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Short-term International Study Programs and Intercultural Maturity Development: Does an Enhanced Appreciation for Differing Cultural Perspectives Continue to Progress When Students Return Home?

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ABSTRACT

Numerous studies have shown that international mobility programmes enhance students' intercultural maturity development, regardless of duration, few have attempted to ascertain whether this change is long lasting. This study tested students two years after their participation to see if their intercultural maturity levels continued to progress, plateaued, or regressed in the intervening period. 93% of the study cohort continued to progress in their level of intercultural maturity in at least one dimension, with none regressing, and only one plateauing. This suggests that the shifts in identity, values, and skills that the students develop are far-reaching and profound.

Introduction

University students of today live in a rapidly changing and progressively more diverse and interconnected world (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2018). A result of an increasingly globalized workforce is that graduates are now required to possess not only the core skills and knowledge mandated by their profession, but also effective communication and relational skills with culturally diverse others (Marcotte et al., 2007; Tran, Phan et al., 2021). They must be able to demonstrate intercultural maturity, or a global perspective, and have the capacity to work in various international contexts (Marcotte et al., 2007; Tran, Phan et al., 2021; Tran, Stafford et al., 2021). Higher education institutions have responded to this arising need for interculturally competent graduates by implementing international mobility programmes for students, which include study abroad, student exchanges, and internships in foreign countries (Bretag & van der Veen, 2017; Marcotte et al., 2007; Thi et al., 2021; L. Tran et al., 2021; L. Tran, Bui et al., 2021; Tran, Stafford et al., 2021). In the Australian context, the desire to provide students with the work-based experiences and the skills necessary to effectively participate in an increasingly culturally diverse workforce is mirrored in the Australian Government's New Colombo Plan (NCP) – an initiative aimed at deepening Australia's relationship with countries of the Indo-Pacific through reciprocal student

mobility programmes (Australian Government, 2020, n.d.-b; Thi et al., 2021; L. Tran et al., 2021).

Although a student's participation in international mobility programmes may be founded upon attaining increased disciplinary knowledge and the expected thrill of exploring another country, it is a truism that "the simple act of travelling outside one's own culture can have developmental benefits perhaps unconsidered pre-travel" (Whatley et al., 2021, p. 3). A student typically returns from such sojourns with a heightened awareness and sensitivity towards people from other cultures, and a deeper understanding of their "obligation to the global community or their own and another's culture" and of themselves (Whatley et al., 2021, p. 3).

The Australian government, together with educational institutions, have been supporting international mobility programmes (Bretag & van der Veen, 2017; Thi et al., 2021; Tran, Phan et al., 2021) with 1 out of 4 domestic graduating students having had international experiences (Australian Government, 2020). For one third of these students, they were recipients of the NCP scholarships – a 2014 student mobility initiative to enhance Australian students' Indo-Pacific literacy and engagement(L. Tran et al., 2021). There has been a number of studies conducted of the NCP alumni on connection building (L. Tran, Bui et al., 2021) and employability (Thi et al., 2021; Tran, Phan et al., 2021). These have comprised of surveys and interviews but have been limited as they were, on the whole, conducted after students' completion of the programme or were cross-sectional at a point in time (Bretag & van der Veen, 2017; Tran, Phan et al., 2021). In the study on employability and NCP programme in 2020, NCP alumni, from 2014 to 2020, and current students were invited to participate in the employability study by Tran, Bui et al. (2021). In the study by the same lead author on building experience and the resume, 52 semi-structured interviews with staff and Australian students going to different Indo-Pacific countries (Tran, Stafford et al., 2021). The study collected interview data for staff once and for some of the students once or twice. However, there is no information on the reasons or the additional information collected from the students that were interviewed twice (Tran, Stafford et al., 2021).

To address the scarcity of empirical research into the long-term effects of international mobility programmes, the current study investigates into whether short-term study abroad or internship opportunities can produce lasting change in students' intercultural skills and perspectives. King and Baxter Magolda (2005) described such cross-cultural development as intercultural maturity. The researchers primarily applied Kegan's (1994) model of "maturity" – one which comprises three dimensions of development and through which a person learns to balance external influences with internal interests – to a global context, arriving at their developmental model of intercultural maturity (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005). This paper begins with a review of the literature on intercultural maturity and followed by background discussion on the Global Perspective Inventory (GPI), a validated instrument used to assess students' global perspective. The next section will be on the method employed for collection of data and research questions for the study followed by presentations of the results. The paper concludes with a discussion of the findings and significance before concluding.

