

Beyond “Just Being There”: Teaching Internationalization at Home in Two Qualitative
Methods Units

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Abstract

Study abroad and international student programs are commonly understood to transform their participants into “global citizens,” possessing “cross-cultural competencies.” Similar benefits are anticipated from “internationalization at home”—defined as any on-campus, internationally related activity—whereby international students engage with and thus enrich the lives of domestic students. In this paper, we reflect on a research project tied to two coursework units, in which largely domestic undergraduate students undertake qualitative research with or about international students. When developing the project, we postulated that the researcher–informant engagement that characterizes qualitative research mirrors that required for effective domestic–international student engagement. In describing “engagement” we utilize research on experiential learning, which suggests that experiences can only become knowledge through reflection, analysis, and synthesis. We examine the ways that cross-cultural engagement and experiential learning gained through students’ qualitative research might lead to the realization of the anticipated benefits of internationalization at home.

Keywords

internationalization, internationalization at home, cross-cultural, qualitative methods, experiential learning

Study abroad and international student programs,¹ which bring students from all over the world to study at universities, are generally understood to be opportunities to deliver student outcomes in internationalization, preparing graduates to be responsible and effective global citizens in possession of “cross-cultural competencies” (Amit 2010; Barnick 2010; Engle and Engle 2003; Stronkhorst 2005). Similar benefits are anticipated from “internationalization at

home”—defined as any on-campus, internationally related activity—a process whereby international students engage with and thus enrich the lives of domestic students (Nilsson 2003; Soria and Troisi 2014). Inherent in this rhetoric is the assumption that these outcomes will occur automatically, as a direct consequence of “just being there” (Amit 2010; Baldassar and Mulcock 2012; Stronkhorst 2005). In practice, however, domestic and international students often inhabit quite separate worlds, with few opportunities for engagement, despite international students’ frequently expressed desires to engage with domestic students (Baldassar and Mulcock 2012; Bringle and Hatcher 1999; Fechter 2007; Gmelch 1997; Jackson 2010, 2012; Laubscher 1994). Furthermore, while programs promise to improve cross-cultural competency and international citizenship, they usually comprise a set of units selected for their academic content in various disciplinary areas, and rarely contain academic content designed specifically around these outcomes (Amit 2010; Baldassar and Mulcock 2012; Donohue-Bergeler 2011).

Existing scholarship suggests that internationalization at home, study abroad, and international student programs do indeed have the potential to transform and develop students’ “cross-cultural competencies,” yet this does not necessarily occur in practice (Bringle and Hatcher 1999; Fechter 2007; Gmelch 1997; Jackson 2010, 2012; Laubscher 1994). Rather, such development is more often evident in programs where guided and structured activities are provided (Bringle and Hatcher 1999; Soria and Troisi 2014). In the project under discussion, we examine and experiment with the realities and opportunities of internationalization at home (see also McKenzie and Baldassar forthcoming). This project is tied to two Anthropology and Sociology honors coursework units at The University of Western Australia (UWA), a research-intensive university located in Perth, Western Australia. The definition of an honors degree varies internationally, and the honors program discussed here is an optional, one year degree proceeding from a three year Bachelor of Arts. This

program comprises a 15,000 word thesis—based on one year of research—and four coursework units—two of which are examined in this paper. In these units, students (who are mostly domestic) are required to undertake qualitative research with or about international students.

The project topic reflects Baldassar’s expertise in transnational migration, encompassing, among other things, migrants’ use of communication technologies. McKenzie began collaborating on this project in March 2014 and assists with the teaching of the two units. When developing the project, Baldassar postulated that the engagement between researchers and informants that characterizes qualitative research mirrors that required for effective domestic–international student engagement (see also Jurasek, Lamson, and O’Maley 1996). In describing “engagement” we utilize research on experiential learning, which suggests that experiences can only become knowledge through reflection, analysis, and synthesis. We propose that the cross-cultural engagement, experiential learning, knowledge, and understanding potentially gained through students’ qualitative research might lead to the realization of the anticipated benefits of internationalization at home and to greater understanding and appreciation of the study abroad experience in general.

