Chapter 3
Learning environments for growth: Promoting reciprocity

> For many students, their university or college can provide an environment that is far richer in diversity than any they have encountered before… The quality of this experience will be largely determined by the efforts that an institution makes to enable students and staff to express, encounter, negotiate and enjoy difference in a climate of respect and learning and to foster good relations across the campus community to the benefit of all.
>
> (ECU, 2013a, p. 3)

Introduction

Any environment is a *learning* environment. As outlined in Chapter Two, the learning which occurs there can be: intended or unintended; conscious or subconscious; cognitive, behavioural, and/or affective; and can enrich or impoverish a student's understanding of self, others, and the world. As global higher education increasingly brings diverse students together, nurturing a 'harmonious campus <racial> climate' is necessary to encourage students to 'engage with diversity' and to help them develop the 'willingness and courage' to persist despite the cognitive and emotional challenges they may face (Cole *et al.*, 2014, p. 28 & 29, parenthesis added). Students and their environments are engaged in ongoing 'dynamic interactions' which contribute to the development of their intercultural relationships (Kudo *et al.*, 2019, p. 474).

The quality of students' intercultural interactions within their learning environments, including features such as equity and reciprocity, is more important than their frequency. In this chapter, we explore factors which might influence that quality. Our focus on relationships and critical pedagogy gives particular importance to *people* - the human component of the environment, the co-shapers of social learning – and to the *hidden curriculum* which permeates all learning environments, face to face and digital, undermining or supporting intended learning. We argue that creating

opportunities for learners to encounter and engage with diverse others requires critical analysis of cohort demographics, learner behaviours, and the messages which permeate the environments in which they learn.

Environments

Student perceptions of themselves and others around them, and the feelings and identities which may accompany those perceptions, such as safety, connectivity and respect for self and others, are reinforced or are challenged within **any** of the environments they experience at university. It is common to differentiate 'formal' and 'informal' learning environments, as illustrated in Figure 3.1.

INSERT FIGURE 3-1 ABOUT HERE

However, although the two are clearly distinguishable in terms of structure and regulation, their borders are much more permeable when it comes to each student's lived-experience. For example, as students move between a campus cafeteria and a seminar room, they may surround themselves with, or find themselves surrounded by, a group of culturally similar peers in both spaces. Thus, both environments will similarly limit incentives to explore intercultural relationships, and will potentially reinforce any existing inter-group stereotypes and prejudices. At the same time, individual students may experience <sexism> from their peers in equal measure in both spaces. Both environments will then similarly contribute to a sense of isolation or justifiable outrage, and will drive down motivations to seek out inter-group contact opportunities. Such *lived* experiences contribute to each student's learning about themselves and their peers, regardless of the formal status of the environment they happen to be in. Volet's (2001) 'person-in-context' perspective refers to this as the *experiential interface*, characterised as 'a real situation in real time that can be either positive or negative' (Kudo *et al.*, 2017, p. 102). Echoing the role played by *situation* in the Social Exchange Theory of relationships (Thibault *et al.*, 1959), the experiential interface is the space in which learners with all their prior development and current dispositions in place, encounter an environment with all

its characteristics in play. The ensuing learning (positive or negative) is shaped by the degree of congruence between the two, not by the classification of the environment as formal or otherwise. It is equally important, therefore, to be concerned about how interactions are experienced and how relationships are shaped across informal learning environments as it is to focus on more formal spaces.

Globally diverse students will be more motivated to engage with each other if their learning environments, on-line and face-to-face, are *designed* to foster positive, mutually affirming interactions. Furrer *et al* (2014) set out features of such environments under the headings of *warmth, structure,* and *autonomy*, as summarised in Table 3.1. Although some of these may be most relevant to structured learning activities, and assessments which are part of the formal and extended curriculum, the ethos they capture would enhance all university environments.

INSERT TABLE 3-1 ABOUT HERE

As explored in Chapter Two, *interaction patterns* influence the climate, or harmony, of learning environments and impact upon students in ways which are of direct relevance to their relationship development. How people interact within university environments has the potential to enable the development of growth-fostering communities or of communities which isolate and inhibit individuals and/or specific groups. In large part, this is dependent upon the thoughts, feelings, and identities of the students themselves, but also in large part upon 'the social forces that drive the patterns and content of relationships among community members' (Smith *et al.*, 2019, p. 257). We broadly characterise those social forces as 'environment'. In this vein, we suggest that the kind of 'sensitive and thorough dialogue' (Fasset *et al.*, 2007) needed for intercultural relationship development is contingent upon how the patterns of interaction which typify student communications are framed. These interactions are dependent upon the range of relationships which are *available* to

and *attractive* to a student. These are, firstly, determined by who is actually present and who is flourishing.

The individuals who populate learning environments will determine the opportunities each student might have to develop growth-fostering relationships with diverse others. Responsibilities for who is present and who is flourishing do not lie exclusively, or even predominantly, with those individuals, but with the institutions which bring them together. This is not to disempower learners, or to say that they have no responsibilities for their learning and their being together. However, just as a discipline must develop curriculum, learning activities, and assessments which enable students to pursue that learning, so institutions must take responsibility for creating environments in which all learners can fully participate. In some contexts, national and institutional factors may situate a student entirely or predominantly among same-<gender> peers, or within <racially or religiously> homogeneous cohorts. To the extent that local conditions allow, any institution can proactively seek to extend student diversity within their learning environments, or to extend the environments for learning. This may mean establishing virtual learning communities, formalising engagement with the local community, or widening recruitment demographic targets. Or all three.

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Case Study

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Where there is low representation of specific groups within the domestic population, some countries have established national policies which encourage or enable institutions to deploy affirmative action (positive discrimination) tools to facilitate student admissions from various minority groups. Depending on the local/national context, these might be focussed on those from defined socio-economic groups,

those of specific ethnicities, women, specified castes, religious minorities, or indigenous peoples. Often initiatives to recruit international students are also linked to opportunities to build more diverse learning communities.

Measuring the effectiveness of all such initiatives, though, can be complex. Because data which goes beyond published admissions numbers is often limited, institutions work from incomplete pictures which do not reflect the realities experienced by students on the ground. For example, one study (Chanana, 2006) explored how positive discrimination policies for scheduled castes (SC) and tribes (ST) in India were impacting on women. National data from India identifies a largely positive story with regards to women's participation in higher education, rising steeply to over 40 per cent in the last half century. However, Chanana characterizes the broad intersectional impacts on women as 'a burden of multiple inequality' (Op.Cit., p. 237). With regard to SC and ST students specifically, the study identified SC students accounted for 11.5 per cent overall in 2001-02, but SC women only accounted for 3.5 per cent; ST totals were four per cent, but ST women 1.3 per cent. On this, the author concludes (Op.Cit., p. 385):

> Despite a clearly defined policy of positive discrimination, the presence of SC/ST students is not adequate and the proportion of women is negligible.

Chanana's study highlights the need to investigate the impacts of affirmative action policies if headline data is not to mask continuing access issues. Nonetheless, in addition to their wider social function, targeted admissions policies hold the potential to extend the diversity of learner relationships available to students. International student recruitment policies, even those with a primary focus on income generation, can be similarly effective. These may also be quite self-limiting if they have a predominant focus upon a single nationality or a limited rage of disciplines. Institutions which do not work to build diverse communities may find student homogeneity is self-perpetuating. Often this happens because minority students do not see university environments in which they will have a place. It may,

though, also be the case for institutions who traditionally do attract minority group students. One study, for example, has shown that minority students may seek out institutions in which they feel they are more likely to belong because 'there will be many other people of the same "non-traditional" age, ethnicity or class' (Read *et al.*, 2003, p. 274).

Responsibilities for diverse student learning and well-being do not end with admissions, or with the creation of intercultural learning opportunities beyond the campus. Creating diversity-rich environments and knowing who is present within them are an important beginning, but knowing who is flourishing within those environments is just as important. By collecting and interrogating data on *retention and achievement* across *intersecting identity characteristics* for the whole student body, institutions and faculty can begin to understand which students may continue to be ill-served by their learning environments. With the increasing availability of more complex data, Smith and Vonhoff (2019) advocate investigating student networks to gain a more sensitive insight into the campus communities in which they are (or are not) engaged, and how they are positioned within those communities.

