010) who stated, "the researcher took a broader view of the goals of internationalization and considered the preparation of students for responsible global citizenship and successful work in multicultural workplaces to be the primary focus" (p. 316). Although I wish that more intercultural connections were formed between students in this research study, I want to take solace in the fact that they were exposed to an experience that will hopefully set them on a path towards global citizenship. As our world continues to become interconnected, it is important that we understand our shared humanity and what our world could look like if we all work together to accomplish common goals for everyone. As Altbach and De Wit (2015) stated, "even though we should be realistic that international cooperation and exchange are not guarantees for peace and mutual understanding, they continue to be essential mechanisms for keeping communication open and dialogue active" (p. 9). With an open dialogue, I believe if we continue to explore the dynamics between U.S. and international students with the goal of decreasing prejudice and increasing intercultural connections the possibilities are plenty.

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APPENDIX A

INSTRUCTOR JOURNALS PROTOCOL

Instructor Journals Protocol

Each week during the 14-week course, I wrote a journal entry after the completion of each class in a laptop in a document in a password protected folder. Some of the things I looked for during each class that I reflected upon afterwards are noted here in a short form for note taking purposes during the class that helped with the quickness of taking notes while being present during the observation process. Using the quick notes from class, I wrote a journal entry to try to identify specific events between students that were related to acculturation and intergroup contact theory.

These short form notes will include:
- US: U.S. student
- INTL: International student
- DIS: Disagreement
- ELI: English language issues
- BL: Body language
- Qs: Question(s)
- PREJ: Prejudice
- ICC: Intercultural connection
- ASS: Assimilation
- MAR: Marginalization
- INT: Integration
- SEP: Separation
- FF: Friendship forming
- CG: Common goals
- ES: Equal Status
- COOP: Cooperation
- SUP: Support of Institution
- FEAR: Fear
- TRUST: Trust
- APATHY: Apathy
- +: Positive (can be added to all of the above)
- -: Negative (can be added to all of the above)
- = Unsure (can be added to all of the above)

I utilized the below notes template:

Week:		Day:
Event/Activity Observed:	**Names involved:**	**Description:**
Post Reflection Journal Entry:		

APPENDIX B

STUDENT JOURNALS PROTOCOL

Student Journals Protocol

Students submitted self-reflective journals for ten weeks throughout the semester. Each journal submission was supposed to be approximately 250 words in length. These submissions were submitted electronically in the learning management system and were downloaded for analysis. These journal prompts followed the ten steps of the transformative learning experienced outlined by Mezirow (1978) as well as incorporating mindsets that are addressed each week in the curriculum. Each number below corresponds to a week in the semester.

The journal prompts are as follows:

1. What has been the hardest aspect of beginning your studies here at ASU? Why? How might creative problem-solving help solve this?
2. What feelings of prejudice, either negative or positive, do you have of U.S./international students? Why? Are there any mindsets that may change these feelings?
3. By interacting with U.S./international students in this class, what is something you previously thought about them that you may have been wrong about? Why? How has your sense of awareness changed?
4. What have you tried to do or what can you do to further connect with people from different backgrounds? Why? How can empathy aid in these connections?
5. What is one goal that you would like to set for yourself to become comfortable with being uncomfortable? Why? How can collaboration help you achieve this goal?
6. What have you learned about other cultures from your interactions with U.S./international students that you would like to incorporate into your own life? Why? In what ways does optimism help incorporate these new pieces of information?
7. Describe your overall experience with working with group members from different cultural backgrounds than your own? *(Remember, culture does not just mean country of origin. There are many different aspects of culture like beliefs, religion, food, music, art, etc.)* How do you feel? Why? How was your sense of creativity been explored by working with different group members?
8. How do you connect with your family and friends from back home? How can you include them in your current college experience? How have you developed confidence from your family and friends?

9. Working with people from different backgrounds will continue to be a part of our lives. In the future, when people do not understand my perspective, I will try to…… Why? Are you more or less comfort with risk taking because of this experience?

10. In what ways will you continue learn and connect with people from varied backgrounds after this class? Why? How does motivation play a role in this?

APPENDIX C

SEMI-STRUCTED INTERVIEWS PROTOCOL

Semi-Structured Interviews Protocol

Four students were interviewed three times during the course of my intervention. Once at the beginning of the semester, once during the middle and then the last interview took place at the end of the semester. These interviews were recorded using the Otter ai computer system which transcribes the words of the interviewer and interviewee automatically. I then reviewed each interview to correct any errors or misunderstandings in the transcription. These questions tried to address issues of acculturation and chosen acculturation strategies.

The first interview protocol used semi-structured questions to assess their initial thoughts on their acculturation and any feelings of prejudice they may have had while being in a culturally diverse classroom environment.