The project addresses several significant issues in sociological teaching. In a recent report, *Teaching Sociology*, written by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (now the Office for Learning and Teaching), it was recommended that sociology teaching programs “focus on the value of learning about research methodologies in an undergraduate setting” (Marshall et al. 2009:43). In the United States, the American Sociological Association has proposed that departments should structure curriculum to increase students’ exposure to multi-cultural, cross-cultural, and cross-national content that relates to the field of sociology (McKinney et al. 2004). This project combines and addresses these two broad sociological concerns.

Accordingly, in this paper we evaluate the project as: 1) a means of better understanding the lived experiences of international students; 2) a way of teaching qualitative research methods; and 3) an avenue for examining, understanding, and improving the practice of internationalization at home. We begin by briefly clarifying the theory and practice of experiential learning, and then proceed to outline the assumptions and realities of “internationalization” initiatives: including study abroad, international student, and internationalization at home programs. In particular, we contrast assumptions that cross-cultural learning and engagement occur through “just being there” with research on students’ motivations and experiences (Baldassar and Mulcock 2012). Following this, we outline the development of the project, connecting literature on experiential learning (and, in particular, the role of formal and informal curriculum) to notions of engagement. We then examine the project in practice, by detailing the units under discussion and describing the staff and students involved. We draw on our observations in redeveloping and teaching these units in 2014 and 2015; discussions with and feedback provided by honors students; and honors students’ qualitative research findings, specifically their reflections on international and domestic students’ engagement within the project. Here, we reflect on the opportunities, challenges, successes, and failures of the project.

“JUST BEING THERE”: ASSUMPTIONS AND REALITIES OF INTERNATIONALIZATION

Research in the field of experiential learning—that is, learning through experience—reveals that students’ experiences can only become knowledge through reflection, analysis, and synthesis (Hubbs and Brand 2005; Jackson 2010; Laubscher 1994; Lutterman-Aguilar and Gingerich 2002). According to recent publications in the field, such experiential learning approaches are a particularly effective means of teaching sociological concepts (Peterson, Witt, and Huntington 2015; Scarboro 2004; Wright 2000). Yet, it is argued, such approaches

can be challenging when seeking to instill “a global perspective,” given the geographic limits of such learning (Peterson et al. 2015). Studying internationalization at home initiatives can therefore overcome such challenges.

Indeed, in recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of those enrolled as international students or participating in study abroad programs, both in Australia and worldwide (Department of Education and Training 2015; Engle and Engle 2003; Jon 2013; Stronkhorst 2005; Wächter 2003). In 2014, 25 percent of all Australian university students were international students (Department of Education and Training 2014b), while 20 percent of students at UWA were international (The University of Western Australia 2014b). In 2012, 13 percent of *completing* undergraduate students enrolled onshore at Australian universities had studied overseas during their course, with two thirds of these having been abroad for one semester or less (Department of Education and Training 2014a). UWA figures are again slightly lower than the national average, with this group making up nine percent of completing undergraduates in 2012 and ten percent in 2013 (The University of Western Australia 2015c).

Promotional materials, advertising universities’ study abroad and international student programs, often place a great deal of emphasis on objectives and outcomes related to building cross-cultural competencies and global citizenship. Such skills, it is suggested, are highly valued and rewarded in the modern, international workforce (Barnick 2010). Yet little, if any, information is provided on how these outcomes are facilitated and achieved during students’ (often brief) time abroad (Amit 2010). Rather, international students are understood to develop an international perspective and to experience new cultures by “just being there” (Amit 2010; Baldassar and Mulcock 2012; Stronkhorst 2005). Amit (2010:16) suggests that this perspective is informed by an understanding of international travel as intrinsically

educational and transformative, possessing a “formative value regardless of the actual practices and motivations of student participants” (see also Bradburd 1998; Watson 1999).