Literature review

King and Baxter Magolda (2005) developmental model of intercultural maturity advocates that a global perspective develops across the three dimensions identified by Kegan (1994): cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal. Interactions with culturally diverse others enables individuals to recognize and respect the validity of multiple perspectives (cognitive domain), better understand their personal values and cultural identity (intrapersonal domain) and enhance their intercultural communication skills and interdependency with people from differing cultural backgrounds (interpersonal domain). Throughout this paper, the terms "intercultural maturity" and "global perspective/s" will be used interchangeably as both refer to the level of intercultural competence possessed by the individual – the skills and attitudes that are to be gained through the same three dimensions (cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal), as well as informed by an increased awareness of global issues, acceptance of other cultures, increased self-understanding, heightened concern for others, and an enhanced ability to be open to multiple perspectives (Brooks, 2019).

Research has shown that maturation in intercultural maturity is achievable pre-eminently through experiences of cultural immersion; classroom-based courses aimed at teaching intercultural communication have failed to enhance the competency level of students (Penington & Wildermuth, 2005, p. 166). This is because intercultural skills are learned through "*direct interpersonal experience* with members of diverse cultural groups" for it is these encounters that present a challenge to students' internal perceptions of themselves and the cultural "other" (Penington & Wildermuth, 2005, p. 168, emphasis in original). International mobility programmes, on the other hand, offer students the opportunity to fully immerse themselves in a different cultural context (Bretag & van der Veen, 2017; Tran, Phan et al., 2021). Researchers have proffered that the reason why these international programmes enable students to attain a deeper appreciation and understanding of other cultures is because they are experiential learning experiences – a "sense-making process of active engagement between the inner world of the person and the outer world of the environment" (Beard & Wilson, 2006, p. 19). Different cultural contexts illuminate for a student, at a personal level, theories of cross-cultural awareness and communication previously only understood conceptually (Penington & Wildermuth, 2005).

The experience of being a cultural outsider, marginal to the mainstream culture, is also a vital aspect of the opportunity for growth presented by such programmes as it enables the dismantling of cultural stereotypes and an ethnocentric worldview (Marx & Moss, 2011; Matheus & Gaugler, 2020; Penington & Wildermuth, 2005; L. Tran et al., 2021; Tran, Phan et al., 2021). In the cultural dissonance, or "culture shock", that accompanies being perceived as the cultural other, students begin to consider that their own beliefs, values, and behaviours are but "one organization of reality among many viable possibilities" (Marx & Moss, 2011, p. 37). In facing the reality of considerable cultural differences in the host culture, students must learn how to function in a different cultural context (L. Tran, Bui et al., 2021), which necessarily includes acquiring a "better understanding of how citizens in the host community live, what they think, and what they value" (Stachowski & Mahan, 1998, p. 159).

Although there is consensus in existing scholarship that participation in international study or internship programmes enhances students' cultural appreciation and

perspectives (Batey & Lupi, 2012; Braskamp et al., 2009; Marcotte et al., 2007; Marx & Moss, 2011; Matheus & Gaugler, 2020; Penington & Wildermuth, 2005; Sherman et al., 2020; Thi et al., 2021; Tran, Phan et al., 2021; Zamastil-Vondrova, 2005), there is disagreement as to the length that these programmes need to be to produce meaningful change. A study by Kehl and Morris (2007), for instance, found a statistically significant difference in the acquiring of global-mindedness[1] in students studying abroad for a period of only eight weeks compared to a full semester. Consequently, they argue that any university international mobility programme must be at least a semester in length in order for students to acquire growth in global-mindedness (Kehl & Morris, 2007).

Gullekson et al. (2011) and Feinberg (2002)concur, stressing that short international programmes don't offer students the same opportunity for cultural awareness and enhanced insight that sojourns of a semester or a full academic year do. As it takes time to fully immerse oneself in a new cultural context, Arenson argues that programmes of less than a semester cannot afford students the opportunity to enter the "reality" of another country, to understand the perspectives of the locals or become fluent in the language of the host culture (Arenson, 2003). It also runs the risk of more deeply engraining an ethnocentric perspective, Feinberg (2002) warns, with many U.S. students, for example, often returning from study abroad programmes with a more deeply engrained perception of America as the glorified leader of the First World.

