An Exploration of Virtual Intercultural Learning Experiences for Undergraduate Students

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Outline

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Introduction
Study Abroad

- International study abroad (SA) is an incredible opportunity that has been more readily available to certain student groups than others.  
- Barriers to SA have impacted students’ participation in study abroad, primarily disadvantaging low-income students, students of color, and students with disabilities.  
  - Lack of access to information  
  - Lack of funding  
  - Lack of support/encouragement  
  - Fear of negative stereotypes
- Only 1.6% of U.S. higher education studied abroad for academic credit during 2016-2017.  

(Bryant & Soria, 2015)  
(NAFSA: Association of International Educators, n.d.)
Cultural Intelligence

- SA students receive personal, academic, and professional benefits.  
  - Cultural intelligence  
  - Self-awareness  
  - Leadership skills  
  - Personal growth  
  - Self-confidence/Independence  
  - Problem-solving skills

- Emerging global leaders have been called on to develop cross-cultural self-efficacy (CCSE) and cultural intelligence (CQ) in order to effectively navigate an increasingly intercultural climate.  
  - CCSE & CQ can be developed via study abroad, self-reflection, and exposure to new/different cultures.

(Bryant & Soria, 2015)  
(Livermore, 2011)  
(Schindler, 2019)  
(Heinert & Roberts, 2016)
**VIntLEs**

- **Virtual Intercultural Learning Experiences (VIntLEs)** are a form of online/distance education that may provide an alternative for students without the means to study abroad.

- Through combining intercultural dialogue with digital technology, distance is no longer a barrier to exploring other cultures.

- VIntLEs have cultivated the development of employability skills.
  - Digital competence
  - Communication skills
  - Ability to work in a diverse cultural context
  - Foreign language competence.

(EVOLVE, n.d.)
Cultural Terms

- **Self-Efficacy** - one’s belief in their own ability to accomplish tasks and achieve success; succinct, measurable improvement in varying aspects of cultural awareness including curiosity, confidence, and acceptance of ambiguity.

- **Cultural Intelligence (CQ)** - the ability effectively navigate and respond to multicultural situations across a variety of contexts.

- **Cross-Cultural Self-Efficacy (CCSE)** - a term describing self-efficacy within the context of global leadership, because self-efficacy is a predictor of cross-cultural adjustment levels and cultural intelligence.

References:
1. Bandura, 1977
2. van der Velden, Millner, & van der Heijden, 2016
3. Schindler, 2019
4. Livermore, 2011
Technological Terms

- **Distance Education (DE)** - education in which content is delivered via online/digital technology that is not confined to in-person classroom learning between the student and instructor.

- **Virtual Exchange (VE)** – sustained, technology-enabled education in which interaction takes place between individuals/groups who are geographically separated and/or from different cultural backgrounds.

- **Virtual Field Trips (VFTs)** – live-streamed, educationally-oriented experiences that remove the barriers of time, cost and location, making experiences available to all students.

- **Virtual Intercultural Learning Experience (VIntLE)** - term developed by the project creator/researcher to most appropriately describe her integration of principles from VE, VFTs, DE, and online learning.
Leadership Terms

- **Global Leadership** - the ability to influence and bring about positive change by leading within diverse organizational structures.

- **Global Mindset** - a global leader’s self-efficacy; the ability to influence dissimilar others in the complex, interdependent, and constantly changing global world.

- **Intercultural Empathy** - the ability to communicate and connect, build emotional ties, and engage with people from other parts of the world to create collaborative solutions.

(IGI Global, n.d.)¹ (Global Integration, n.d.)² (Jokien, 2005)³ (Javidan et al., 2016)⁴
Problem/Need
Problem

Lack of access to study abroad opportunities.

How can we make the learning of cross-cultural self-efficacies and intercultural leadership accessible to all students within academic learning environments?
Literature Review
Theoretical Framework

- **Social Constructivism** posits that knowledge is active, adaptive, makes sense of one’s experience, and is both a mental and cultural process.  
  - “social negotiation of meaning” (p. 6)

- **Experiential Learning Theory (ELT)** is a process of knowledge creation through transformative experiences; inherently social in nature; new, engaging experiences.

- **Vicarious** experiences allow a learner to see another person engaging in a way they would like to, providing a model of achievability to act off.

(Doolittle & Camp, 1999)  (Dewey, 1938)  (Bandura, 1977)
Model of Experiential Learning

(Kolb, 1984)
Previous Studies

- **Krakowka (2012)** - students experienced all four stages of Kolb’s (1984) EL Module through in-person and virtual field trips.

- **Helm (2018)** - dates VE back to a Cold War Telecommunications Project of 1988; connect youth from the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R.
  - VIntLE used within foreign language education, intercultural learning, conflict resolution, and facilitated dialogue.

- **Hagley (2016)** - language-learning VE (1,500 students from six countries) showed increase in students’ overall cultural awareness

- **Schenker (2012)** - 12-week VE showed high student interest in cultural learning, language improvement, and development of intercultural awareness
# Previous Studies

- VEs are comparable to study abroad in developing of cultural competencies and in increasing students’ self-efficacy/CCSE and desire to learn more about other cultures.
  - van der Velden et al. (2016)
  - Wang, Rechl, Bigontina, Fang, Gunther, & Fottner (2017)
  - Aristizabal & McDermott Welch (2017)

- Intercultural awareness, global leadership, and self-efficacy are critical skills
  - Park, Jeong, Jang, Yoon, and Lim (2018)
  - Tichnor-Wagner’s (2019)
  - Osman-Gani & Rockstuhl (2009)
Virtual Intercultural Learning

- Developed a **Virtual Intercultural Learning Experience (VIntLE)** for undergraduate students in AEC/CALS to learn about intercultural awareness.
- **Six videos** ranging from 7-10 mins each created from footage filmed during AEC 3065 Summer C study abroad to Costa Rica.
- Providing access to cultural diversity through video technology.
- Agriculture from a global perspective.
Virtual Intercultural Learning

- Module 1: Costa Rican Culture
- Module 2: Animal Biodiversity
- Module 3: Rainforest, Plants, and Animals
- Module 4: Dairy Farming
- Module 5: Global Coffee Farming
- Module 6: Sustainability & Future

*Online demonstration*
Opportunities & Challenges
Opportunities

- Online learning continues to rise in popularity and prevalence; primary source of enrollment growth in higher education.
- VIntLEs have incredible opportunities to continue gaining popularity and application; disability, illness accommodations.
- “The proportion of academic leaders who report that online learning is critical to their institution’s long term strategy has grown from 48.8% in 2002 to 70.8% this year [in 2018]” (p. 4).
- Social, cultural, political, & economic integration have led humans to integrate at incredibly high levels; vitality of intercultural education.

Challenges

- Dependant on technology, electricity, and internet connection in order to establish and maintain any virtual learning environment.
- Critical assumption that technology reliably and consistently performs as expected.
- Many Instructional Designers are still in the process of acquiring knowledge and training regarding DE, which poses a problem for instructors who need help transitioning to digital/online learning platforms. 

(Telg, Lundy, Irani, Bielema, Dooley, Anderson, Raulerson, 2005)
Conclusion
What I Learned

- Grad school is tough
- Resilience is key
- Preparation is fantastic
- Ambiguity is okay
- Change is constant
- Plans can fail
- I can do it!!!!
Thank you!!!

- My family - love, support, kindness
- My partner - encouraging me every step of the way
- My advisor - opening my mind to possibilities
- My committee - guidance & support
- CALS/UF - providing an incredible program
- And... To everyone watching, thank you for being here with me!
Thank you!

Questions?