A similar, though less extensively discussed, argument posits that the presence of overseas students on campus brings benefits to domestic students akin to those imagined for international and study abroad students (Amit 2010; Baldassar and Mulcock 2012). This logic—that meaningful engagement with international students can and does act as a proxy for international travel—underpins the concept of internationalization at home. The concept was developed by Nilsson (2003) at Malmö University, Sweden, emerging in the late 1990s after which it rapidly gained in popularity. Originating in a University characterized by cultural diversity, and where students were not especially wealthy, the concept was based on an understanding of internationalization that extended “beyond mobility” (Wächter 2003:6). Rather, the idea was “to ‘internationalise’ the education of that vast majority of higher education students who would never leave their home country” (Wächter 2003:5). Thus, Nilsson (2003) overcame criticisms commonly leveled at study abroad and international student programs: that only a small minority of mostly wealthy students are able to participate in them and enjoy their possible benefits (Breen 2012). Moreover, while the concept’s emphasis on cross-cultural interaction was by no means new to the academy, scholars utilizing the notion now applied this focus to higher education (Wächter 2003:8).

Few studies have measured the impact of internationalization at home initiatives, and in particular their influence on domestic students (Jon 2013; Soria and Troisi 2014). One example is provided by Jon (2013), who conducted a mixed methods evaluation of two highly selective, voluntary campus programs for domestic and international students at a Korean University: a buddy program and a culture and language exchange program. Students’ intercultural development, interactions, and behaviors were measured using student surveys, while interviews explored motivations for, and experiences with, internationalization

at home initiatives (Jon 2013). Jon (2013:455) found that they had “a positive and direct effect on Korean students’ interaction with international students, and a positive and indirect effect on their intercultural competence.”

Further research has been conducted by Soria and Troisi (2014), who utilized student surveys to compare study abroad and internationalization at home initiatives in nine United States public research universities. Internationalization at home initiatives included international or global coursework, interactions with international students in and out of class, and voluntary global or international co-curricular activities (Soria and Troisi 2014). They established that these initiatives had more *perceived* benefits among students than did study abroad ones, in regard to the development of global, international, and intercultural competencies (Soria and Troisi 2014). While we draw on prior evaluations of internationalization at home throughout this paper, in contrast to Soria and Troisi (2014) and to Jon (2013), we do not measure students’ perceptions nor do we attempt to quantify their development of cross-cultural competencies. Rather, we examine the potential of the process of experiential learning, and of qualitative research, to deliver cross-cultural knowledge, understanding, and engagement.

While research into the outcomes of internationalization at home is rare, studies on students’ motivations and experiences of study abroad and international student programs are more common. Barnick (2010), who explored Canadian students’ reasons for studying abroad in Australia through interviews and participant observation, found that they saw these programs as an opportunity to take “time out” as well as a means of obtaining career and travel goals. Similar to universities’ promotional materials, students described international travel as fostering personal growth and transformation (Barnick 2010:23). Moreover:

While students were not necessarily concerned with how their study abroad or exchange experience might help them in terms of finding a

career in the ‘knowledge-economy’, they were keenly aware of the fact that they could capitalize on the rationales and lists of benefits they are given from study abroad offices and use them in narratives of personal development (Barnick 2010:26).

Some students, she observed, felt that study abroad experiences might be included in résumés or curricula vitae, or used to improve employability more generally (Barnick 2010). Yet many had never thought about studying abroad in terms of their future employability, and those who had tended to be seeking future “international” careers (Barnick 2010:26). Overall, study abroad and international student programs were imagined by students and staff to foster personal transformation and develop cross-cultural competencies, qualities frequently considered to be highly beneficial in the contemporary global workforce (Amit 2010). Such arguments, linking these features to employability, have been subject to much academic critique (Amit 2010; cf. Franklin 2010; Jones 2011). Yet while links between employability and cross-cultural competence are often presumed, the possession of cross-cultural “skills,” such as the ability to interact with people from other backgrounds, appear frequently in employers’ job selection criteria.