The first interview protocol questions for international students included:

1. Have you tried to befriend a U.S. student? Was this an easy or difficult task?
2. How often do you want to spend social time with U.S. students?
3. How often do you want to spend study time with U.S. students?
4. Do you think U.S. students are interested in learning about your home culture? Why?
5. Describe a time when you felt you were being treated unfairly or negatively because of your cultural background?
6. How interested are you in developing a connection to U.S. culture?
7. How important is it to you to maintain a connection to your home culture?
8. In what ways do you think you face prejudice either negative or positive from U.S. students?
9. Do you feel like you are treated equally compared to your U.S. student peers? Why?
10. Do you think you share the same goals as U.S. students? Why?
11. What challenges do you think you'll face when trying to develop intercultural connections with your U.S. peers?
12. What has been your overall experience so far of interacting with U.S. students both inside and outside of the classroom? How do you think these interactions are influencing you?

The first interview protocol questions for U.S. students included:

1. Have you tried to befriend an international student? Was this an easy or difficult task?
2. How often do you want to spend social time with international students?
3. How often do you want to spend study time with international students?
4. Do you think international students are interested in learning about U.S. culture? How come?
5. Describe a time when you treated someone unfairly or negatively because of their cultural background?
6. How important do you think it is for international students to develop a connection to U.S. culture?
7. How interested are you in learning about the cultures of some of your international student peers?
8. In what ways do you think you have thoughts of prejudice either negative or positive towards international students?
9. Do you feel like you are treated equally compared to your international student peers? Why?
10. Do you think you share the same goals as international students? Why?
11. What challenges do you think you'll face when trying to develop intercultural connections with your international student peers?
12. What has been your overall experience so far of interacting with international students both inside and outside of the classroom? How do you think these interactions are influencing you?

Taking into consideration the responses during the first interview protocol for each student interviewed, specific questions for the second interview protocols were designed. However, three initial questions from the first interview protocol were asked in each subsequent interview to note any changes in responses over time. Additionally, included in both the second and third interviews were questions regarding their photovoice submissions.

The second interview protocol questions for both groups of students included:

1. How many U.S./international students would you call your friends?

2. How would you describe the majority of your friendships with U.S./international students?
3. How often do you spend social time with U.S./international students?
4. How often do you spend study time with U.S./international students?
5. What challenges have you faced when trying to develop intercultural connections with your U.S./international student peers?
6. How do you feel like you are being influenced by interacting with U.S./international students in this class?
7. What is the message that you wanted to convey with this photo(s)?
8. What inspired you to take this photo(s)?
9. How does this photo(s) express your feelings of prejudice towards U.S./international students?
10. How does this photo(s) express your viewpoint regarding your ability to build connections with U.S/international students?

The final interview protocol asked participants to predict whether they hoped to continue to develop intercultural connections with other students beyond this research study. As with the second interview protocol, the third interview protocol included questions from the first interview protocol and also included questions about the photovoice submissions.

The third interview protocol questions included:

1. How many U.S./international students would you call your friends?
2. How would you describe the majority of your friendships with U.S./international students?
3. How often do you spend social time with U.S./international students?
4. How often do you spend study time with U.S./international students?
5. What is the message that you wanted to convey with this photo(s)?
6. What inspired you to take this photo(s)?
7. How does this photo(s) express your new/changed feelings towards U.S./international students due to your participation in this class?
8. How does this photo(s) express your desire to build intercultural connections with U.S./international students due to your participation in this class?
9. What, if any, are the long-term benefits of interacting with U.S./international students?
10. How has interacting with U.S./international students influenced you over the course of this class?

11. Do you think you will continue to try and develop connections with U.S./international students after this class? Why? What do you see as challenges to do so or not?
12. Through this experience with students from different backgrounds, what is the most important thing you have learned about yourself?
13. Do you agree or disagree with this statement, "Sections of this class should always contain both U.S. and international students?" Why do you agree or disagree?

APPENDIX D

PHOTOVOICE PROTOCOL

Photovoice Protocol

All students were asked to submit eight photos at two points in the semester. These first ten pictures focused on their initial experiences with acculturation and prejudice while beginning their college career in a culturally diverse environment. These prompts incorporated acculturation strategies as well as culturally sustaining pedagogies.

The first photovoice submission prompts included:
1. Take 2 photos that express your thoughts of prejudice about U.S./international students before taking this class.
2. Take 2 photos that express how you feel regarding learning about the cultures of U.S./international students in this class.
3. Take 2 photos that express how you feel about trying to become friends with U.S./international students.
4. Take 2 photos that express how you feel about the influence that interacting with your U.S./international peers has had on you so far.

The second group of eight pictures focused on their experiences with developing intercultural connections with their peers and how their feelings of prejudice may have changed over the course of the semester.

The second photovoice submission prompts included:
1. Take 2 photos that express either negative or positive things that you think about U.S./international students after completing your first semester at ASU.
2. Take 2 photos that illustrate your friendships with your U.S/international peers as this class comes to an end.
3. Take 2 photos that express the influence that interacting with your U.S./international peers has had on you.
4. Take 2 photos that express your desire, or lack thereof, to develop friendships with U.S./international students in the future.