However, while long-term international programmes offer a greater opportunity for acquiring a deep, nuanced understanding of the host culture, the increasing numbers of students participating in short-term study abroad or internship programmes suggest that sojourns of a semester or longer are unfeasible for many (Matheus & Gaugler, 2020; Tran, Stafford et al., 2021). Short-term programmes may be more desirable due to the lower cost of participation, family responsibilities which preclude the possibility of extended travel, that students' limited free time from study is usually reserved for work or internships, the rigidity of certain degree programme requirements, and that these international programmes typically run during periods of study break (Tarrant & Lyons, 2012; Whatley et al., 2021). Although they cannot achieve the same depth of intercultural maturity development as long-term programmes, research has continued to demonstrate that short international internships or study programmes still provide the opportunity for growth in students' cultural perspectives (Batey & Lupi, 2012; Opengart, 2018; Penington & Wildermuth, 2005; Perry et al., 2012; Tran, Phan et al., 2021).

While studies have presented quantifiable evidence that short-term international programmes enable students to enhance their global perspectives, little research has investigated whether these advances towards an ethnorelative, over an ethnocentric, worldview continue when the students return home. Do their intercultural maturity levels plateau, continue to progress, or regress in the months and years that follow? Existing scholarship that has attempted to measure the long-term impacts of international programmes suggests that the personal and professional growth triggered by these experiences is long lasting (Collins et al., 2019; Garbati & Rothschild, 2016; Gu, 2015; Scoffham, 2020; Shiveley & Misco, 2015). Scoffham (2020), for example, discovered that an overseas study visit to India for UK teacher education students had an enduring influence on their intercultural understanding, personal development, and professional practice. Similarly, Gu (2015) found that study abroad experiences had a lasting impact

on Chinese students. With their structured prompts for self-exploration and reflection, international programmes often trigger a deep desire in students to "know more about their roots and themselves, and about their values, identities and capabilities" (Gu, 2015, p. 75).

The GPI is a widely used tool for assessing development in an individual's global perspective as a result of life experiences (Anderson & Lawton, 2011; Braskamp et al., 2009; Engberg et al., 2016; Gaia, 2015; Whatley et al., 2021). Braskamp et al. (2014) created the GPI by primarily drawing on King and Baxter Magolda (2005) and Chen and Starosta (1996) theoretical frameworks of intercultural maturity and intercultural communication, respectively (Brooks, 2019, p. 46). The GPI offers students 35 Likert-type items, based on the cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal dimensions, which they must self-rate their agreement with, from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree". Participants can earn up to five points per response, with a total of up to 175 points. In general, the higher the score, the higher the individual's global perspective (Brooks, 2019, p. 51). The Global Perspective Inventory Scales of the research instrument breaks each intercultural maturity dimension into two scales, so that one reflects the theory of intercultural maturity and the other intercultural communication theory (Braskamp et al., 2014). The cognitive dimension is split into "Knowing" and "Knowledge", the intrapersonal dimension becomes separated into "Identity" and "Affect", and the scales for the interpersonal domain become "Social Responsibility" and "Social Interaction" (Ferguson, 2013).

Materials and methods

Data collected from Australian business students participating in three international programmes in 2019 informs the findings of this study. To understand whether participation in international programmes produced maturation in the intercultural maturity, or global perspectives of students, and whether this impact was long lasting, a qualitative analysis of students' written reflections immediately post participation (drawing on King and Baxter Magolda's framework) was employed, coupled with students completing a questionnaire (the GPI) to test their global perspectives approximately two years after the programme. Both methods were utilized to address the main research questions of this study:

Research Question 1: Can the development of intercultural maturity occur from participating in short-term international study or internship programmes?

Research Question 2: If participation in these programmes enabled students to develop an enhanced global perspective, were these effects long lasting? Did students' levels plateau, continue to progress, or regress in the years that followed?

Study sample

The data for this study was provided by 25 students who attended short-term, faculty-led international internships or study tours in 2019. One group of students participated in an

internship programme in Lebanon, while the remaining two groups attended a study tour of India. Programme length varied from two to four weeks in the host country, with an additional period of several weeks pre-departure spent preparing for the trip. The internship programme in Lebanon allowed Australian business students the opportunity to gain work experience in a foreign bank, the internship programme. The two India study tours provided the opportunity for business students to experience advanced experiential learning and build their networking and employability skills.

The students who participated in the international programmes were predominantly enrolled at an Australian public university, with one studying at an Australian private college. Most participants (80%) were born in Australia, with only 20% born overseas in India, Nigeria, Pakistan and China. For the students that participated in the Lebanon programme, two had basic levels of Arabic language proficiency. In the India study tour, two students were proficient in Hindi and Punjabi/Hindi languages that are spoken in certain states of the country. As shown in Table 1, the study sample contained a nearly even ratio of male (48%) and female participants (52%), and most students were aged under 25 (88%).