Despite the significant rhetoric around the anticipated outcomes of study abroad and international student programs, there are few initiatives that directly monitor or evaluate these programs. The existing research frequently contradicts assumptions about the transformative nature of international travel (Amit 2010:13). For instance, although Gmelch’s (1997:475) study of United States students’ experiences in Europe to some extent supports the notion that travel contributes to personal development, by requiring students to “make decisions and deal with the demands of daily life in new and unfamiliar settings,” these developments were largely superficial. In addition, research suggests that, in practice, international and domestic students rarely interact (Bringle and Hatcher 1999; Fechter 2007; Jackson 2010, 2012;

Laubscher 1994). Yet, as Baldassar and Mulcock (2012:11) note, study abroad programs can be highly variable, “depending on the nature of the academic subject under study, the preparation of the student, and the opportunities for cross-cultural engagement” (see also Stronkhorst 2005). Other factors that impact students’ experiences include where they are living and the duration of their stay; at one end of the spectrum, international students who form part of a program of study that involves traveling and living with fellow students from their home university are more likely to experience a “bubble” effect, where they have limited opportunities and little motivation to engage with their domestic counterparts (Baldassar and Mulcock 2012). Overall, literature on study abroad and international student programs suggests that their benefits are partial and uneven (Baldassar and Mulcock 2012; Barnick 2010; Gmelch 1997), while research on internationalization at home hints at more widespread benefits (Jon 2013; Soria and Troisi 2014).

INTERNATIONALIZATION AT HOME: DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROJECT

Central to internationalization at home, and its intended outcomes, is international and domestic students’ engagement. Yet, once again, there is little literature addressing how this engagement might be defined. In redressing this lack of research, we take as our starting point Baldassar and Mulcock’s (2012) prior study, which found that international and domestic students rarely engage with each other in the absence of well-developed curriculum. In other words, cross-cultural learning and engagement cannot be left to “just being there.” Domestic students generally have well developed social networks and thus have little need to purposively meet international students without the incentive provided by formal curriculum (Bringle and Hatcher 1999; Soria and Troisi 2014). This may be especially true in the context of our project in Perth, where the vast majority of UWA’s domestic students originate (The University of Western Australia 2015a). Furthermore, while international students are often very eager to meet domestic students—to interact socially or to learn the local language—

they may require the opportunities of informal curriculum to facilitate this engagement, as literature on study abroad and international students has frequently suggested (Baldassar and Mulcock 2012; Gmelch 1997). Here, formal curriculum refers to the inclusion of specific course-related activities and learning modules that are assessed as part of students' final grades (Bringle and Hatcher 1999). For instance, it may include guided self-reflective exercises linked or parallel to local engagement activities—including projects, photo essays, journaling, and web blogging—that are formally assessed for marks towards the final grade. Informal curriculum refers to activities, events, and programs that are arranged and guided by the University or course administration, but not accredited within the main program of study (Bringle and Hatcher 1999). It involves events organized to bring domestic and international students together, including celebrations, festivals, films, and exhibitions. We designed the project to deliver formal curriculum in internationalization at home to domestic students (through coursework in qualitative research methods), and informal curriculum in internationalization at home to international students (through invitations to participate in interviews and focus groups).

As outlined previously, we discuss engagement by drawing on theories of experiential learning (Kain 1999; Peterson et al. 2015; Schmid 1992; Shostak et al. 2010). Engagement, we argue, is intimately tied to the experiential learning process. Furthermore, when initially developing the concept of engagement for this project, Baldassar was struck that the process of experiential learning mirrors the qualitative research process: requiring reflection, analysis, and synthesis (see also Jurasek et al. 1996). She hypothesised that, by studying internationalization at home and developing skills in qualitative research methods in a project involving international students, domestic students would have the opportunity to engage in experiential learning with international students. This would help to develop a richer understanding of what it is like to be an international student, increasing their awareness of

issues pertaining to international students and the politics of internationalization in higher education more broadly (with the latter being of particular interest to many students). The project therefore aimed to employ experiential learning techniques—incorporating both informal and formal curriculum—to develop knowledge on and understanding of internationalization at home and international students, advance training in qualitative research methods (Bradburd 1998; Watson 1999), and examine the practice of internationalization at home (for further examples see Boud 2001; Churchill and DuFon 2006; Deardorff 2009; Donohue-Bergeler 2011; Loughran 2002; Peterson et al. 2015; Rotabi, Gammonley, and Gamble 2006; Spalding and Wilson 2002).