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APPENDIX E

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Ying-Chih Chen
Division of Teacher Preparation - Tempe
-
Ying-Chih.Chen@asu.edu

Dear Ying-Chih Chen:

On 5/20/2021 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Prejudice and Cultural Differences: An Exploration of Cross-Cultural Connections Between U.S. and International Students
Investigator:	Ying-Chih Chen
IRB ID:	STUDY00013994
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Revised Consent Form. Ross. 5.19.21.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • Revised Protocol. Ross. 5.20.21.docx, Category: IRB Protocol; • Revised Recruitment Email for International Students. Ross. 5.19.21.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials; • Revised Supporting Documents. Ross. 5.17.21.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • UNI 120 Syllabus. Ross. 5.8.21.pdf, Category: Other;

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (1) Educational settings, (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 5/20/2021.

APPENDIX F

UNI 120 COURSE SYLLABUS
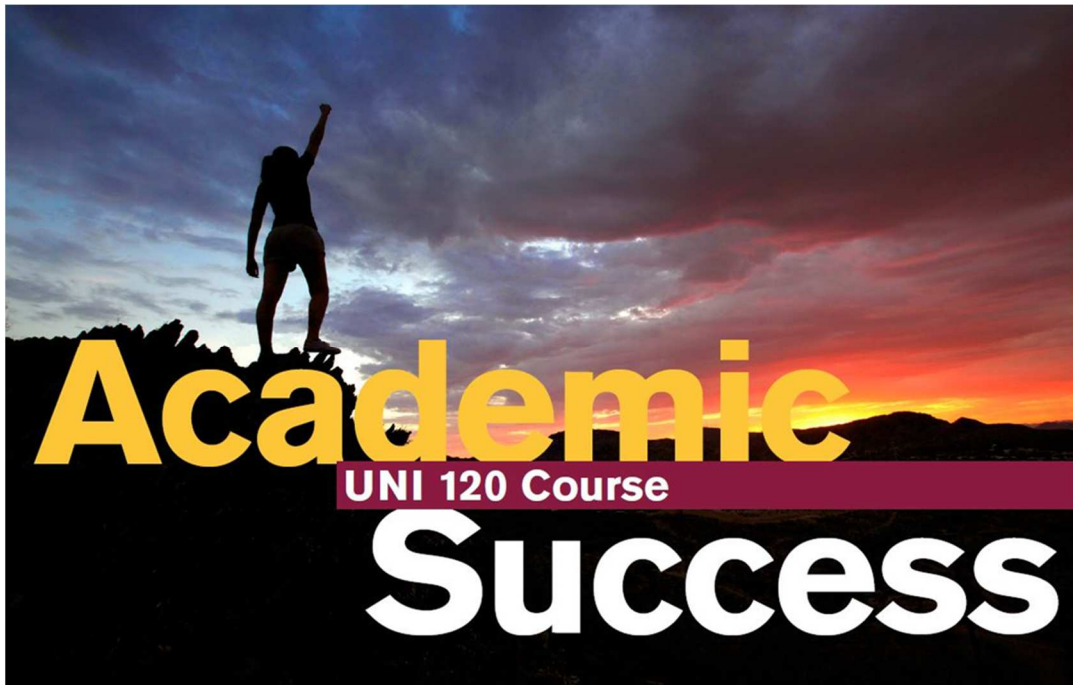
Instructor

Name: Mr. Drew Ross
Office Location: Student Services Building, Suite 170
Email: drew.ross@asu.edu
Phone Number: 480-965-9861

Course #: 78643 & 97669
Course Location: ART 202
Days/Times: Monday 4:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Open Hours

Individual assistance is available by appointment scheduled through email.

College Contact

This course is offered by University College. For more information about the college, visit our website.

If you have questions or concerns about this course, please speak with your instructor. If your instructor is unable to address your questions, please send your inquiry to, please send your inquiry to successcourses@asu.edu.

Course Description

Assists students in creating creative problem-solving strategies for success in their academic lives. Students explore personal and academic strengths and barriers that impact success, identify and utilize university resources available to support success at

ASU, acquire and enhance academic skills necessary for success in the university, and discover ways to stay on course to meet academic goals.

This special section will look to support the development of cross-cultural connections between U.S. and international students through multi-cultural learning perspectives and reflection.

Course Learning Outcomes

Through their participation in this course, students will:

- Apply the creative problem-solving process to various personal, academic, and professional problems;
- Build their skills within the 10 mindsets and attributes necessary for strong creative problem-solving practice;
- Select a problem and complete a semester project to answer the question, "How might we solve this problem?";
- Create strategies for addressing roadblocks to creative problem-solving; and,
- Evaluate proposed solutions through the prototyping and iteration cycle.

Successful Students…

- Know when and how to attend class
- Participate throughout every class meeting
- Turn in assignments on time
- Attend faculty open hours
- Refer to the academic calendar
- Keep all notes, assignments, and work produced for this course
- Read and understand this syllabus
- Regularly check ASU email and Canvas and respond as needed
- Read Announcements

Course Structure

The course employs dynamic in-class activities, collaborative learning, homework assignments, and projects. To enable students and the instructor to have frequent and meaningful interaction with each other and with the group, class size is limited. You will receive a letter grade for this course.