Students who are unable to flourish in their learning environments are unlikely to be well-placed to engage in intercultural relationship development, even if those relationships might ultimately prove to be highly sustaining. In recognition of this, many institutions respond to perceived student need with support mechanisms of various kinds. Although important, care must be taken to ensure these do not contribute to existing deficit models of those they are dedicated to support ('international students can't speak English'), or allow mainstream systems, faculty, and administrators to shed their responsibilities. The flourishing of globally diverse students cannot be delegated to mental health support units, international student offices, or <LGBTQ+> solidarity groups, even if these might be needed to pick up the pieces when learning environments fail to provide a growth-enhancing campus climate.

Regardless of their 'status', university environments can by shaped in ways which intercultural relationship development is facilitated or inhibited. The process begins by creating opportunities for globally diverse students to encounter each other, through widening recruitment or through extending the environment into new spaces, perhaps virtually, perhaps within local communities. Universities with diverse student bodies hold responsibilities to understand how their students are flourishing, requiring data collection and research. These institutions, their administrators and their faculty, must take primary responsibilities for this, with support units in place for when they fail to create environments which are empowering for all.

Students

In this section, we consider the role of students, and the challenges they may face within those environments. These concern:

- preconceptions which shape how students are perceived by others, and how they perceive themselves and others; and
- the ways in which a student and others behave, and how those behaviours are received and responded to.

Preconceptions of globally diverse students

Whatever the range of diversity available to students when they enter their university, each of their peers will hold their own preconceptions; their pre-existing schemas for <men>, for <middle class>, for <Sikhs>. And, if an individual has never encountered, read about, or heard about <Sikhs>, they will have a ready-to-hand schema for 'different from me' into which they can be slotted. Perceptions of difference can be interesting, but can also be threatening. For example, international student participant responses in one study indicated the emotional impact of negative stereotypes held towards some of their domestic peers: 'students from Asian countries reported fear and apprehension around African American males' (Johnson *et al.*, 2018, p. 1872). While we would not condone such fears, they must be recognised, and learning environments designed to ameliorate rather than

nurture them. How globally diverse students *feel* in their learning environments, in particular their sense of belonging, is inextricably linked to their motivations to engage and to learn, and is influenced strongly by their encounters and relationships with others:

> … students' concentration, imagination, effort, and willingness to continue are powerfully influenced by how they feel about the setting they are in, the respect they receive from the people around them, and their ability to trust in their own thinking and experiences. People who feel unsafe, unconnected, and disrespected are often unmotivated to learn…
>
> (Ginsberg *et al.*, 2009, p. 3)

The psychological barriers which inhibit intercultural interaction and relationship development tell us that we need to actively construct the kinds of environment in which students feel confident enough to take the risks needed to overcome them. To experience encounters which facilitate growth-fostering relationship development, globally diverse students require learning environments which consistently challenge their preconceptions of themselves and their peers, while supporting them emotionally through the anxieties which boundary crossing might promote.

Other barriers are created through negative preconceptions, often shared as deficit models, of one group or another. Smit outlines how deficit thinking leads to minority students being 'labelled and further stigmatised', while at the same time supporting 'a laziness to grapple with the complex issues around student difficulties' (Smit, 2012, p. 372). Smit's discussion, transferrable from its South African context, highlights how these processes lead to alienation and failure. In Chapter One, we noted that if a student is to *wish* to engage in intercultural relationships, they need to *perceive initial and ongoing value* in those relationships. If students are to open themselves to intercultural relationships, learning environments need to be designed to consistently challenge deficit thinking about their globally diverse peers. No student should be identified by others as a bearer of 'their culture'.

In Chapter Two, we noted that students' prior intercultural contact *experiences* can make them more comfortable when engaging in new intercultural encounters. This suggests that where students do engage in successful intercultural contact across their learning environments, those experiences can serve to scaffold them into further contacts and potentially into relationship-building as they progress through their studies. The *inclinations* to do what appears to be natural and 'stick together', rather than reach across cultural boundaries, are perhaps strongest among students who have limited prior meaningful contact with culturally diverse others, and then enter university and are surrounded by large numbers of 'similar' peers. In one project, for example, students who self-identified as 'Australian' showed themselves less interested in engaging across cultures than both their international peers and other local students with more complex 'Australian+other' identifications (Fozdar *et al.*, 2016). As a local majority group, the 'Australian' Australians in this study entered university with more limited prior intercultural contact than their 'Australian+other' peers and, unfortunately, may be destined to leave university similarly disadvantaged. International students may often move in a 'parallel society' (Gomes, 2015) to that of their domestic peers, populated by others from their own country but also with peers from other countries. Whether entirely by choice, or through the lack of any enthusiastic reception by their local peers, these *international* societies offer far greater opportunities for developing intercultural relations than the mono-cultures of those majority group local students.

Case Study

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Prior cultural *knowledge* may also support students within culturally diverse environments. Among other findings, research among African students attending universities in China (Akhtar *et al.*, 2015, p. 108) found those who were aware of cultural differences abroad 'more likely to be satisfied with a host culture'. By contrast, being ill-prepared for some fundamental realities of life inside a new learning environment can bring significant challenges:

> "I did not imagine I would be the only female. It was a very difficult experience to accept a sudden change, getting used to another culture and to be alone in a male dominated department … I remember, I was scared to walk into the building and to look at people's faces."
>
> (Female Saudi respondent cited in Alqudayri *et al.*, 2018, p. 1741)

These examples suggest a valuable role for *pre-arrival or early intervention cultural orientations*. Many institutions with an established history of receiving international students in large numbers do provide some such form of physical or virtual orientation programme (see, for example, Jacobs University, 2019). Unfortunately, the presumption in many of these seems to be that it is for the international student to do all the adapting to the environmental norms of the institution. At the same time, many of these orientations offer unrealistic representations of the environment to which students are expected to adapt. Among Western Anglophone institutions, for example, pre-arrival programmes typically do not include honest disclosures concerning the much-reported lack of welcome or unwillingness to integrate among their domestic student peers. Indeed, there is a strong tendency to overtly identify campuses as 'welcoming international communities'. Domestic and majority students also need to be able to 'embrace difference without feeling a major threat to their own shared cultural identity' – whether those differences are found among international students or based within regional and local diversity 'arising from domestic multiculturalism' (Caruana *et al.*, 2010, p. 13). However, it is not common to find any orientations to prepare those students for learning within a diverse international and multi-cultural environment.

If institutions are serious about recruiting locally and internationally diverse students *in order to promote intercultural learning*, their pre-arrival orientations need to engage those students with honest and meaningful representations of the environments they will encounter, rather than the promotional propaganda which currently typify many web sites and prospectuses. For example, one interactive, pre-

arrival online resource created *by students for students* includes frank case studies from international students about their experience of the new culture and life on campus, paired with interactive awareness-raising activities prepared by the students to help shape expectations and foster a realistic and pragmatic preparation for transition to their new environment (Foster, 2012, 2016). This kind or orientation can be followed by activities specifically designed to bring globally diverse students into successful encounters early in their transition to university life.

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Pritchard and Skinner's intervention (Pritchard *et al.*, 2002) placed significant responsibility on the participants themselves, with interactions staged outside the formal learning environment, but also retained measures of *authority support* (Allport, 1979/1954) through regular contact. Their report illustrates the messy nature of intercultural learning when conflicts between cultural pride and challenge are brought to the fore through simple daily activities. Overall, though, it shows how early work to facilitate relationship-building can re-orientate preconceptions, and establish attitudes and self-confidence which may pave the way to further encounters.

Behaviours and responses

Whatever their *prior* experiences, expectations and prejudices concerning their globally diverse peers, the interactions which students experience within their learning environments influence their well-being and their motivations to persevere in relationship development. Interactions among students who are different *might* mean that all students are 'more likely to feel a sense of belonging on campus' (Winkle-Wagner *et al.*, 2014, p. 107). However, the nature of those interactions is central to their impact.