INTERNATIONALIZATION AT HOME: PROJECT IN PRACTICE

The project “Intercultural Learning at Home: Promoting Internationalisation On Campus” commenced in 2014 following a trial conducted at UWA in 2013.² Baldassar also researched, reviewed, and implemented some of the ideas on which this project is based at the Monash University Study Abroad Centre in Prato, Italy, during her term as director from 2009 to 2011. By participating in this research, it was envisioned that domestic students would have opportunities to learn and practice qualitative research, by interviewing and conducting focus groups with or about international students. At the same time, international students would have opportunities to reflect on their experiences and to meet and speak with domestic students. Furthermore, both sets of students would participate in processes of experiential learning: reflecting on, analyzing, and synthesizing their experiences into knowledge and, potentially, cross-cultural engagement. Domestic students would do so through their qualitative research, and international students through their research participation.

Two coursework units offered within the Discipline of Anthropology and Sociology were redesigned for the project: Applied and Professional Practice One and Two (APP1 and APP2). In 2014 and 2015, the coauthors developed and taught these units, which advance

students' practical research experience in qualitative research methods, drawing on anthropological and sociological approaches in particular (see also McKenzie and Baldassar forthcoming). One unit focused on undertaking one-on-one interviews, and the other on conducting focus groups with around five to ten people (see also Charmaz 1991; Earley 2014; George 2012). Students were assigned the broad research topic of internationalization at home. In 2015, they were free to develop their own individual topics. In 2014, they were encouraged to undertake research on the social uses of communication technologies, including how they facilitate, or act as barriers to, internationalization at home. Some students investigated the ways that technologies—like mobile phones, laptops, and tablets, and social media and communication platforms such as Facebook and Skype—were used by international students. The program design drew on Baldassar's research expertise on transnational migration (for example see Baldassar forthcoming), ensuring sound knowledge of the relevant literature, a practice in keeping with the traditions of academic teaching. As such, in implementing a similar program, other academics might focus on a different research area, for instance, gender, class, or race.

Students developed their own research question within the broader topic; formulated interview or focus group questions and participant information sheets in keeping with ethics protocols; and recruited UWA international students (or occasionally staff or domestic students) for their interviews or focus groups. International students were recruited through relevant international student programs as well as through snowball sampling and students' personal contacts. Students were asked to undertake an interview or focus-group approximately one hour in length. After carrying out their qualitative research, students transcribed their recordings, analyzed the data they had gathered, and presented their findings in the form of a research report and poster. This facilitated the development of students' qualitative research skills by requiring them to undertake an interview with an international

student, thus providing them with the opportunity to reflect on and gain expertise in the international student experience.

As well as being required to undertake independent research, students participated in weekly seminars that mirrored the broader research process, including: a seminar that informed students on prior research regarding international students and their experiences; classes on the theory and practice of interviews/focus groups; role-playing exercises, in which students practiced interviewing or guiding focus group discussions on each other; and sessions on data and thematic analysis, report writing, and communicating findings. In addition to educating students on the process and conventions of planning, conducting, analyzing, and presenting qualitative research, students' findings have contributed to an important repository of data collection and analysis, which is then used to inform the research of subsequent students, as well as contributing to forthcoming scholarship by the authors.

For each of the seminars, students were required to complete readings, which focused on internationalization at home, international students and study abroad, the theory and practice of qualitative research methods, and communicating qualitative findings. Students were assessed on the reading notes they prepared and their participation in seminars. In addition, they were also assessed (and were provided with feedback on) various tasks that they undertook towards their research: their draft and revised participant information sheets and list of interview/focus group questions; an excerpt and brief analysis of their transcript; their research report; and their poster presentation.