Materials
- A planner or personal calendar
- Required readings will be provided on Canvas
- Canvas Student App
- Access to GSuite Applications using your ASU login/account
- Reliable broadband internet connection
- Downloaded version of Microsoft PowerPoint (free)
- An activated ASU e-mail account
- Web browser (Chrome preferred)
- Adobe Acrobat Reader and Flash Player (free)
- Webcam and microphone
- Access to your portfolio on ASU's Digication platform

Note: A smartphone, iPad, Chromebook, etc. will not be sufficient. While you may be able to access course content with mobile devices, you must use a computer for some assignments. Zoom performs better on a computer.

Face Coverings
Everyone is required to follow current ASU policy on face coverings. For more information about face coverings, please visit the FAQ page.

Canvas Course Access
Your ASU courses can be accessed by both my.asu.edu and asu.instructure.com; bookmark both in the event that one site is down.

Course Content Delivery
This course is scheduled as an in-person (face-to-face) course. I will be teaching the course in the classroom unless otherwise directed by ASU policy.

Communication

To build a course climate that is comfortable for all, it is important that everyone in our class:
- Display respect for all members of the class – including the instructor and students
- Pay attention to and participate in all interactive student partner/instructor sessions and activities; and
- Observe the rules of appropriate online behavior (also known as netiquette). This term is defined by the instructor and includes keeping course discussion posts and oral communication with other students (or the instructor) focused   on the assigned topics.
- Maintain a cordial atmosphere and use tact in expressing differences of opinion. In addition, they must avoid racist, sexist, homophobic, or other negative

language that may unnecessarily exclude course members. This is not an exhaustive list of behaviors; rather, it represents examples of the types of things that can have a dramatic impact on the course environment. Your final grade may be reduced each time you engage in the types of negative behaviors indicated above.

Your ASU email account is an official means of communication among students, faculty, and staff. Students are expected to read and act upon email in a timely fashion. Students bear the responsibility of missed messages and should check their ASU-assigned email regularly.
All instructor correspondence will be sent to your ASU email account.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance

Students' experience in this course is highly dependent on attending class sessions. Much of the learning for this course happens as a result of classroom activities and group interaction.

Just like at your job, you will want to notify me before the class meets if you will be absent, arriving late, or leaving early.

More than two (2) unexplained absences may result in an 'E' (failing the course) on your transcript. More than three (3) absences of any kind may result in an 'E'.
To explain an absence if you miss class, you must:
- Email me within 24 hours and be honest.
- Provide your reason and include an examination/assessment of your priorities. Any reason will be accepted unless there is an in-class project or presentation or other special situation.

If you are not on time to class, you will receive absences proportional to the frequency you are late. The below may be adjusted based on how much class time was missed.

Late #	Absence Deduction	Late #	Absence Deduction
1	No Penalty	4	.5
2	.25 absence	5	1 absence
3	.25 absence		

If you are absent or late, talk with your classmates and obtain any missed information, assignments and handouts. If additional help is needed, you are encouraged to attend my open hours and chat.

If you have a significant life issue such as an extended illness, family issue, injury, etc. you are encouraged to contact Student Advocacy in the Dean of Students Office: DeanofStudents@asu.edu.

Absences for illness, quarantine or self-isolation related to illness should be documented by a health professional and communicated to the instructor as soon as possible by email.

Excused absences do not relieve students from responsibility for any part of the course work required during the period of absence. Faculty will provide accommodations that may include participation in classes remotely, access to recordings of class activities, and make-up work.

If there is a disagreement as to whether an absence should be accommodated, the instructor and student should contact the academic unit chair immediately for resolution.

If you stop coming to class, you will not automatically be withdrawn from the course. If your name appears on the roster at the end of the semester, but you have stopped coming to class, you will receive a grade that reflects all missed work.

Students who need to be absent from class due to the observance of a religious holiday (ACD 304-04) or to participate in university-sanctioned activities (ACD 304-02), should work with their faculty member as far in advance of the holiday/obligation as possible. Students should notify faculty at the beginning of the semester about the need to be absent from class due to religious observances. This absence may apply toward a student's two allowable absences. Student's should plan ahead and make schedule changes as necessary and communicate with faculty per the ACD policy.

Students who participate in line-of-duty activities (ACD 304-11) shall be provided make-up assignments, examinations, or other graded coursework missed because of required work performed in the line-of-duty, without penalty.

Students who have flex attendance accommodations from the Disability Resource Center should discuss their options with their faculty member. Flex attendance does not waive students from the attendance policy for this course.

Work Submission
Unless otherwise noted, all assignments should be submitted electronically in the specified format via Canvas. Paper forms and email submissions will not be accepted. In the event of a Canvas failure, you may email your work to "stop the clock" but you must submit via Canvas as soon as possible. Corrupt files and blank files will not count as a submission. Please open files once submitted to ensure they are correct and working.

Assignment due dates follow Arizona Standard time. Note: Arizona does not observe daylight savings time.

Late or Missed Assignments

Plan for last-minute emergencies, including printer and computer issues. Late work is not accepted.