Wink (2005, pp. 56-57) recounts patterns of silencing she has observed, and as we go on to illustrate, similar actions are experienced regularly by our globally diverse students as they seek to make their way in their learning environments:

Often,

- those who have more, silence those who have less;
- those who are from the dominant European American culture silence those from non-European American cultures;
- boys silence girls;
- men silence women;

Often,

- men don't know it;
- boys don't know it;
- European Americans don't know it, and
- those with more don't know it.

Early work on 'co-cultural theory' (Orbe, 1998), identified that members of a dominant group utilise interaction strategies to establish and reinforce their position. In response, minority group members adopt behaviours which enable them to navigate the interaction. Orbe's taxonomy of observed 'co-cultural practices' ranges from 'nonassertive assimilation' behaviours, such as emphasising commonalities and self-censorship, through to 'aggressive separation' such as sabotaging dominant group members or attacking them verbally (see Orbe *et al.*, 2012 for full taxonomy and review of ongoing advances in this area). Utilising co-cultural theory in research into racial discrimination towards Asian-Americans, Jun (2012, p. 12) found, for example, that their most common communication responses were 'non-assertive', and included 'avoiding interaction with the aggressor, observing the aggressor without responding, …controlling their own emotions'. For simplicity here, we characterise all of these as 'silencing' because they are communication strategies stimulated in *response to* the power-privilege practices of others. Co-cultural theory recognises that the situational-context influences the selection of strategies, such that 'group members may adopt different practices' (Orbe *et al.*, 2012, p. 297) in different contexts. Learning environments may restrict or extend the range of choices available by design. However, we would argue they

should do more. Educators must seek to establish learning environments in which no students are constrained in what they say or how they say it by dominant peers.

Across the many contexts of global higher education, the systemic privileging of specific majority groups means some voices are heard and some silenced as students manoeuvre through their learning environments. In a Canadian study, an Indigenous student recounted his isolation when silenced by his peers (respondent cited in Bailey, 2016, p. 1273):

> *I had them talk right over me. There was a White person on my left and a White person on my right and they turned and looked at each other and started talking right over me and pretending as though I wasn't there.*

In Australia, a local female Muslim student recounted how "you ask a question and [certain lecturers and students] brush you off or they won't even answer you, or they'll speak rudely to you" (respondent cited in Asmar, 2005, p. 303). In the USA, Black students in one study reported how their experiences were 'devalued' in 'juxtaposition to the experiences of White students' and how they were 'expected to act as spokesperson for their race, and to explain the myriad ways in which they are different from the norm of Whiteness' (Bourke, 2010, p. 129).

It has long been acknowledged that silencing can happen in virtual environments just as easily as it can in face-to-face contexts unless design features promote inclusive awareness, behaviours and attitudes (see, for example Mechanis, 1998). Ma & Yun (2011) identify that across research themes into online learning, the two (p. 211) 'key success factors' are 'the connection of peer learners and their engagement in knowledge sharing behavior'. Their own model proposes that how students perceive their own online *attachment motivation* and *relationship commitment* will influence their desire to share knowledge with peers online. In turn, knowledge-sharing will positively impact on their online relationship development. These perceptions, respectively, concern how much the students believe they can improve their online

social interaction, and how much they can persist in their relationships with others online. Their research supports the model, and broadly implies that motivations for knowledge sharing online are similar to those in face-to-face learning situations. They suggest this indicates that promoting knowledge-sharing online requires a learning platform which is designed to fulfil student needs to belong. This includes by creating systems and mechanisms which make forming and maintaining online social bonds easier. Although this work did not look at intercultural relationships specifically, the importance it attaches to knowledge-sharing within relationship development supports the idea that establishing minority students as experts with knowledge to share might motivate all students to better *listen* to each other, on line and face-to-face. Wherever globally diverse students interact, they should do so in environments which encourage everyone to take a co-cultural stance towards 'exploring the intersections of culture, power, and communication' (Orbe *et al.*, 2012, p. 293). This represents a reciprocal, mutually supportive, approach which has the potential to liberate majority and minority students from their largely sub-conscious approaches to communication.

Too commonly, discriminatory behaviours in our learning environments are not limited to silencing. One respondent among students experiencing disability-related prejudice in the UK related that:

> I will often attempt to walk about without my walking aids (crutches, walking stick) because of the stares and comments made ... I have in the past had people kick my walking aids out of the way as a "joke".
>
> (NUS, 2011, p. 16)

In a South African study, coloured female students reported being almost invisible as individuals among their Africaan peers. Experiencing their identities in terms of being 'labelled a "quota" was, 'dehumanising and disempowering' in a learning environment where the "first thing people see when they look at you is Coloured" (Respondent in Daniels *et al.*, 2011, p. 159). Majority group lecturers and students, when faced with evidence which should have disconfirmed their pre-conceptions,

side-stepped the need to change their established schemas:

> When they come into contact with a coloured student who does not fit the stereotype of the disadvantaged academically mediocre student, she is "othered" from her ethnic group. [One participant] was described by white classmates and a lecturer as "not as Coloured" as the rest of her ethnic group because she is well informed and opinionated.
>
> (Op. Cit., p. 161)

In another UK report (ECU, 2009), 49.5 per cent of LGBT students reported having been 'treated in a negative way because of their sexual orientation' by other students, and over ten per cent by their teachers. Various researchers have found evidence that international students 'are often the target of racism…face several other forms of discrimination…and are often the victims of exclusion, isolation, and unfriendliness from domestic students' (see cited work in Ramos *et al.*, 2016, p. 402). For example, one study found that international students at eight US universities were more likely than their domestic peers to feel 'threatened or insulted on the basis of their cultural or ethnic background' (Glass *et al.*, 2014, p. 112). Such acts do not always originate among their student peers. An international student from Africa studying in Brazil, for example, recalls a lecturer saying in class that "Brazil is being invaded by Latin America and Africa" (respondent cited in Guilherme *et al.*, 2018, p. 416). These brief accounts of the lived-experience of globally diverse students indicate very clearly the need for significant changes in the way we shape their learning environments.

The kinds of group segregation which are commonly reported in both internationalisation and multicultural education literature may reflect wider local behavioural and attitudinal norms. In Malaysia, Trahar (2009, p. 220) recalls 'being surprised by how the Malays, Indians and Chinese students sat in discrete ethnic groups in the classroom', and wondering, in light of this observation, how they might welcome and integrate 'non-local' students. The student narratives which Trahar (Op. Cit.) goes on to explore reveal a complex mixture of experiences, but one of her

observations is that when domestic students perpetuate local social conventions by segregating each other, there is then pressure upon international students to “follow the custom here” (student respondent). The same patterns of ethnic self-segregation were also reported among Malaysian students in the UK (Coles *et al.*, 2012), and must raise similar questions concerning the impact of this upon their relationship-building across the wider university community. By contrast, Mustapha *et al* (2009) while acknowledging the same ethnic polarisations in Malaysia, are encouraged by the ‘high degree of acceptance and interaction of multi-ethnic students’ and the sense of ‘unity’ being created, in line with national objectives. Nonetheless, the authors (Op.Cit., p. 43) encourage universities to develop ‘diversity-related activities’ such as intergroup dialogues to ‘facilitate cross-group interactions’.

Each of the examples above illustrates how the behaviours of some students can, consciously or otherwise, set environmental norms through which others are silenced, set apart from their group, required to justify their strangeness, or forced to abandon their own ways of being and take-on those of their majority peers. Growth-fostering relationships cannot be built when some systemically disregard and disempower others. As post-national universities deliberately create learning communities which are increasingly complex in their diversity, helping those who ‘do not know it’ (Wink, 2005) to recognise and re-orientate how they are behaving towards their peers is a basic responsibility. This resonates with *intercultural responsibility*, which is ‘as much about responsibility for others in relation to oneself as it is about responsibility for oneself in relation to others’ (Guilherme *et al.*, 2010, p. 84).