In 2014 and 2015, APP1 and APP2 each had enrollments of around 15 to 20 students, the majority of whom were undertaking honors degrees within the authors' department of Anthropology and Sociology. These units have also attracted enrolments from outside the department, including students studying Linguistics, Asian Studies, and European Studies. While the bulk of teaching has been undertaken by the authors, a variety of guest presenters

led discussions on topics such as library research skills, linguistic analysis, data analysis software, professional report writing, and creating and presenting posters. Furthermore, five Arts Practicum students have worked as project officers: attending unit seminars, assisting honors students with recruitment, and synthesizing students' research or conducting their own research. UWA's Arts Practicum is a semester long unit for second and third year undergraduate students that enables them to participate in a research project or workplace placement of their choice.

Five Arts Practicum students and 41 honors (APP1 and APP2) students conducted qualitative research for this project in 2014 and 2015. Of these, relatively few were international students. Only five of the 41 honors students were international, and most of these students were enrolled through other disciplines, particularly Asian Studies (The University of Western Australia 2014a, 2015b). Interestingly, four of the five Arts Practicum students were international. The popularity of the project among international Arts Practicum students, who selected the project from a long list of possibilities, is in keeping with Baldassar and Mulcock's (2012) observation that international students participate in voluntary activities aimed at internationalization, but that domestic students, for the most part, do not. This confirms our rationale for the project design: incorporating research on and about international students into the formal honors curriculum, while making international students' participation in the project informal. Indeed, a large number of international students (145 in total) have voluntarily participated in the honors students' research projects as interviewees and focus group participants.

Our examination draws on the authors' observations and incorporates verbal discussion and written feedback gathered from APP1 and APP2 students, Arts Practicum students, and guest presenters. We also draw on interviews and focus groups undertaken by students, specifically those emphasizing the findings that relate to international and domestic

students' participation and the practice of internationalization at home within the project. Overall, we discuss the project activities in relation to students' development of knowledge and understanding of internationalization at home, their engagement with international students, as well as students' development of skills in qualitative research methods and, in particular, the processes of experiential learning.

FINDINGS

Deepening Understandings of Internationalization at Home

Perhaps the most obvious contribution of the project was honors students' development of knowledge and understanding of international students and internationalization at home. Since the beginning of 2014, students have produced nearly 70 research reports and posters documenting international students' motivations, experiences, and relationships in great detail. From a single interview or focus group, and based on a deepening understanding of international students' experiences and motivations, honors students developed arguments that informed, furthered, and sometimes challenged the existing literature. While students' qualitative skills and research interests varied, a number of common themes emerged in their accounts. For instance, students' research confirmed previous studies suggesting that domestic and international students inhabit separate worlds, and that international students often live in a "bubble," cut off from their domestic counterparts (Bringle and Hatcher 1999; Fechter 2007; Gmelch 1997; Jackson 2010, 2012; Laubscher 1994). Loneliness, isolation, and confusion regarding cultural and social norms were persistent themes in students' findings, especially among newly arrived international students. One student investigated the use of communication technologies by such an international student and, through interviewing that student, learned that "in the early weeks of exchange [technology use] is driven not by the capacities and constraints of the medium, but by sheer loneliness; almost any communication will do" (Emily Chalmers, 2015 APP1 Research Report).

Similarly, students confirmed Baldassar and Mulcock's (2012) finding regarding the diversity of international students' experiences, which could be vastly different depending on their living and social arrangements. One student, for example, developed the concepts of "being with" and "being there with" to highlight the significant variation in international and domestic students' engagement (Akram Azimi, 2014 APP2 Research Report). Based on a student focus group, he came to understand that "being with" each other, even in a residential college, was considered insufficient for intercultural engagement to occur (for instance, with domestic students rarely expressing an interest in international students' diverse cultural backgrounds). In contrast, "being there with"—for example, at some college club events—was experienced as having far greater potential to deliver meaningful engagement by promoting cross-cultural "familiarity" among students. This finding leads us to question whether the units described here invariably lead to domestic–international student engagement or rather primarily increases engagement between international students. Furthermore, this raises the question of how we might actually observe or measure students' engagement.