Eligible students participating in the India study tour received an NCP Mobility Grant to support some of the expenses incurred with their international travel. The grant provides Australian university undergraduates, aged 18 to 28, with funding to support their participation in a study or professional development programme in one of the 40 host locations across the region (Australian Government, n.d.-a). All students participating in an India study tour were provided with an NCP scholarship of $3,000. Additional costs were either self-funded or paid through OS-HELP – a loan for students enrolled in a Commonwealth supported place (CSP) who want to complete some of their study overseas.

As the Bank of Beirut internship programme was not located in the Indo-Pacific region, students participating in the internship were ineligible for the NCP Mobility Grant. With high participation costs, averaging between $3,000 to $3,800, the accompanying academic staff member provided all students with a $500 scholarship from her own research budget to contribute towards the cost of their airfare. Table 2 outlines the costs accrued by students participating in either international mobility programme.

Data collection and analysis

As a course requirement, all students completed a reflection paper that focused on detailing the professional and cultural insights they attained during their time abroad. These reflective papers served as the data used to answer the first research question of this project – whether short-term international programmes can foster students' intercultural

Table 1. Student demographics.

Destination	# Participants	Male	Female	Under age 25	Over age 25
Total students	25	12 (48%)	13 (52%)	21 (84%)	4 (16%)
Lebanon	8	6	2	7	1
India (June-July)	8	3	5	8	0
India (Dec)	9	3	6	6	3

Table 2. Student participation fees.

Destination	Average total fee	Scholarship amount	Remainder paid by student
Lebanon	$3,000-$3,800	$500	$2,500-$3,300
India (June-July)	$5,892.40	$3,000	$2,892.40*
India (Dec)	$6,373.33	$3,000	$3,373.33*

*Students also covered the cost of their visas, immunization and other out of pocket expenses, such as some of their meals.

maturity development. A qualitative content analysis using Nvivo 12 was employed to analyse these reflections for evidence of each students' intercultural maturity level.

Reflection papers were chosen as the medium through which to analyse students' immediate post-trip global perspective due to the critical status existing literature has afforded reflection in enabling cultural development (Aktas et al., 2017; Kortegast & Boisfontaine, 2015; Penington & Wildermuth, 2005; Perry et al., 2012). Kortegast and Boisfontaine (2015) assert that structured institutional opportunities for reflection are critical for students to be able to make meaning out of their experiences abroad. Mechanisms to facilitate the meaning-making process for students are an imperative part of the learning process (Kortegast & Boisfontaine, 2015; Whatley et al., 2021).

The reflection papers were studied by the researchers, with segments of text relating to the cultural experiences of the students analysed for evidence of intercultural maturity level. This was achieved through a qualitative content analysis that employed a coding frame informed by (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005) developmental model of intercultural maturity. Segments of data were coded based on categories that were created to embody the characteristics of the three different levels of intercultural maturity King and Baxter Magolda (2005) identified (initial, intermediate, and mature) and the three dimensions (cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal). Due to the interrelationship between the dimensions, segments of text were often attributed to more than one code.

After a trial coding phase, in which two researchers blindly coded the same segmented text, the coding frame was further refined. This involved tweaking the name of codes to better encapsulate the characteristics of the level and dimension of intercultural maturity they were to capture. After modifying the coding frame, the entirety of the reflection papers was coded, and a level assigned to each student. Importing this data into Nvivo 12 enabled the researchers to further explore the key growth areas of intercultural maturity experienced and ascertain whether there were any gender differences in global perspectives among the students.

To discover whether this development was long lasting, participants were asked to complete the GPI instrument. The GPI was provided to the students digitally, with WhatsApp and email chosen as the contact methods – with a greater responsiveness to the WhatsApp message noted by the researchers.

Although the GPI also offers additional data on students' openness to diversity and challenge, competence for civic action, and social innovation under what they term "Global Competence Scales", this study only used the findings of the "Global Perspective Inventory Scales" of the GPI report issued by the Global Perspective Institute. In order to facilitate a comparative analysis between the students' responses immediately post participation and then again approximately two years later, the

researchers further refined the coding frame so that each GPI dimension was broken down into the two scales as defined by Braskamp et al. (2014).

Each segment of data was then recorded accordingly so that students' responses were afforded a level of intercultural maturity for both scales of each dimension. In the rare cases that segments of data indicated two levels per individual GPI scale, the higher level was attributed. Next, the students' responses to the GPI were analysed to determine if any growth had occurred in their global perspective in the intervening period. Using the GPI codebook, which outlines how scores are afforded per item, each student was given an individual score for each scale of the GPI. These scores were then transformed into levels of intercultural maturity using the following rules:

- If the mean value was less than or equal to 2.5, then the initial level was assigned.
- If the mean value was greater than 2.5 and less than 5, then the intermediate level was assigned.
- If the mean value was 4 or greater, then the mature level was assigned.