Classroom Disruption

If you are disruptive in the classroom, you may be asked to leave. If you are asked to leave, you will be marked absent for the date. Please note that unless otherwise instructed, we will not be using any electronic devices during our class time together, so please put your phones and other devices away at the start of class.

Students wishing to use electronic translators should contact the class instructor to make arrangement for this use of technology. The goal of this policy is engagement, so if a student needs this for communication with instructor and classmates it is acceptable.

Discussion

We will be discussing sensitive and controversial issues. Our class discussions should be lively and challenging. I want everyone to feel safe in the discussion, even when we disagree; that means we conduct discussion in a civil and respectful manner. As a group, we will not tolerate perceived attacks or disrespect. While I support free speech, you are not immune from the consequences of speech. Disrespect towards anyone in the classroom will result in a loss of points, dismissal from the classroom with an absence recorded, and/or a possible withdrawal from the course.

Extra Credit

Extra credit work may be assigned as an option to the entire class. This will be no more than 2% of the total possible points for the course. No individual extra credit will be offered.

Assignments

Homework – 15%

Assigned work used to reflect on creative problem-solving techniques and approaches. This includes readings, short answer responses, videos, and the calendar assignment. For the calendar assignment, students will practice using calendars to organize their time and academic responsibilities. Creating of a calendar practices planning, problem definition, and solution development skills. Though this assignment is due at the beginning of the semester, it may be periodically checked throughout the term for additional homework credit.

Creative Problem-Solving Project – 30%

Students will work individually and in creative communities to develop some "how might we" options to a problem that you have identified in your life or in the world around you. Students will:

- identify and frame the problem,
- practice awareness through academic research, observation, and interviews, and
- brainstorm ideas.

You will answer the question: "How might we solve this problem?" The end product will be a 3-5-minute narrated PowerPoint. You will be challenged to be creative and to practice your leadership skills.

Journals – 20%
Self-reflective journals are a critical component of this course. In order to pass this course, ALL journal entries must be completed. If you miss a journal entry at some point in the semester, you will need to complete the journal (for no credit) to include in your Annotated Journal. Journal submissions are not shared with your peers nor will your instructor use your writing as an example to discuss in class. This should allow you to thoughtfully and thoroughly self-reflect on your experiences over the course of the semester.

Final Essay – 10%
Students will prepare a 2-3-page final essay that applies course concepts, terms, and creative problem-solving approaches learned in the course that are potentially useful in their life. The essay will identify what you have learned from focusing on them this semester and what you can do to improve these capabilities in the next few years.

Participation – 25%
Discussion is not only encouraged but necessary to facilitate a fulfilling classroom experience. Your active participation in classroom discussions and activities is an integral part of your final grade. Participation is graded holistically. You can indicate to me that you are engaged and participating by:
- Preparing before class
- Speaking in class and/ or asking questions
- Contributing during group activities
- Completing all in-class activities
- Presenting examples and related ideas during discussions

Grade Scale

Grades will be determined by the percentage you accumulate:

A	90-100
B	80-89.9
C	70-79.9
D	60-69.9
E	<60

XE	Failure due to Academic Dishonesty
EU	Failure Did Not Complete
EN	Failure Never Attended

I   Incomplete (may not be issued in this course)
Y   Satisfactory – This grade may be offered optionally to students earning a C or better at the end of the semester. Students must request this grade and complete a contract that will contain further details according to ASU Grade Policy.

For your own protection, you should keep a copy of everything you hand in. You should keep your graded assignments at least until grades are finalized at the end of the semester in the event you wish to contest any grades.

Grade Appeals

Students must first speak with the instructor of the class to discuss any disputed grades. If, after review, a resolution is not achieved students may proceed with the appeal process. Student grade appeals must be processed in the regular semester immediately following the issuance of the grade in dispute (by commencement for fall or spring), regardless whether the student is enrolled at the university. Complete details are available in the ASU Grade Appeals policy.

Refer to Canvas for specific instructions regarding all course assignments.

Campus Resources

ASU students who use these resources earn higher GPAs:
- Tutoring: https://students.asu.edu/academic-success
- Counseling Services: http://students.asu.edu/counseling
- Financial Aid: http://students.asu.edu/financialaid
- Disability Resource Center: http://www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/ed/drc/
- Major/Career Exploration: http://uc.asu.edu/majorexploration/assessment
- Career Services: http://students.asu.edu/career
- Student Organizations: http://www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/mu/clubs/
- ASU Writing Centers: https://tutoring.asu.edu/writing-centers
- ASU Police Department: https://cfo.asu.edu/police
- International Student Resources: https://students.asu.edu/international/support/academic
- ASU Novel Coronavirus Information and Resources

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Course Time Commitment

Coursework includes all learning activities including reading, watching videos, studying, and completing assignments. Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) requires 45 hours of coursework per credit for college-level courses, which translates to:

         1 credit hour = 45 total hours
         2 credit hours = 90 total hours

3 credit hours = 135 total hours
4 credit hours = 180 total hours
5 credit hours = 225 total hours

ASU courses range in length from 6 weeks to 15 weeks. Below is a breakdown of the 135-hour required time commitment for a three-credit course divided among weeks for courses of various lengths.