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How students behave towards each other may not only silence and repress. Their behaviours also stimulate responses which further impact upon well-being and learning. How individual students respond to the behaviours they encounter depends upon who meets whom on campus, on what terms, with what history, and

with whatever power differentials these imbue. In their relatively large study of international students in the UK, Ramos *et al* (2016, p. 413) found that 'students' perceptions of being a target of discrimination is associated with a sense that boundaries between their [group] and host groups are impermeable'. They argue that this association indicates that it is 'what international students can (or cannot) do in their intergroup context' (i.e. the ways in which group boundaries might or might not be crossed) *and* perceptions of discrimination which pull students into own-nationality groups. Arguably, though, there is also a 'push' factor as it is, principally, their majority peers who create the boundary conditions in the first instance.

Ranson (2018, p. 1360) concludes that the one-day intervention summarised in our Window on Practice built a 'sense of mutual dependency among group members'. Mutuality is a condition within growth-fostering relationships, and relates strongly to feelings and actions of reciprocity between partners. Among much else of interest in a detailed examination of the experience of study abroad students (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002), is the importance of 'reciprocity' in the relationships which develop between those newly-arrived and their hosts:

> Reciprocity matters, for at first the social relationships between newly arrived strangers and their social environment is given as asymmetrical and unequal… Evidently strangeness is mutual but *native members do not have to try and reduce the distance separating them from foreigners*.
>
> (Murphy-Lejeune, 2003, p. 181 & 182. Emphasis added)

Reciprocity plays out in large and small ways within intercultural interactions. For example, Interdependence Theory (Kelley *et al.*, 2003, p. 9), discussed in Chapter One, emphasizes the importance of understanding interaction patterns. As students engage with their peers, each of them needs to:

> … discern which situation she is in and which she is not in; …to appreciate the values, norms, dispositions, and motives relevant to the existing situation;…

> to predict the likely behaviour of interaction patterns in this situation; …[and] anticipate potential unfoldings of events over time…

These are all significantly easier for those students already familiar with the particular interaction patters which dominate a learning environment. Less easy for those students, though, is the additional requirement that they 'must also imagine each of these from the partner's perspective' (Kelly *et al*., Ibid). Such 'imagining' is a specific form of reciprocity, it implies a willingness to forgo the easy advantages brought by familiarity with 'our way'. Why would a student choose to do so, unless the norms permeating the learning environment gave positive endorsement to such a sacrifice? In Chapter Two, we noted that effective student learning requires learners to recognise, manage, and modify their own emotional responses and behaviours within any intercultural encounter. Again, how can learning environments establish this as a priority for majority group students, whose dominant position leaves them less exposed to the emotional challenges of intercultural encounters than their minority peers?

Case Study

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Although not the main focus of this book, the learning which takes place among globally diverse students within their university accommodation can also illustrate the importance of peer perceptions and behaviours. Indeed, many students may find their most intimate experience of their peers occurs in their shared living spaces. Given this intimacy over a relatively prolonged period, it might be expected that shared living might engender empathy and reciprocity. However, several studies suggest otherwise. In a campus dorm, for example, 'several US students shouted "go back home, foreigners!" to one international student', causing her to eventually move 'for fear of her safety' (Johnson *et al.*, 2018, p. 1872). Overt racism such as this may be rare and would likely lead to some sanction by college authorities. However, the prevalence of superficial contact and challenges posed by the 'normal' behaviours of domestic students may be much more common. In one UK study

(Coles *et al.*, 2012), Malaysian students' use of cooking facilities promoted hostility, while their own concerns over domestic students' use of alcohol and sexual habits left them feeling alienated. The prevalent attitude was one of indifference to any real relationship development: "Here it's like, 'Hey, how are you? See you next time!' But you never see them again" (Participant in Coles *et al.*, 2012, p. 94). Even those who left their period in residence halls with intentions to maintain contact, did not do so, and the relationships which had developed by virtue of proximity only 'disappeared at the end of the first year along with the structure that created them' (Op.Cit., p.94). In the same study, some international students planned pro-active approaches to integration, in particular, by joining university societies. However, several had already tried and rejected students' clubs because of the prevalence of alcohol, unacceptable behaviours, and/or the superficiality of contact on offer. Similar superficiality was reported by international students in residences in South Africa: "People all greet, you say, 'Hi, Hi', you meet somebody, you shake hands, and so on. But people don't really mix freely" (Participant in Weber, 2016, p. 196). In this case, superficiality was accompanied by more overt prejudice towards fellow residents from other African nations. Chinese students electing to live with an American roommate had a variety of expectations but many related to wanting to gain a sense of 'connectedness and belonging' (Yao, 2016, p. 769). Those whose requests for US roommates were fulfilled, found that their expectations were not, one reporting, for example:

> Last semester, I lived with a White girl. We lived together but we don't really have any mutual topics. So every time, every night, when we sit in one room we just keep silent. That's so bad. Actually, we did know that we can get along well but we just don't have much mutual topics. And this semester, I moved out and I live with one of my Chinese friends. We have more topics to talk about.
>
> (Op.Cit, p. 771)

The majority of students in the study decided to move to accommodation off campus and all chose to live with other Chinese students. Far from learning that

intercultural relationship development was possible and beneficial, these students, and presumably their American roommates, had *learned* the opposite.

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Several features of Todd and Neasdale's programme, identified by the authors, might inform the development of other work to harness any learning environment to support intercultural relationship development:

- it was aligned with students' regular lives and not 'a limited or separate activity';
- it operated under a principle of student autonomy, but was monitored and supported;
- the environment and key figures within it were prepared and supported;
- intercultural interaction was recognized as a 'valuable goal' which would 'enrich both groups' university experience'.

Although, as some research has indicated (McKenzie *et al.*, 2016), it is unlikely most students will build long-term relationships with their globally diverse peers, university learning environments can create opportunities for the development of meaningful, growth-fostering learner relationships. This section has highlighted some of the socio-cultural and psychological barriers which may need to be overcome if they are to do so. The next section focusses on the ways in which the hidden curriculum may also impede the process.

Hidden curriculum

How students encounter their peers is influenced not only by who they are and how they behave, but by the broader ethos which surrounds them. Flowing through all learning environments is a 'hidden' curriculum in which norms and values are powerfully, if unintentionally, conveyed, and in which 'tacit' assumptions are made concerning what students already know, and about which, therefore, explicit guidance is assumed not to be needed. Both of these bring advantage to those

students with similar values and prior experiences, and disadvantage to others. Many of the student behaviours rehearsed in the previous section contribute to this hidden curriculum, and are at the same time often supported through the messages it carries. The hidden curriculum is the responsibility of every department and function of a university (see Killick, 2016) because it can manifest itself in any space and 'is in process at all times' (Kentli, 2009, p. 88). Learning environments cannot be separated from the hidden curriculum. Its messages empower and disempower globally diverse students on a daily basis. Its impacts on the social situation in which learning is shaped are often profound and are differentially experienced across the student body. Precisely because of its 'covert and insidious' nature, the hidden curriculum requires a 'critical lens [to] bring it into view' (Wink, 2005, p. 43), across all learning environments. And it requires interventions designed to align it with intended learning.

The hidden curriculum tends to normalise dominant groups. This can happen even in institutions with 'a high proportion of 'non-traditional' students' because the academic culture still 'reflects the dominant discourse of the student as <young, white, middle-class and male>' (Read *et al.*, 2003, p. 274, parenthesis added). Through the process, the hidden curriculum can undermine the cultures and characteristics of many globally diverse students. As discussed in Chapter Two, for example, stereotype threat may diminish performance, motivation, and student capacity and will for interaction with diverse peers. Stereotype threat 'can be evoked by a broad variety of cues, including quite incidental environmental cues that signal the possibility of identity-based devaluation' (Steele *et al.*, 2002, p. 435). It is in the hidden curriculum that such incidental cues lurk.

Through their experiences of the hidden curriculum, students 'will have begun the process of confronting and negotiating the … "rules of the game" of university life' well before 'they have attended their first lecture or attempted their first essay' (Read *et al.*, 2003, p. 261). Even before a student joins university (potentially preventing some students from even applying) they may have encountered

unintended messages of exclusion within university promotional materials: “when you see it up there, like actually see the prospectus, it’s like white people, white people” (Black African female respondent in Archer & Hutchings, 2000. Cited in Read *et al.*, 2003, p. 262). As illustrated through Magolda’s (Magolda, 2000) research in our Window on Practice, even the campus tour can serve to show who is welcome and who not.