Results

RQ1: Can the development of intercultural maturity occur from participating in short-term international study or internship programmes?

The findings of this study indicate a growth in intercultural maturity in most of the study cohort immediately after completing their international internship or study tour. As shown in Table 3, their immersion in a different cultural context enabled the majority of students (96%) to realize the first and second levels of King and Baxter Magolda (2005) developmental model of intercultural maturity in all three dimensions. Only one student (female) did not progress beyond the initial level (4%). A small number of male students (12%) demonstrated growth in select domains of the mature level. The domain that indicated the largest amount of growth was the cognitive dimension, with 47% of total coding comprising this domain, followed by the interpersonal domain (27%) and the intrapersonal domain (26%).

The experiential learning experience offered by these international programmes enabled students to:

- Gain an appreciation for cultural differences, rather than continue to possess a fear of them (cognitive dimension)
- Reflect on their own values, beliefs and cultural identity (intrapersonal dimension)
- Become willing to interact with diverse others – refraining from judgment – and acknowledge the power of individuals working together to enact positive change for the collective (interpersonal dimension)

Table 3. Student intercultural maturity development by dimension

Intercultural dimension	Initial	Intermediate	Mature
Cognitive	Yes	Yes	Yes (12%)
Intrapersonal	Yes	Yes	Yes (4%)
Interpersonal	Yes	Yes	Yes (4%)

Appreciating cultural differences, rather than fearing them

The cognitive dimension of the intermediate level of intercultural maturity is characterized by the challenging of limiting stereotypes and pre-conceptions of differing social norms held by the cultural "other"; these are replaced with more complex, nuanced appreciation and understanding of another culture. For many students, a new appreciation for the host culture was expressed through admiration for the beauty of the landscape and for historically or religiously significant buildings:

> [W]e visited one of the seven wonders of the world and that was Taj Mahal . . . The material, the history and the story behind this remarkable place caught my eye as I never thought it would.

> We got to hike through Yahchouch in Mont Liban and Chouf in the South of Lebanon, eat at an altitude of 2,500 meters in Oyoun Orghosh and explore some of the best night clubs in the country.

> Lebanon is an amazing country, filled with history, great people, and amazing food, it is definitely somewhere I would come back again as it definitely left a lasting impression on me.

For others, being immersed in a new cultural context offered the opportunity to see Australia (their home country) from another perspective, and to develop a deep respect for other cultures and religions:

> From this trip I also believe that we have a lot to learn from foreign countries such as India, in the way their government focuses heavily on development opportunities for their young professionals.

> By immersing myself into another culture, I have gained an understanding of how India['s] rapidly growing economy is different to Australia's.

> . . . this study tour has really helped me understand Indian culture, history and the people. Feeling the culture shock taught me a new respect for other cultures and religions, and my appreciation and respect for them has grown immensely.

> I would like to be able to experience more cultures and religions to keep that appreciation and respect for other cultures and religions alive.

> Being immersed in a culture that is the complete opposite to my own was exciting, scary, fun and intimidating. Therefore, it gave me a new-found respect and admiration for other cultures and religions.

The opportunity to reflect on their values, beliefs, and cultural identity

According to King and Baxter Magolda (2005), progressing beyond the initial level of intercultural maturity "requires an internally defined sense of self to avoid feeling threatened by difference" (p. 578). As such, the intermediate level of the intrapersonal domain is defined by self-exploration at the level of one's identity – being able to develop a sense of self that is not defined externally by the dominant culture, nor threatened by different perspectives. Seeing the greater economic hardships faced by those of the host culture offered the opportunity for many students to examine their privilege:

It was heartbreaking to know that people live this lifestyle and made me feel more than grateful for what I have back at home.

Delhi has a population of 19.8 million and yet 21.9% of the population lives below the poverty line . . . In Australia we enjoy the luxury of Centrelink payments and many other charities which fund children who are underprivileged but going to India and seeing children as young as 3 years old begging it really put life into perspective.

. . . I had been exposed to the poorer more negative part of Lebanese society as I was asked for money by someone on the street, who appeared to have a genuinely dire financial situation. In regards to the more corporate life, I had learned about the extremely low income in Lebanon, and was baffled that $1000 USD a month was considered a really "good" salary in Lebanon.

Hearing about these stories and seeing the struggles that the people of Dharavi go through on a daily basis is a truly inspiring story. The conditions they are living in are almost considered inhuman.