Students' limited experience in conducting qualitative research, as well as the practicalities of carrying out research in a short timeframe, presented some potential challenges in the development of generalized research themes. This was to some extent mitigated by the fact that students were asked to include a copy of their interview or focus group transcript in their research reports (provided it did not contain any sensitive information), enabling us to examine their data more closely. Students were also required to revise the first draft of their list of interview/focus group questions and information sheet (which detailed their research question) based on extensive feedback provided by the authors in their roles as course coordinators. We found this two-step development of the list of questions and information sheet was essential to ensure a high standard of research

methodology. Many students benefited greatly from feedback at this early stage in the development of their ideas, and the revised documents were invariably a significantly improvement on the first. This process also mirrored the process of experiential learning, requiring students to reflect on and analyze how their questions would facilitate engagement with their participants.

Domestic–International Student Engagement

In light of previous research showing that domestic and international students rarely engage with one another (Bringle and Hatcher 1999; Fechter 2007; Gmelch 1997; Jackson 2010, 2012; Laubscher 1994), a point reinforced by students' findings above, one of the aims of this project was to encourage meaningful engagement between domestic and international students. A large number of international students participated in the project in 2014 and 2015, primarily as research participants (n=145) but also as Arts Practicum students/project officers (n=4) and honors students (n=5). This enabled them, directly or indirectly, to contribute to knowledge on international students and internationalization at home. Our project also afforded a large number of international and domestic students the opportunity to interact. This interaction ranged from the bare minimum of the recruitment process and the interview or focus group, along a spectrum that included ongoing interaction on social media as well as in person.

Honors students sometimes reflected on these interactions in unit seminars, but most said they had not established ongoing relationships with their international student research participants. In written feedback provided by APP1 and APP2 students at the end of semester, some students pointed to the interview or focus group as a meaningful cross-cultural engagement in itself, for both domestic and international students. As one student stated, the project “benefited the students we interviewed because many of them have difficulty

integrating at UWA” (Honors student, APP2, 2014). Thus, interaction or engagement for any duration might be deemed meaningful and beneficial.

Yet, in many cases, interactions with international student participants endured across two semesters, with honors students’ interviewing a previous focus group participant or drawing on a previous interviewee’s social networks in order to recruit participants for a focus group. Indeed, it is important to note that even when not particularly active at this point in time, these kinds of associations often remain and can be reactivated when required. Relevant here is Granovetter’s (1973) well-supported argument about the “strength of weak ties.” For example, one honors student was contacted by her international student interviewee a year later, when the latter needed some advice on navigating the University’s support services. Ongoing interaction between honors students and international Arts Practicum students appeared to be more firmly established, with shared seminars providing continuous opportunities for discussion. In one semester, one of the honors students even invited the Arts Practicum students home for a meal. Overall, while the project did not always work to forge ongoing relationships between international and domestic students (at least in the short term), it did facilitate continuous interaction between these groups.

We hesitate to argue that interaction necessarily equates to engagement. Much like “being there with,” “doing research with” international students may not necessarily foster cross-cultural engagement. In this project, opportunities for reflection, analysis, and synthesis were largely afforded to domestic students. Given the difficulties of getting domestic students to engage with international students on campus, however, this is arguably a critical feature of the project design. Moreover, participation in interviews or focus groups allowed international students to reflect on their experiences, as well as offering recent, non-English-speaking international student arrivals opportunities to communicate in English (to date, all interviews and focus groups have been conducted in English). Most significantly, through the

process of reading and planning, undertaking qualitative research, and analyzing, reflecting on, and synthesizing findings, domestic students were afforded the possibility of better understanding and engaging with international students. Future research is required to uncover whether such experiences lead to the overall enhancement of domestic–international student engagement.

Learning Qualitative Research Methods

Related to domestic–international student engagement is the issue of students’ learning about and developing skills in qualitative research methods. Honors students’ formal curriculum on internationalization at home and international students, as well as activities undertaken in preparation for assessment, aimed to deliver such learning. Seminars, readings, and assignments were designed to emulate the qualitative research process, and aimed to foster the reflection, analysis, and synthesis that characterizes experiential learning (Hubbs and Brand 2005; Lutterman-Aguilar and Gingerich 2002). Thus, our project had the dual aim of translating students’ experiences of qualitative research into methodological knowledge as well as knowledge on internationalization at home. While relying on student feedback to evaluate teaching can be problematic, numerous honors students, Arts Practicum students, and guest presenters discussed qualitative methods learning in their written feedback for APP1 and APP2. One student said that the unit enabled them “to put into practice the skills and techniques used by [social scientists] in real life employment scenarios” (Honors student, APP2, 2014). This student then added that this approach led to more skills development “learning” than did traditional unit structures.