INSERT WOP TEXT BOX 3-5 ABOUT HERE

The non-inclusive norms which Magolda (2000) reveals as being ‘subtly’ promoted in the campus tour will influence which students might expect to establish growth-fostering relationships within this university community. Institutions need to examine their promotional materials and activities for the hidden messages of inclusion and exclusion they carry if globally diverse students are to begin to feel themselves at home.

Within campuses a number of factors contribute to the hidden curriculum. These range from disability access arrangements, catering provision for multiple dietary requirements, spaces for worship, toilet facilities, to the cultural and historical symbols which are displayed in public spaces. Institutions in which minority groups are unrepresented among faculty and administrators, or where diversity is present but apparently segregated, also create non-inclusive messages. By contrast:

> A globally aware and culturally diverse staff who engage constructively with colleagues different from themselves, who exhibit curiosity about the world, and who seek out new global experiences can send a powerful signal to students that these qualities are valued in the campus community.
>
> (Ward, no date, p. 10)

The kinds of extended curriculum activities explored in Chapter Seven also send their own messages, and ‘in many ways, define the campus and thus are an important

part of the landscape in which the formal curriculum is enacted' (Leask, 2009, p. 207).

All of these are signifiers of how diversity is understood by an institution. Their messages confirm or challenge how globally diverse students should envisage themselves and each other, and the value they might place on building intercultural relationships.

INSERT WOP TEXT BOX 3-6 ABOUT HERE

While campus newspapers may be a particular feature of Chinese institutions, a range of media are used to communicate with students across global education. Zhao and Postiglione's research (2010) in our Window on Practice demonstrates the value of taking a critical perspective on 'official' messages (graphic or visual) about students of any group. It also raises the issue of 'celebrations' of minority cultures and their potential for unwittingly or otherwise contributing to hidden curriculum messages which segregate, diminish, and caricature.

Policy and practice vary widely across global higher education, but there are good examples of national bodies and of individual institutions taking steps to seek to influence the messages of the hidden curriculum in order to positively impact on student relations. In some contexts, for example, a 'Student Charter' (or similar) may have been jointly constructed by students, academics, and administrative staff to make explicit expectations regarding how people behave towards each other. One such charter (SOAS, 2019), for example, sets as its 'fundamental principle', 'that we will provide mutual support, seek to improve communications and strengthen relationships'. It includes the tenets that everybody at the institution will:

- Treat all members of [the institution] fairly and with dignity.
- Encourage diversity and promote equality.
- Be respectful, understanding and helpful in all interactions.

- Participate fully as partners in a community of scholars and be guided by each other.

Even where an institution has developed detailed equality policies, these can be undermined by recurrent instances of unconscious bias in classrooms and assessments (ECU, 2013b), as explored in subsequent chapters, and also by a blindness to sniggering prejudices in sports clubs and fraternities, stereotypical representations in campus spaces, an absence of representation in prestige positions, the differential recognition of voice, and in some contexts even expectations concerning dress or body piercings.

The hidden curriculum can surface through institutional practices and publications even before a student applies, and throughout their enrolment. It sends messages which can silence, exclude, perpetuate stereotypes and reinforce stereotype threat. It strengthens the norms of majority groups while disempowering others. It respects no boundaries and permeates all spaces. Researching its presence and its impacts, penetrating it with highly visible policies and tangible actions is needed if it is to be harnessed to support intercultural learning. Future chapters will explore the consciously planned academic curriculum and the optional curriculum, and their related learning activities. The hidden curriculum is to be found in those contexts, also. While the opportunities created for student interactions within mainstream and extended curriculum learning activities are of immense consequence to intercultural relationship development, their success depends upon the environment in which they are experienced.

Chapter summary

In this chapter we have proposed that learning occurs in all university environments. Motivations to learn and to engage with others are intricately entwined with how relationships are enacted within learning environments. Interaction patterns impact upon warmth, structure, and autonomy to meet motivational needs (Furrer *et al.*, 2014). There is a dynamic relationship at play between each student and the

environment, each influencing the other and both impacting how intercultural relationships might develop. Of particular importance are the people who populate formal and informal learning environments, and the hidden curriculum which permeates them. Policies and practices to promote campus diversity are to be welcomed, but it is essential that data be collected and examined carefully to reveal how these are actually serving students 'on the ground'. Creating diversity is not an adequate policy objective, and it may result in inequitable learning environments in which majority students flourish at the expense of others.

Learners carry with them very different prior experiences and conceptions of culturally diverse others. These impact upon how they behave towards those others, and how they see their own responsibilities within intercultural interactions. Hidden curriculum messages which reinforce majority norms do not promote learning *together*, and can stimulate responses which inhibit relationship development. Student (and faculty) behaviours and attitudes are impacted by these messages, and contribute to them.

For learning environments to facilitate growth-fostering intercultural relationship development, it is necessary to expose excluding messages within the hidden curriculum, and to intervene to promote inclusivity and reciprocity among all students. Windows on Practice and Case Studies have shown examples of researchers and practitioners working to these ends.

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Co-constructing intercultural development on a professional development programme for teachers from China

Carrie Xiaorong Zhang, Sharon McIlroy, Daguo Li, University of Reading, UK

The International Study and Language Institute hosts three-month residential courses to promote professional and personal development among junior and senior middle school teachers of English from China. The course aims to engage participants with current theories and practice in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). In response to curriculum reform in China (Wang, 2007), developing intercultural understanding is an important part of the programme.

We introduced a number of elements to enhance the development of intercultural understanding during the programme. We encouraged participants to take a critical and reflective approach towards their intercultural experiences 'in the field', and then introduced opportunities for them to co-construct intercultural understanding in dialogue with their peers. An initial workshop introduced a range of ethnographic methods and techniques, the most practical and relevant being observing, recording by writing or taking photos, and analysing. Using a structured template, participants then created three reflective journal entries focussed on their intercultural encounters. Because the participants had no opportunity to engage with domestic students on campus during their stay, we asked them to focus upon their interactions with the wider host community, specifically with teacher trainers at the university, teachers and students in their local placement school, and their host families.

The participants then critically evaluated these reflections with their peers in subsequent workshops at three stages of the course. These discussions were supported by both British and Chinese tutors to offer richer interpretations of their interaction experiences. To evaluate the impacts of these developments, we undertook an action research study. We collected impact-data using a variety of methods, but restrict discussion here to that which captured the student voice directly.

Overall, participants developed a keen awareness of cultural diversity and differences in customs, habits and mind-sets through their interactions with local British people, often characterised as ‘they’ in their journal entries. The following selected quotes illustrate something of the diversity of these experiences and observations:

> *They load all the laundry, including tea towels, underwear and socks in one go.*

> *… I stepped on the bus in a hurry [due to the rain]…didn’t realise there was a queue… someone moaned…I was really embarrassed.*

> *At the end of one lesson in my placement school, the teacher simply pushed a disabled student’s wheelchair towards him for him to use [without unnecessary assistance to allow him more self-sufficiency] … [So] the disabled seem more independent and confident here... a completely different attitude towards the disabled [to that in China]…*

> *At the host home I took photos of her friends …The host perhaps didn’t hear my request…demanded I should’ve asked for her permission first…*

> *We invited our host for a meal together. We prepared beef and pork… embarrassed to know eating these is their taboo because …Muslims…we knew very little about their culture…*

> *[T]he old people … want to be respected and accepted as an independent person… unlike in China…*

Observations such as these provided rich and authentic experiences for the group dialogues. Over time, participants enhanced their intercultural confidence,

awareness and competence on the course. We believe the scaffolded analytical and critical reflection also promoted cultural sensitivity (Chen, 2010), a higher level of tolerance for different cultures, and resilience in a strange environment, as suggested by participant comments:

> *I was scared to speak [to a foreigner] in the past… I didn't know how… [I am] much more confident now …*

> *In the past, I couldn't understand their humour …not on the same page in communications…gradually I can feel the fun and enjoy it.*

> *I know why my host became annoyed…she values privacy more [than we do]…I know her position now so I won't be stuck in my own perspectives again…*

> *I have become more open-minded and tolerant as I realise diversity is everywhere in the world, e.g. different religions.*

Following these results, this component has been incorporated into the curriculum for subsequent courses. The same procedures apply in every course. A focus on critical incidents (Griffin, 2003; Hall & Townsend, 2017) is reinforced in order to engage participants in discussing and evaluating experiences along the 'fault lines' (Kramsch, 2003). Students are offered dual guidance by tutors of both Chinese and British origin in line with a multiple cultural perspectives approach (Arasaratnam, 2007). Cross-checks between colleagues have become standard practice before a sharing session to avoid potential culturally-biased interpretations.