This opportunity for self-reflection afforded many the ability to challenge longstanding attitudes and ignited a desire to change their outlook on life:

When I experienced all of this [i]t was clear to me that the only barriers on a person [are] those that [they] place on themselves.

. . . after seeing how Dharavi operates and how it is such a benefit to society, this motivates me to stick to being who I am and standing up for what I believe in and realizing that the little guy out there in the world is able to reach whatever heights they want.

Using my reflections and my experiences I have understood that there is no need for me to fit in amongst the crowd if it changes who I am, I need to be who I am and stand up for my whole moral compass.

Reading about Gandhi . . . opened by eyes and heart to becoming better in all aspects and also made me question my purpose in life and how I can make a contribution or a difference.

Is willing to interact with diverse others and acknowledges the power of individuals working together to enact positive change for the collective

The interpersonal dimension of intercultural maturity is characterized by an individual's ability to "interact effectively and interdependently with diverse others" (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005, p. 579). This involves demonstrating an understanding of, and respect for, differing perspectives and experiences (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005). In the intermediate level of this dimension, individuals indicate a willingness to interact with people from differing cultural backgrounds who hold contrasting beliefs and opinions to their own. There is also an identification of the ways in which "social systems affect group norms and intergroup relations" and a burgeoning interest in the power of diverse others working together to effect positive social change (Perez et al., 2015, p. 767). Many students found that conversing with members of the host culture improved their social skills and opened them up to new perspectives:

At first, I found it hard to sometimes understand the situation at work because they mostly speak Arabic . . . but as time goes by I tend to read the body language of the employees and pick up one word or two that I understand. Which has helped me to understand what is going on

when they do not speak English. For instance, if I was present at a client meeting and all they spoke was Arabic I would then take notes of the meeting of what I could understand by reading their body language and ask the employees questions later concerning what I understood from the meeting.

Because this experience pushed me beyond my comfort levels, I am able to communicate more confidently, becoming stronger in the way I communicate my speech.

I was very fortunate to have colleagues [who] took me in like family, I felt free to have a conversation about anything which came to my mind . . . Many sensitive topics were brought to discussion which I previously had no knowledge of before I travelled to Lebanon . . . we conversed on topics which we gathered knowledge from both different perspectives, and we discussed major issues which we might not have initially thought or pondered upon.

For others, the experience made them consider what they could be doing to improve the lives of others:

From this Study tour, I plan on helping those that are disadvantaged as my passion [lies] there.

. . . when we visited the Shanthi Bhavan Women's Centre, a short-stay home for women and children in distress and need, I could not stop thinking about what they all must have gone through, the trauma they endured, especially the children. I kept thinking there must be something we can do to help the programs they have in place.

The ways in which Dharavi is able to conduct itself as a community and provide such positive repercussions from what they do is truly inspiring . . . Dharavi is the best example I have ever seen of a community of people in a very bad situation and circumstances coming together to not only benefit the community but the world as well.

Reading about Gandhi, his views and all that he has done for people and nations opened by eyes and heart to becoming better in all aspects and also made me question my purpose in life and how I can make a contribution or a difference.

RQ2: If participation in these programmes enabled students to develop an enhanced global perspective, were these effects long lasting? Did students' levels plateau, continue to progress, or regress in the years that followed?

Of the 25 whose data we used to answer our first research question, 15 (60%) completed the GPI questionnaire. Three students answered the GPI who did not provide data for research question one, so their responses were not used for comparative analysis. 93% of the cohort showed maturation in at least one scale of the GPI, with 46% showing advancement in all scales available to be compared. 86% progressed to the mature level for at least one scale, with only one student showing no change at all in their level of intercultural maturity across the scales able to be compared. These results indicate that the majority of students continued to progress in their level of global perspective in the two years since their participation in an international programme, with none regressing, and only one plateauing. Tables 4–9 display any changes in level of intercultural maturity among the cohort from 2019 to 2021, broken down by GPI scale.

Key areas of maturation in global perspectives

The GPI attributes a numerical value to a student's response for each item (1–5), with an overall mean afforded the cohort per item. Within the Cognitive Knowledge

Table 4. Students' knowing scale levels in 2019 and 2021.

Student name	Knowing (2019)	Knowing (2021)	Change?
Alice*	Intermediate	Intermediate	No
Kieran	Initial	Intermediate	Yes
William	Initial	Intermediate	Yes
Ginny	Intermediate	Intermediate	No
Kyle	Intermediate	Intermediate	No
Nick	Intermediate	Mature	Yes

*Student names have been changed

Table 5. Students' knowledge scale levels in 2019 and 2021.