Based on our own and others’ research (Bradburd 1998; Jurasek et al. 1996; Watson 1999), it appears that research methods training may be successfully applied to facilitate experiential learning, and could be particularly useful in challenging widespread and pervasive assumptions such as those surrounding travel and internationalization, as well as in

developing knowledge on internationalization at home and domestic–international student engagement. Undertaking research in this manner enabled students to reflect on, analyze, and synthesize their experiences into knowledge. Moreover, by studying the topic of internationalization at home and developing skills in qualitative research methods in a project involving international students, meaningful engagement between domestic and international students was encouraged and to some degree facilitated. Yet such an approach required levels of teaching support beyond that normally provided to small units such as APP1 and APP2 and so has important resource and funding implications. Furthermore, the honors students discussed here were in their fourth year of study, and were able to draw on several years’ undergraduate experience, including participation in units centered on culture and cultural difference. This experience most likely positively impacted their learning in APP1 and APP2.

CONCLUSION

In recent decades, there have been widespread efforts to “internationalize” education, through study abroad and international student programs and, more recently, internationalization at home initiatives. Research to date has found that internationalization at home activities can be effectively implemented (Jon 2013), often more so than international student and study abroad programs (Soria and Troisi 2014). Moreover, while international student and study abroad programs are generally restricted to a minority of largely wealthy students and/or disciplines, internationalization at home is potentially more equitable and accessible (Breen 2012). With this in mind, we developed the qualitative methods units APP1 and APP2 so that students could investigate and better understand the lived realities of international students; practice undertaking qualitative research; and participate in internationalization at home activities that involved engaging with international students. Previous studies on experiential learning suggest that these aims are complementary (Bradburd 1998; Jurasek et al. 1996; Watson 1999), with the reflection, analysis, and synthesis necessary to qualitative research

being mirrored by the reflection, analysis, and synthesis that leads to meaningful domestic–international student engagement. In the case of this project, both worked to advance knowledge on and facilitate internationalization at home.

Yet such programs are rarely available to lower level undergraduate students. Therefore, in future, we aim to develop a first year unit that attracts international and domestic students—facilitating their mutual engagement—in order to trial our approach with larger groups of lower level students. Despite challenges such as large classes sizes and less established student understandings of culture and cultural difference, there is potential for some of the benefits of internationalization at home to be more fully—and more equitably—realised. An undergraduate unit would enable a broader range of students, especially those who would not normally have an opportunity to undertake a study abroad program, to develop the cross-cultural competencies so often lauded by universities and employers *at home*.

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NOTES

1. In internationalization at home initiatives, both domestic students and various types of international student are targeted. Hence, we include all kinds of “international” students in our discussion. These include: 1) those traditionally labeled international students, who are residents or citizens in another country and are enrolled at a foreign institution; 2) study abroad students, who are those enrolled in overseas study, usually while studying a degree at their home university; and 3) exchange students, a sub-category of study abroad students who are swapped between two institutions. Honors students’ research projects encompassed all of these groups, and their findings suggest that these definitions are complex and fluid, rather than straightforward. Students themselves often reflected on this. Furthermore, in some cases, students compared the experiences of domestic migrant students (that is, students from rural and regional areas or interstate) with those of international, study abroad, and exchange students, uncovering numerous similarities. For the sake of simplicity, and because all these types are relevant to discussions of internationalization at home, we use the term “international” in this paper to refer broadly to students in all three categories.

2. This project has been declared exempt from Ethics Review by UWA’s Human Research Ethics Office (HREO). Low risk projects centered on teaching and learning research are eligible for such status.

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