By asking participants to focus upon their individual, authentic encounters with members of the host community, we have seen that this approach contextualises abstract big 'C' cultural concepts to specific small 'c' situations (Holliday, 1999; Smolcic & Katunich, 2017). Using their own perceptions and observations,

supported by guided reflective discussions participants transform an otherwise accidental learning opportunity into an intentional, systematic and rigorous constructive process. As this occurs, we have observed students' beliefs, worldviews and values relativizing and decentring - perhaps preparing them to embark upon future intercultural encounters with greater intercultural understanding from the outset. As one participant put it:

> "[V]iewing the world will never be the same again for me. Why? For example, in the past, it was true for me that China was in the centre of the world map. Now you realise China isn't [always] in the centre of the world map".

Commentary

The development of this programme overcame a lack of opportunities for the single nationality cohort to interact with domestic students on campus. This was achieved by extending the learning environment into the local community with whom the participants were, in any case, engaging. The organisers were able to transform what might have been poor, or even negative, incidents into rich intercultural learning experiences by encouraging participants to reflect on their own learning. A preparatory introduction to ethnographic observation and recording methods supported the creation of reflective journal entries, which then formed the basis for guided discussion. We have not encountered the use of tutors from two cultures to minimise misinterpretations of critical incidents in any other projects of this kind.

Achieving Intercultural Learning in the Language Zone

Carolin Schneider, Fiona Heubeck, University of Leeds, UK

The Language Zone (Schneider, 2018) is a self-access centre which provides high quality resources and offers a range of co-curricular activities which contribute to the student experience in a safe place to meet other learners. Anecdotal evidence suggests that apart from improving language skills, cultural awareness and confidence, regular attendees develop relationships and find new ways to learn together. Weekly activities aimed at dissolving virtual and psychological barriers were introduced to offer English language learners opportunities to practise their speaking skills, take a break from their academic work, and meet new people.

The majority of students attending the activities introduced below are speakers of English as a foreign or second language and are studying towards undergraduate or postgraduate degrees. Many of them are attending pre-sessional and in-sessional courses designed to help them study in an English-speaking environment, while others already study for undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. Sometimes, the activities are also attended by members of staff or visiting scholars, who want to improve their non-academic language skills.

There are three types of sessions to enhance skills, build confidence and develop relationships: Conversation Club, Book Chat and Presenting with Confidence, each briefly described below.

During *Conversation Club* sessions, which usually last fifty minutes, discussions are initiated by staff or guest speakers, and are then very much shaped by participants. Topics vary, ranging from culture and sports to festivities, with recurring subjects including local traditions and festivals such as Halloween, student life, and well-being. During the session, students are encouraged to talk to different people in small groups, mixing cultures and backgrounds, as appropriate.

Book Chat is an hour-long session for everyone who likes reading and discussing ideas. The session leader briefly introduces a text, theme or genre to facilitate discussion, aiming to stimulate shared understanding of culture and attitudes through exchanging experiences of literature from around the world. Topics are advertised before the session, but participants are not expected to read or prepare anything in advance.

Presenting with Confidence is based on the concept of PowerPoint Karaoke, which is an improvised activity in which the participant must deliver a presentation based on a set of slides they have not seen before (Wikipedia, 2019).Presentations consist of eight slides, which move on automatically after 15 seconds. Participants usually present four slides each. Students learn to give and receive feedback, share strengths and weaknesses to their mutual benefit, and develop their confidence in public speaking skills in a mutually supportive environment.

In all sessions, students seem to appreciate the safety net of a facilitator in order to feel that they can start talking to each other, and this persists for some time. It is only after attending several times that students seem to be willing to engage freely with each other. As a generalisation, we have observed that European and South American students need less support to engage in a dialogue with strangers. European and South American students appear to need less support, while students from Japan and China seem to benefit the most from attending the events regularly. Students seem to use the activities as a means of meeting like-minded compatriots with whom they go on to socialise outside university.

It is very common for students to complain that the only British people they meet are university staff. By inviting students and staff from various university roles to talk to the Conversation Club, we provide a mix of ages and accents for the international students to experience. It is often painfully clear that those who speak English as their first language do not realise the extent to which their use of idiom, speed, and articulation can make them quite incomprehensible. This

reinforces an ‘us and them’ barrier, and it is not surprising that the extra-curricular activities produce social benefits that are more often intra-cultural than inter-cultural.

Whatever benefits accrue to the students attending the sessions, they are all valuable. Meeting others who speak the same language, have the same cultural background and are going through similar feelings of being new to university in the UK, is an important factor in feeling comfortable in a new environment. This is more likely to boost confidence and motivation to engage in all aspects of university life. We have found that students who attend Language Zone activities are more aware of what is on offer and are more willing to try new things.

After attending Book Chat for three terms, one student reported that she had had more opportunity to speak meaningfully for longer while discussing what she had read in the group than in any other university setting. She felt this had had a huge impact on her fluency and confidence and was planning to start a Book Chat activity in her school on her return to teaching in Japan. Another regular said it had been the best thing she had done at university, and it had been, “like a Utopia for me”. Teachers on pre-sessional courses have noted that students benefit from attending these co-curricular activities, and actively encourage their students to participate.

The positive impacts of Language Zone activities appear greatest for those who attend regularly. For example, we have observed that regular attendees have become more confident in starting a conversation with others, and in presenting themselves in a public space, whether on a one to one basis or in groups. In addition, their English language skills have improved, especially their speaking and listening. Often, we also notice that regular attendees form relationships, most often within their own cultures, and look forward to seeing each other every week, sometimes also meeting outside the weekly sessions.

Commentary

Although facilitating minority group students to support each other through initiatives such as this one, where domestic majority students are largely unengaged is not an end-point in terms of intercultural relationship development, the emerging sense of self-efficacy and value captured by the student feedback here may be of great value if it then supports them to bring their own voice into future intercultural encounters. Drawing on Lee's (Lee, 2008) work on the stages of intercultural relationship development, Kudo et al (Kudo et al., 2019, p. 482) propose that in the first stage 'seemingly temporal, and even superficial relationships are a precondition for moving on [to subsequent stages]'. Potentially, establishing relationships among diverse minority communities may provide a similar transition stage into more challenging encounters with local majority group peers.

Architecture of Multiple Authorship – Teaching global citizenship

Sandra Denicke-Polcher, London Metropolitan University, UK

Architecture of Multiple Authorship is an initiative that offers an alternative model of teaching and learning beyond the classroom to architecture students. It bridges the relationship between speculative, studio-based reflections and professional practice, enabling experimentation within the context of the needs of communities. The curriculum is designed to engage different student groups to work on a specific project in one place over several academic years. There are two points of engagements (November and February) which are credit bearing, an additional summer workshop is voluntary. Students at different stages of their academic studies ranging from undergraduate to PhD come together in a vertical studio to share critical learning approaches and knowledge.

Universities can provide an education beyond the chosen subject area of architecture and offer to shape society by teaching citizenship. The proposition is that effective learning consists not only of the course curriculum, but includes active engagement with communities, too. In contrast to the 'model of master and student' (Crowther, 2013), the tutor takes the role of an arbiter and joins the co-learning experience.

Our students form part of the ongoing community-led architecture project *Crossing Cultures* in Italy, integrating asylum seekers arriving on the coast into the fabric of depopulated villages. The students become 'agents for change' making a difference in the village and gaining experience for their long-term learning. This inclusive learning environment invites students to establish intercultural relationships with their peers and new communities. It instructs them how to engage with their future world, building more tolerant and integrated societies.