Student name	Knowledge (2019)	Knowledge (2021)	Change?
Annabel*	Initial	Intermediate	Yes
Kieran	Initial	Intermediate	Yes
Aidan	Intermediate	Mature	Yes
Claire	Intermediate	Intermediate	No
Georgia	Intermediate	Mature	Yes
Ginny	Intermediate	Mature	Yes
Kyle	Intermediate	Mature	Yes
Michael	Intermediate	Intermediate	No
Nick	Intermediate	Mature	Yes
Ryan	Intermediate	Mature	Yes
Vanessa	Intermediate	Mature	Yes
William	Intermediate	Mature	Yes

*Student names have been changed

Table 6. Students' identity scale levels in 2019 and 2021.

Student name	Identity (2019)	Identity (2021)	Change?
Claire*	Intermediate	Intermediate	No
Georgia	Intermediate	Mature	Yes
Melinda	Intermediate	Mature	Yes
Ryan	Intermediate	Mature	Yes
Nick	Intermediate	Mature	Yes

*Student names have been changed

Table 7. Students' affect scale levels in 2019 and 2021.

Student name	Affect (2019)	Affect (2021)	Change?
Claire*	Intermediate	Mature	Yes
Georgia	Intermediate	Mature	Yes
Penelope	Intermediate	Mature	Yes
Ryan	Intermediate	Mature	Yes

*Student names have been changed

scale, respondents performed particularly high on their self-reported ratings for items "I understand how various cultures of this world interact socially" and "I can discuss cultural differences from an informed perspective", with both having an average score of 4.39 out of 5.00. Higher again were students' scores pertaining to items "I take into account different perspectives before drawing conclusions about the world around me" and "I consider different cultural perspectives when evaluating global problems" of the Cognitive Knowing scale, both receiving an average score of 4.44 out of 5.00.

Table 8. Students' social responsibility scale levels in 2019 and 2021.

Student name	Social Responsibility (2019)	Social Responsibility (2021)	Change?
Annabel*	Intermediate	Intermediate	No
Georgia	Intermediate	Mature	Yes
Kyle	Intermediate	Mature	Yes
Ryan	Mature	Mature	No

*Student names have been changed

Table 9. Student's social interaction scale levels in 2019 and 2021.

Student name	Social Interaction (2019)	Social Interaction (2021)	Change?
Annabel*	Initial	Intermediate	Yes
Kieran	Initial	Mature	Yes
Alice	Intermediate	Mature	Yes
Claire	Intermediate	Intermediate	No
Georgia	Intermediate	Mature	Yes
Ginny	Intermediate	Mature	Yes
Melinda	Intermediate	Mature	Yes
Michael	Intermediate	Intermediate	No
Ryan	Intermediate	Mature	Yes
William	Intermediate	Mature	Yes

*Student names have been changed

Within the Intrapersonal Affect scale, items "I am accepting of people with different religious and spiritual traditions" and "I enjoy when my friends from other cultures teach me about our cultural differences" performed particularly high, with means of 4.89 out of 5.00 and 4.78 out of 5.00, respectively. Further, students performed strongly on the Intrapersonal Identity scale item "I am willing to defend my own views when they differ from others", with a mean score of 4.44 out of 5.00, and the Interpersonal Social Responsibility scale item "I consciously behave in terms of making a difference", with an average score of 4.33 out of 5.00. Lastly, students demonstrated continued social engagement with cultural others by their strong response to items "I frequently interact with people from a race/ethnic group different from my own" and "I frequently interact with people from a country different to my own" in the Interpersonal Social Interaction scale, with average scores of 4.61 out of 5.00 and 4.56 out of 5.00, respectively.

Discussion

The findings of this study support the consensus in existing literature that, regardless of duration, student mobility programmes do foster development in participants' intercultural knowledge and skills, with 96% able to realize the first and second levels of King and Baxter Magolda (2005) developmental model of intercultural maturity in all three dimensions. The results of this study also indicate that this change can be lasting, with 93% of students showing maturation in one or more GPI scales two years after completing their programme. This was confirmed by no students regressing in level, and only one student plateauing. Although only one student in 2019 had attained a mature level of intercultural maturity in one scale, two years later, 86% of the cohort had attained a mature level in one or more of the GPI scales. Such a finding supports Gu's (2015)

thesis that the shifts in identity, values, skills, and insight that students experience through participating in international mobility programmes are "continuous, profound and far-reaching" (p. 76).