Course Length	Time on Coursework per Week for a 3-credit course	Total Time Requirement for a 3-credit Course
6 weeks	22.5 hours	135 hours
7.5 weeks	18 hours	135 hours
8 weeks	17 hours	135 hours
15 weeks	9 hours	135 hours

Drop and Add Dates/Withdrawals

If you are unable to take this course for any reason, be aware that there is a limited timeline to drop or add the course. Consult with your advisor and notify your instructor to add or drop this course. If you are considering a withdrawal, review the following ASU policies: Withdrawal from Classes, Withdrawing as a Financial Aid Recipient, Medical/Compassionate Withdrawal, and a Grade of Incomplete.

Academic Integrity

Academic honesty is expected of all students in all examinations, papers, laboratory work, academic transactions and records. The possible sanctions include, but are not limited to, appropriate grade penalties, course failure (indicated on the transcript as a grade of E), course failure due to academic dishonesty (indicated on the transcript as a grade of XE), loss of registration privileges, disqualification and dismissal. For more information, see http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity.
If you fail to meet the standards of academic integrity in any of the criteria listed on the university policy website, sanctions will be imposed by the instructor, college, and/or dean. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on an academic evaluation or assignment, plagiarizing, academic deceit (such as fabricating data or information), or falsifying academic records. Turning in an assignment (all or in part) that you completed for a previous class is considered self-plagiarism and falls under these guidelines. Any infractions of self-plagiarism are subject to the same penalties as copying someone else's work without proper citations. Students who have taken this class previously and would like to use the work from previous assignments should contact the instructor for permission to do so.

If you have any doubt about whether the form of cooperation you contemplate is acceptable, ask the TA or the instructor in advance of turning in an assignment. Please be aware that the work of all students submitted electronically can be scanned using plagiarism detection software, which compares them against everything posted on the

internet, online article/paper databases, newspapers and magazines, and papers submitted by other students (including yourself if submitted for a previous class).

Student resources on Sun Devil Integrity and strategies for completing your work with integrity and avoiding plagiarism are available here: https://provost.asu.edu/academic-integrity/resources/students If you have any questions about your work and the academic integrity policy, please discuss your assignment or concerns with your instructor or TA in advance of submitting an assignment.

Students with Disabilities

If you need academic accommodations or special consideration of any kind to get the most out of this class, please let me know at the beginning of the course. If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education at ASU, please call Disability Resources for Students. The site can be found here: https://eoss.asu.edu/drc

       Downtown Phoenix Campus
       University Center building, Suite 160
       Phone: 602.496.4321
       E-mail: DRCDowntown@asu.edu

       Polytechnic Campus
       Sutton Hall - Suite 240
       Phone: 480.727.1039
       E-mail: DRCPoly@asu.edu

       Tempe Campus
       Matthews Center building, 1st floor
       Phone: 480.965.1234
       E-mail: DRCTempe@asu.edu

       West Campus
       University Center Building, Room 130
       Phone:602.543.8145
       E-mail: DRCWest@asu.edu

Mental Health

As a student, you may experience a range of challenges that can interfere with learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, substance use, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These emotional health concerns or stressful events may diminish your academic performance and/or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. ASU Counseling Services provides counseling and crisis services for students who are experiencing a mental health concern. Any student may call or walk-in to any ASU counseling center for a same day or future appointment to discuss any personal concern. Here is the Web site: https://eoss.asu.edu/counseling. After office hours

and 24/7 ASU's dedicated crisis line is available for crisis consultation by calling 480-921-1006.

Please note some course content may cause a student to be uncomfortable and trigger emotions or experiences of the past. (SSM 104-02 of the Student Services Manual)

Harassment Prohibited

ASU policy prohibits harassment on the basis of race, sex, gender identity, age, religion, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, Vietnam era veteran status, and other protected veteran status. Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, including termination of employees or expulsion of students. Contact the professor if you are concerned about online harassment of any kind, and he/she will put you in contact with the Dean of Students office.

Student Conduct

ASU and the University College expects and requires its students to act with honesty, integrity, and respect. Required behavior standards are listed in the Student Code of Conduct and Student Disciplinary Procedures, Computer, Internet, and Electronic Communications policy, ASU Student Academic Integrity Policy, and outlined by the Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities. Anyone in violation of these policies is subject to sanctions. Students are entitled to receive instruction free from interference by other members of the class. An instructor may withdraw a student from the course when the student's behavior disrupts the educational process per Instructor Withdrawal of a Student for Disruptive Classroom Behavior. The Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities accepts incident reports from students, faculty, staff, or other persons who believe that a student or a student organization may have violated the Student Code of Conduct.

Students must refrain from uploading to any course shell, discussion board, or website used by the course instructor or other course forum, material that is not the student's original work, unless the students first comply with all applicable copyright laws; faculty members reserve the right to delete materials on the grounds of suspected copyright infringement.