Crossing Cultures was introduced in 2016 when London-based students organised a summer workshop to explore the boundaries of practice and education, and it

has since become a university platform outside of the academic environment for students to collaborate with a growing number of stakeholders.

The curriculum brings three separate groups to the village in November, February and July, with different student cohorts contributing to a growing body of work. Choosing a small village in Italy places students in an environment where they can immerse themselves into the project and the necessary collaboration creates positive relationships with each other outside of university, creating an international and inclusive educational environment to develop global competences. As we discovered during interviews:

> *Here we are all confronted with each other. There is a density of working in the same place and then meeting in the same bar in the evening and again for breakfast.*

Working closely together creates a safe working and learning environment amongst all participants, we call it a 'common ground', which differentiates it from conventional academia. Students, locals and migrants develop empathy, a sense of equality and respect for each other, build lasting emotional relationships which in turn 'impacts on better learning' (Brooks, 2019) "Here in Italy we are all migrants…." (Unpublished Internal Report, 17 July 2019). This citation expresses the feeling of an international architecture student who participated in the Workshop in Italy that she felt the same as the other participating students, refugees and locals.

Our students are taught to value working with people of different backgrounds as all participants are integrated and feel accepted:

> *I learned to appreciate that other people have much more to contribute … The more I do this [work], the more I appreciate that people can contribute to things that, at first, I didn't recognise.*

They acknowledge there is “*no vibe of hierarchy*” and emphasise the “*equal importance of all contributors*”. They combine academic knowledge with hands-on understanding and develop positive emotional dialogues with peers and new communities.

We conducted 23 interviews with students, refugees and locals, who participated in the last Summer Workshop (Denicke-Polcher *et al.*, 2019).
Our own observations indicate that the project helps develop intercultural awareness, and an understanding of global issues, and shapes a sense of social justice amongst our students, equipping them with values and attitudes that are essential for a well-functioning society. We see students putting extra effort into their work in response to stimulating feedback from effecting change through hands-on engagement, and they feel a duty of care as their learning and achievements in a real context gives legitimacy to their work.

Observing that positive change takes a long time in which the students develop the vital skill to persevere and be resilient:

> *Seeing this [project] grow from the last years to this year and knowing it carries on, is really important. The community is growing, developing, creating a positive change over time.*

Unpublished Internal Report, international student (17 July 2019)

Moreover, the work-based learning of *Crossing Cultures* moves away from simply viewing students as university “customers”. Learning about collaboration and teamwork is important for students’ profession as architects. Students benefit from the ethical and social impact they have on communities in a globally inter-connected world with an increasing prospect of mass-migration.

Concluding, we question the sole focus on academic performance alone, as it might matter more to students to experience their ability to make an impact and create positive change. This boosts the student's confidence and forms a basis to become energetic professionals, and it may also benefit their mental health and encourage volunteering beyond their studies.
Commentary *This programme is highly unusual creating a learning environment which not only extends across cultures and communities, but does so over a number of years. The principles raised here - that faculty become co-learners, and all participants establish a 'common ground' in a 'safe working and learning environment' - have particular strength among globally diverse learners and contexts. Feedback shows this is more than a theoretical position. The alliance between academic work and enabling students to 'experience their ability to make an impact and create positive change' is a model of an empowering curriculum.*

Formal Learning Environments

Where students principally engage in:

Informal Learning Environments

Where students principally **do not** engage in:

Learning with intended outcomes.

Structured and/or guided learning activities.

Learning which may be a required part of an academic programme.

Learning which is formally assessed.

Learning which contributes to academic credits.

Learning which is conducted largely within a mandated language.

Learning which may be designed, structured, and/or supervised by 'teachers' (faculty, teaching assistants, lab technicians, librarians, student services, etc.).

Learning with a designated cohort of fellow learners.

Feature	Learning environments in which students:
Warmth	• talk and listen to each other • provide emotional support • share learning experiences
Structure	• practice communicating • give and receive feedback • model academic competencies • resolve conflicts • provide help and advice • create shared academic goals and behavioral standards • experience predictable, instrumentally supportive interactions (e.g., interpreting teacher instructions, sharing materials) [through which they] know they can rely on their peers for information and help
Autonomy	• attempt to understand each other's viewpoints • work together to negotiate activities in the [learning environment] • cooperate on group projects • examine and challenge their own beliefs • explain the relevance of assignments to each other • engage in self-exploration • share their ideas

Table 3.2 Summary of features of learning environment interactions which help meet motivational needs (summarised from Furrer *et al.*, 2014, pp. 106-107).

Window on Practice – Experiencing intercultural learning through a virtual learning environment

To enhance opportunities for intercultural learning, particularly for those unable to engage in international mobility, a two-way virtual learning experience was created for students in Hong Kong and Australia (Hyett *et al.*, 2019). Online tasks were structured to require participants to exchange cultural information within personally challenging interactions (Leask, 2009), and to stimulate transformative learning. Among the outcomes of the authors' mixed methods research, those which relate directly to the intercultural environment they had created illustrate opportunities to 'practice a myriad of intercultural communication skills' (p.395-6). These included many which would facilitate understanding and help build intercultural relationships among students, as illustrated in the following participant quotes extracted from the article:

> *…we have to be active listeners. We have to listen to what they say and also need to be curious. I think these two skills are needed in order to break away some stereotypes and in order to understand better the cross-culture.*

> *…you sort of approached the topic a bit more cautiously and you picked your words a bit more carefully.*

> *[I learned] just to be mindful of other people's background whether they're Australian, or Hong Kong or just whatever, like don't come in with an expectation.*

> *For me, during the cross-cultural communication, I have learnt how to demonstrate respect and empathy.*

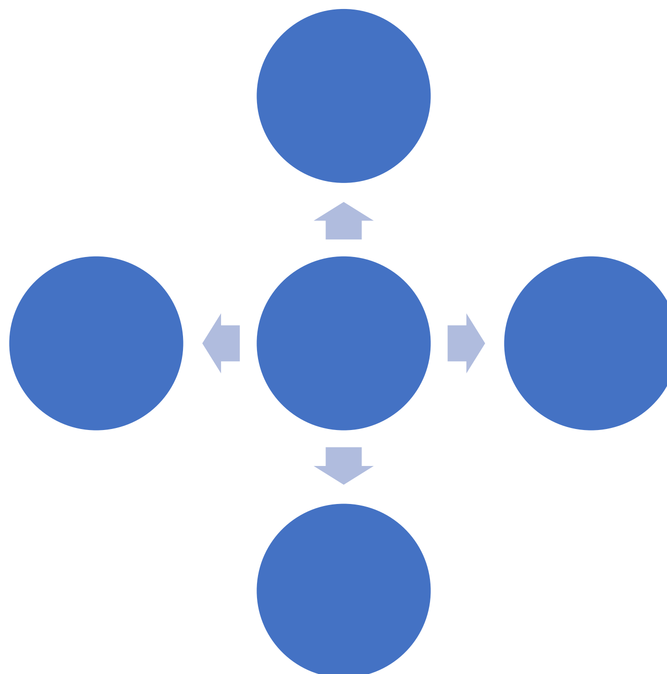
> *It's helped me become more confident in interacting with people that are from a different culture, because I think now a lot of people get offended*

easily so I'm just always like so anxious to not offend people that I think it's changed the way I interact with people.

The research also revealed how the Australian students had developed 'greater awareness and appreciation of *diversity at home'* (p. 401, original emphasis). Among factors which may have contributed to this, the authors note 'peer-to-peer exchange in an informal and noncompetitive setting'. They also suggest that allowing 'for discussion of shared interests and issues and using cultural relatedness as a launch pad for further discussions about difference'. While recognizing the power of 'out-of-comfort-zone' activities to promote transformative learning, they also caution (p. 402) that discomfort 'needs to be balanced with effective educator role-modelling, support, and debriefing.' These are all, perhaps, equally applicable to physical and virtual learning environments.

Hyett, N, Lee, K.M, Knevel, R, Fortune, T, Yau, M.K, & Borkovic, S. (2019). Trialing virtual intercultural learning with Australian and Hong Kong Allied Health students to improve cultural competency. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 23*(3), 389-406.