The strong impact these programmes had on students was also reflected in the high response rate to the GPI questionnaire. That 70% of participants completed the GPI two years after having completed the programme, and with many now no longer in the university system, may reflect the lasting impact of their time abroad. In addition to the deep cultural insights and skills they developed, it is possible that a further factor influencing the high response rate is the unique connection formed between the accompanying academic staff member and the participants. The academics in both programmes fulfilled a position for students that went beyond that of academic mentor as, in caring for the students' many needs, they functioned as pseudo-guardians for the duration of the time overseas.

Cultural development was demonstrated in the NCP programme participants in Indo-Pacific countries and the, on the whole, students' self-funded programme in Lebanon. The lengths of the programmes differed as well as the delivery methods. The constant for both is that they were faculty-led and part of the learning and cultural development may be attributed to the depth of students' contacts, both formally and informally, with the academics. The academics that accompanied the students were from the host countries with knowledge of both language and culture that they shared with the students. The value of these exchanges cannot be discounted. For the Lebanon programme, as illustration, the academic was with the students during most of their activities and events and provided the historical, cultural and other explanations throughout.

This study reported on the written reflections together with their GPIs scores but did not present the interviews or information that had been obtained from the students during the course of the programme. While it is recognized that this data provides greater depth of understanding of the students' experience, it was determined by the researchers that the information was shared beyond the context of this study as many were done in informal conversations.

The study setting was in a university in western Sydney area that is recognized to have students from families, on average, of lower average incomes and culturally diverse backgrounds. As such, they are of the type that were identified by Tran, Stafford et al. (2021) as needing to be more represented in international mobility programmes. They had concluded that NCP were more likely to come from affluent families and that more targeting was needed to support more diversified and less advantaged groups (L. Tran et al., 2021; Tran, Stafford et al., 2021).

The additional finding was the possibility that some students participating in international mobility programmes may have high intercultural development. For one of the students that had no change in her intercultural development was an African migrant to Australia attending a highly multicultural diverse university who had participated in two international exchange programmes – one to China and the other to Lebanon. Information on their country of birth, language(s) spoken or participation in previous or other exchange programmes was not collected in this study but would be included for future research.

The other major contribution of this study is the use of the GPI with Australian students. The GPI had been used in a number of countries but not Australia. There are nuances to the language used resulting in the requirement to fine tuning of some of the items in the instrument for its' use.

Limitations

Although the findings of this research strongly indicate that the change in the global perspectives of students is lasting, it is important to consider the limitations of this study. In addition to the small study sample making any claims of the universality of the results unfounded, the strong evidence of continued intercultural maturity development of participants may be a finding influenced by the diverse cultural backgrounds of the respondents. With 86% of students enrolled at [the university], it is important to note that the Greater Western Sydney area, in which the university is situated, is one of the most diverse cultural communities in the world (citation hidden for anonymity). An interest for future studies may be to compare a diverse population of students, such as in this study, with students from a less multicultural institution. A further limitation was the bounded data on the students' backgrounds of countries of birth, year of arrival in Australia (if born overseas), languages spoken and their proficiencies, and travel histories for the different programmes.

A further possible limitation of this study concerns methodology. As the GPI is a self-rated scale of global perspectives, this offers the possibility of students either over-rating or under-rating their intercultural skills and values. This was evident to one of the researchers who noted a disparity between students' responses to the GPI questionnaire and evidence of their intercultural maturity level in one-on-one discussions. It is possible that the students more freely expressed their thoughts and insights on culture in their reflection papers, then they did when completing a formal assessment tool. The researchers assessed the students' intercultural maturity development for RQ1, while the students self-reported as part of the methodology for RQ2, and these different methods of data collection and analysis will have influenced the overall findings. That the GPI data was collected during a global pandemic may have also been an influencing factor on the students' responses, and the response rate.

Conclusion

This study has shown that not only do short-term international mobility programmes aid students' intercultural maturity development, but this change can also be long-term. This provides insights for policy makers and universities on the ongoing and longevity benefits to students' cultural maturity of short mobility faculty led programmes. This is important given the level of financial and in-kind sponsorships that both have committed to international mobility programmes. However, the COVID-19 global pandemic has demonstrated that international sojourns may not always be an available method for students to enhance their intercultural skills and appreciation for other cultures. The Bank of Beirut internship programme, for instance, was unable to be repeated in country due to the pandemic, but also as a consequence of unrest within Lebanon. Since early 2020, universities have been endeavouring to find new ways to facilitate intercultural exchanges for students while remaining in-country, such as virtual programmes. Whether such programmes offer the same opportunity for intercultural maturity growth as in-country visits remains to be seen.

Notes

1. Kehl and Morris (2007) define global-mindedness as a "worldview in which an individual perceives his or herself as connected to the world community and is aware of his or her responsibility for its members" (p. 69).

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