Title IX

Title IX is a federal law that provides that no person be excluded on the basis of sex from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity. Both Title IX and university policy make clear that sexual violence and harassment based on sex is prohibited. An individual who believes they have been subjected to sexual violence or harassed on the basis of sex can seek support, including counseling and academic support, from the university. If you or someone you know has been harassed on the basis of sex or sexually assaulted, you can find information and resources at https://sexualviolenceprevention.asu.edu/faqs.

As a mandated reporter, your instructor is obligated to report any information they

become aware of regarding alleged acts of sexual discrimination, including sexual violence and dating violence. ASU Counseling Services, https://eoss.asu.edu/counseling, is available to discuss any concerns confidentially and privately.

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to complete the course evaluation. The feedback provides valuable information to the instructor and the college and is used to improve student learning. Students are notified when the online evaluation form is available. The results are always anonymous and cannot be reviewed by the instructor/department until after final grades have been posted.

Academic Affairs Manual

For a complete guide to Arizona State University course policies, please refer to the Academic Affairs Manual (ACD).

Prohibition of Commercial Notetaking Services

In accordance with ACD 304-06 Commercial Note Taking Services, written permission must be secured from the official instructor of the class in order to sell the instructor's oral communication in the form of notes. Notes must have the note taker's name as well as the instructor's name, the course number, and the date.

Establishing a Safe Environment

Learning takes place best when a safe environment is established in the classroom. In accordance with SSM 104-02 of the Student Services Manual students enrolled in this course have a responsibility to support an environment that nurtures individual and group differences and encourages engaged, honest discussions. The success of the course rests on your ability to create a safe environment where everyone feels comfortable to share and explore ideas. We must also be willing to take risks and ask critical questions. Doing so will effectively contribute to our own and others intellectual and personal growth and development. We welcome disagreements in the spirit of critical academic exchange, but please remember to be respectful of others' viewpoints, whether you agree with them or not.

All incidents and allegations of violent or threatening conduct by an ASU student (whether on- or off-campus) must be reported to the ASU Police Department (ASU PD) and the Office of the Dean of Students. If either office determines that the behavior poses or has posed a serious threat to personal safety or to the welfare of the campus, the student will not be permitted to return to campus or reside in any ASU residence hall until an appropriate threat assessment has been completed and, if necessary, conditions for return are imposed. ASU PD, the Office of the Dean of Students, and other appropriate offices will coordinate the assessment in light of the relevant circumstances.

Statement of Inclusion

Arizona State University is deeply committed to positioning itself as one of the great new universities by seeking to build excellence, enhance access and have an impact on our

community, state, nation and the world. To do that requires our faculty and staff to reflect the intellectual, ethnic and cultural diversity of our nation and world so that our students learn from the broadest perspectives, and we engage in the advancement of knowledge with the most inclusive understanding possible of the issues we are addressing through our scholarly activities. We recognize that race and gender historically have been markers of diversity in institutions of higher education. However, at ASU, we believe that diversity includes additional categories such as socioeconomic background, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, veteran status, nationality and intellectual perspective.

ASU Health Services - COVID-19

The ASU Health Services website is Arizona State University's official source of information about the Novel Coronavirus and important tips and precautions you can take to stay healthy. This website is updated regularly with information about the Novel Coronavirus affecting the ASU community. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has the most up-to-date information about the status of the Novel Coronavirus in the US. For information about teaching and learning remotely, please visit the Provost Office webpage. The health of the Sun Devil community is a top priority. If you have any issues, please call 1-855-278-5080 or use the 24/7 live-chat option for any questions at uto.asu.edu/experiencecenter.

We encourage anyone who is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 to request a test. Testing will be available on all campuses — at the start of the semester and throughout the semester — for any student and employee who needs it.

For free student saliva testing at ASU, contact ASU Health Services at 480-965-3349. For public testing sites, visit the Arizona Department of Health Services Coronavirus symptoms may include difficulty breathing, fever, muscle or body aches, sore throat and cough, fatigue and headaches. Those experiencing these symptoms should seek medical attention. Additionally, anyone experiencing two of the following should contact a healthcare professional or medical provider: fever, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat or new loss of taste or smell.

Live Well @ ASU
ASU's Live Well Community is dedicated to supporting you in your health and wellbeing journey. During this time, we understand the value of staying connected as an ASU community, and we will continue to provide you with resources and support that will promote your health and wellness goals. Learn more

Related links:
    ASU Health Services
    ASU Counseling Services
    360 Life Services (for ASU Online students)
    FAQ regarding COVID-19

Syllabus Disclaimer

The course syllabus is an educational contract between the instructor and students. Every effort will be made to avoid changing the course schedule, but the possibility exists that unforeseen events will make syllabus changes necessary. The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus as deemed necessary. Students will be notified in a timely manner of any syllabus changes via email, or in the Announcements section in Canvas.