Leask, B. (2009). Using formal and informal curricula to improve interactions between home and international students. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 13*(2), 205-221.



Window on Practice – An early intervention to bring students together

This programme was designed to ‘bring native and nonnative speakers of English together in a nonthreatening environment’ which would ‘encourage them to reflect on their similarities and differences’ (Pritchard *et al.*, 2002, p. 324). Objectives were to help international students settle in and give them ‘insight into the factors preventing them from forming positive human relationships in a foreign culture’ and to ‘facilitate valuing of cultural diversity among home students’.

Participants met regularly to engage in non-academic tasks (going shopping, contrasting newspaper articles from their respective countries, attending a social event, watching a TV programme). All participants were encouraged to submit a feedback sheet capturing their reflections on the shared activities. The detailed analysis discusses findings within Hofstede’s (Hofstede, 1984) categories of cultural difference, such as uncertainty avoidance and power distance. Here, we select only a few responses to illustrate impacts on participating students’ perceptions of self and other.

Several international students noted the difficulties experienced when their cultural norms were confronted with some local difference (hygiene concerns at un-rinsed washing up, public displays of intimacy on TV and in real life, lack of formality in addressing tutors, death as a focus for comedy). These often prompted them to re-affirm their own practices and values. Others reveal a strengthening of national identity and pride, one student realising s/he was “more proud of my Sinhalese heritage and culture than I had ever cared to admit” (p. 340). However, many also demonstrated that insights into other cultures led to a more critical stance on their own.

There was also evidence of students accommodating the needs and preferences of cultural others. In terms of intercultural relationship development, some participants suggested that their learning may have been sufficiently impactful to carry them forward into continued engagement and future encounters (p. 341):

The relationships between people have become very strong and they are continuing to develop.

I don’t necessarily have to stick with the Internationals [for new friends] and it’s better to set up contact with one or two of the locals.

[If I can] talk to someone from a different country [I can] basically pluck up courage to talk to anyone.

The authors also observed that ‘some of those human relationships forged during the programme proved durable well beyond its conclusion’ (p.345).

Window on Practice – Creating a short-term intercultural learning environment to establish the basis for learner relationships

To help their domestic and international students experience each other in ways which might enable them subsequently to work together in cross-cultural teams, a Canadian university brings them together for a one-day event at the start of their first semester (Ranson, 2018). The event is organised (p.1354) 'to give students an opportunity to work together in groups in a non-threatening, low-stakes activity'. Although working in groups of four domestic and one international student, the activity is designed to ameliorate power imbalances by establishing the international student 'as a subject-area expert on their particular country' such that they 'need to be consulted at every step' (p. 1357). Male female imbalances are also avoided, and the groups who work together during this day remain active throughout the semester.

During the morning, groups develop 'an idea for an environmentally sustainable business *that would work in the international student's home country'* (p.1358, original emphasis), and later in the day pitch the idea to faculty and local business people.

The day feeds into the students' wider academic programme, but the aim of the day itself is, specifically, 'to work toward developing equal power status for all group members' (p.1359) by creating an environment where (p. 1360):

> …international students are valued for their country's knowledge and given the opportunity to demonstrate their expertise in a low stakes activity. The power of the native speaker is reduced, which opens dialogue, forces listening, and builds early bridges to future group work.

The author notes the importance of establishing relationships between diverse learners early in the term, before the students have formed their individual bonds. An intervention of this kind:

…changes the views that domestic students commonly have about international students and improves group relationships and thus team project quality for the rest of the semester.

Window on Practice – Promoting intercultural relations within a residential college.

Drawing on the principles of Allport's Contact Hypothesis (Allport, 1979/1954), Todd and Nesdale (Todd *et al.*, 1997) designed a programme at an Australian college residence to promote initial contact, facilitate subsequent contact, and enhance intercultural knowledge and acceptance among international and domestic students. The programme was introduced in one of two college residences (CI) alongside existing orientation activities, and not at the other.

Their first intervention promoted 'incidental contact' by ensuring there would be approximately equal numbers of international and domestic students distributed around the halls. Secondly, the aims of the programme were discussed with 'floor group leaders' (more senior students within the residences), emphasising that activities should (p. 66): 'take into account the interests of both groups… involve co-operative activities... [and] be interactive rather than competitive'. Residential tutors attended a one-day workshop which included enhancing their tutorial skills and enlisting their support 'in using techniques which would facilitate intercultural contact in their weekly tutorial sessions'. The researchers met regularly with those implementing it to discuss and further its progress, and acted as facilitators throughout the programme, but (p. 68):

> … its essential conduct and ownership always remained in the hands of the college, principally the students—the aim was to have the students take ownership of the project.

Impacts, assessed through questionnaire and debriefing meetings, included (p. 70) 'significant greater intercultural contact' reported by Australian students at CI, but not by their international peers. Among Australian students, the additional contact 'directly impacted upon' (i) the extent of their contact on the wider university campus' and (ii) their level of intercultural knowledge and acceptance.

While the results from the international students may seem disappointing, international students in *both* colleges showed consistently more contact, knowledge and acceptance than the Australian students at the control college, and broadly in line with that of the domestic students at CI.

Window on Practice – Illustration of critical research into the hidden curriculum

In a piece of local ethnography, Magolda (Magolda, 2000, p. 33) cites 'rituals' in educational settings as 'political acts that communicate expectations and norms for behaviour and performance'. The article reveals the ways in which the ritual of the campus tour 'persuades prospective students to believe…they will be members of a unique academic community', while conveying the 'implicit beliefs and values that guide tour organizers as they convey what is the "normal" student role within this academic community'. Illustrated with several specific examples of behaviour and language, Magolda notes (p33) how features of the ritual, such as the tour leader's choice of clothing, use of gestures, and interaction style, 'communicate expectations and norms' which include 'respect for authority and reverence for tradition'. Tour participants themselves unwittingly fall into line with behavioural norms. During the tour, narratives of campus history are embellished with folk tales of human interactions, which reinforce messages concerning the value of human relations 'that foster and sustain a sense of solidarity' (p37), among "normal" students (p38 & 39):

> Subtly, the guide implicitly suggested who would fit in and who would not. The message for prospective students is "if you enroll, this is how we expect you to act." Students are expected to reproduce existing culture norms rather than alter them.

The author notes how 'normalizing rituals' such as these 'discourage students from self-reflection' (p42), and in a subsequent article (Magolda, 2001) Magolda advocates for less coercive rituals, in which more 'relaxed' assumptions about students and their roles might be conveyed. Making the campus tour (for example) a 'meaningful experience' which might 'encourage students to consider a multiplicity of perspectives' (p.8).

Window on Practice – A second illustration of critical research into the hidden curriculum

Through an analysis of the representation of ethnic minorities in text and images in Chinese university campus newspapers, Zhao and Postiglione (2010) identify messages of 'Others' and 'Us', the portrayal of the majority group as normative, and promotion of an ideology of 'state multiculturalism'.

Campus newspapers are produced by the university, and described as (p.321) 'students' main source of information on university regulations, administration, and campus news'. They play a significant role in delivering 'public opinions among the campus community'. The study analyses newspapers from three universities with contrasting admissions profiles, reflecting diverse locations, authorities, and missions.

The authors identify four mechanisms through which ethnic minorities are portrayed as 'Others' (against the 'Us' of the majority), within text and images which:

1. emphasise unique ethnic features
2. indicate the majority group renders 'paternalistic care'
3. display cultural practices
4. represent students' feelings of ethnic identity

All are familiar tropes across global contexts where minorities are 'represented' principally through the eyes of a majority. The authors identify, also, how ethnic minorities are at times variously represented as a part of 'Us' in ways which 'hide the reality of ethnic conflict' and ensure that 'differences among ethnic groups are disguised, ignored or de-emphasized' (p. 327).

For one student the messages conveyed are clear (p. 322):

Negative and one-sided. I seldom find that, for example, a person who has

made a great contribution is recognized as coming from the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. The information implies that minorities are poor; or celebrate some distinctive festivals. This means that ethnic areas are backward, and still celebrate such festivals now!