APPENDIX G

UNI 120 COURSE SCHEDULE

All assignments are due on Sunday by 11:59 p.m. unless otherwise noted

Date	In-Class Activities/Concepts	Homework
Week 1 08/23	Leaders as Creative Problem Solvers What is CPS? Community Building	Homework 1 (8/29) Getting Started Quiz (8/29) Introduction Post (8/29)
Week 2 08/30	CPS Mindsets and Attributes	Journal #1 (9/5) Calendar Assignment (9/5)
Week 3 09/06	Labor Day - No Class	Journal #2 (9/12) Porfolio Assignment #1 (9/12)
Week 4 09/13	Awareness Introduction to Semester Project	Journal #3 (9/19) Homework #2 (9/19)
Week 5 09/20	Empathy Problem Idea Sharing	Journal #4 (9/26)
Week 6 09/27	Collaboration	Project Step 1 Assignment (10/3) Journal #5 (10/3)
Week 7 10/04	Optimism	Project Step 2 Assignment (10/17) Journal #6 (10/17)
10/11	Fall Break - No Class	
Week 8 10/18	Creativity	Project Step 3 Assignment (10/24) Journal #7 (10/24)
Week 9 10/25	Rebellion and Confidence	Project Step 4 First Draft (10/31)
Week 10 11/01	Prototyping, Iteration and Evaluation	Project Step 5 Peer Reviews (11/7) Journal #8 (11/7)
Week 11 11/08	Risk-Taking	Project Final Submission (11/14) Due Sunday 11/14 at 11:59 p.m.
Week 12 11/15	Ethical Decisions	Journal #9 (11/21) Portfolio Assignment #2 (11/21)
Week 13 11/22	Roadblock Busters: Maintaining Motivation	Journal #10 (11/28)
11/25-26	Thanksgiving Break	
Week 14 11/29	Wrap-Up & Reflection Problem Solving for Spring Semester	Final Essay (12/4)
12/04	Final Essay Due to Canvas at 11:59 p.m.	

APPENDIX H

UNI 120 COURSE LESSON PLANS

Week 1 - Leaders as Creative Problem Solvers

OVERVIEW	
Concepts	What is creative problem solving (CPS)?
Teaching Objectives	Provide overview of creative problem solving and what this class is about Provide overview of research study Begin building community within the classroom Develop a rapport, set expectations, ensure student understanding of purpose, build buy-in, build community.
Student Learning Outcomes	❏ Students will develop connections with their peers and instructor. ❏ Students will describe questions they have about college life. ❏ Students will be able to basically define *creative problem solving*
Supplies	❏ Spaghetti, marshmallows, string, tape, pieces of paper
Student's Prep Work	Review canvas course
Upcoming Due Dates	Assignment 1 Class Policies Quiz Introduction Post to Discussion Board
Class Wrap Up, Announcements & Things to Keep in Mind	❏ PowerPoint provided to overview creative problem solving ❏ Introductory activity to introduce concept of the week. ❏ Take roll/attendance (preferred names and pronouns are part of quiz) ❏ Incorporate culturally sustaining teaching strategies ❏ Include assignment due dates in PPT and remind students

Activities
● Intro Activity - Introduce the class in an attention-grabbing way that clearly defines what we will study this semester. Should be short but highly engaging.
   1. Spaghetti Tower - Divide students into teams and provide them with

'building' materials, such as dry spaghetti, marshmallows, string and tape. Set a time limit for designing and building a spaghetti tower (one that's structurally sound, of course). When their time is up, the tallest freestanding tower wins. Prizes can range from bonus points on a recent assignment to a short extension for their next paper or report. There are several variations on this, such as building a pyramid with paper cups, but the idea is to promote communication and collaboration in a leadership exercise—and provide a little incentive as well.

Discussion:
What was the problem?
For groups that found it hard, why was it hard? The goal is for them to see that problem-solving has a number of challenges (working together, preconceived notions, creativity, etc.).
What worked well?

- **PowerPoint** to introduce instructor, research and creative problem solving
- **Introduction(s)**
  - **Pair students together for introductions. Pairs will take turns introducing their partner. They should learn:**
    - **Name**
    - **Where from**
    - **Fun fact**
    - **Pairs will need to identify something they have in common and something that makes them different (besides being ASU students and being U.S./international)**

- Questions Snowball Icebreaker:
  - **Have students think of one question they have about being a college student or at ASU. These can be problems they have encountered, myths they have heard, things they don't understand, or where to get the best pizza.**
  - Have students submit their questions on paper.
  - Have them ball up their question into a snowball. Toss around for a minute (some instructors stand in the middle of the circle and let them throw snowballs at them). Call time and everyone picks up a snowball.

  - **Have students state their name, where they are from and then read the question they ended up with in the snowball fight. Students will read the questions and you all can discuss possible answers. Remind students that the person reading the question did not ask the question.**
  - Some questions can be discussed/answered. Tell them that over the next few weeks our goal will be to answer all of their questions.

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- Show students how to locate everything in Canvas

Assignment(s)

Required Homework
- Module 0
  - Welcome (includes course welcome video)
  - Student introduction post to discussion board
  - Getting started quiz
- Module 1
  - Assignment 1

https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/asia-pacific/can-t-believe-it-worked-story-of-the-thailand-cave-rescue-1.3563754

***FOR ALL 14 WEEKS OF LESSON PLANS, PLEASE EMAIL:

andrew.ross.4@asu.edu